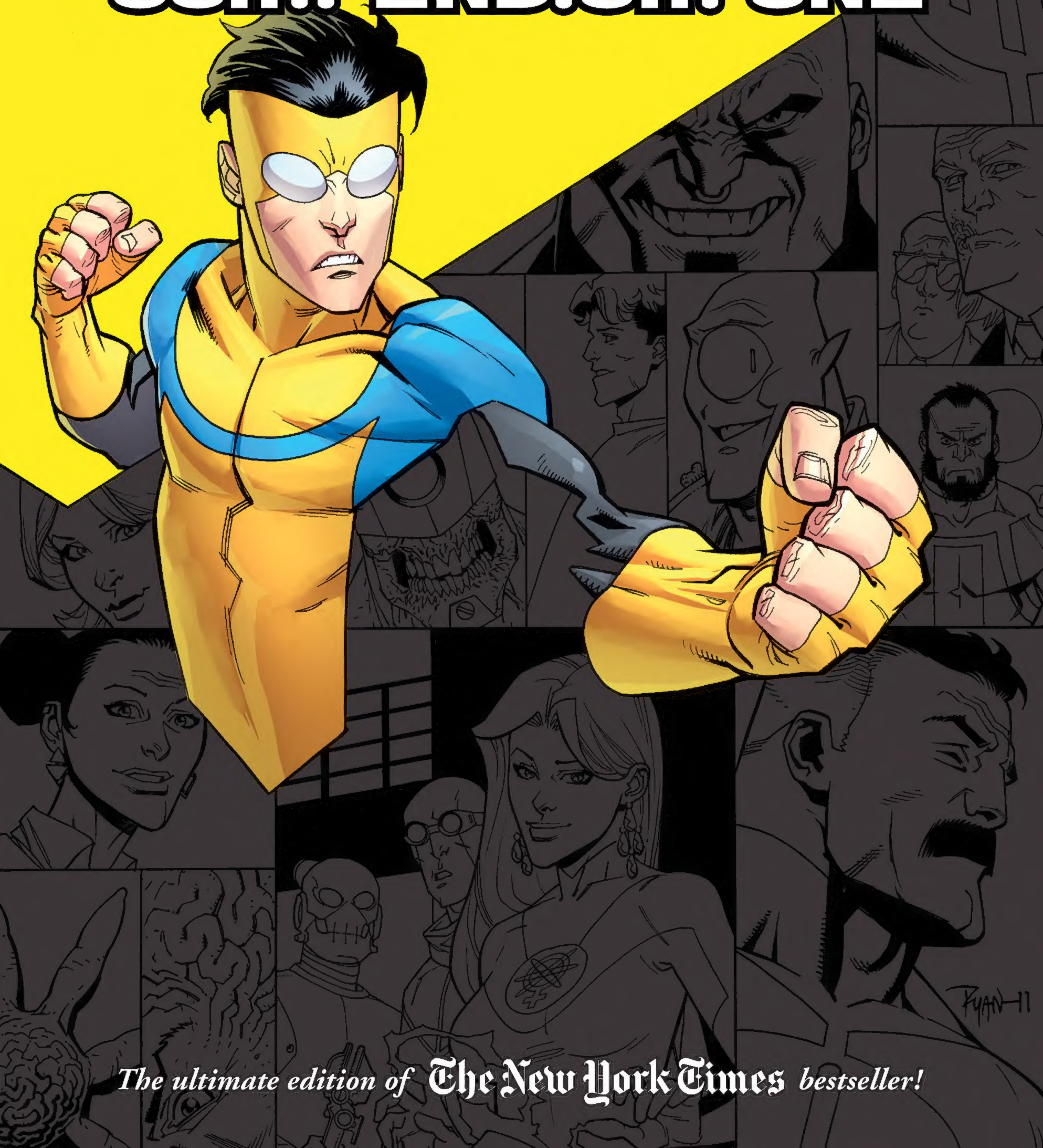


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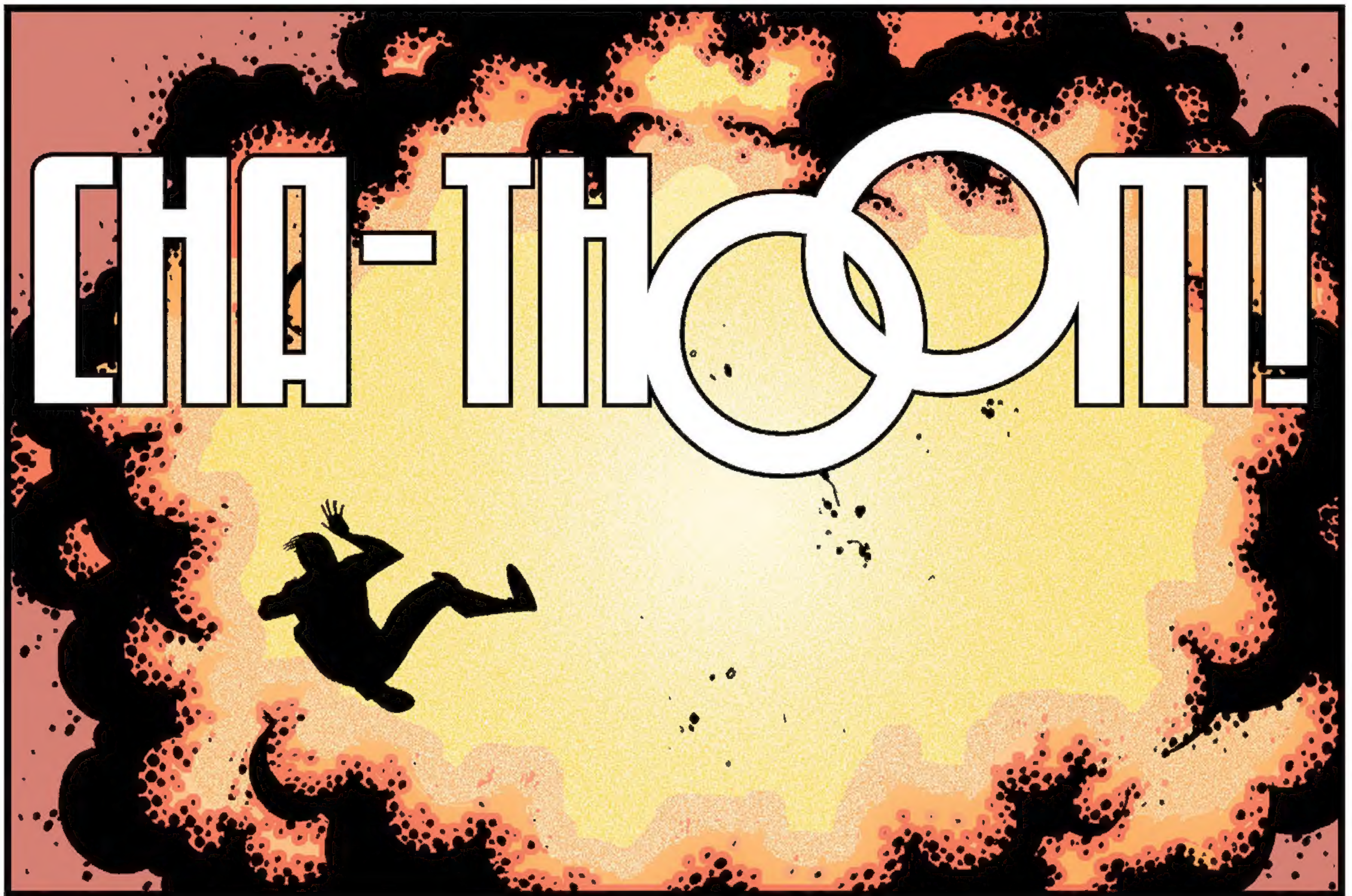
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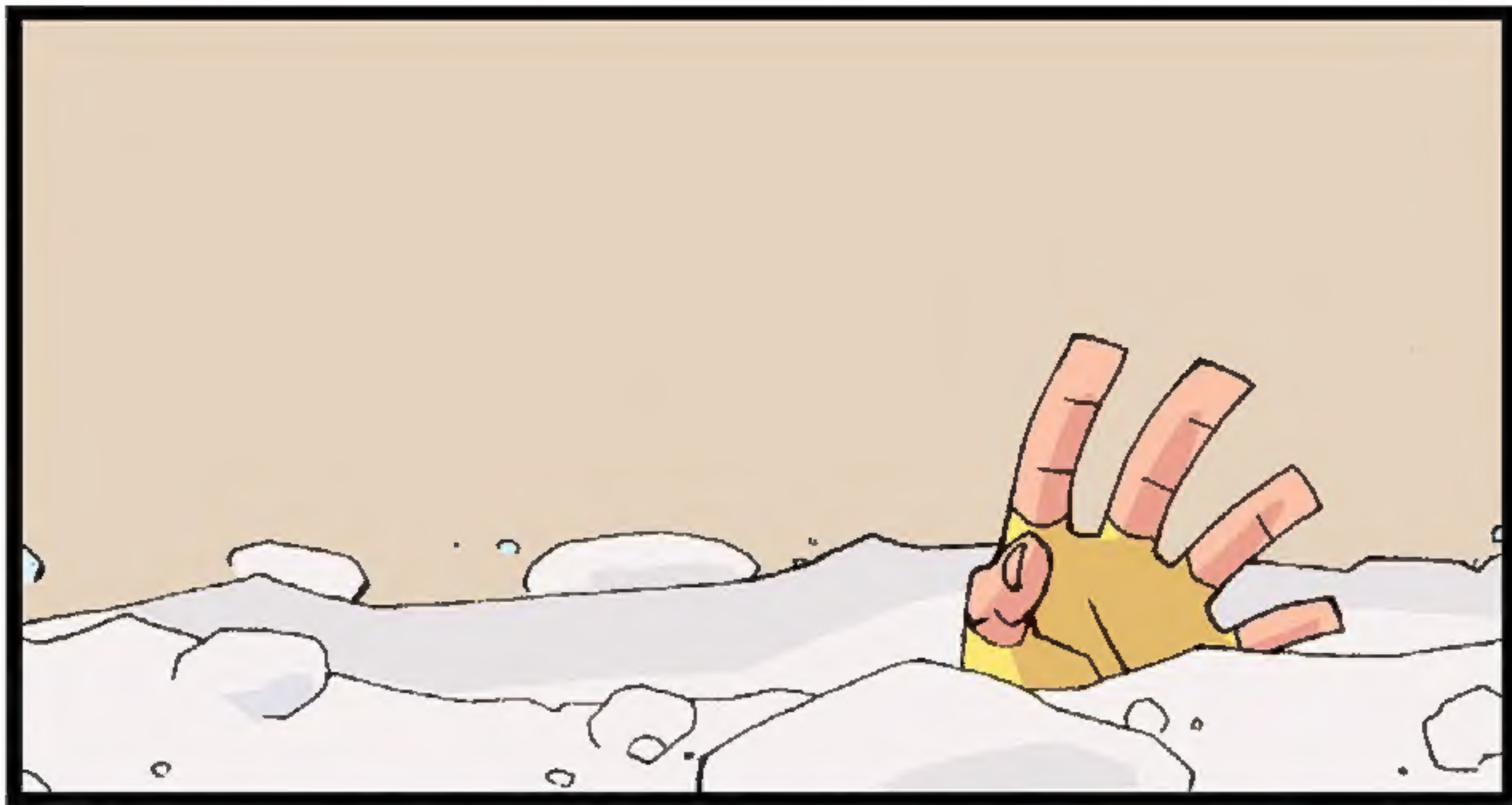
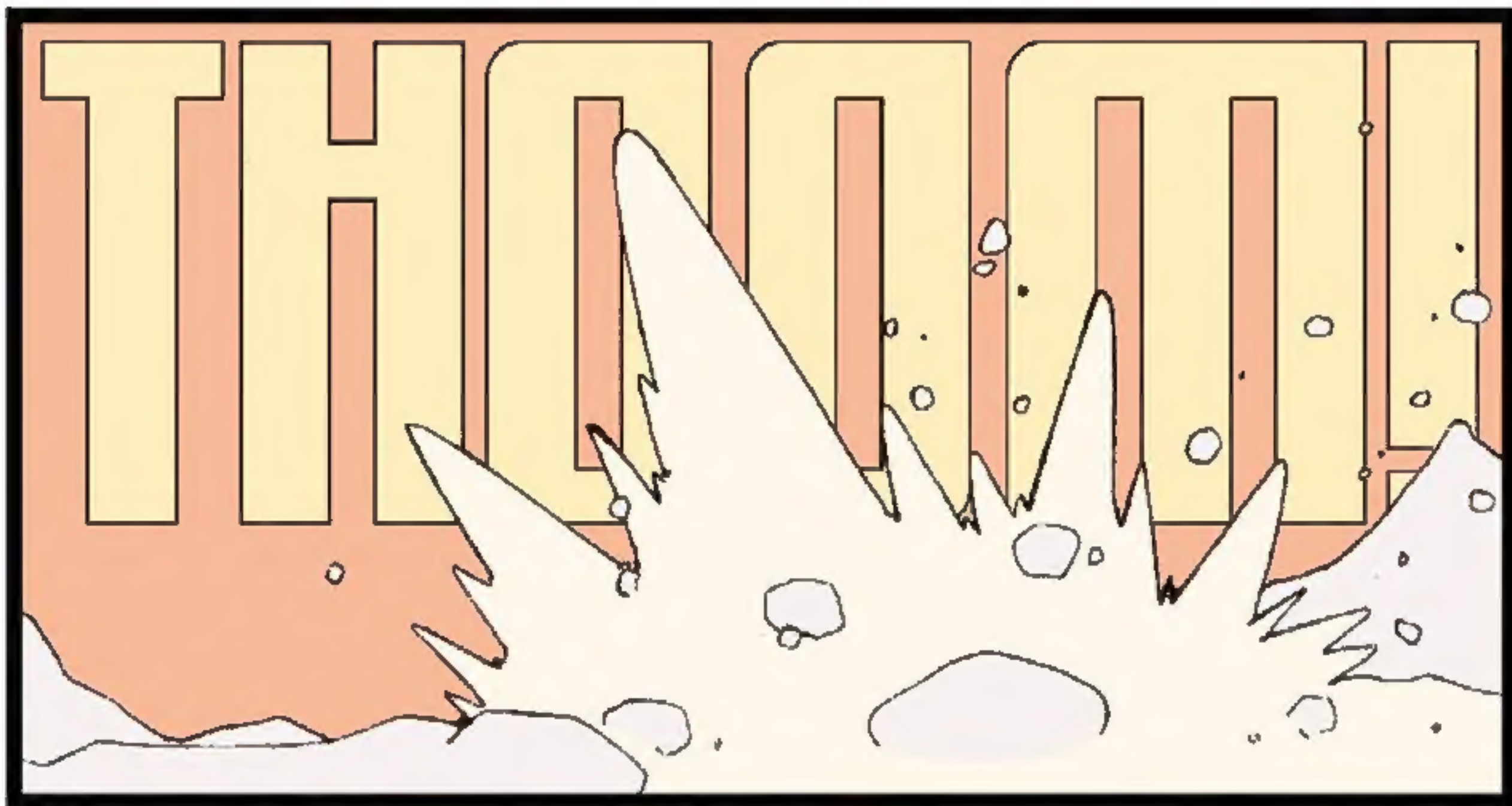
ISSUE ONE

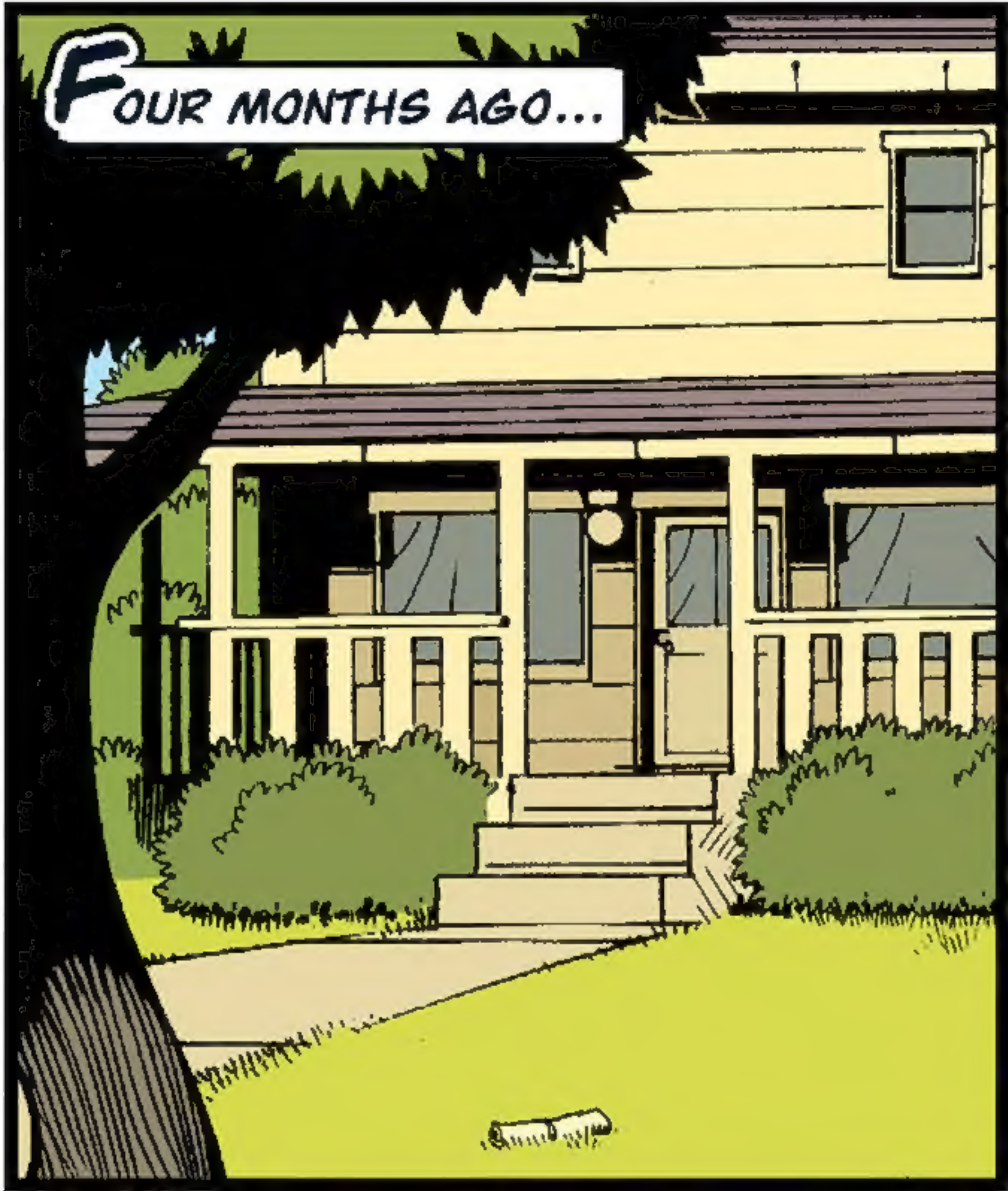


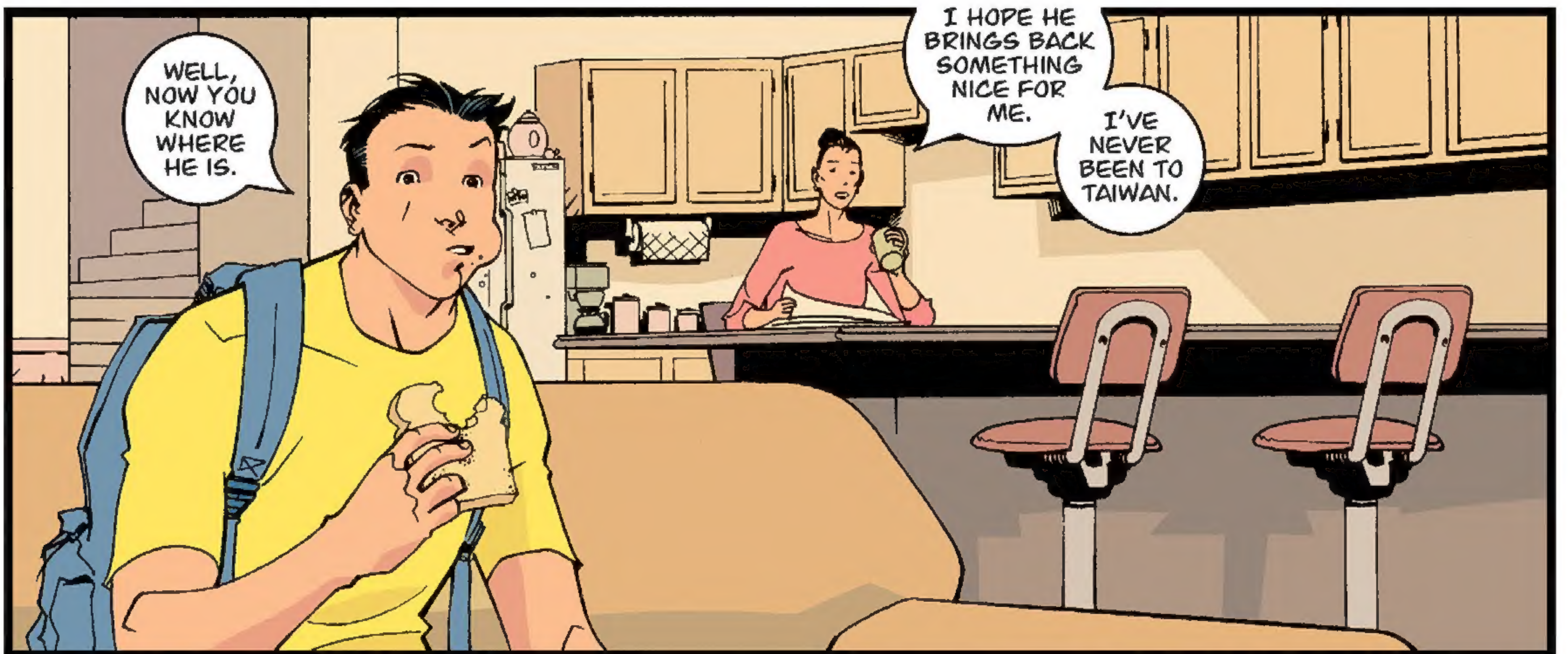
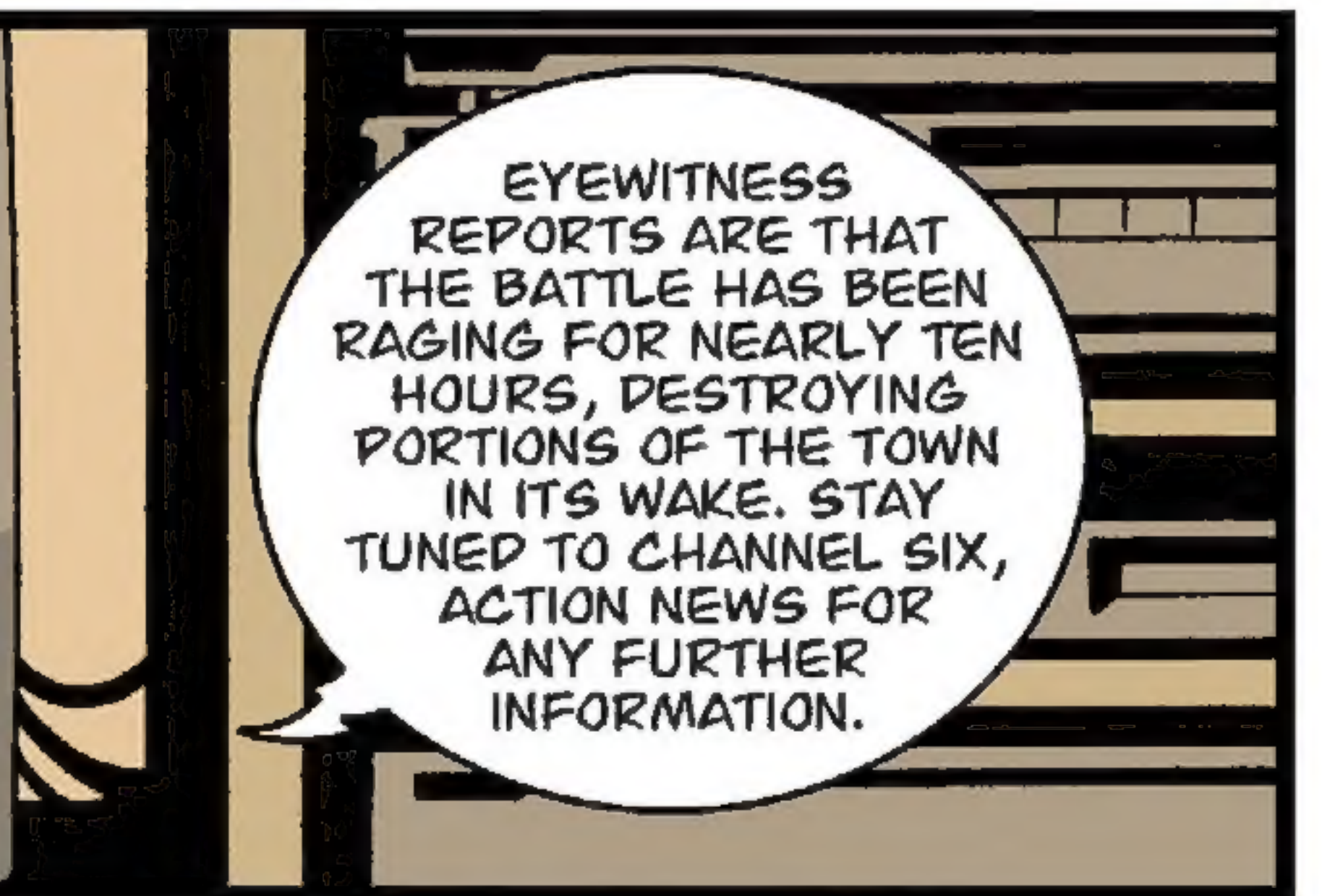
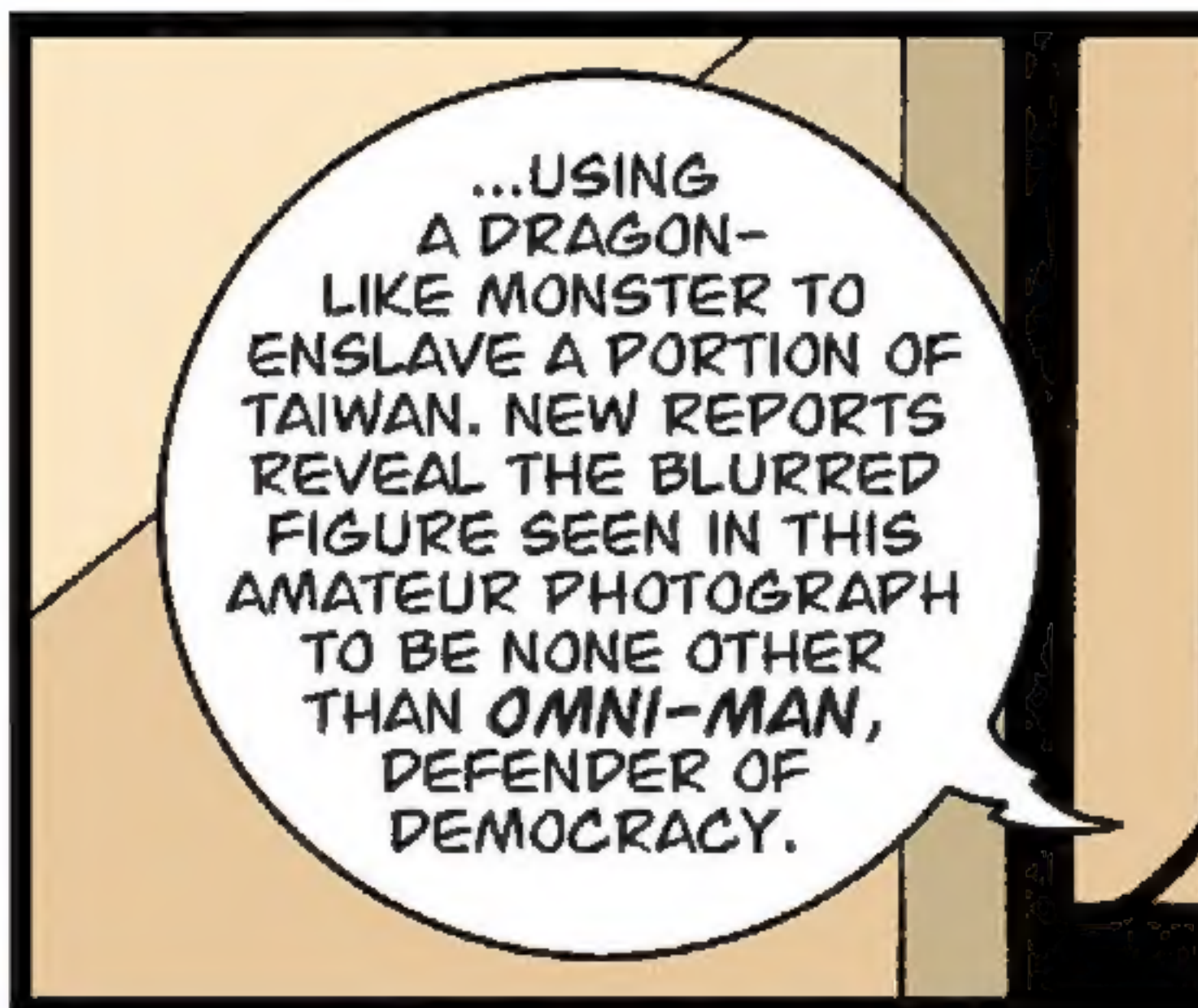
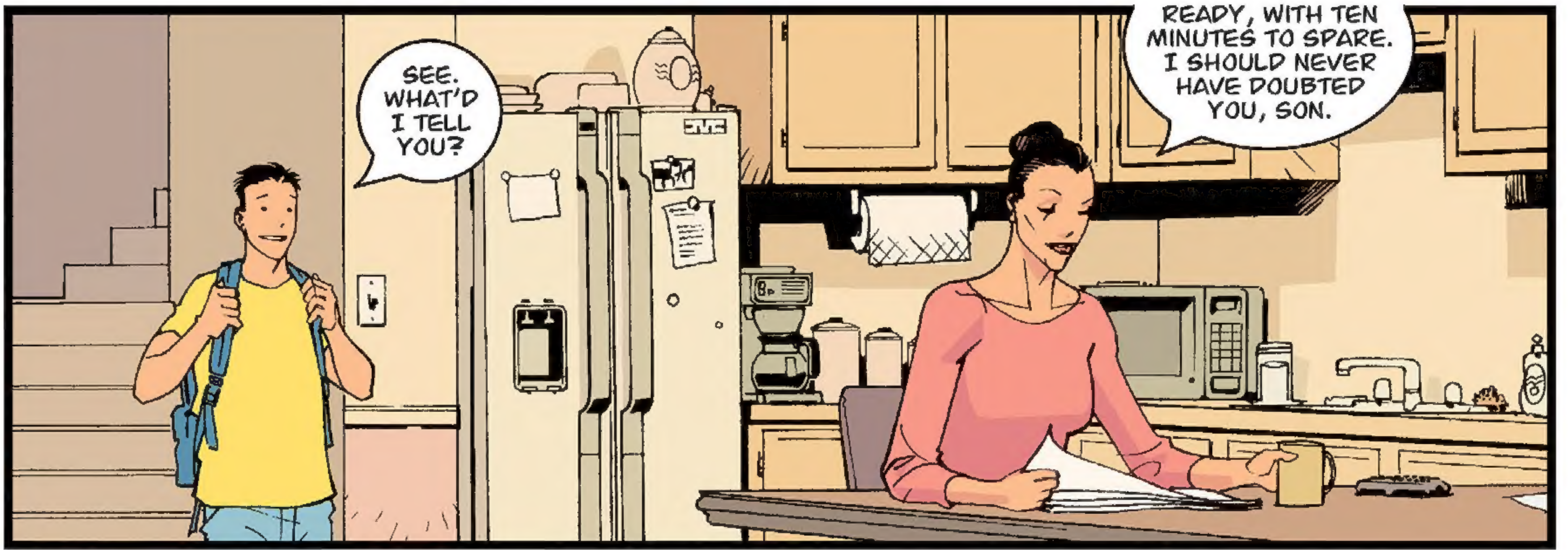


Y'KNOW,
YOU REALLY
RUINED MY
AFTERNOON.

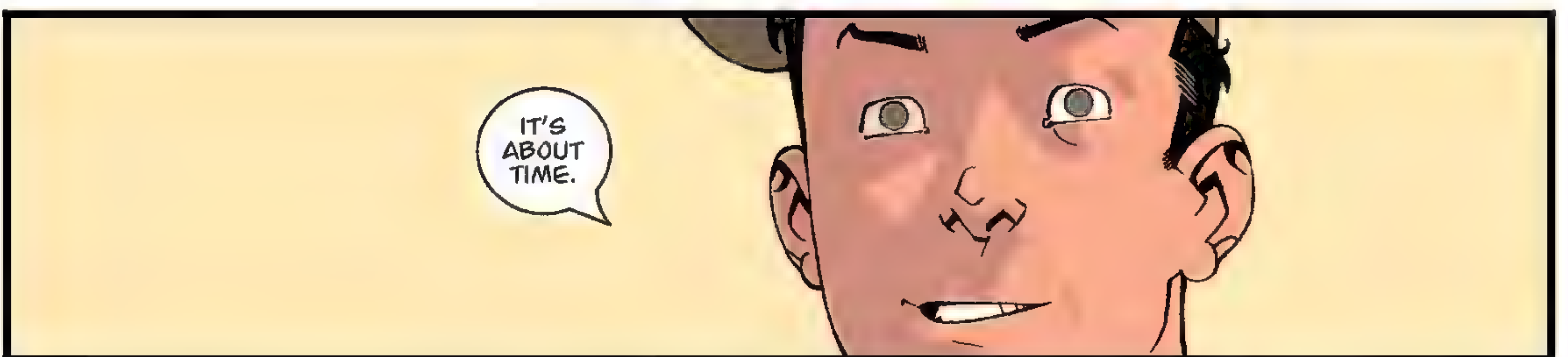
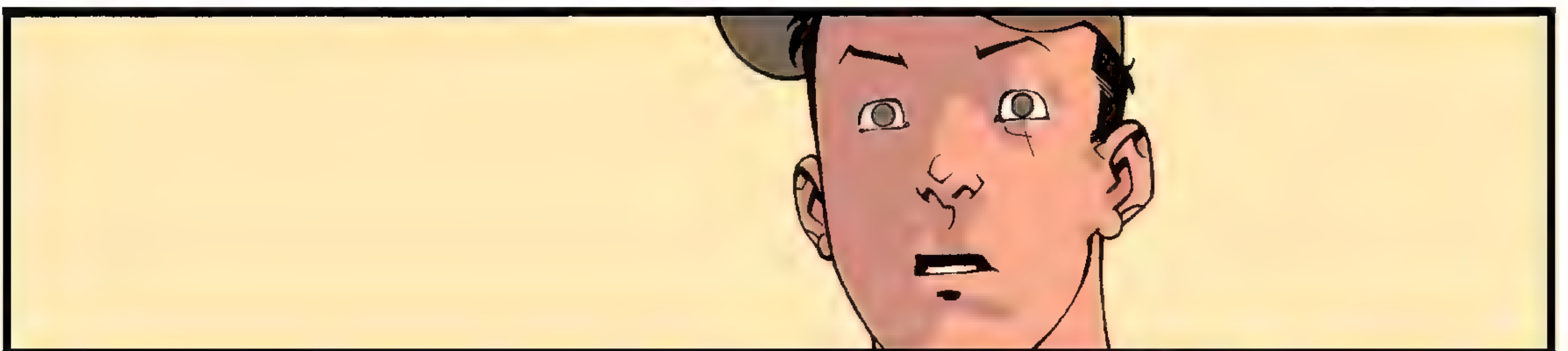
















DID YOU TAKE CARE OF THAT DRAGON?



YEAH, ONCE I FOUND OUT WHO WAS CONTROLLING THE THING, THERE WASN'T MUCH TO IT. THE HARD PART WAS KEEPING THE CIVILIANS SAFE WHILE I FIGURED OUT WHO WAS BEHIND IT ALL.



YOUR PUBLISHER CALLED. HE WANTED TO CHECK AND SEE HOW THE NEXT BOOK WAS COMING ALONG.

I TOLD HIM YOU WERE ON ONE OF YOUR RESEARCH TRIPS.



I GUESS I'LL TAKE A DAY OFF THIS WEEKEND AND WRITE A BOOK FOR THEM. I'LL HAVE TO PICK UP A COUPLE SPARE KEYBOARDS.

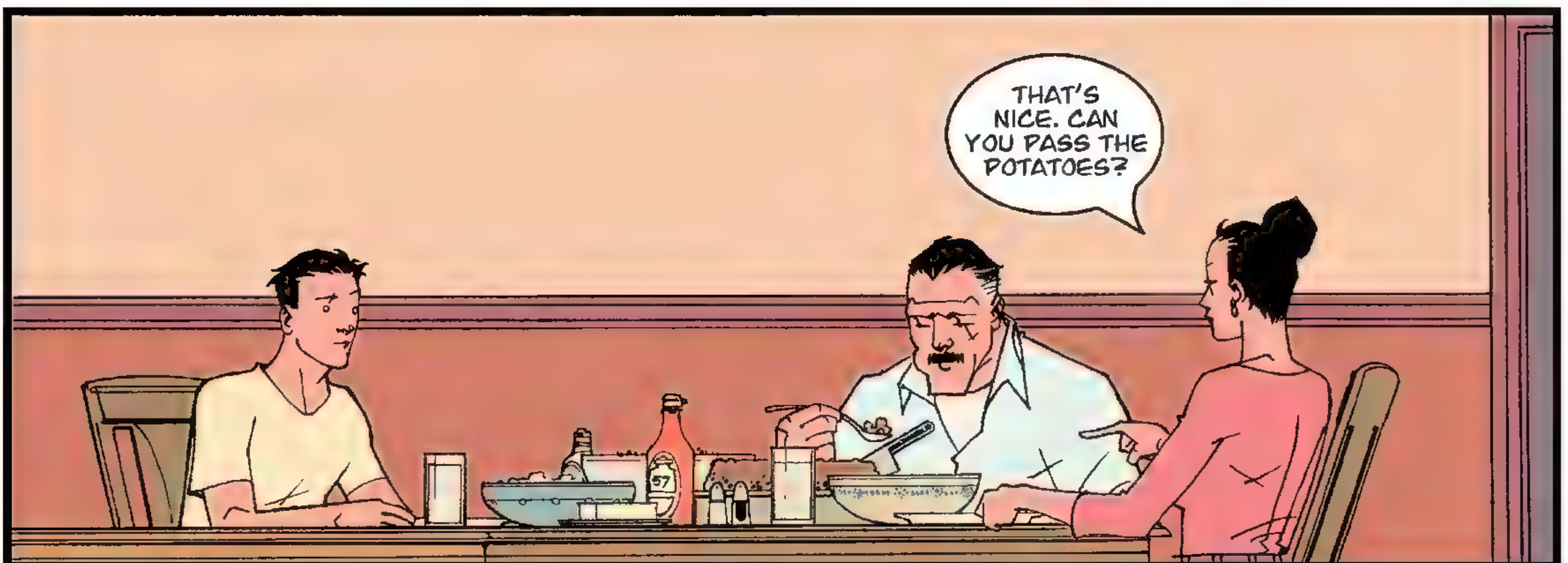
I HOPE THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE CAN COVER FOR ME.



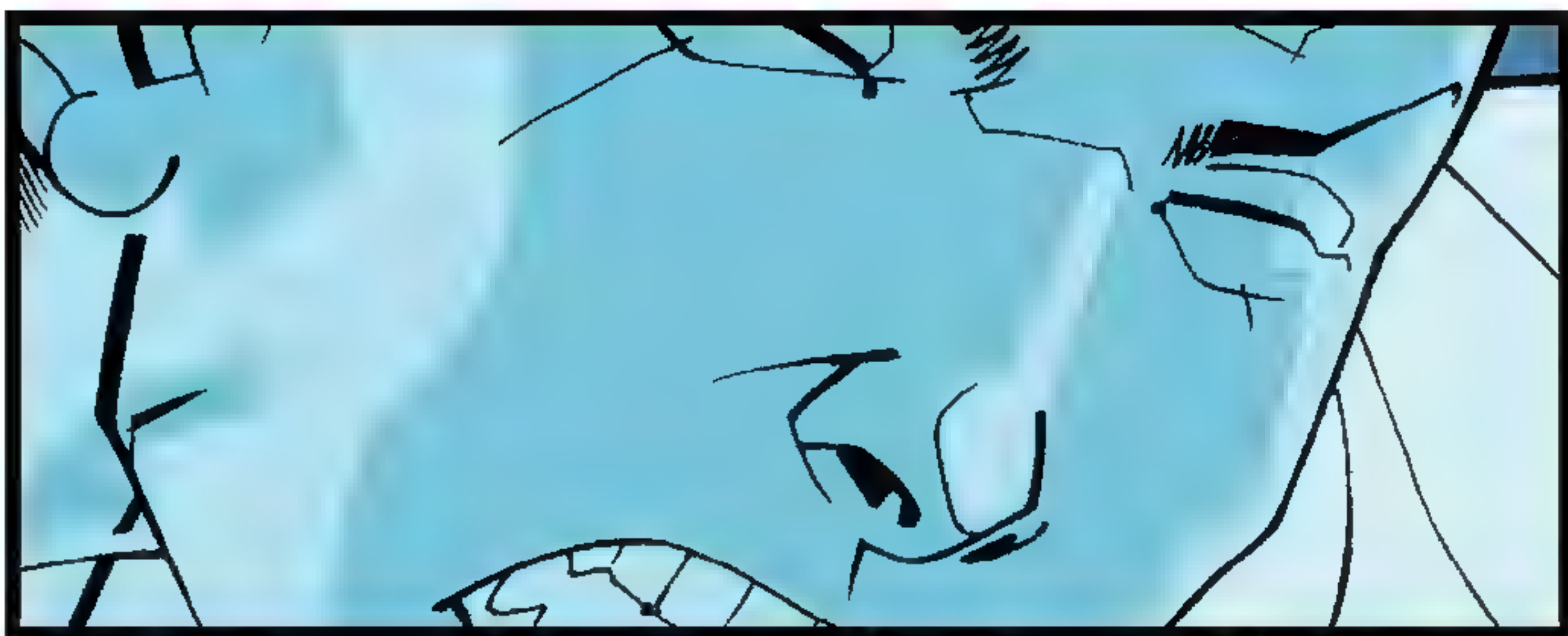
SO... HOW WAS YOUR DAY, MARK?

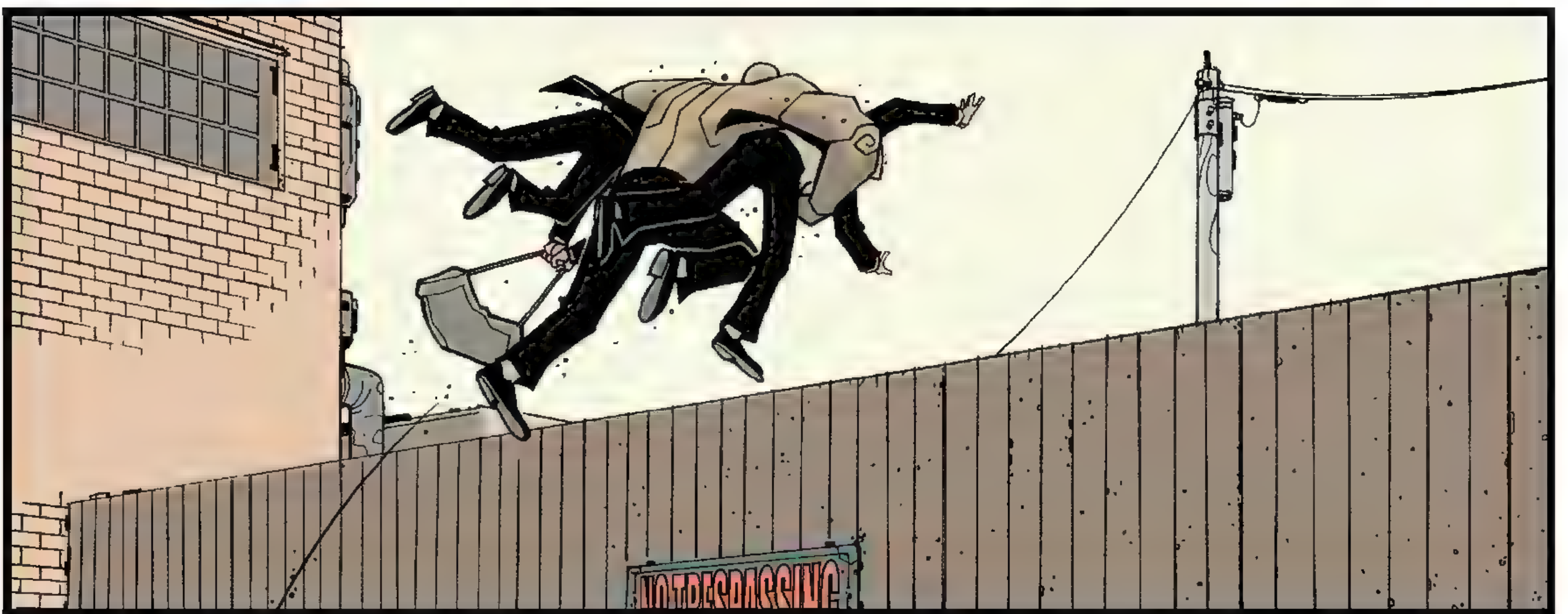
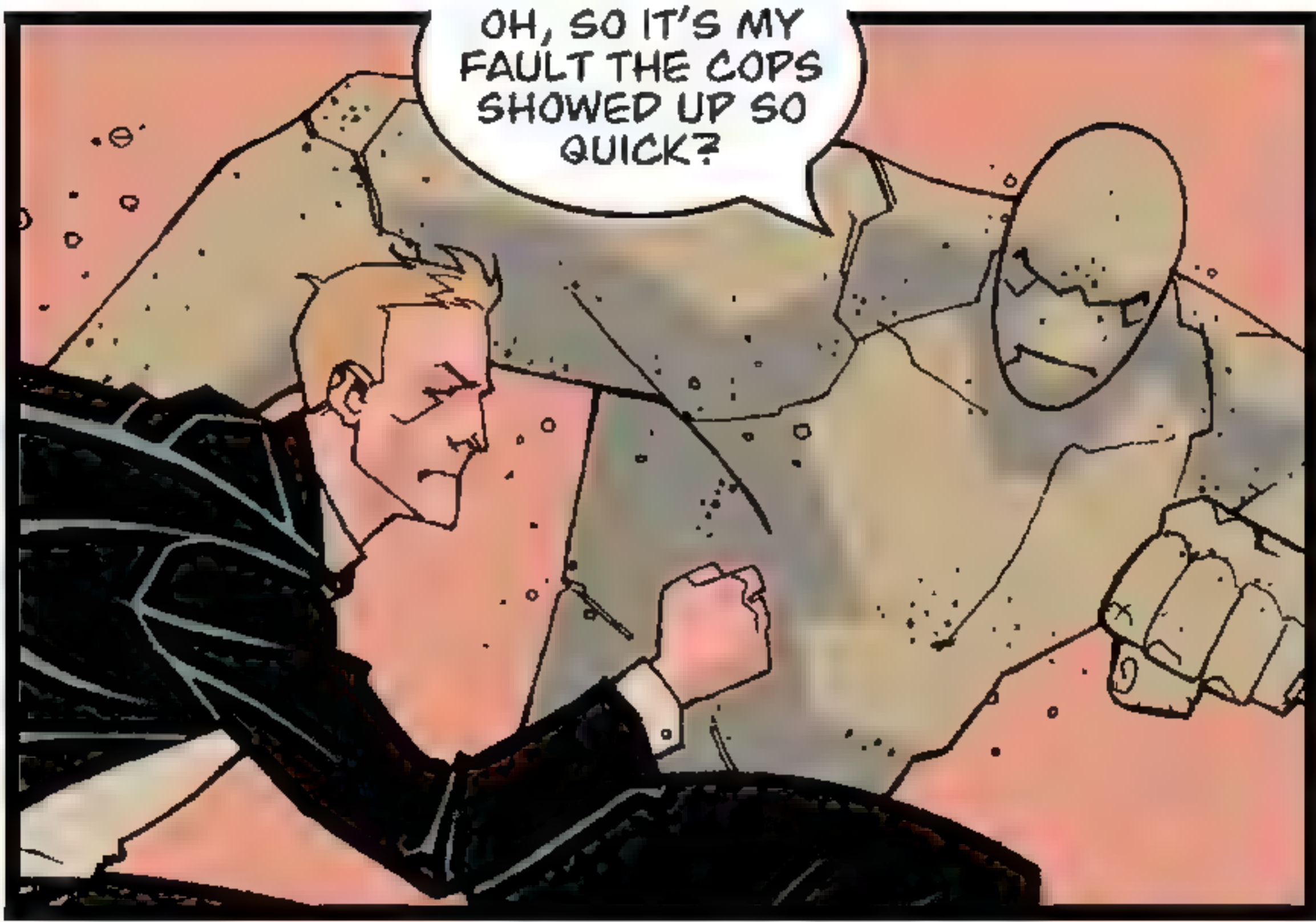
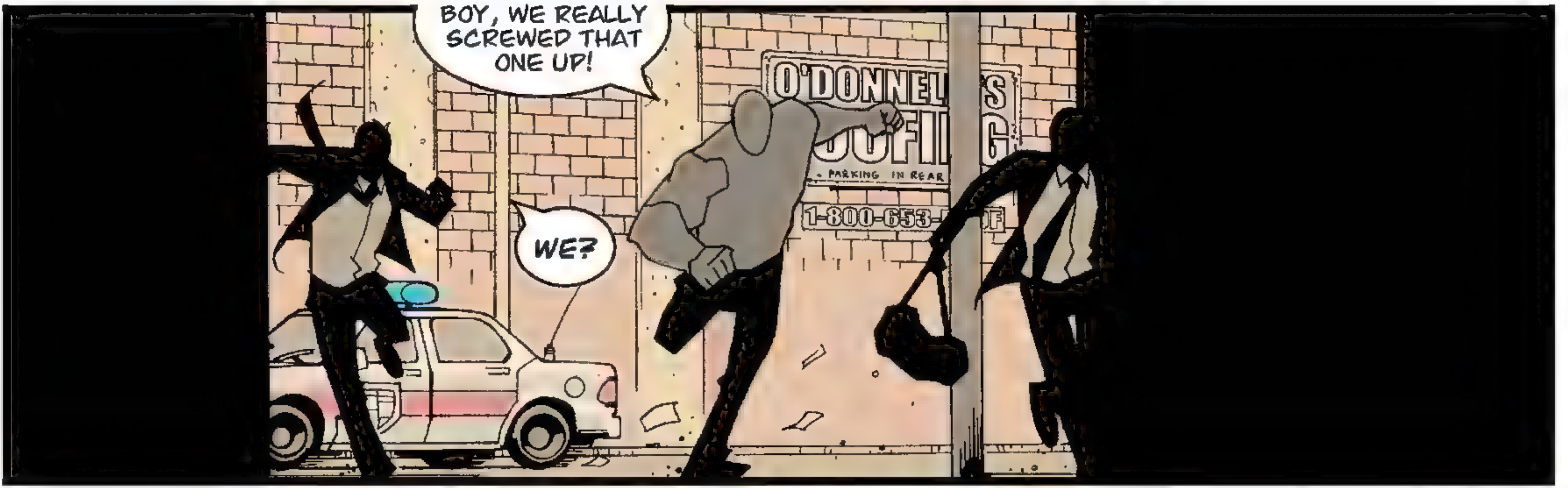


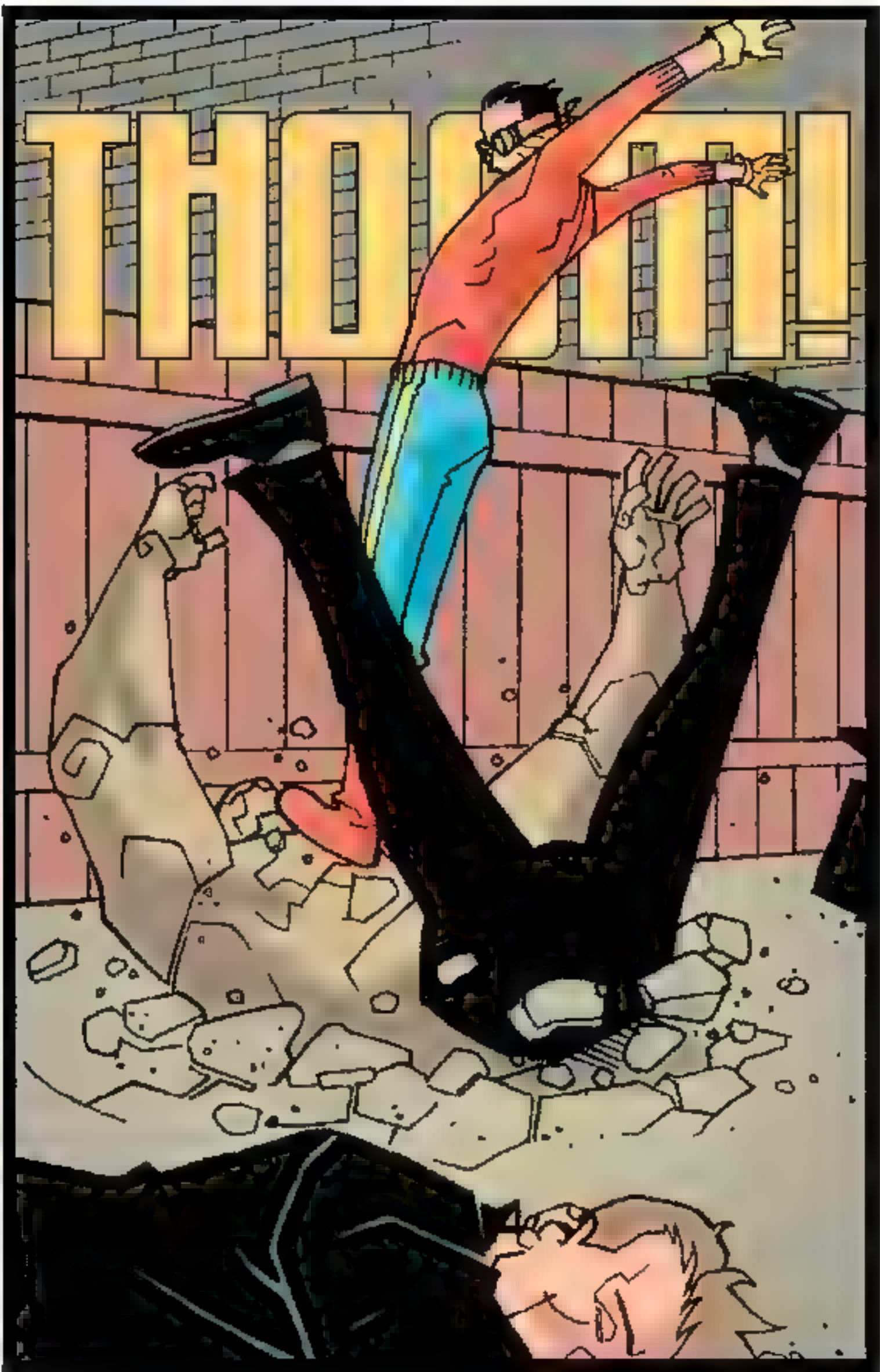
FINE. I THINK I'M FINALLY GETTING SUPERPOWERS.

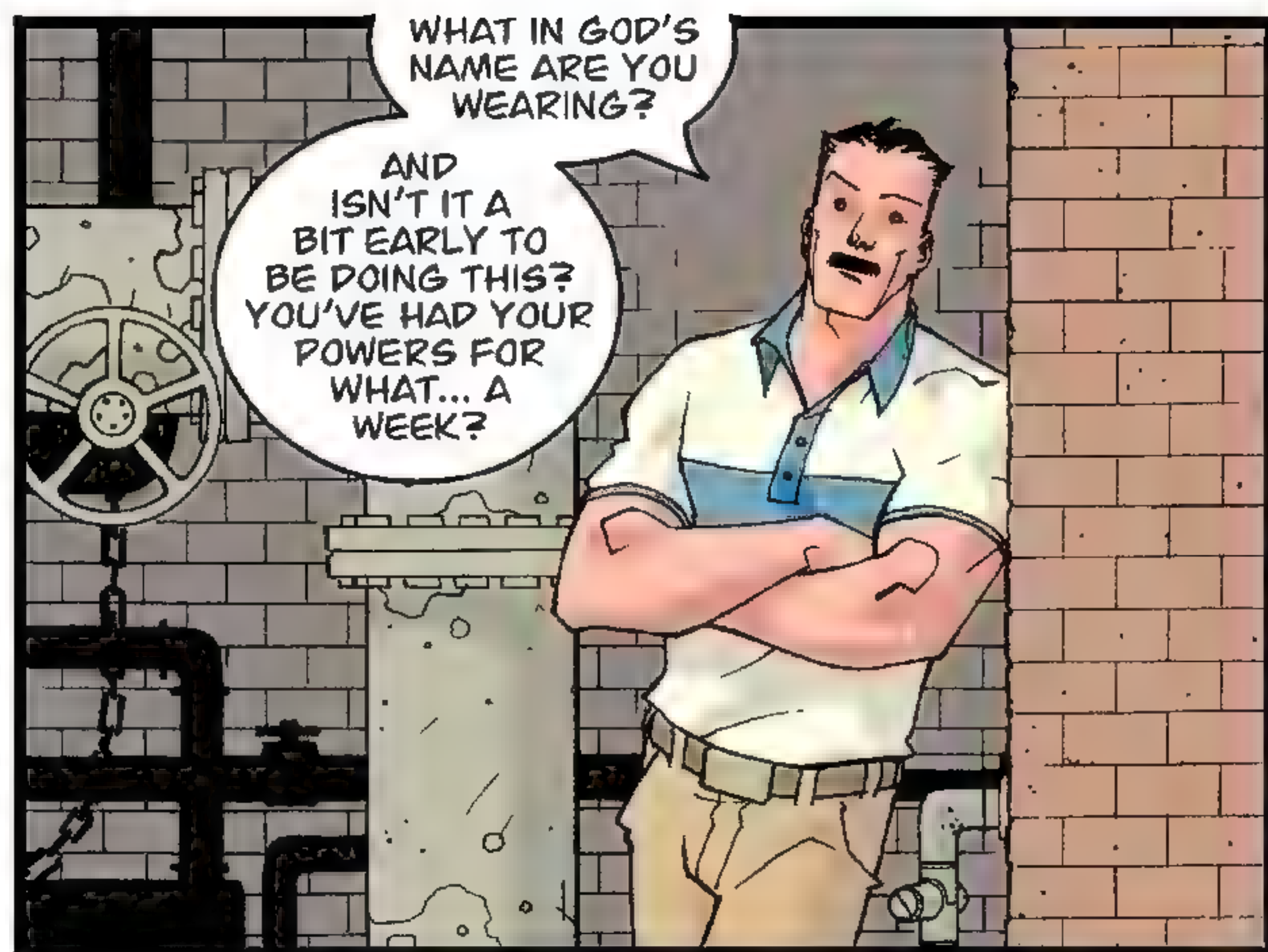


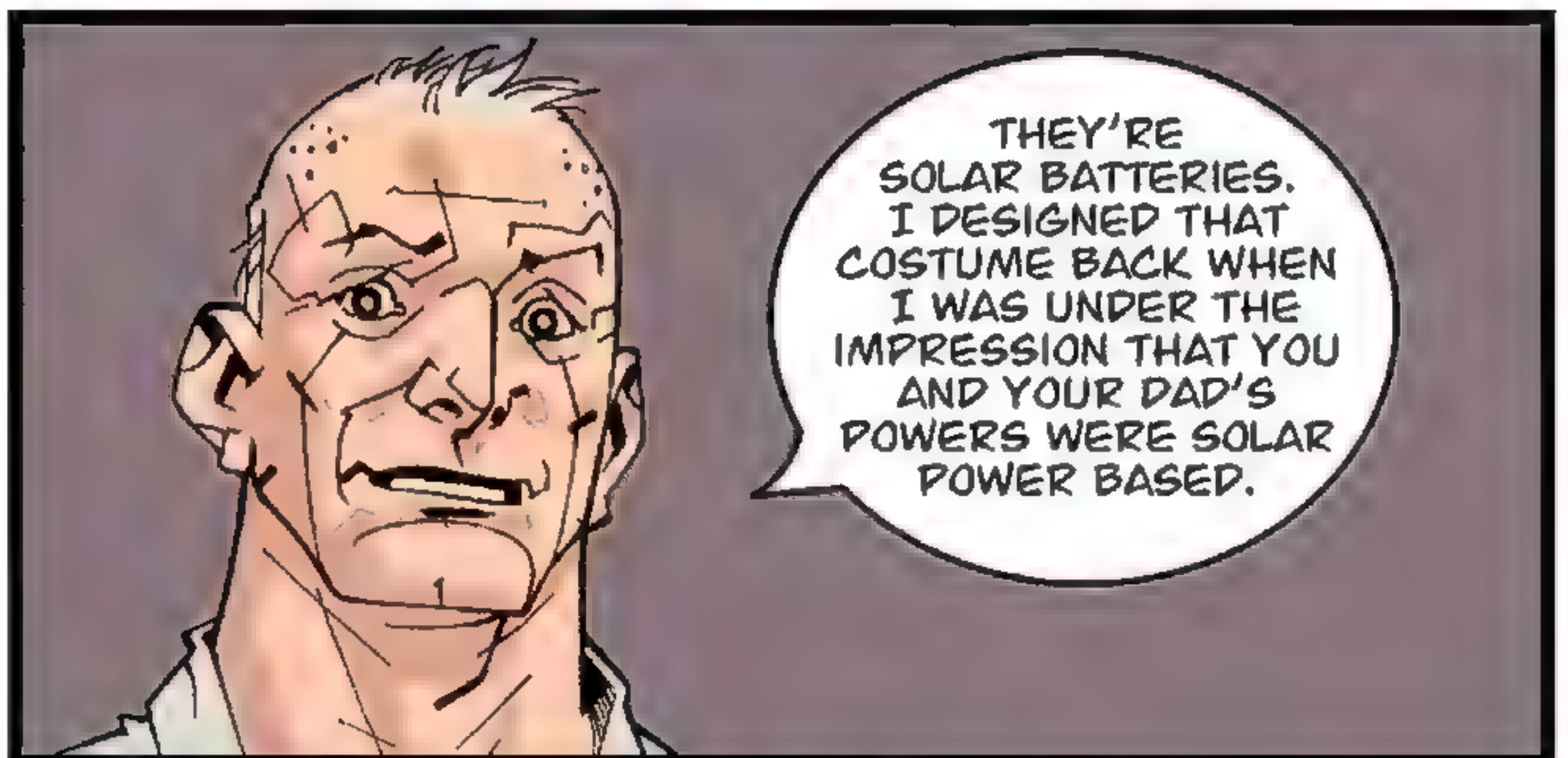
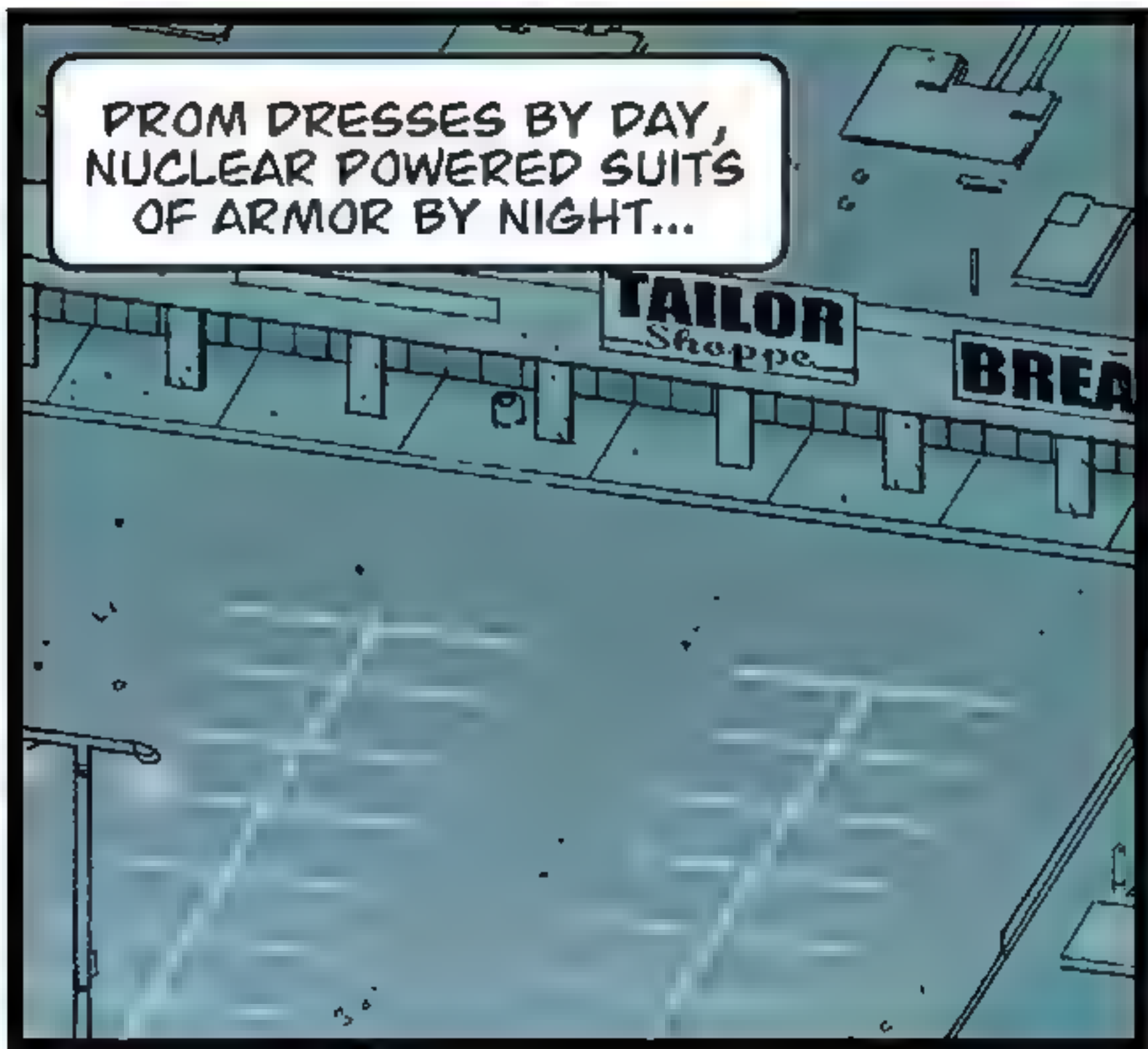
THAT'S NICE. CAN YOU PASS THE POTATOES?

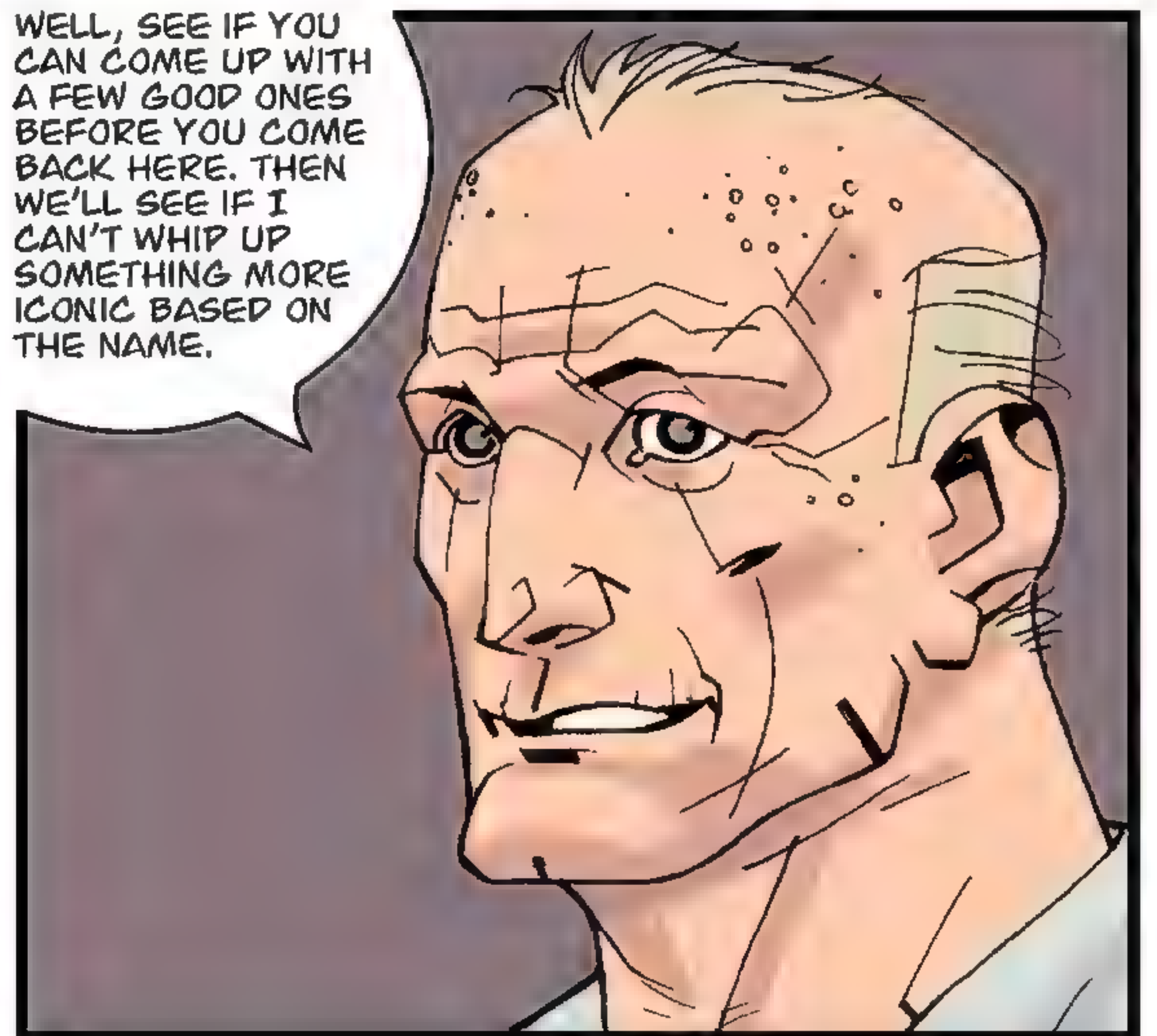
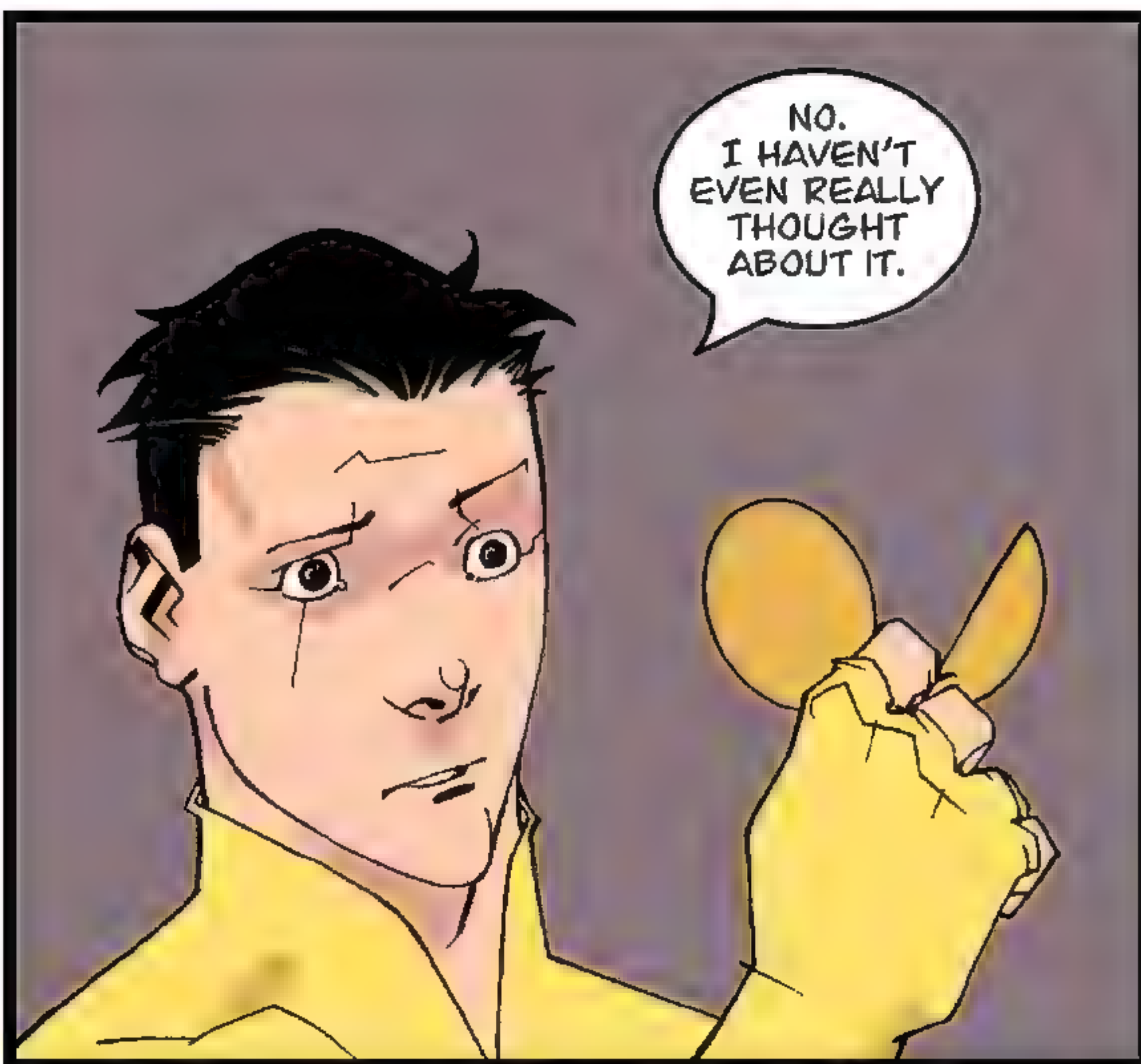
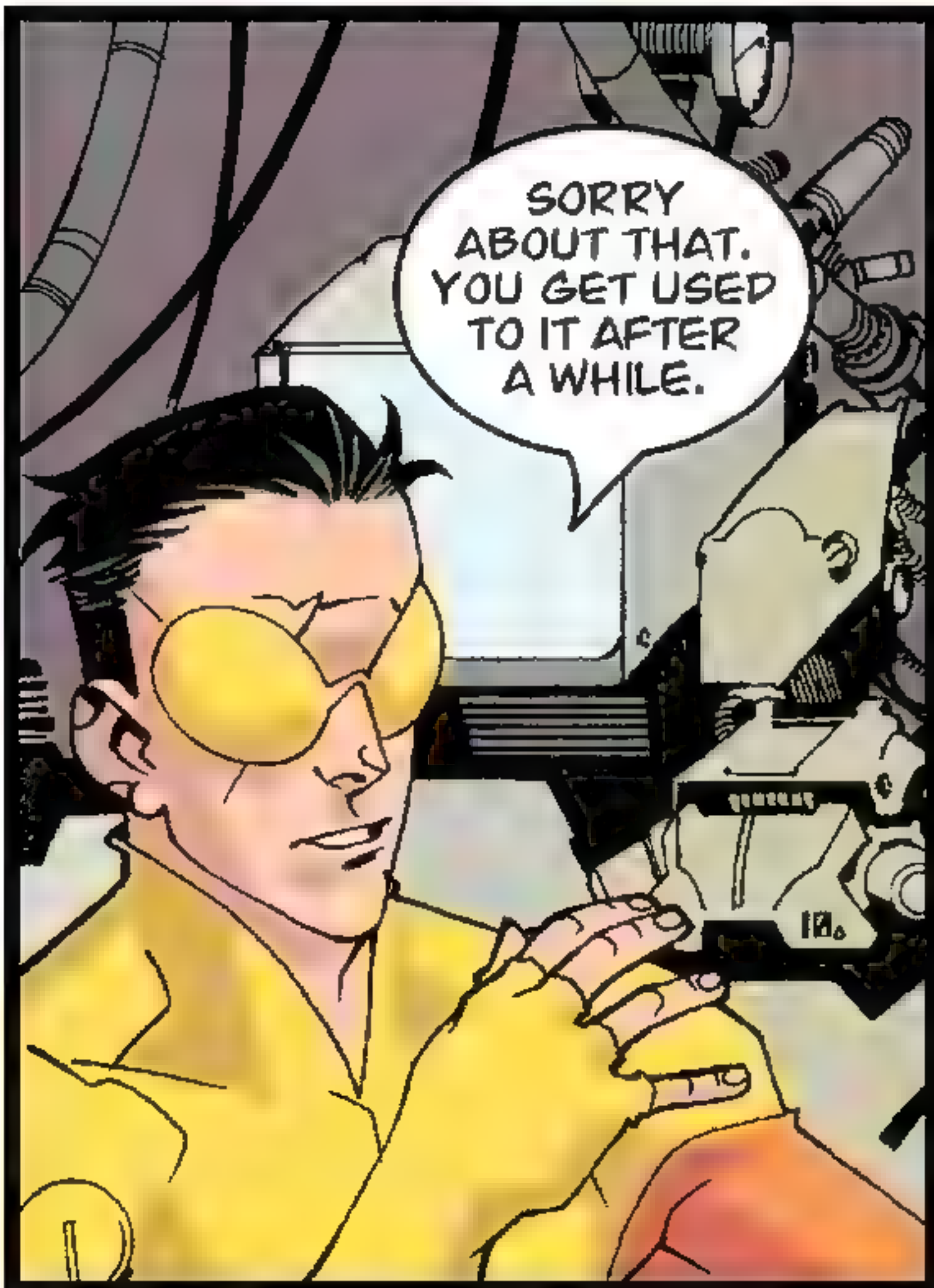
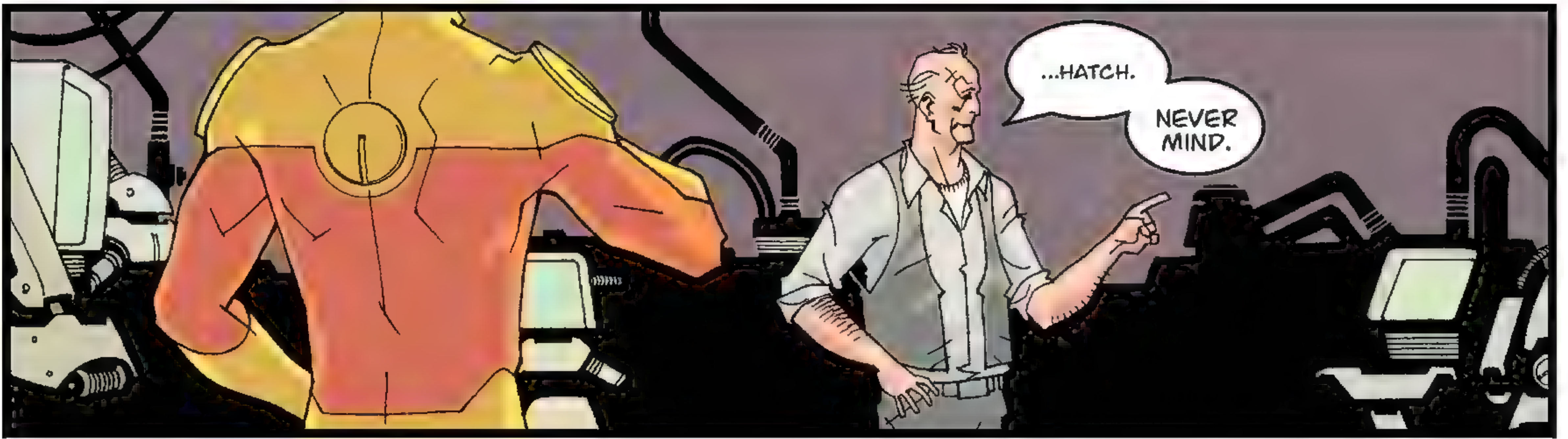


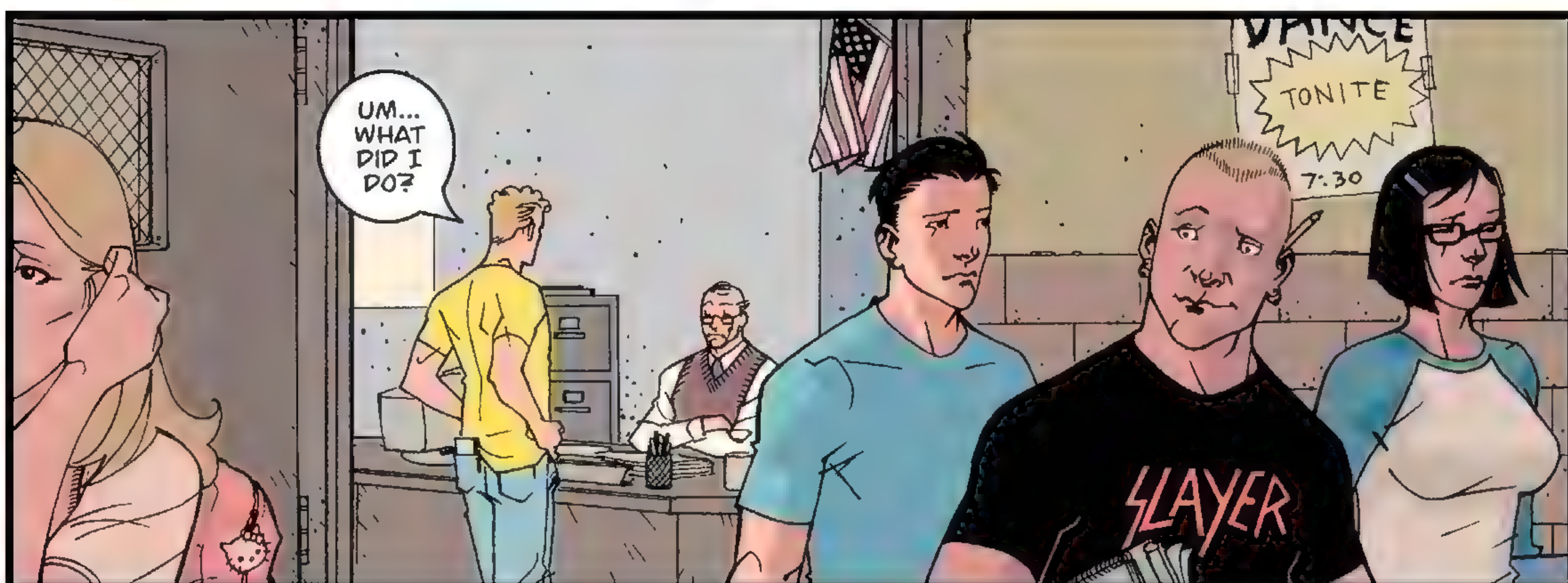
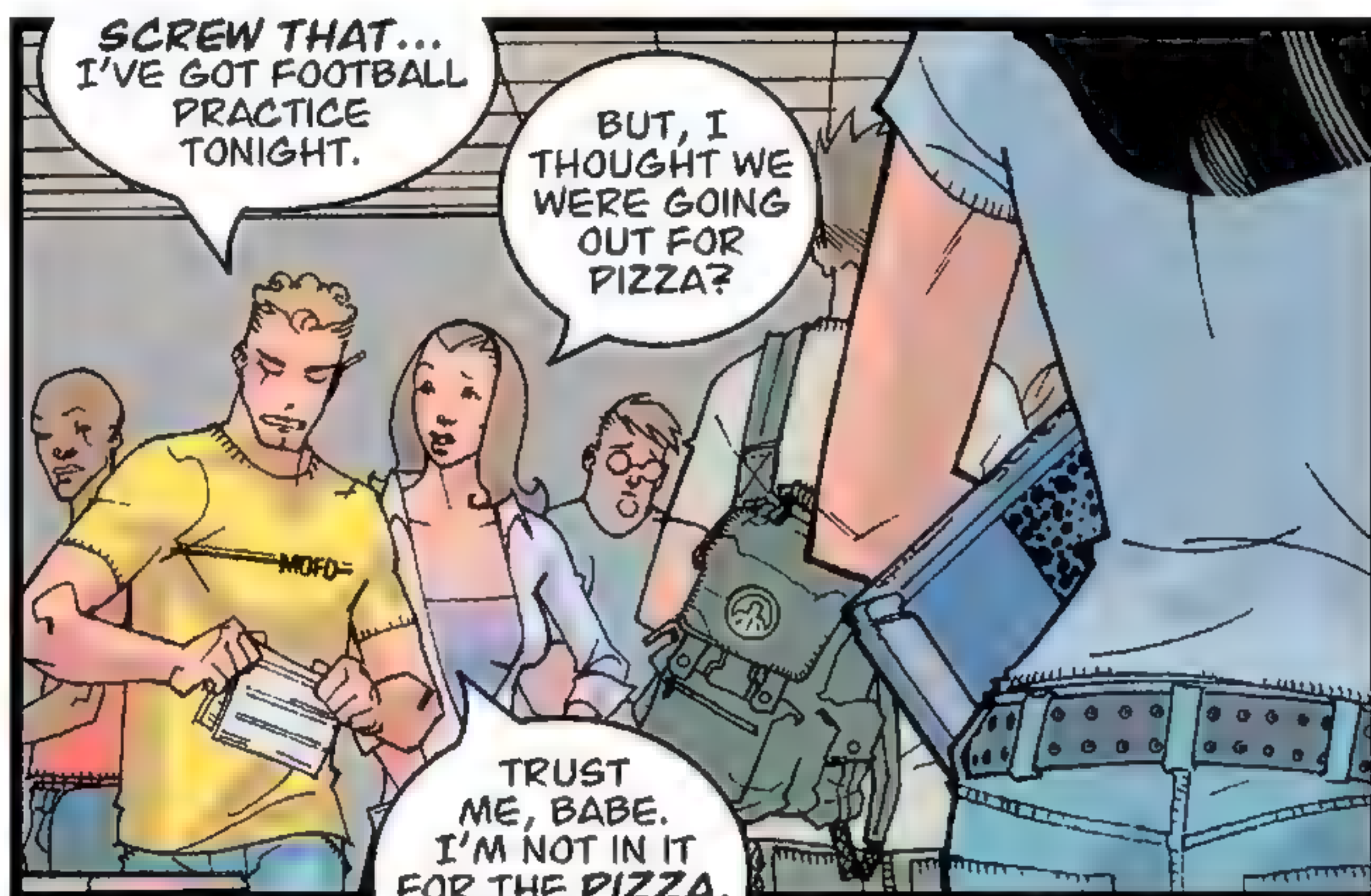
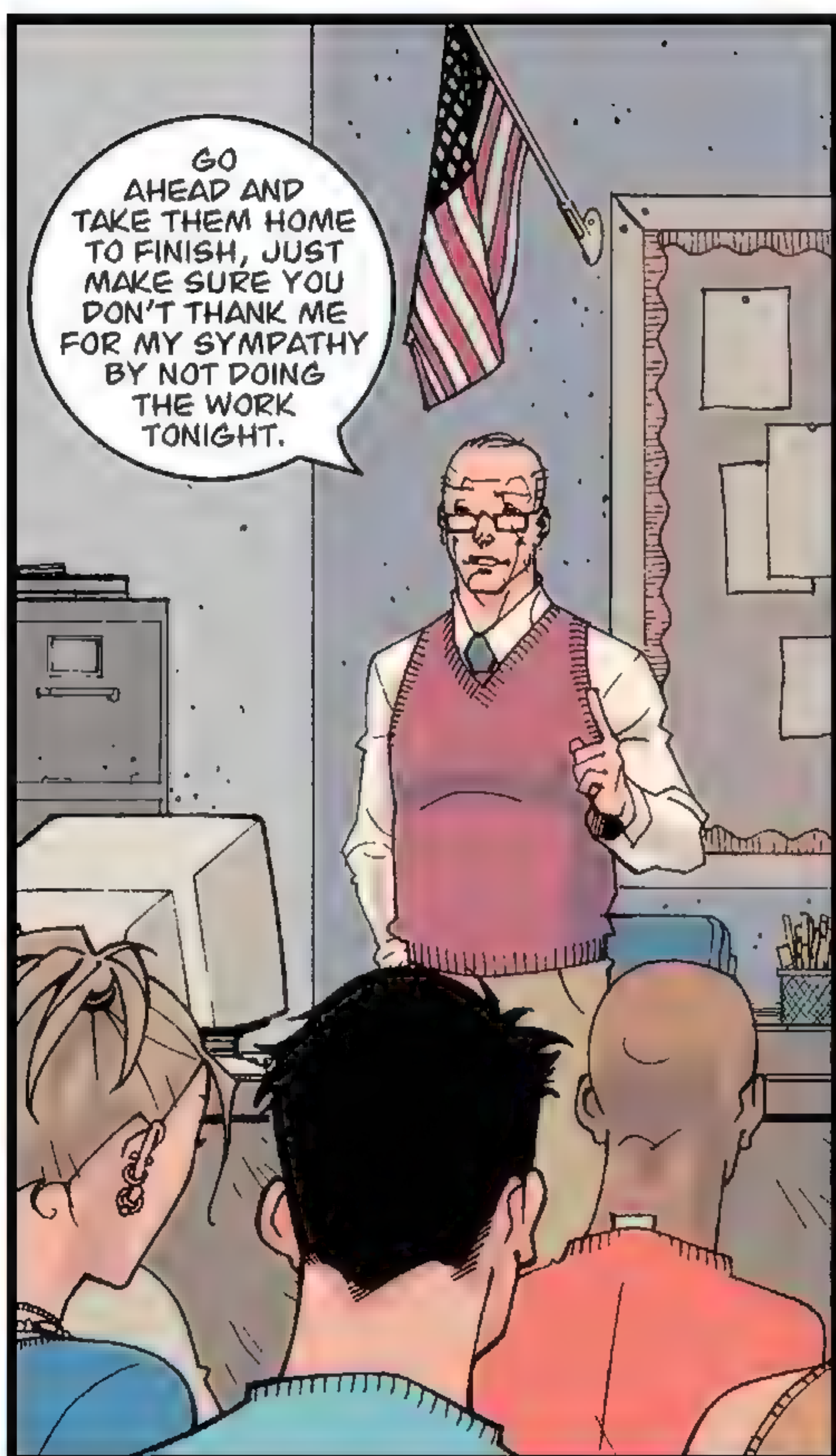
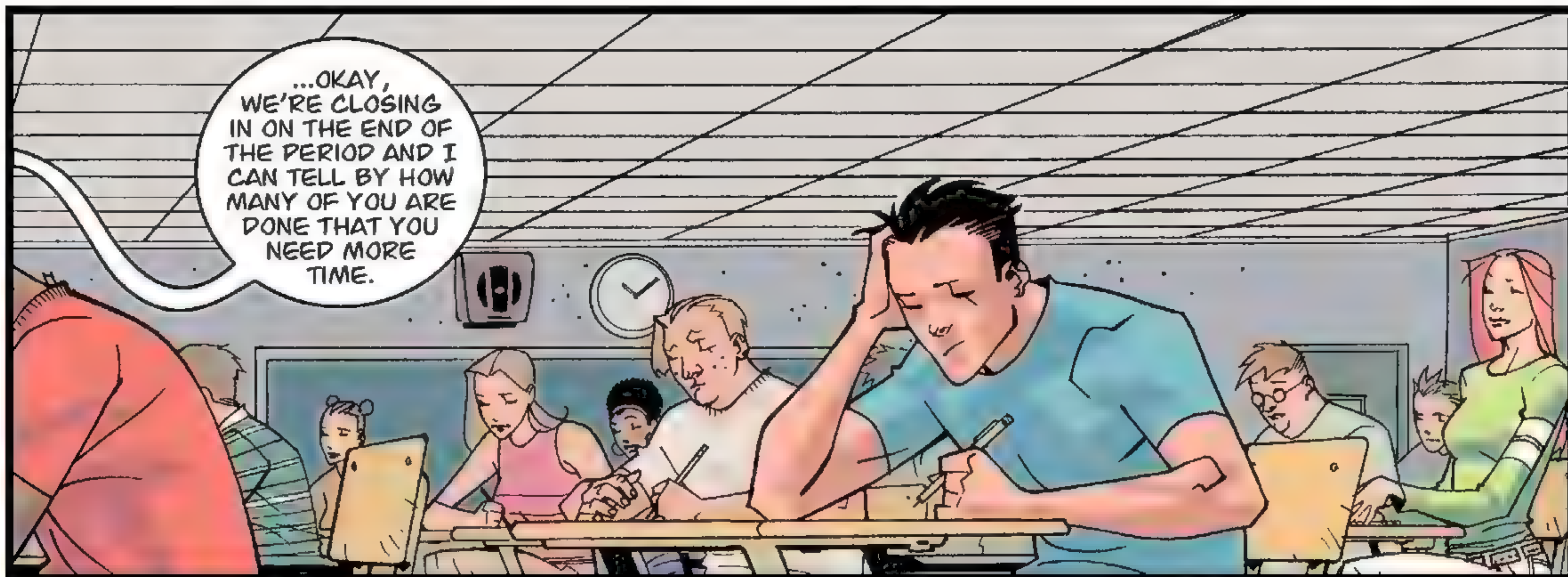






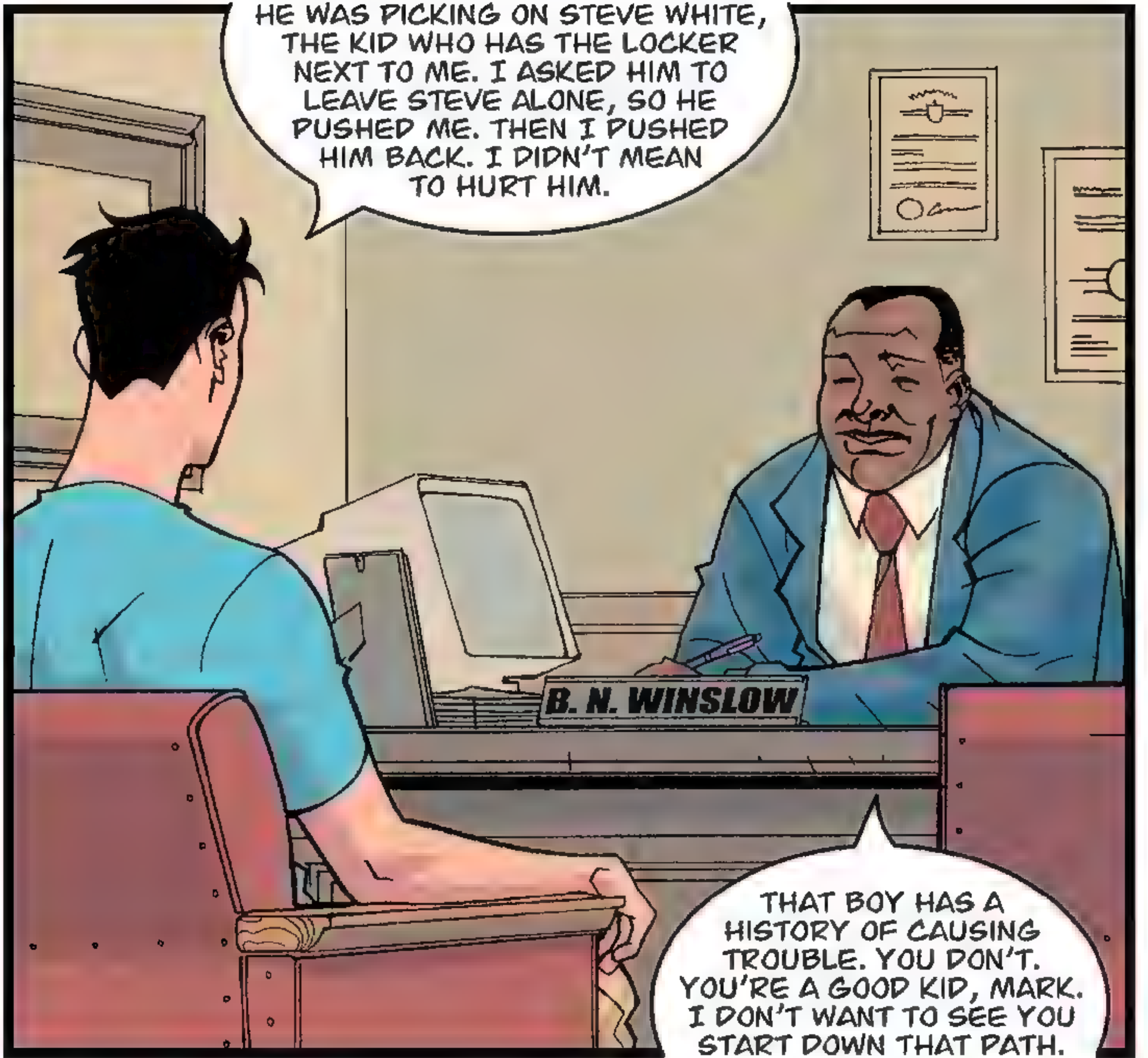


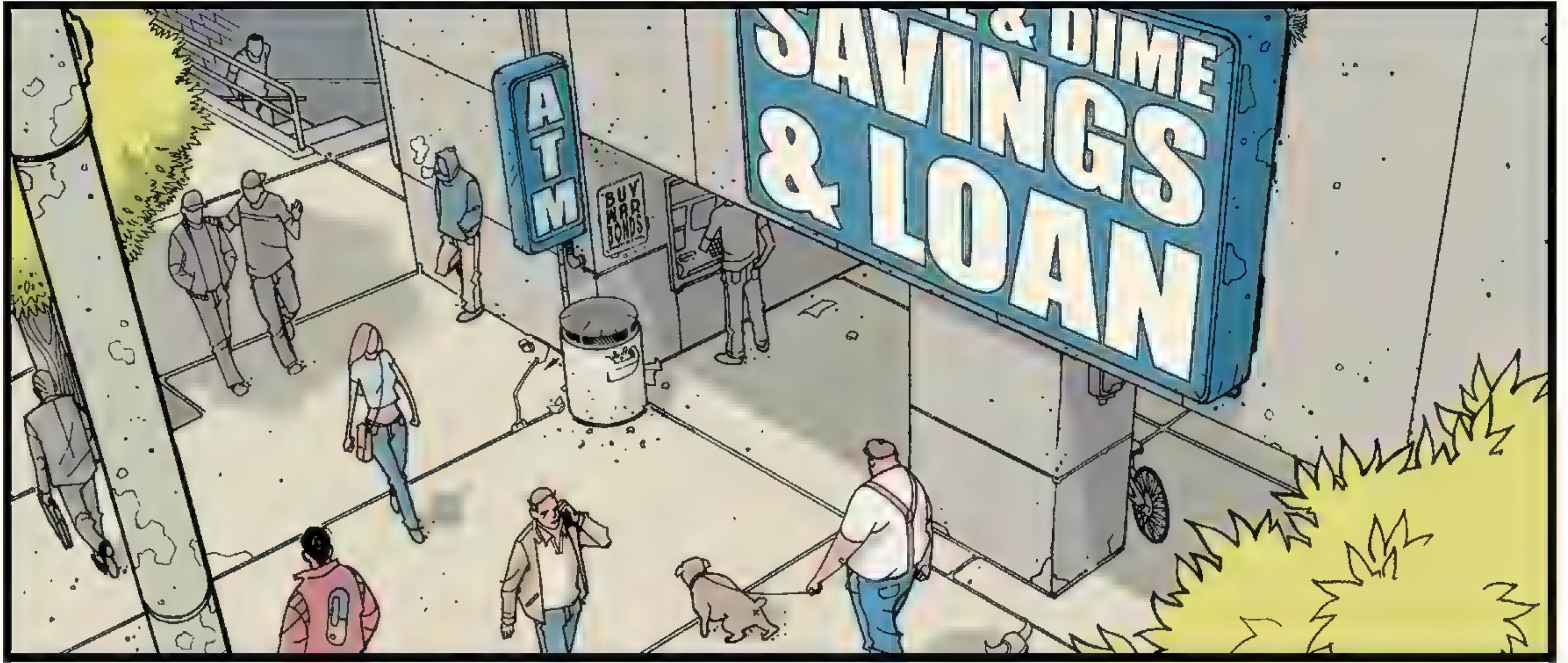


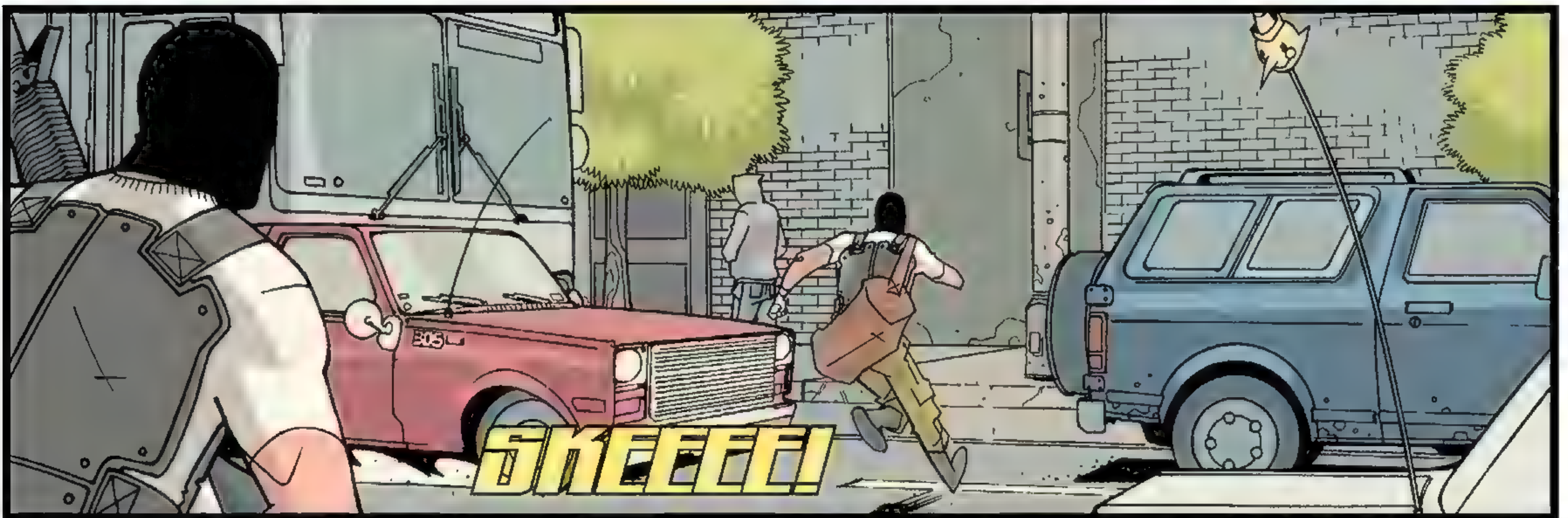
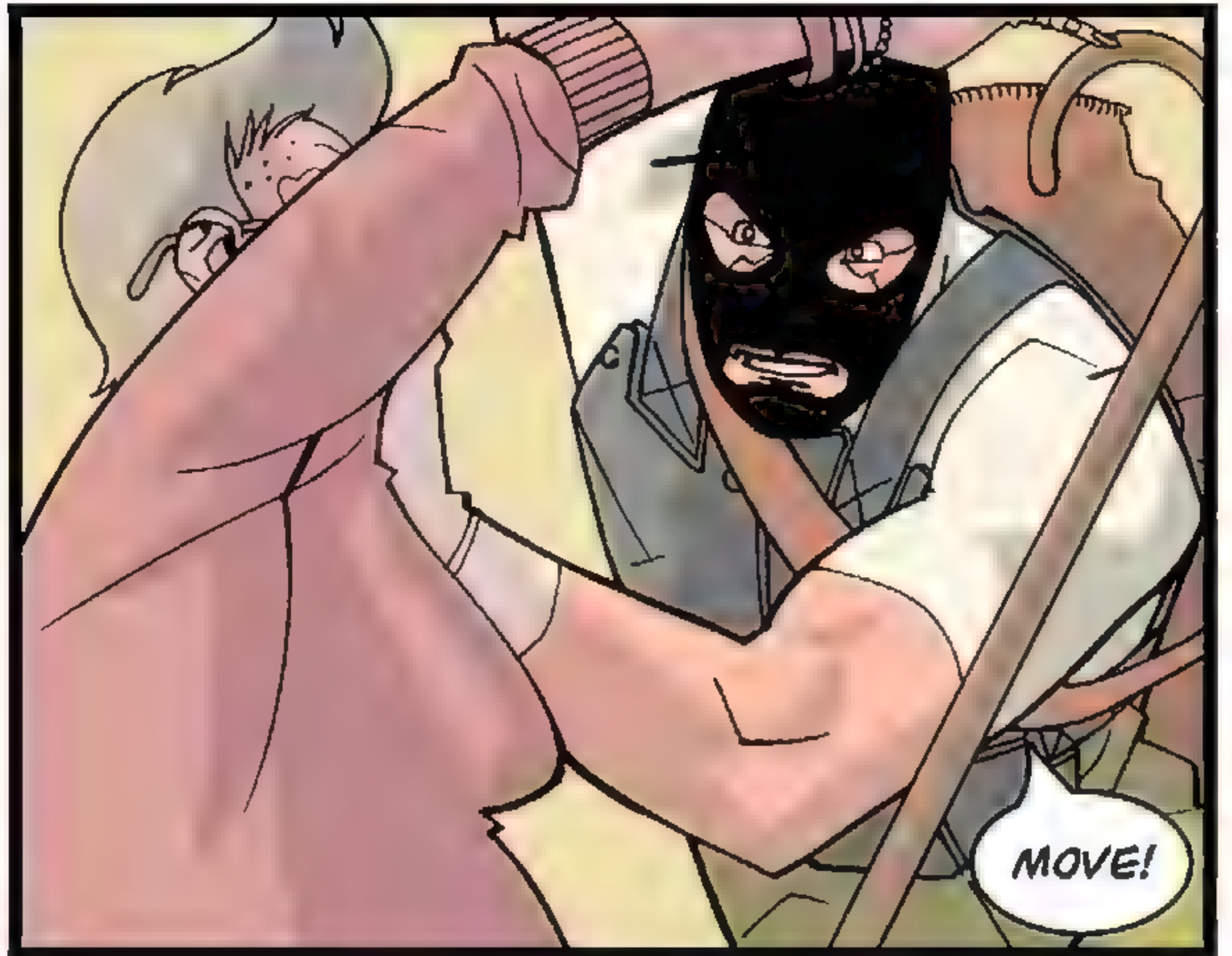




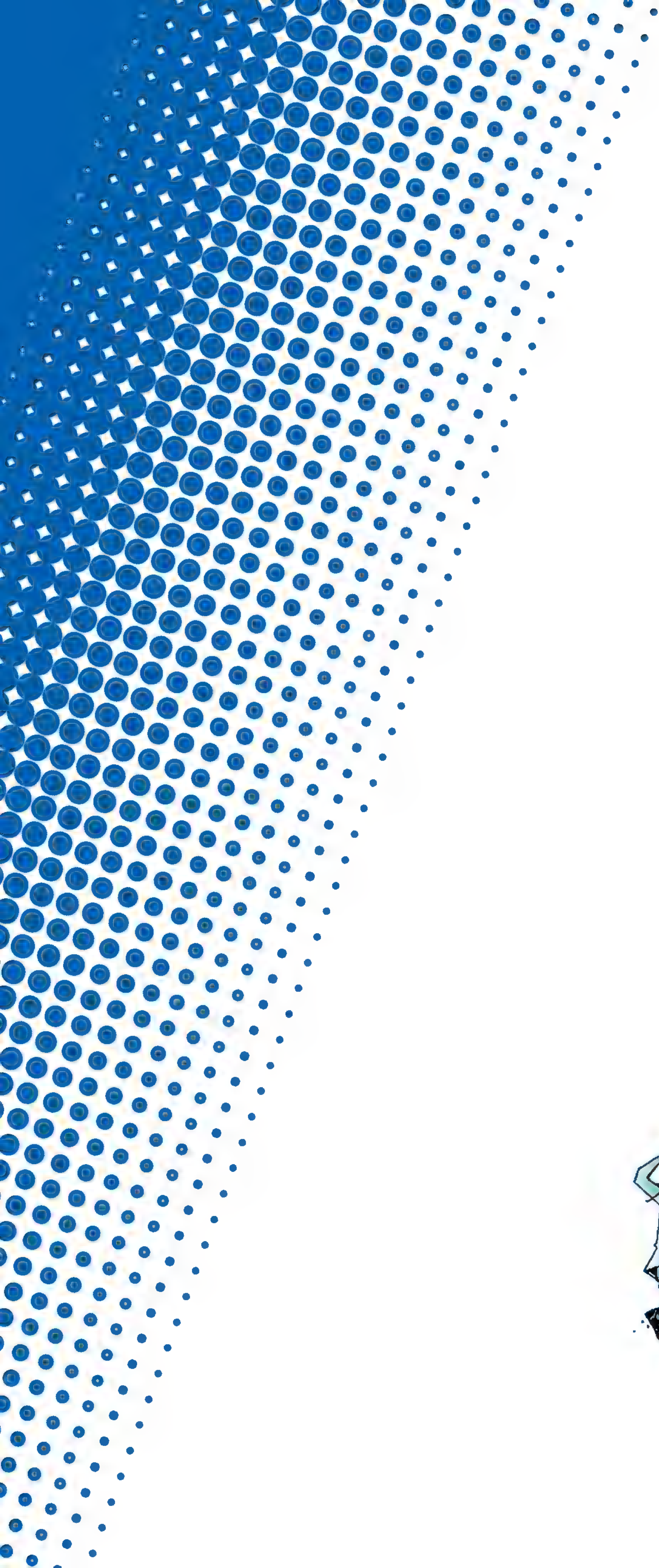












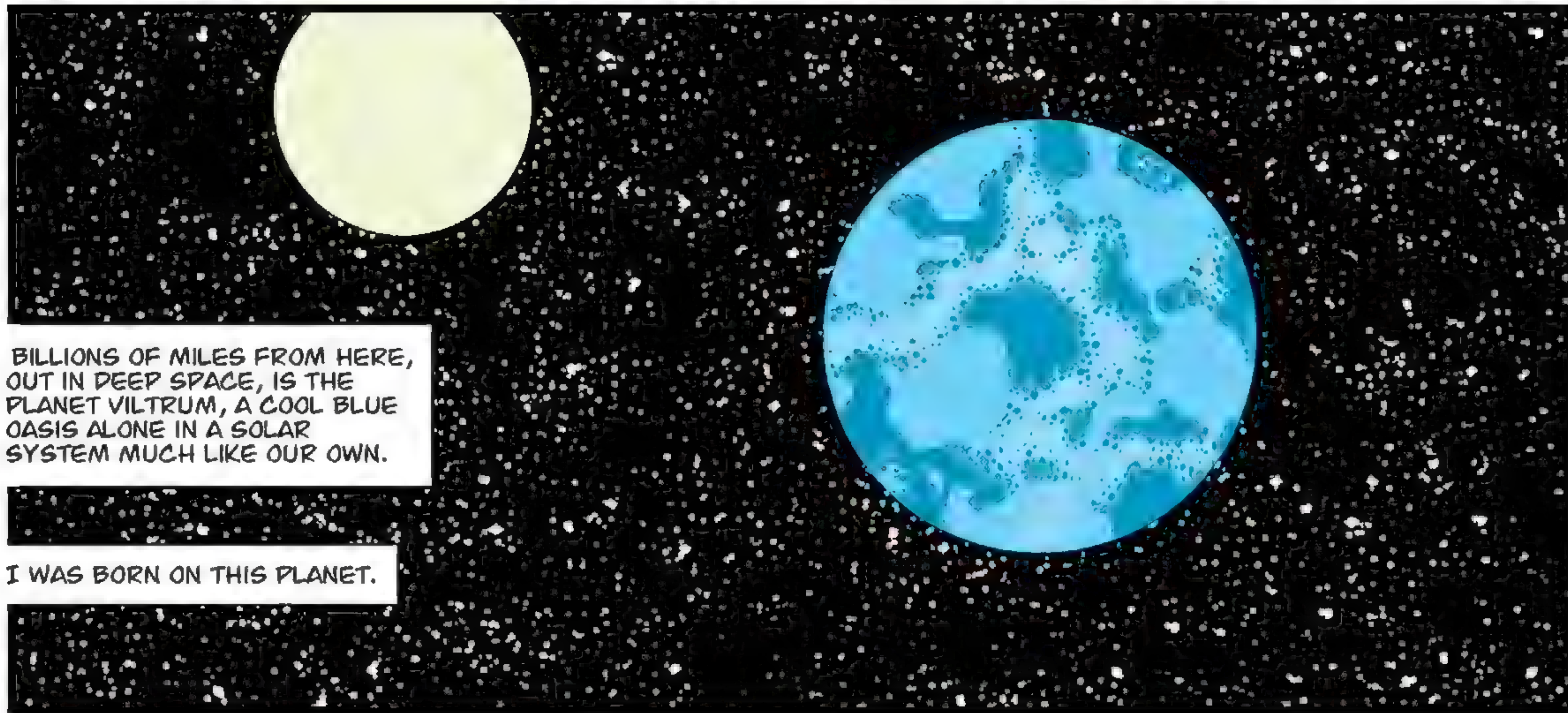
ISSUE TWO





OKAY, SON. YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED BY NOW THAT I'M NOT LIKE NORMAL DADS. I'VE... AVOIDED THE SUBJECT FOR FAR TOO MANY YEARS, AND YOUR MOTHER AND I HAVE DECIDED THAT IT'S TIME YOU KNEW THE TRUTH.

WE THINK YOU'RE OLD ENOUGH FOR ME TO TELL YOU WHERE I REALLY COME FROM.



BILLIONS OF MILES FROM HERE, OUT IN DEEP SPACE, IS THE PLANET VILTRUM, A COOL BLUE OASIS ALONE IN A SOLAR SYSTEM MUCH LIKE OUR OWN.

I WAS BORN ON THIS PLANET.

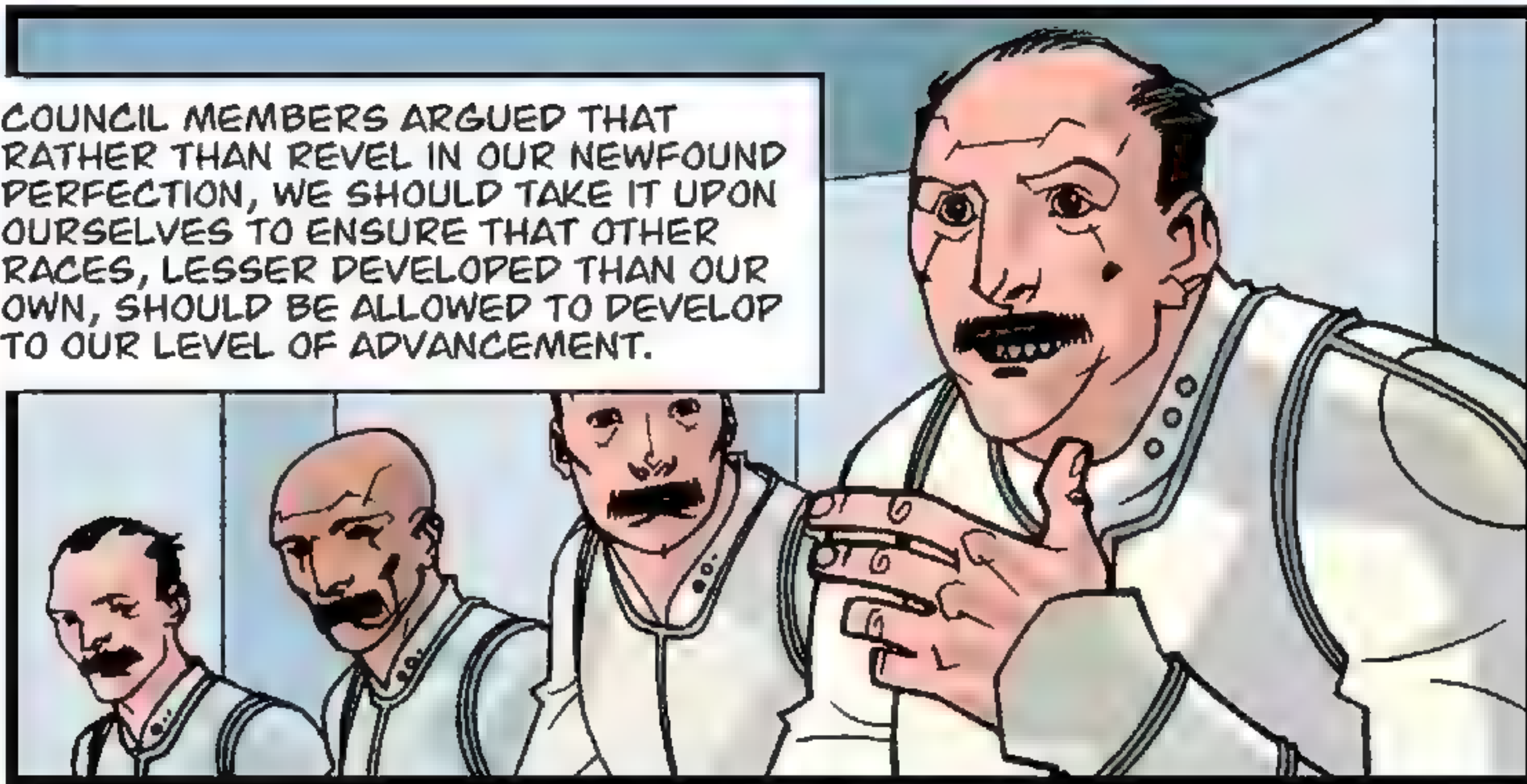


ITS PEOPLE ARE NOT COMPLETELY UNLIKE HUMANS, ALTHOUGH, THEY, AND I, HAVE ABILITIES IN ADDITION TO WHAT HUMANS HAVE. WE CAN FLY, MOVE AT SUPER-SPEED, AND POSSESS GREAT STRENGTH... BY HUMAN STANDARDS.

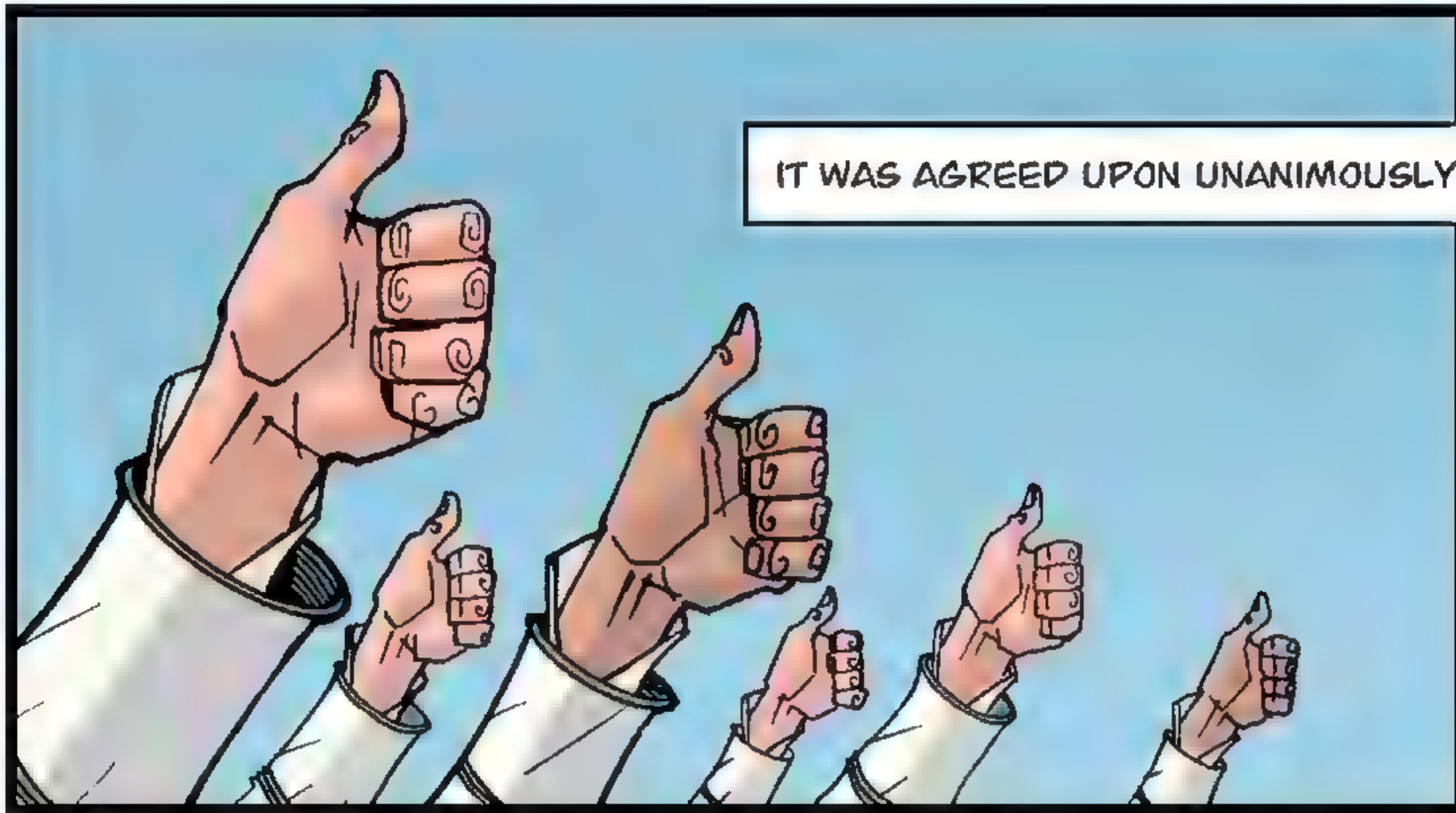
VILTRUM WAS A PLANET THAT HAD ACHIEVED A PERFECT GLOBAL SOCIETY. THERE WAS NO ILLNESS, NO MURDER, NO WAR, IT WAS A RELATIVE UTOPIA.



WITH NO CONFLICT AT HAND, OUR HIGH COUNCIL REFUSED TO LET OUR SOCIETY BECOME COMPLACENT.

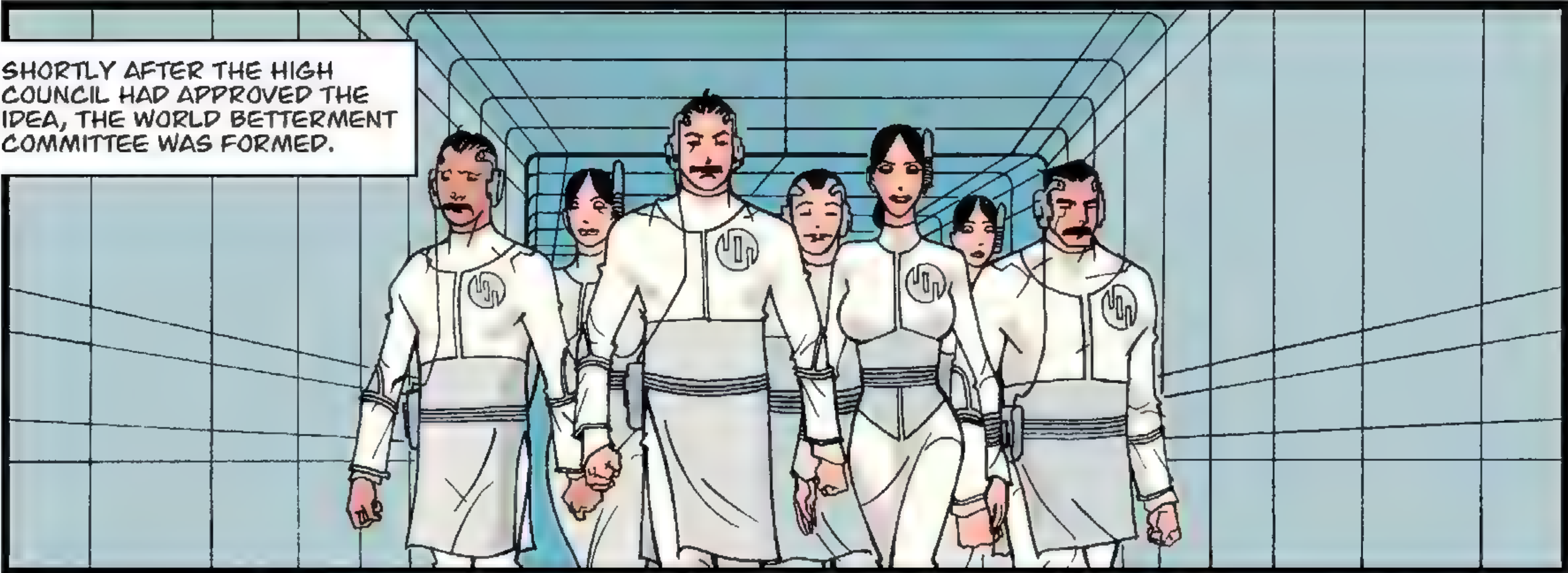


COUNCIL MEMBERS ARGUED THAT RATHER THAN REVEL IN OUR NEWFOUND PERFECTION, WE SHOULD TAKE IT UPON OURSELVES TO ENSURE THAT OTHER RACES, LESSER DEVELOPED THAN OUR OWN, SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO DEVELOP TO OUR LEVEL OF ADVANCEMENT.



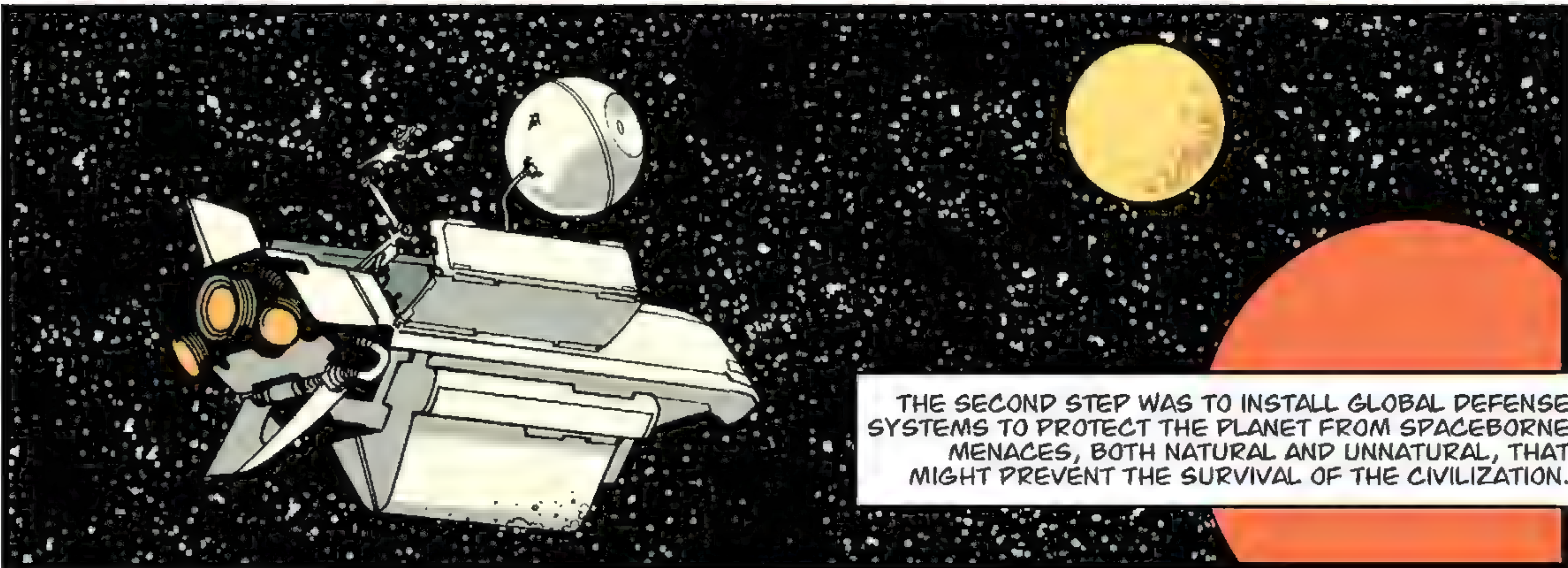
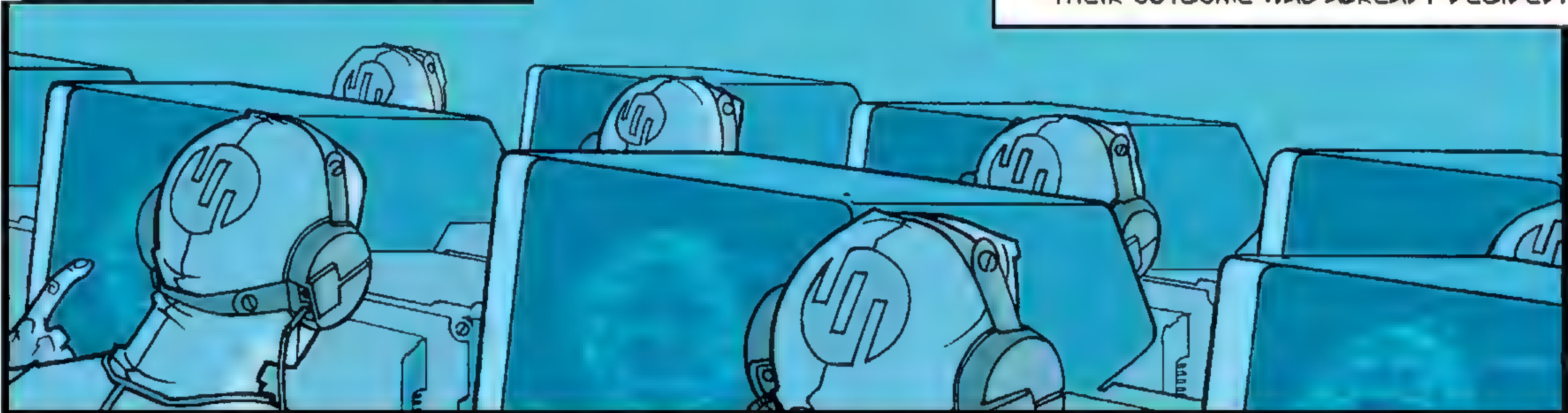
IT WAS AGREED UPON UNANIMOUSLY.

SHORTLY AFTER THE HIGH COUNCIL HAD APPROVED THE IDEA, THE WORLD BETTERMENT COMMITTEE WAS FORMED.



THE FIRST STEP OF THE INITIATIVE WAS TO LOCATE OTHER PLANETS THAT WERE IN A CRUCIAL STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT...

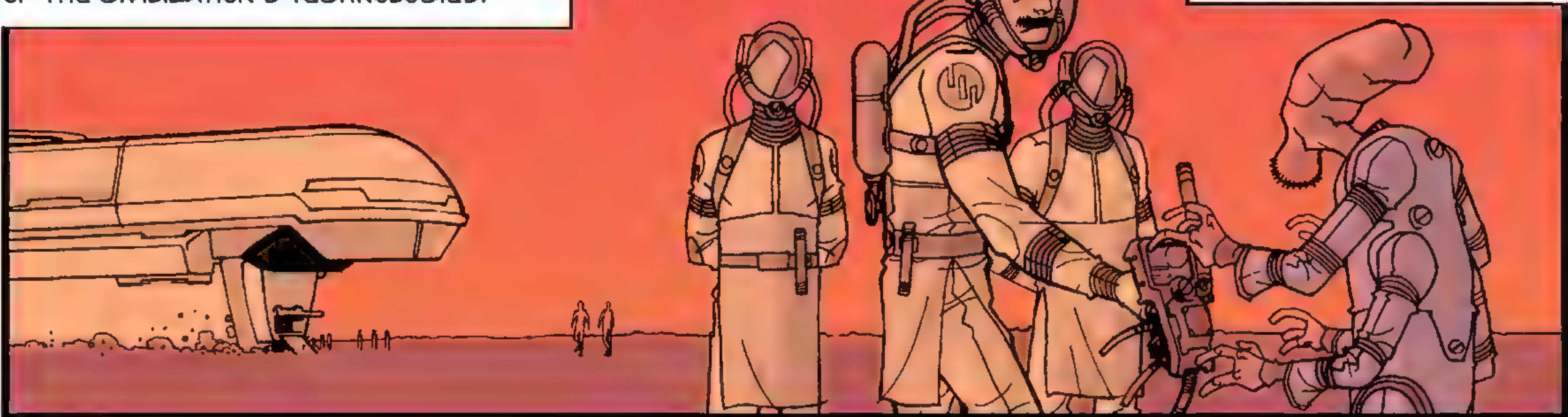
...PLANETS THAT WERE FAR ENOUGH ALONG THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF GREATNESS WAS THERE, BUT WERE NOT SO FAR ALONG THAT THEIR OUTCOME WAS ALREADY DECIDED.

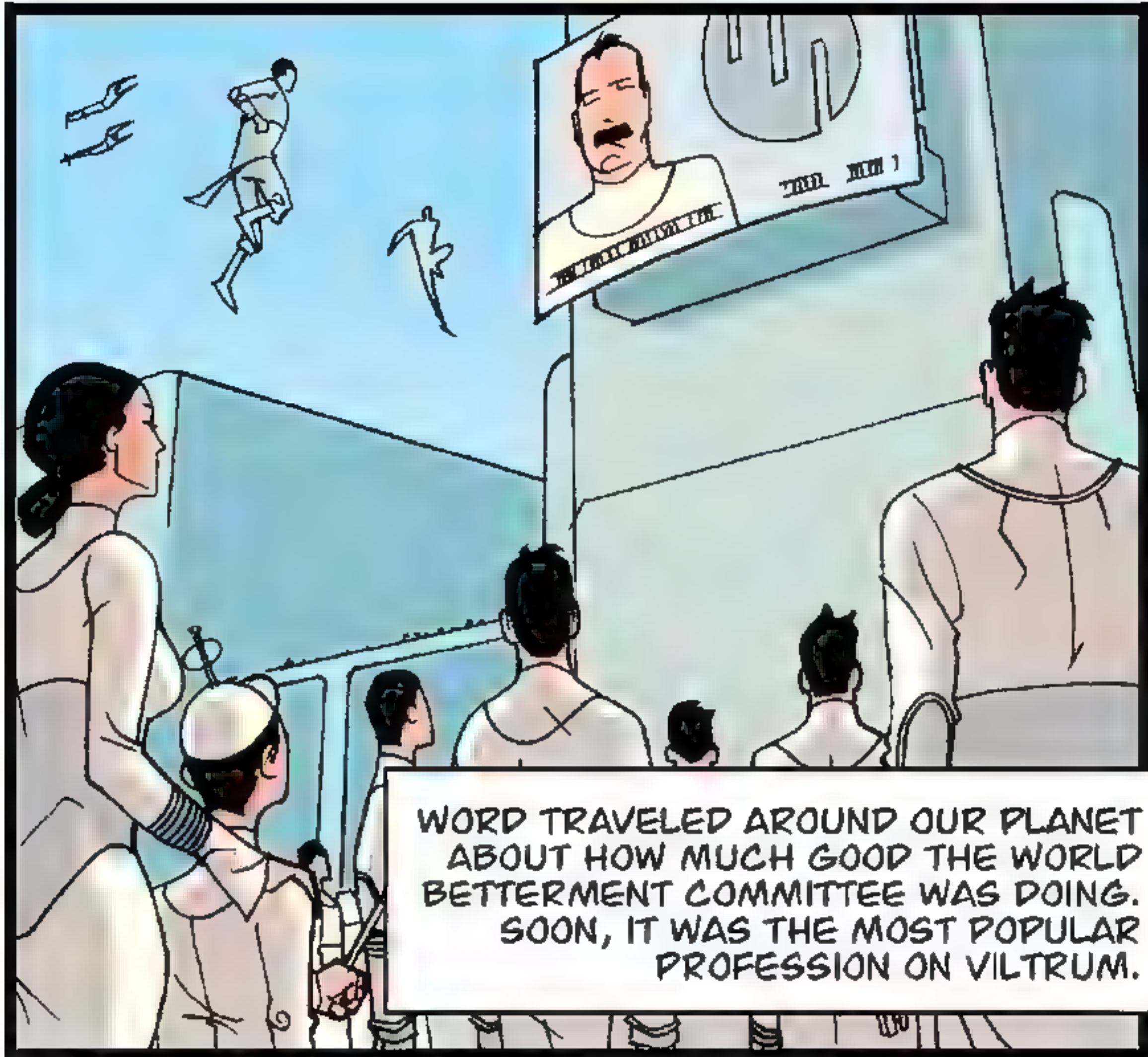


THE SECOND STEP WAS TO INSTALL GLOBAL DEFENSE SYSTEMS TO PROTECT THE PLANET FROM SPACEBORNE MENACES, BOTH NATURAL AND UNNATURAL, THAT MIGHT PREVENT THE SURVIVAL OF THE CIVILIZATION.

THE FINAL STEP WAS TO SEND A TEAM OF SCIENTISTS DOWN TO THE PLANET'S SURFACE TO ASSIST IN THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE CIVILIZATION'S TECHNOLOGIES.

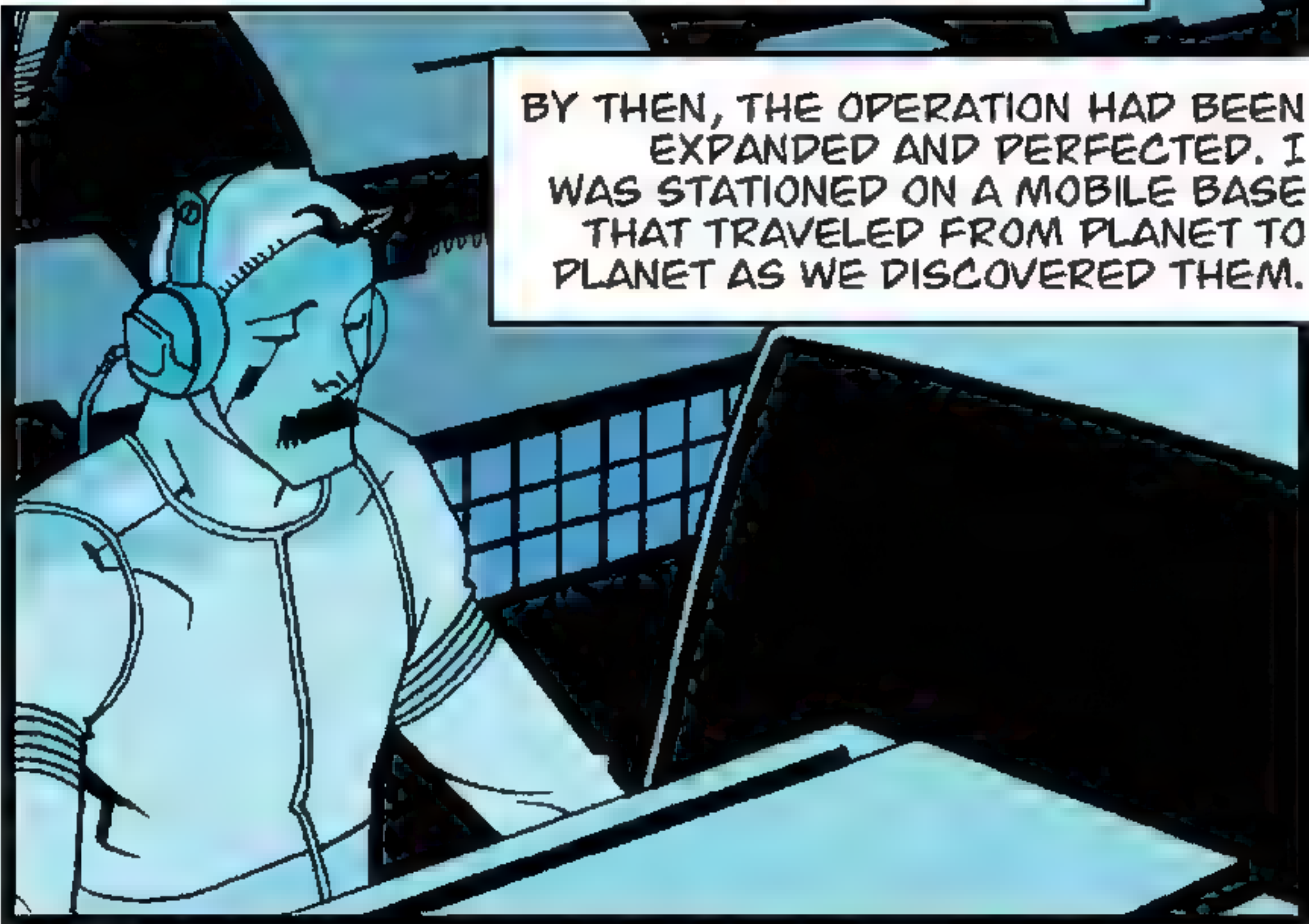
THIS TEAM WOULD STAY BEHIND ON THE PLANET, MONITORING ITS PROGRESS.





WORD TRAVELED AROUND OUR PLANET ABOUT HOW MUCH GOOD THE WORLD BETTERMENT COMMITTEE WAS DOING. SOON, IT WAS THE MOST POPULAR PROFESSION ON VILTRUM.

OF COURSE, WHEN I CAME OF AGE, I SIGNED UP FOR DUTY. I WAS ON THE SEARCH COMMITTEE; MY JOB WAS TO LOCATE AND SUGGEST PLANETS THAT MIGHT BE ELIGIBLE FOR OUR INTERFERENCE.



BY THEN, THE OPERATION HAD BEEN EXPANDED AND PERFECTED. I WAS STATIONED ON A MOBILE BASE THAT TRAVELED FROM PLANET TO PLANET AS WE DISCOVERED THEM.



I WAS IN MY THIRD YEAR OF SERVICE WHEN I DISCOVERED EARTH. I CONVINCED THE COMMITTEE TO DO A PHYSICAL INSPECTION OF THE PLANET.

DURING THE LONG JOURNEY TO EARTH, I USED OUR LONG RANGE SENSORS TO STUDY THE PLANET AND THE CIVILIZATION THAT LIVED THERE.

BY THE TIME WE ARRIVED, I HAD GROWN FOND OF EARTH AND THE PEOPLE ON IT. I WAS FASCINATED BY THE ACHIEVEMENTS THEY HAD ACCOMPLISHED IN SUCH A SHORT TIME.

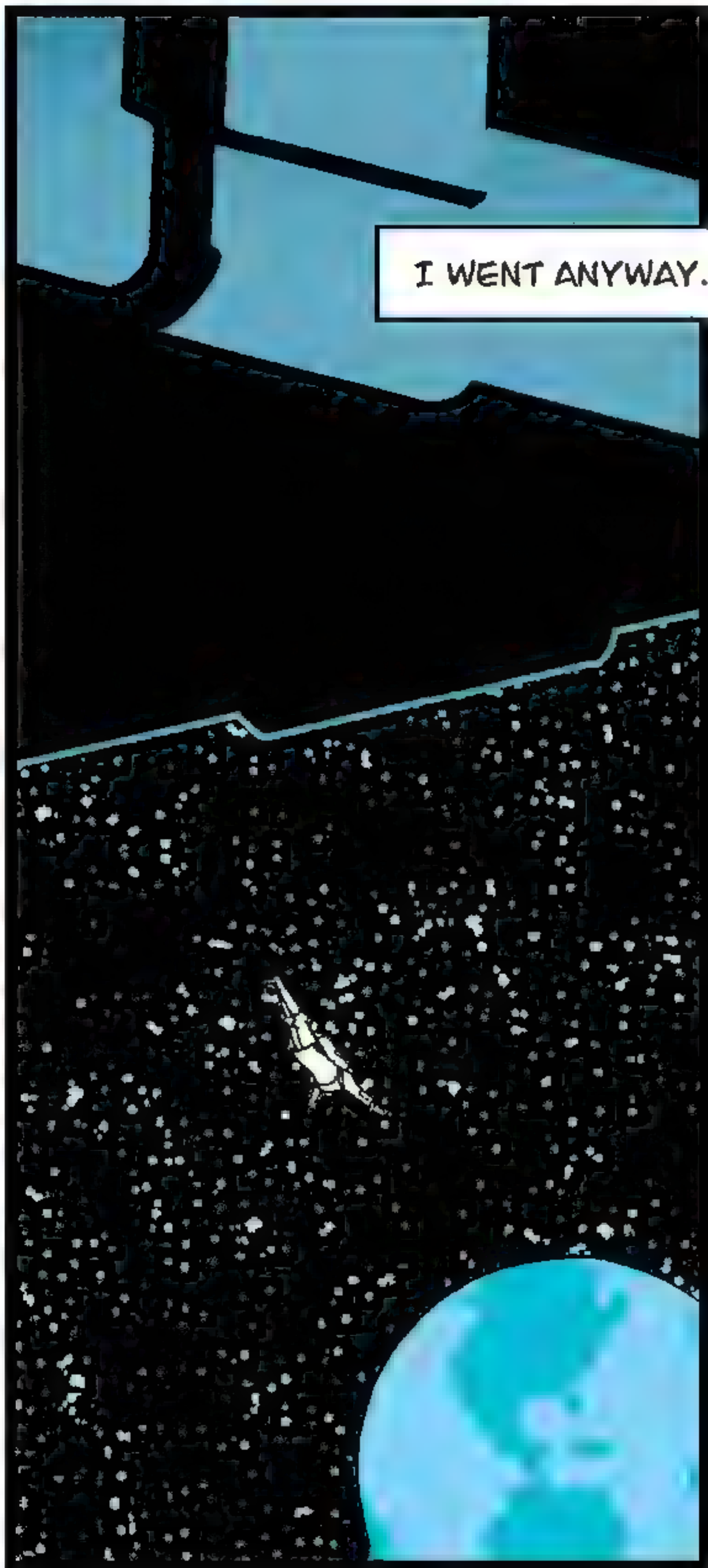


I PLEADED FOR AUTHORIZATION TO ADD EARTH TO OUR BETTERMENT SCHEDULE, BUT IT WAS DEEMED TOO CRUDE AND NOT DEVELOPED ENOUGH FOR OUR INTERFERENCE.

I REFUSED TO GIVE UP, AND OFFERED AN ALTERNATIVE SOLUTION. I VOLUNTEERED TO RELOCATE TO EARTH, AND BE ITS SOLE PROTECTOR, DEDICATED TO THE SURVIVAL OF ITS CIVILIZATION.



DUE TO EARTH'S LOCATION IN SUCH A REMOTE AREA OF THE UNIVERSE, I WAS WARNED THAT THERE MIGHT NOT BE ANY CHANCE OF RETURNING.



I WENT ANYWAY.

NO AMOUNT OF RESEARCH COULD HAVE PREPARED ME FOR WHAT I WOULD EXPERIENCE UPON MY ARRIVAL.



EARTH WAS A VIBRANT NEST OF INDIVIDUALITY. I MARVELED AT THE PEOPLE I SAW AS THEY SCURRED ABOUT THEIR DAILY LIVES.

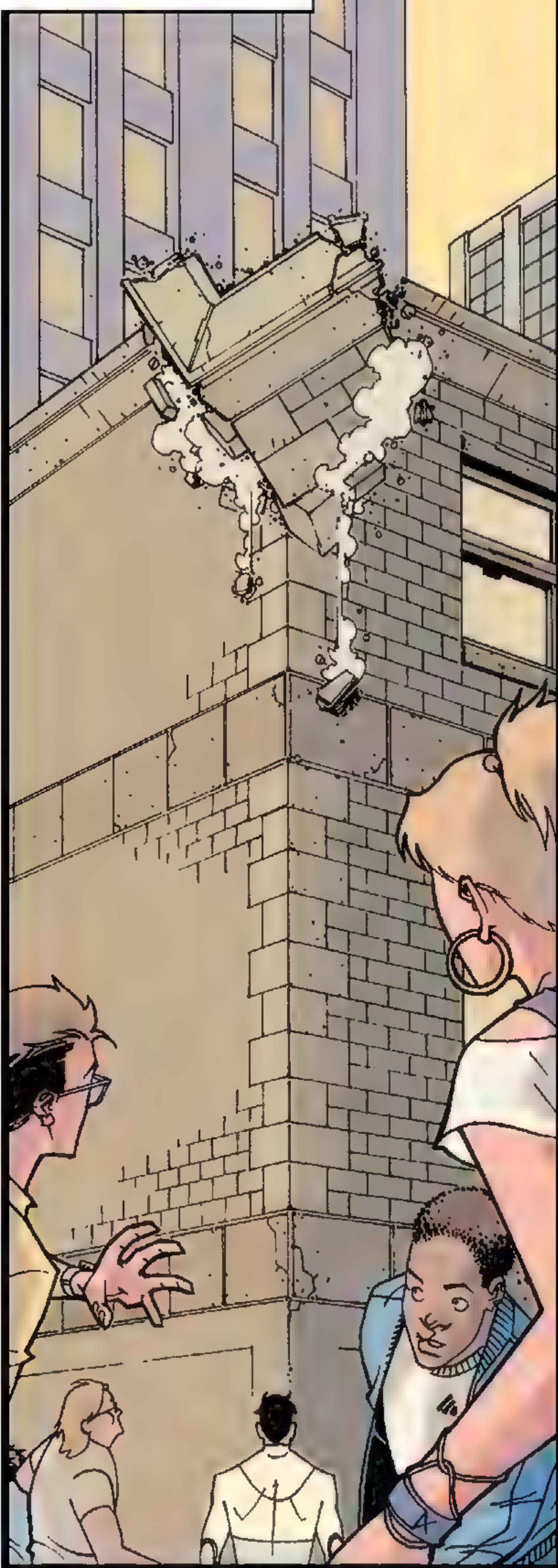


IT WAS THERE, AMONG THE PEOPLE, THAT I INSTANTLY KNEW I HAD MADE THE RIGHT CHOICE.



I MIGHT HAVE EVEN FORGOTTEN WHAT MY MISSION ON EARTH WAS...

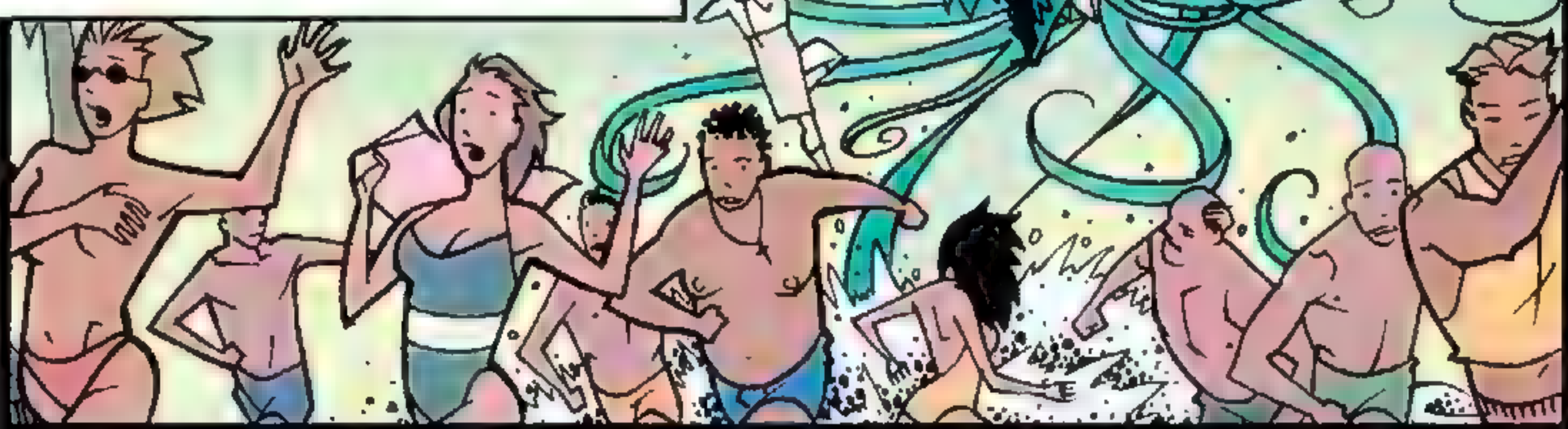
...HAD I NOT BEEN SO ABRUPTLY REMINDED.



ates of America

WITH MY MISSION CLEARLY AT HAND, I WENT TO WORK.

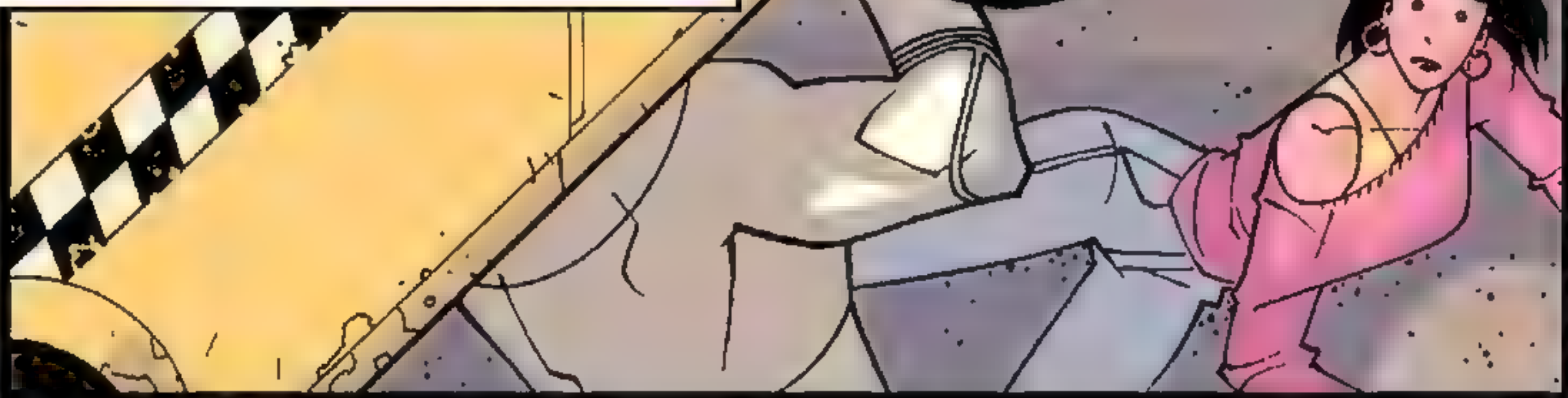
THE PEOPLE OF EARTH NEEDED SOMEONE TO KEEP THEM SAFE...

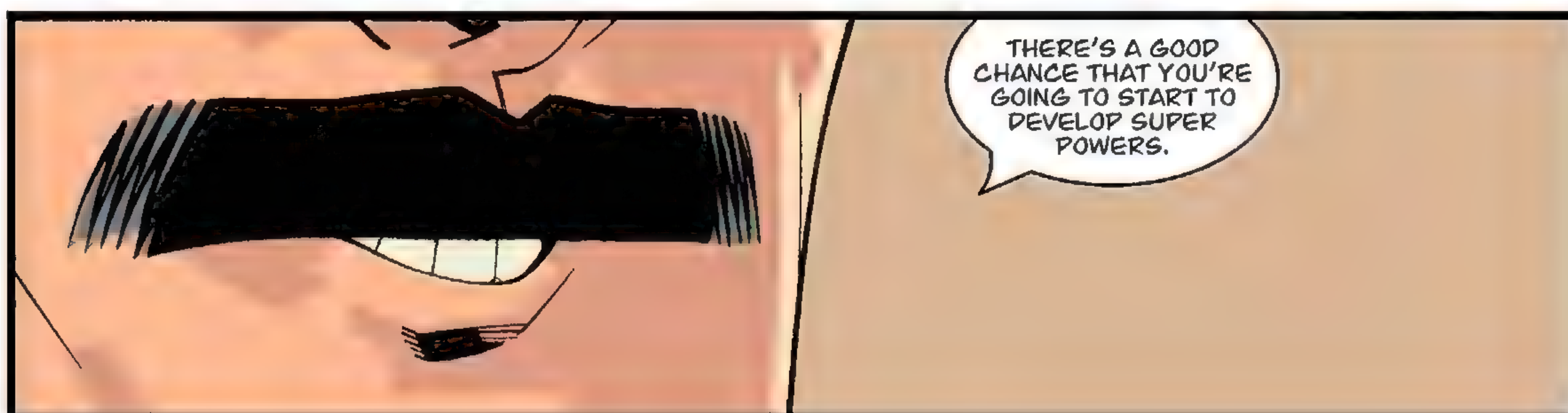
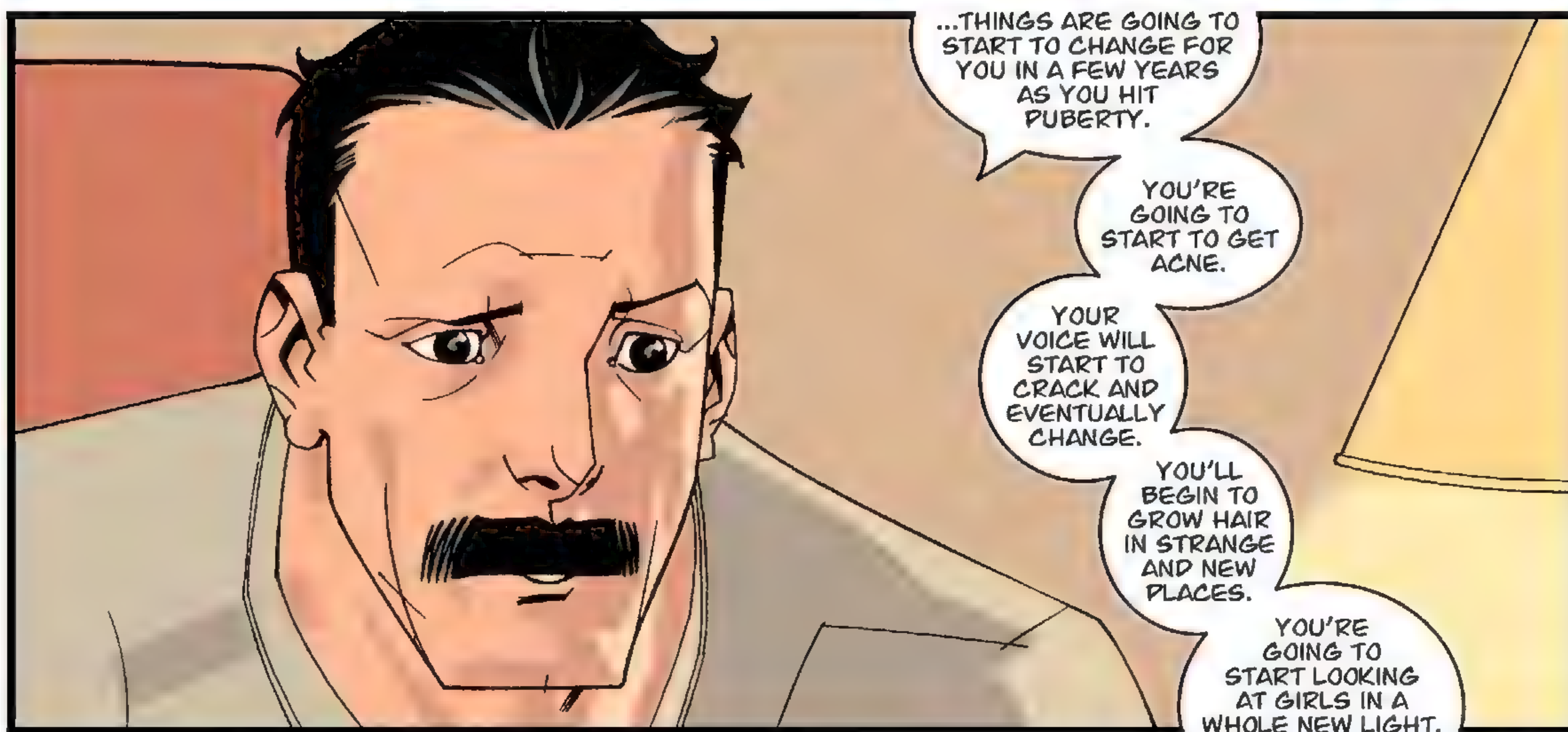
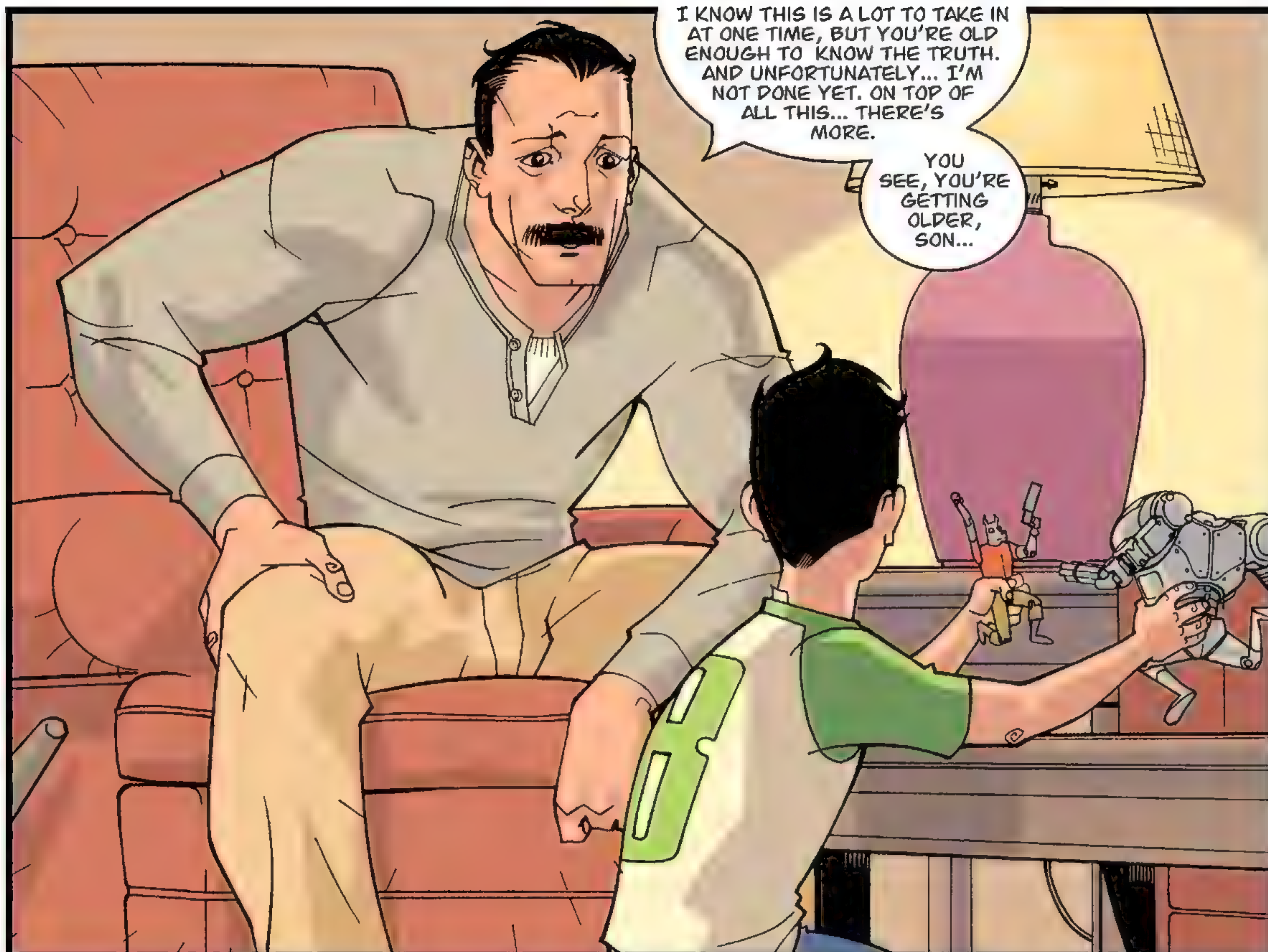


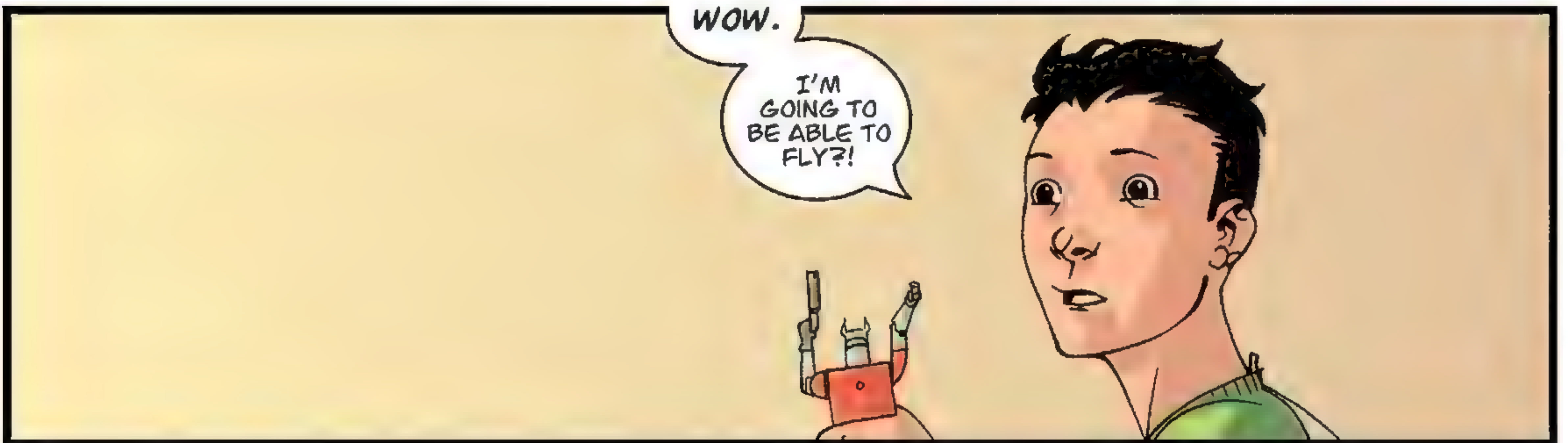
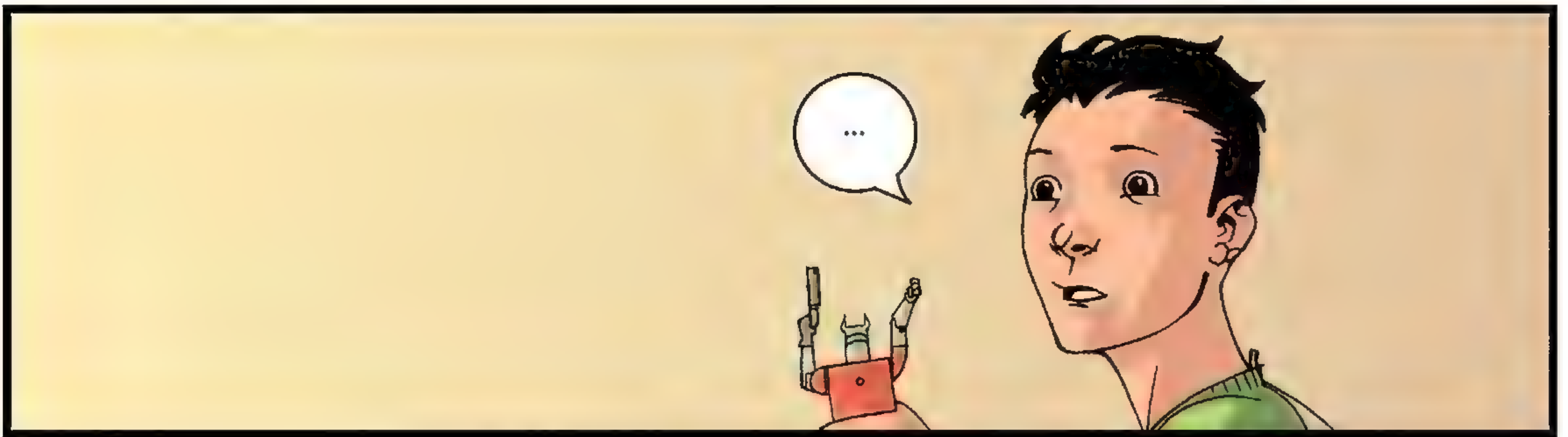
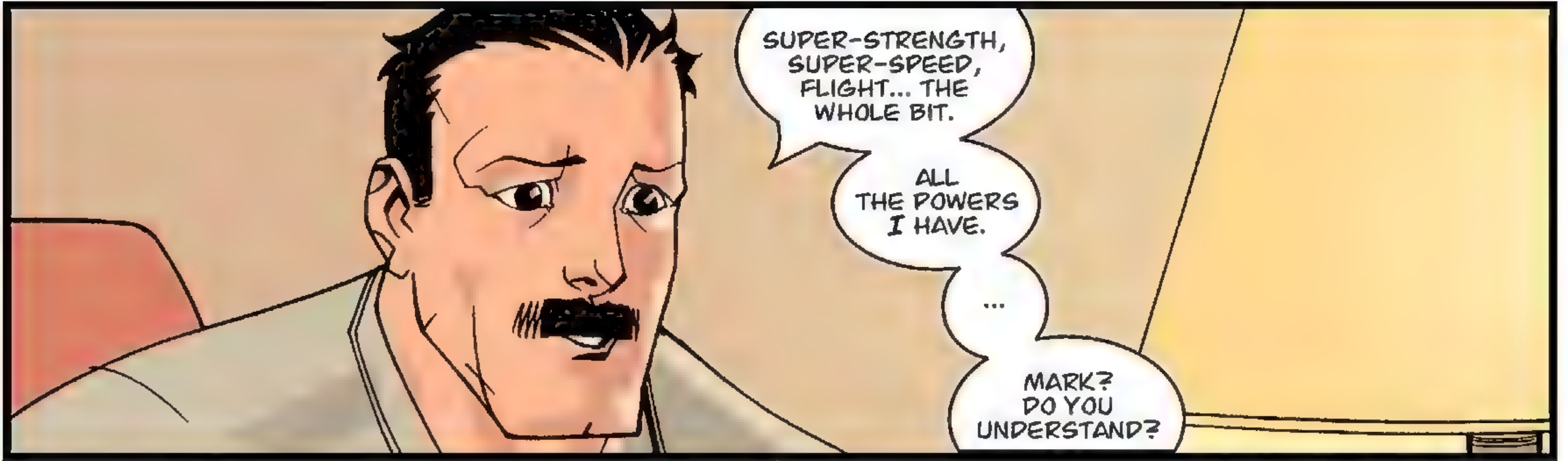
...AND I WAS HERE TO PROTECT THEM.



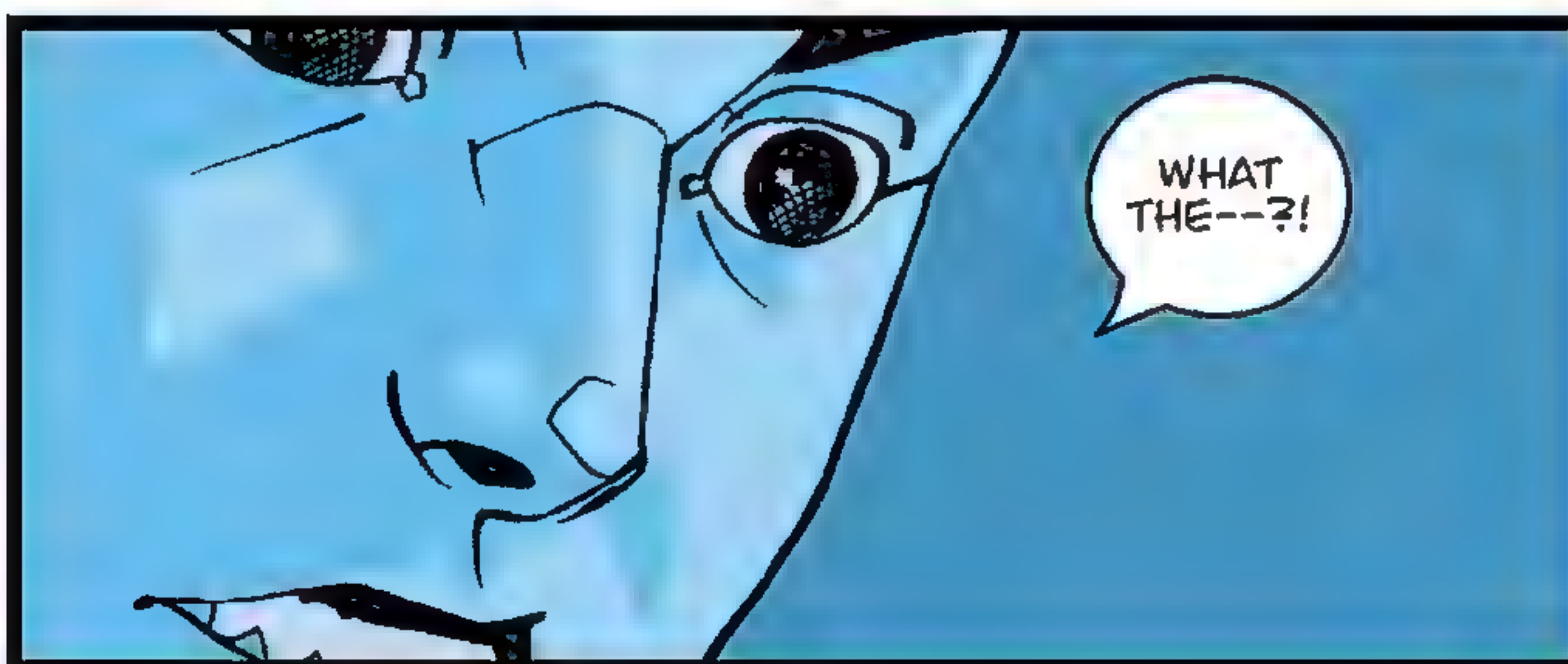
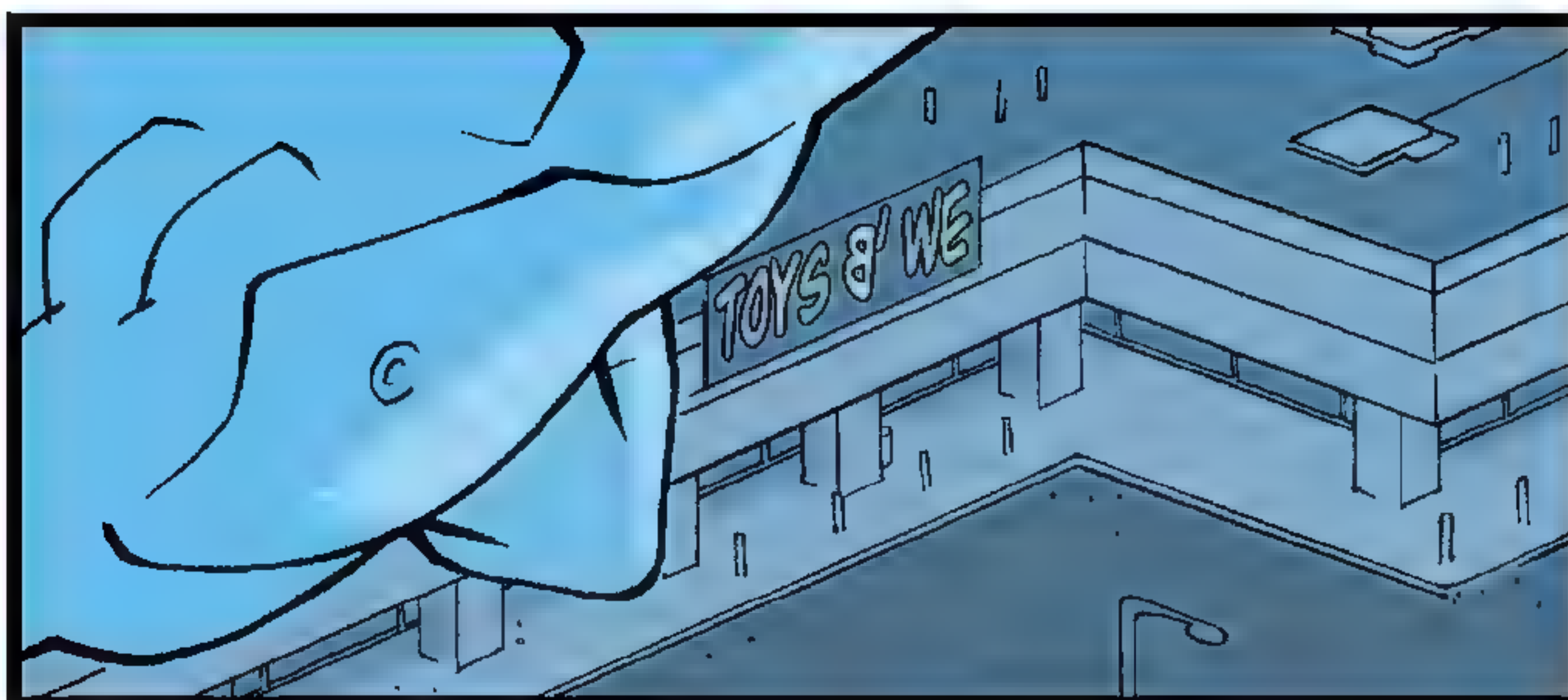
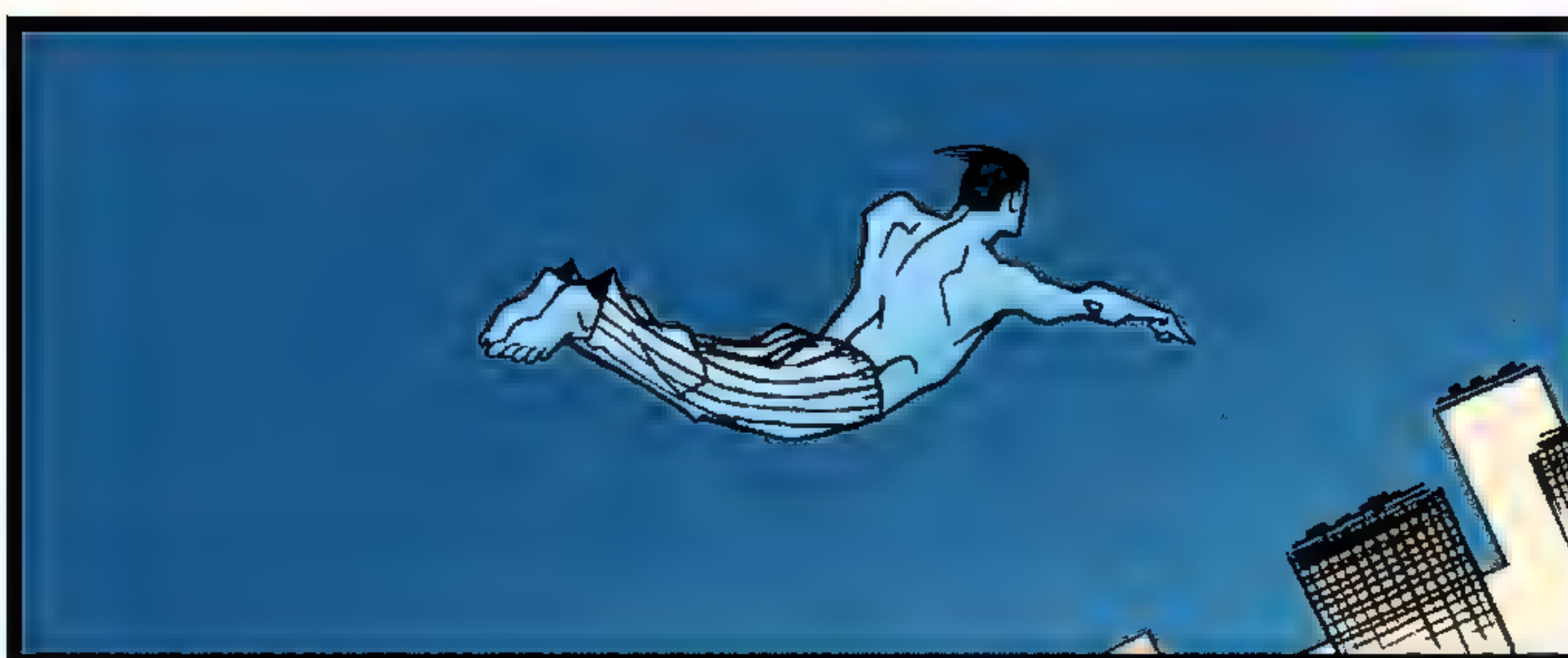
IT WAS LESS THAN A YEAR BEFORE I MET YOUR MOTHER... BUT THAT'S A STORY FOR ANOTHER TIME.



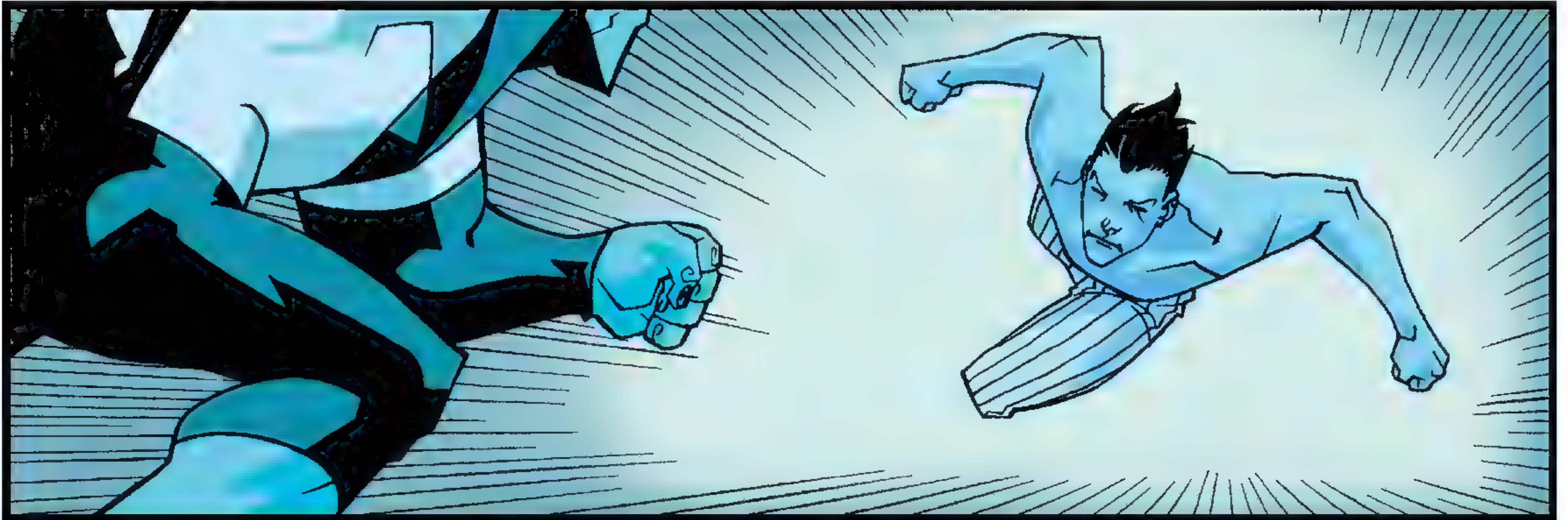
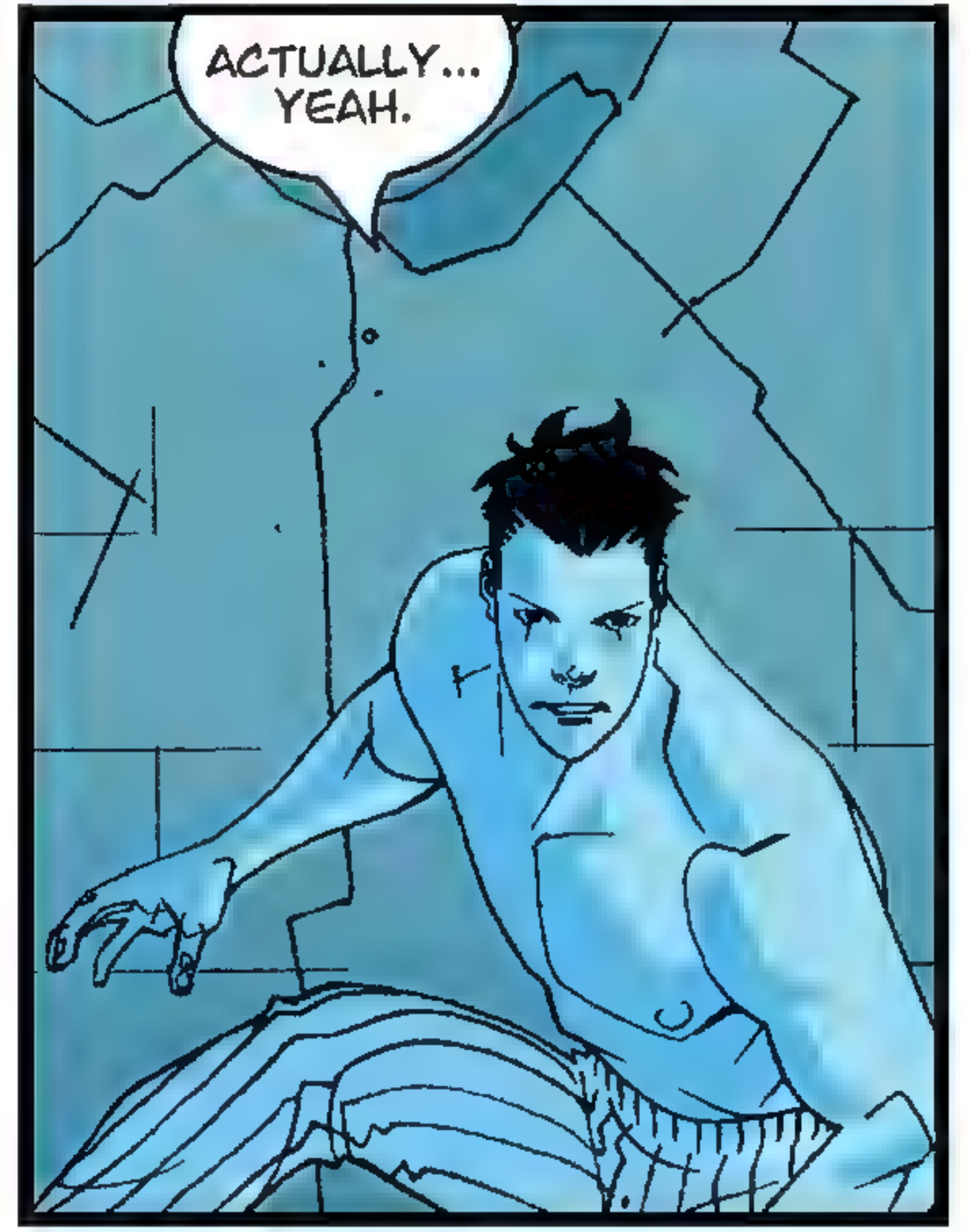
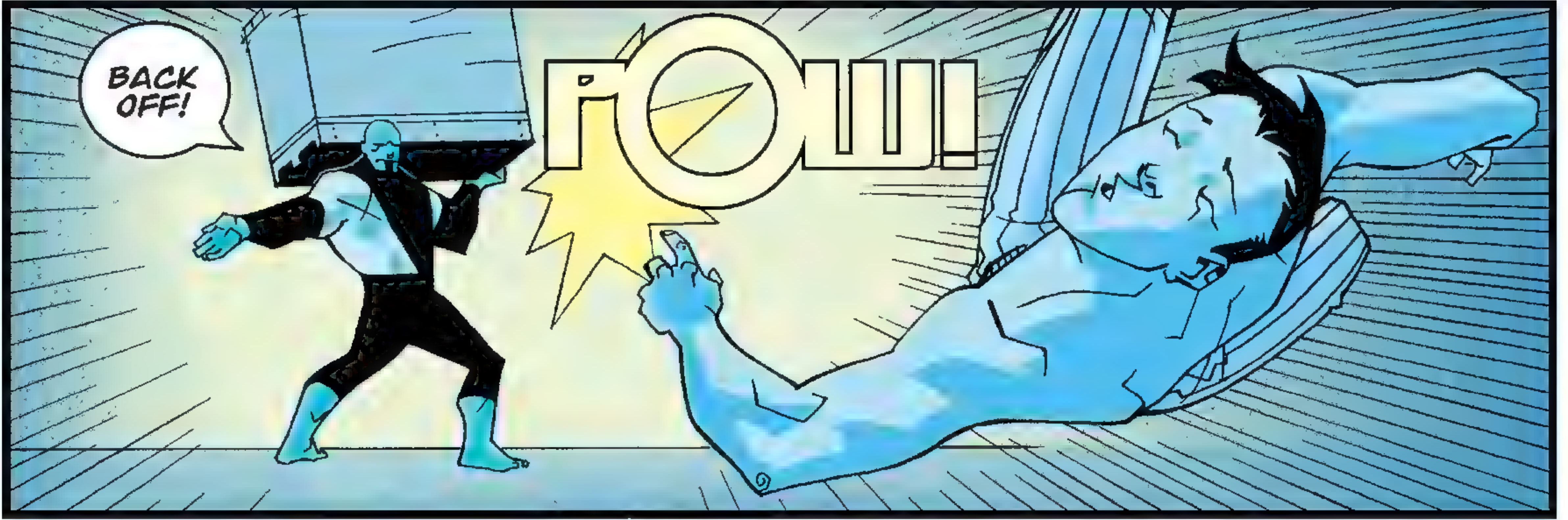










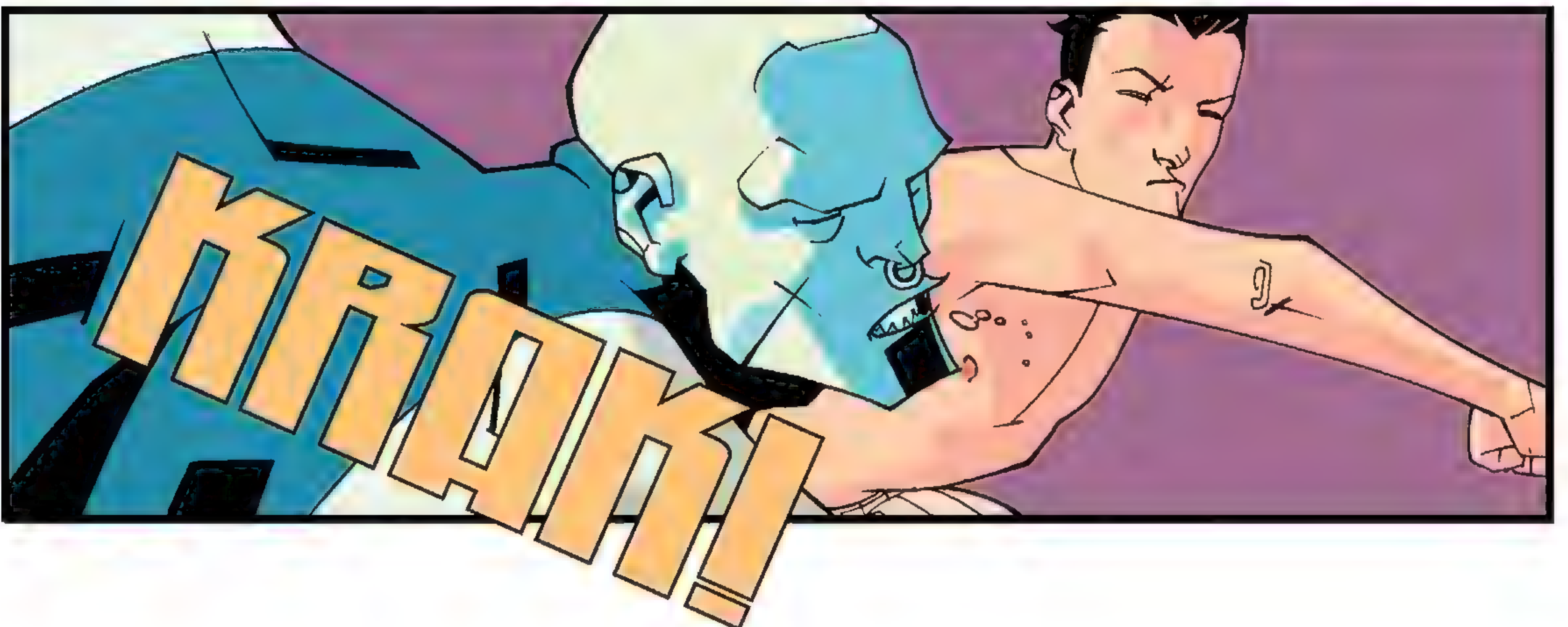
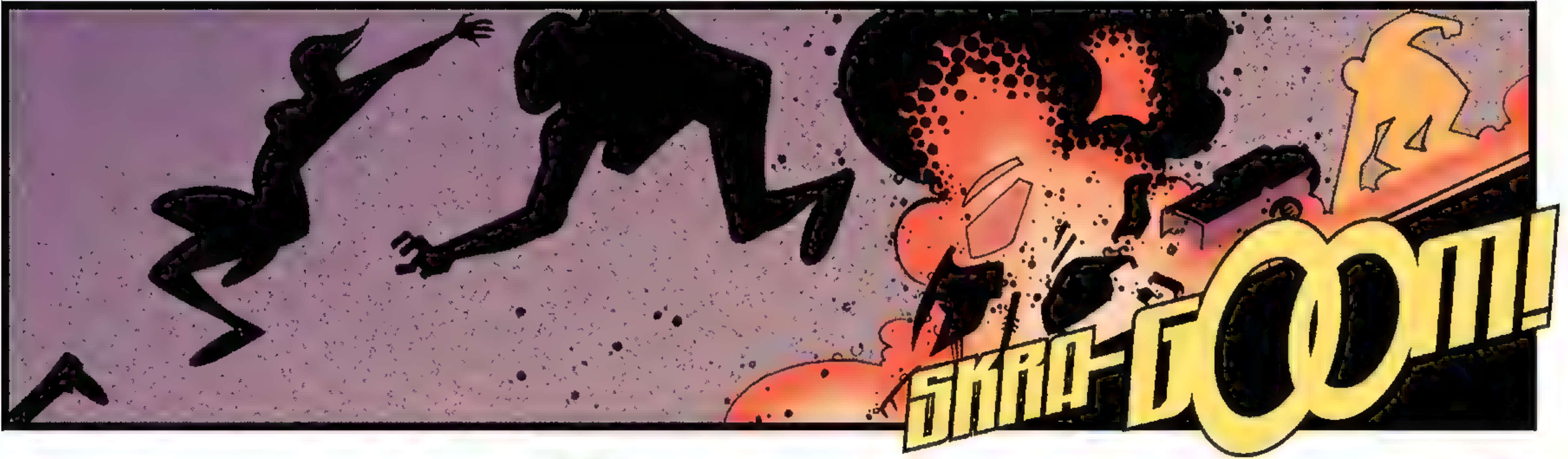
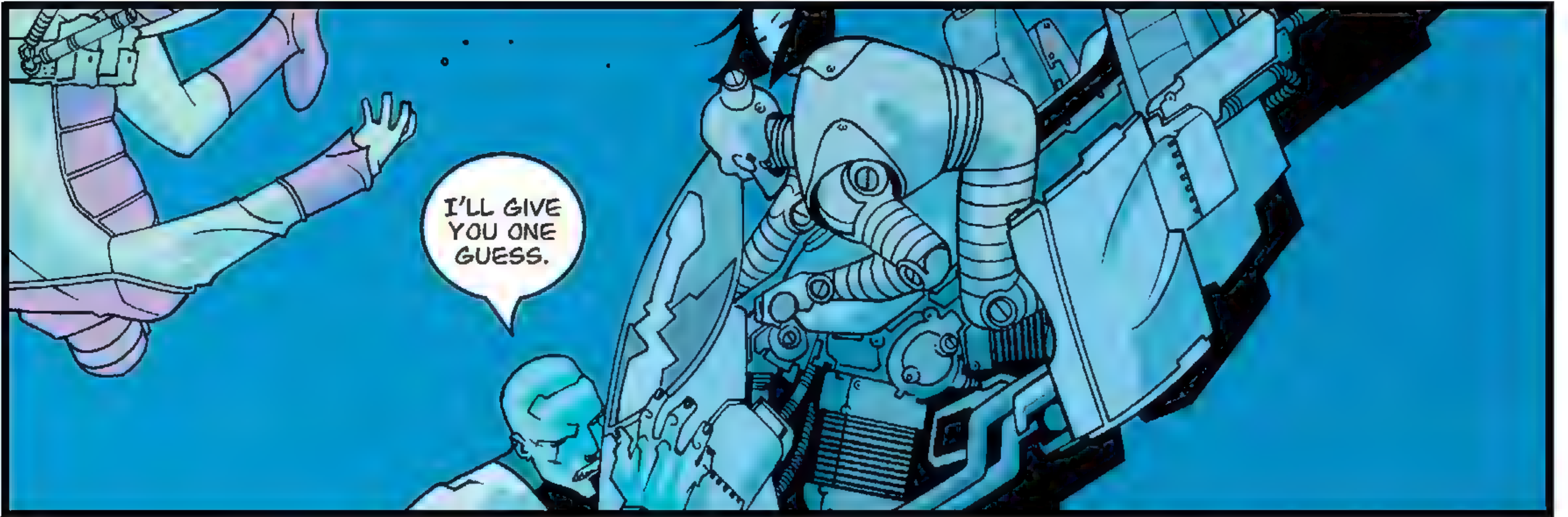


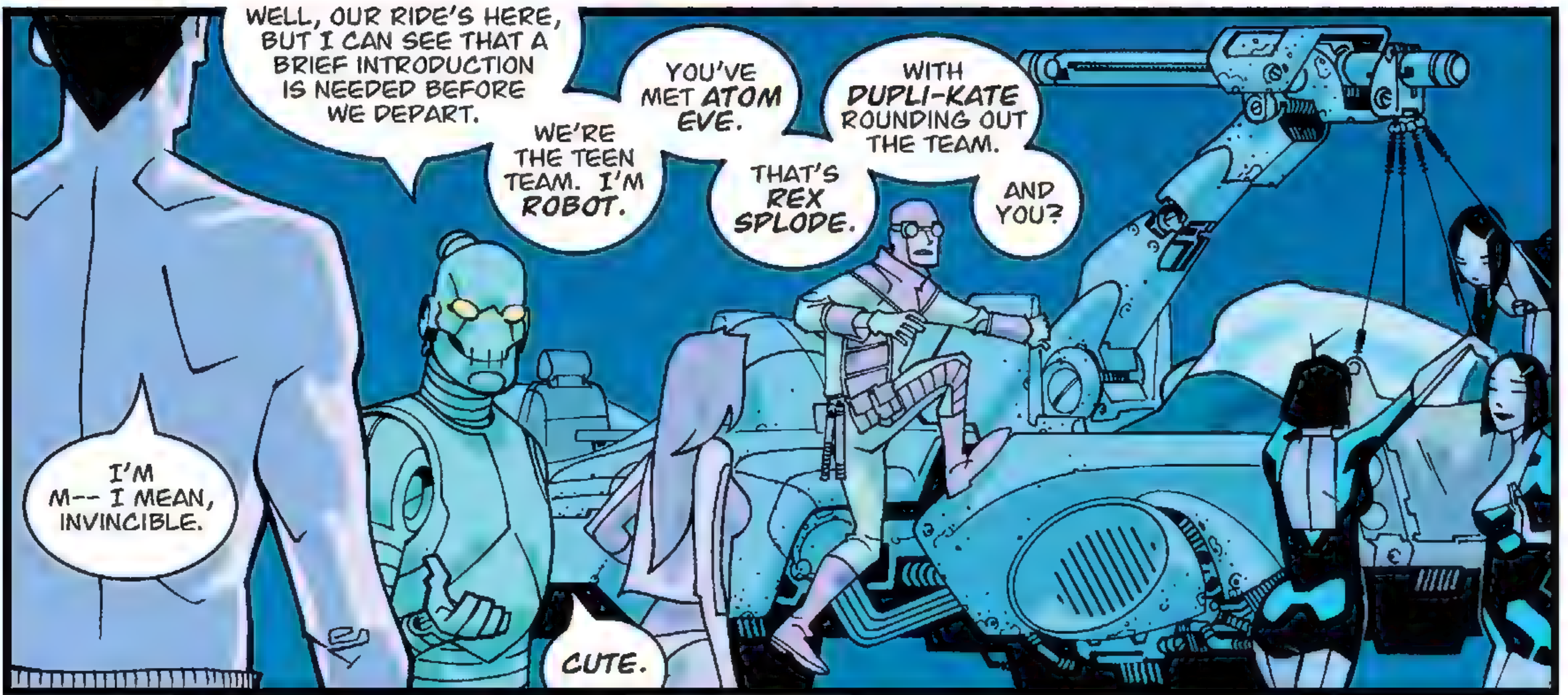
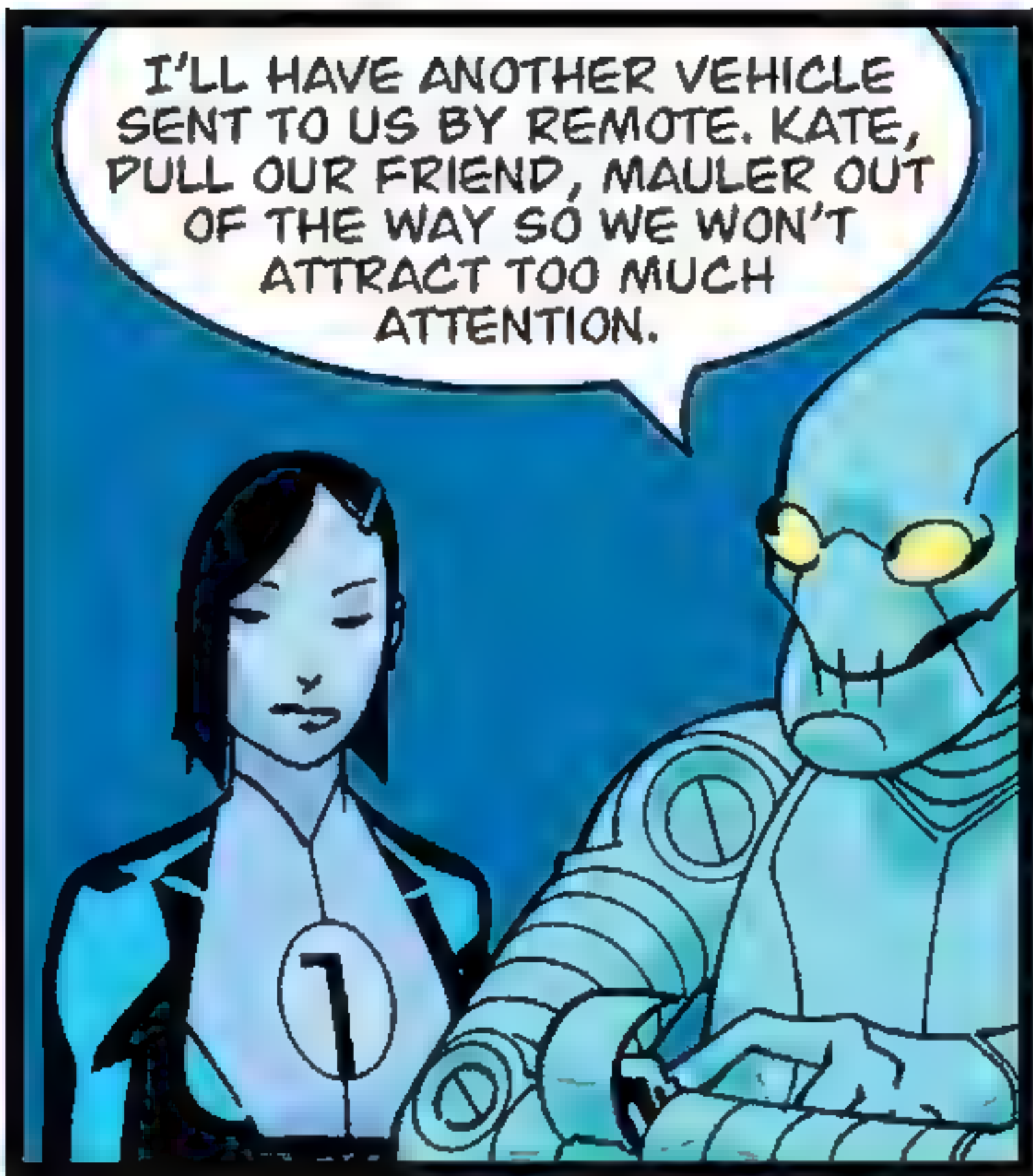


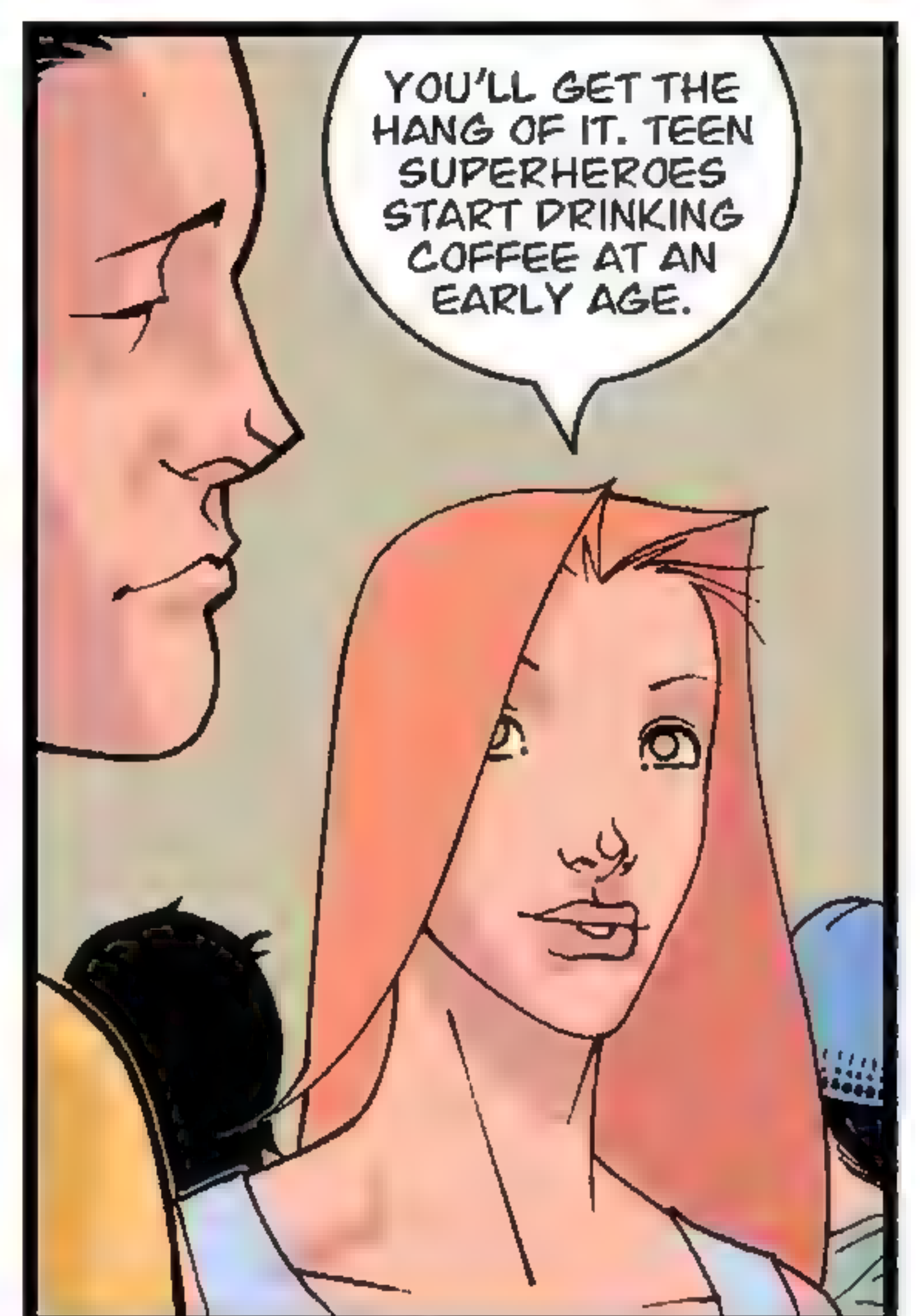
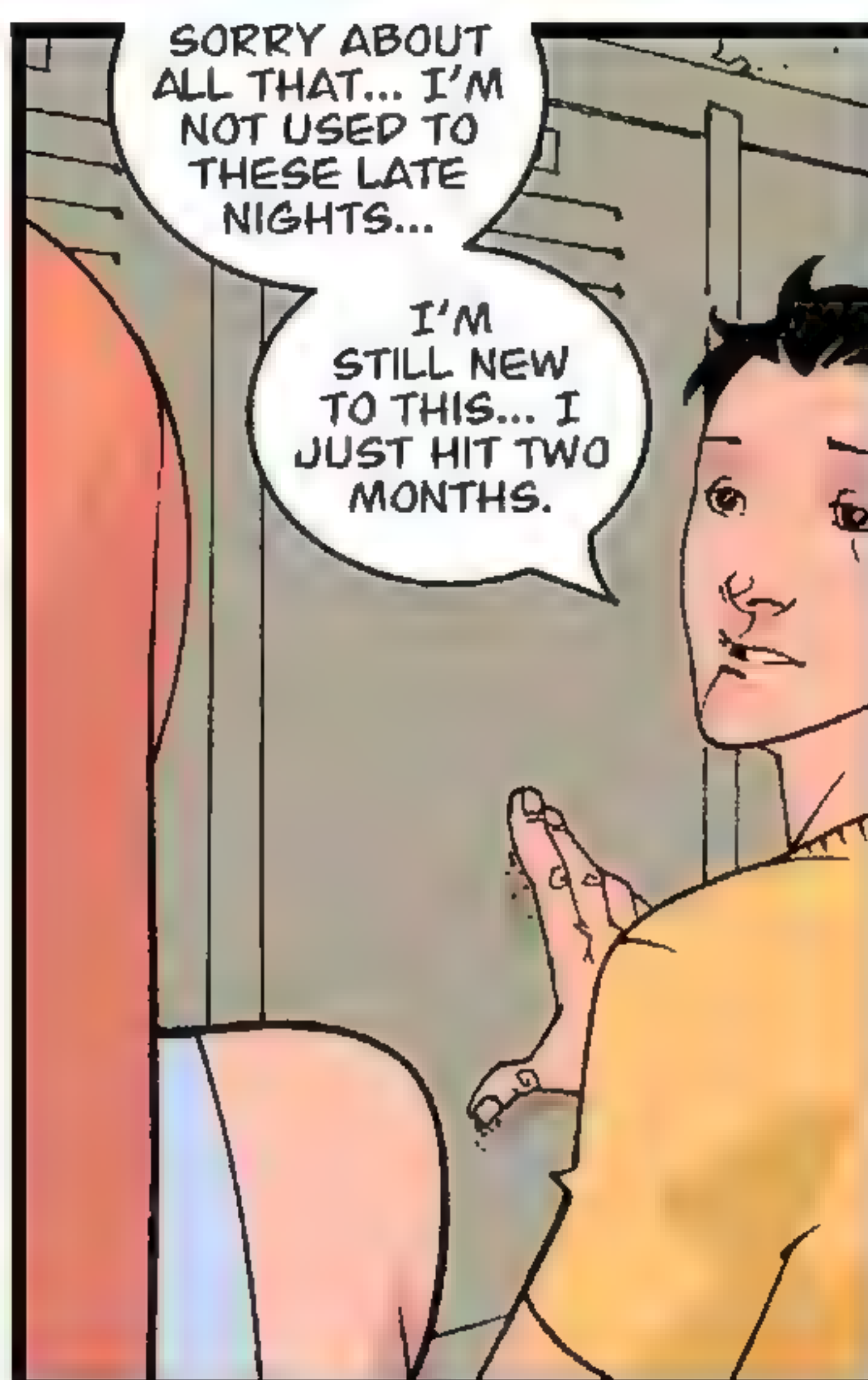
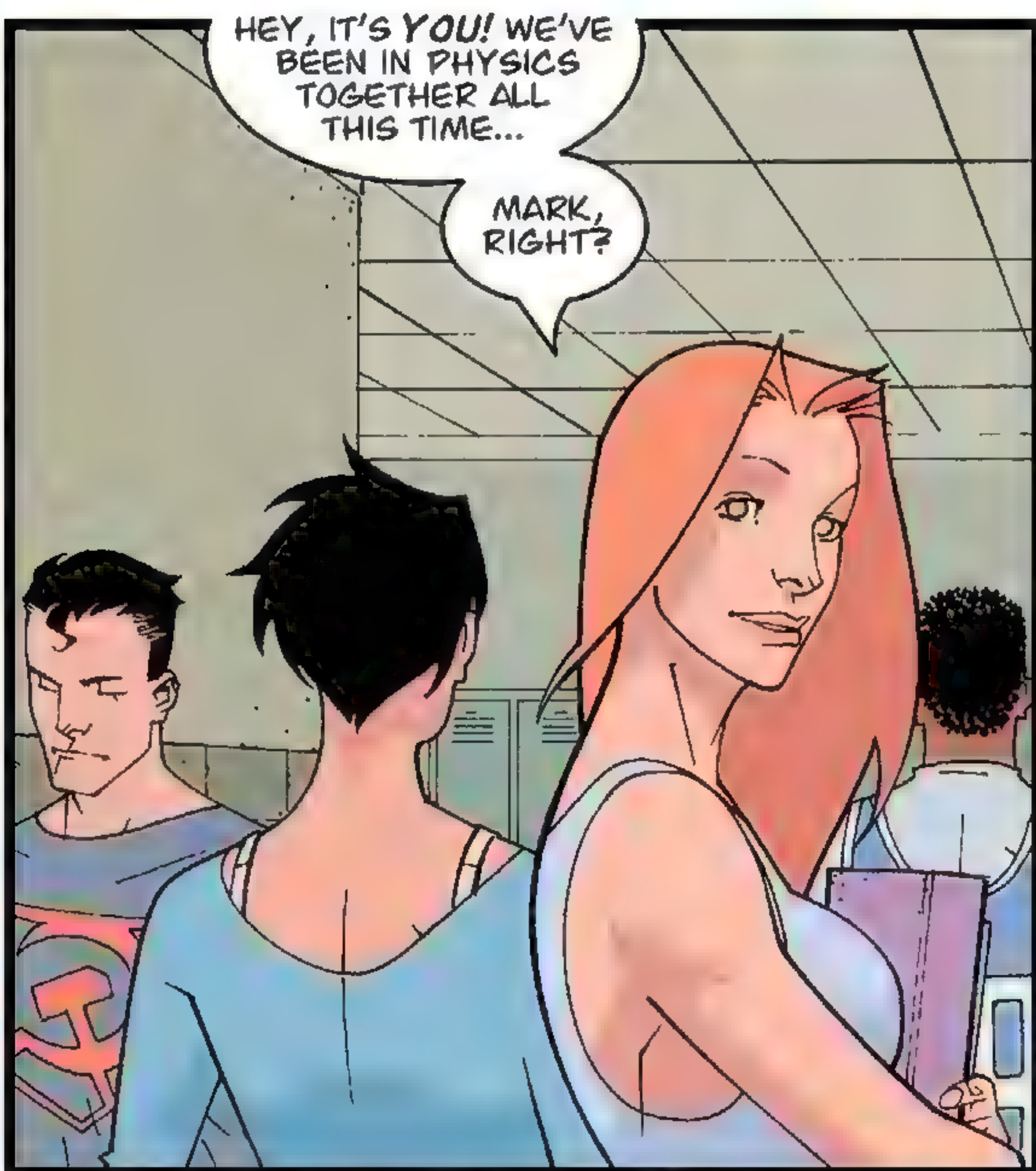
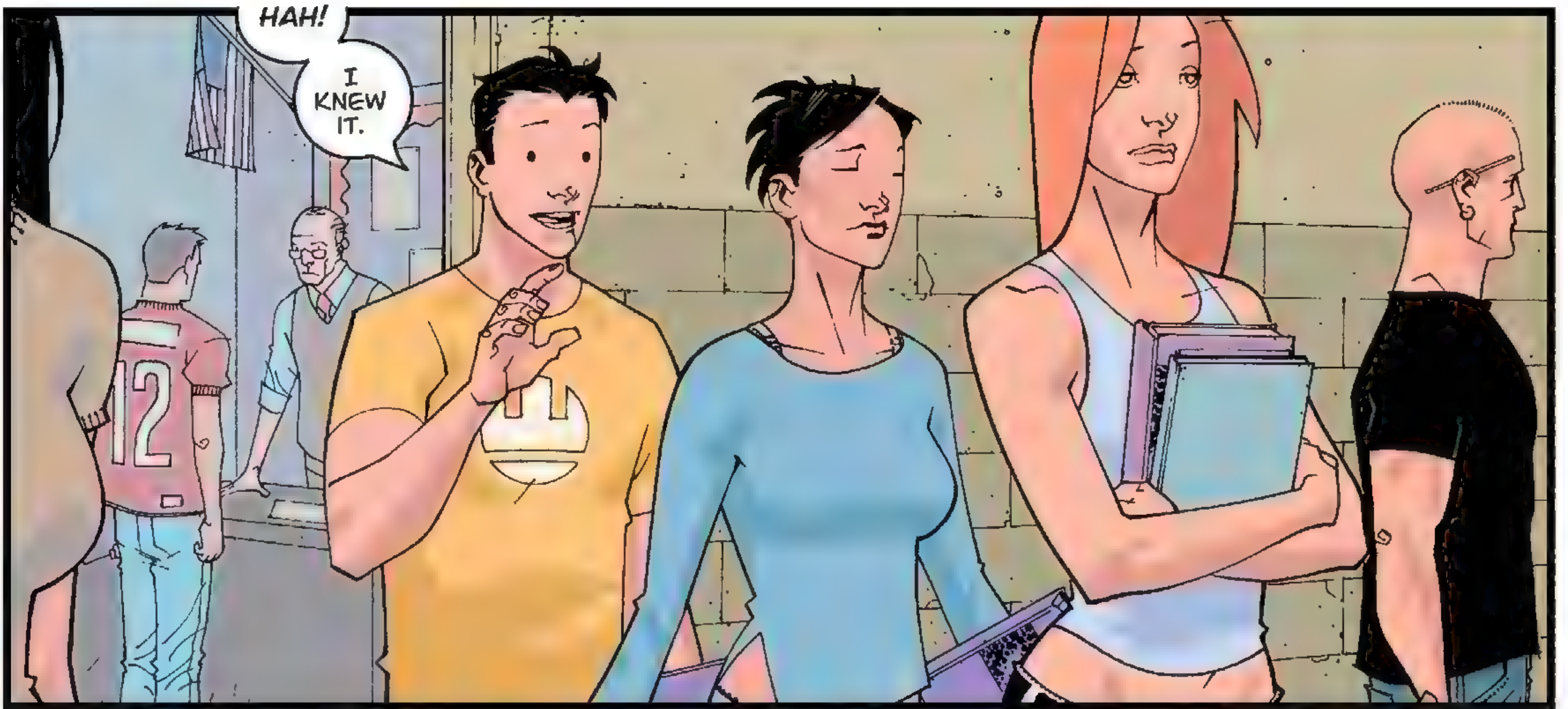
THAT WAS
A BB, YOU
DON'T WANT
TO SEE WHAT I
CAN DO WITH
A GOLF
BALL.

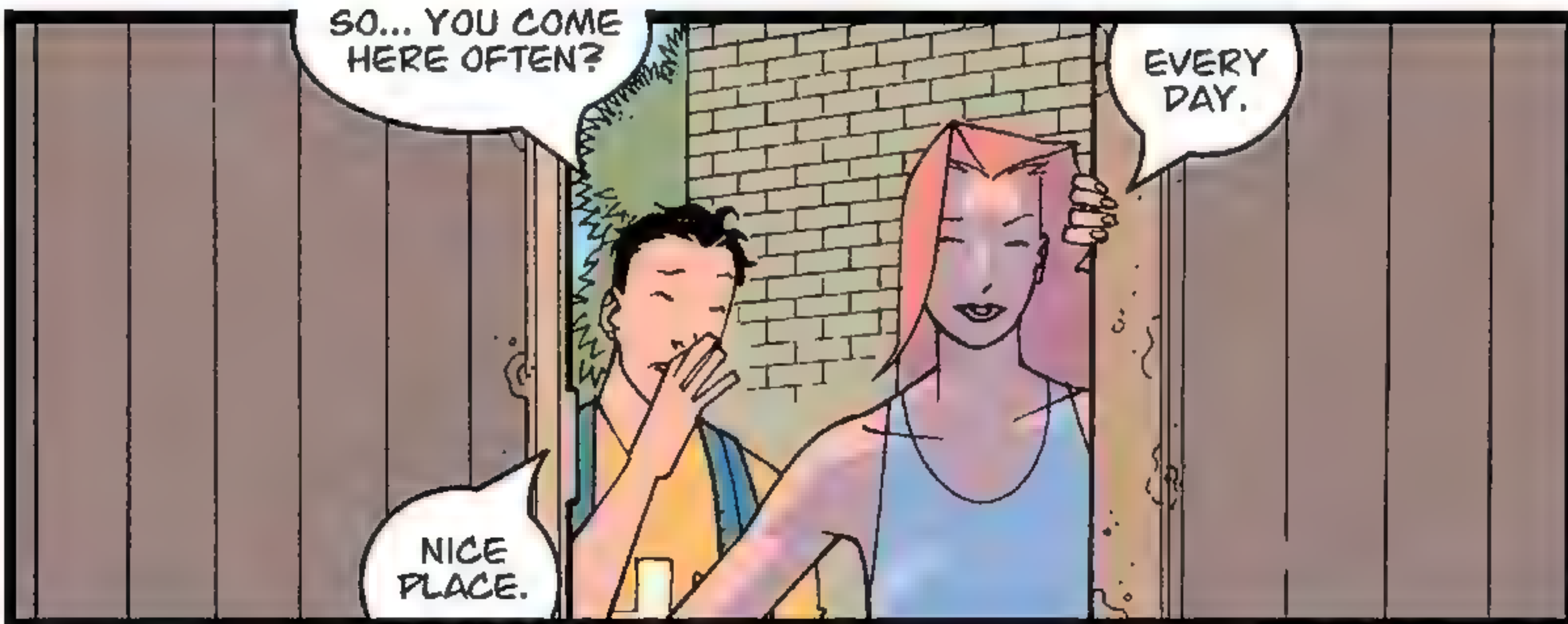
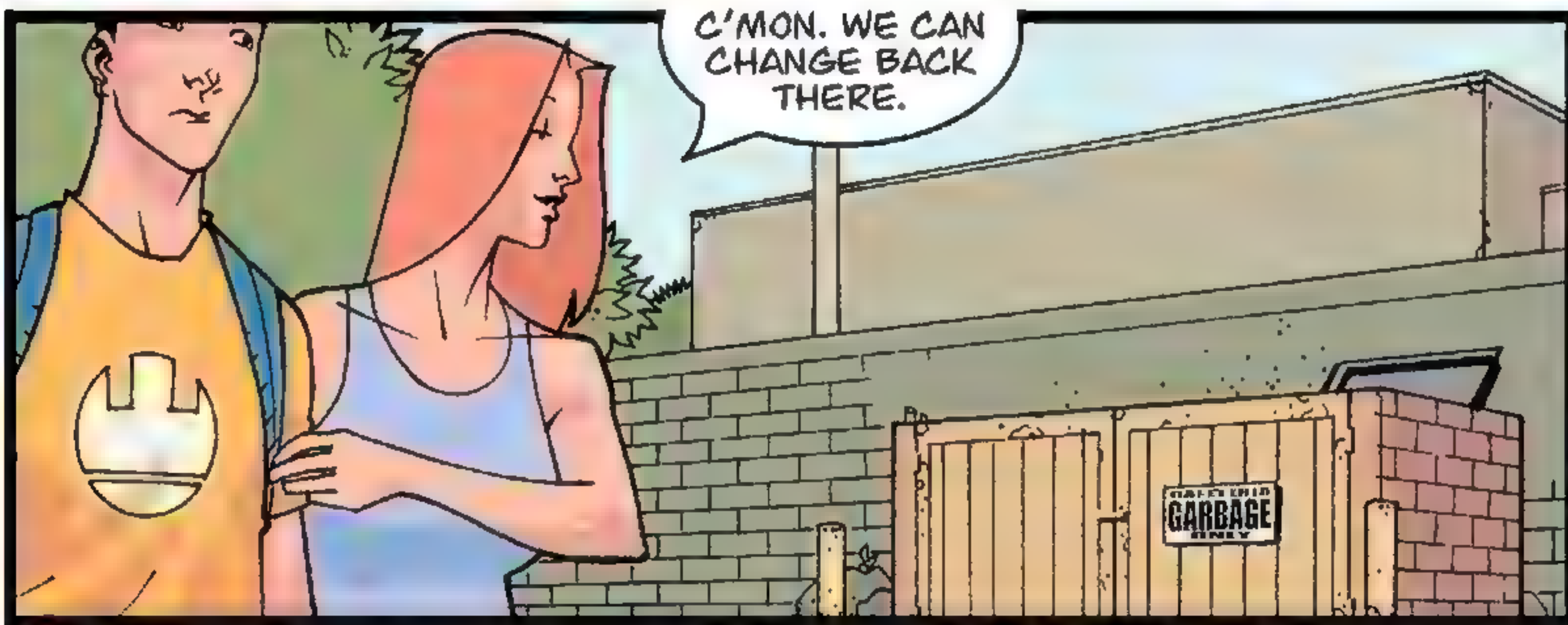
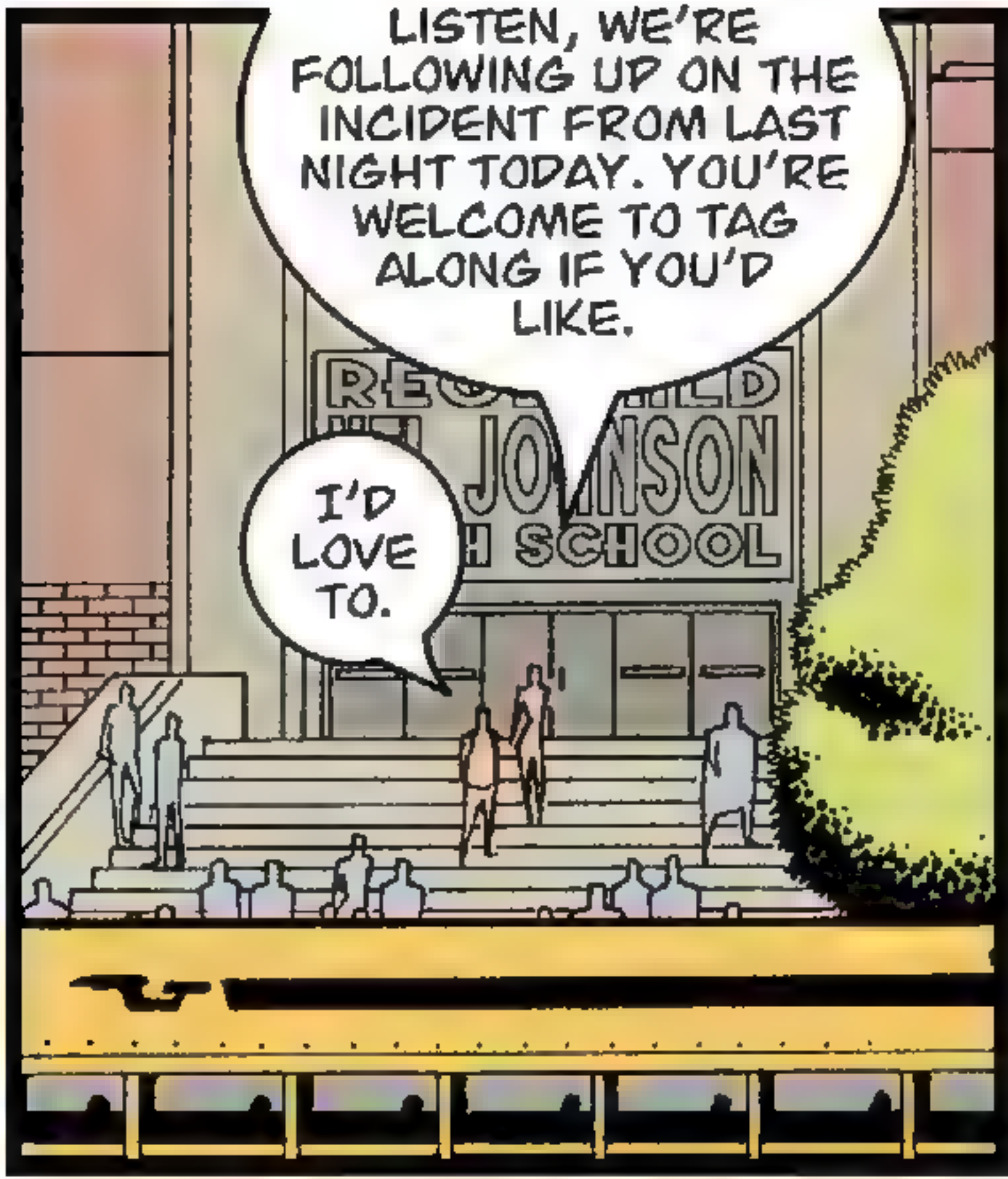
NOW.

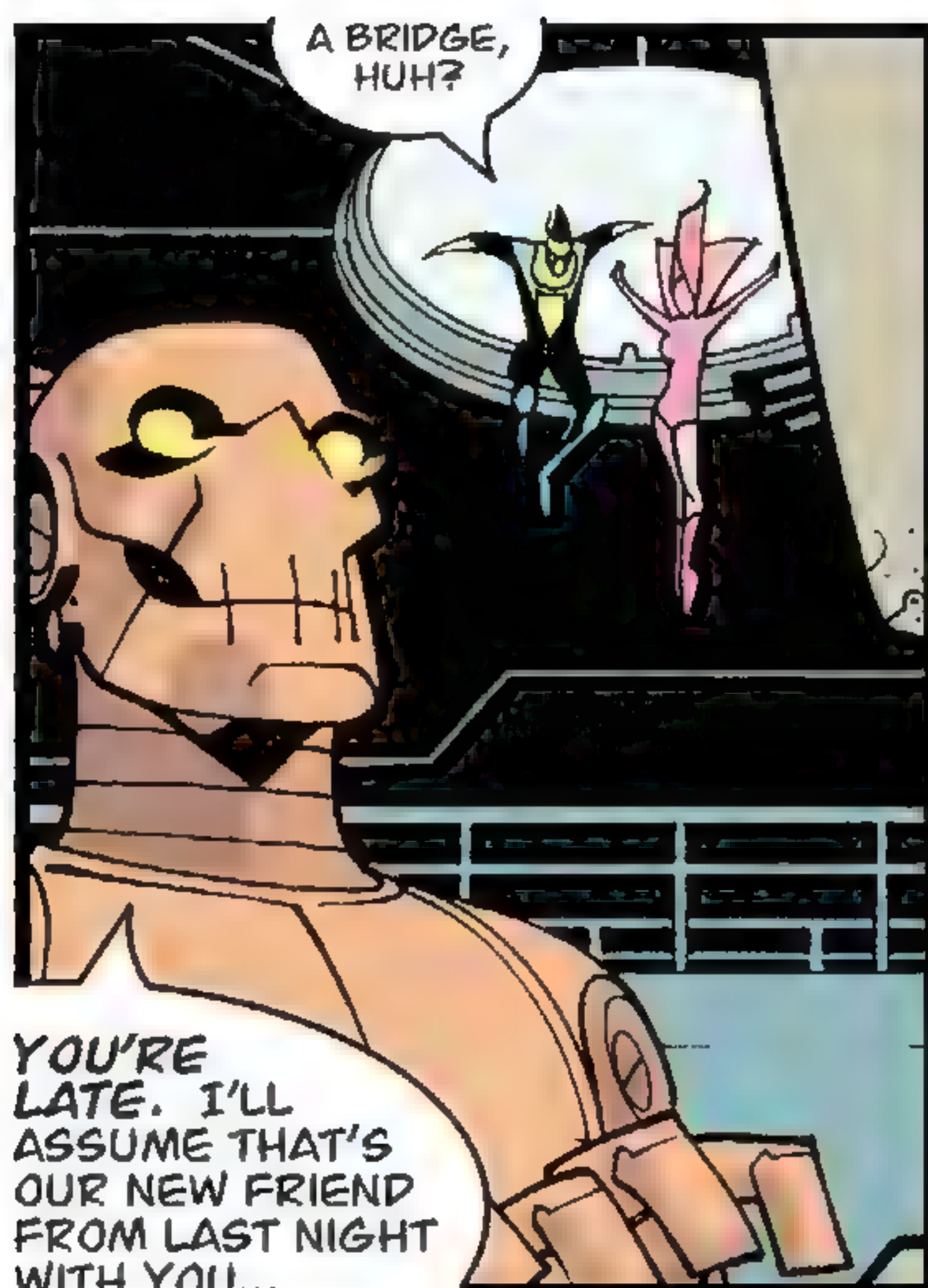
WHO
STARTED
IT?





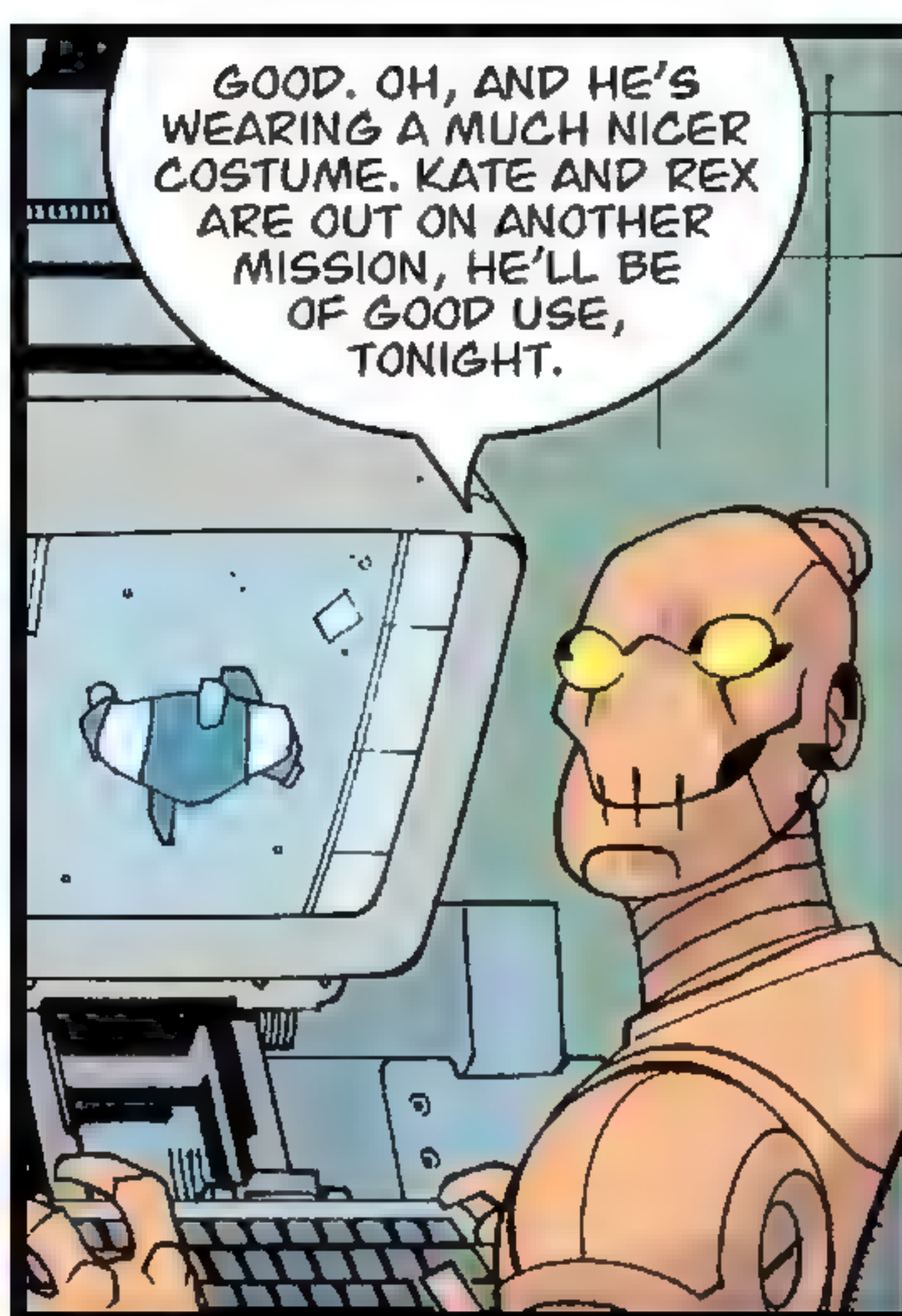




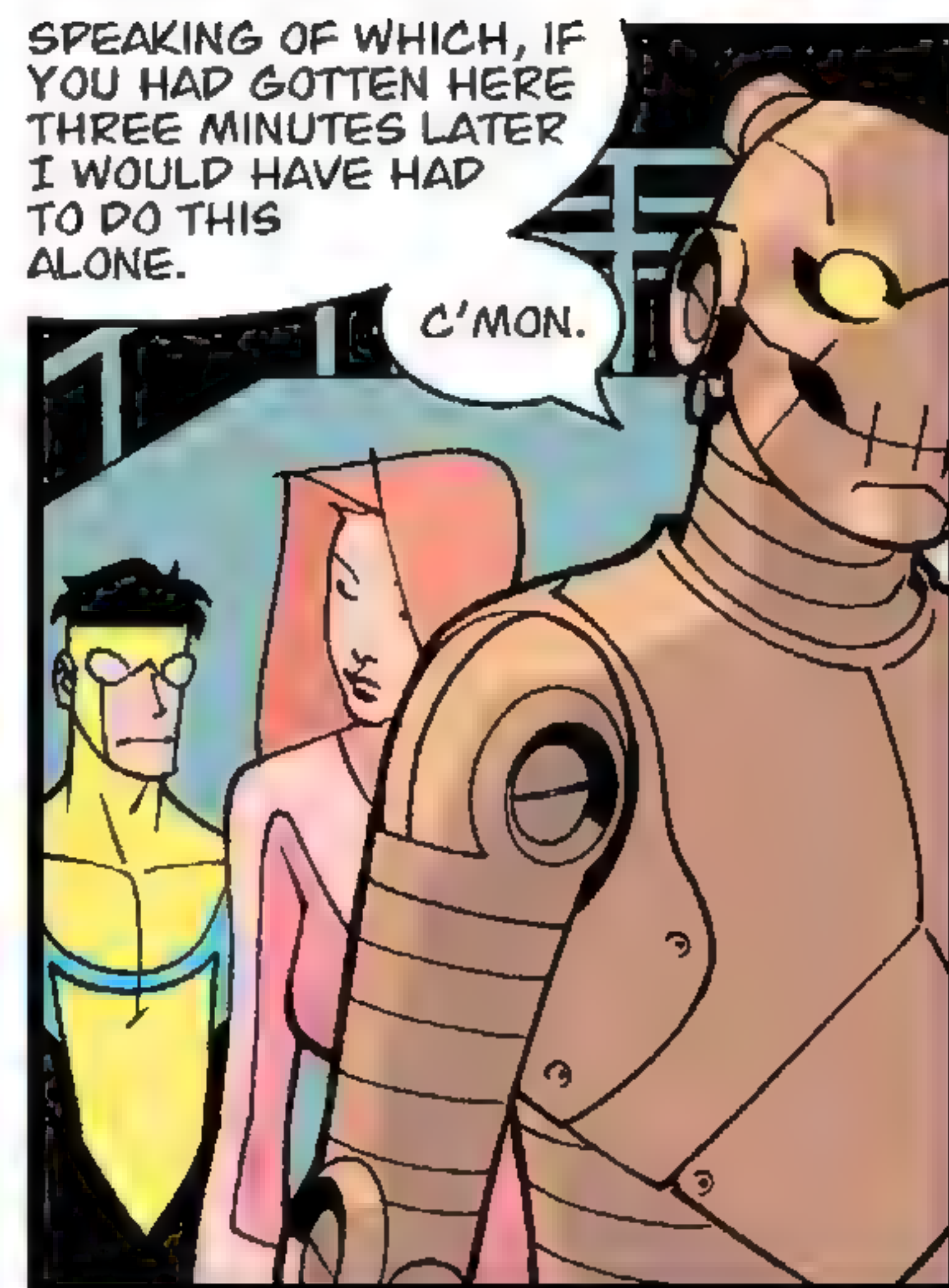


A BRIDGE, HUH?

YOU'RE LATE. I'LL ASSUME THAT'S OUR NEW FRIEND FROM LAST NIGHT WITH YOU...

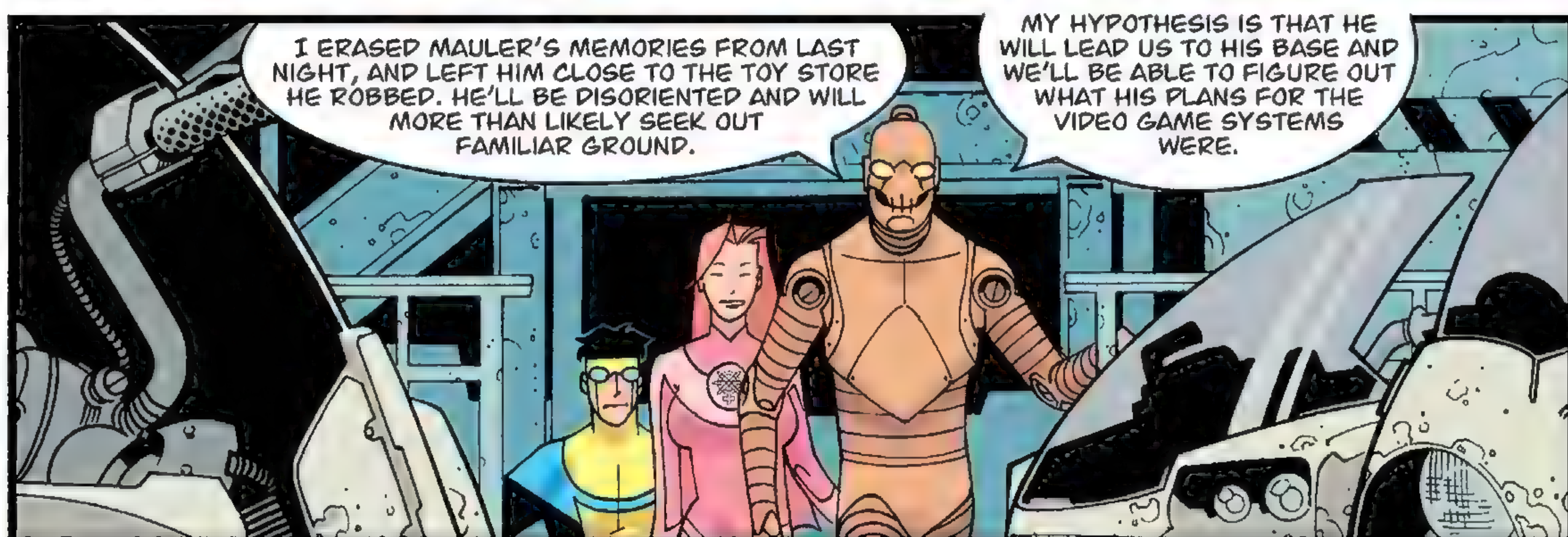


GOOD. OH, AND HE'S WEARING A MUCH NICER COSTUME. KATE AND REX ARE OUT ON ANOTHER MISSION, HE'LL BE OF GOOD USE, TONIGHT.



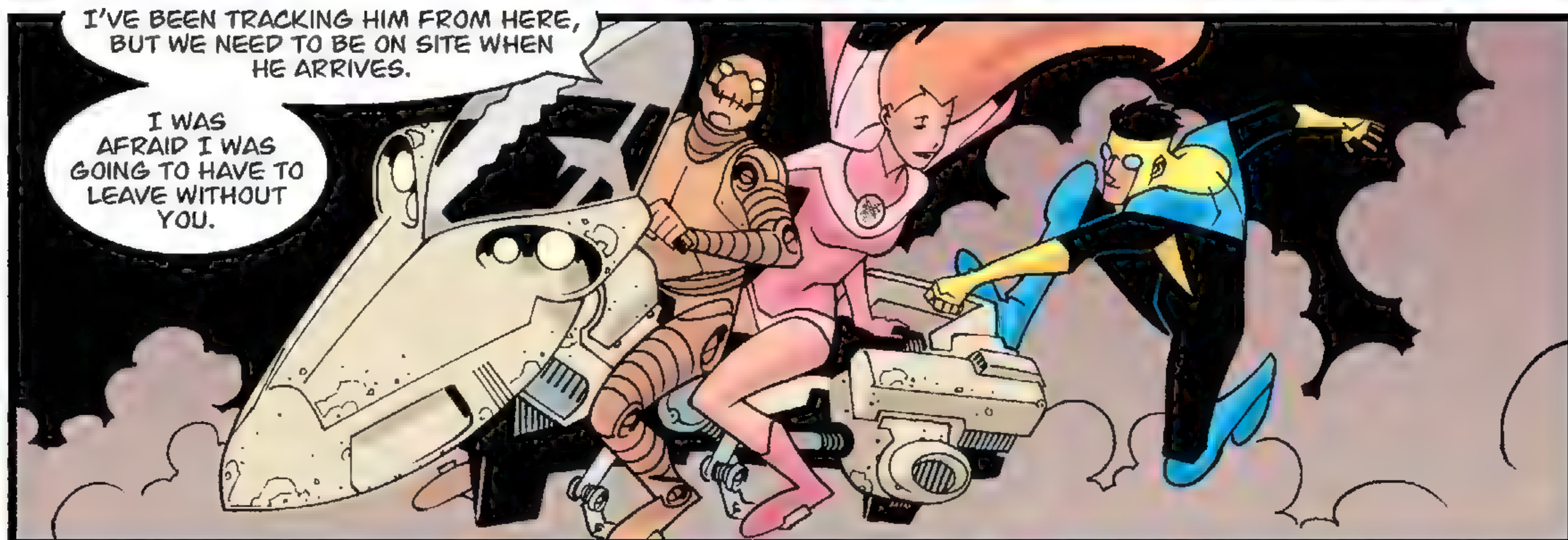
SPEAKING OF WHICH, IF YOU HAD GOTTEN HERE THREE MINUTES LATER I WOULD HAVE HAD TO DO THIS ALONE.

C'MON.



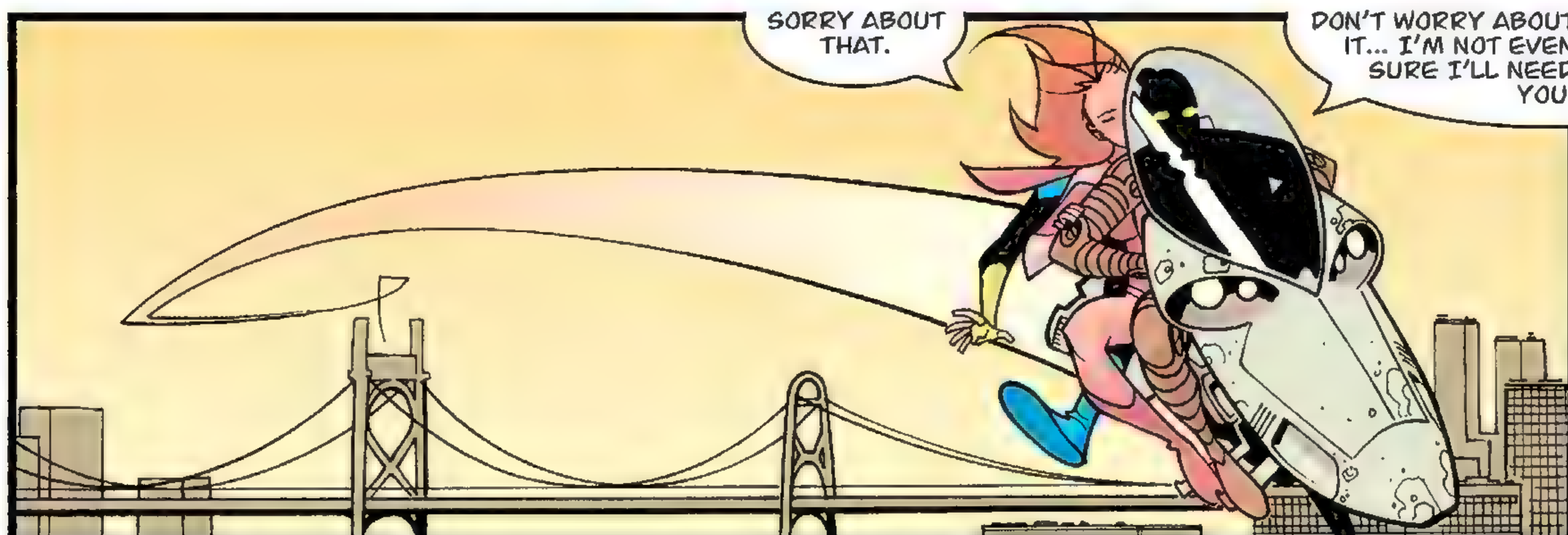
I ERASED MAULER'S MEMORIES FROM LAST NIGHT, AND LEFT HIM CLOSE TO THE TOY STORE HE ROBBED. HE'LL BE DISORIENTED AND WILL MORE THAN LIKELY SEEK OUT FAMILIAR GROUND.

MY HYPOTHESIS IS THAT HE WILL LEAD US TO HIS BASE AND WE'LL BE ABLE TO FIGURE OUT WHAT HIS PLANS FOR THE VIDEO GAME SYSTEMS WERE.



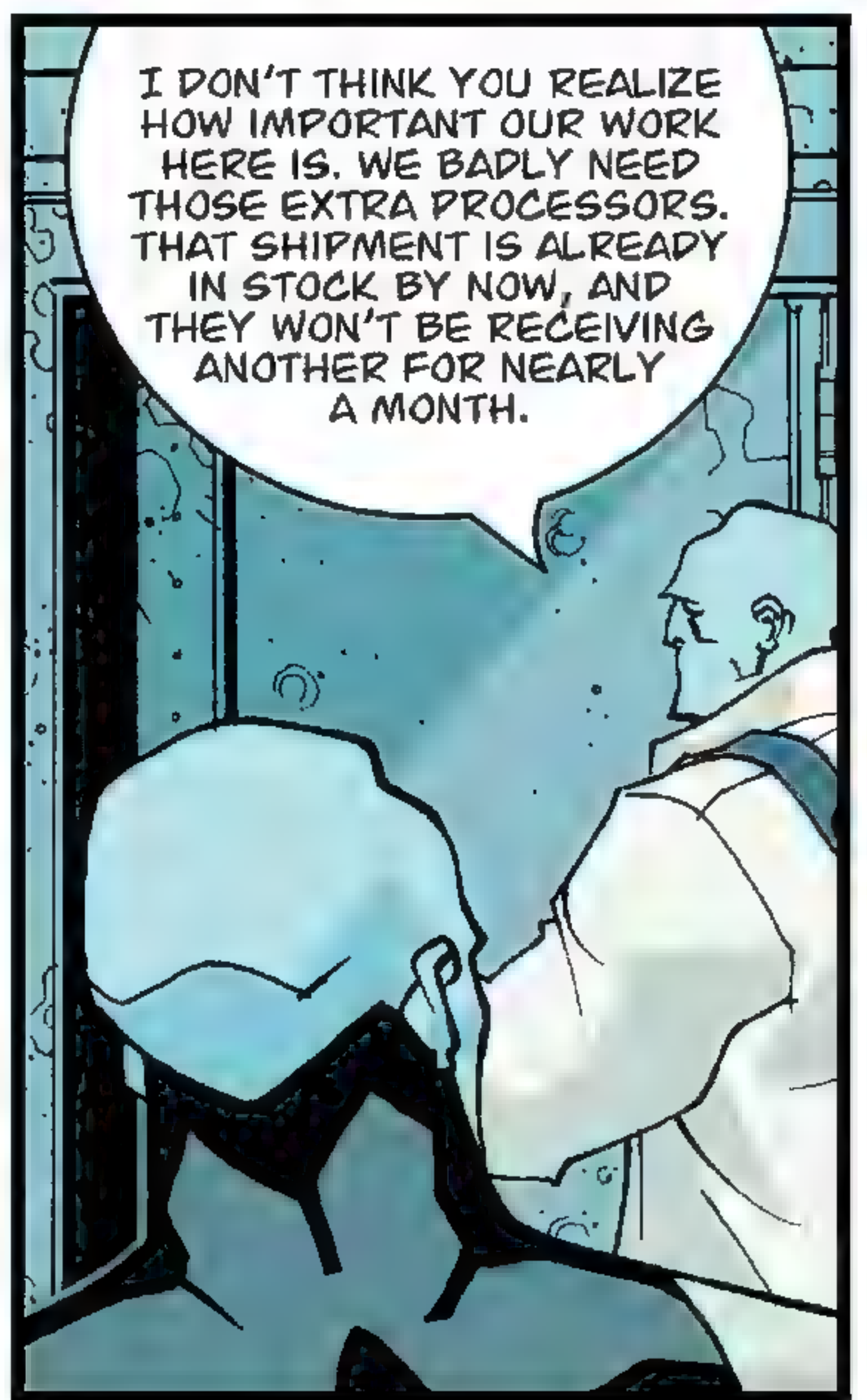
I'VE BEEN TRACKING HIM FROM HERE, BUT WE NEED TO BE ON SITE WHEN HE ARRIVES.

I WAS AFRAID I WAS GOING TO HAVE TO LEAVE WITHOUT YOU.

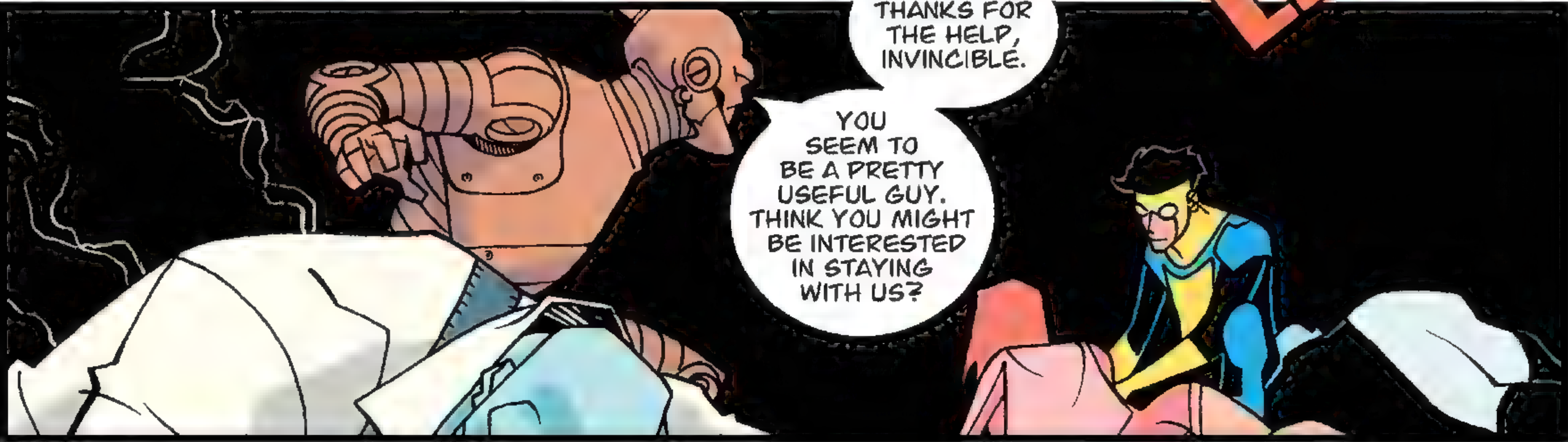
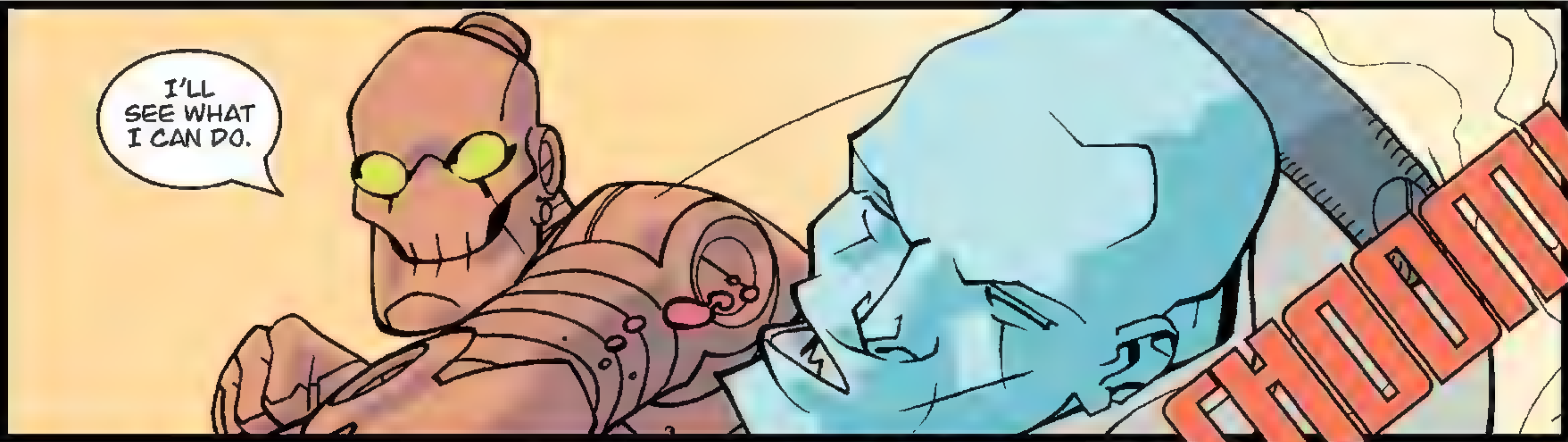
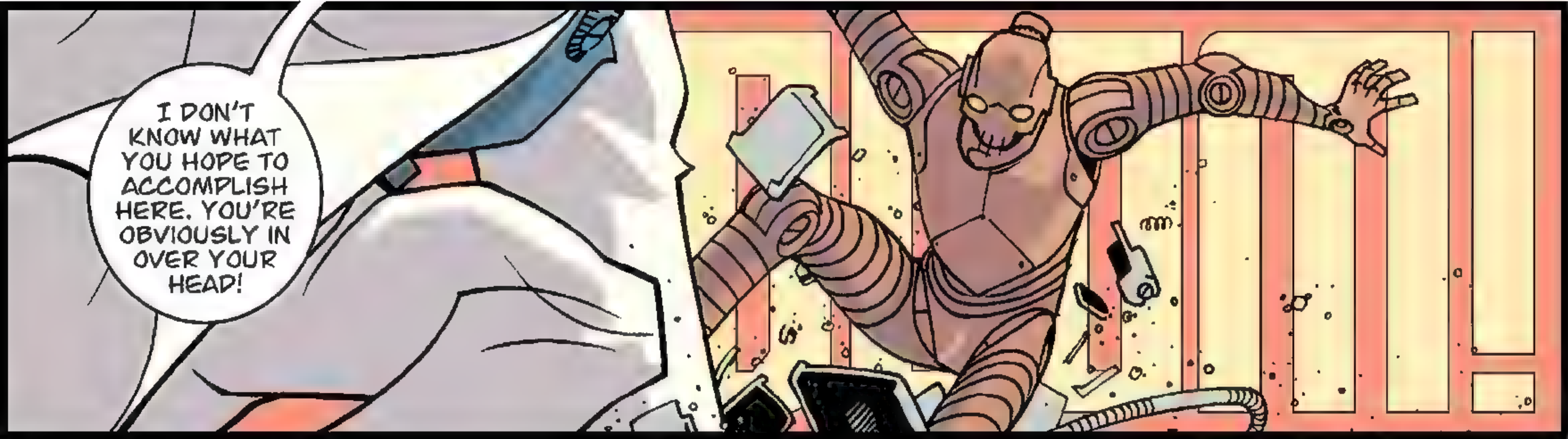


SORRY ABOUT THAT.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT... I'M NOT EVEN SURE I'LL NEED YOU.



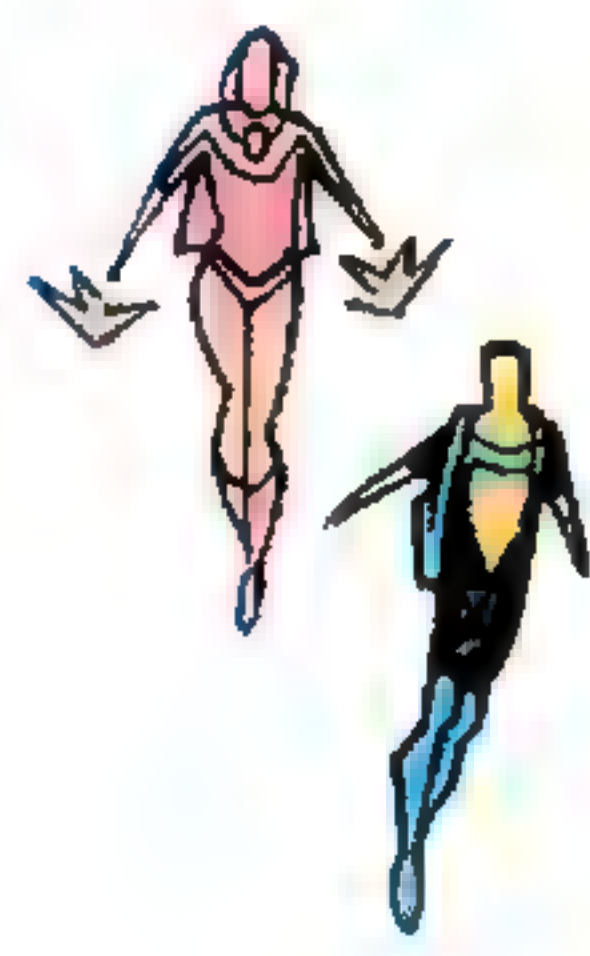
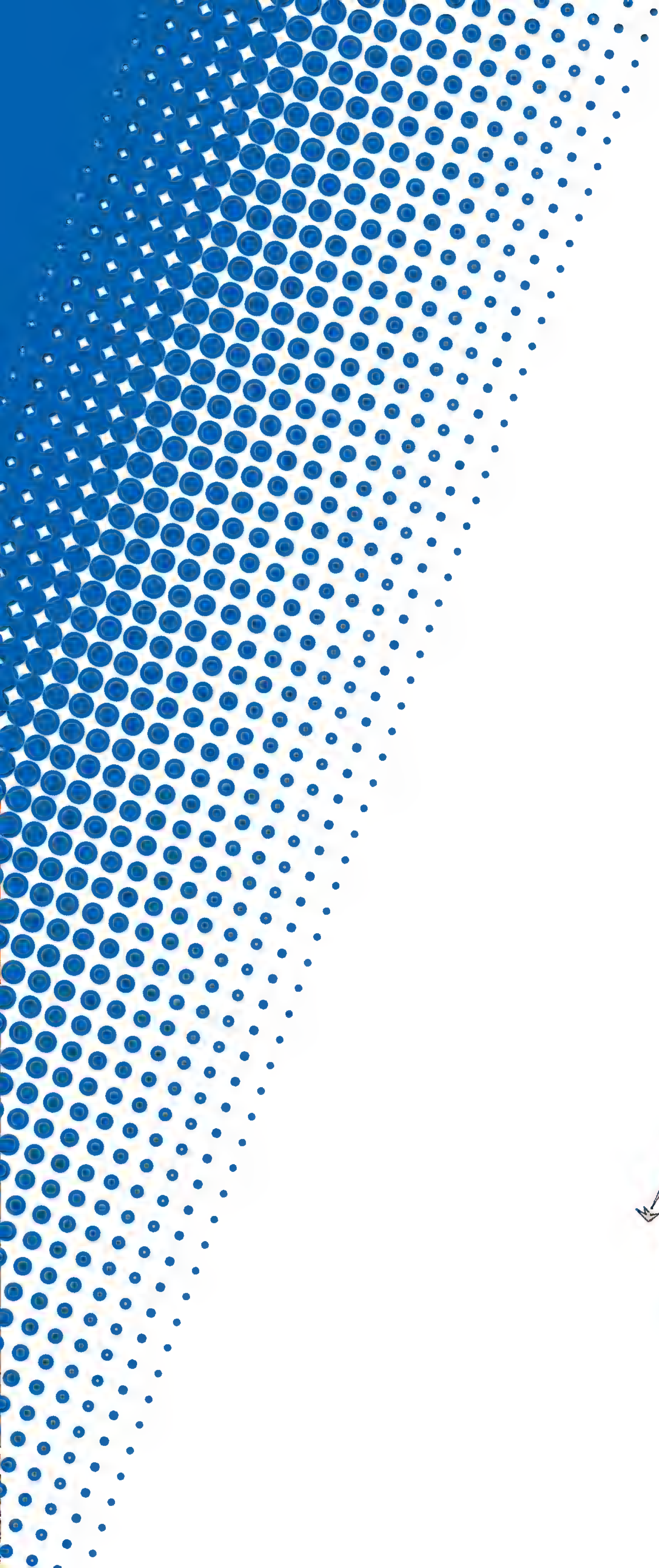






BOOOOM!!

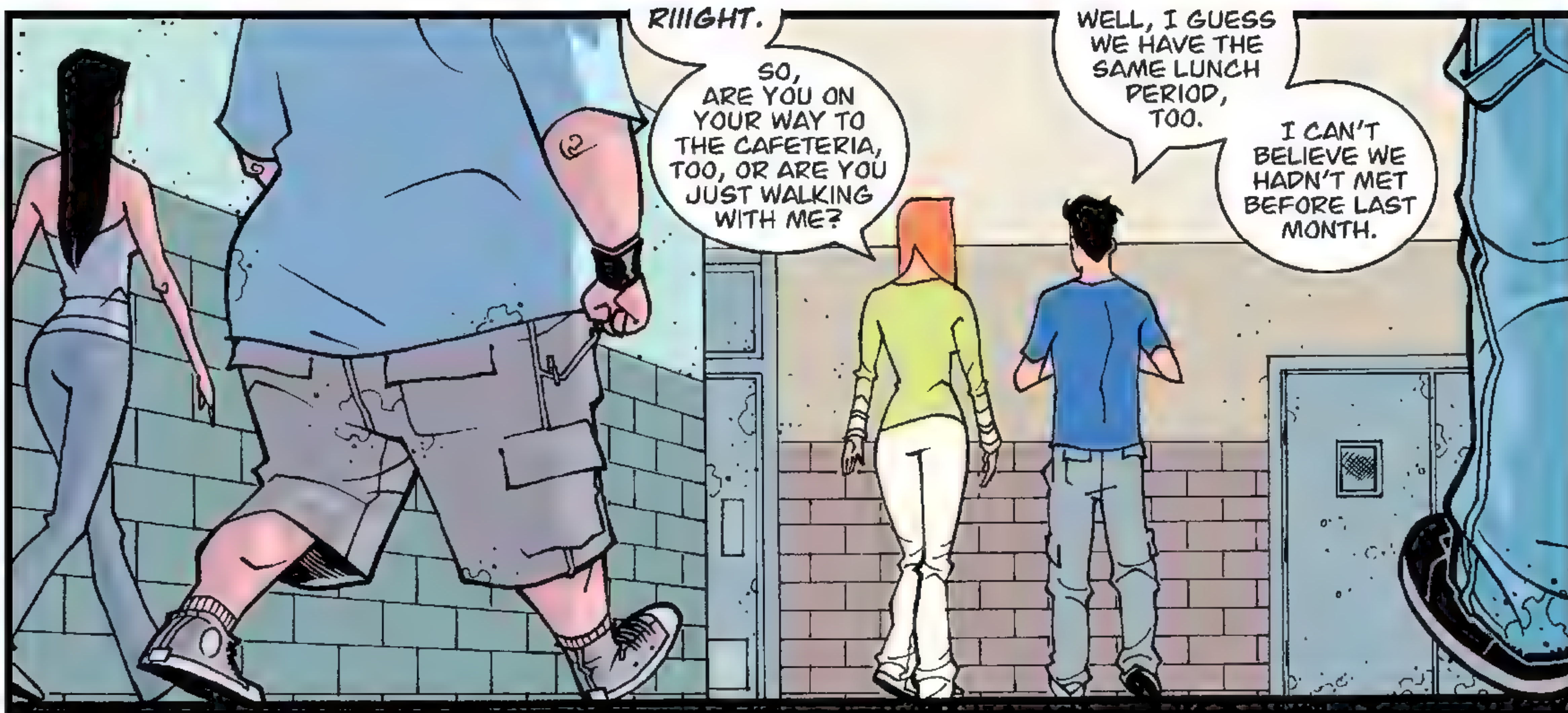
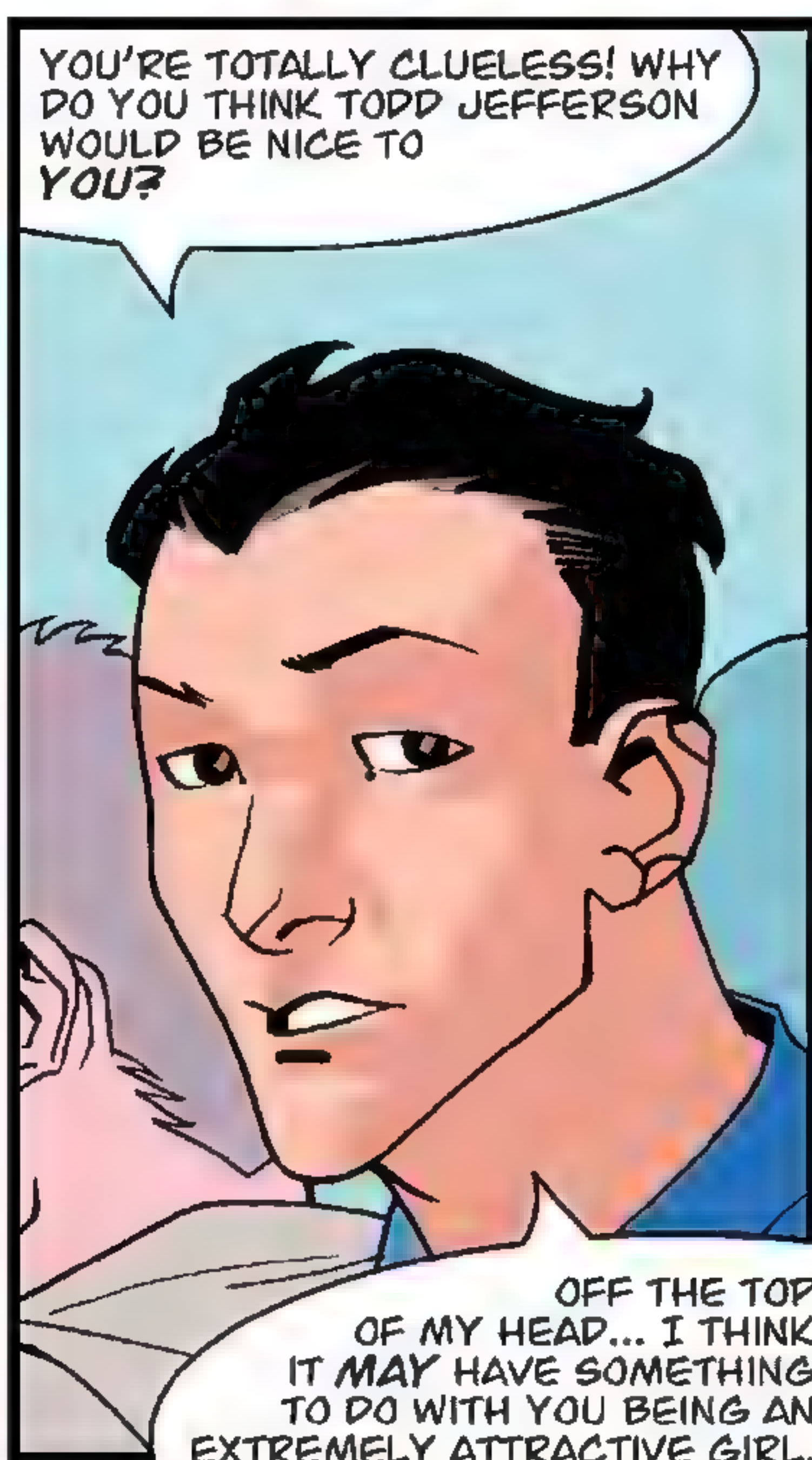
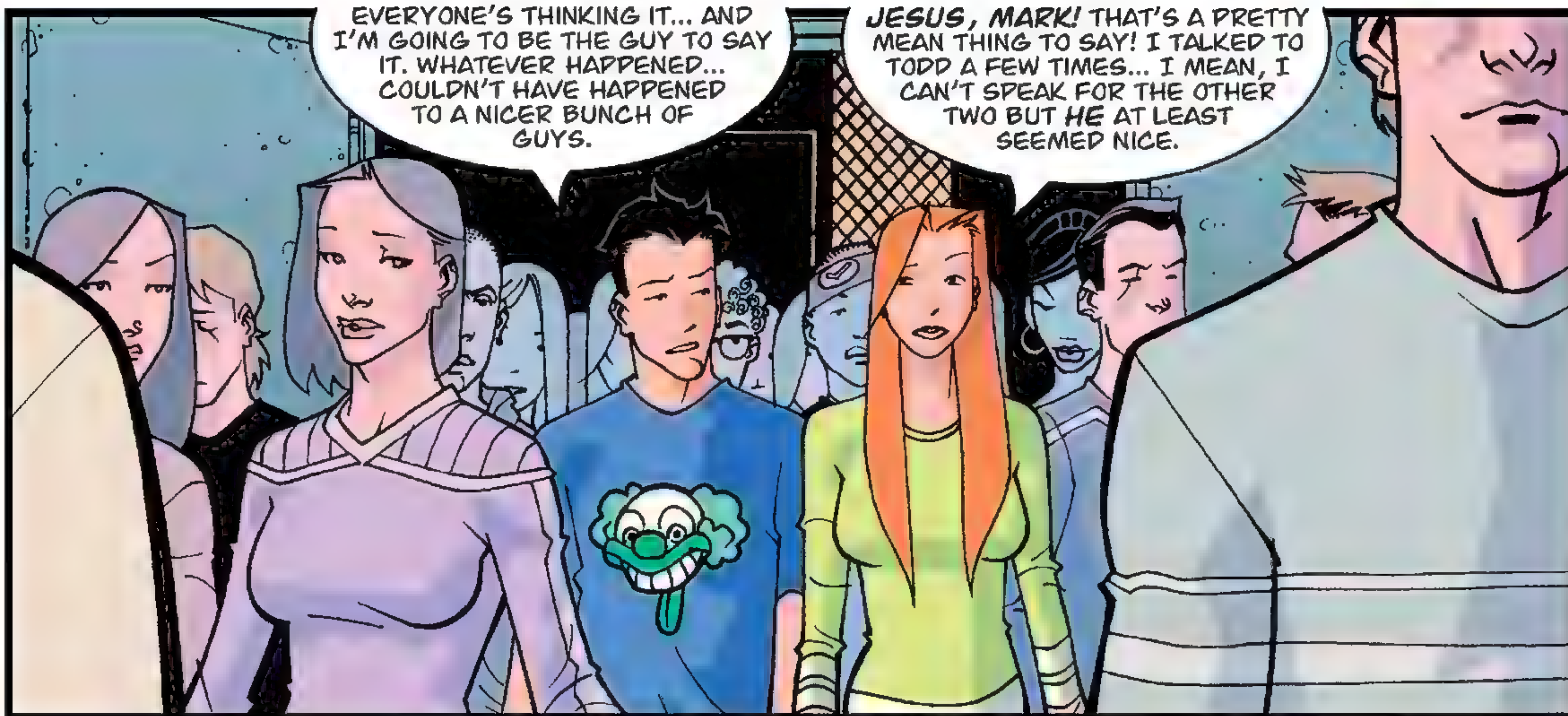


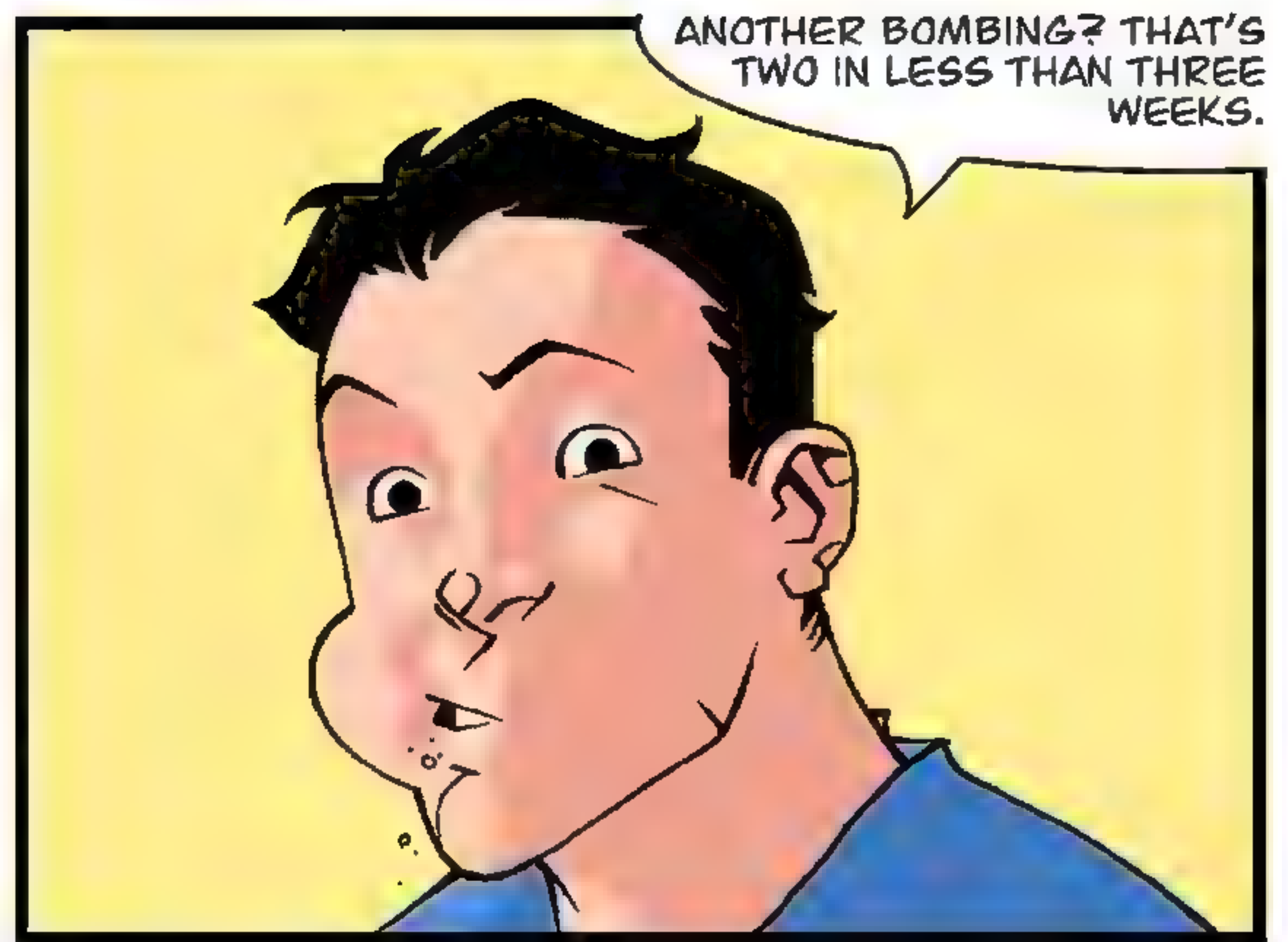
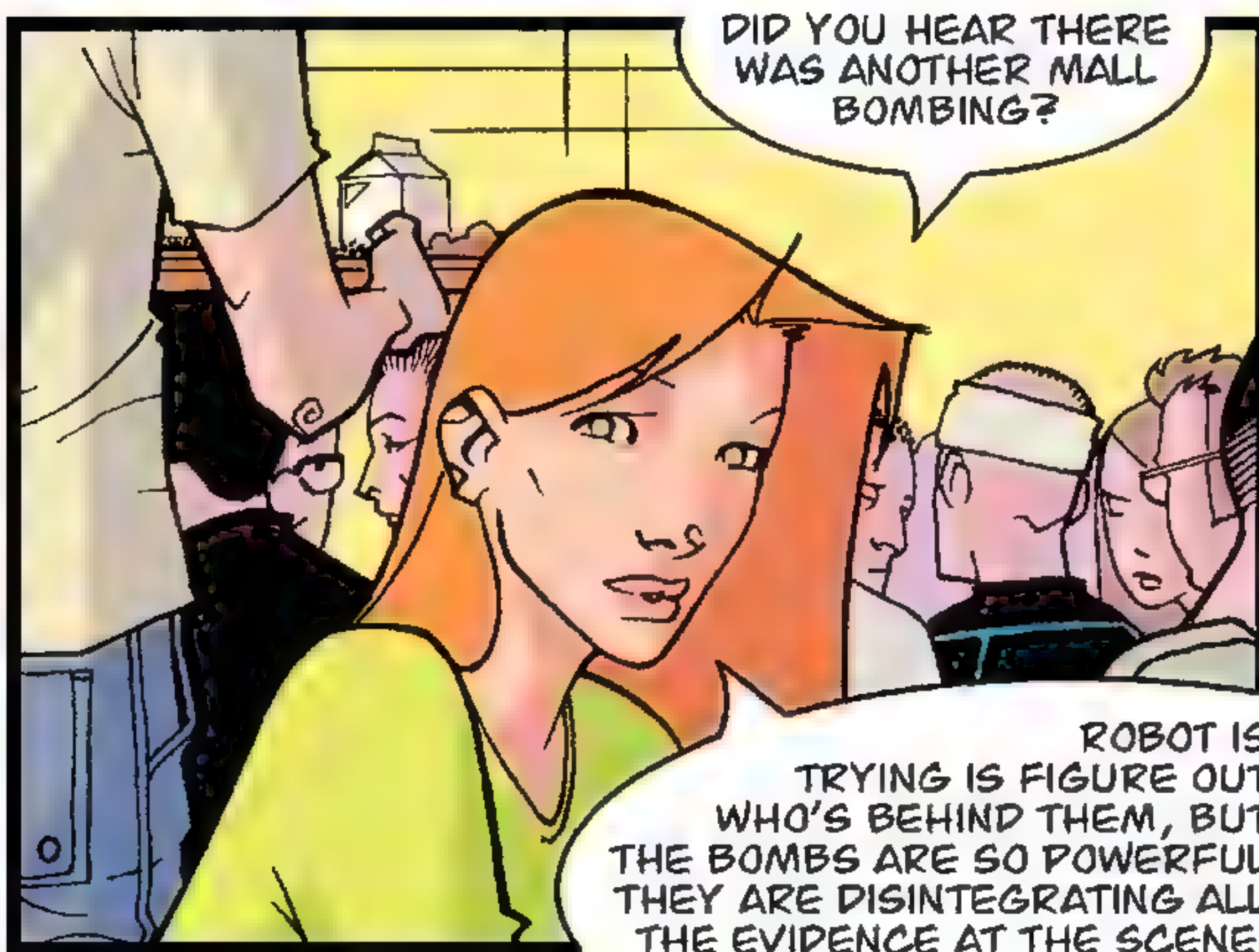
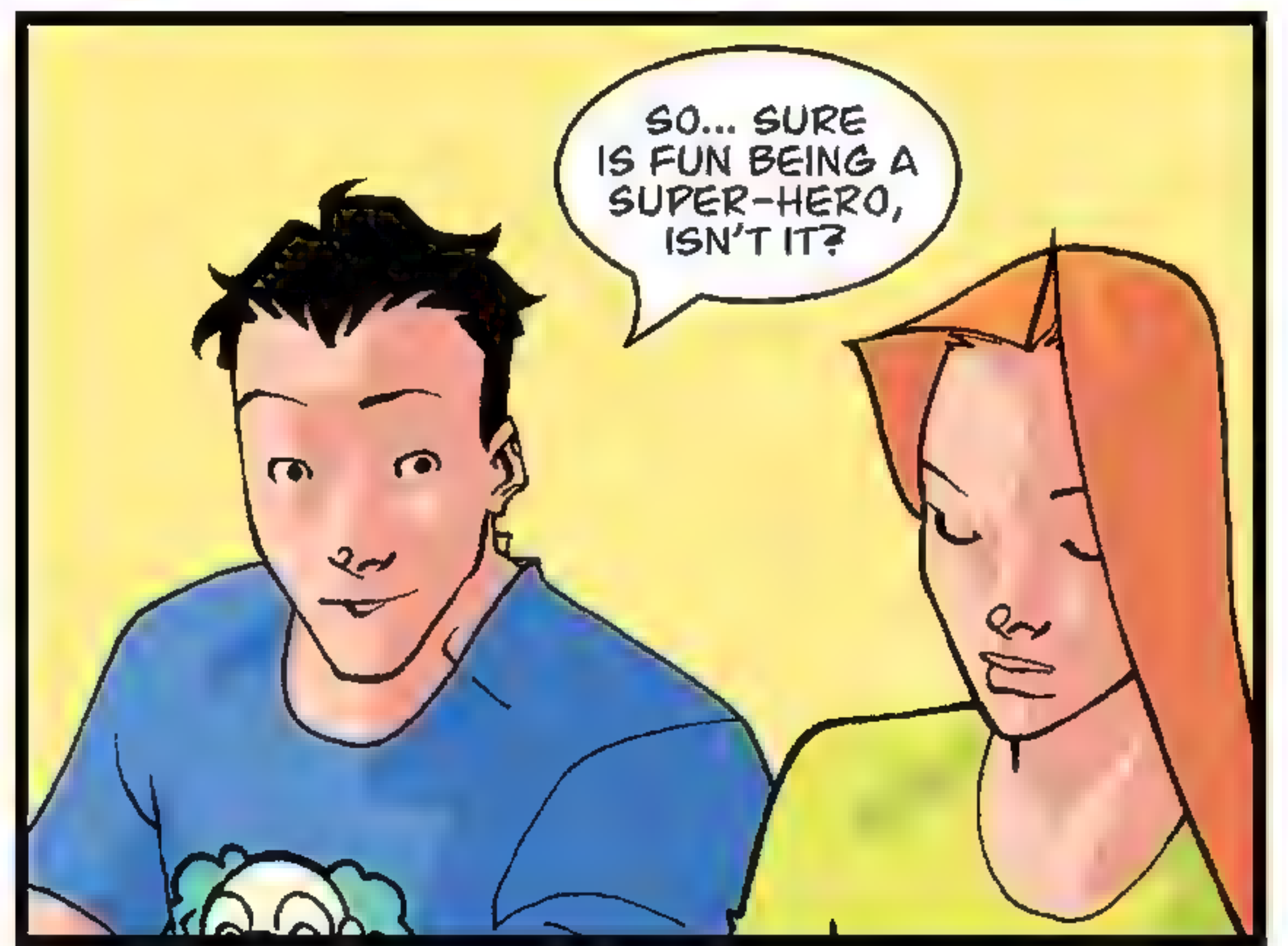
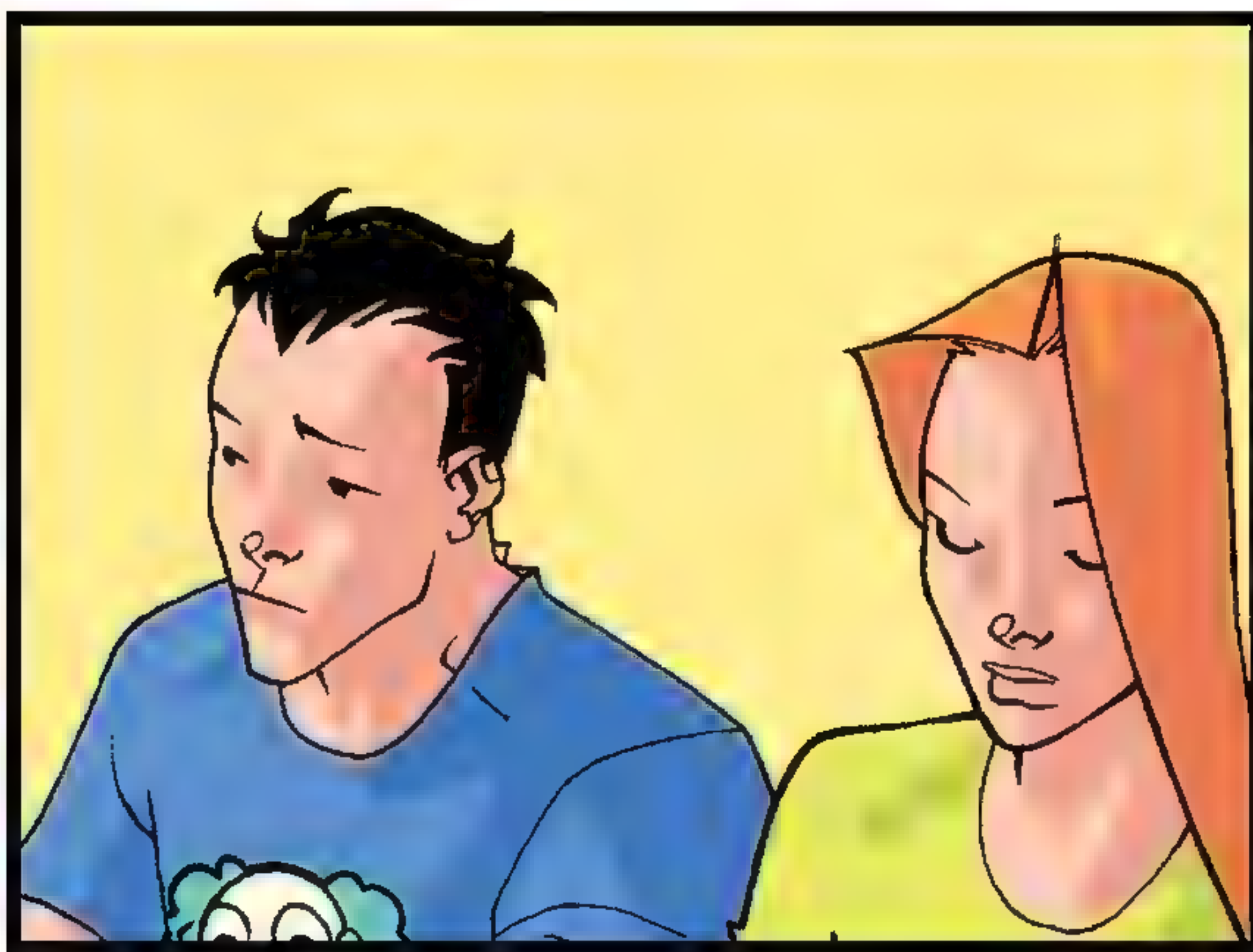
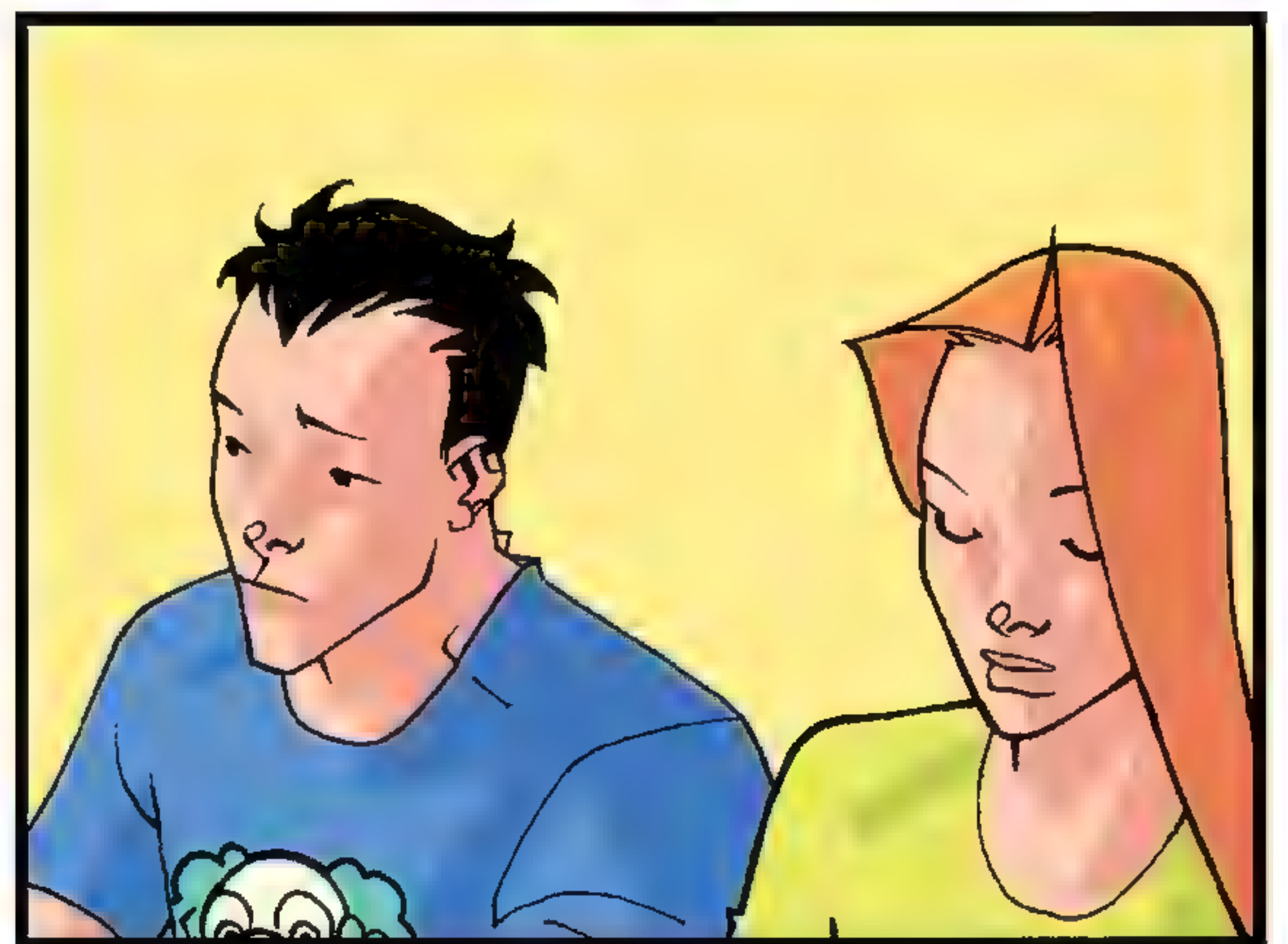
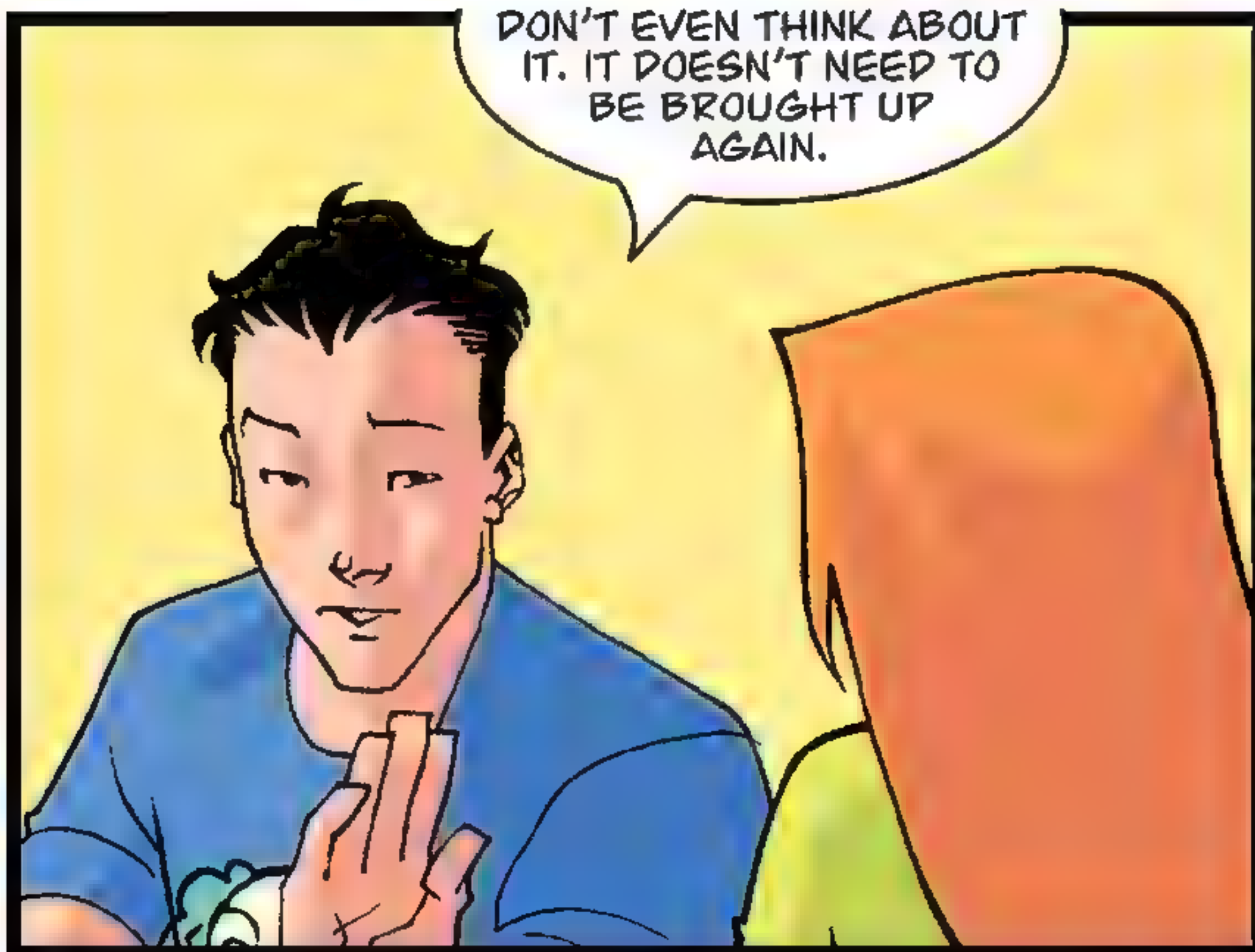
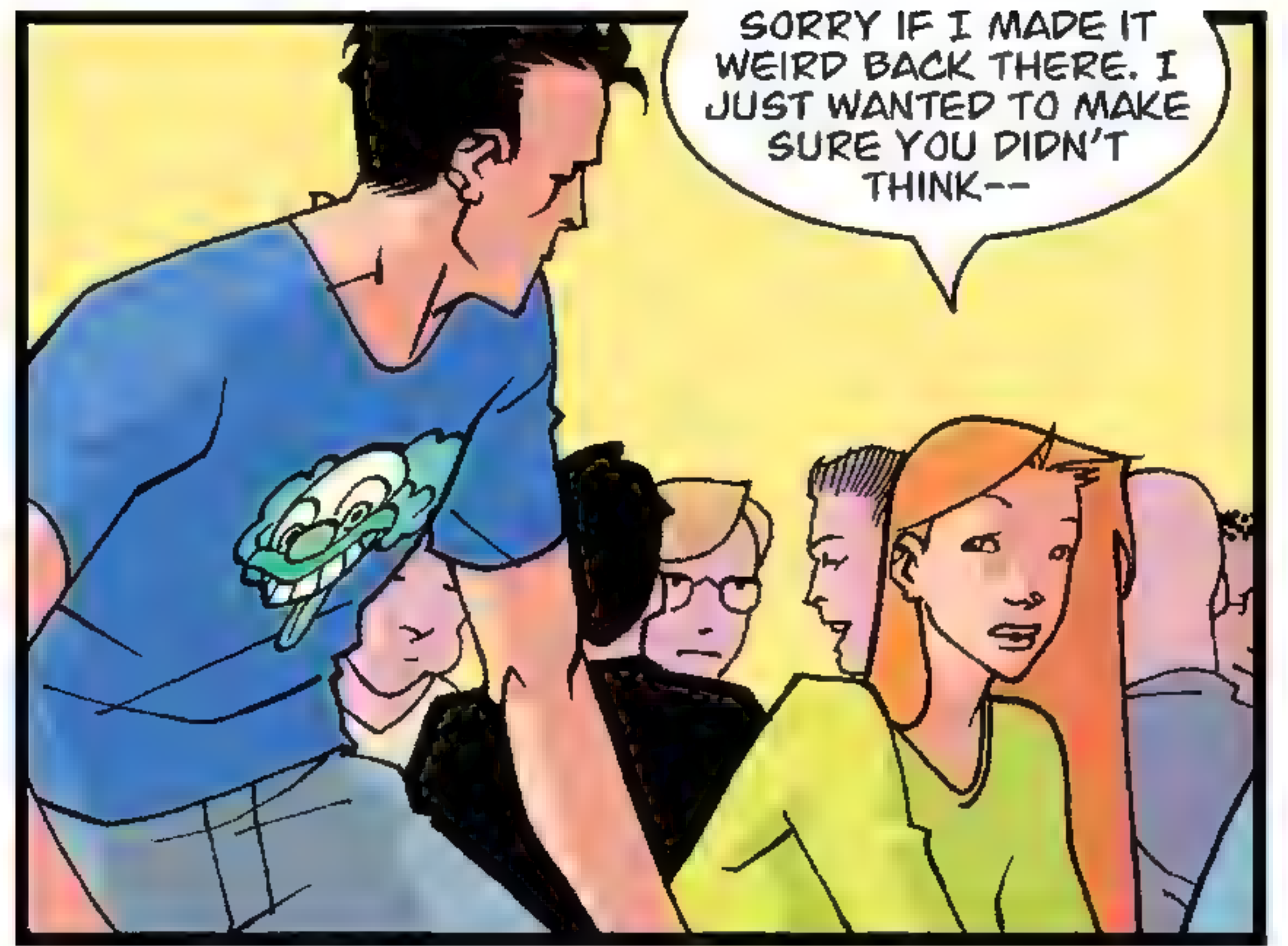


ISSUE THREE









IF YOU WANT TO SWING BY THE... "SECRET LAIR" (OR WHATEVER THE BOYS CALL IT) AFTER SCHOOL TODAY, I'M SURE ROBOT WOULD BE GLAD TO SEE YOU. YOU NEVER DID GET BACK TO HIM ON WHETHER OR NOT YOU WERE GOING TO JOIN THE TEAM.

I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN MAKE IT. I'VE GOT TO WORK TONIGHT.

YOU STILL WORK AT THE BURGER MART? ISN'T YOUR DAD A SEMI-FAMOUS NOVELIST?!

WELL.. YEAH, I MEAN... IT'S NOT LIKE I NEED THE MONEY, HE MAKES ME WORK THERE BECAUSE HE THINKS IT BUILDS CHARACTER.

WEIRD.

WELL, I'VE GOT TO GET TO CLASS.

SEE YOU AROUND.

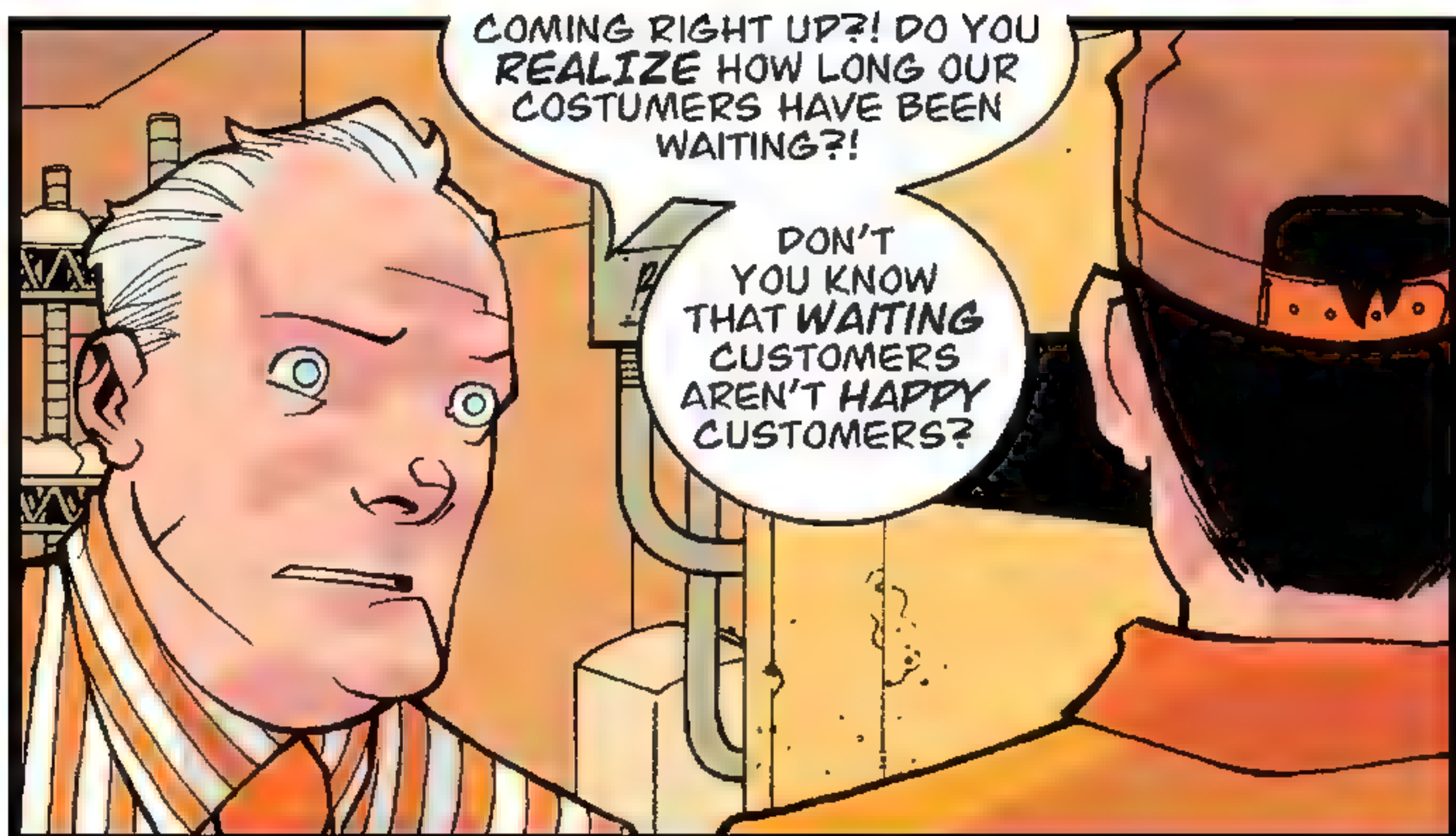
LATER.

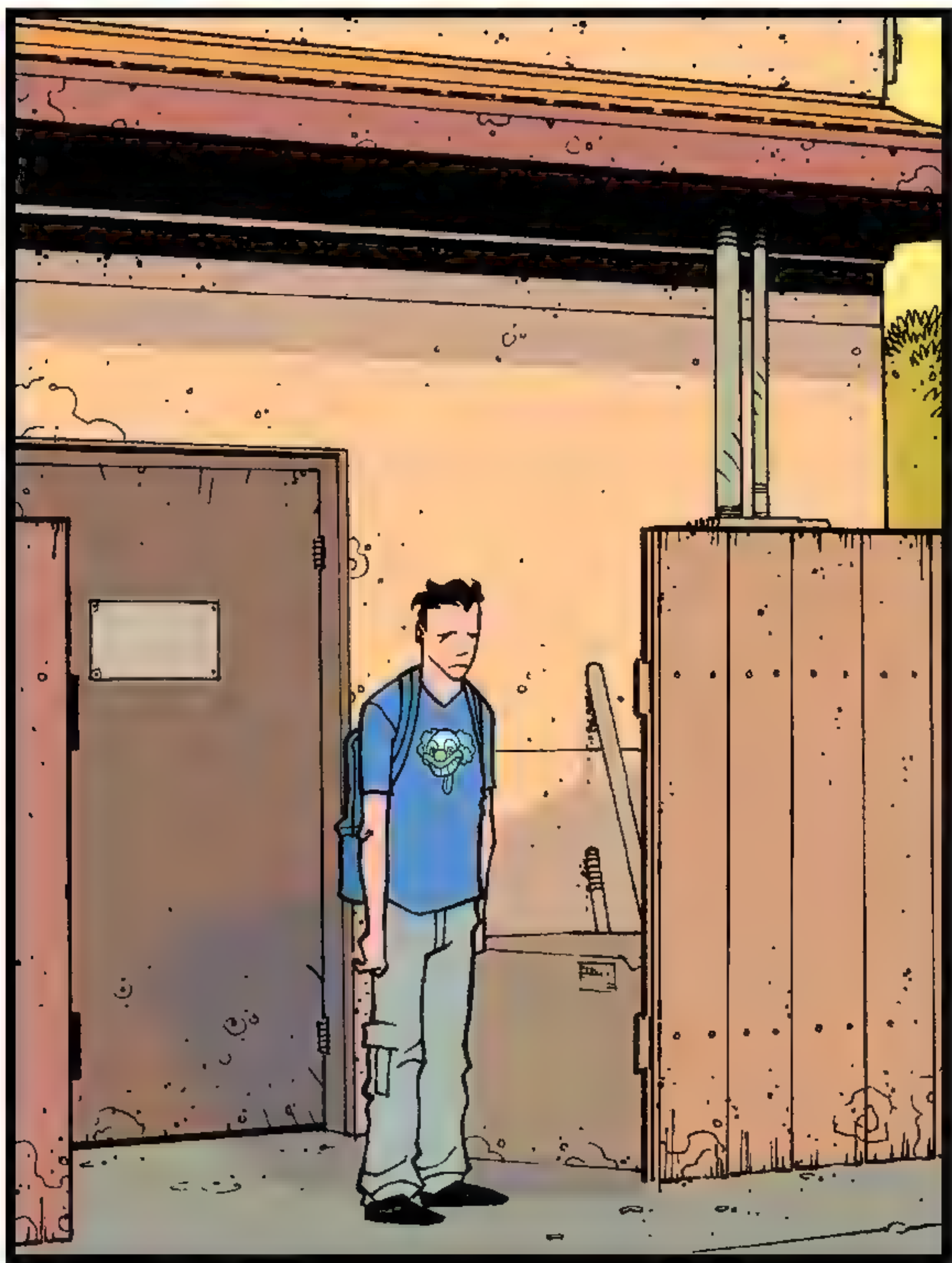
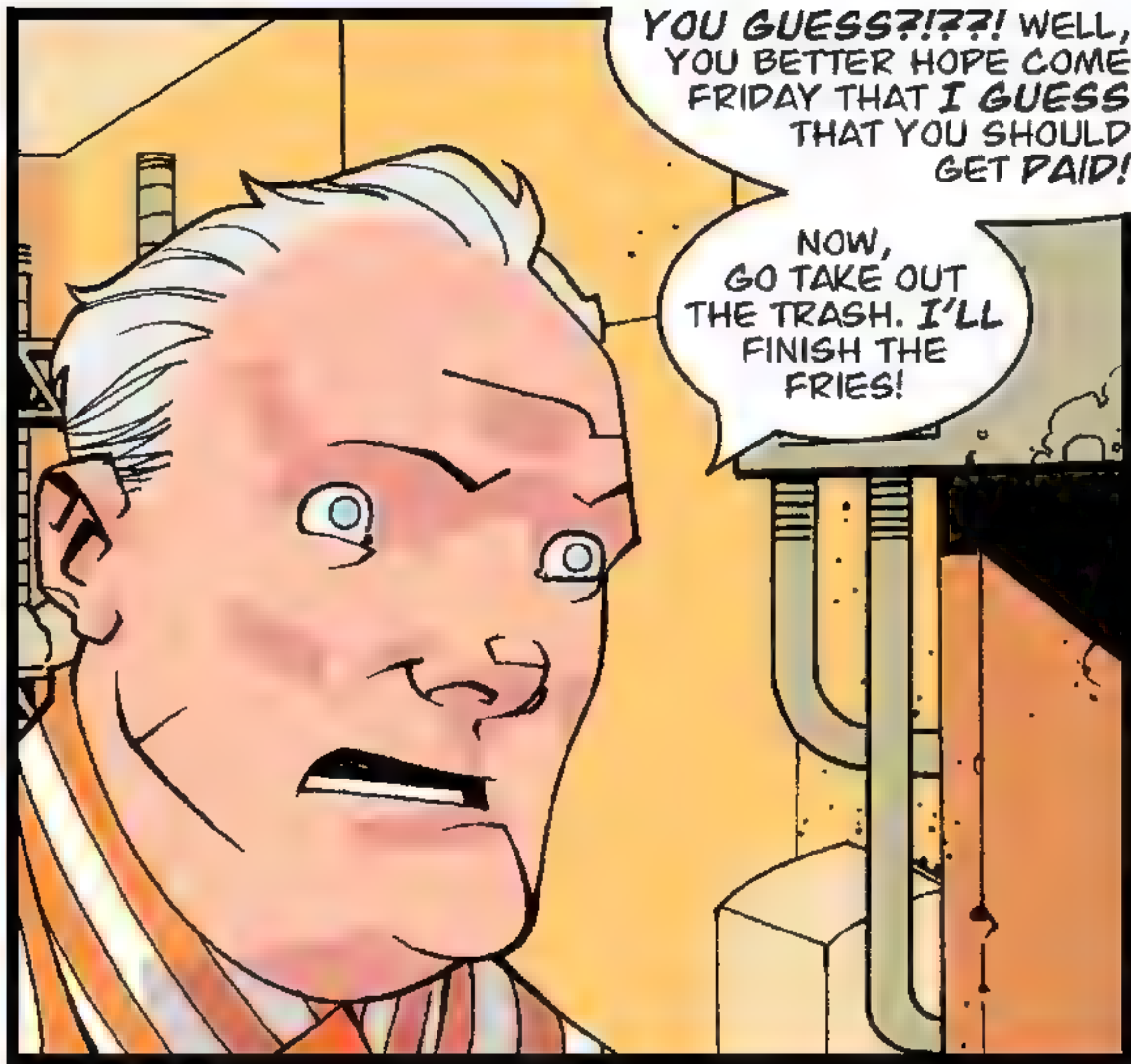
SO, THE RUMORS ARE TRUE. YOU GUYS ARE GOING OUT.

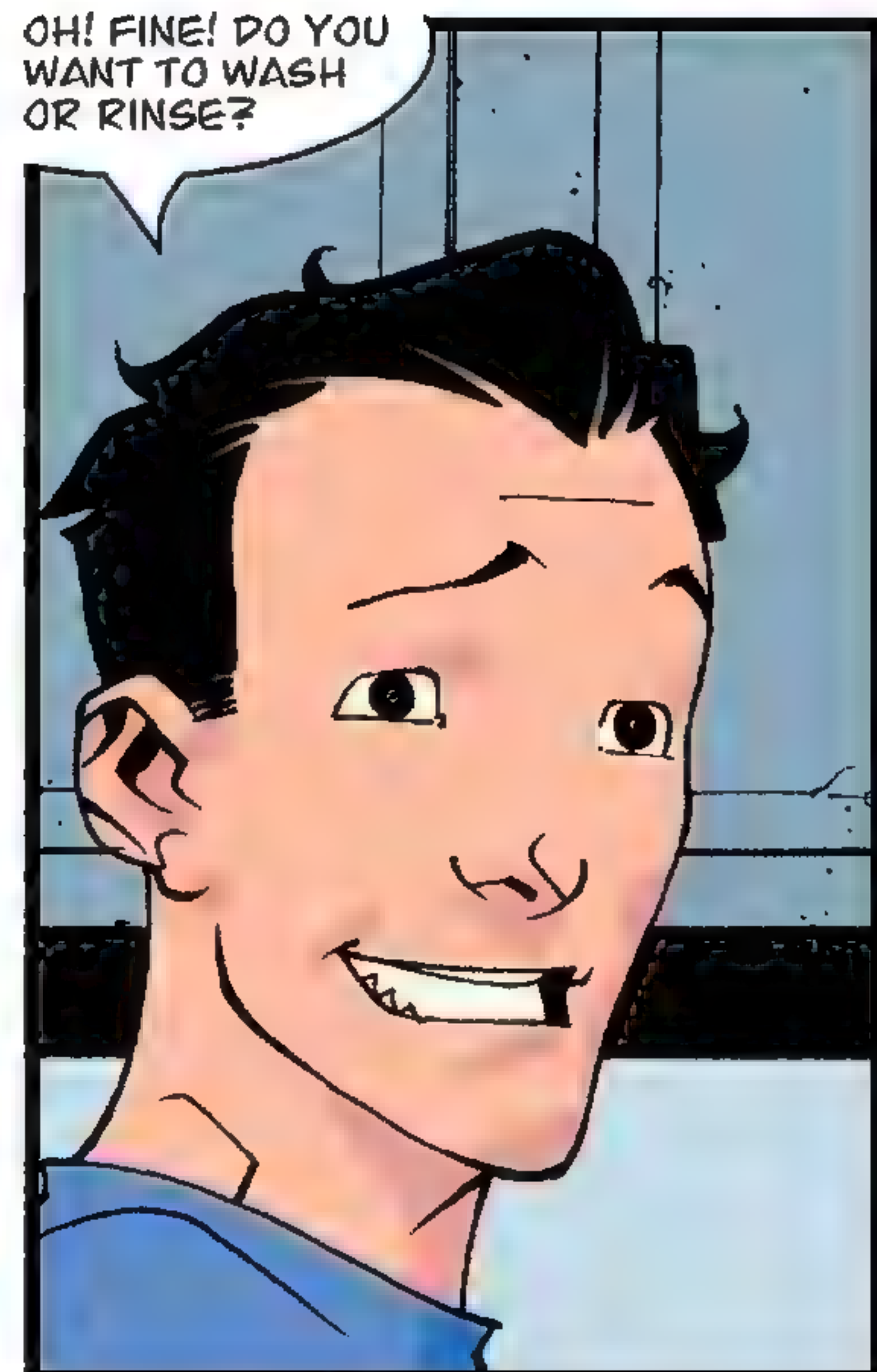
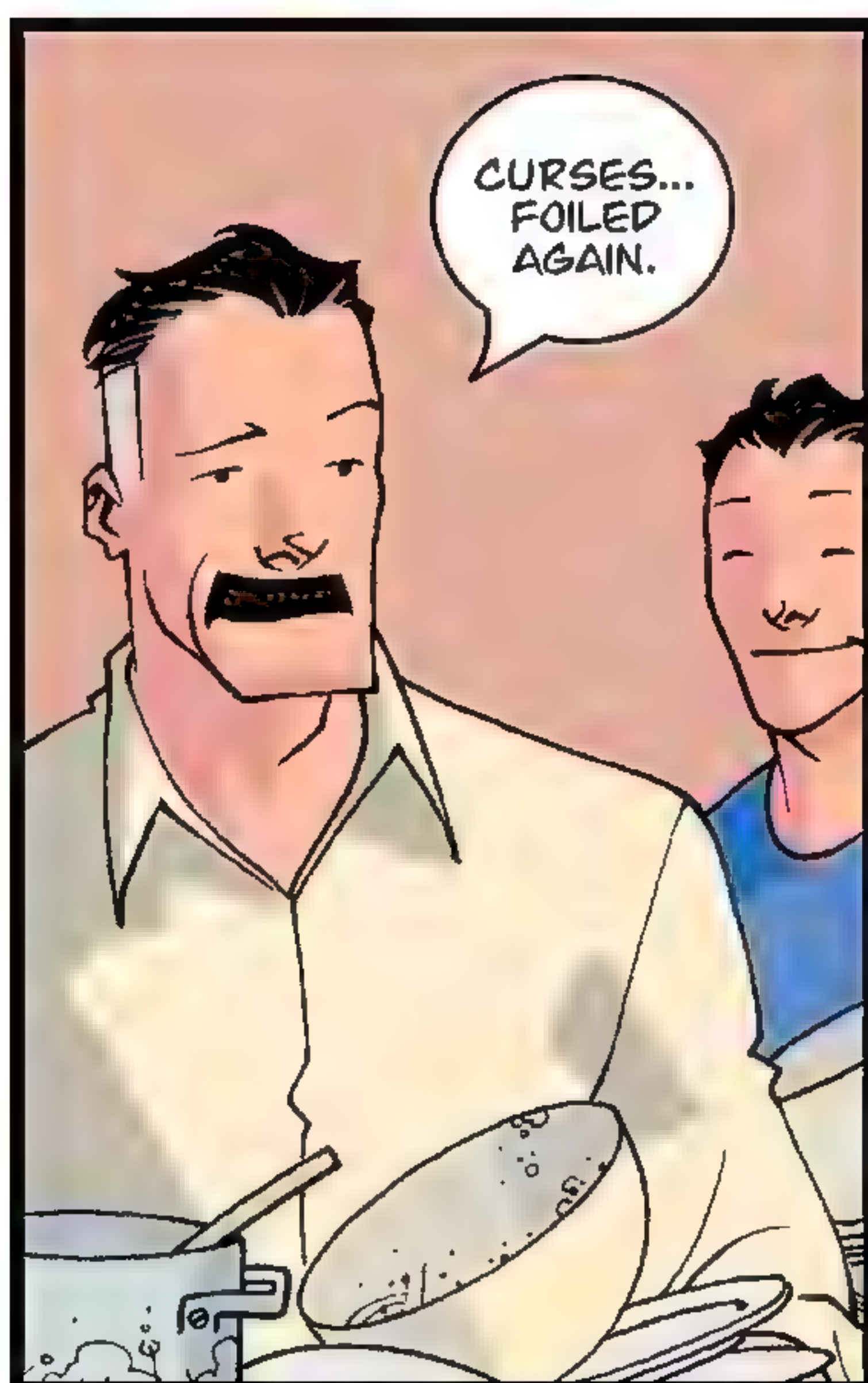
OH. HEY, WILLIAM... GOING OUT WHERE?

DON'T PLAY DUMB WITH ME. YOU TWO ARE AN ITEM, BOYFRIEND AND GIRLFRIEND, AND ALL THE PERKS THAT COME WITH IT.

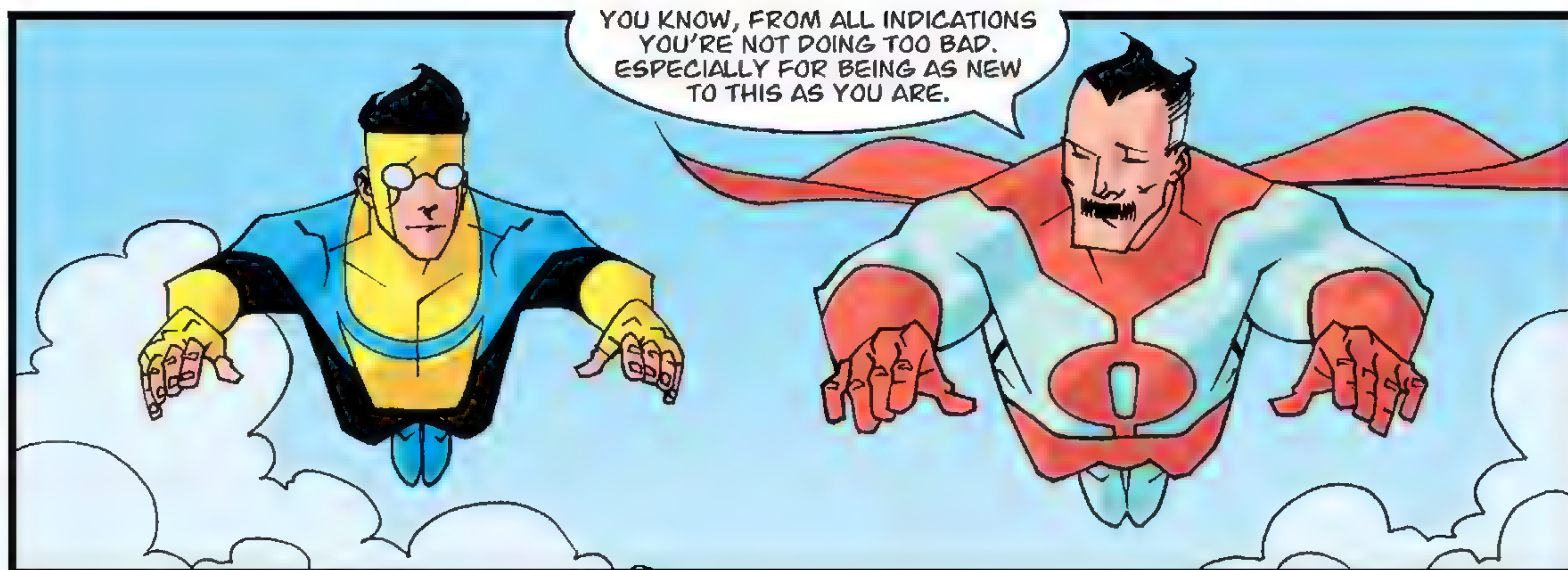
TRUST ME. SHE'S NOT MY GIRLFRIEND.



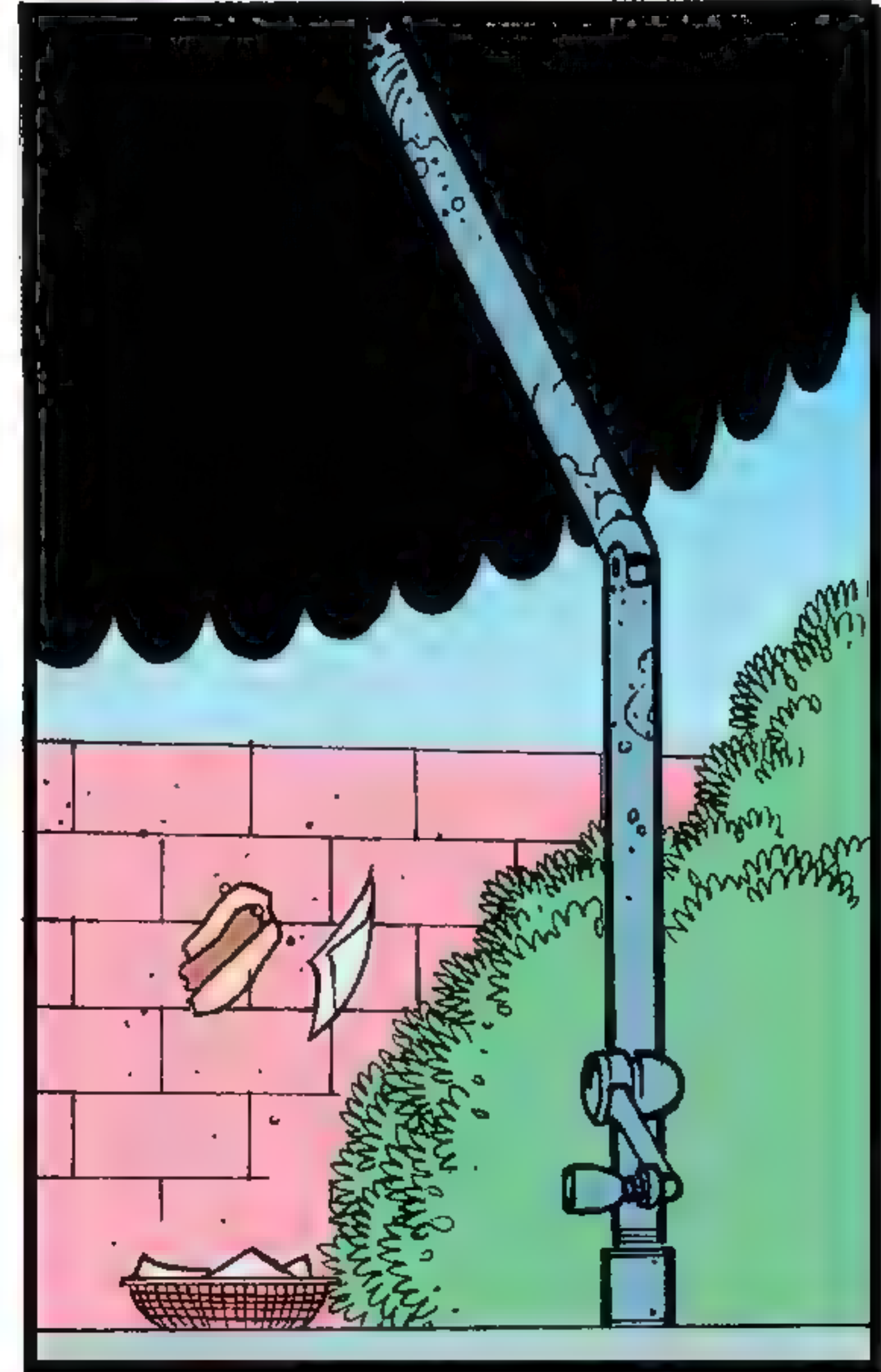
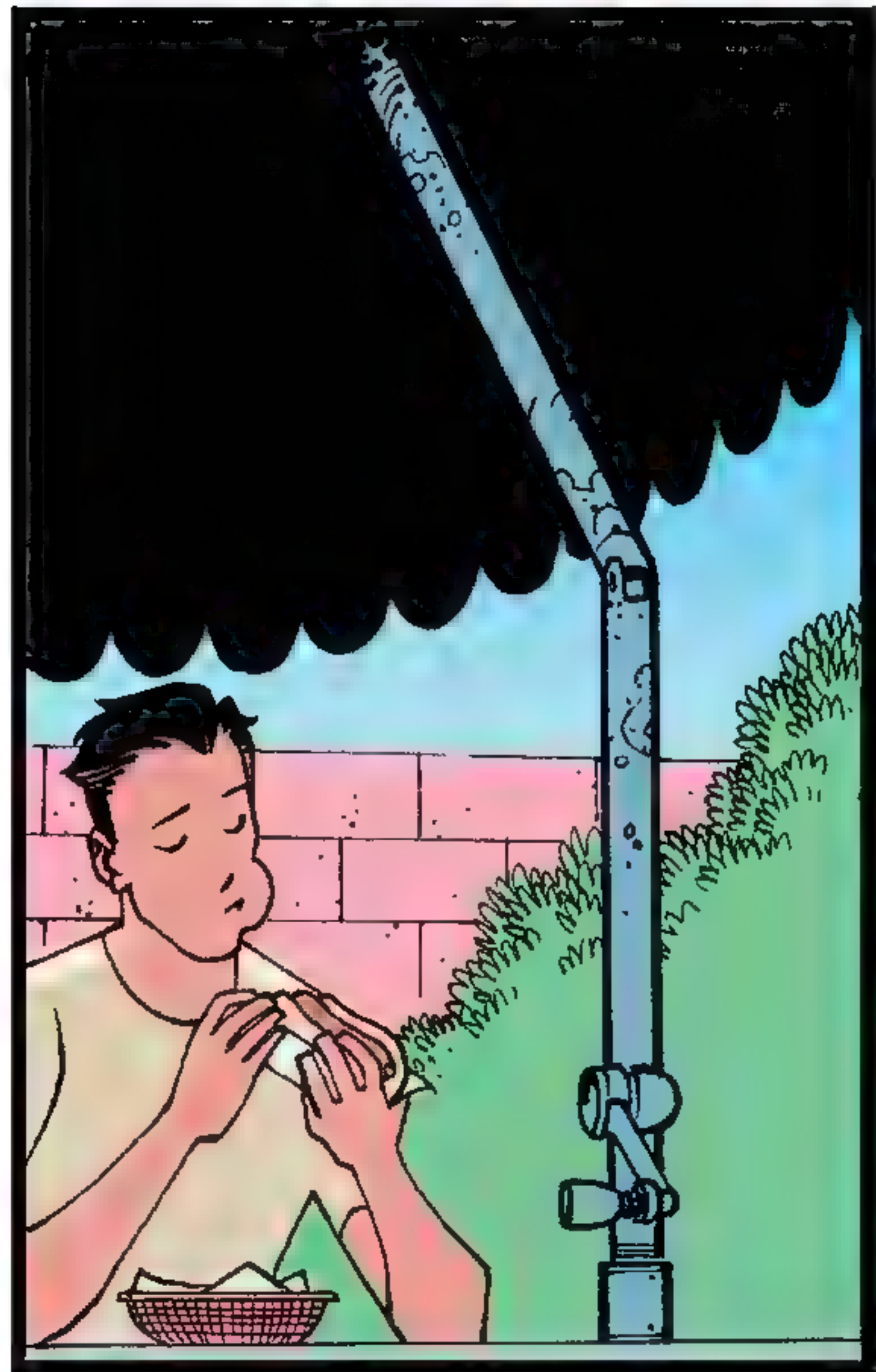
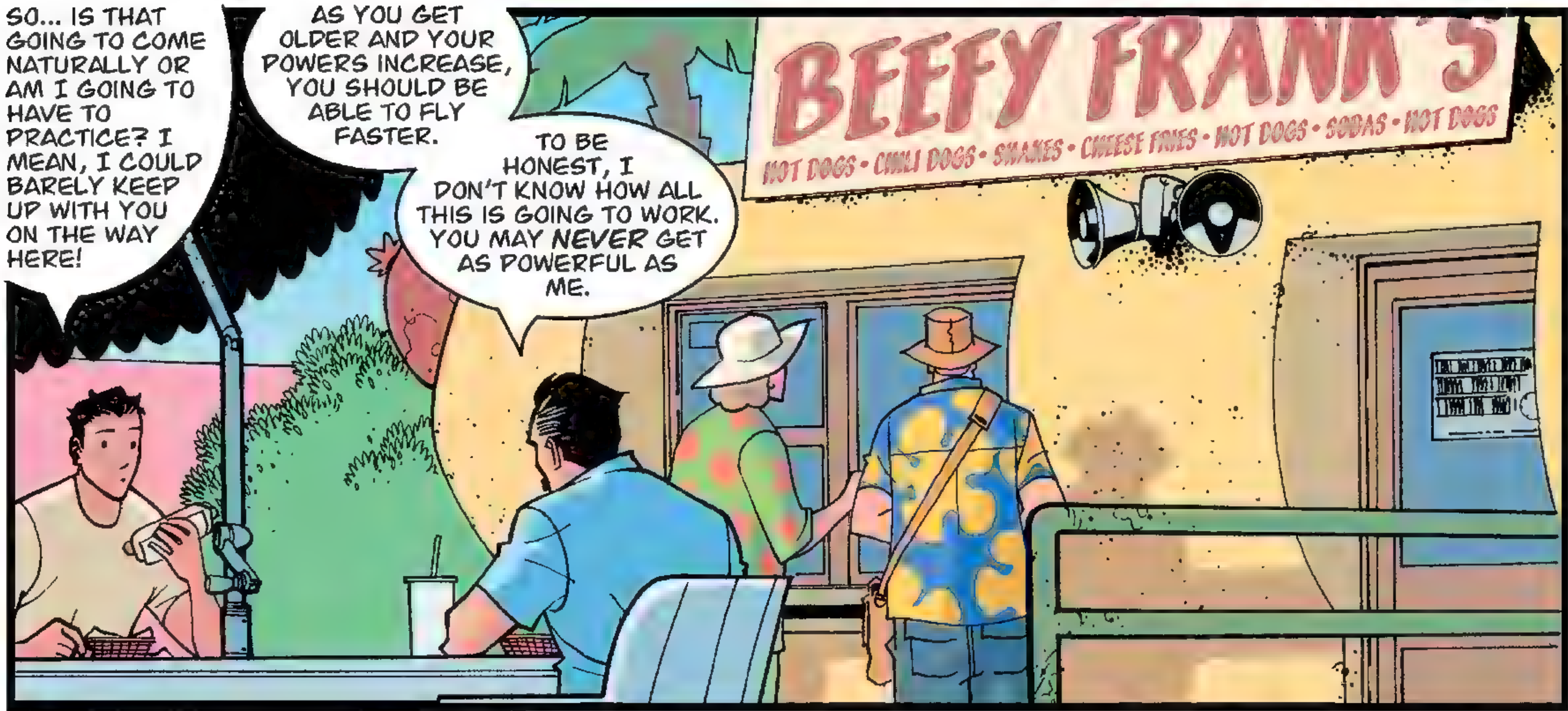


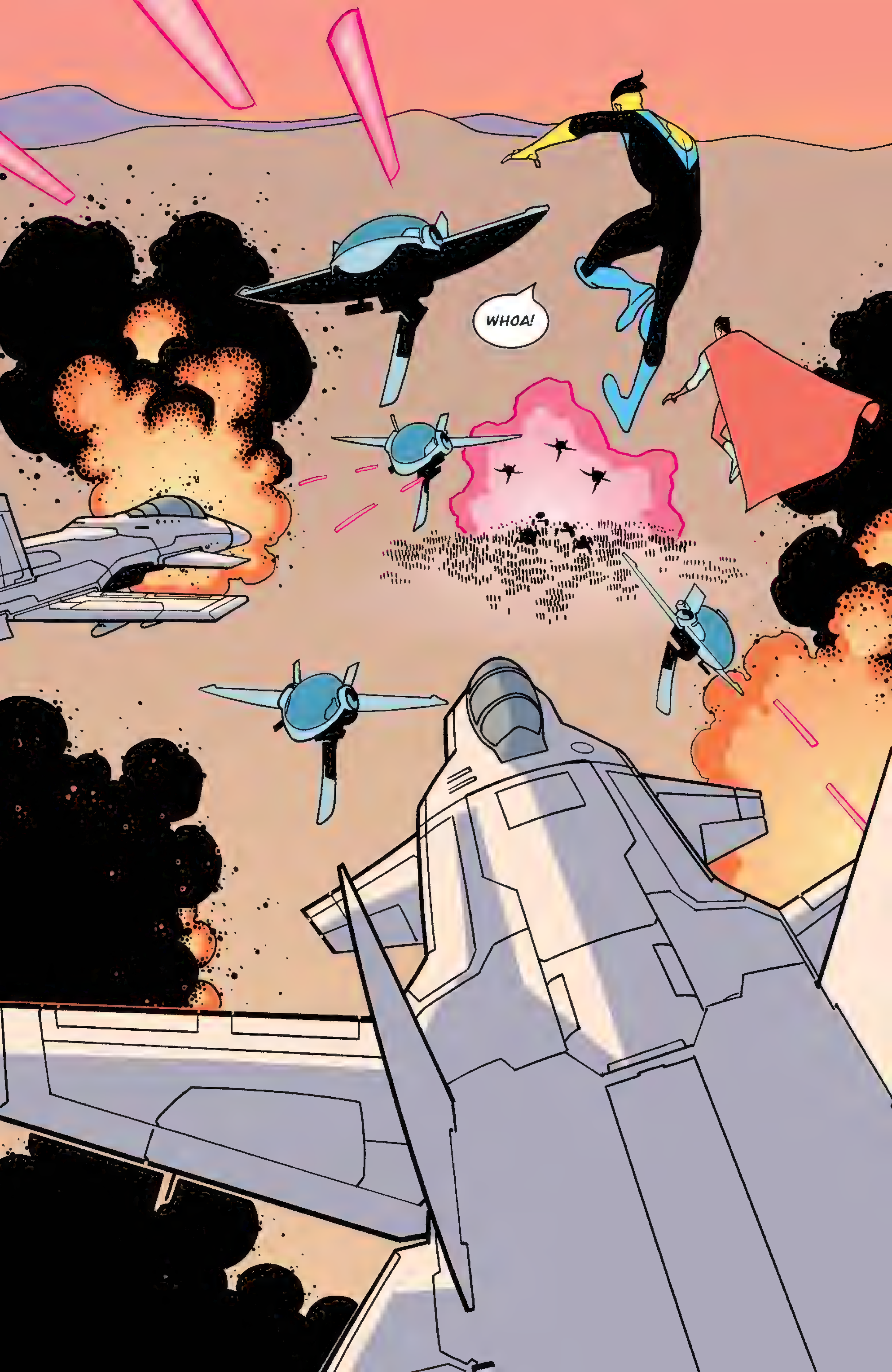












WHOA!

NO TIME FOR
THAT, SON!
LET'S HELP
THESE BOYS
OUT!



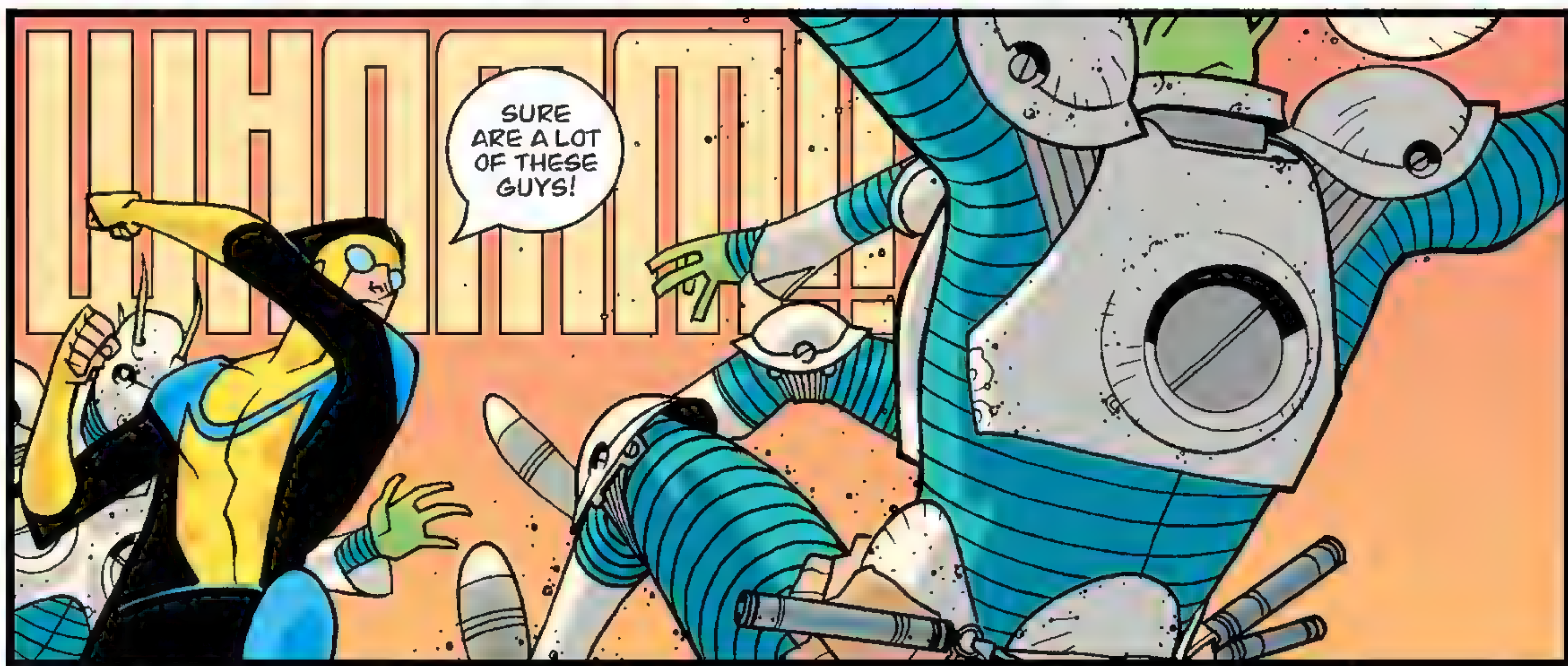
I'LL
DO WHAT
I CAN!



THAT'S
THE
SPIRIT!



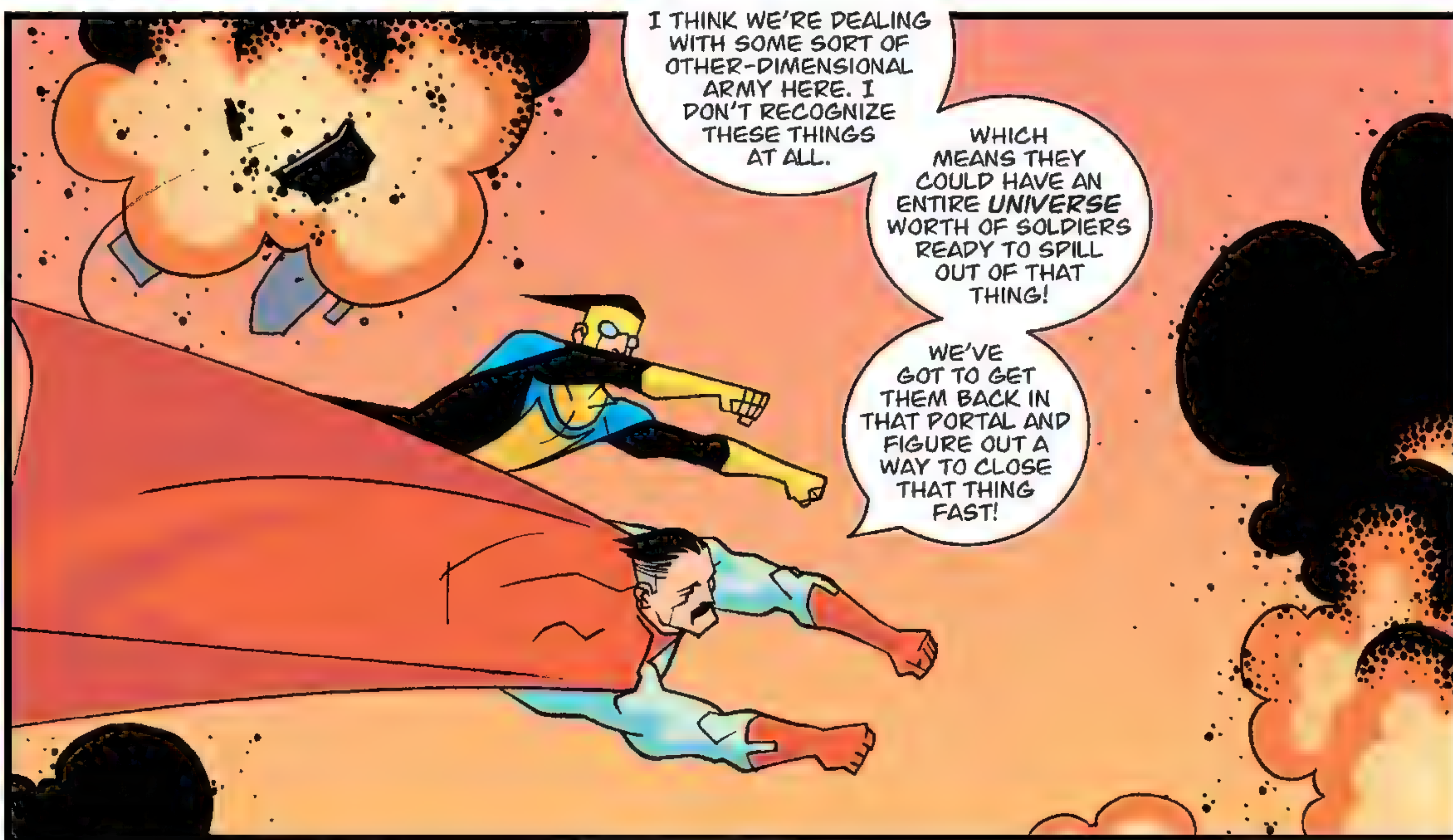
SURE
ARE A LOT
OF THESE
GUYS!

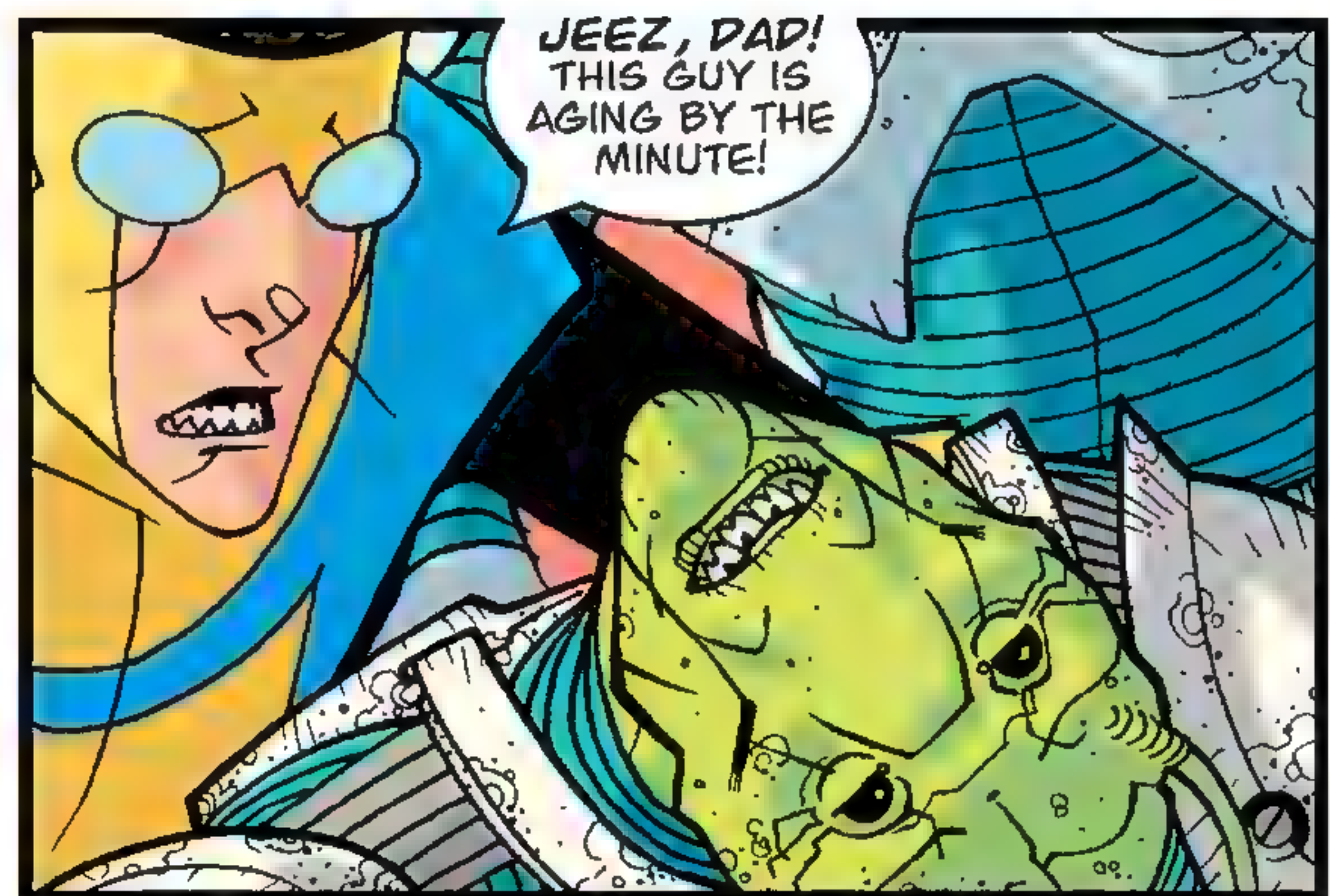
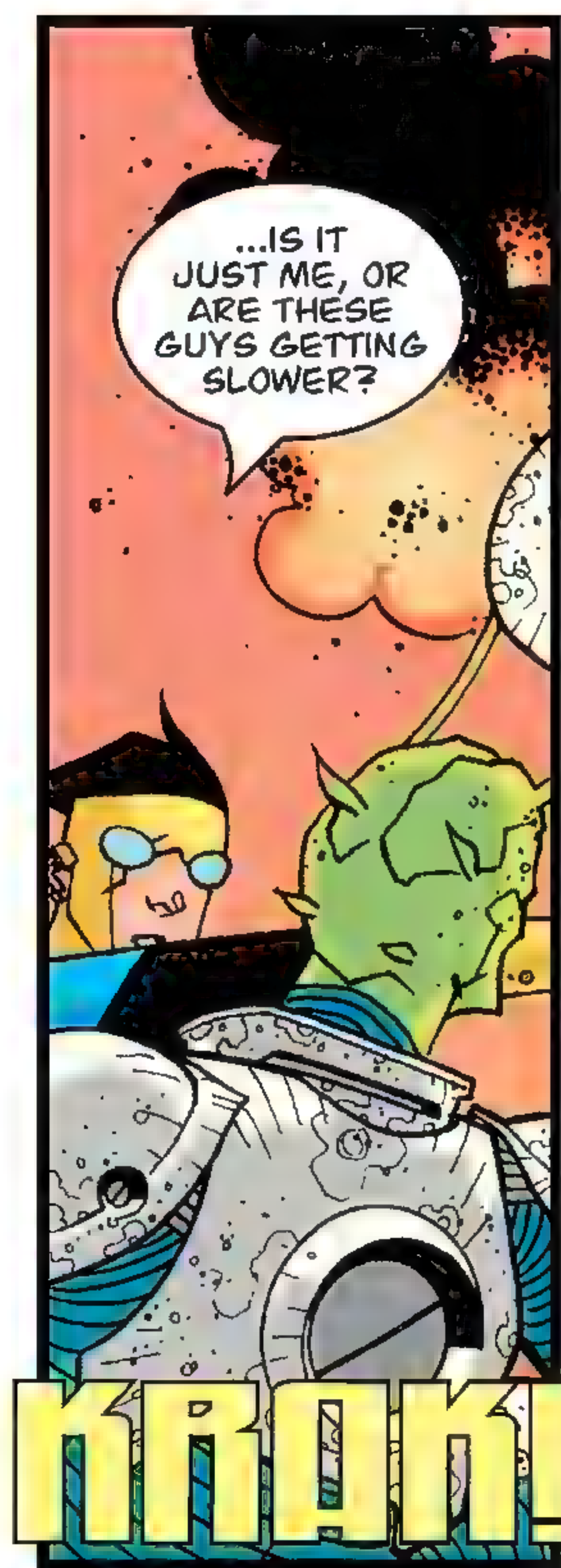


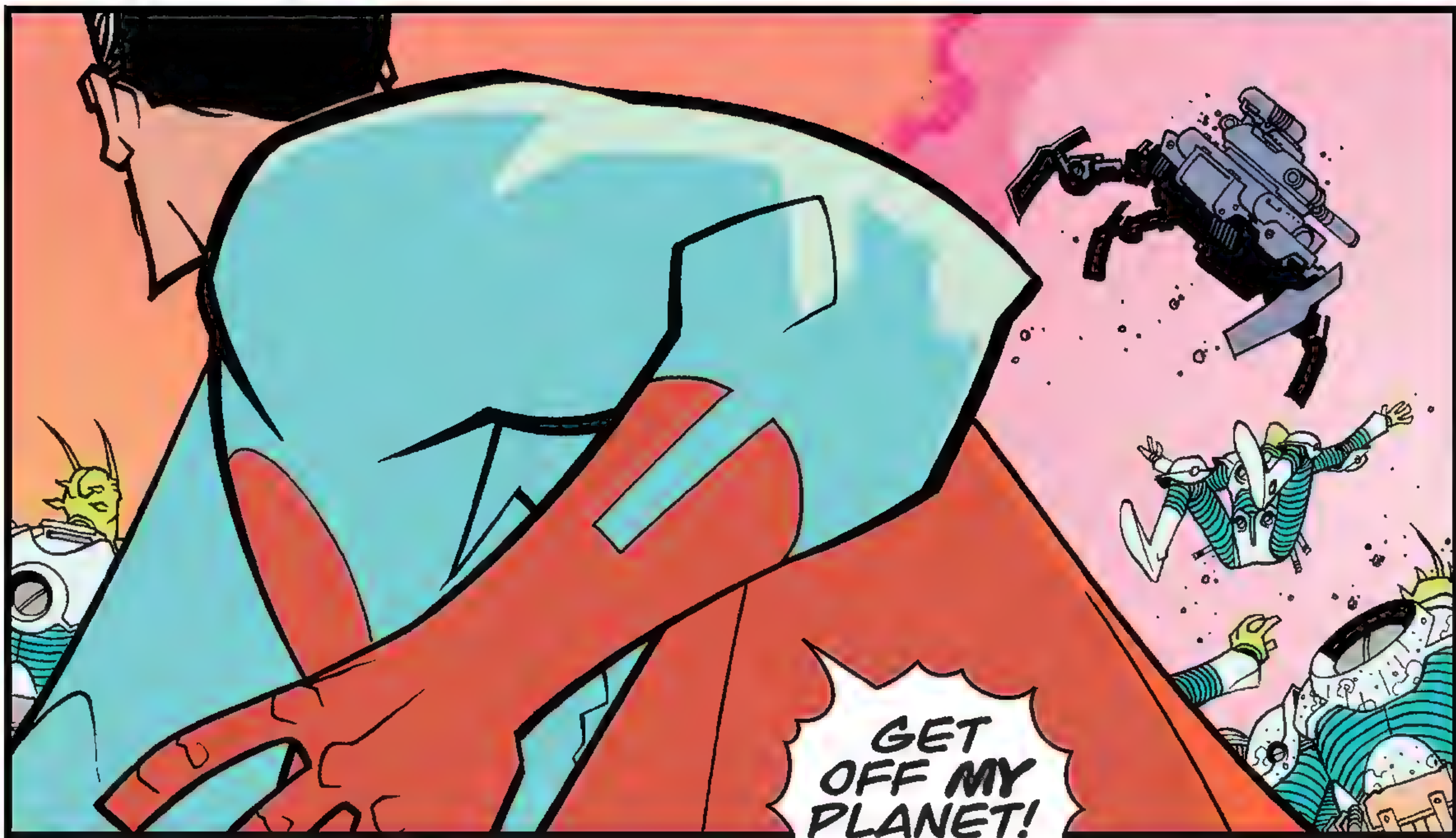
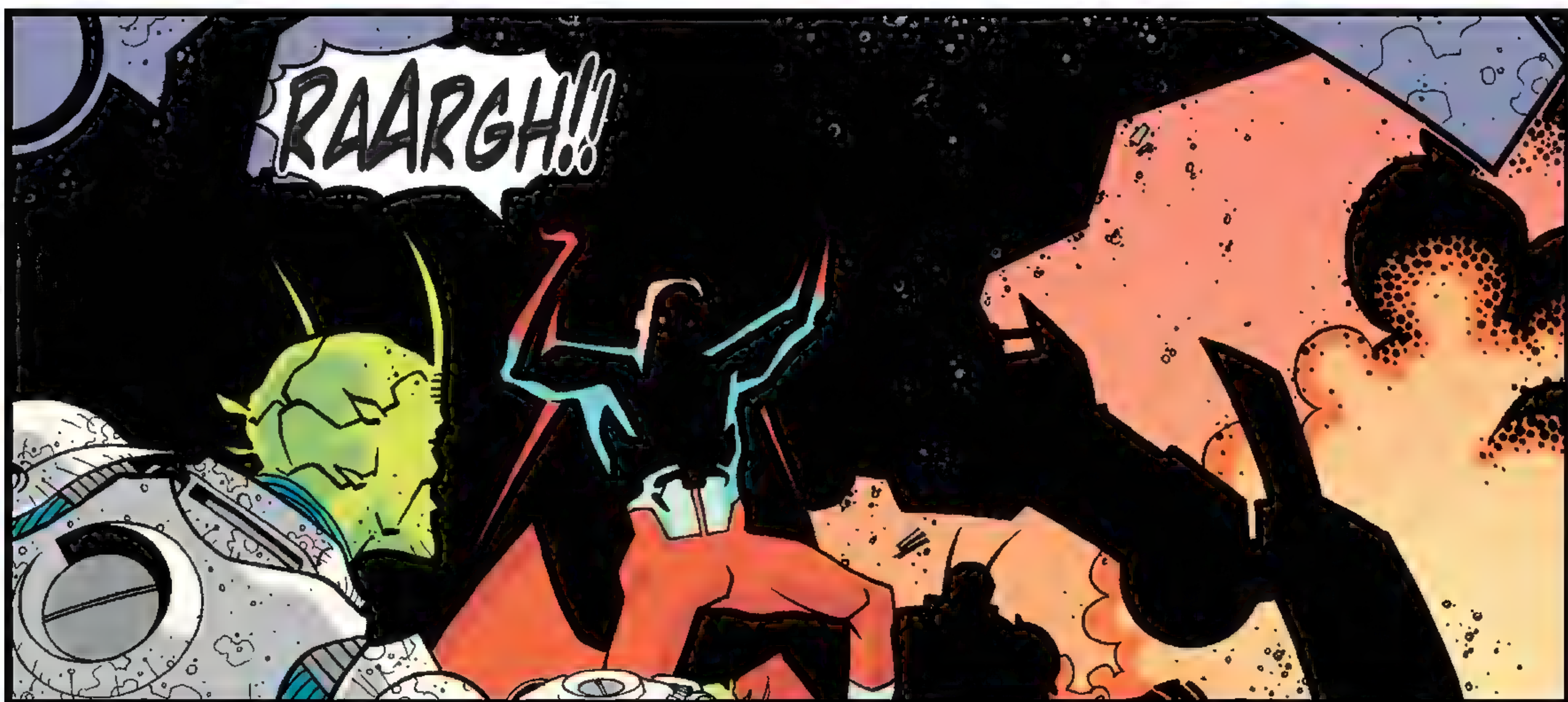
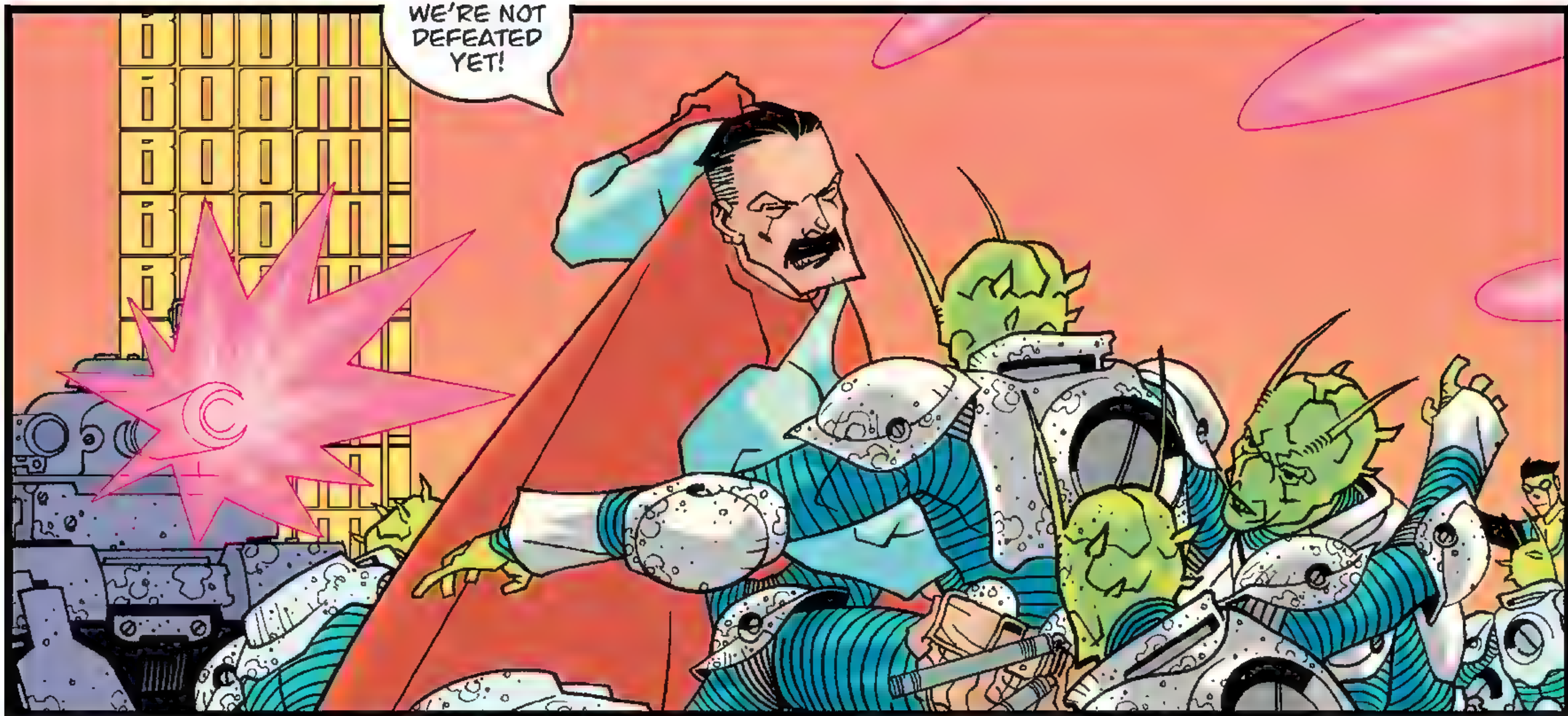
NO
KIDDING!

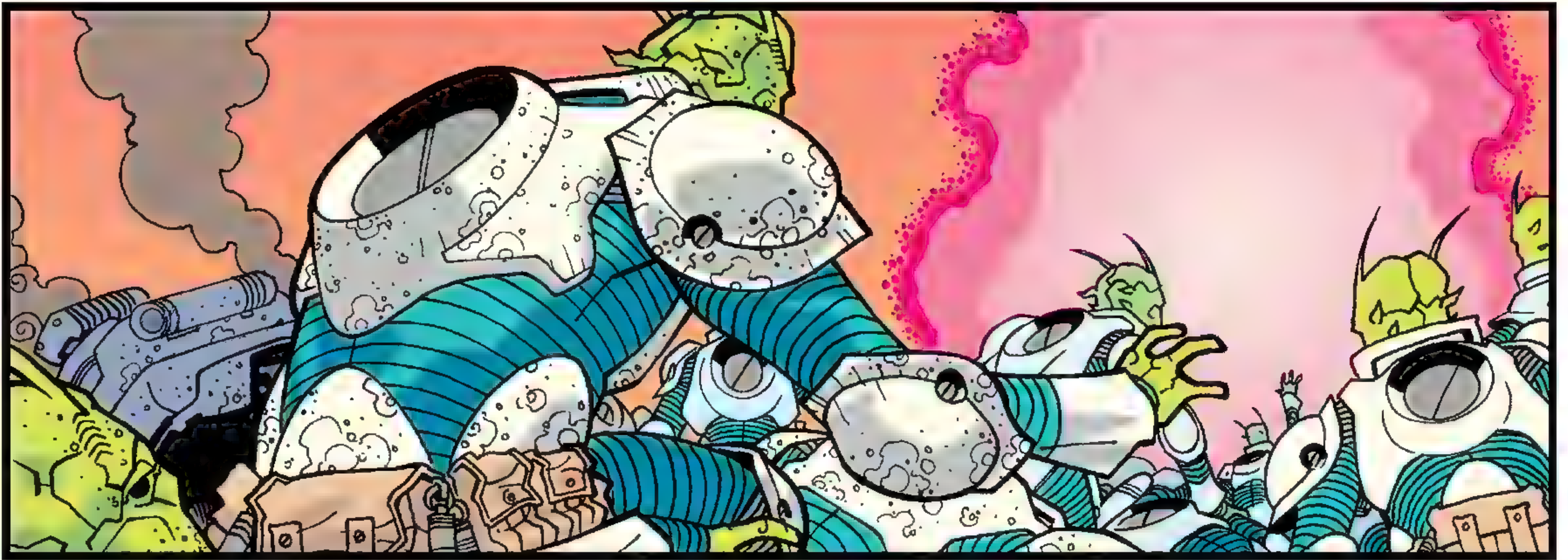
THERE
SEEMS TO
BE AN ENDLESS
STREAM OF THEM
COMING OUT OF
THAT PORTAL.









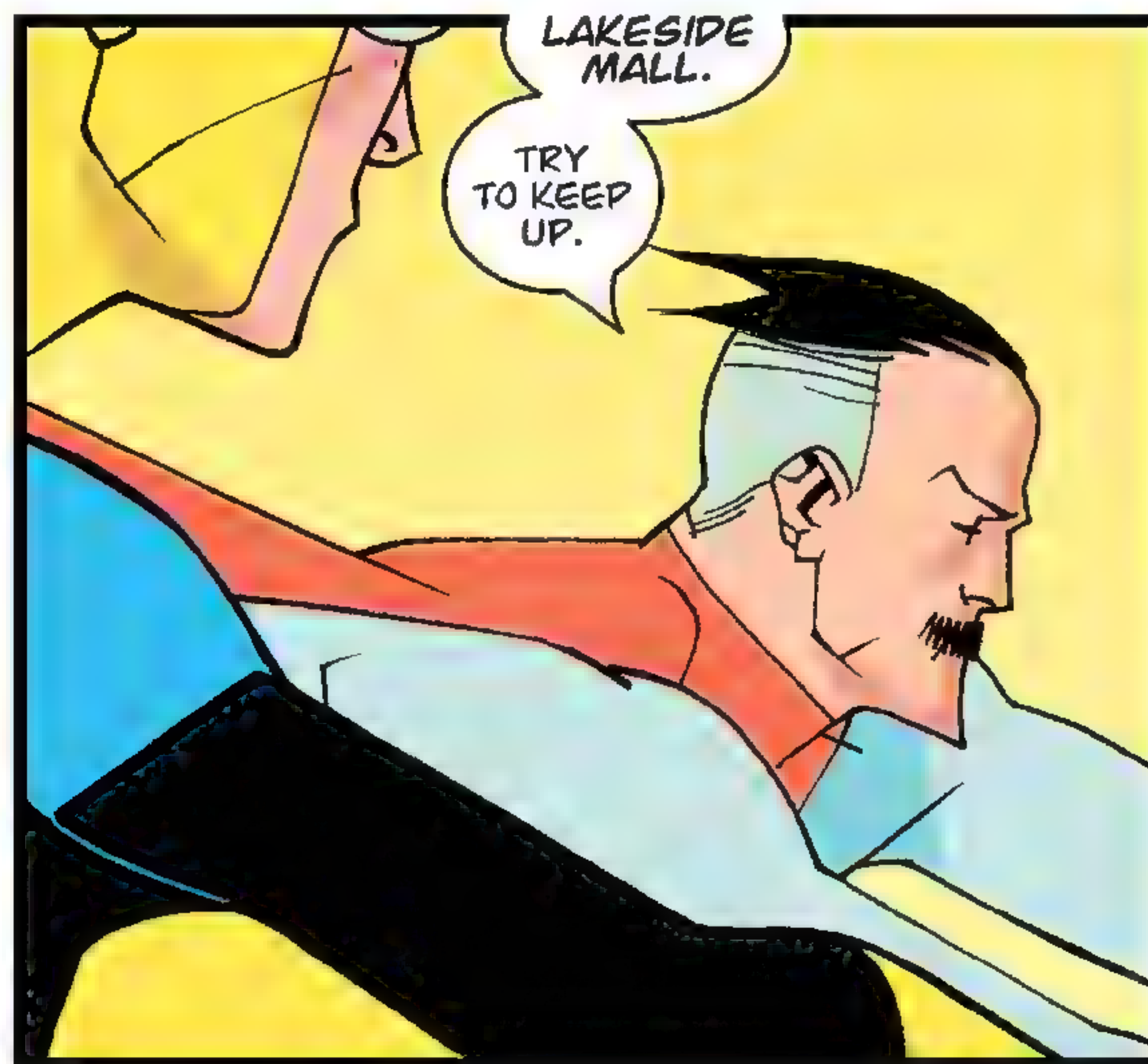


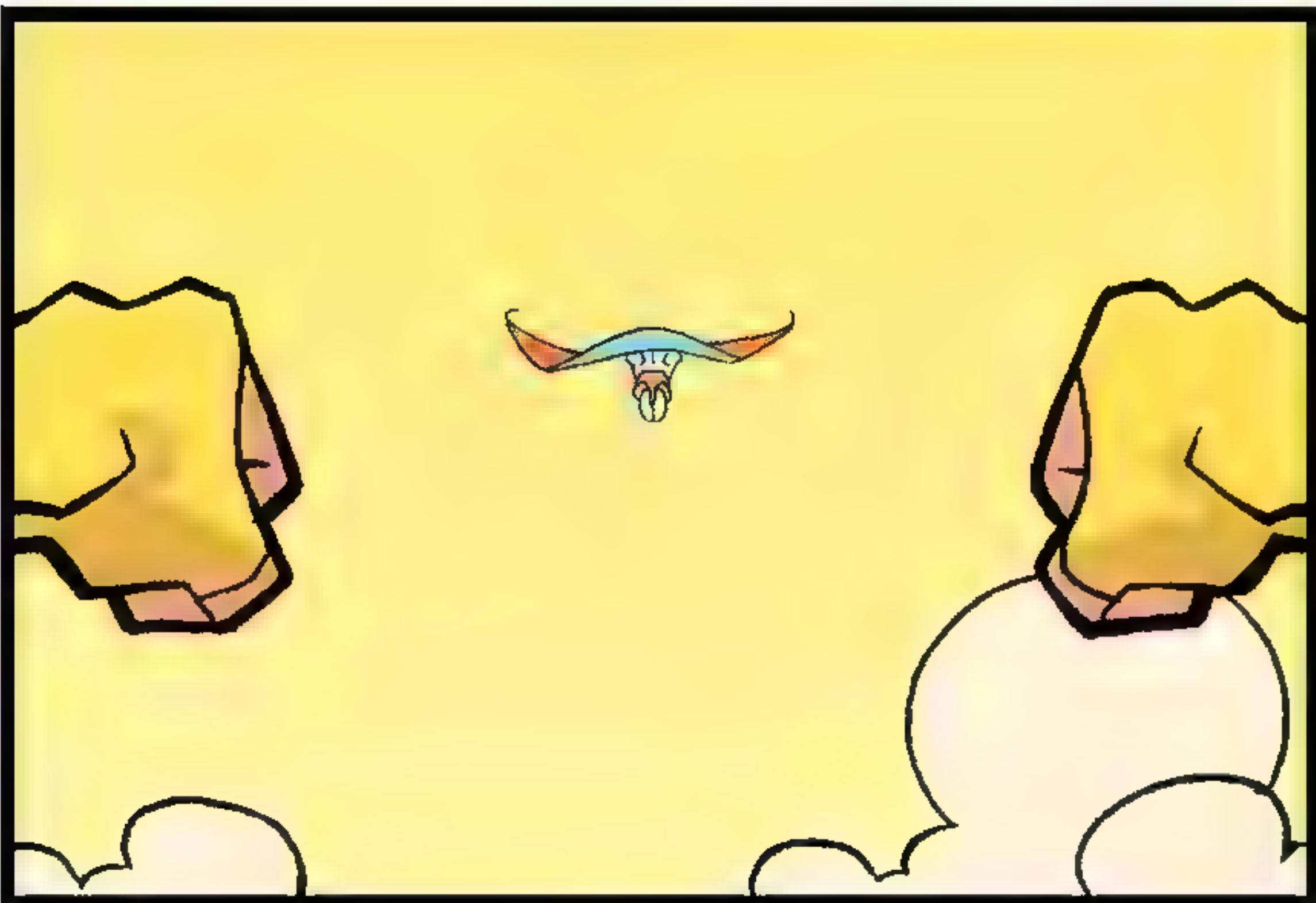
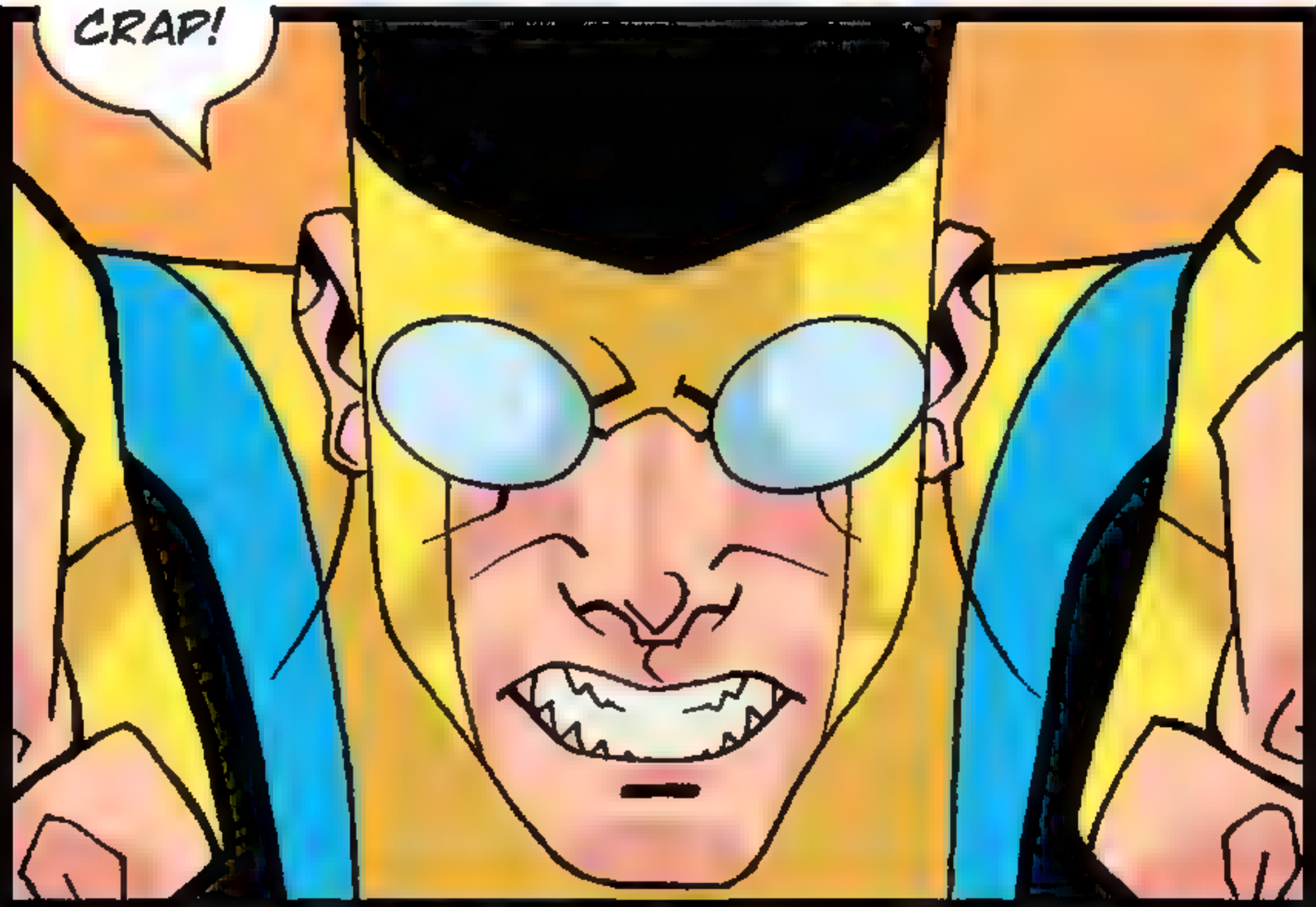
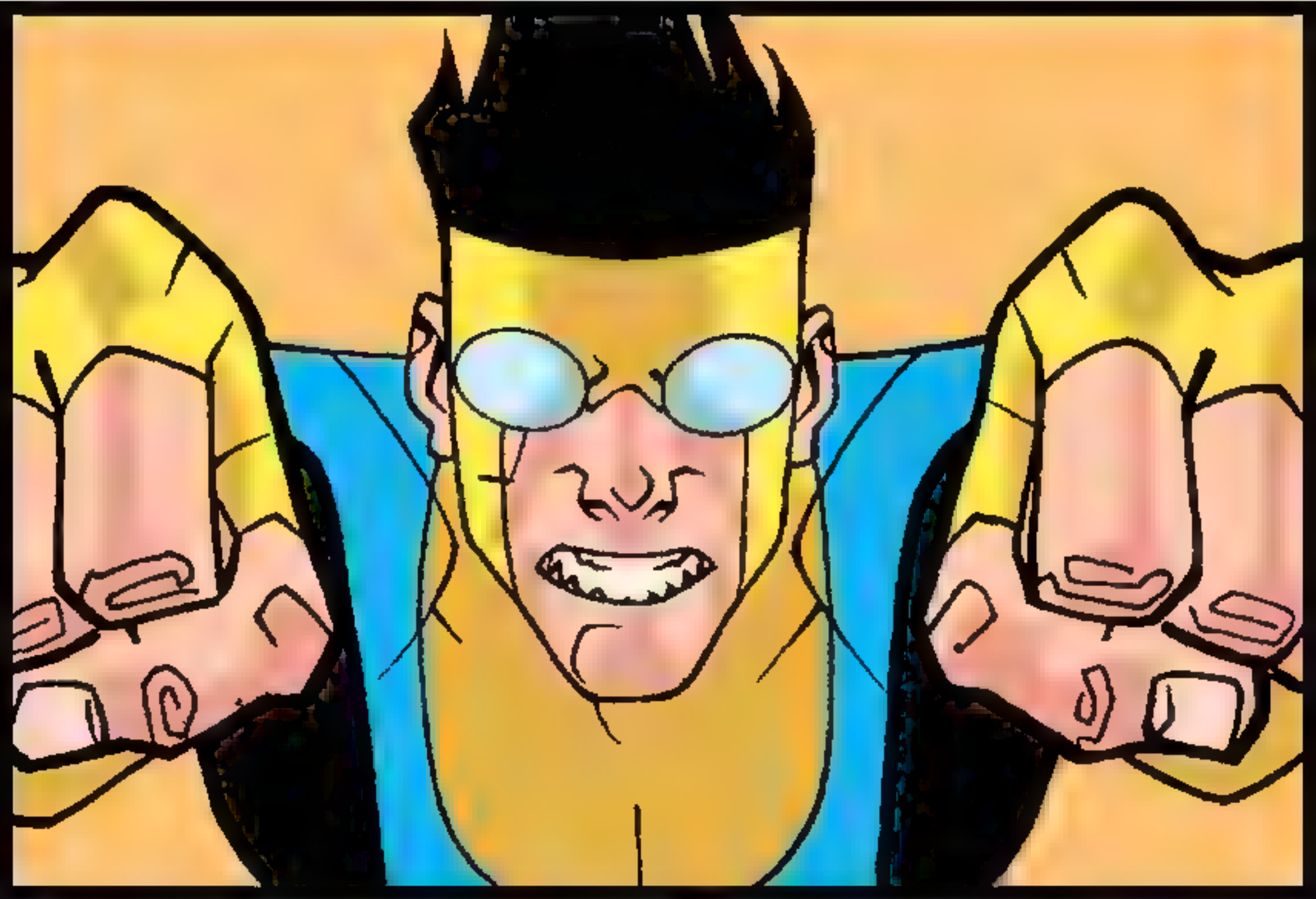


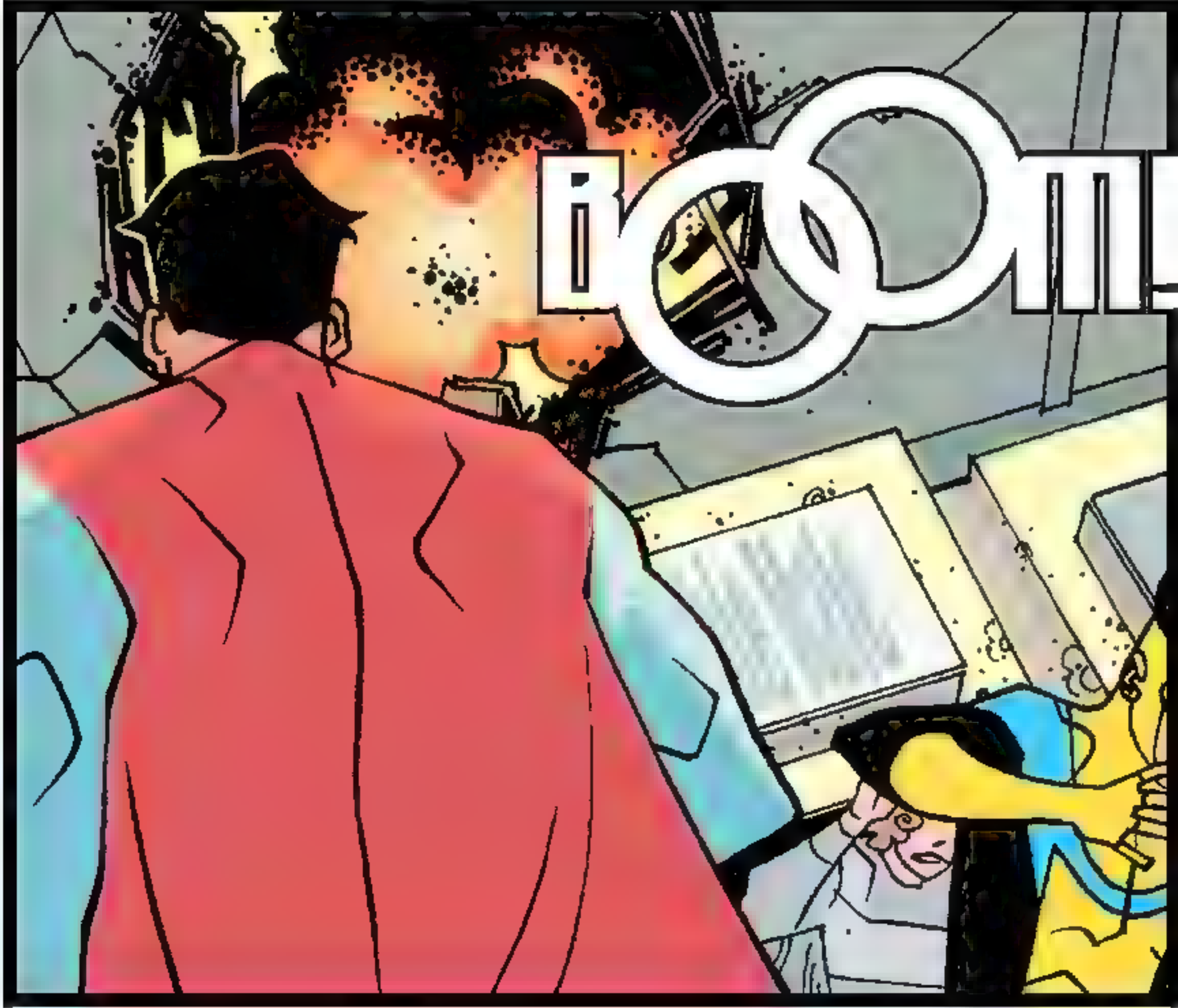
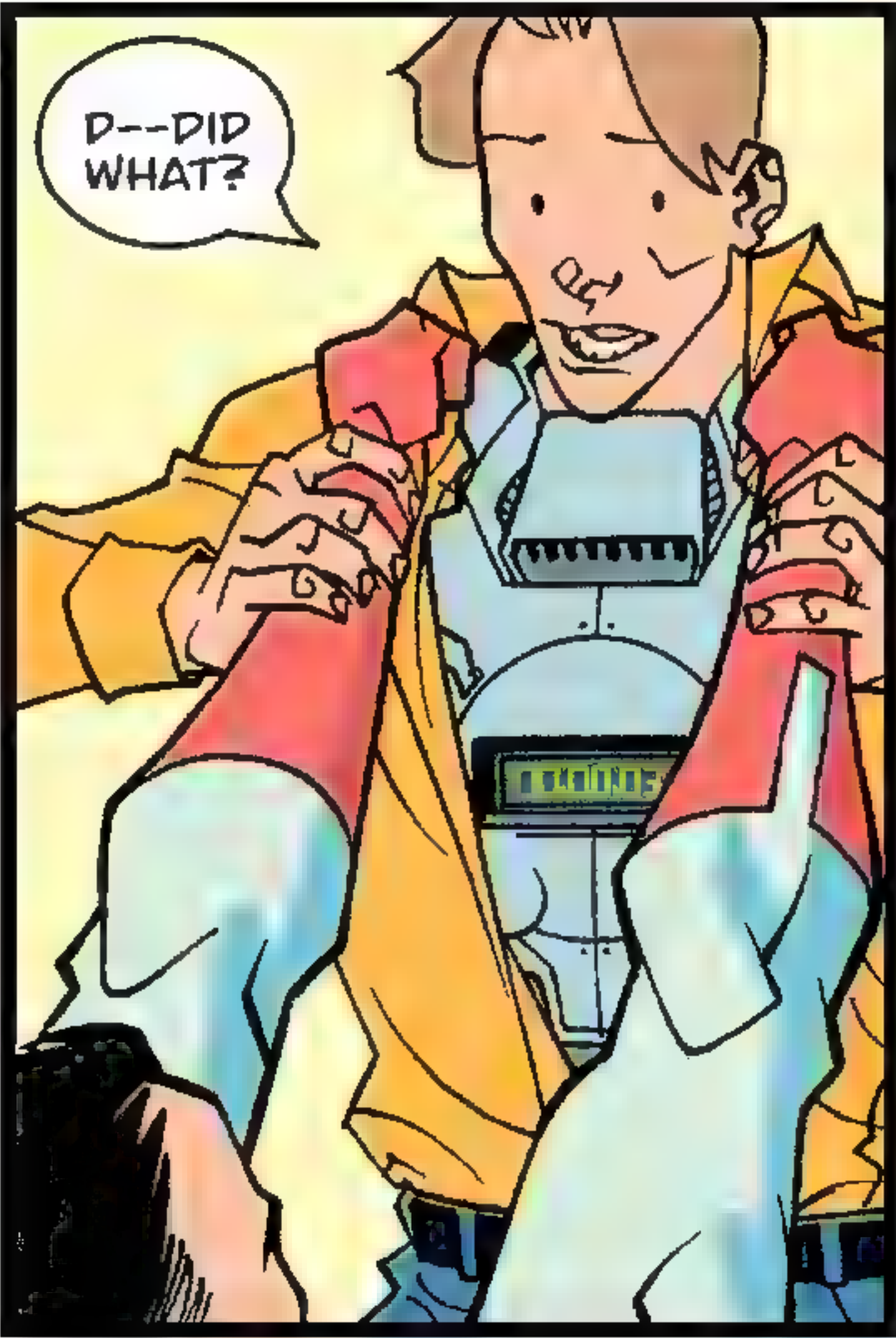
IF ANOTHER COUPLE OF SECONDS HAD GONE BY BEFORE WE DISCOVERED THEIR ACCELERATED AGING I WOULD HAVE CALLED IN THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE, OR MEGAFORCE... OR BOTH.



I GUESS I DIDN'T REALLY NOTICE HOW BAD IT GOT.







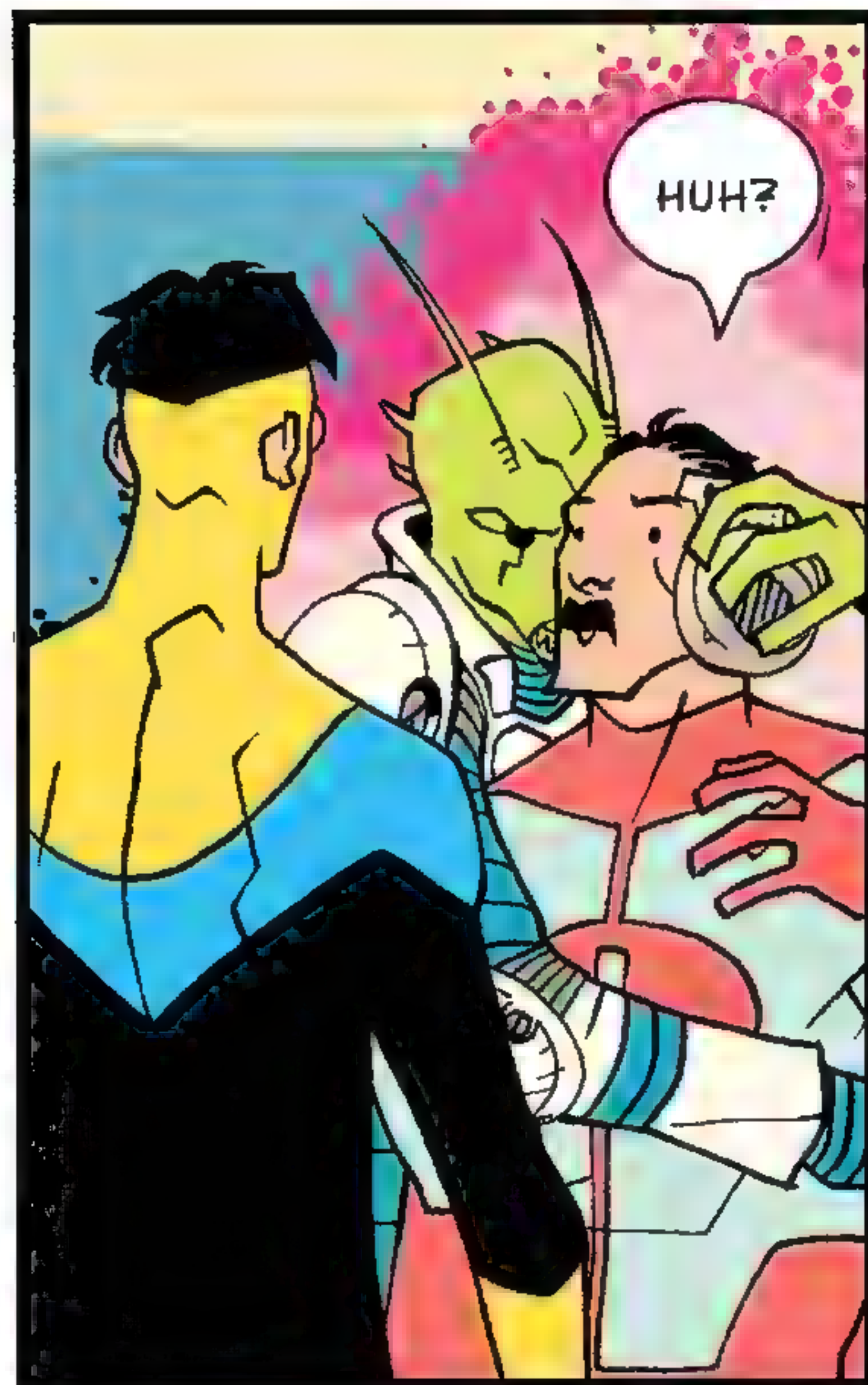
THAT WAS ONE
OF THE MISSING
STUDENTS
FROM MY
SCHOOL!



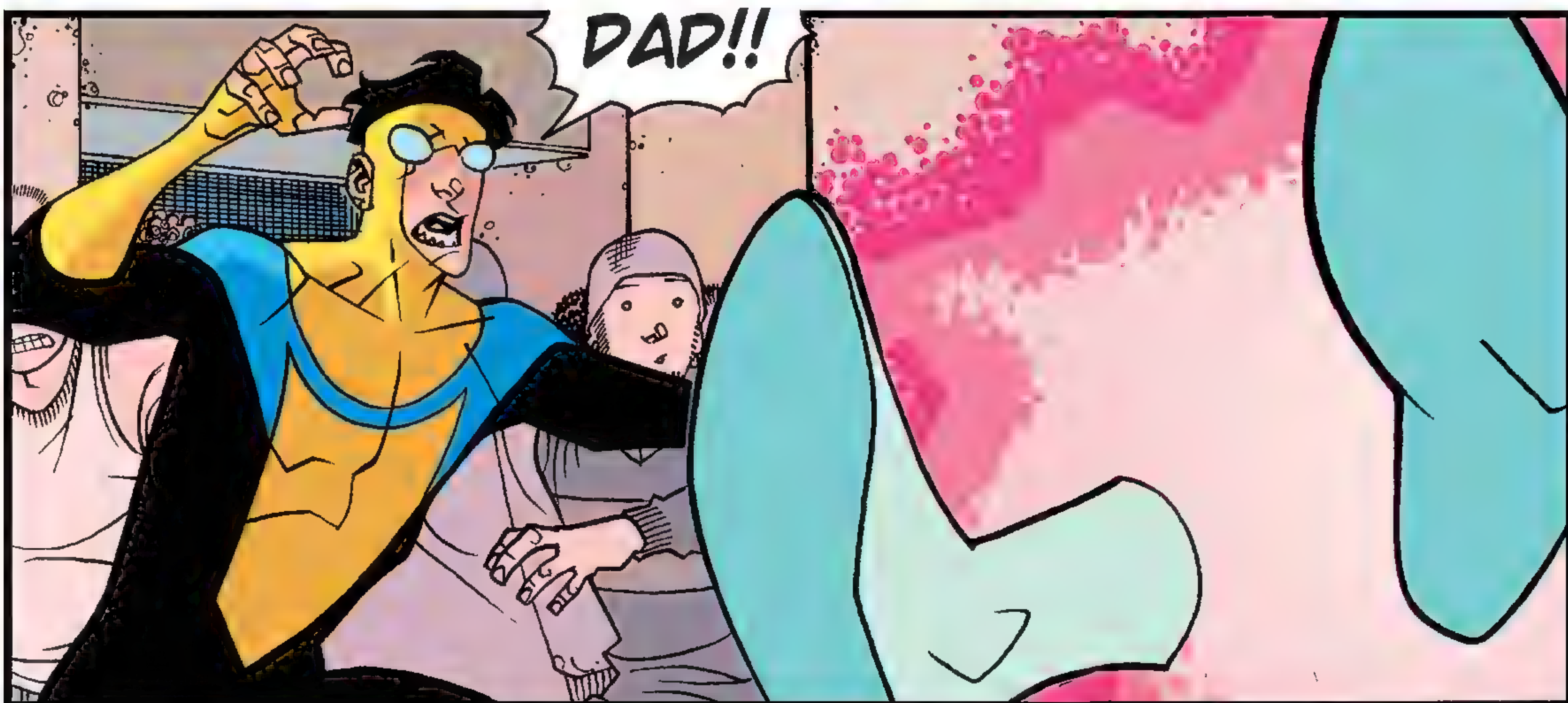
BUT
THAT WOULD
MEAN--



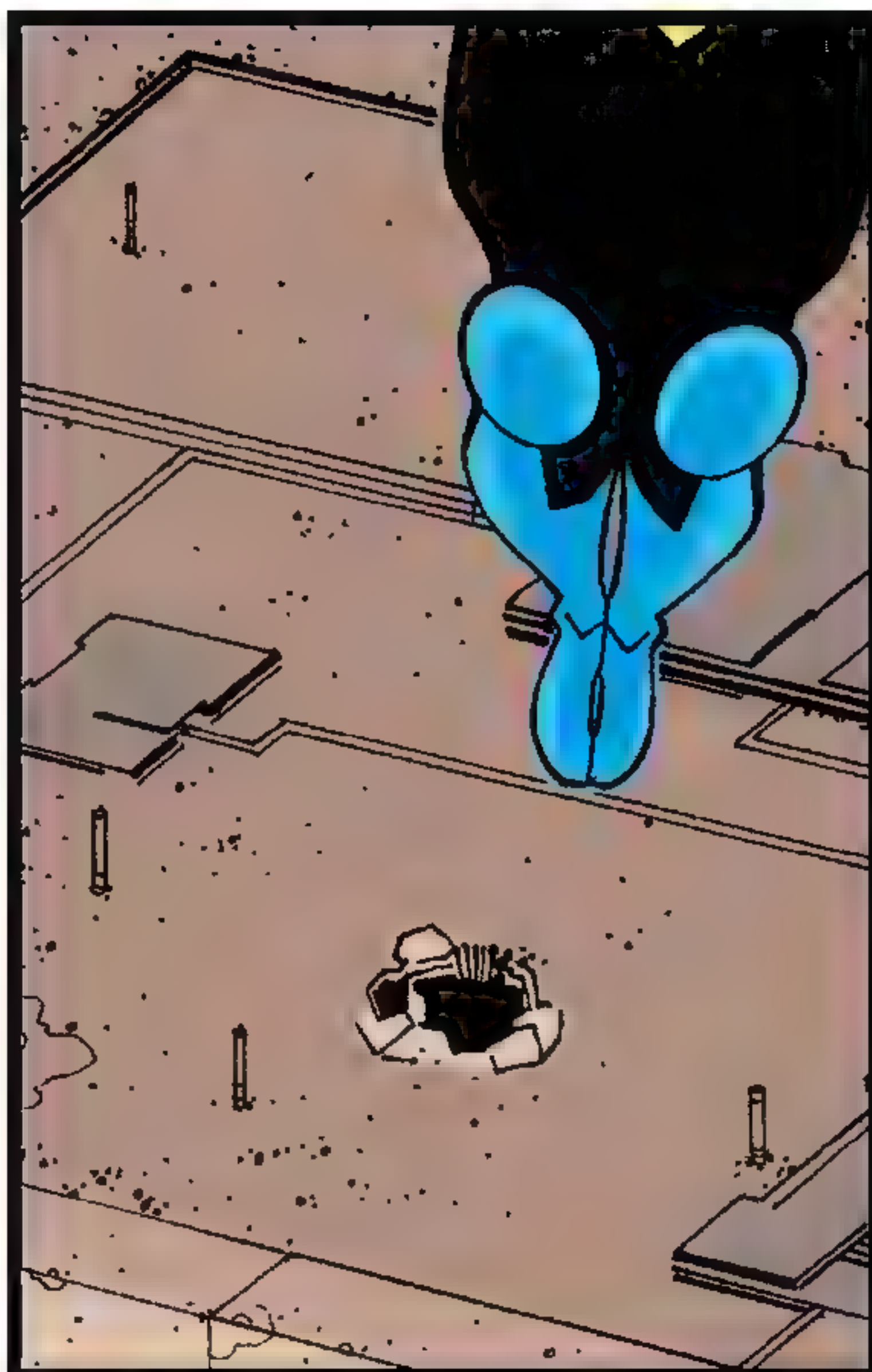
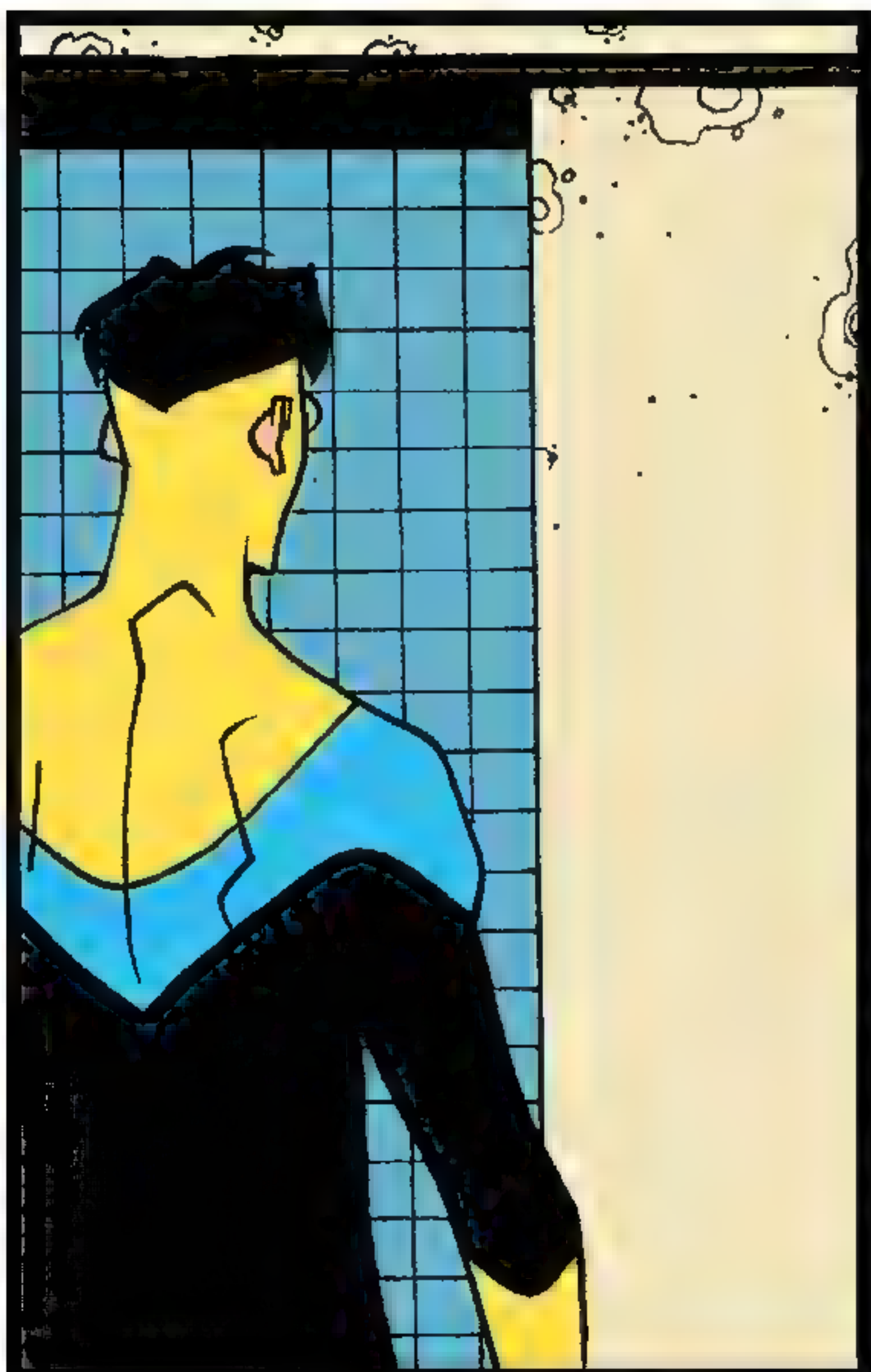
HUH?

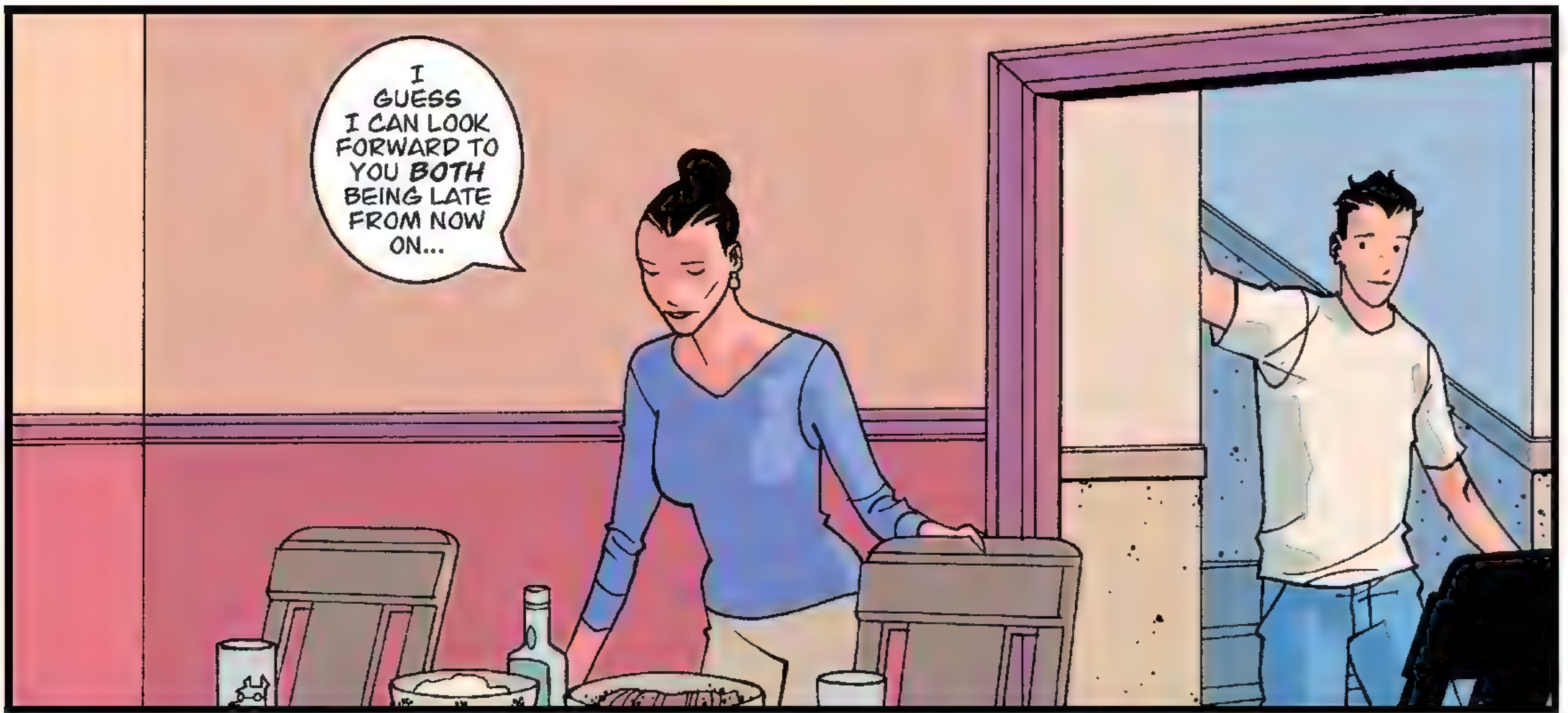


DAD!!



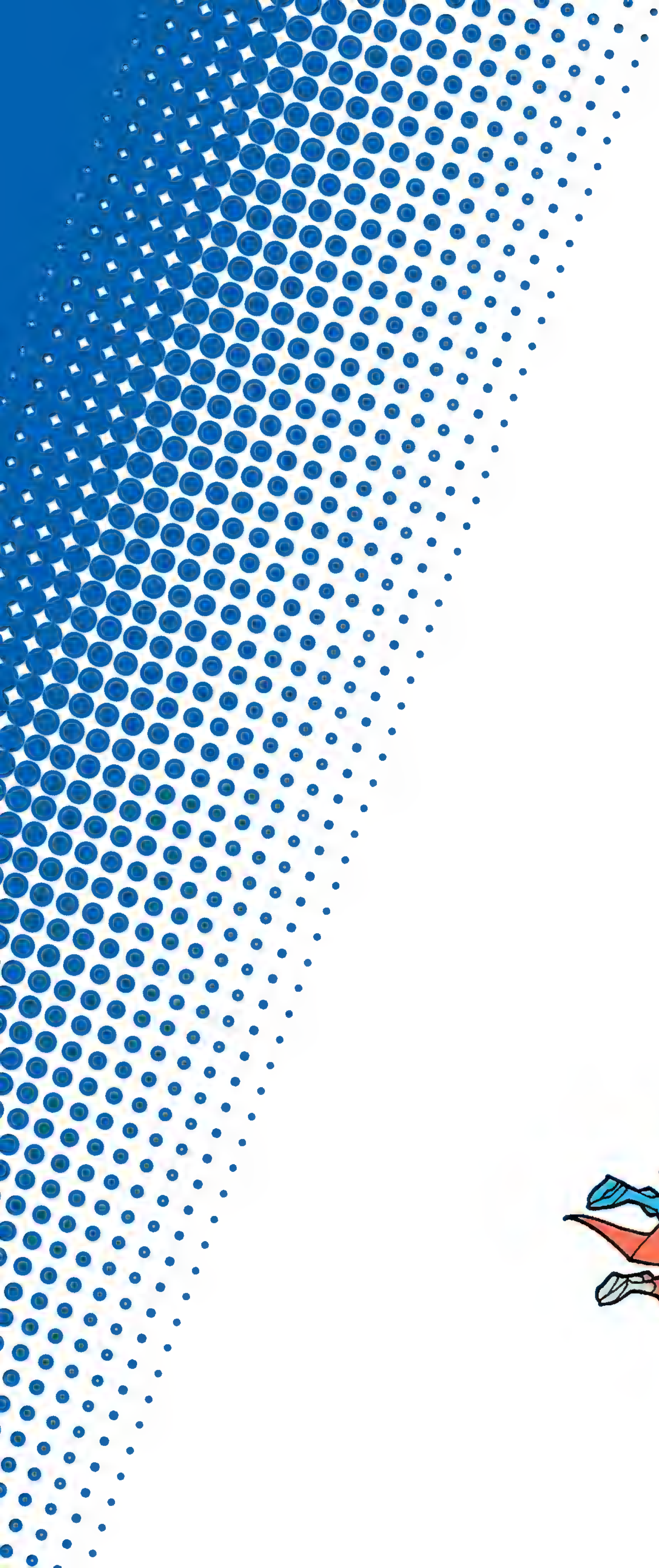
DANG
IT.



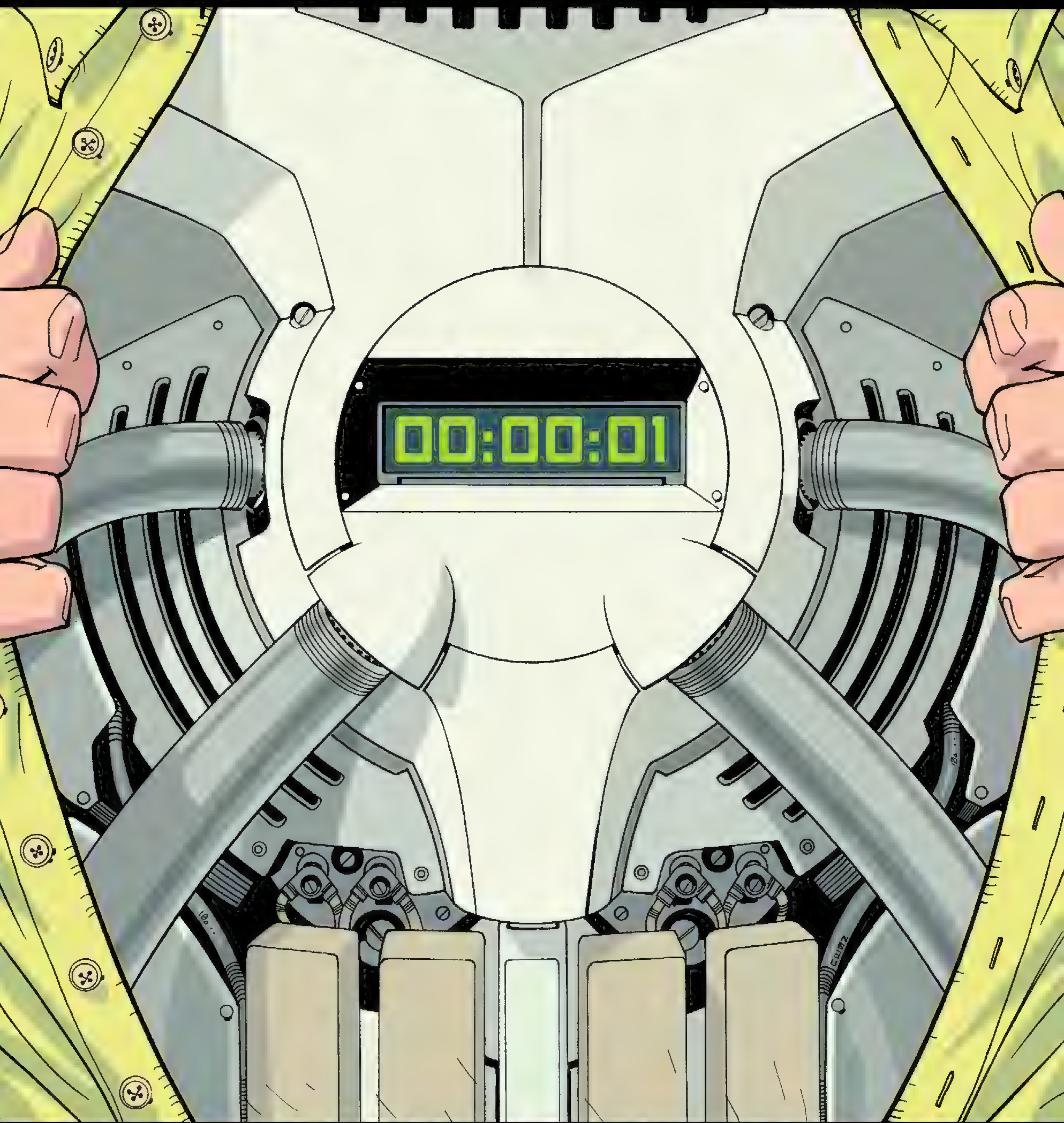


ACTUALLY... DAD WAS SUCKED INTO A PORTAL ABOUT FIFTEEN MINUTES AGO, I DON'T THINK HE'LL BE HOME TONIGHT.





ISSUE FOUR



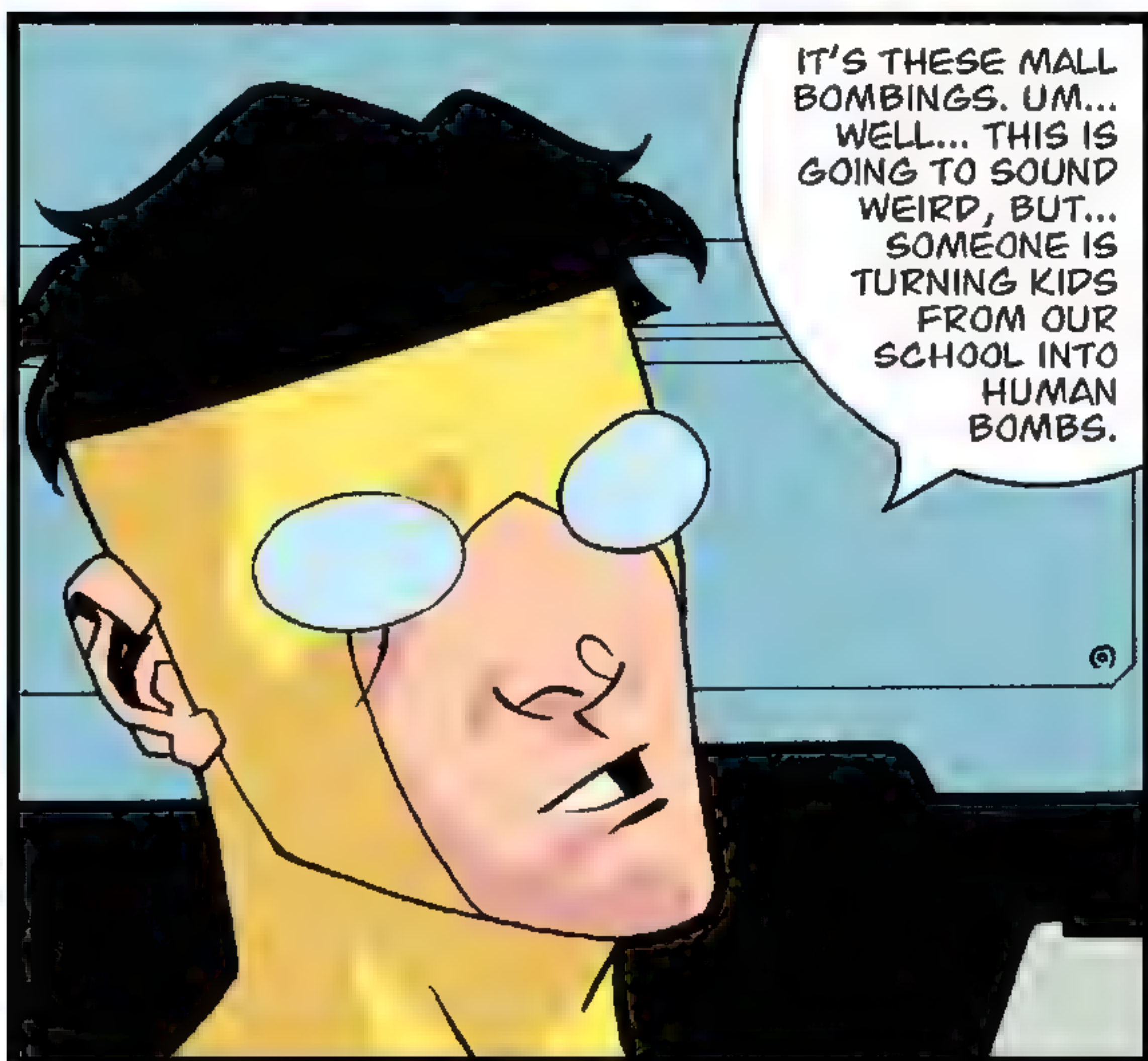
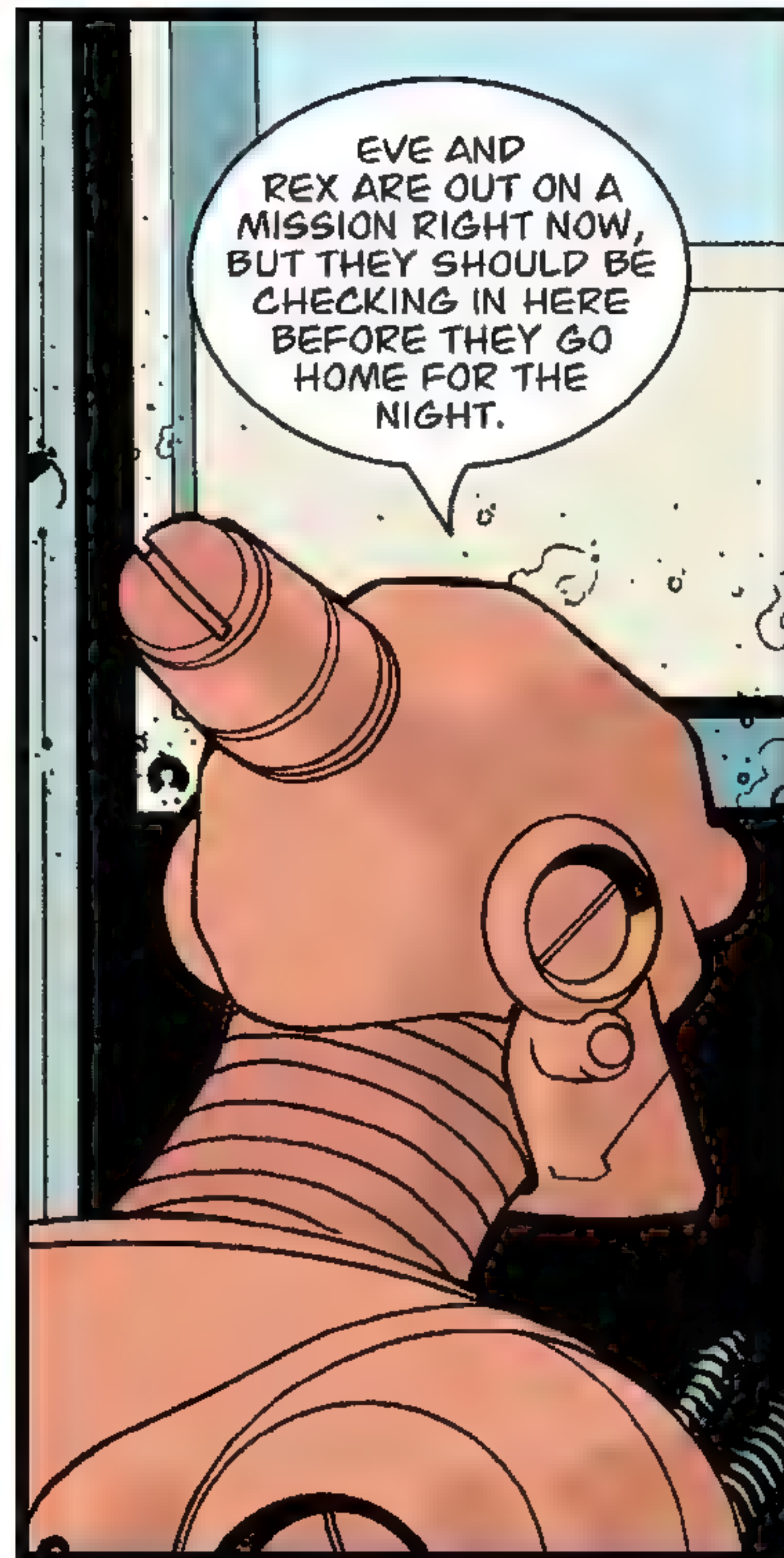
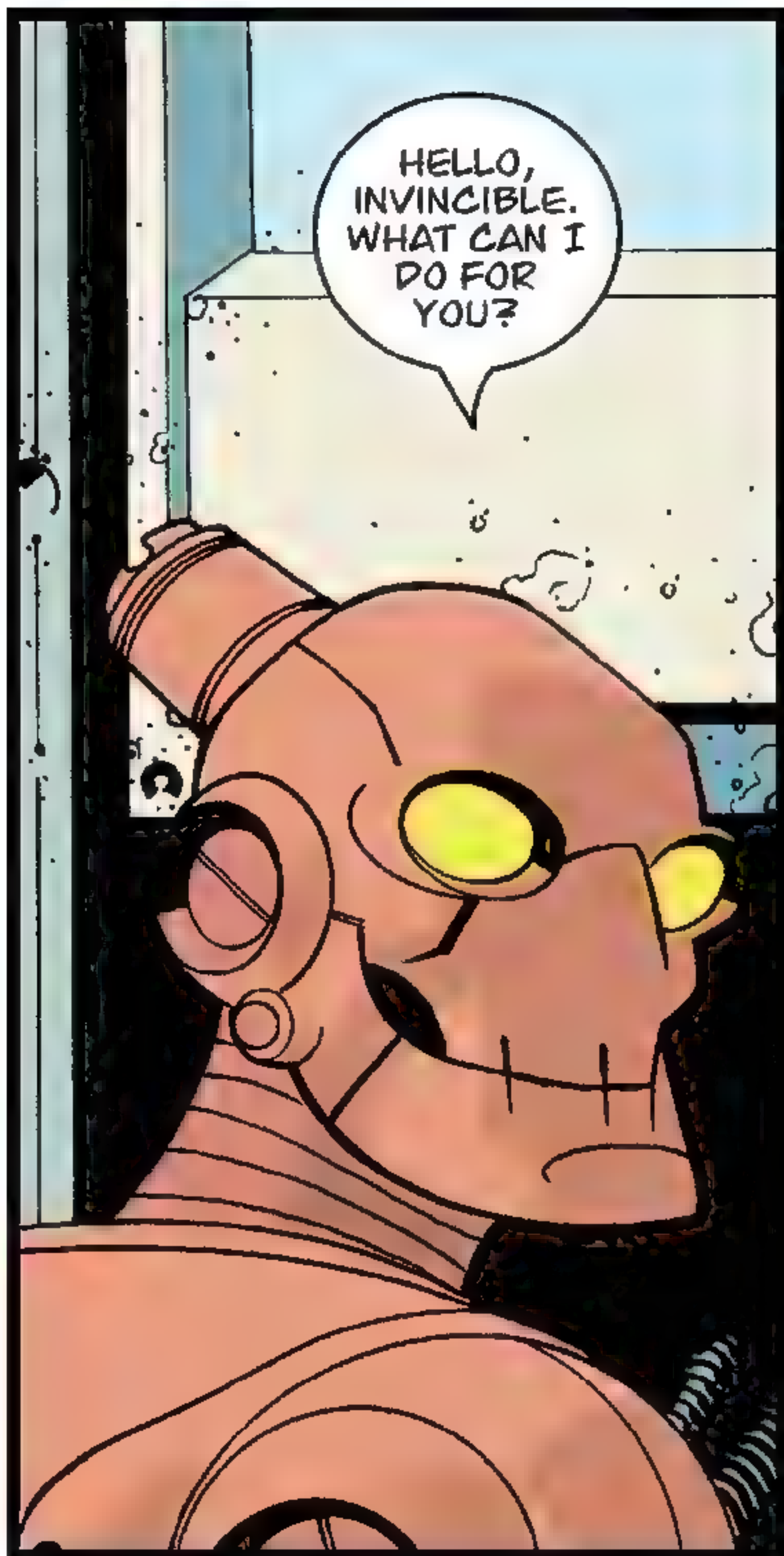
REMARKABLE.

THE GAME BOX PROCESSOR IS SO ADVANCED IT COULD OPERATE THIS MACHINE FOR YEARS WITH A BURNOUT RATE OF LESS THAN TEN PERCENT!

HAD WE NOT STOPPED THE MAULER TWINS BEFORE THEY ACTIVATED THEM. THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN NEARLY UNSTOPPABLE.

FASCINATING. SIMPLY FASCINATING.

ROBOT?

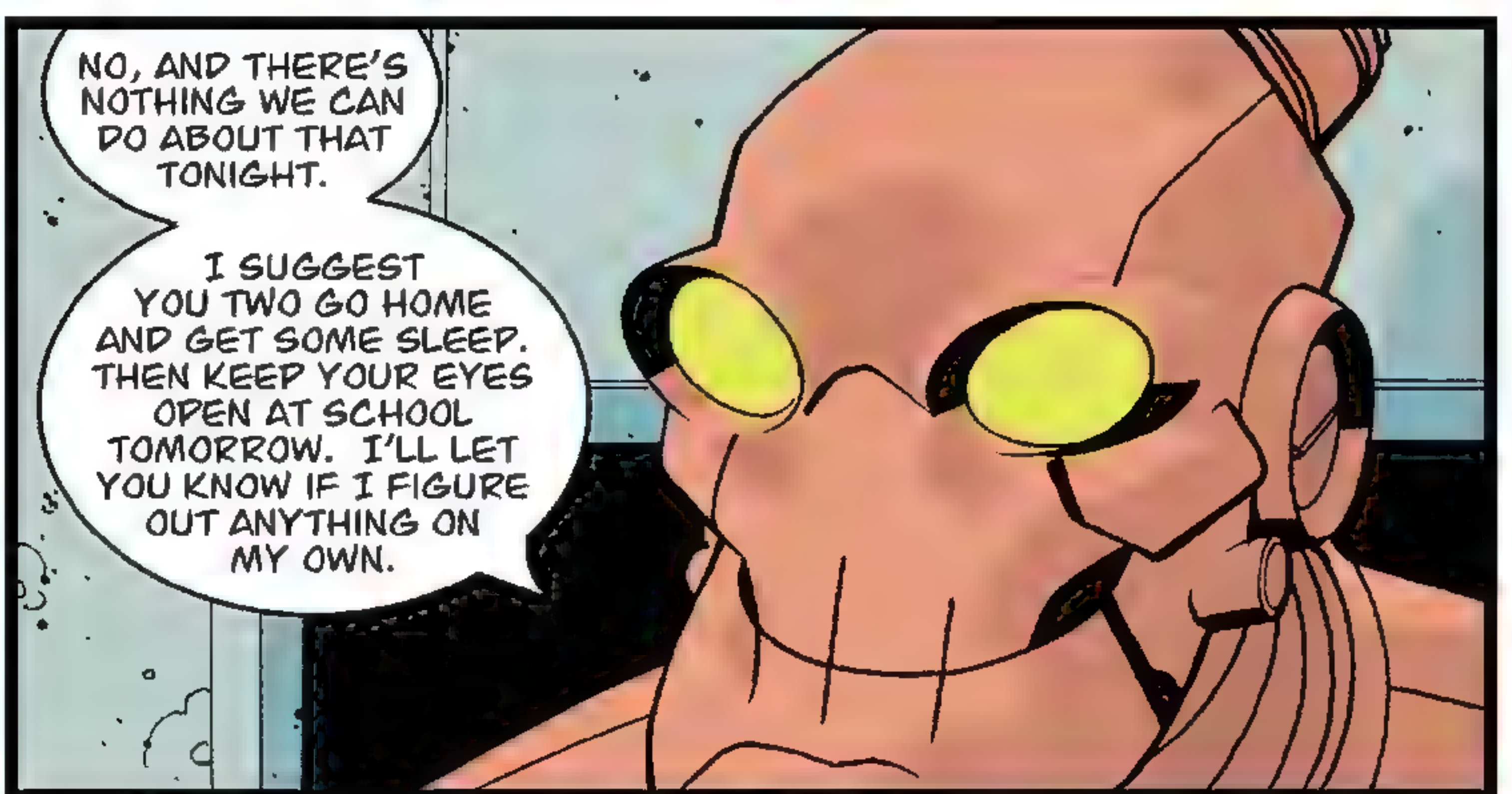
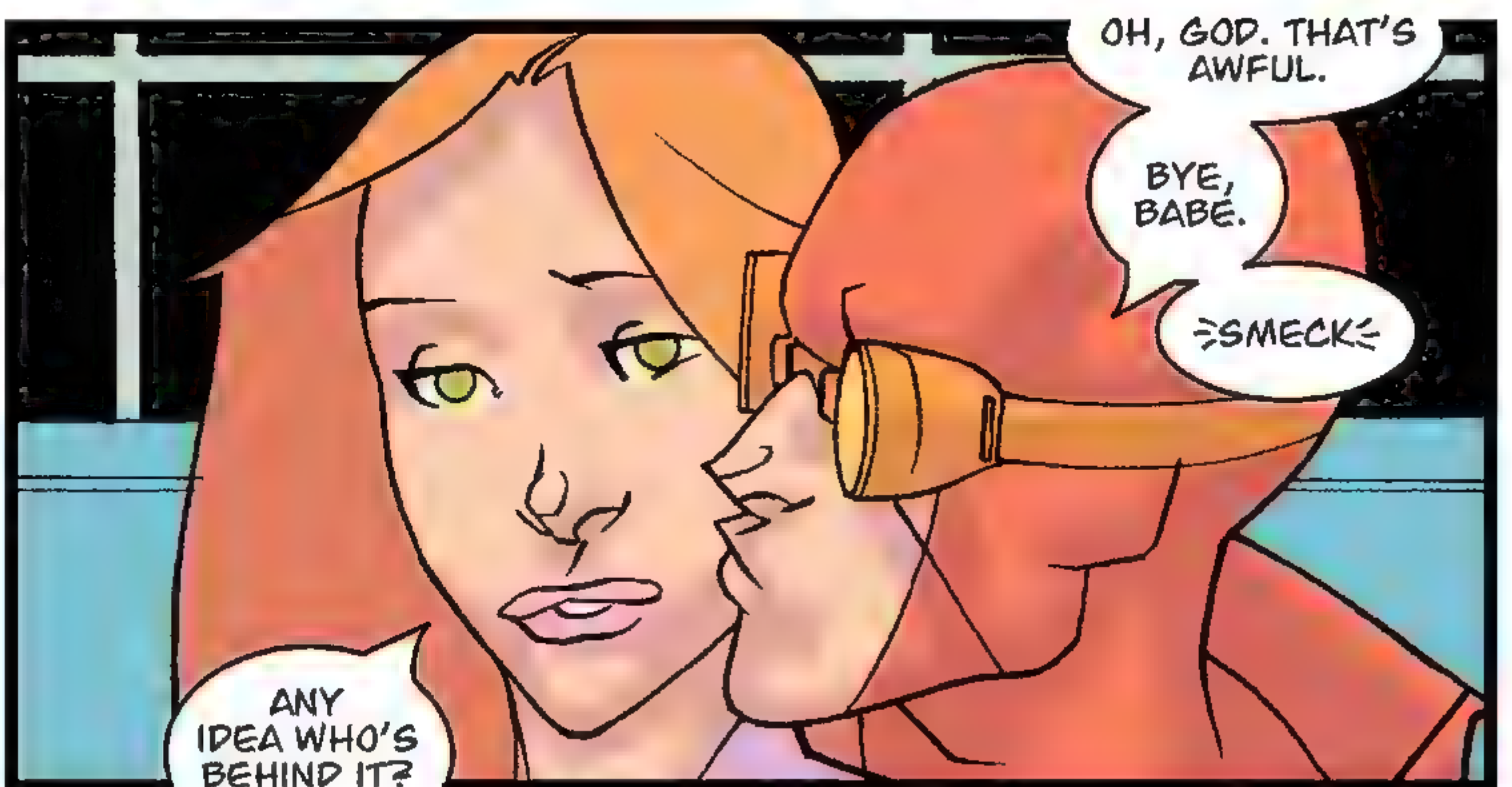
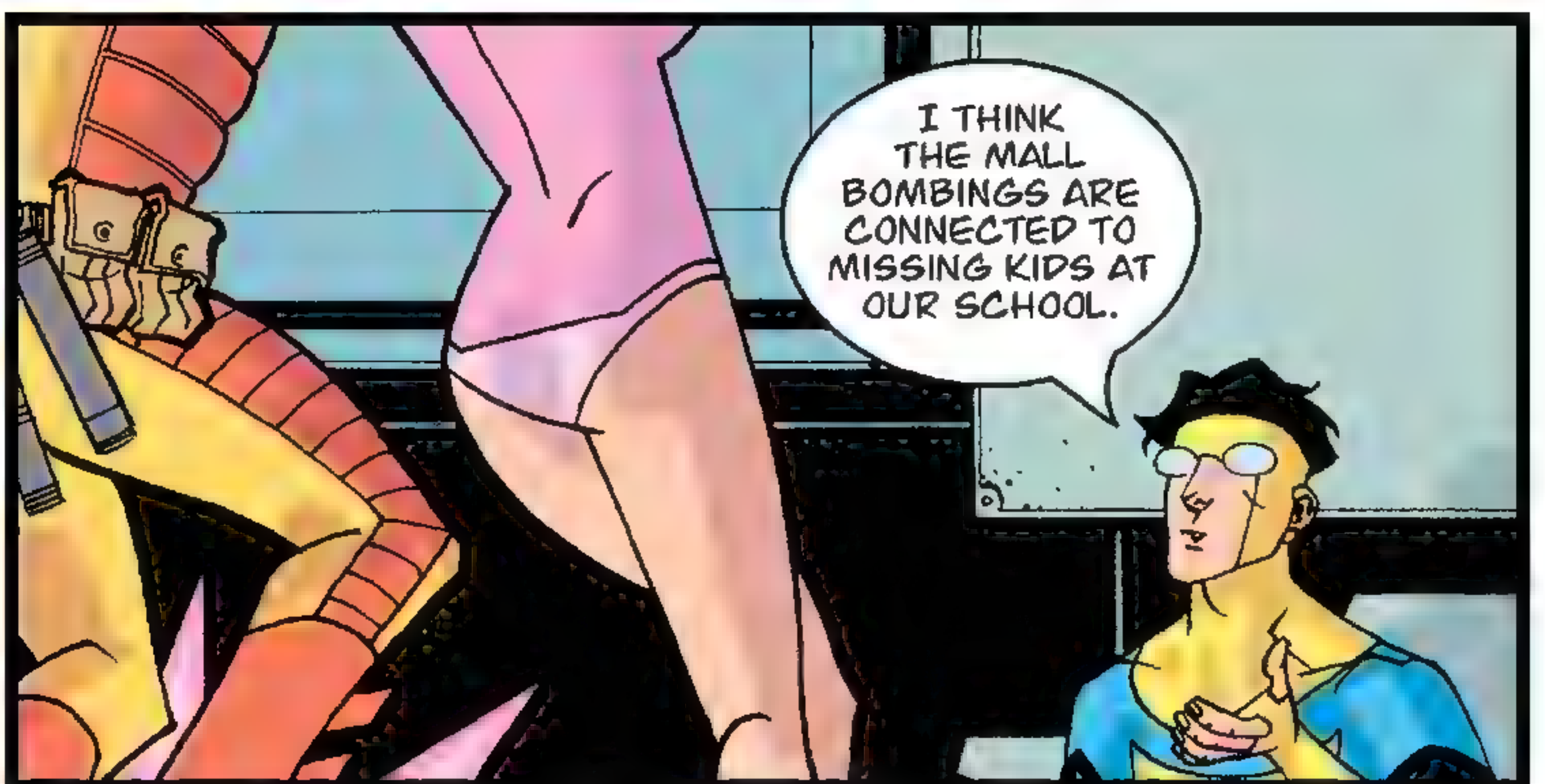
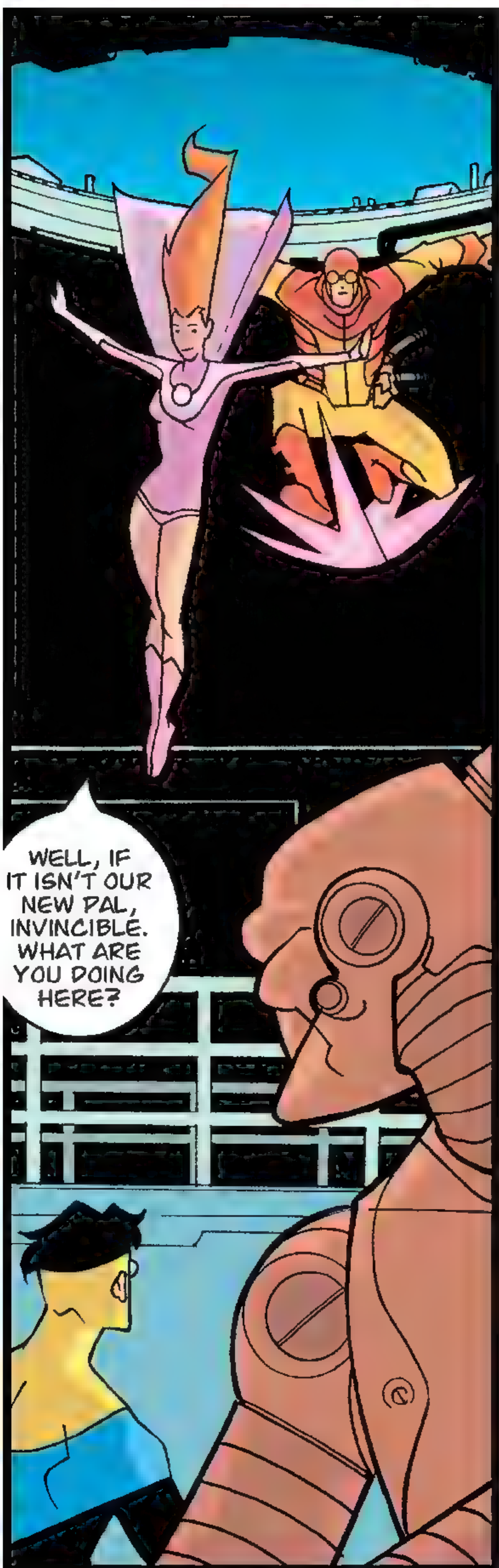




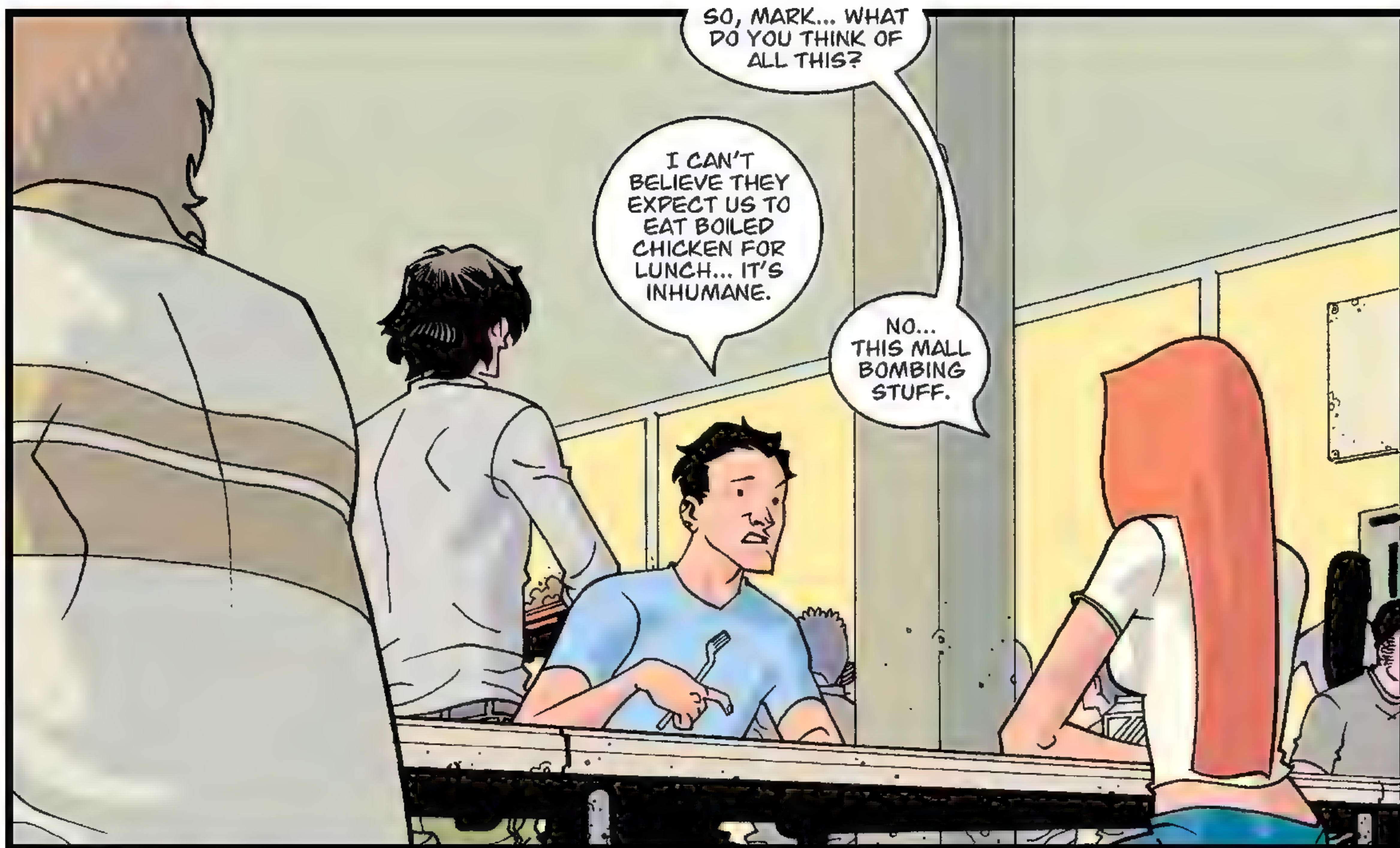
RESIDUE FOUND AT THE BLAST SITES INDICATED THAT THE TIMING MECHANISMS IN ALL THE BOMBS WERE ORGANIC IN NATURE. MORE THAN LIKELY, HUMAN CIRCULATORY SYSTEMS PROVIDE THE CATALYST.

FROM THAT IT WAS MERELY PROCESS OF ELIMINATION TO DETERMINE THE AGE AND RELATION OF THE HUMANS THAT ARE BEING USED AS BOMBS.

I DIDN'T KNOW THEY WERE ALL FROM YOUR SCHOOL IN PARTICULAR, BUT I'M SURE I WOULD HAVE... EVENTUALLY.







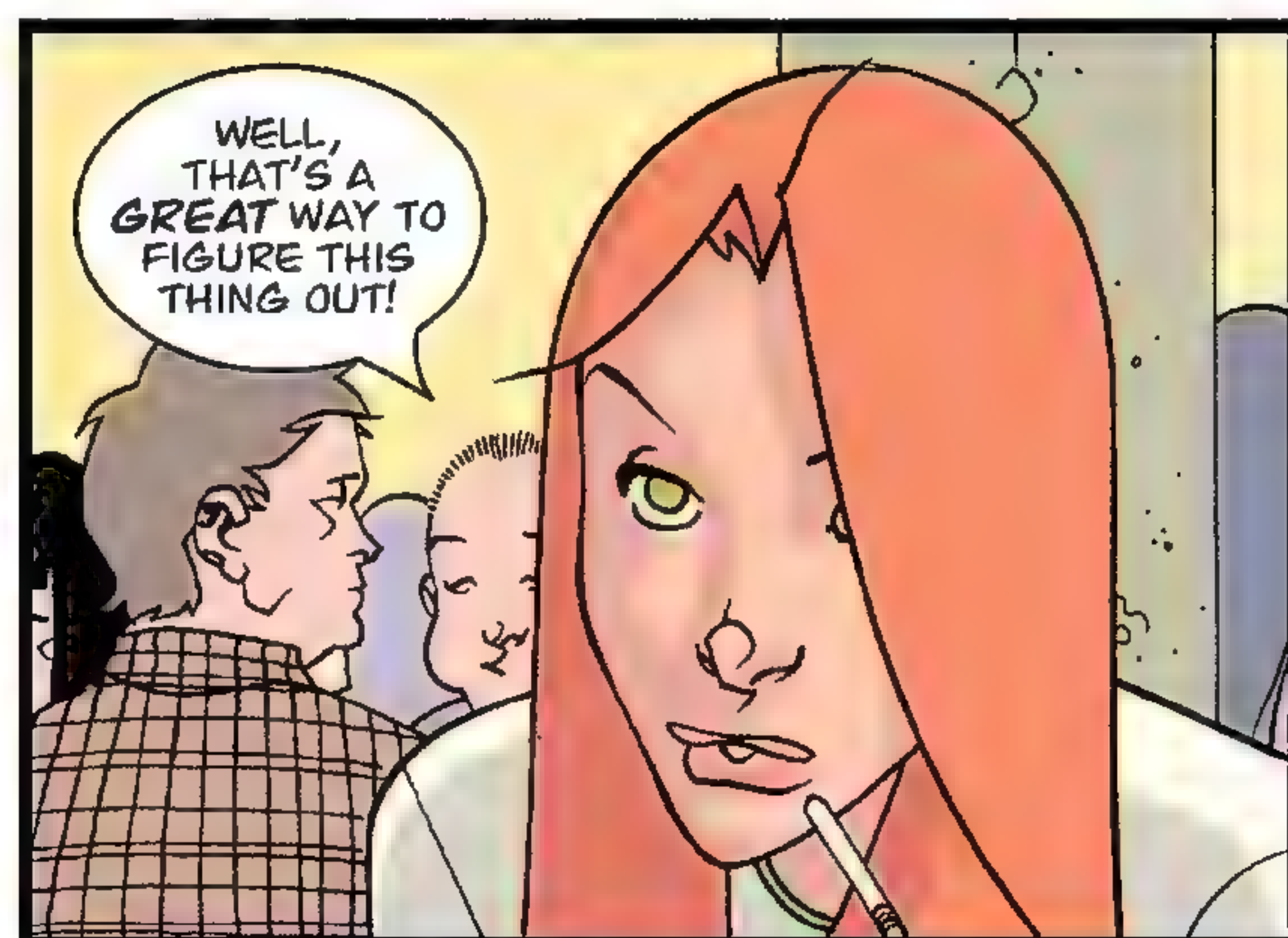
SO, MARK... WHAT DO YOU THINK OF ALL THIS?

I CAN'T BELIEVE THEY EXPECT US TO EAT BOILED CHICKEN FOR LUNCH... IT'S INHUMANE.

NO... THIS MALL BOMBING STUFF.



I DON'T KNOW... IT'S UNSETTLING. I MEAN, I KNOW THIS IS GOING TO SOUND BAD, BUT I'M TRYING NOT TO THINK ABOUT IT.



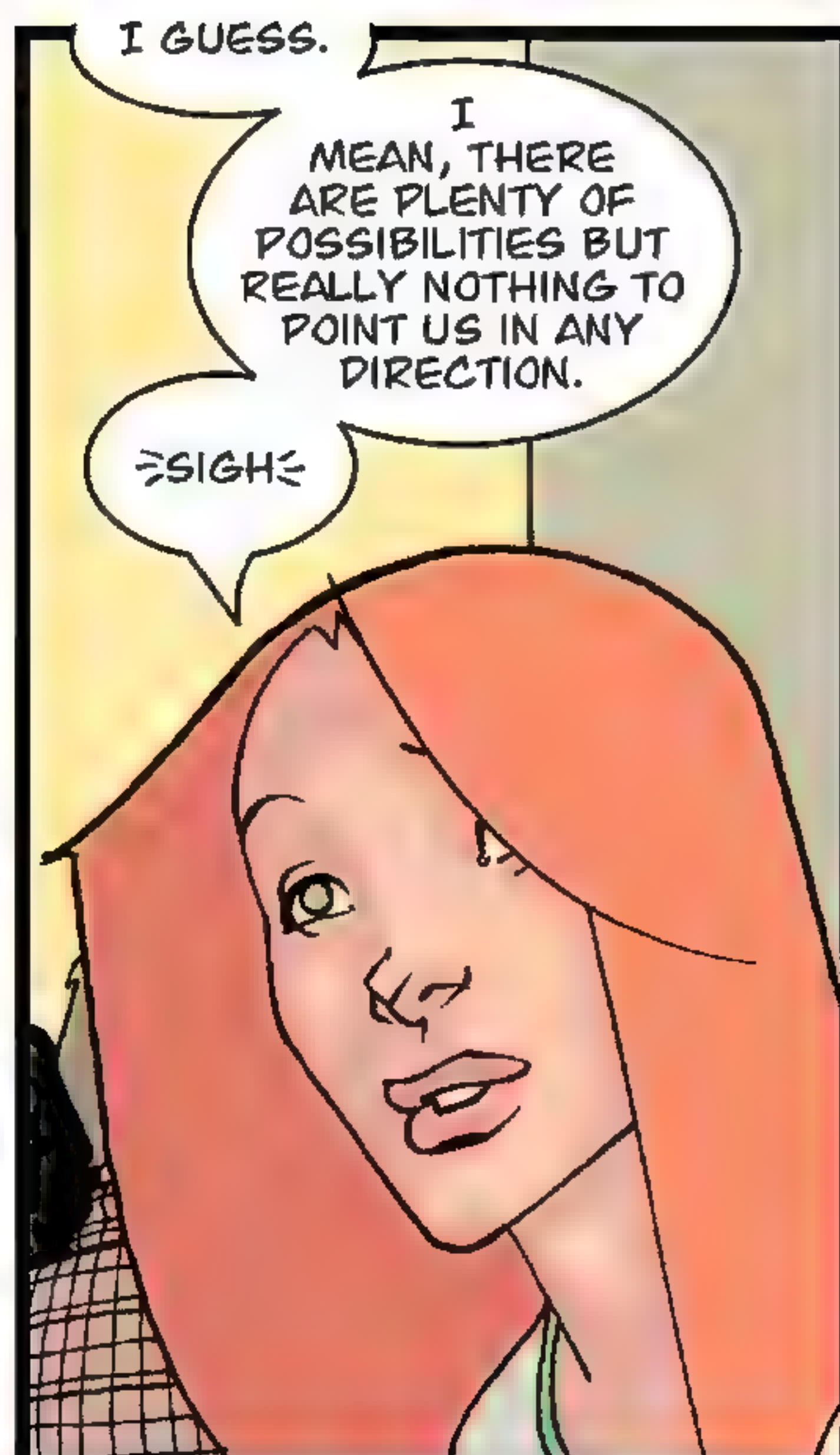
WELL, THAT'S A GREAT WAY TO FIGURE THIS THING OUT!



SORRY, BUT LET'S BE REALISTIC. SHOULD WE BE SEARCHING FOR CLUES RIGHT NOW? I FOR ONE AM NOT DRESSED FOR THAT SORT OF THING, AND WE DON'T EVEN HAVE A DOG.

DON'T THINK FOR A SECOND THAT I DON'T WANT TO CATCH THIS GUY. I JUST THINK THAT WE DON'T REALLY HAVE ANYTHING TO GO ON RIGHT NOW...

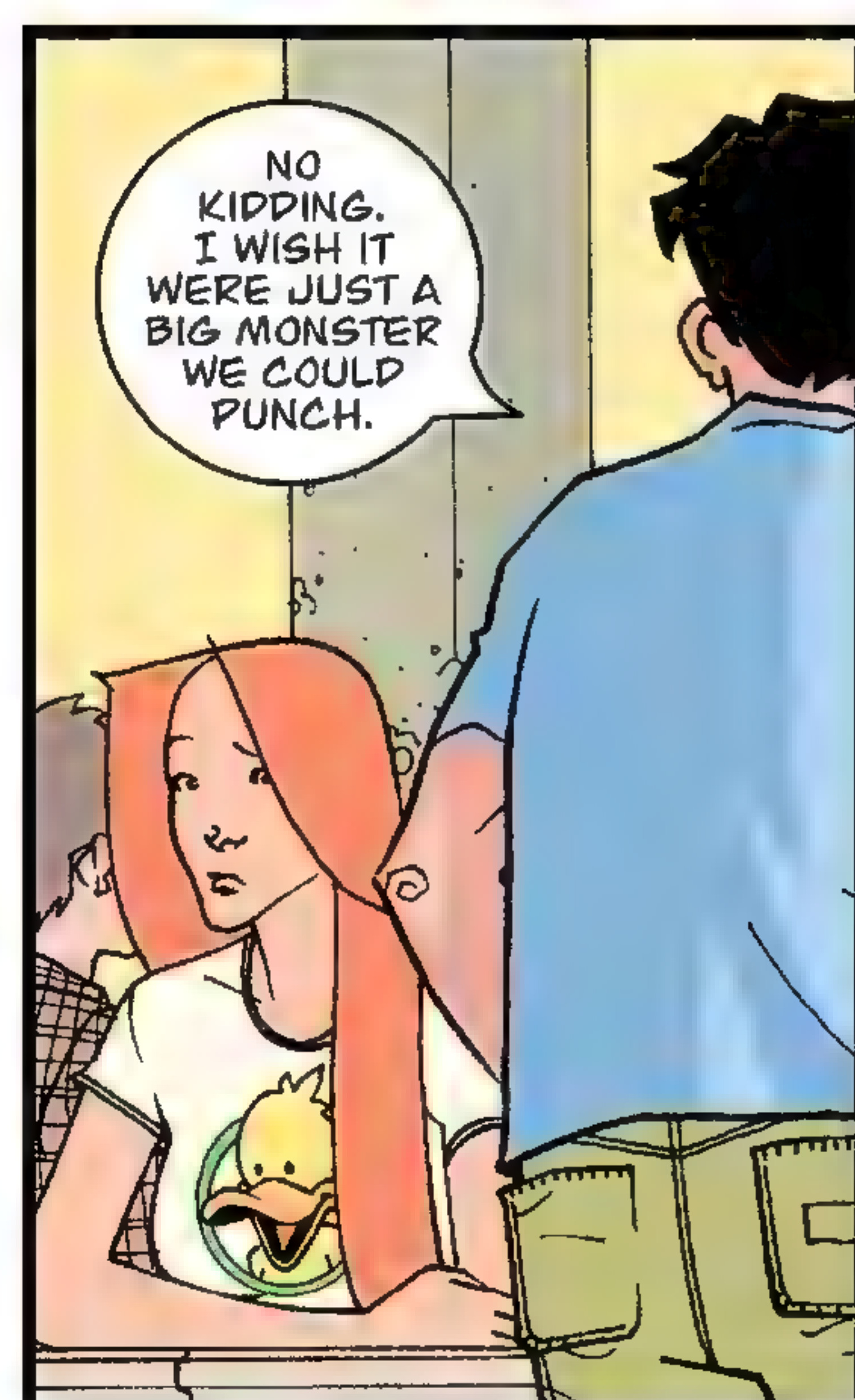
...RIGHT?



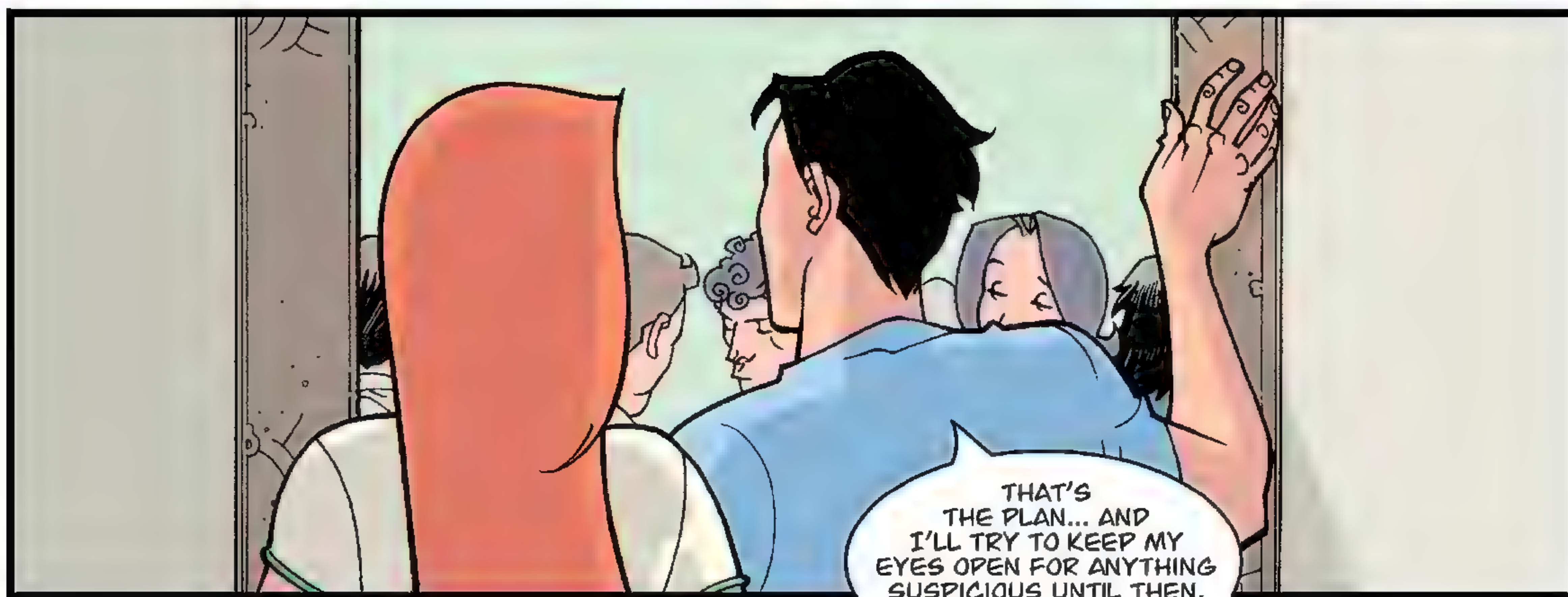
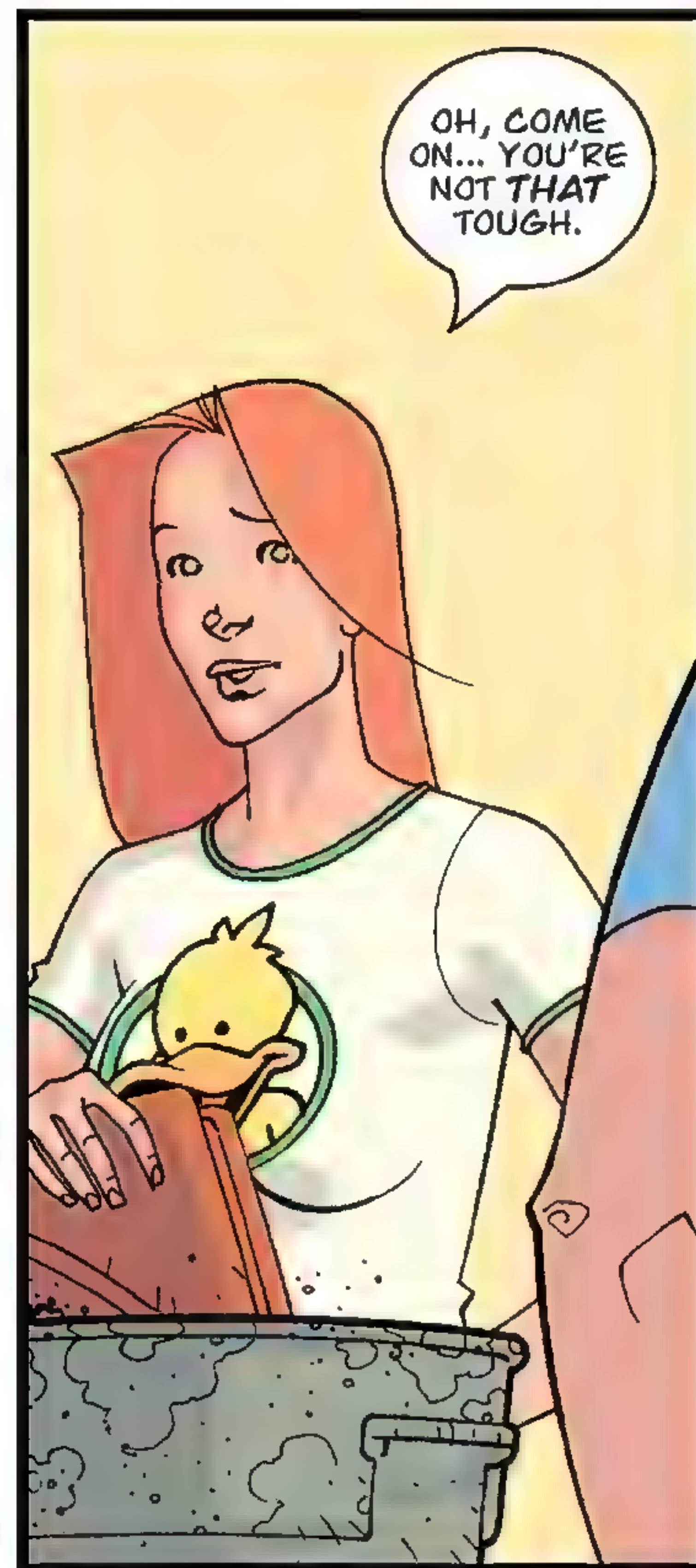
I GUESS.

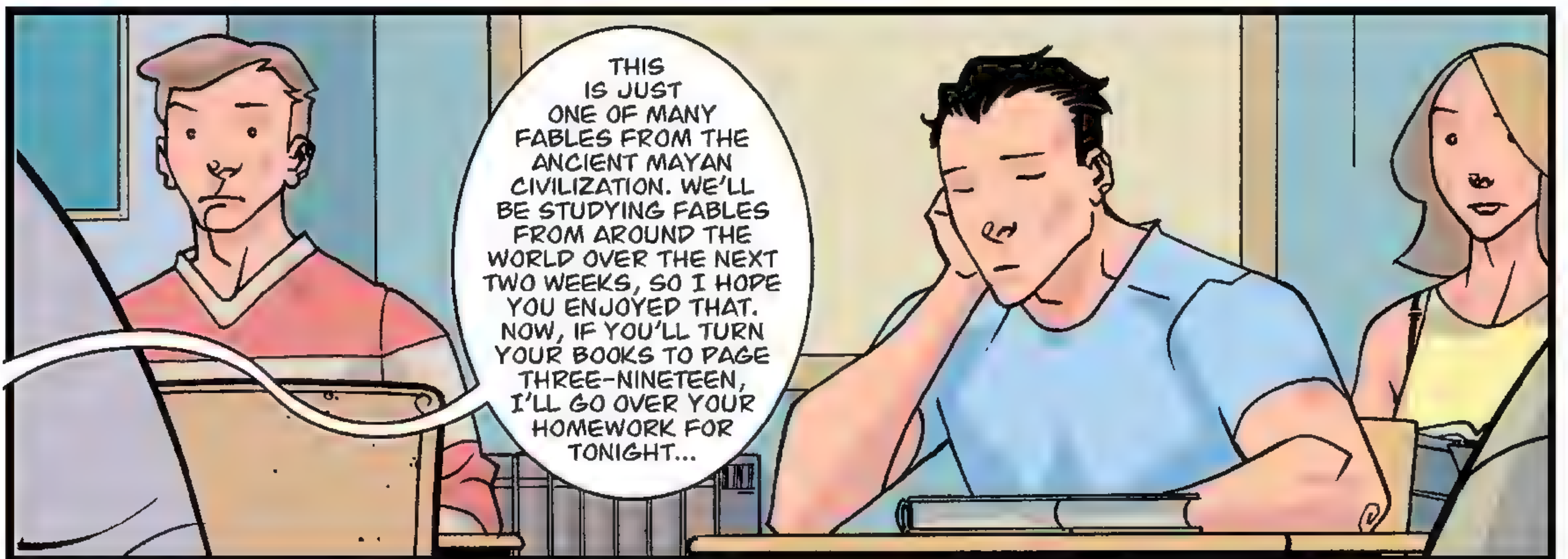
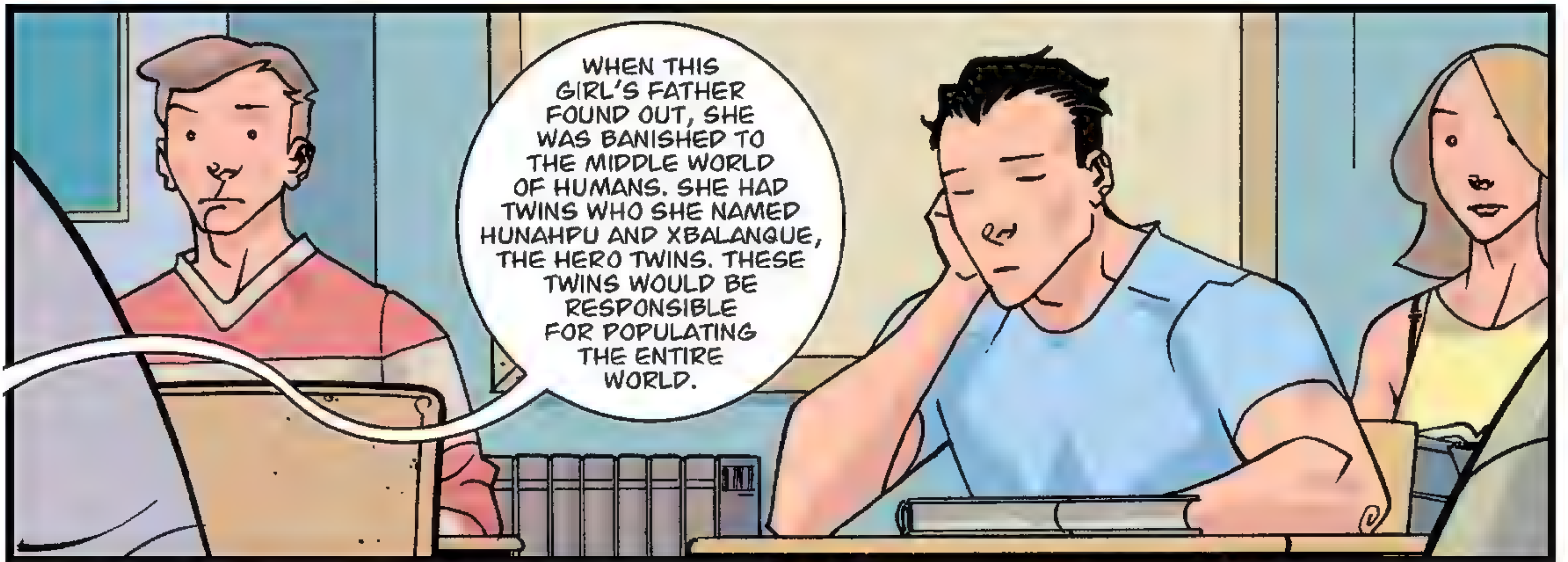
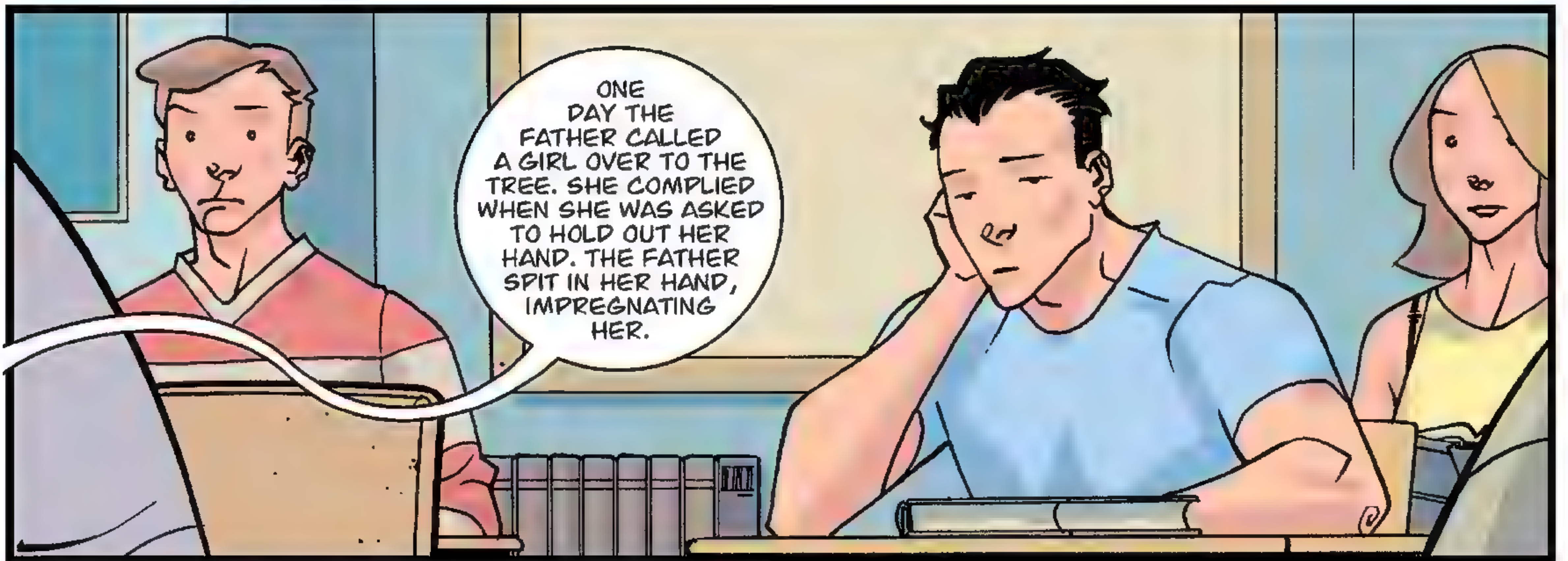
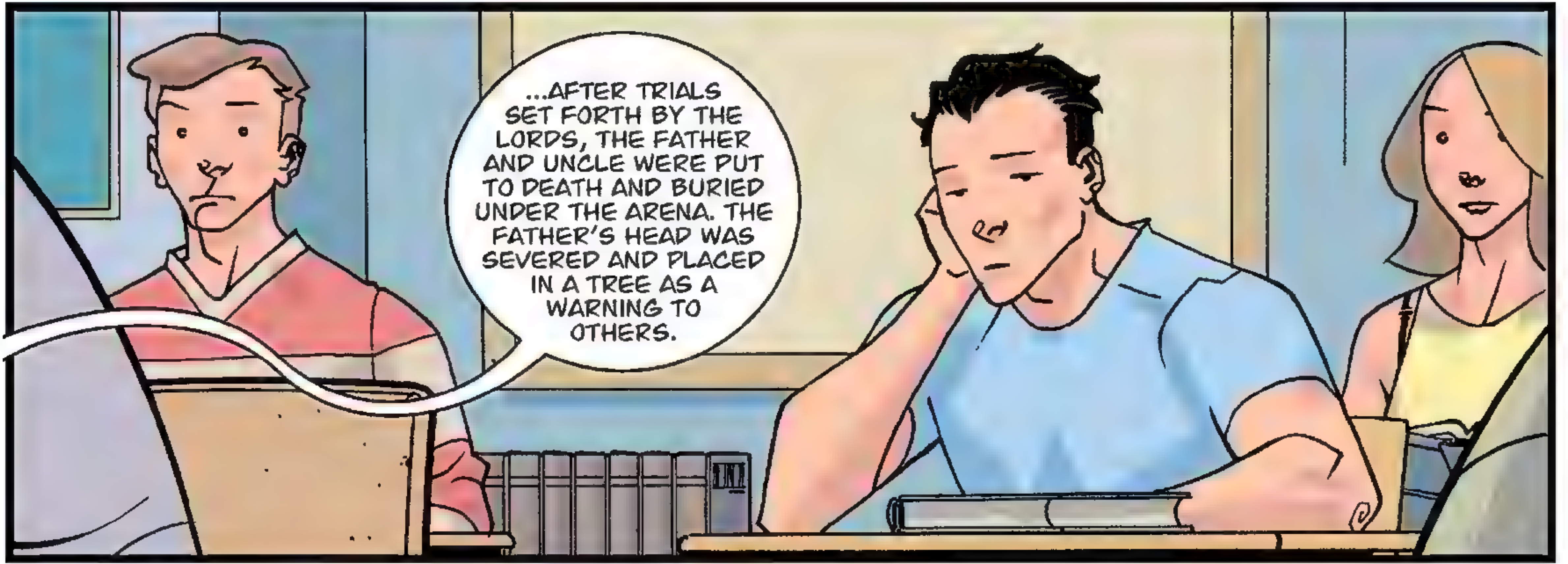
I MEAN, THERE ARE PLENTY OF POSSIBILITIES BUT REALLY NOTHING TO POINT US IN ANY DIRECTION.

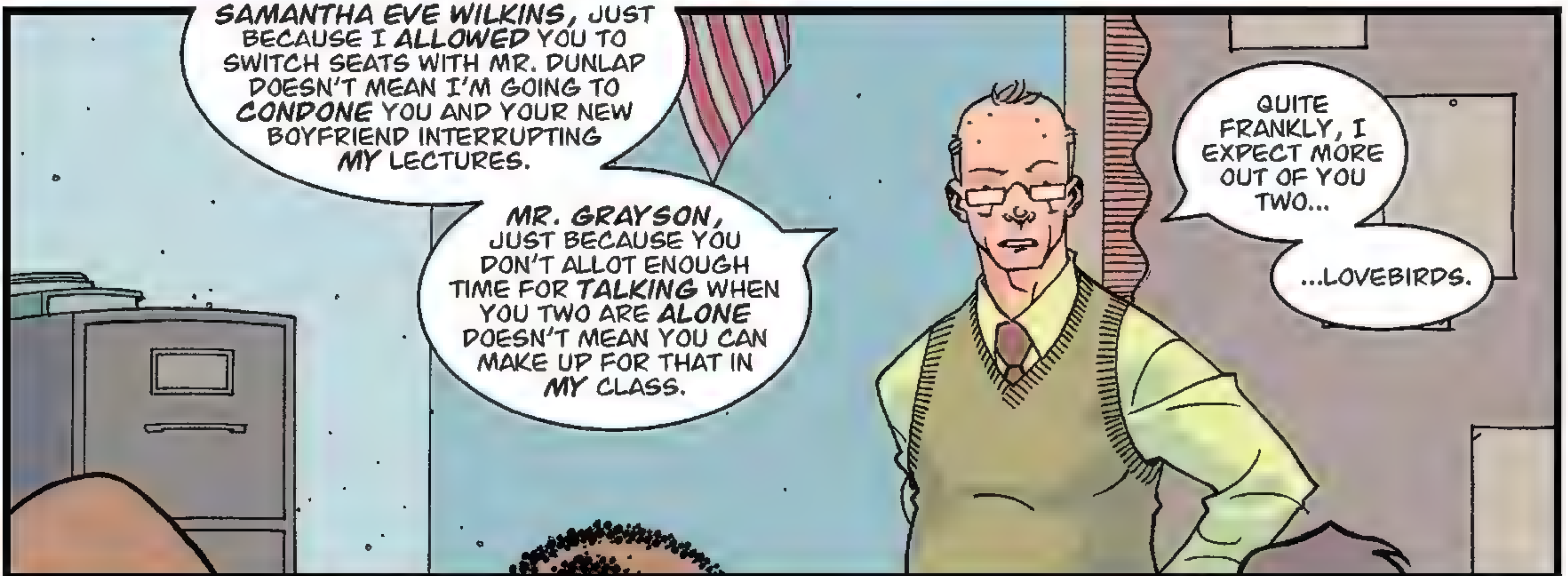
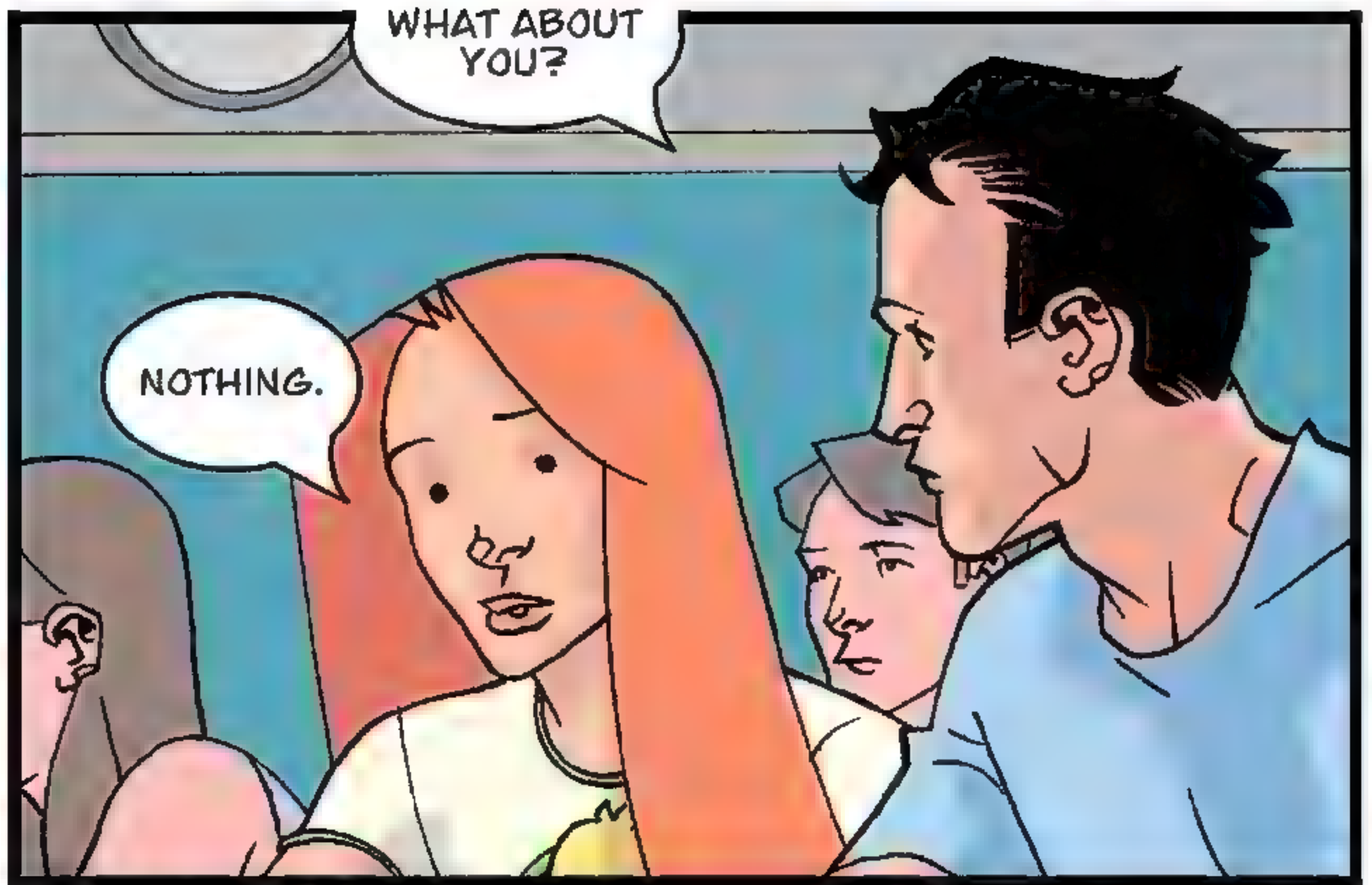
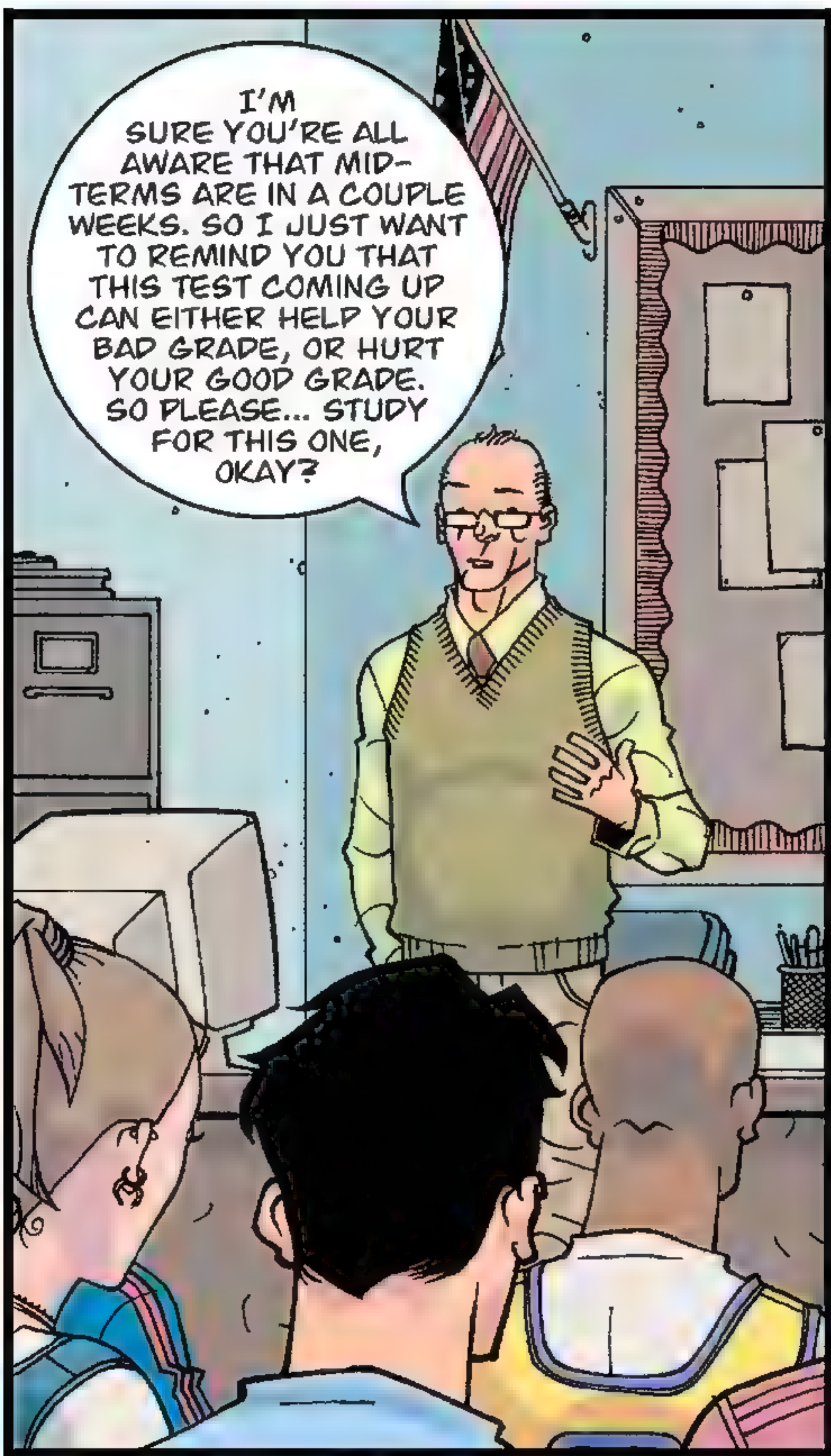
~SIGH~



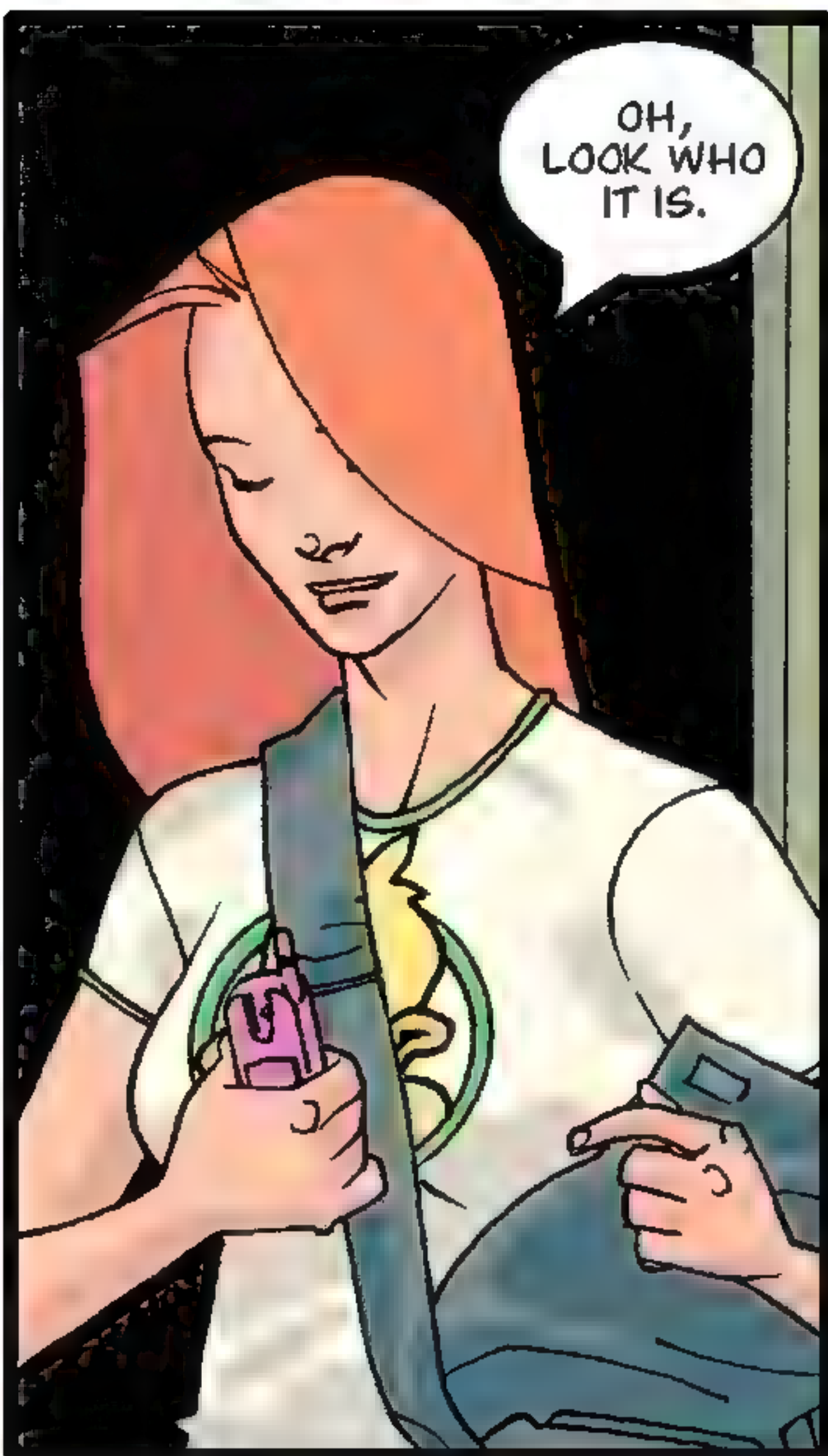
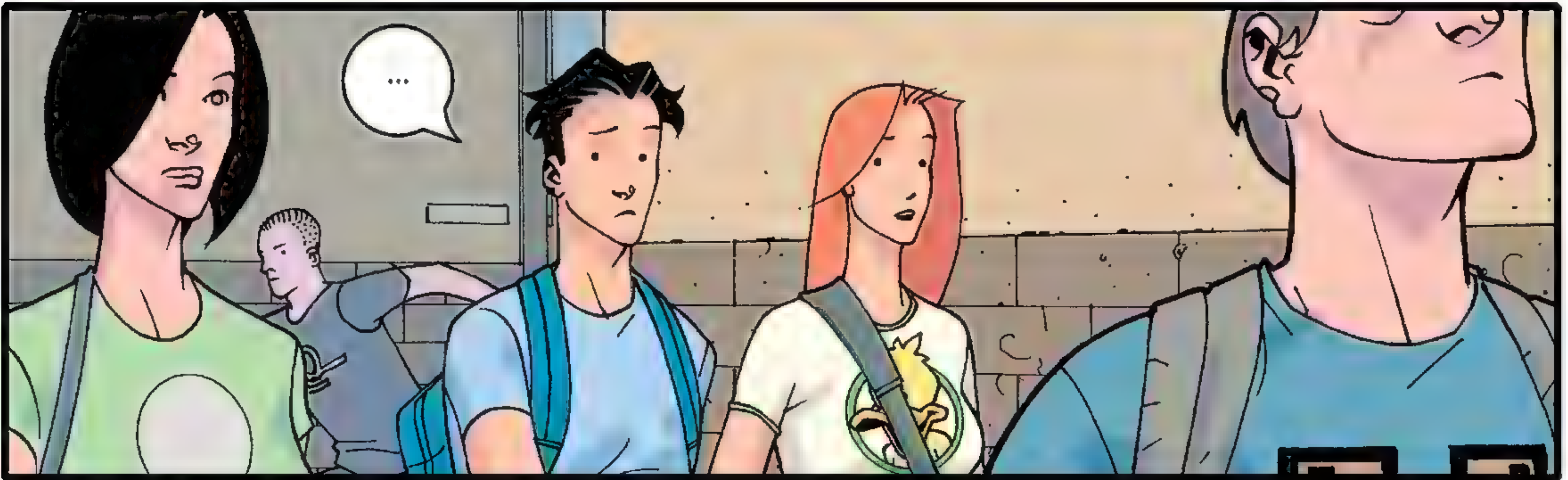
NO KIDDING. I WISH IT WERE JUST A BIG MONSTER WE COULD PUNCH.

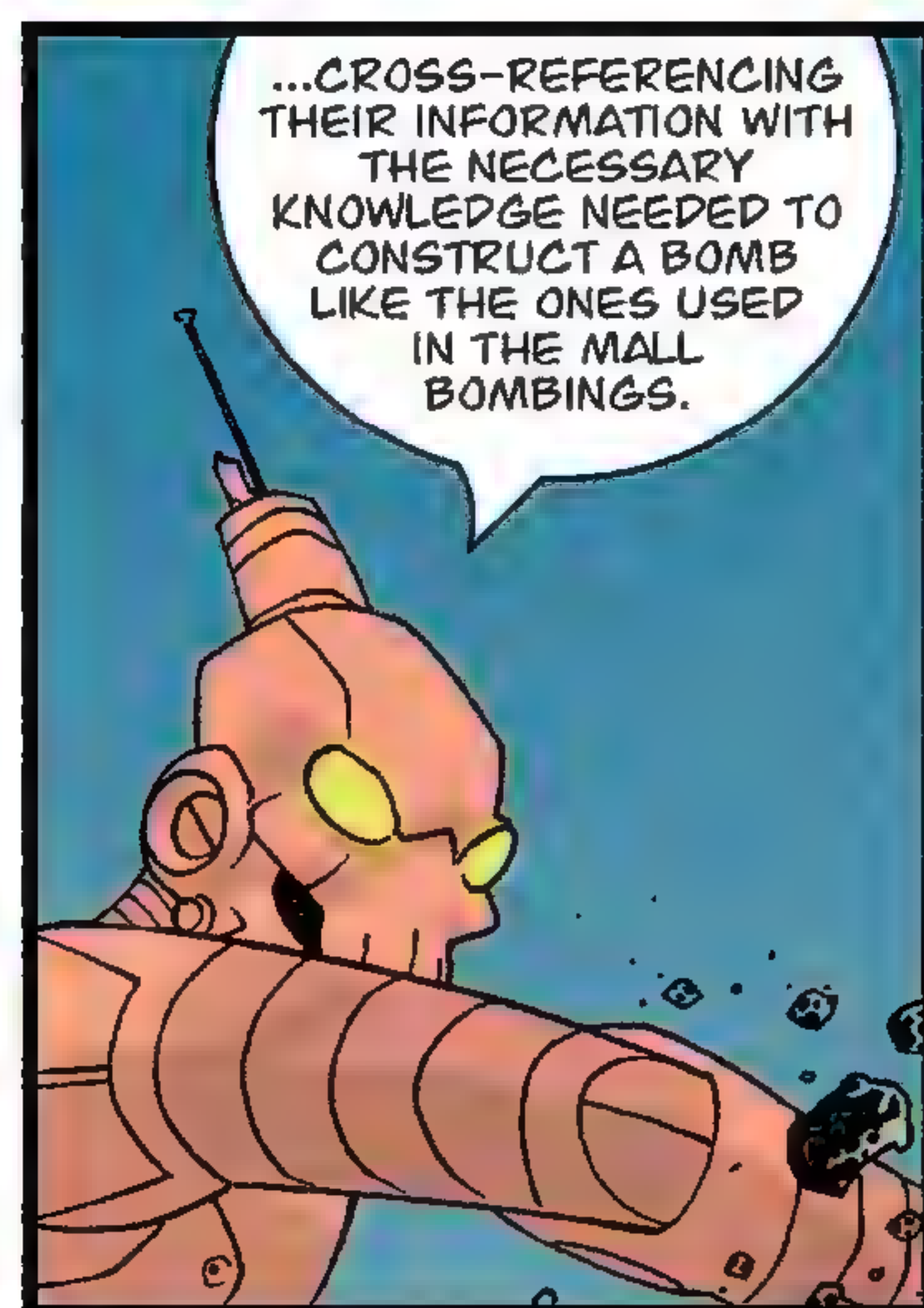
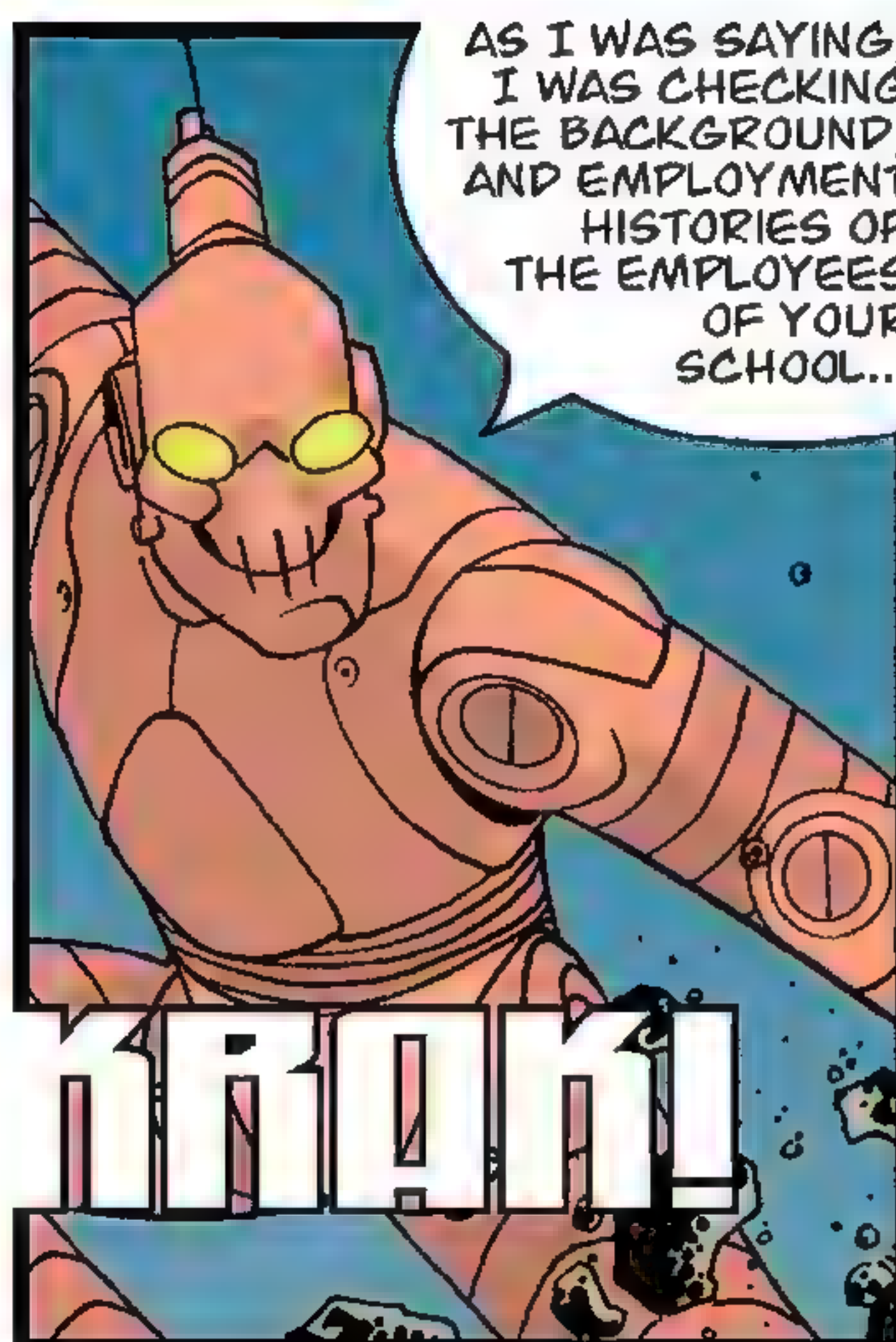


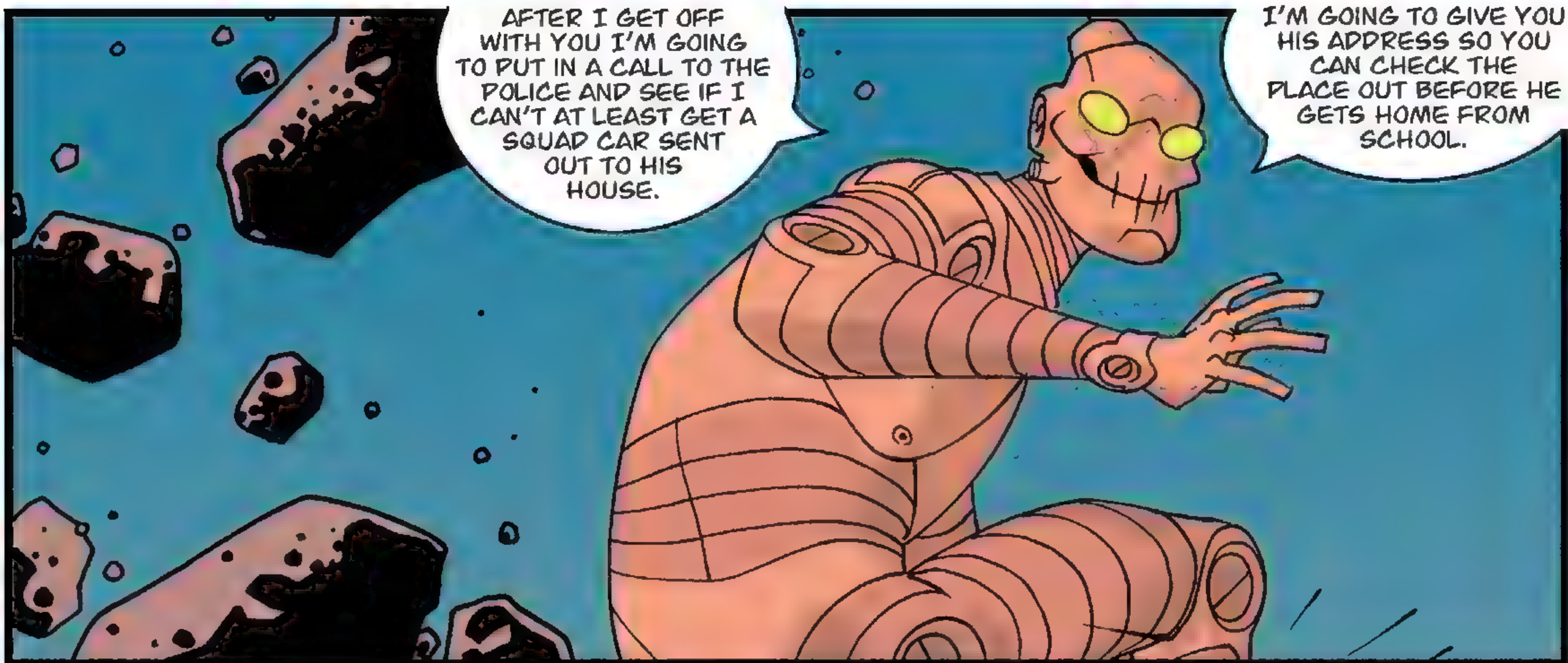
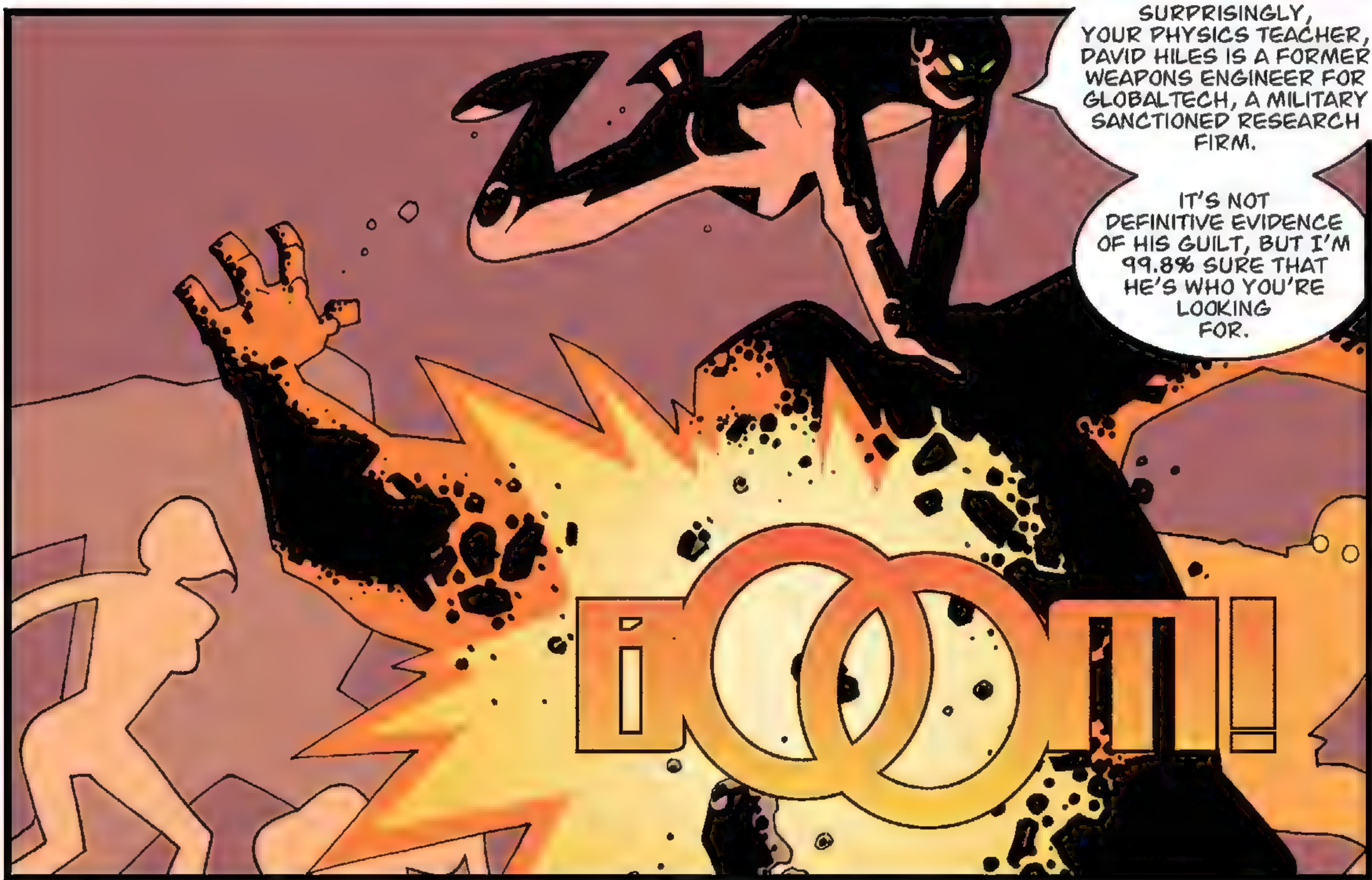
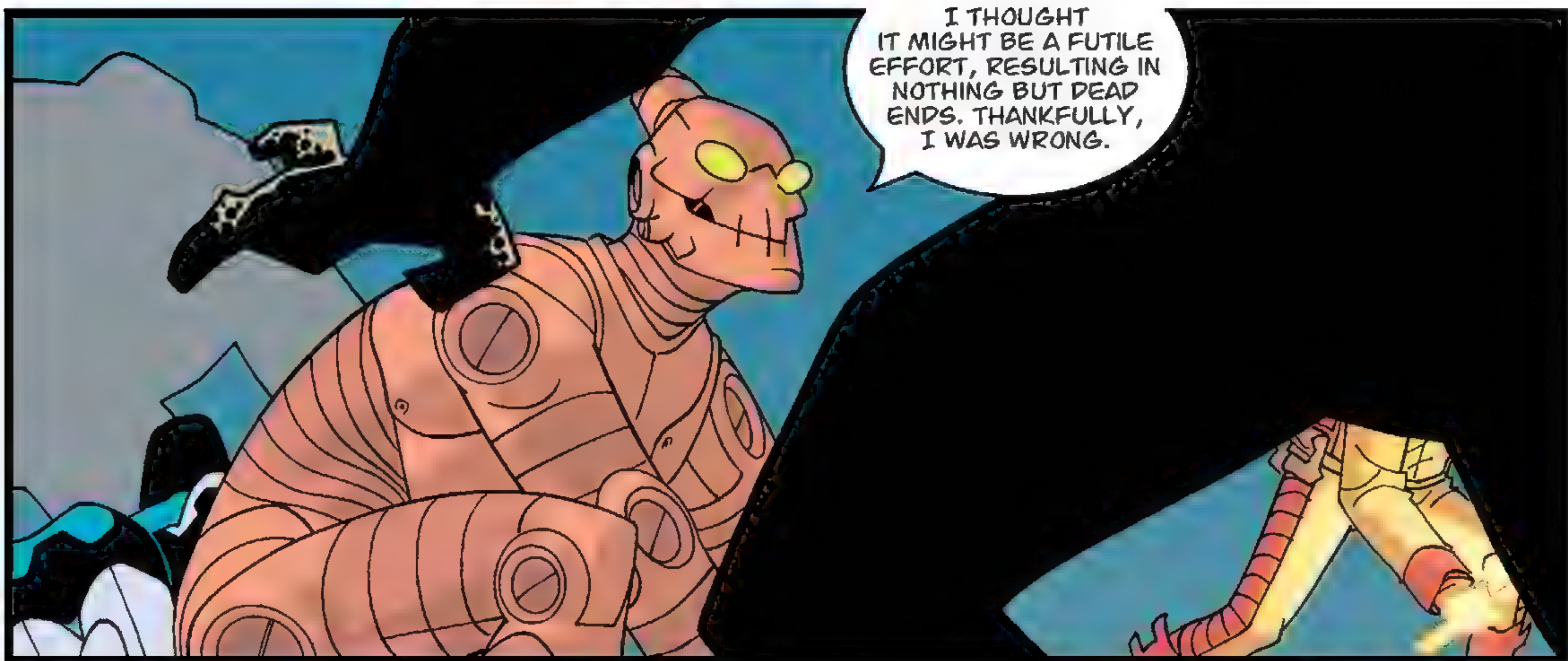


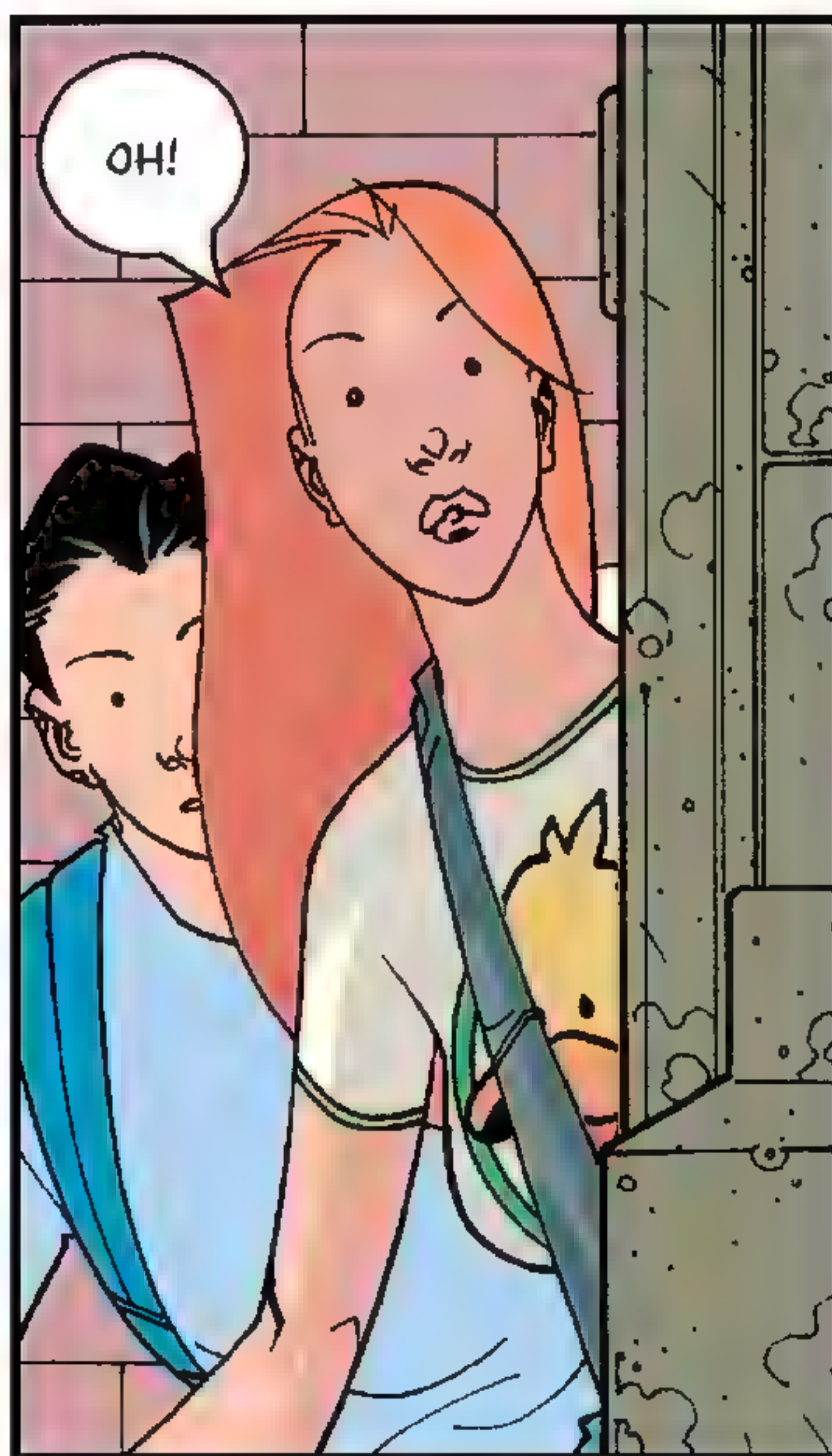
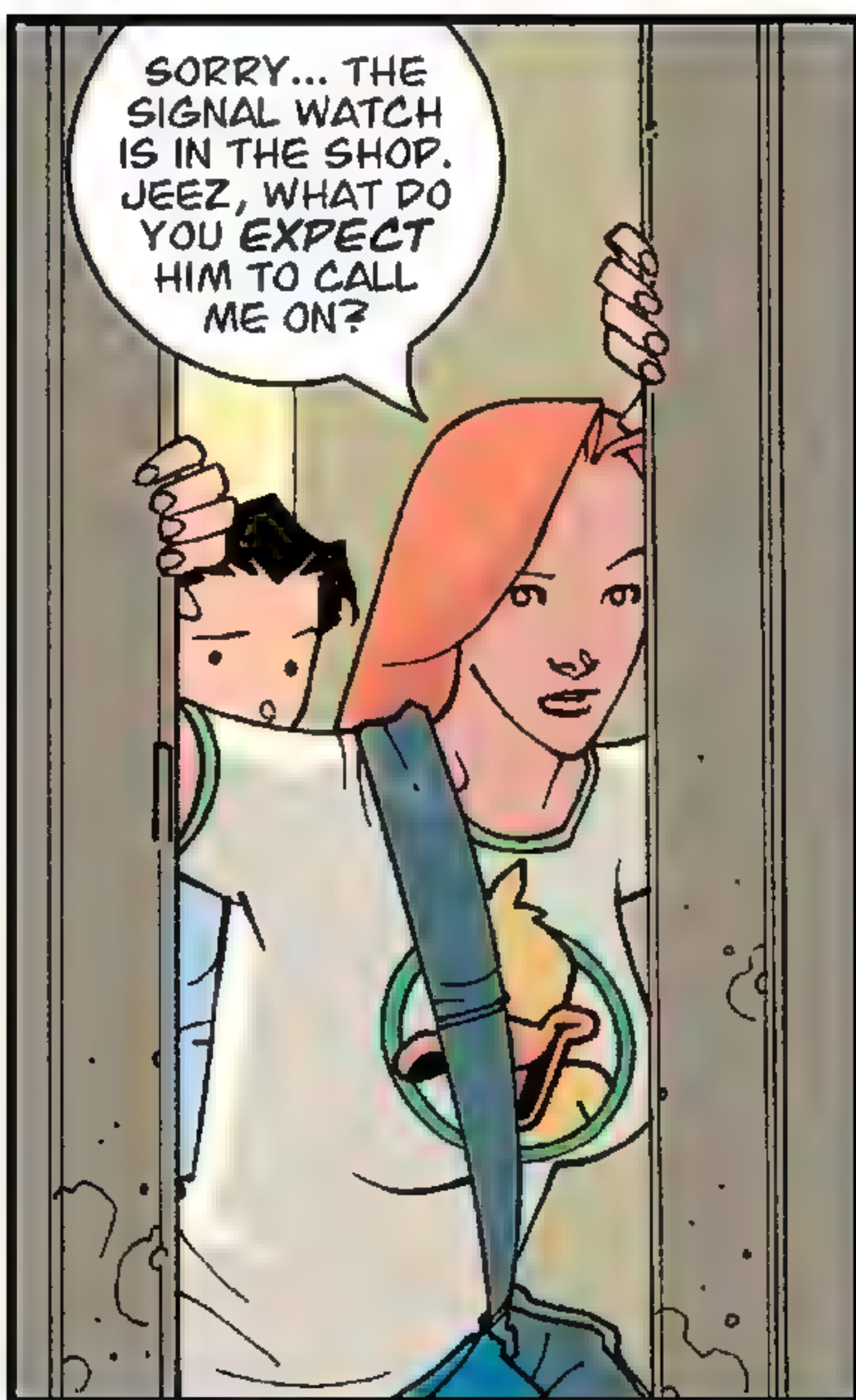


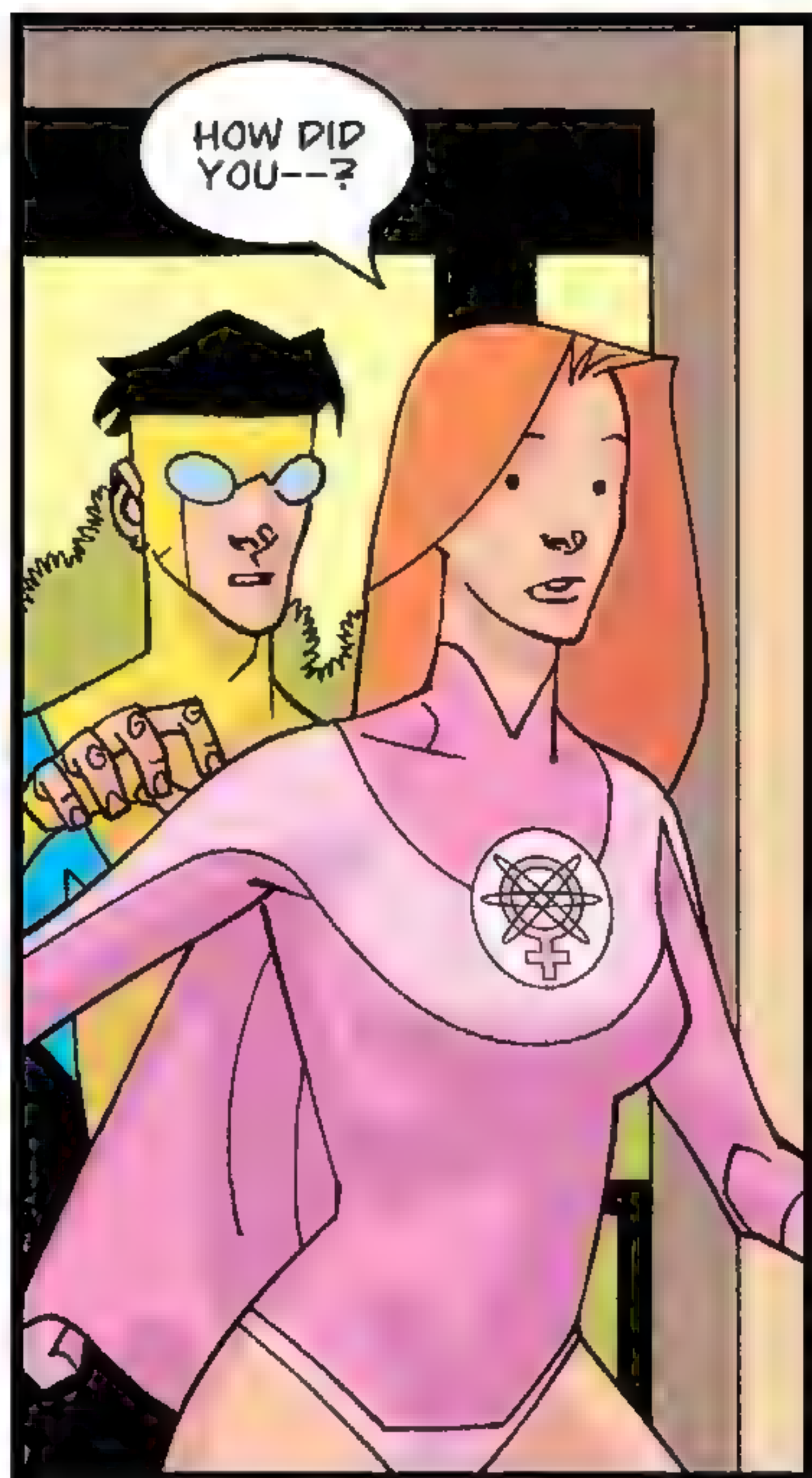
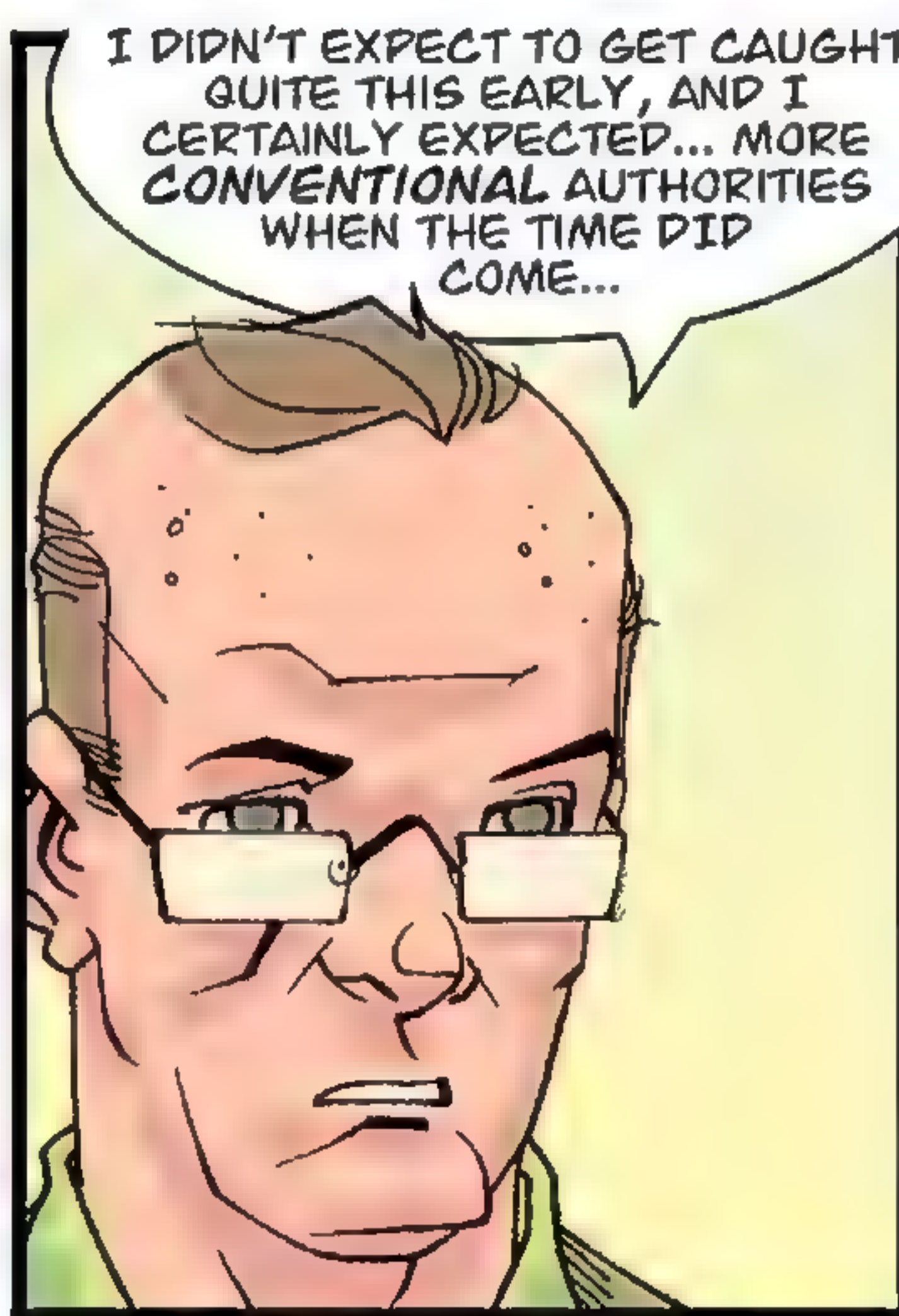
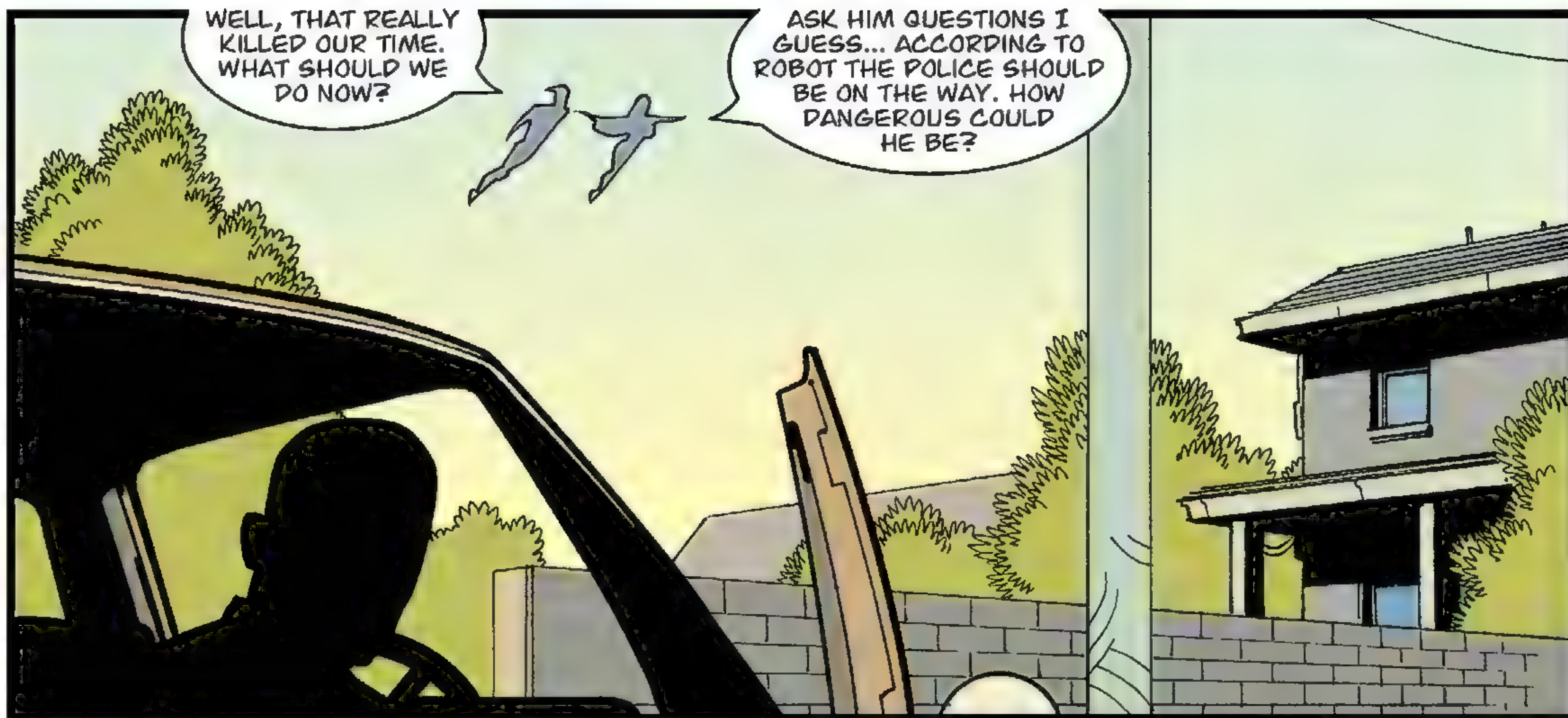


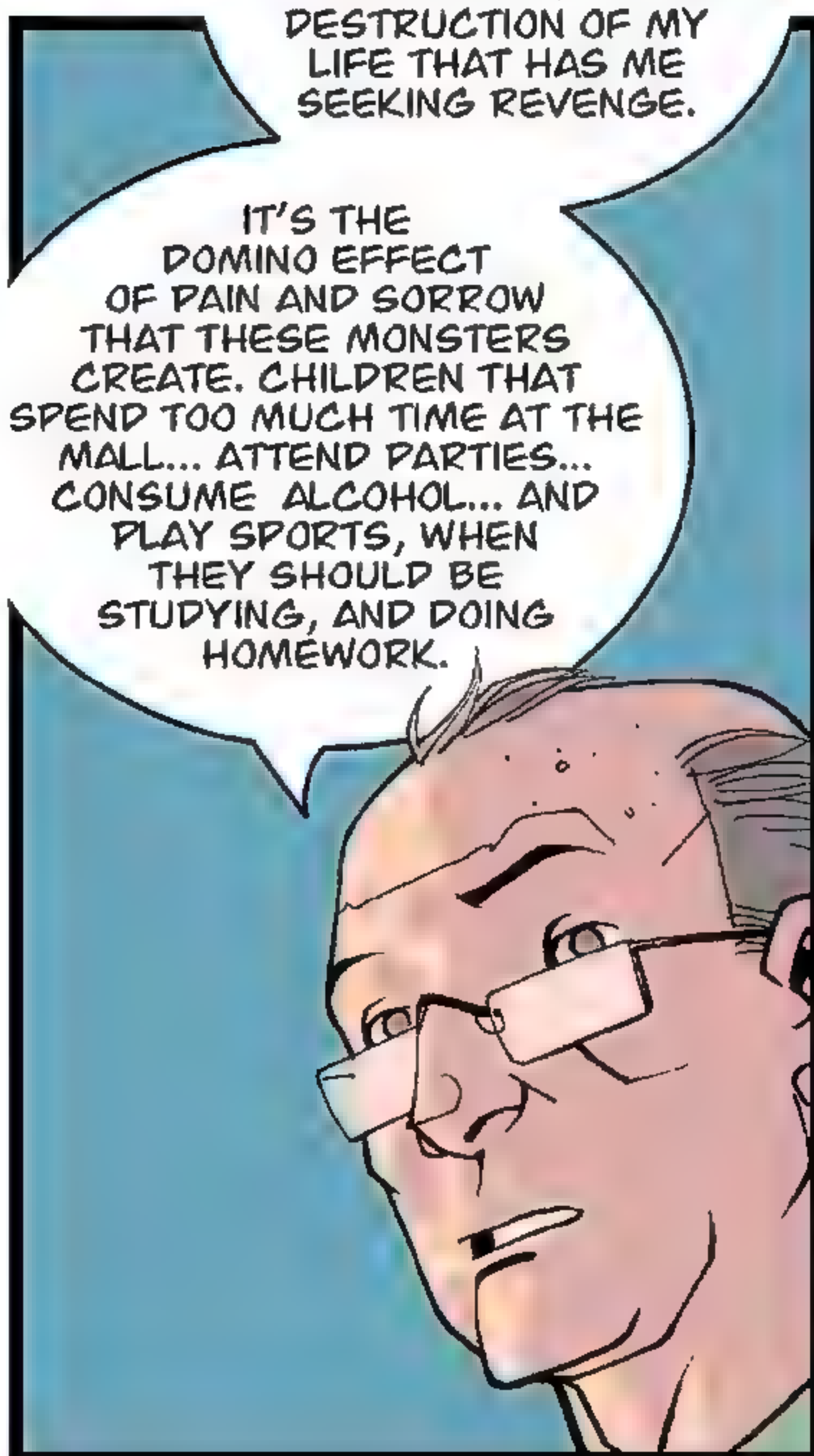
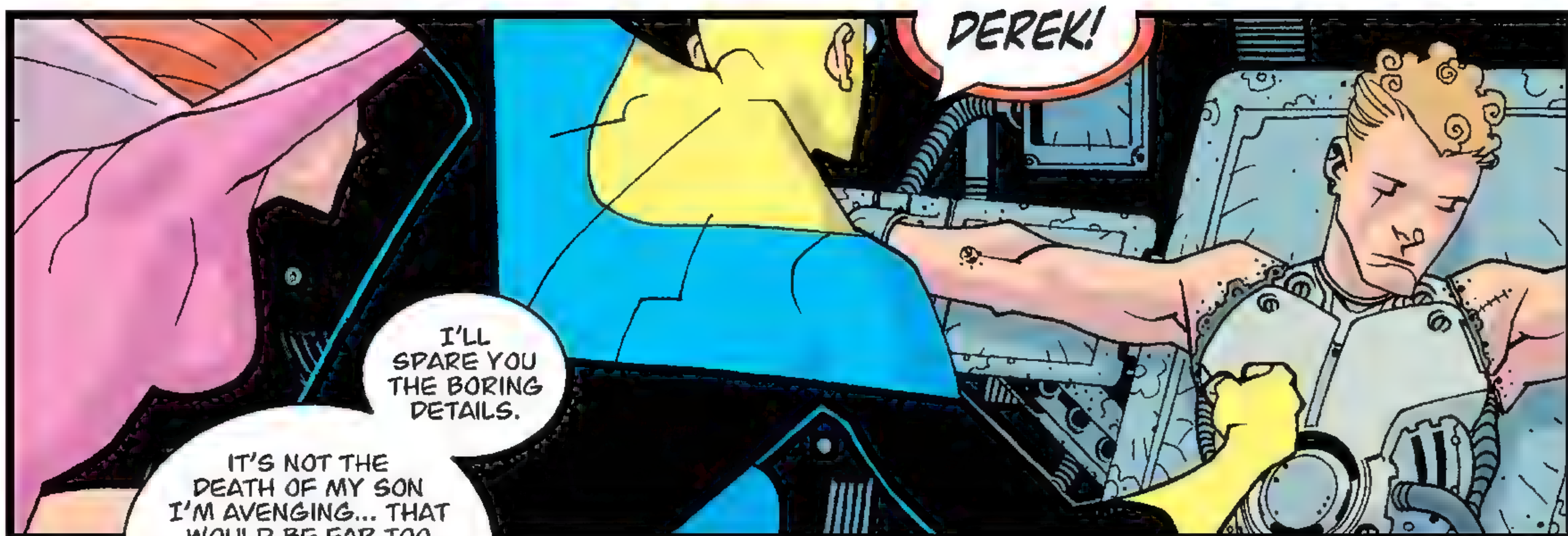
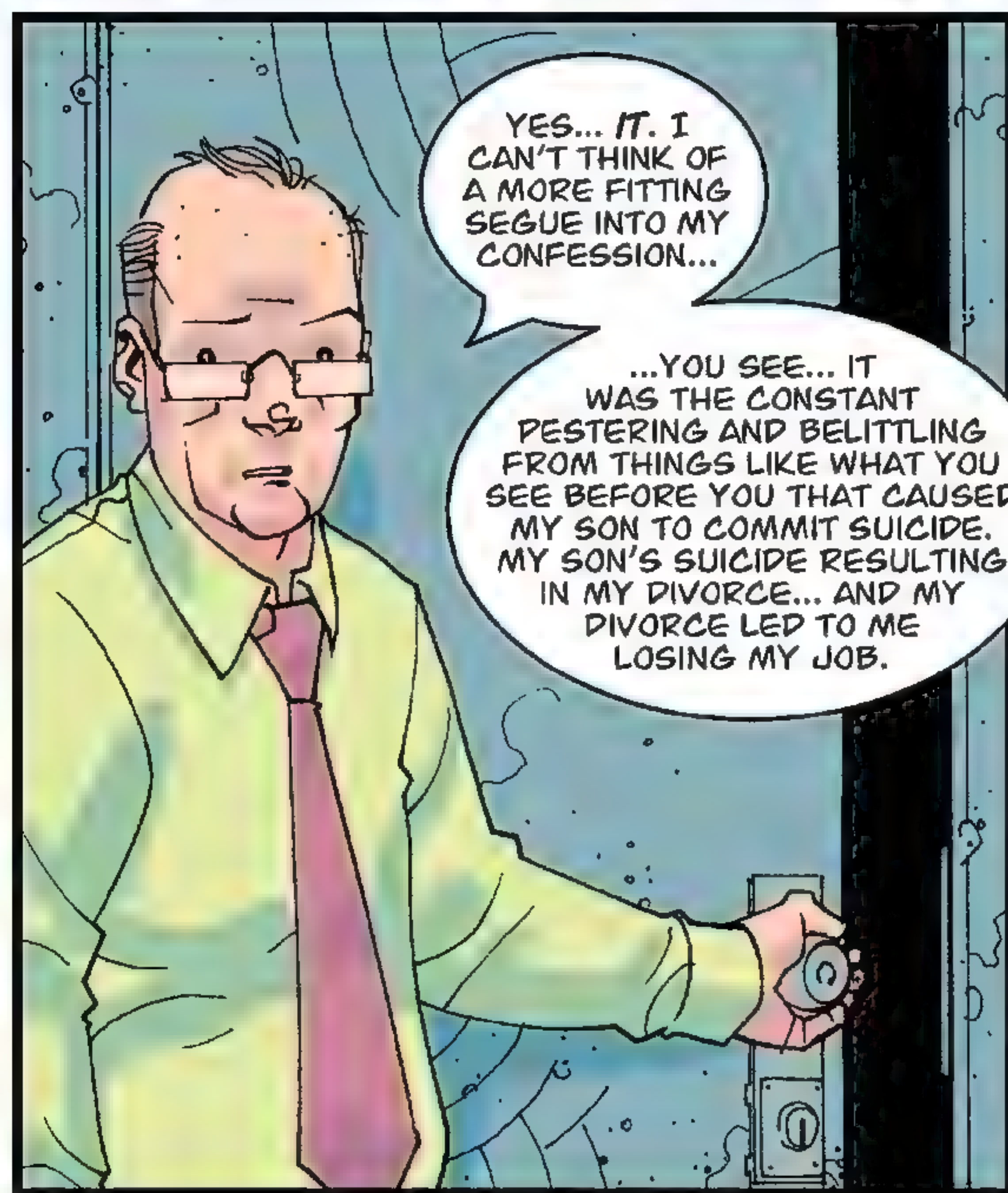
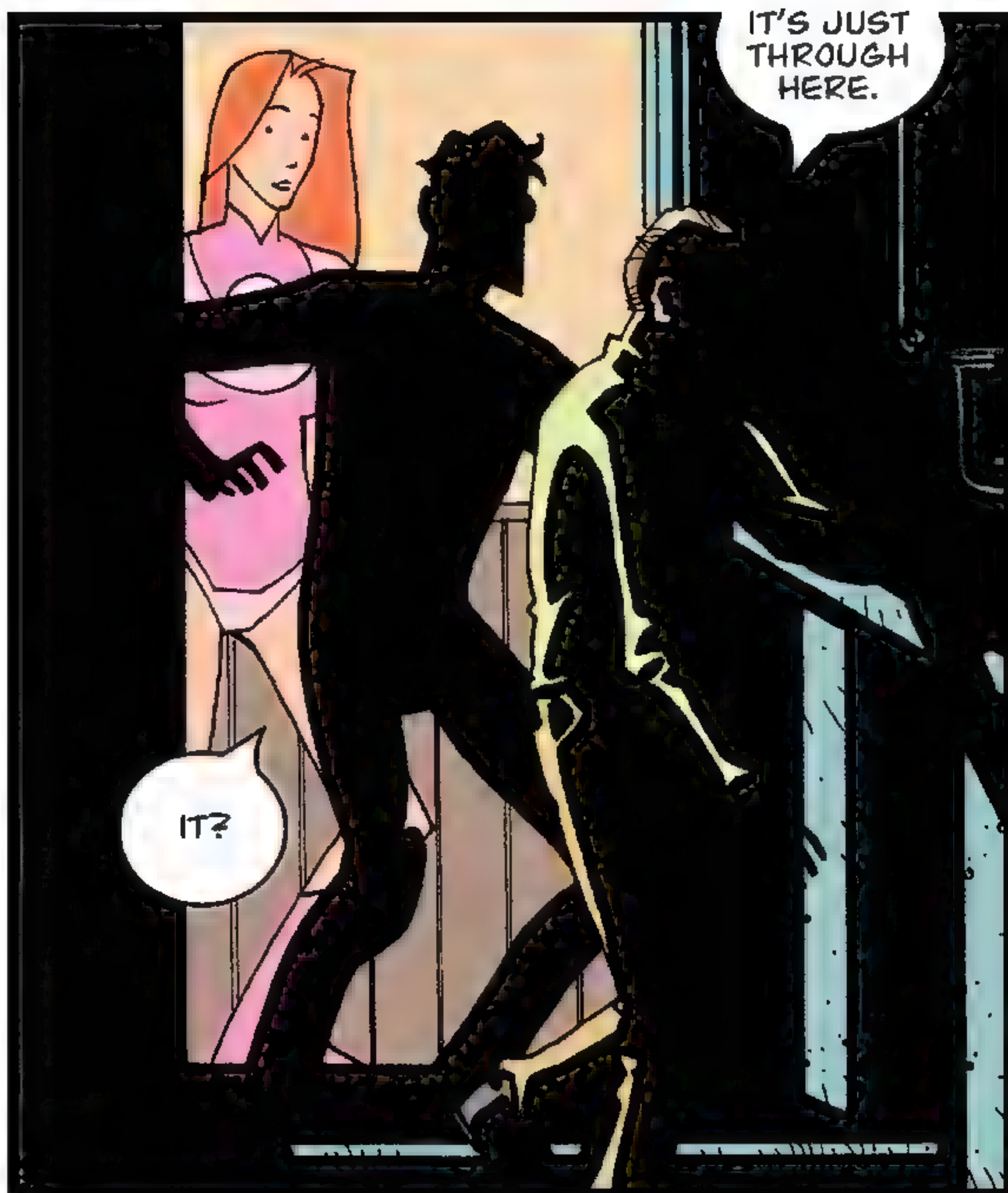


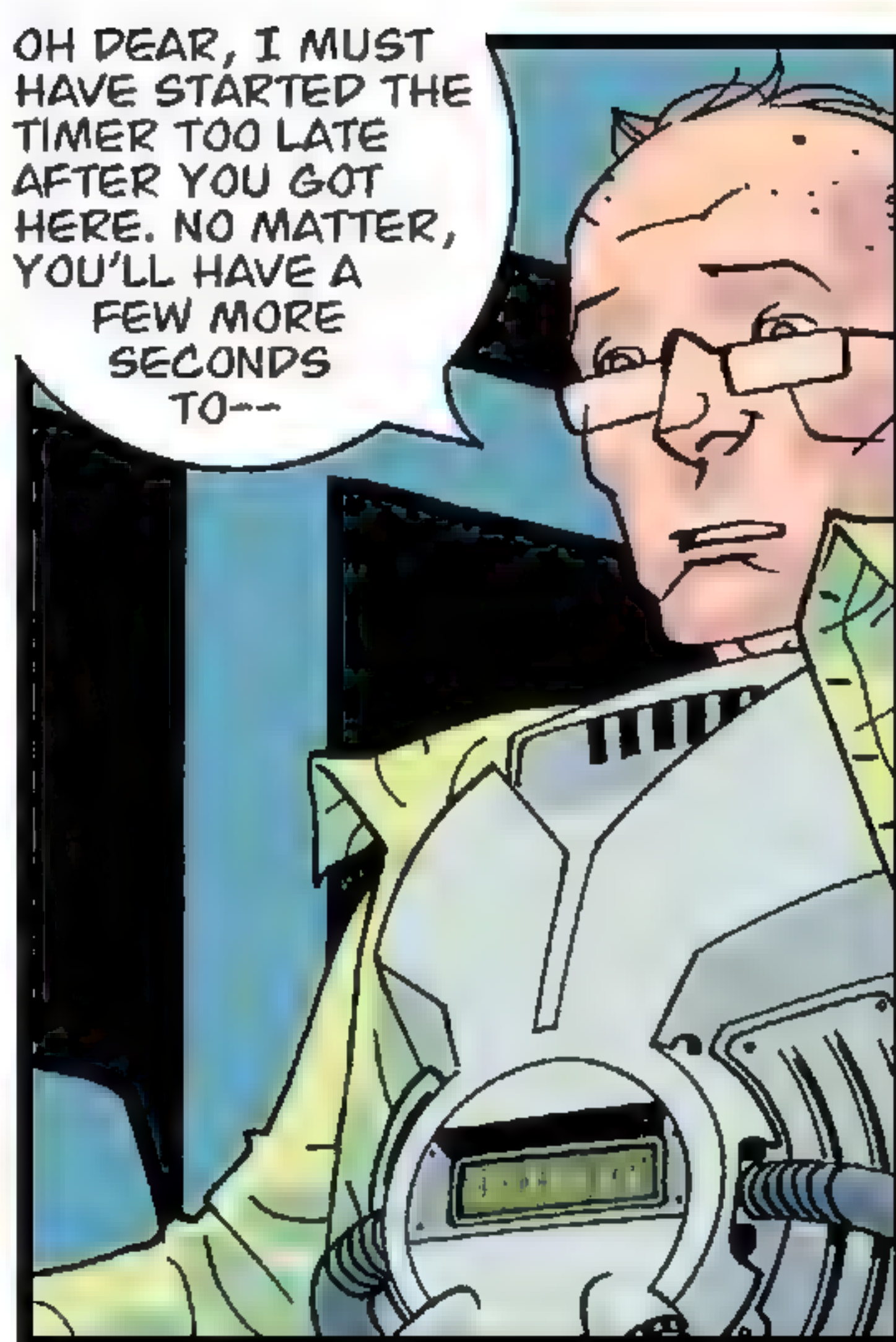
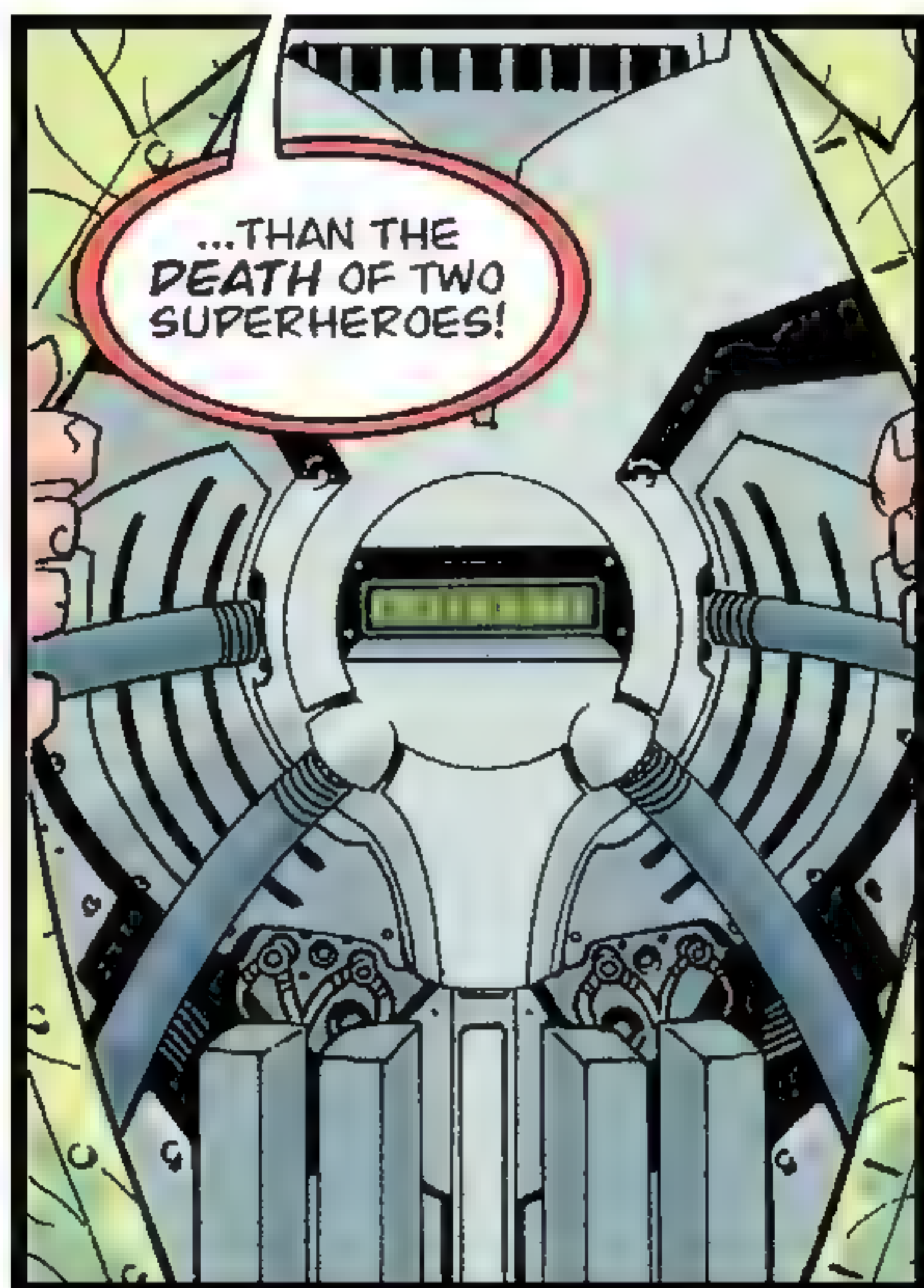




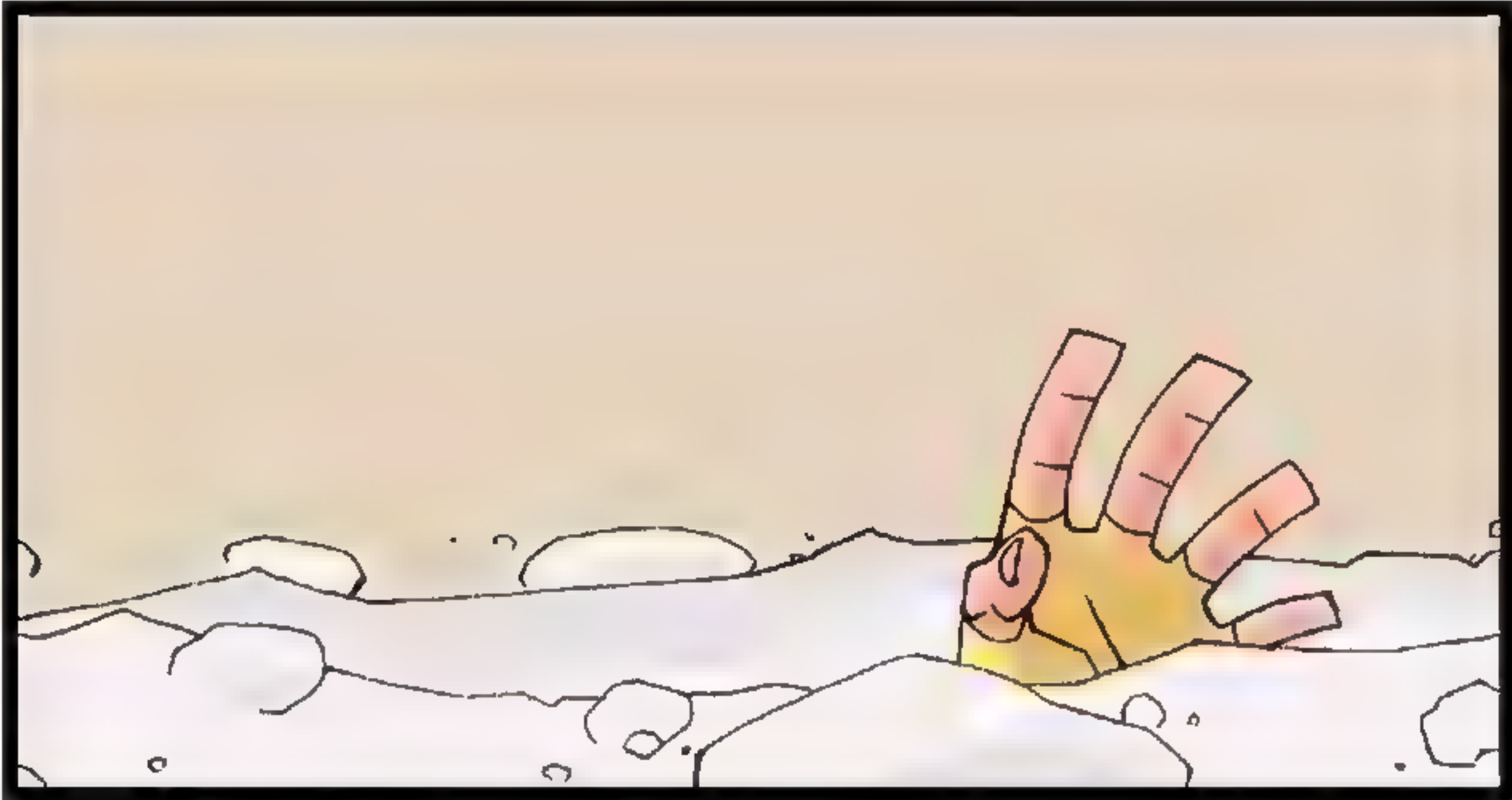


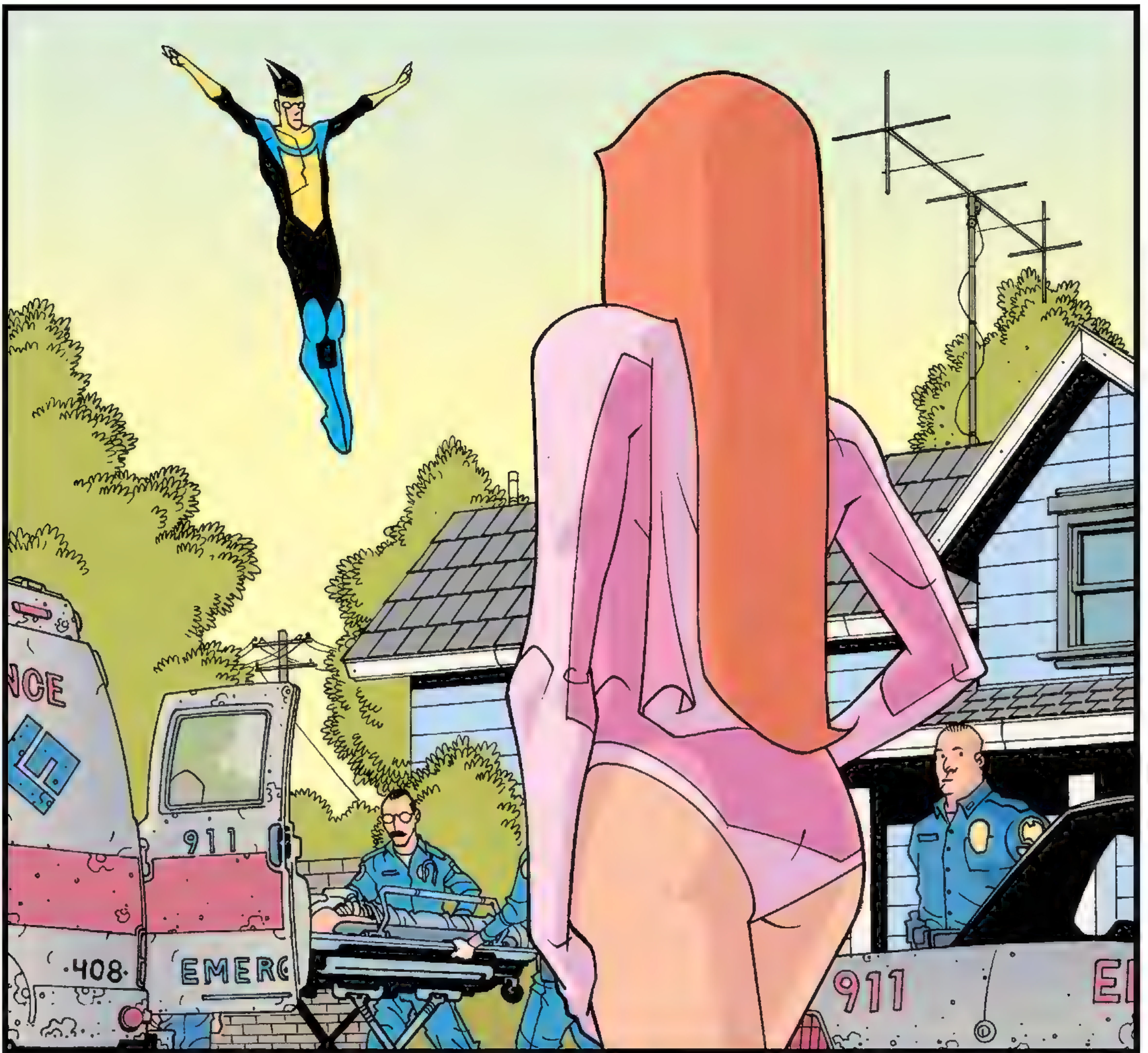






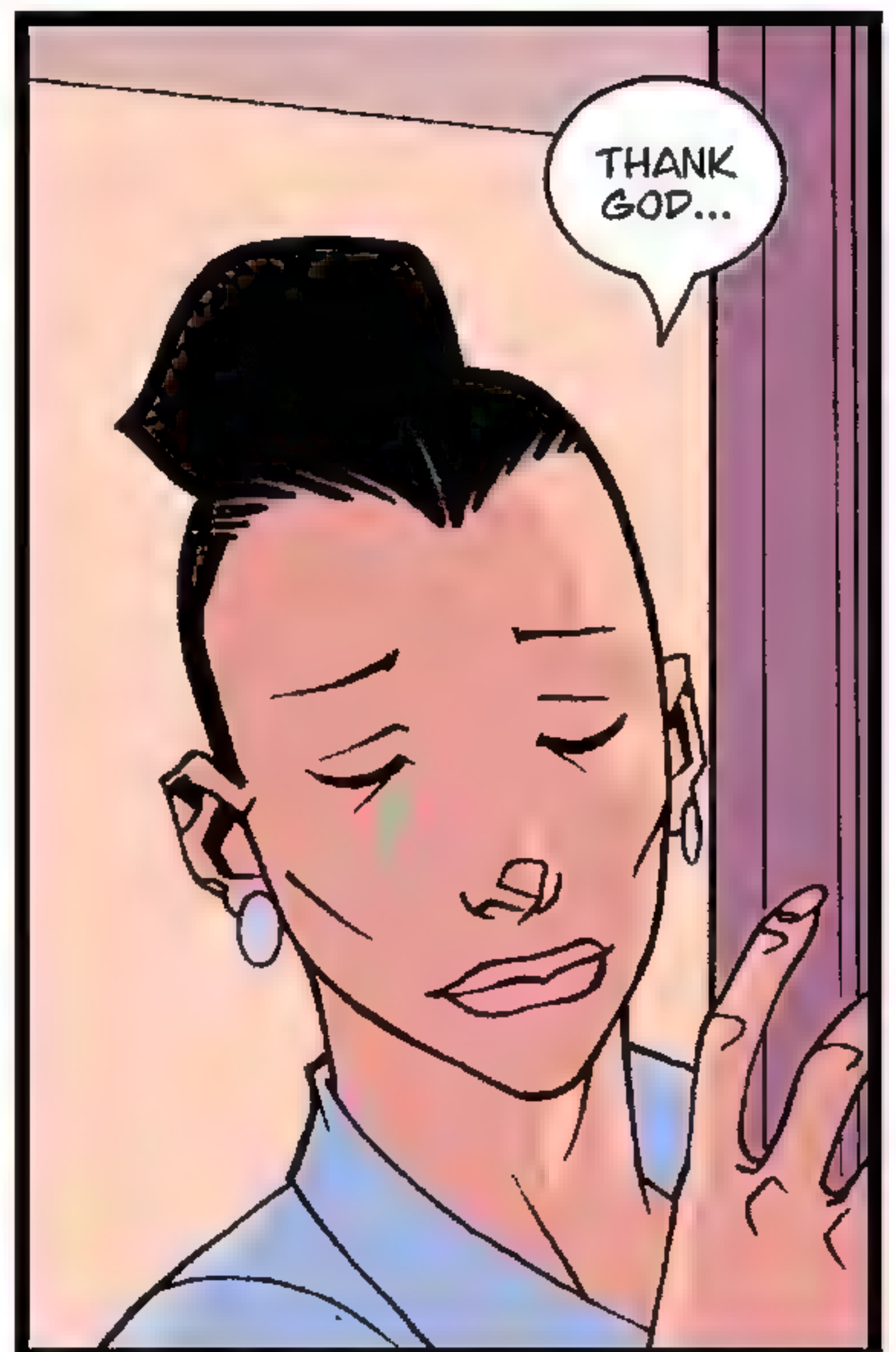
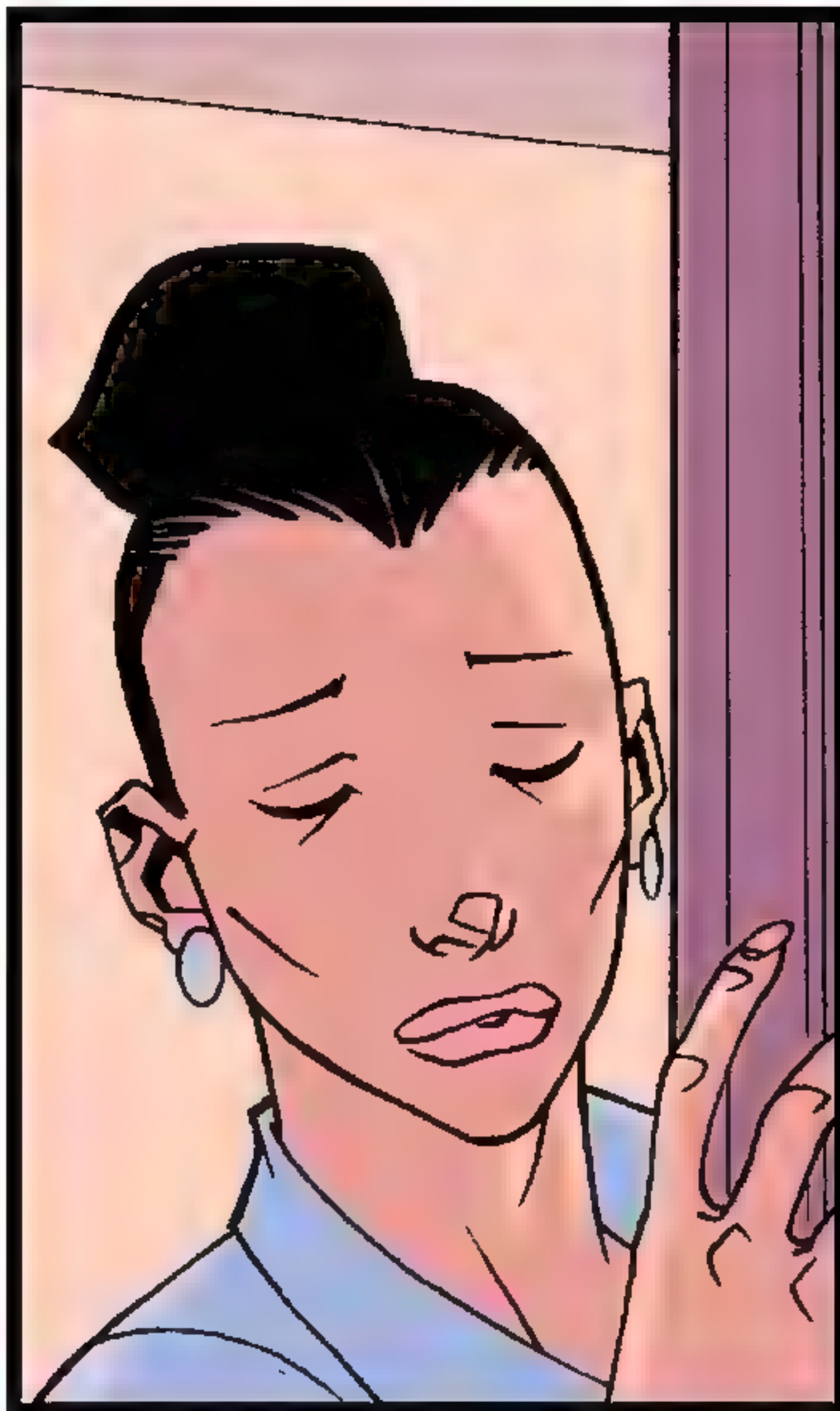
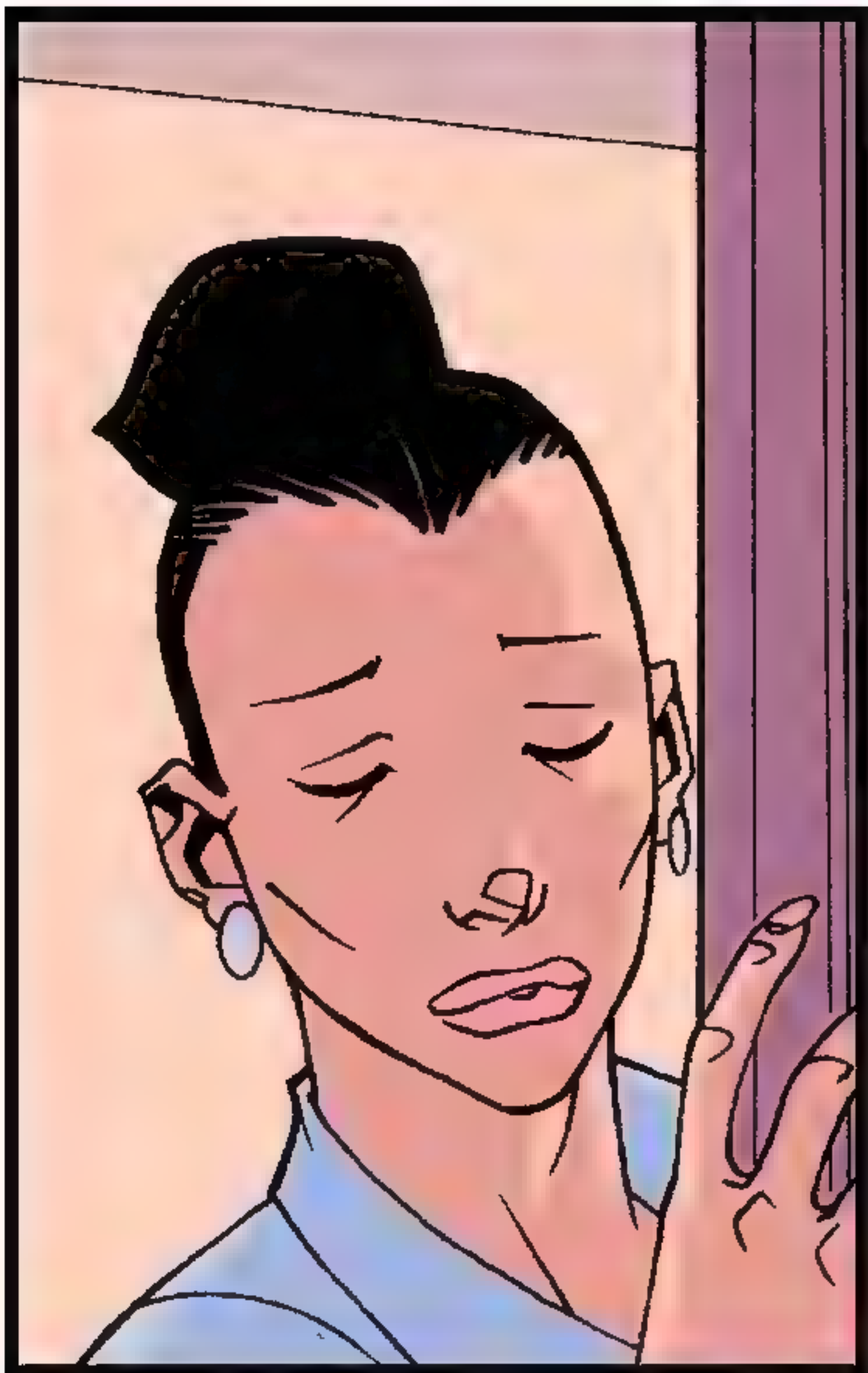
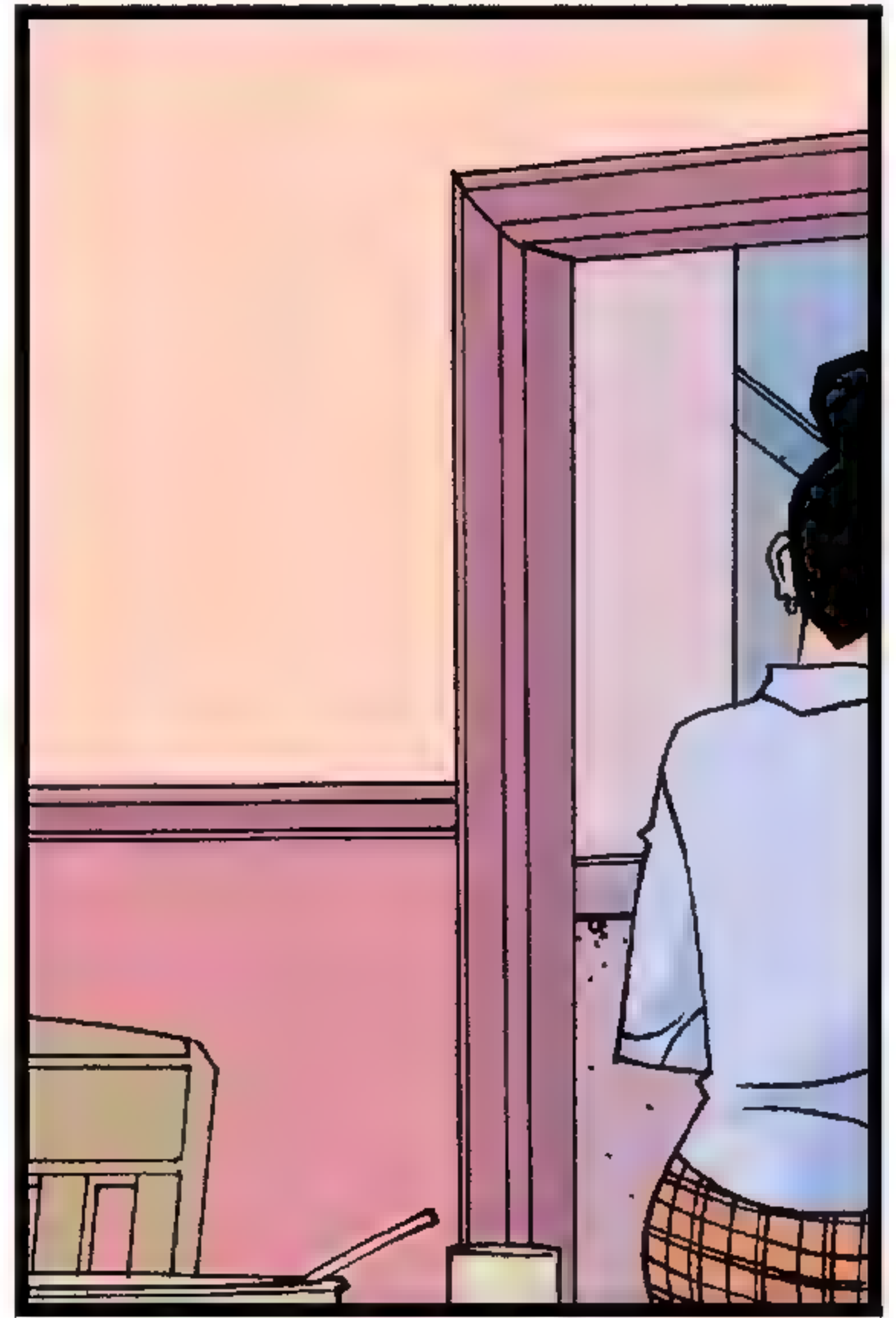
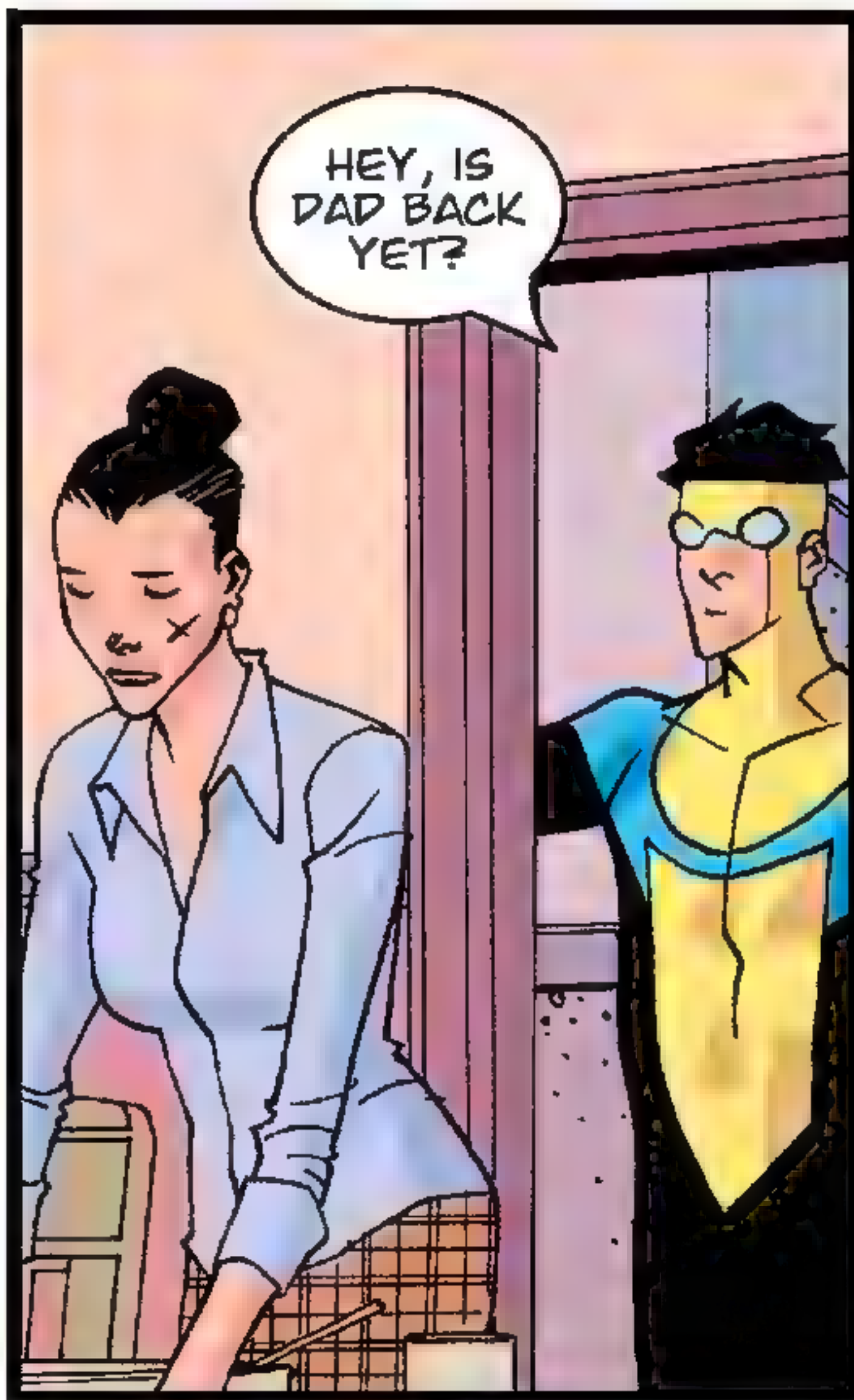
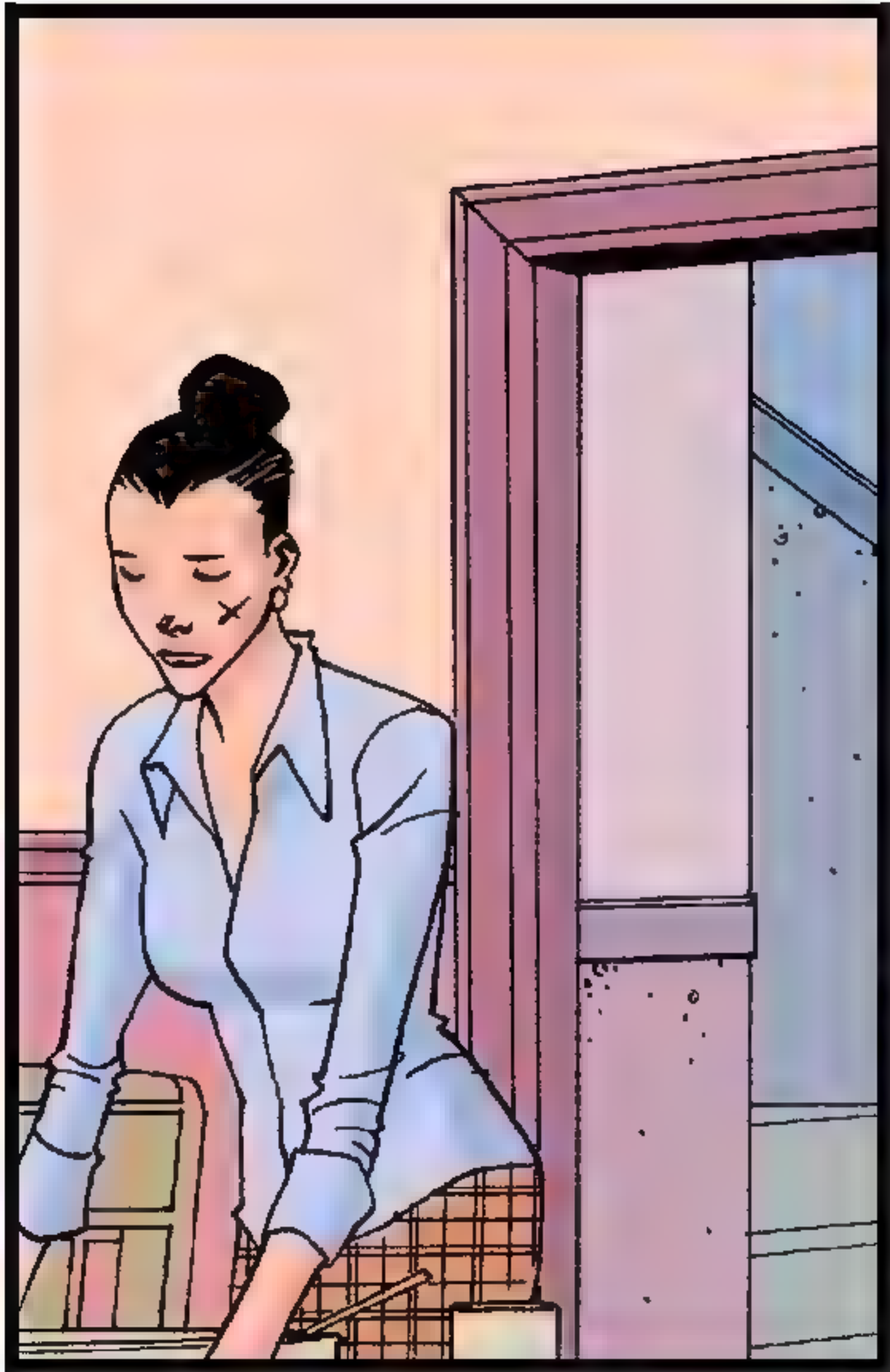


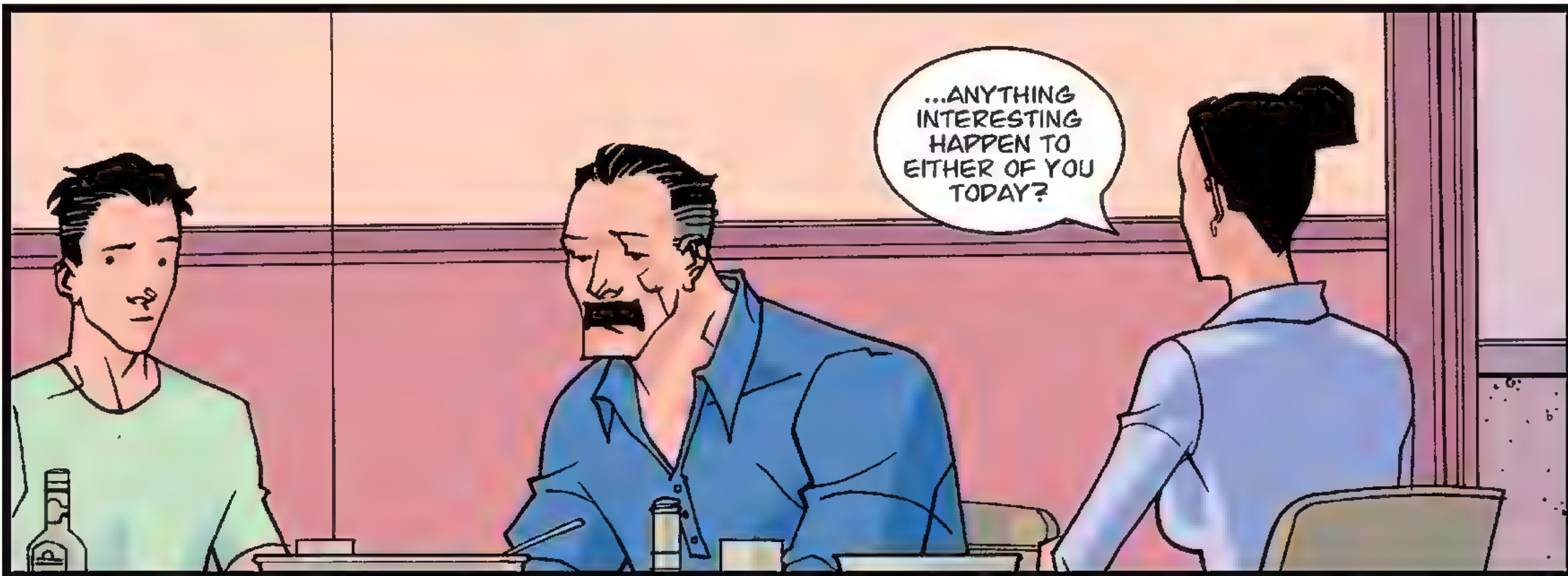
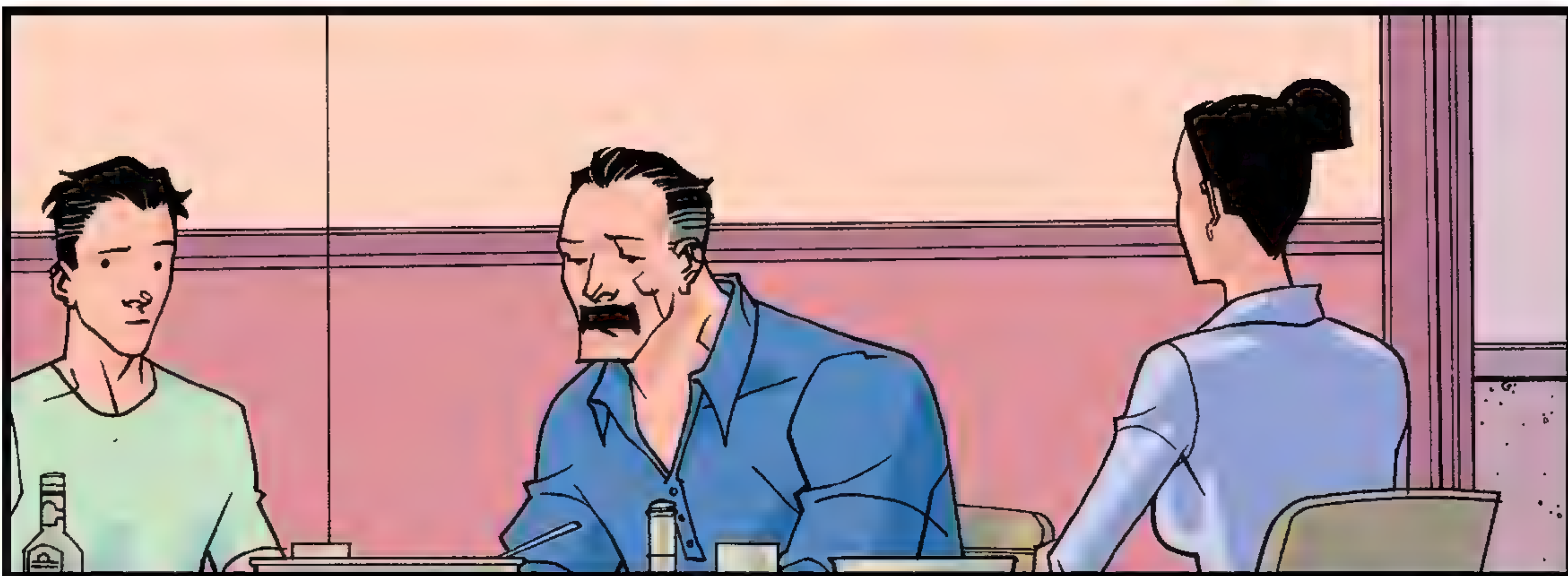
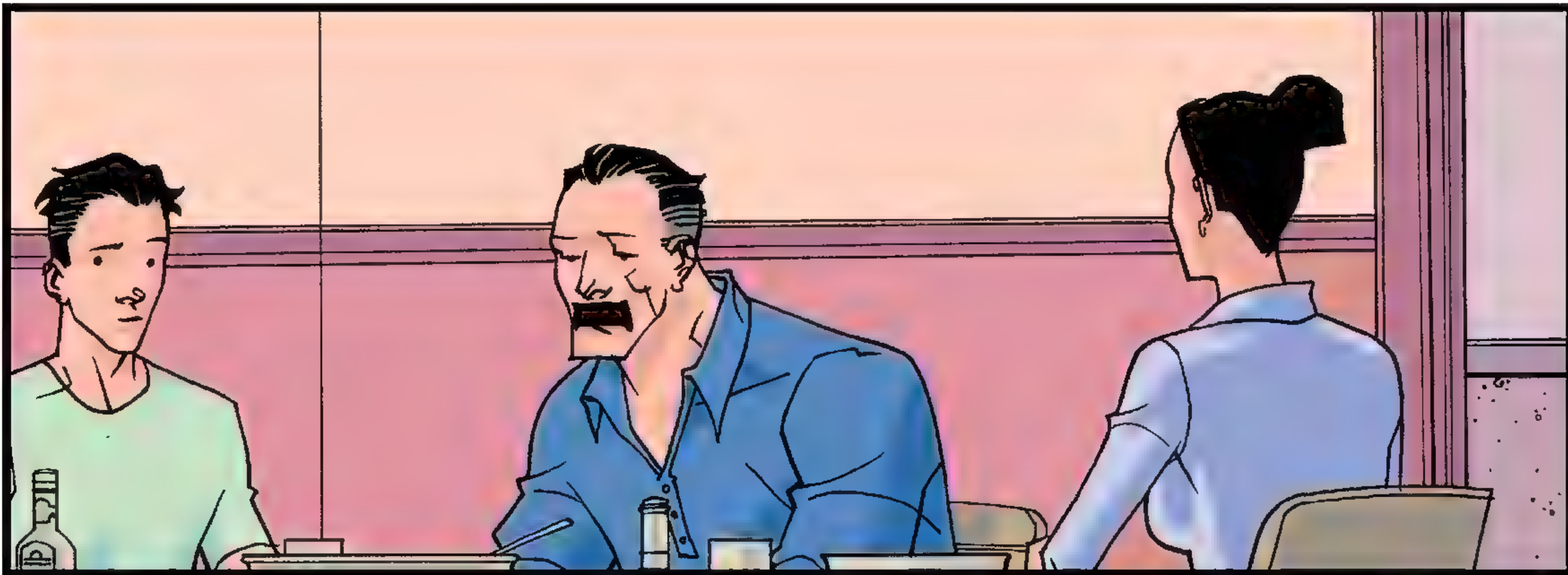


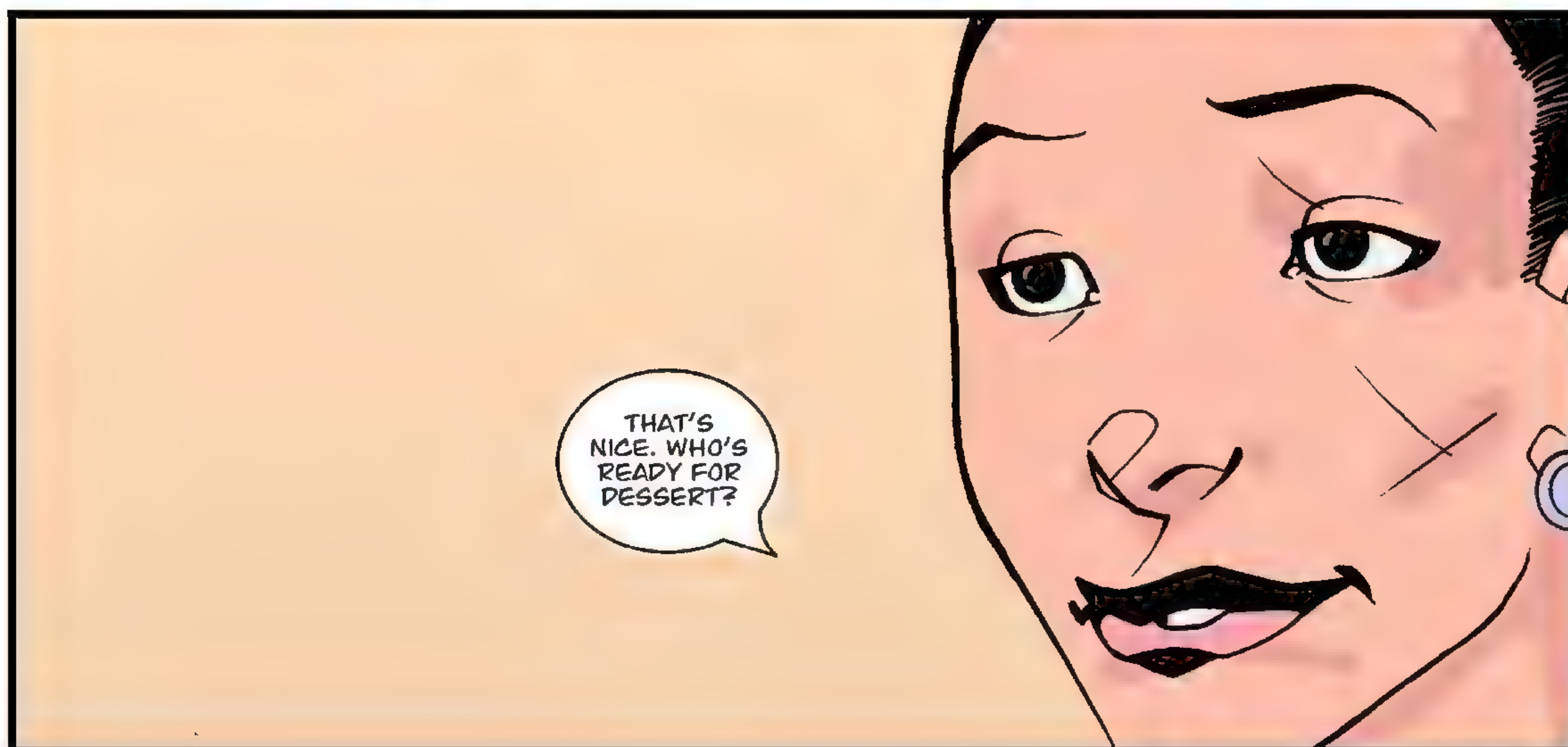
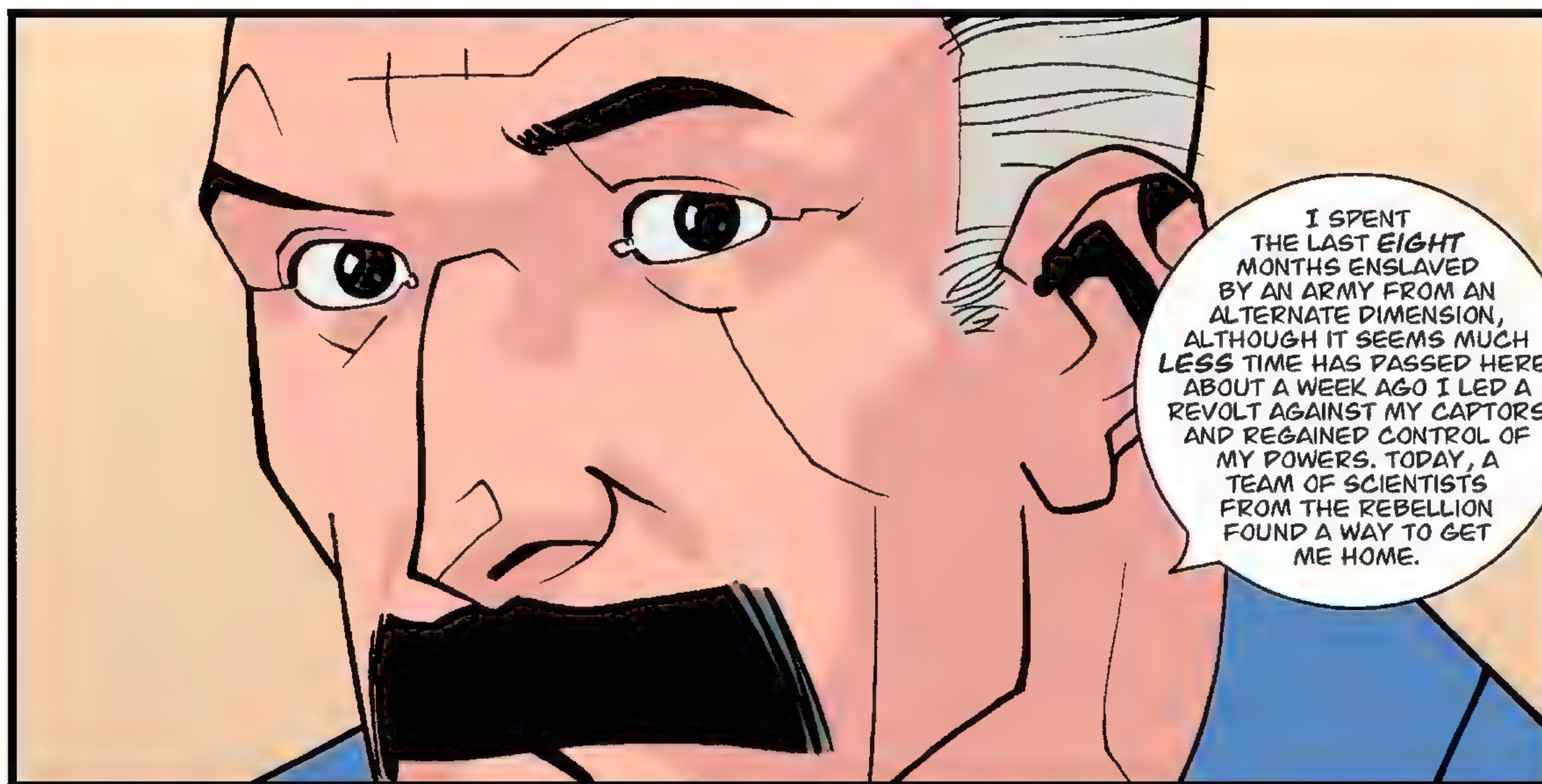
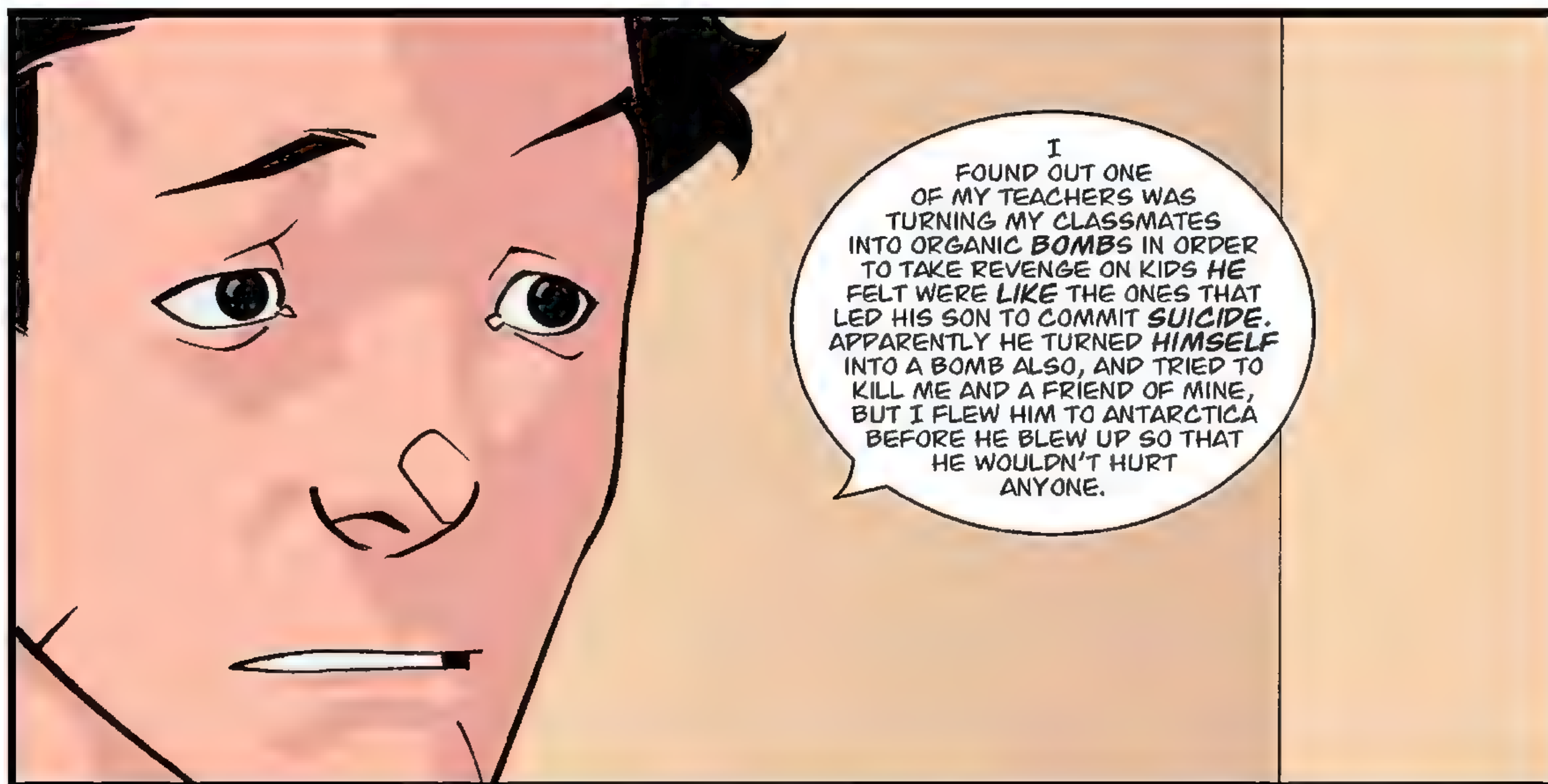


ROBOT IS COMING BY TO DO A SWEEP
OF THE HOUSE TO CHECK FOR
ANYTHING DANGEROUS. I THINK THE
POLICE WILL BE WRAPPED UP
HERE SHORTLY.









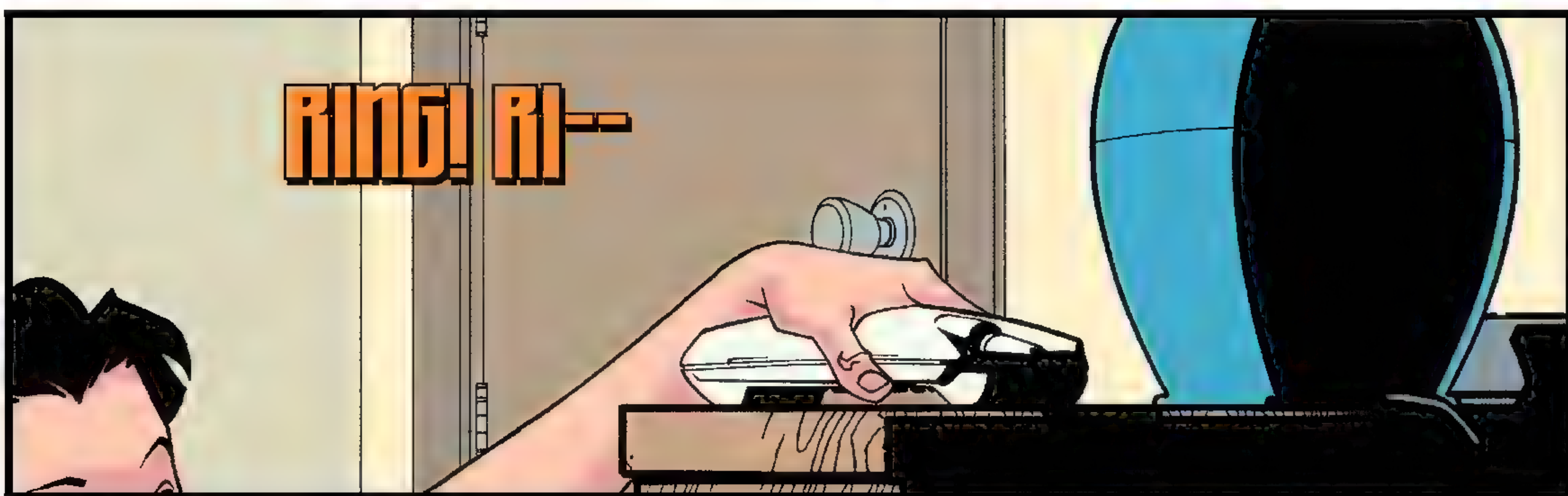
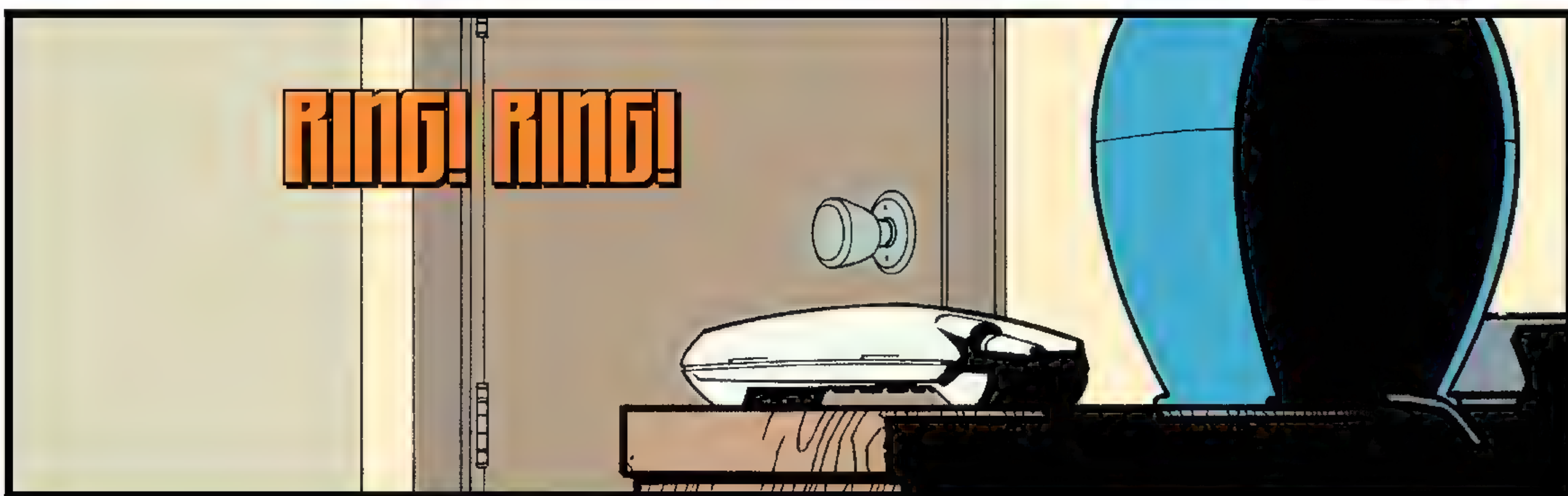


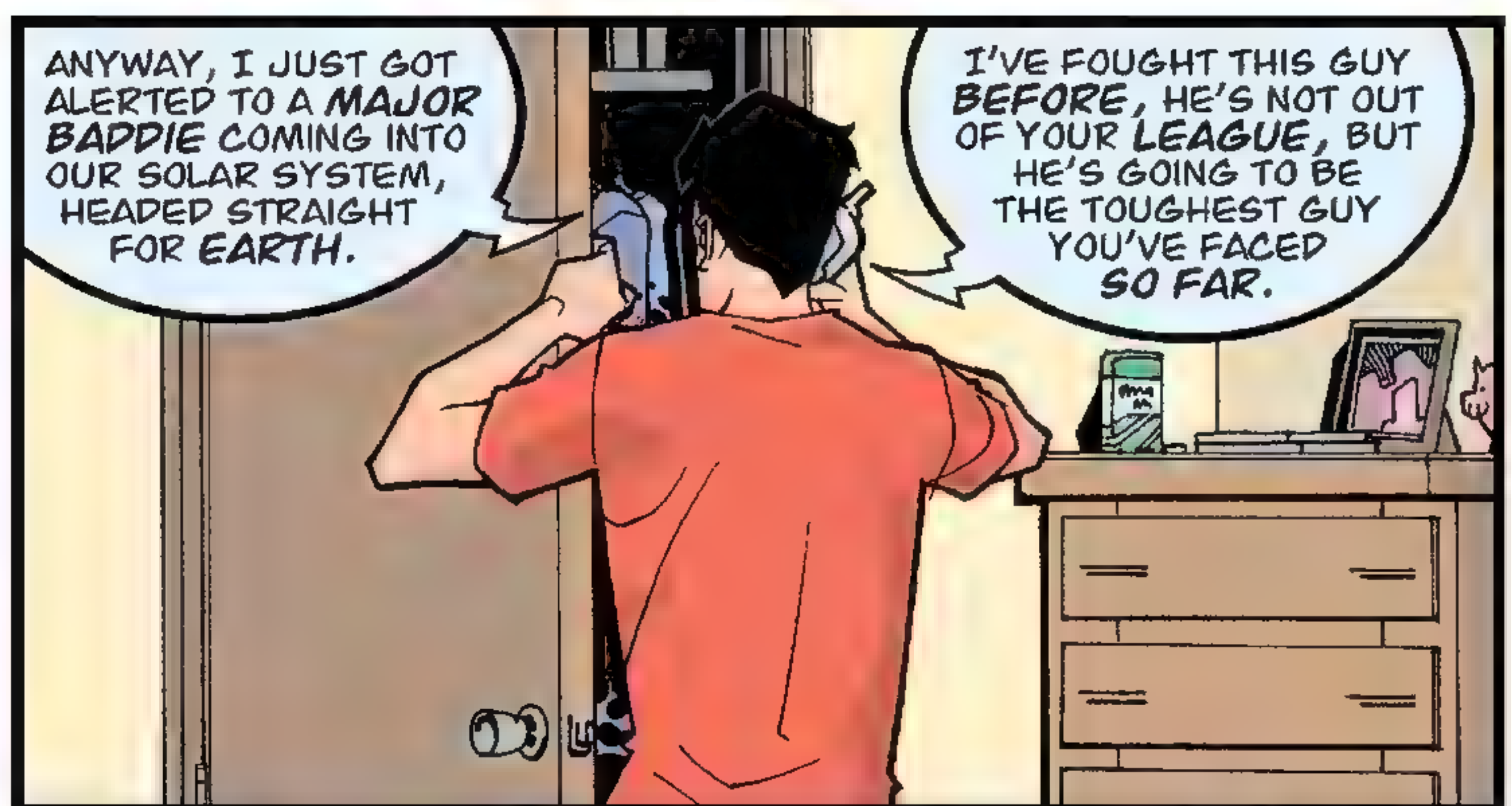
ISSUE FIVE

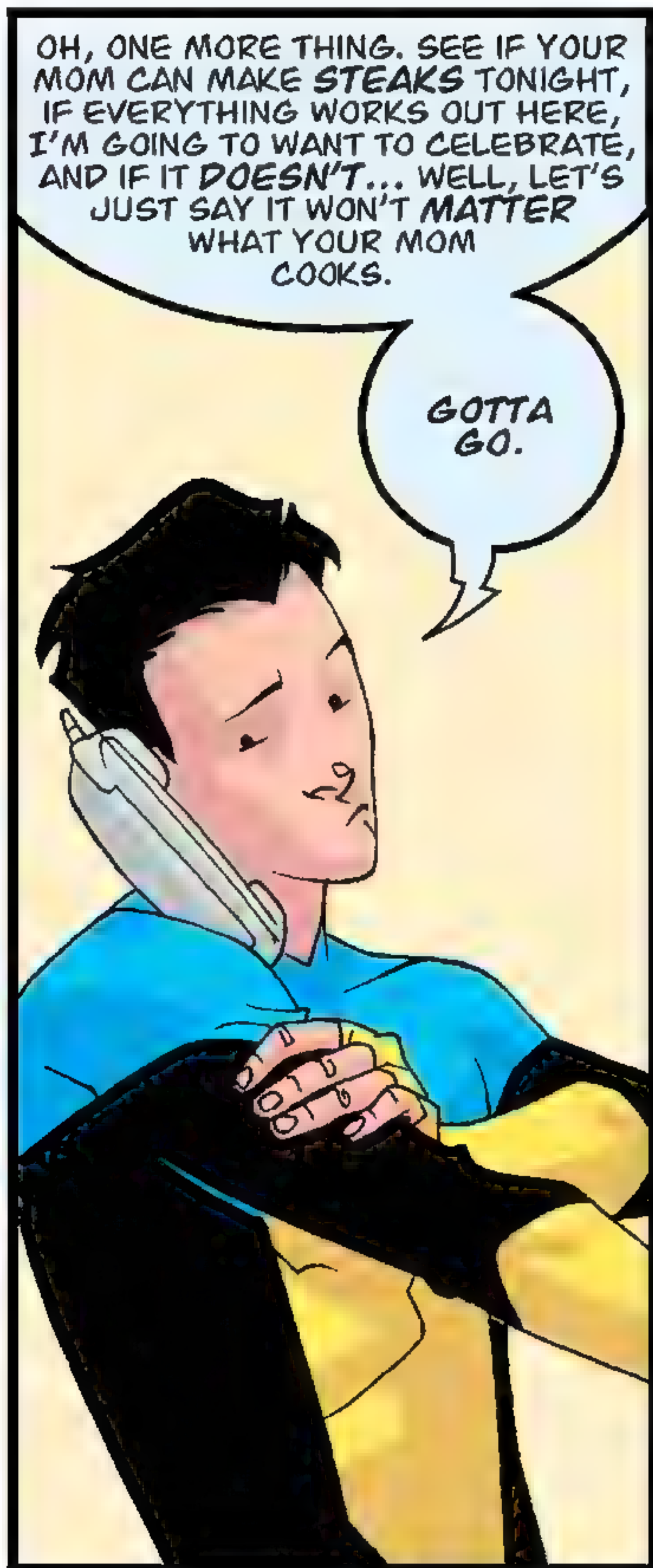


OUCH.

CW02





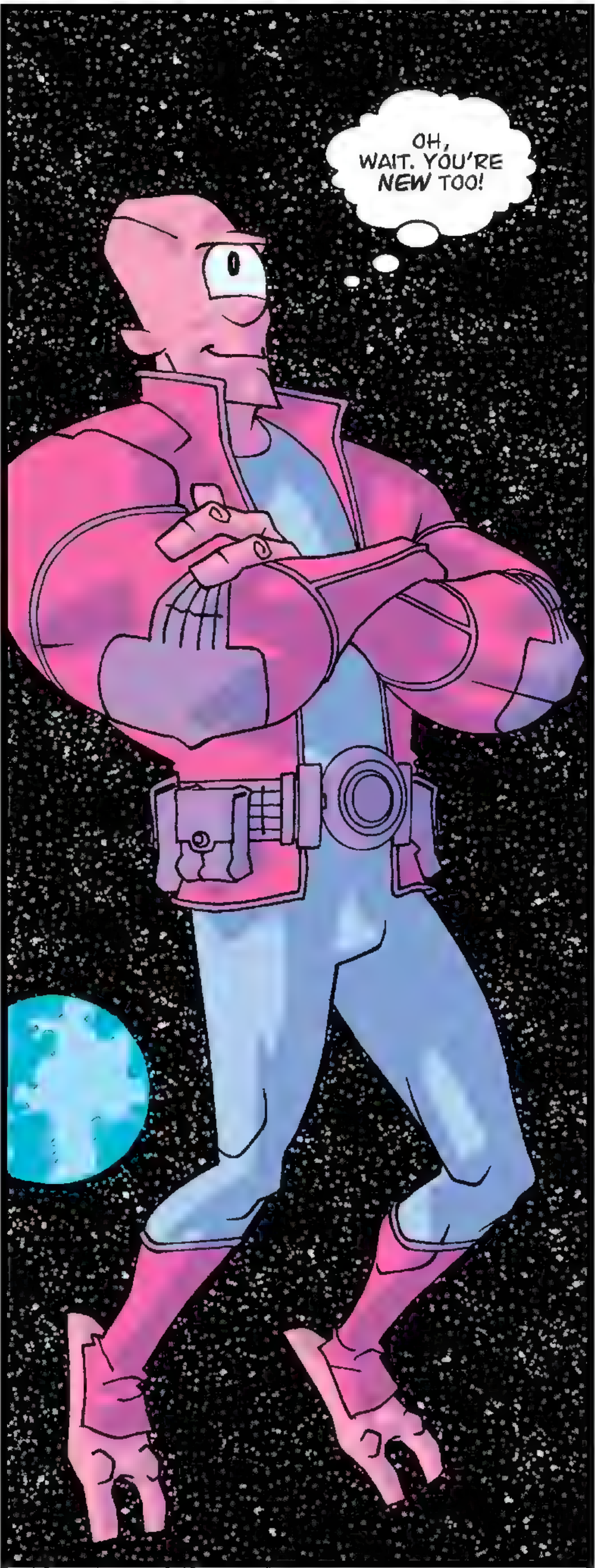


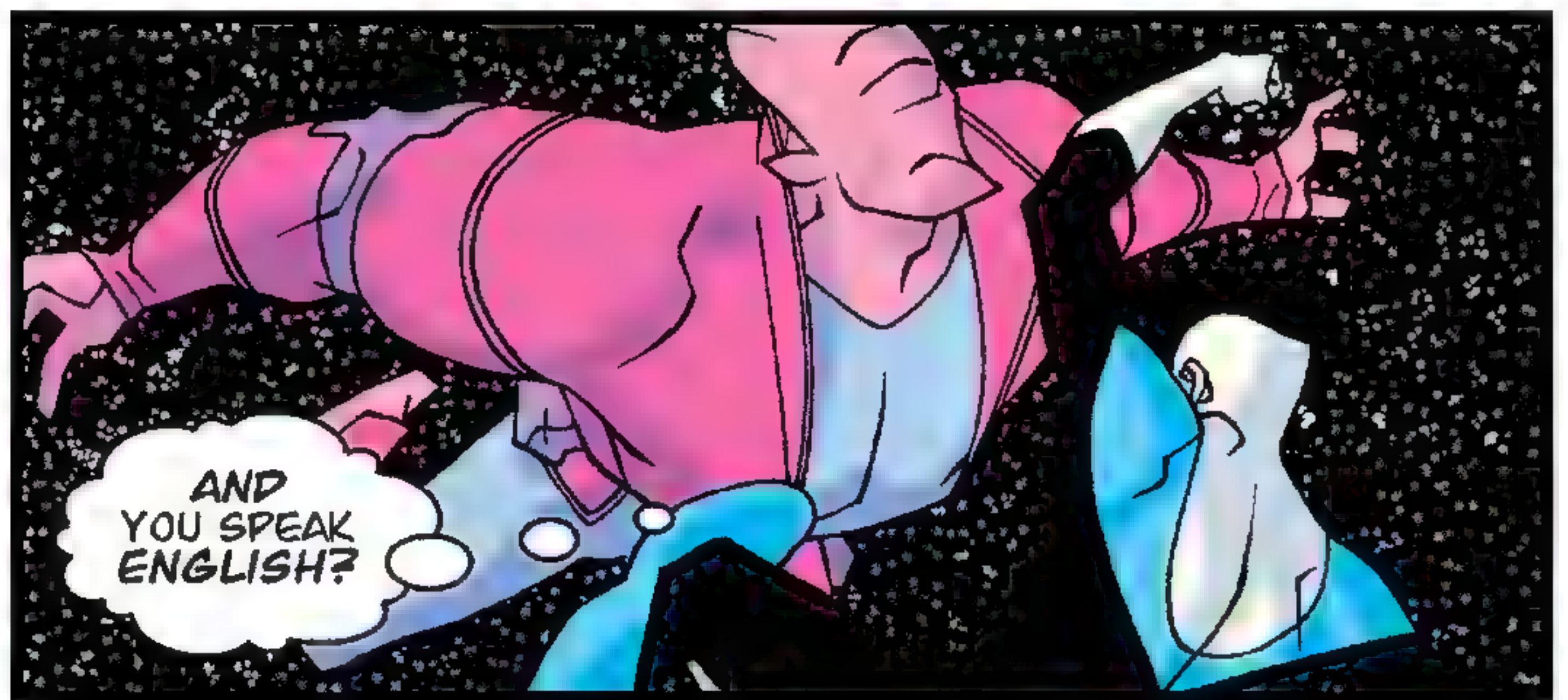


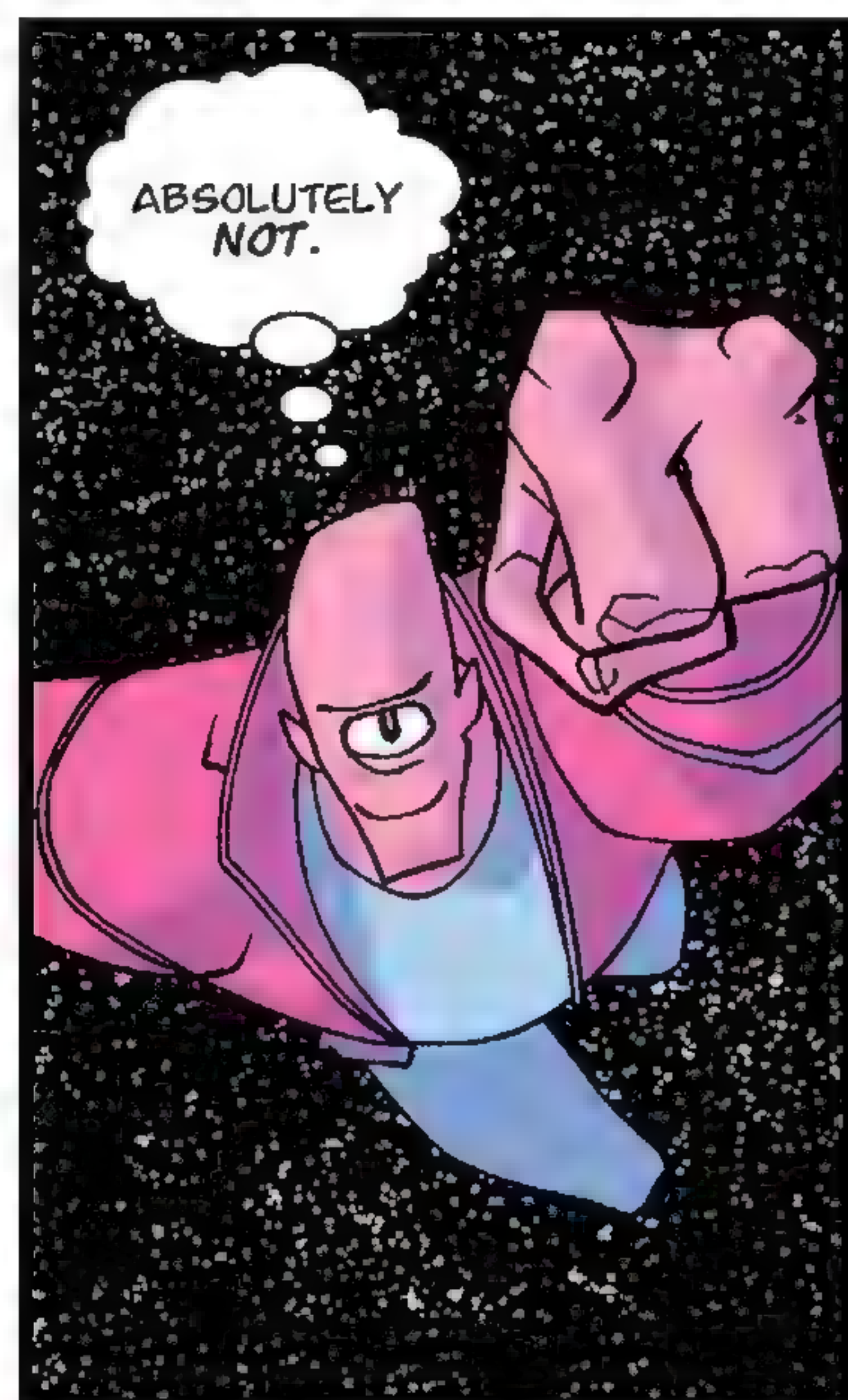
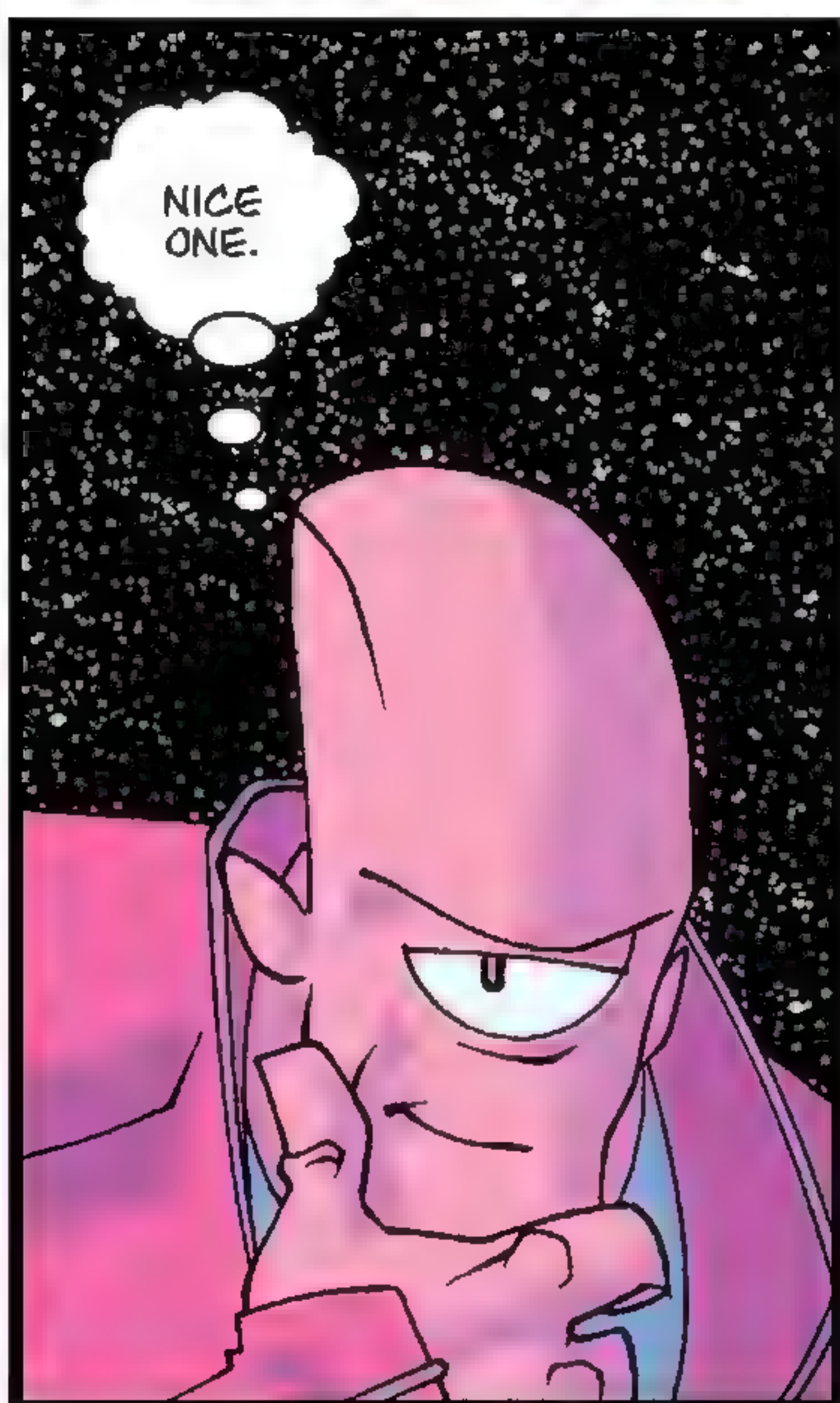


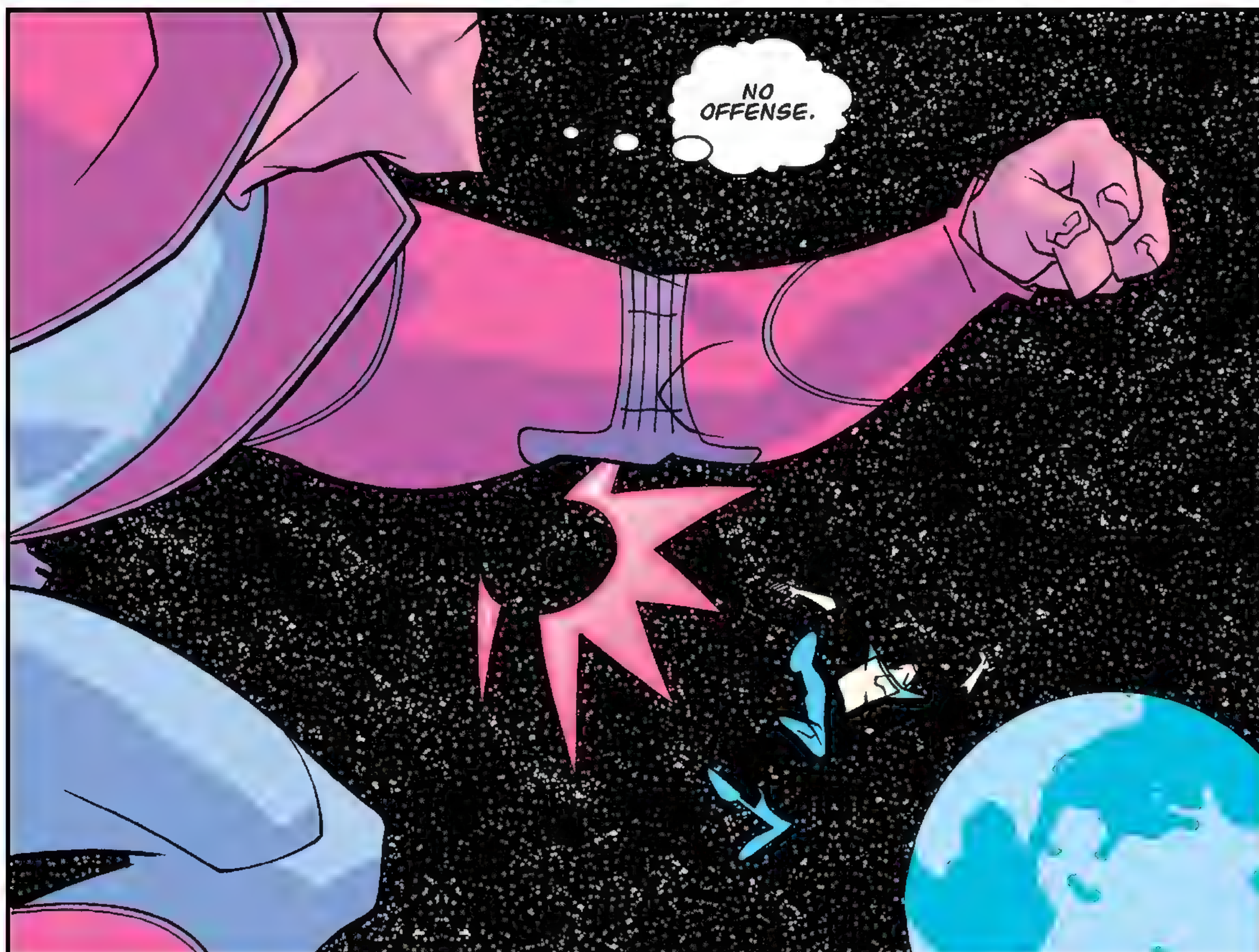
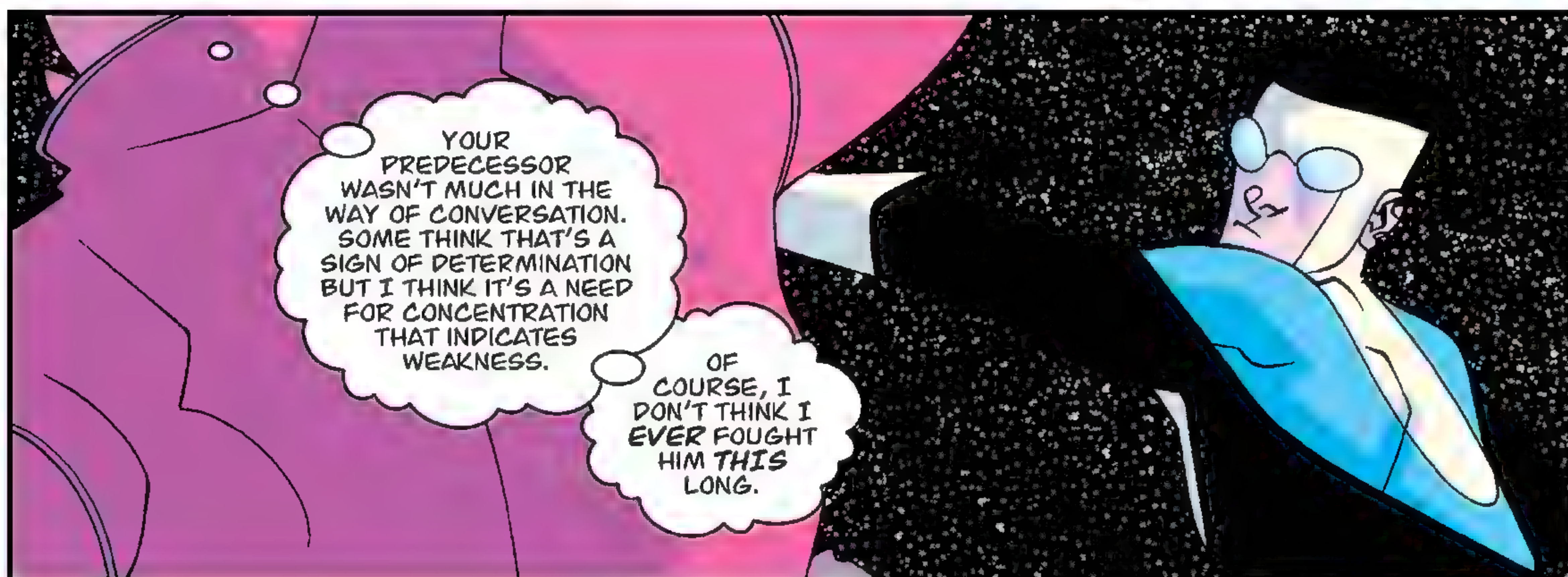


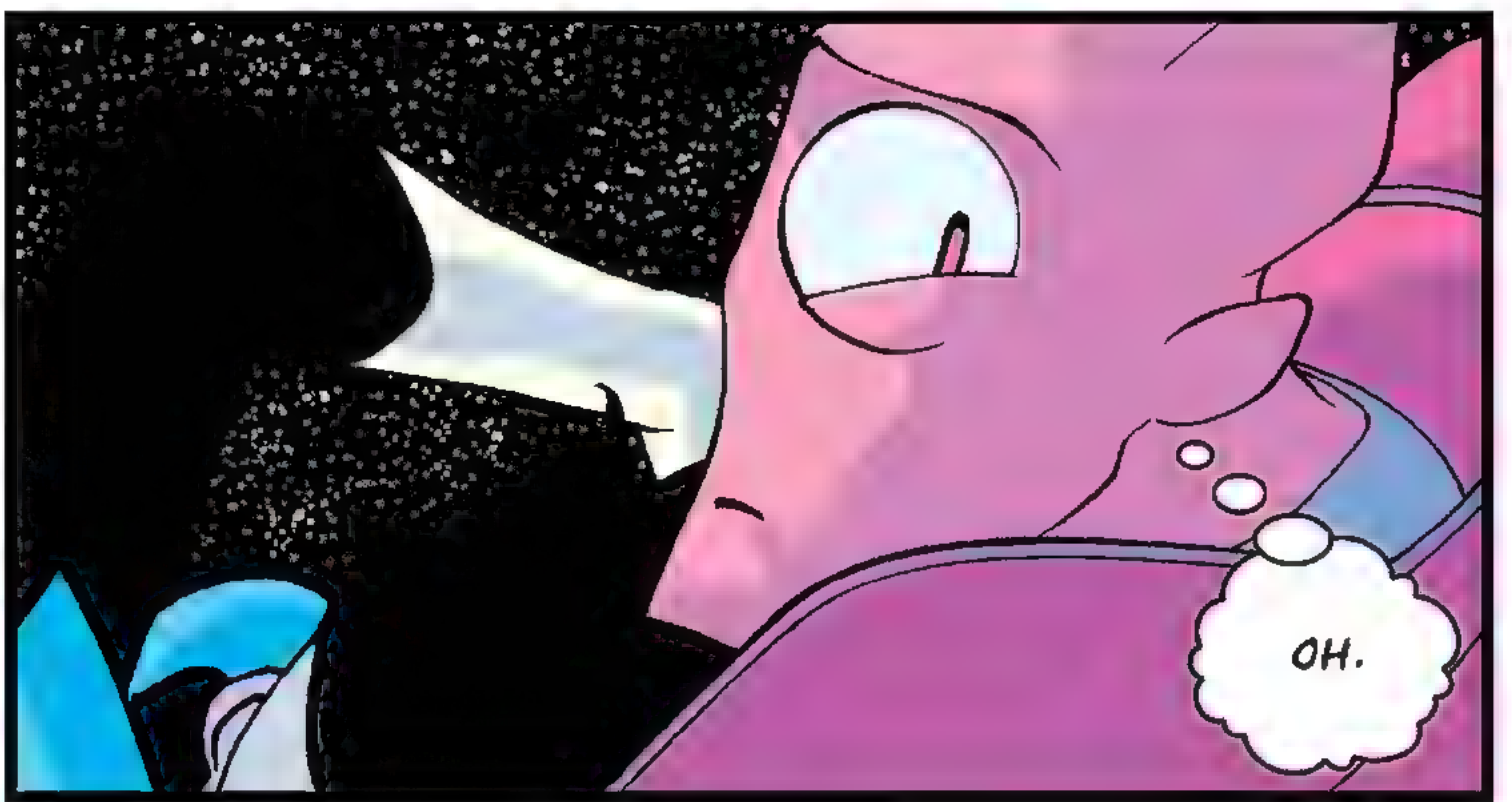
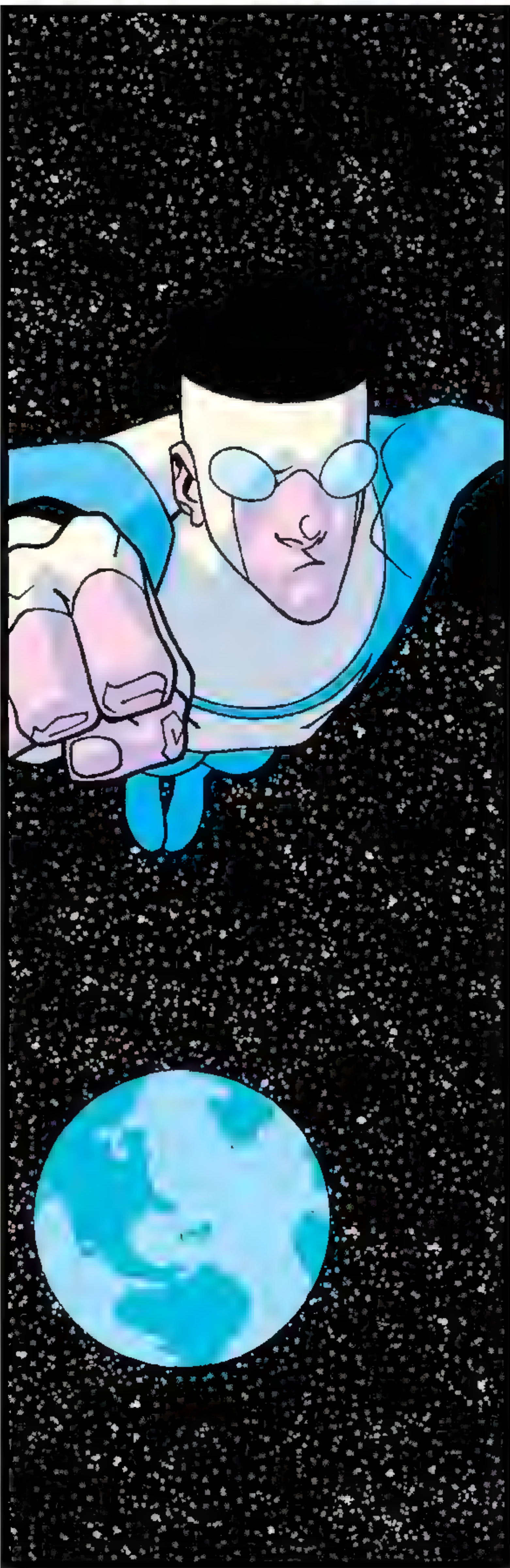
YOU'RE
EARLY!



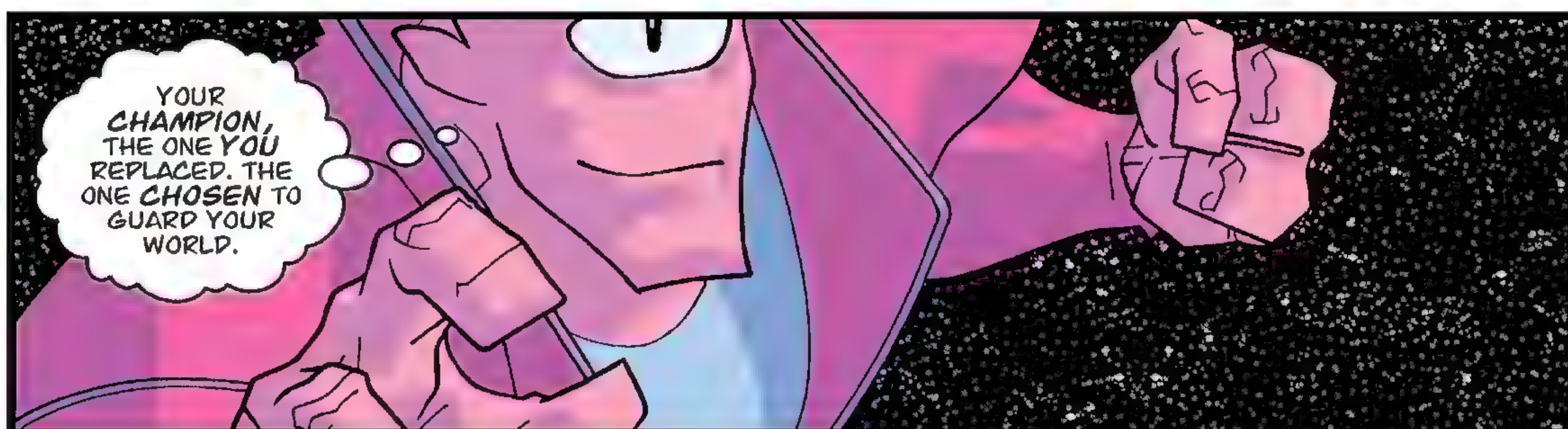


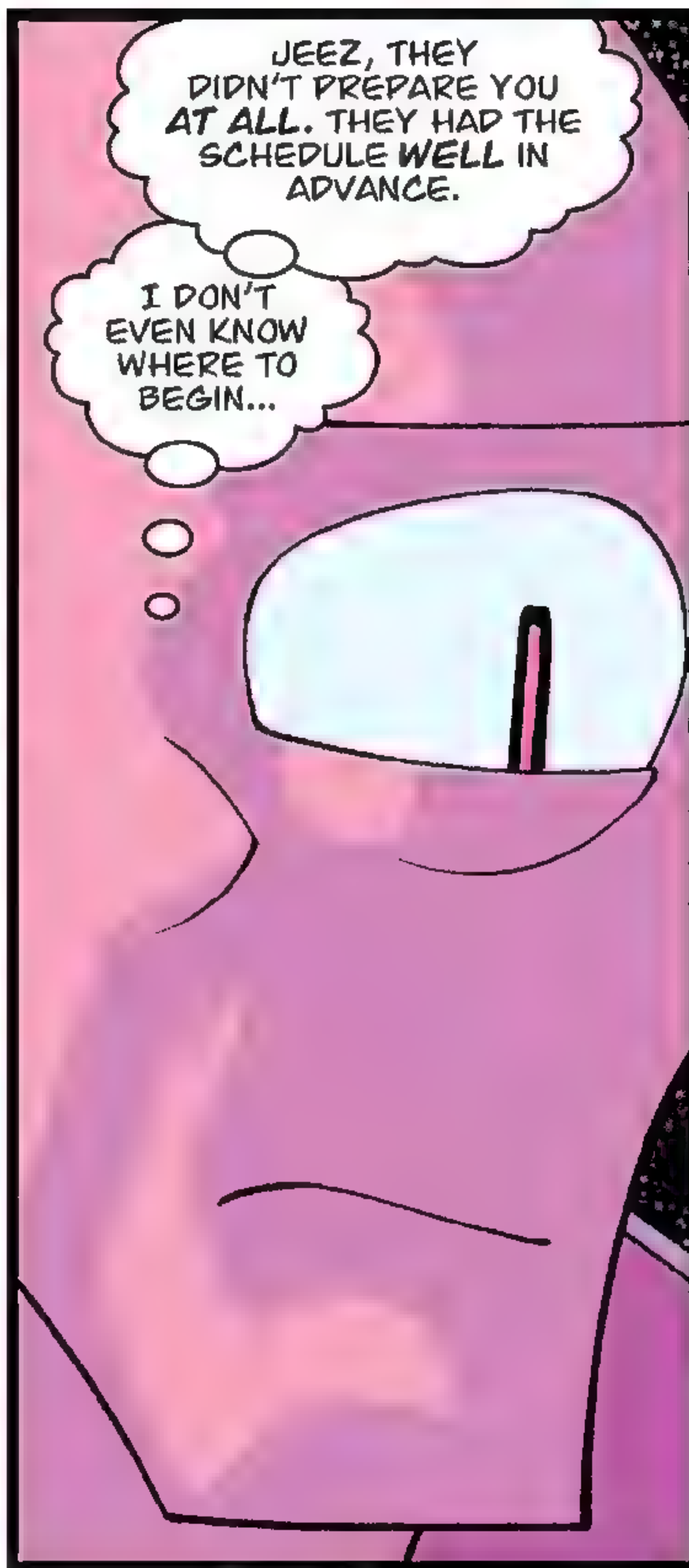


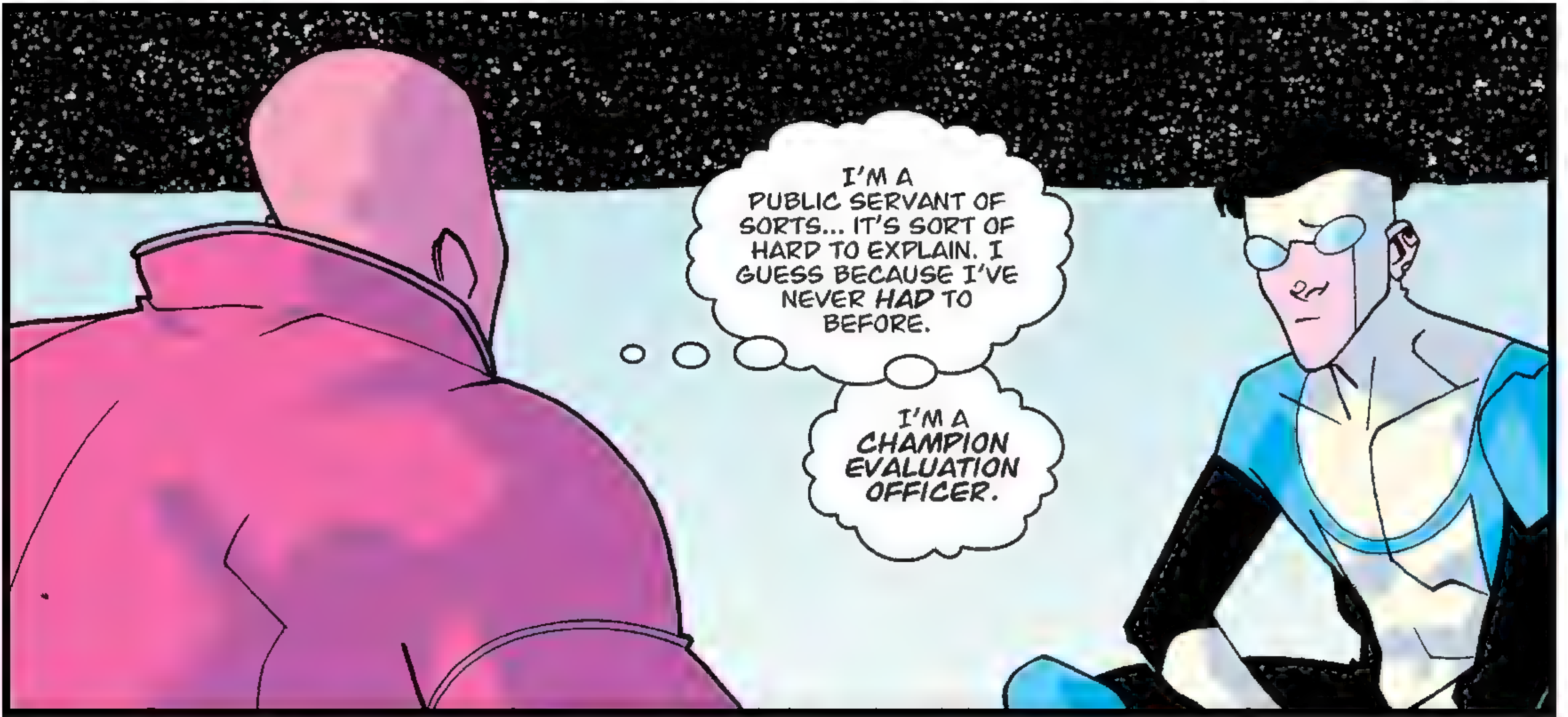




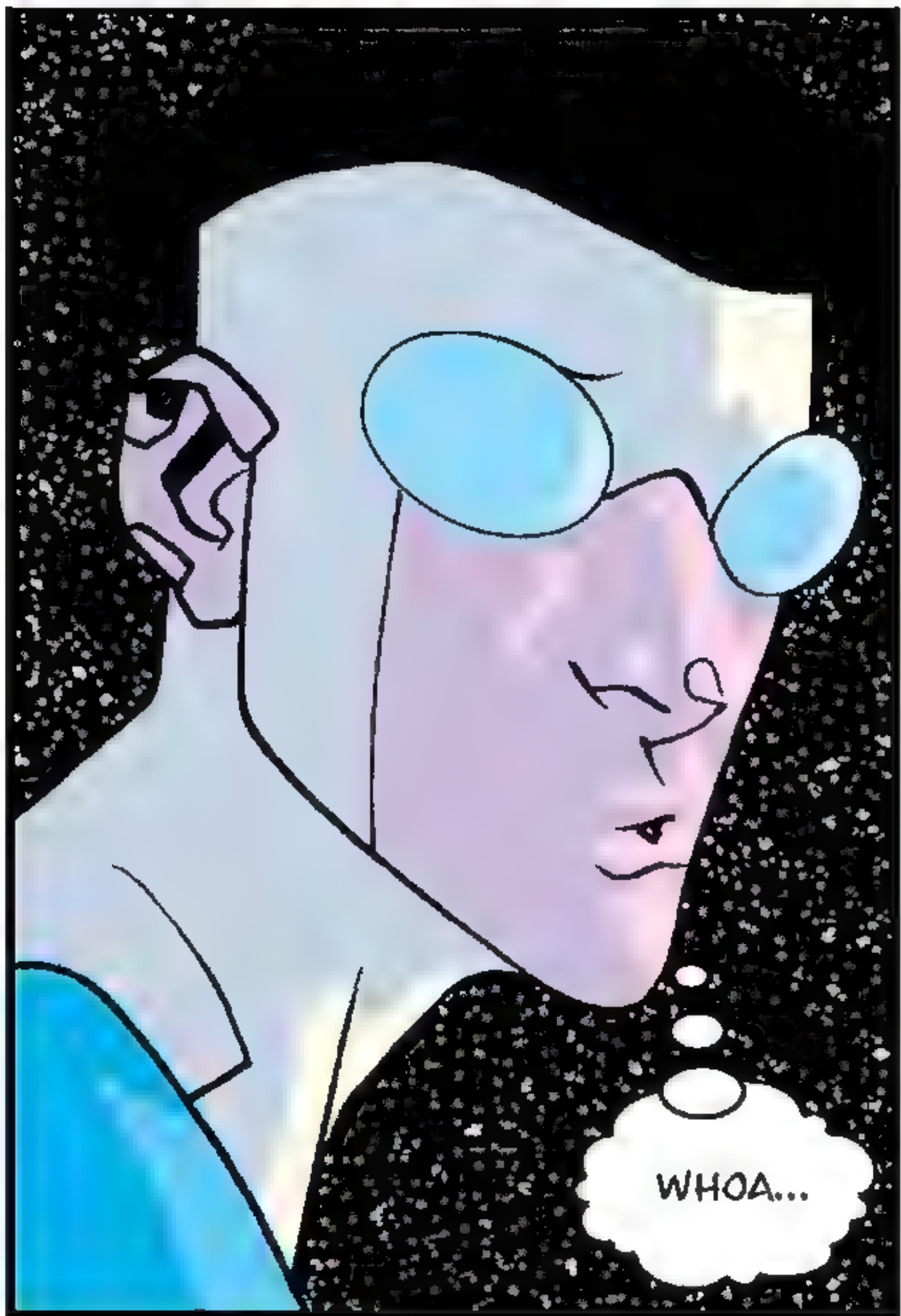
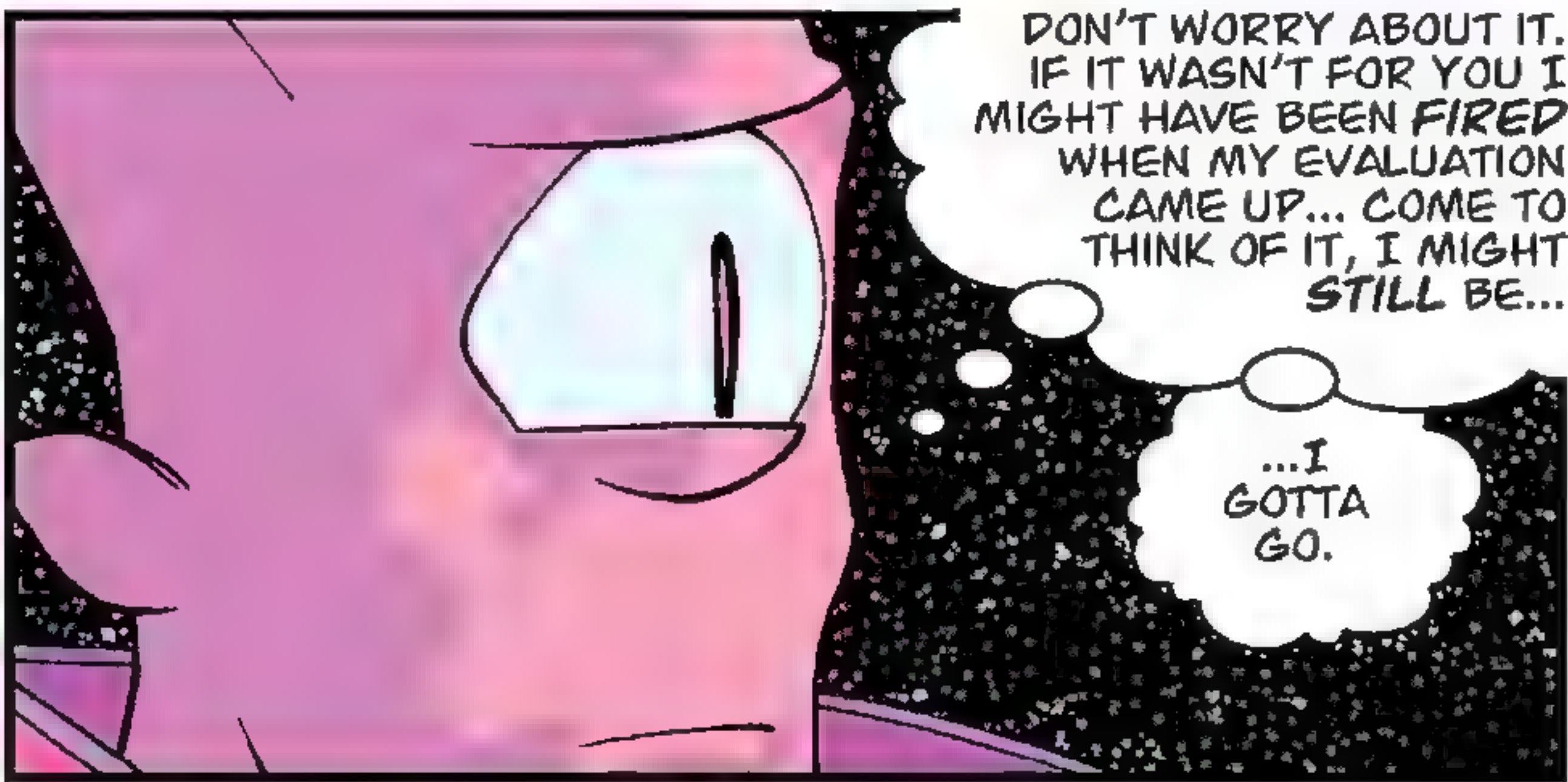






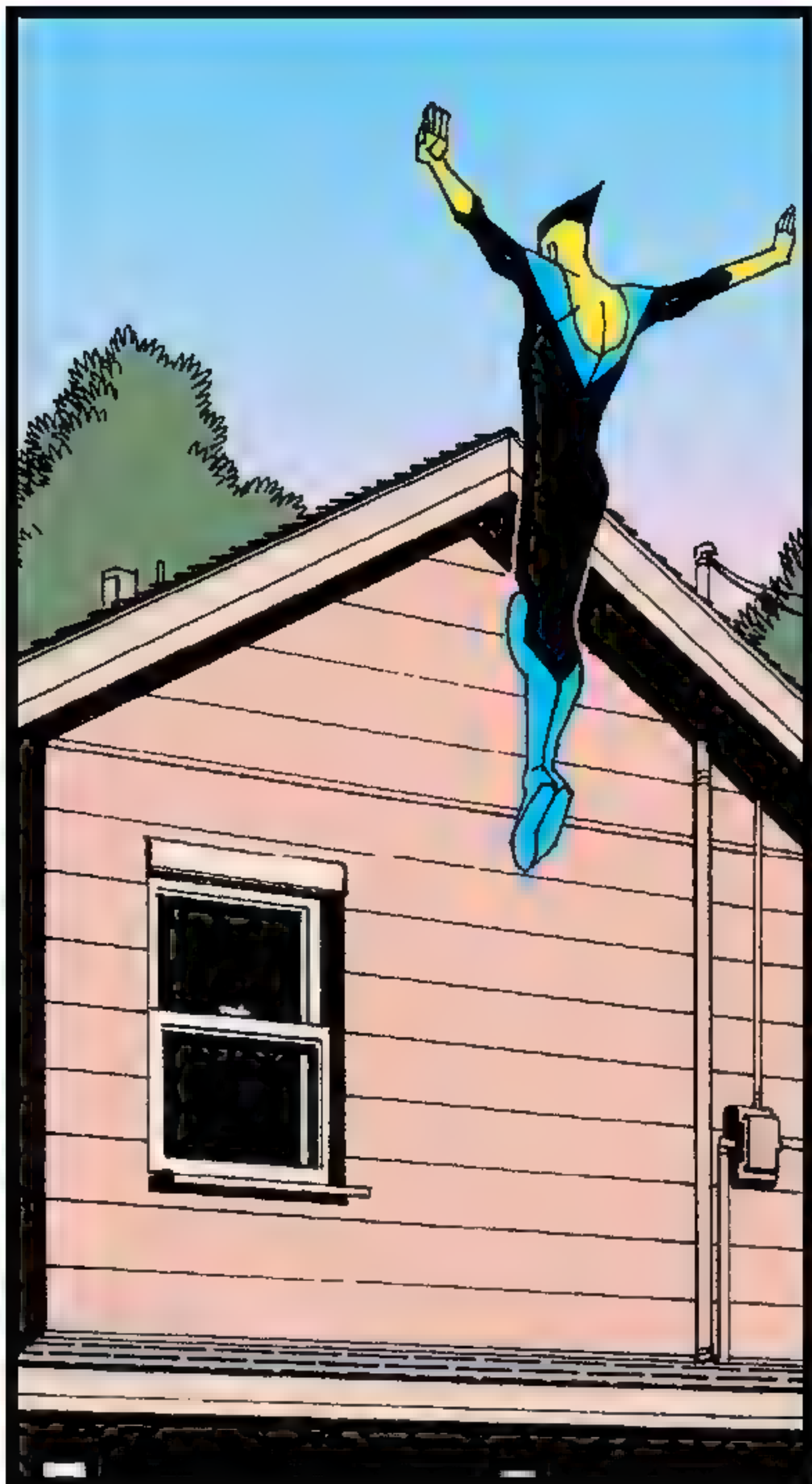








...COOL.



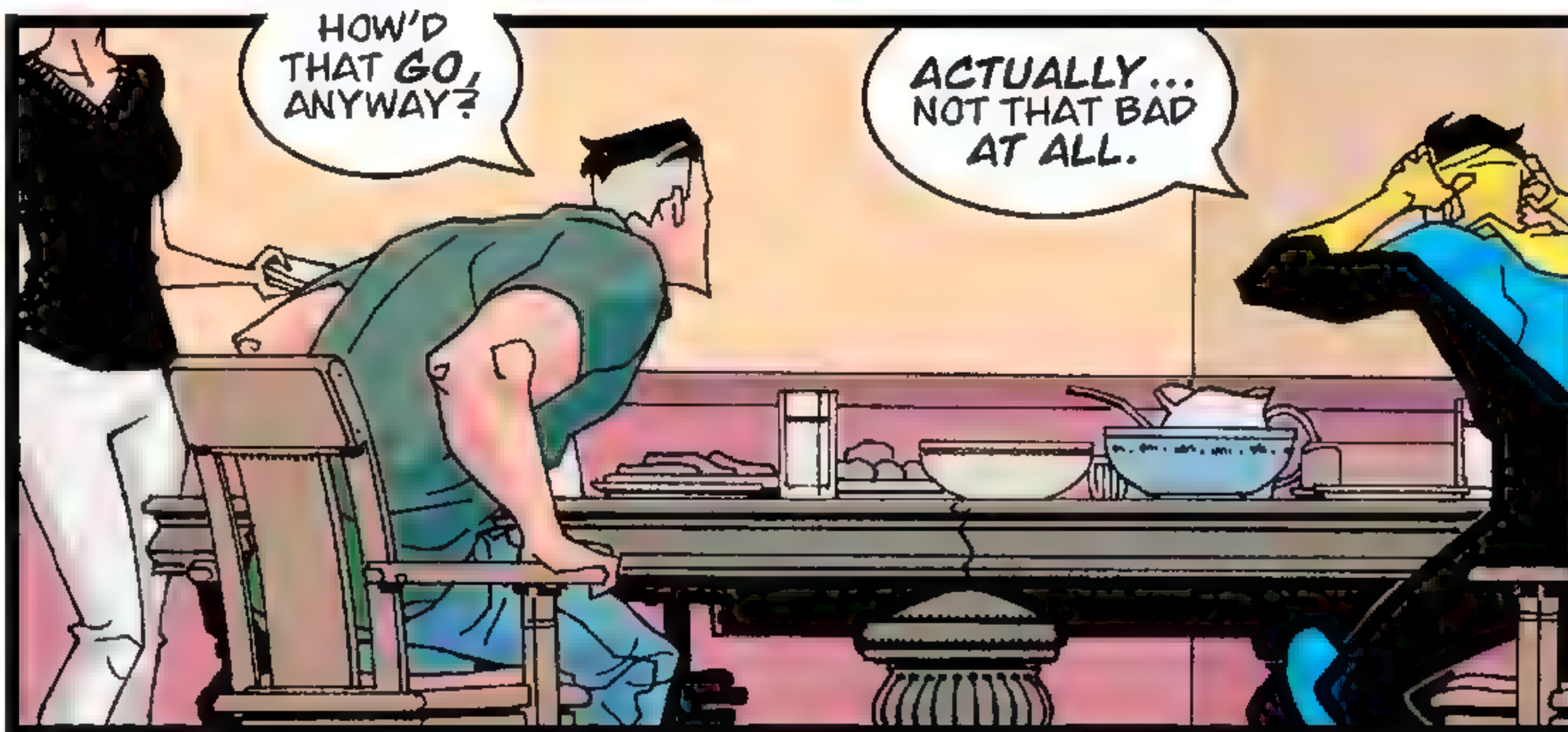
IT'S SO NICE
TO HAVE YOU
HOME THIS
EARLY.

I HAD A
LITTLE HELP
TODAY...



HOW'D
THAT GO,
ANYWAY?

ACTUALLY...
NOT THAT BAD
AT ALL.



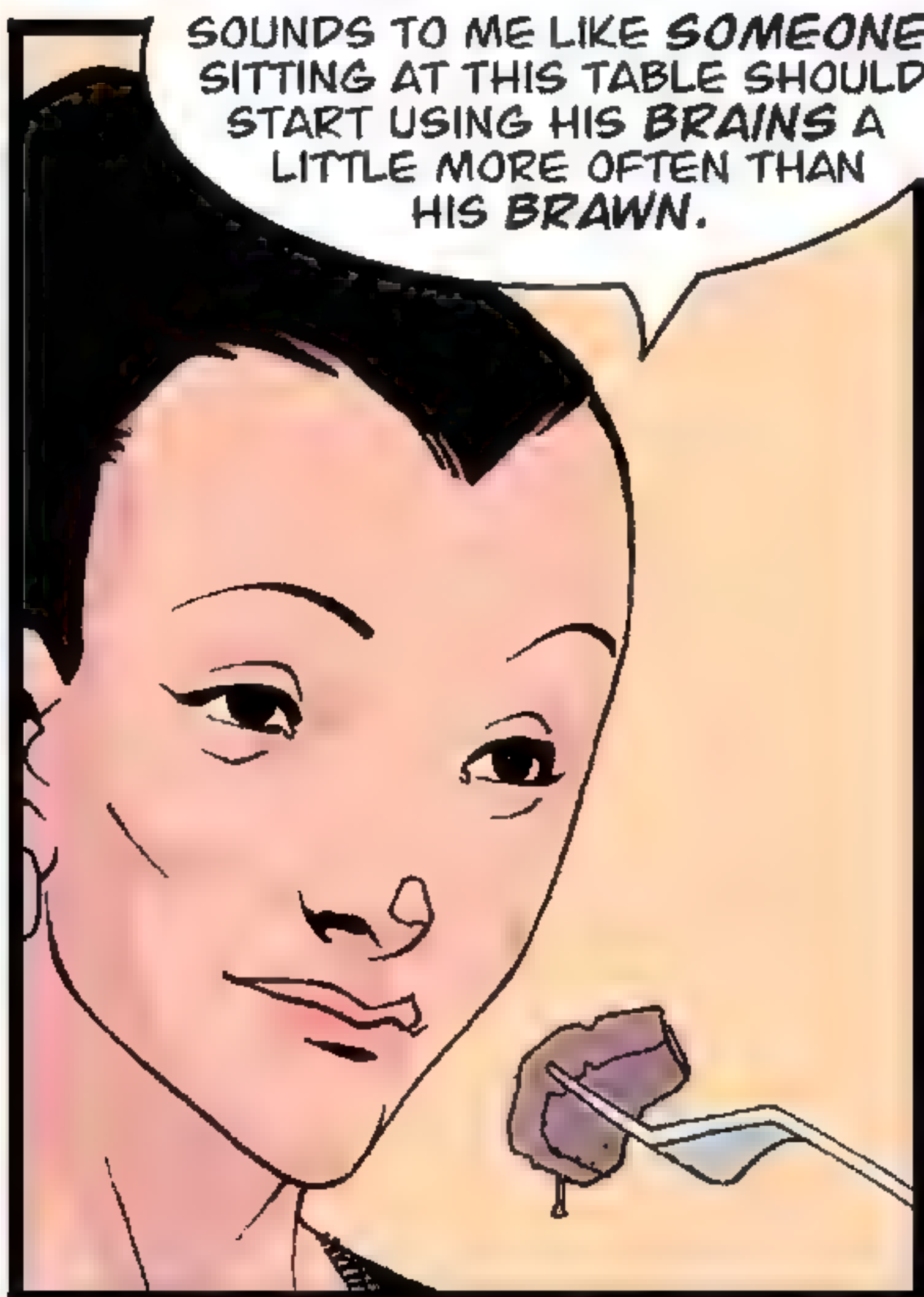
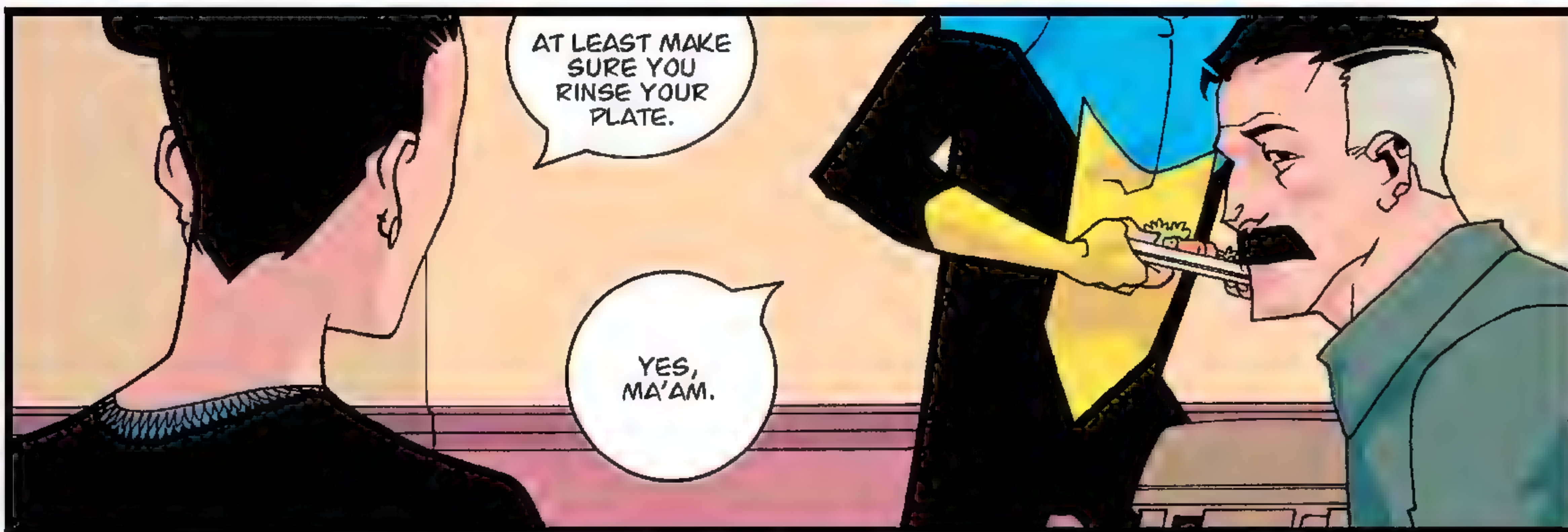
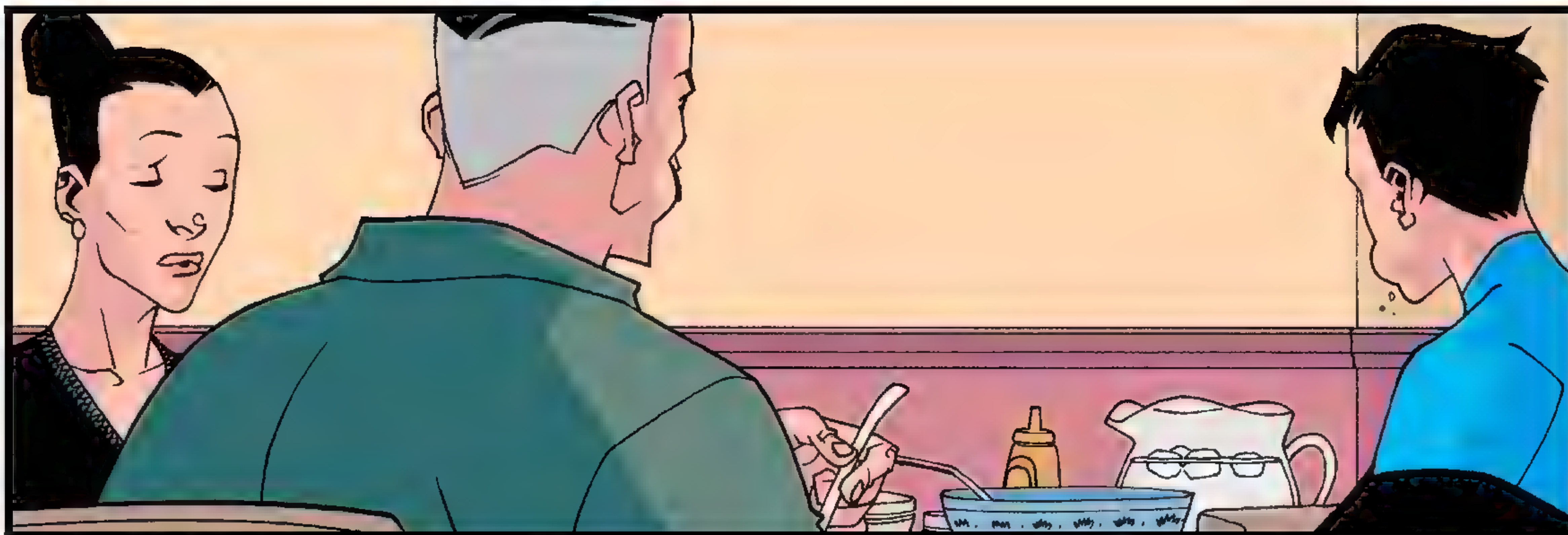
REALLY?

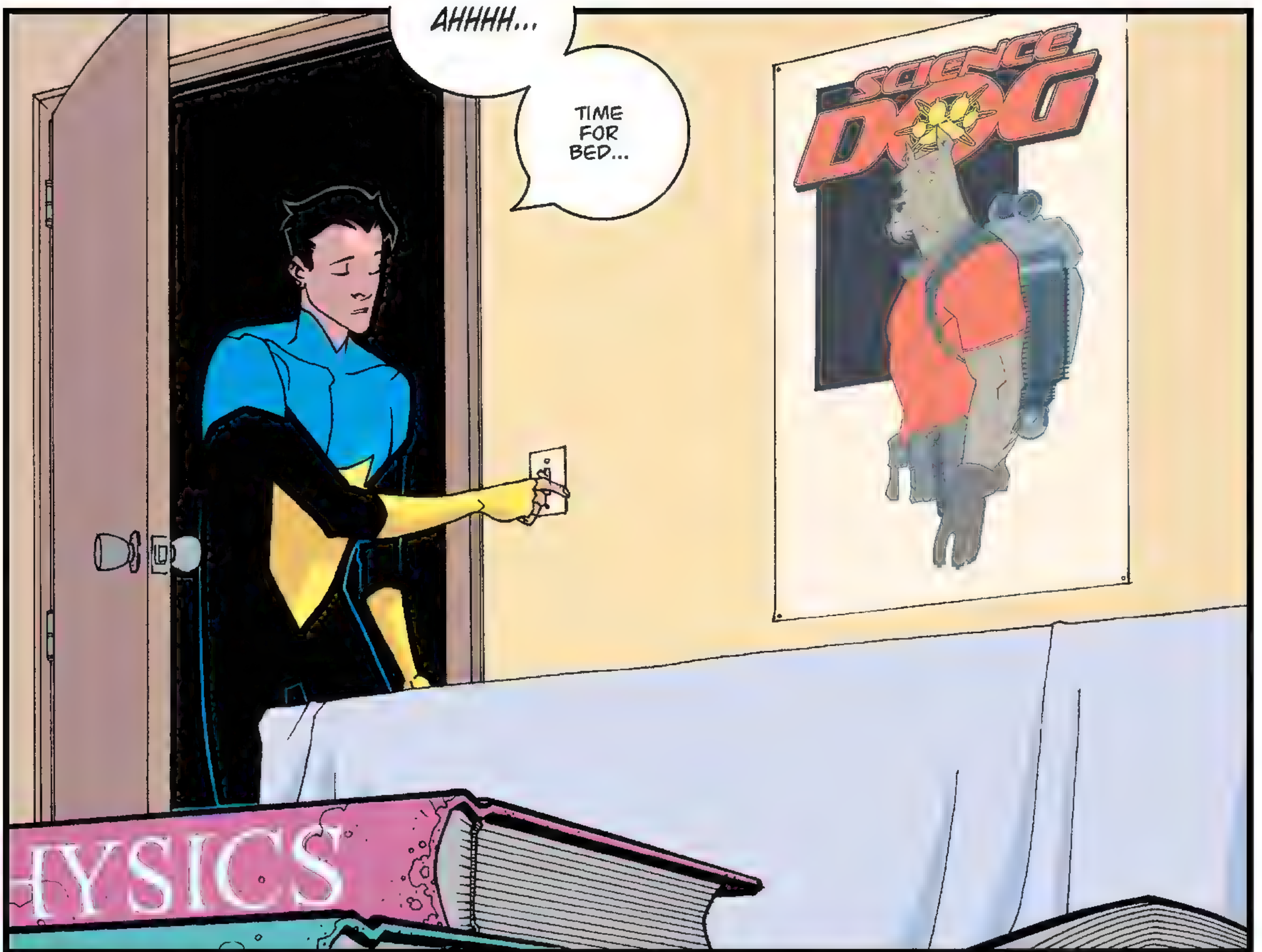
YEAH, HE
WON'T BE BACK.
TURNS OUT HE'S BEEN
COMING TO THE **WRONG**
PLANET THIS **WHOLE** TIME.
EVERY THREE YEARS FOR
NEARLY FIFTEEN YEARS...
I'M GLAD I TOOK THE
TIME TO TALK
TO HIM.

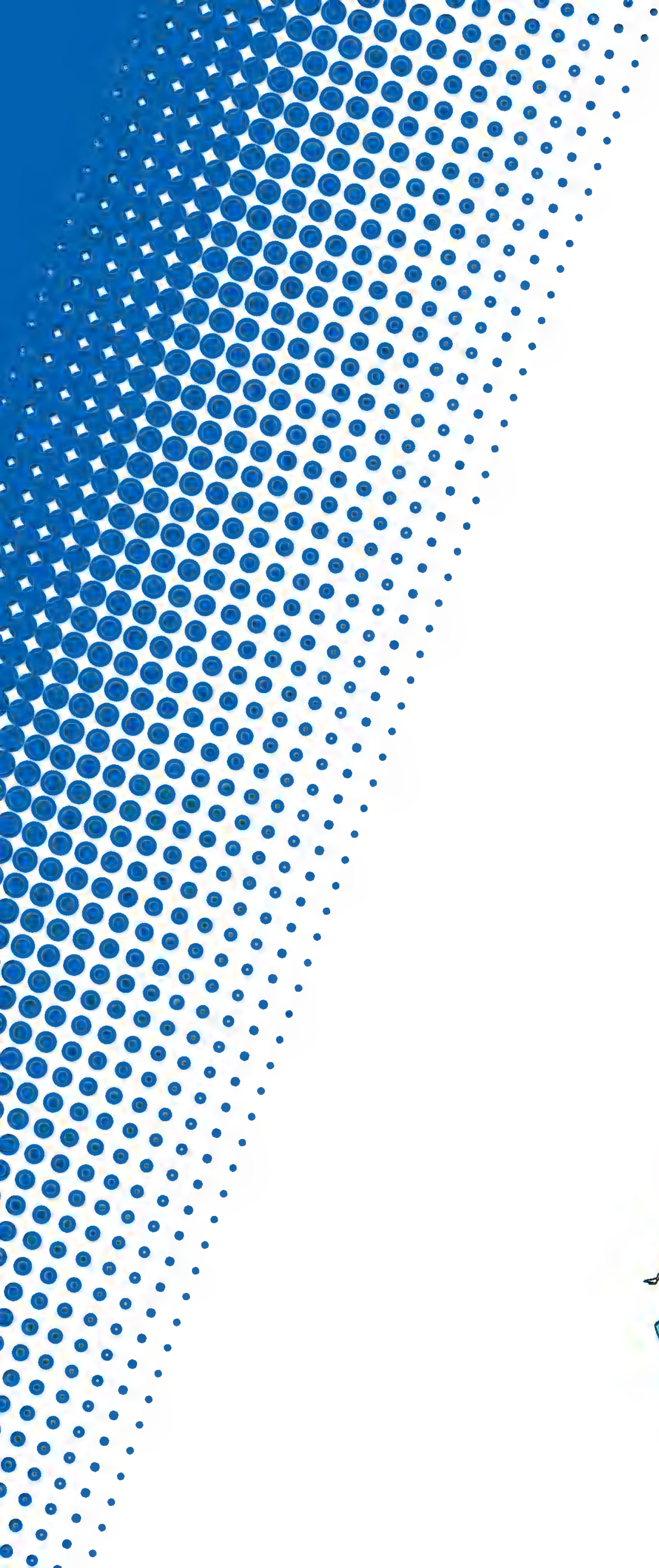


DAMN,
SON... I'M
IMPRESSED.
I WISH YOU HAD
BEEN AROUND
THE **FIRST** TIME
I FOUGHT
HIM.









ISSUE SIX

SIT TIGHT,
WILLIAM...
I THINK WE
LOST IT.



NO,
ACTUALLY IN
THE TIME IT TOOK
US TO LEAVE THE
BATTLE SITE IN SAUDI
ARABIA AND SAVE
THOSE PEOPLE AT THE
MALL THEY DEvised
A WAY TO **TRACK** US,
AND BUILT A DEVICE
TO **DAMPEN** OUR
POWERS.

SO, AS
SOON AS THEY
PUT THAT **THING**
ON MY HEAD, I
WAS POWERLESS...
THAT'S HOW THEY
PULLED ME IN
THE PORTAL SO
EASILY.

I CAN'T
FIGURE OUT
HOW **TIME** WORKS
FOR THEM, FOR ALL I
KNOW THEY COULD BE
FROM A **NONLINEAR**
DIMENSION... I HAVE
NO CLUE HOW
LONG I WAS
THERE.

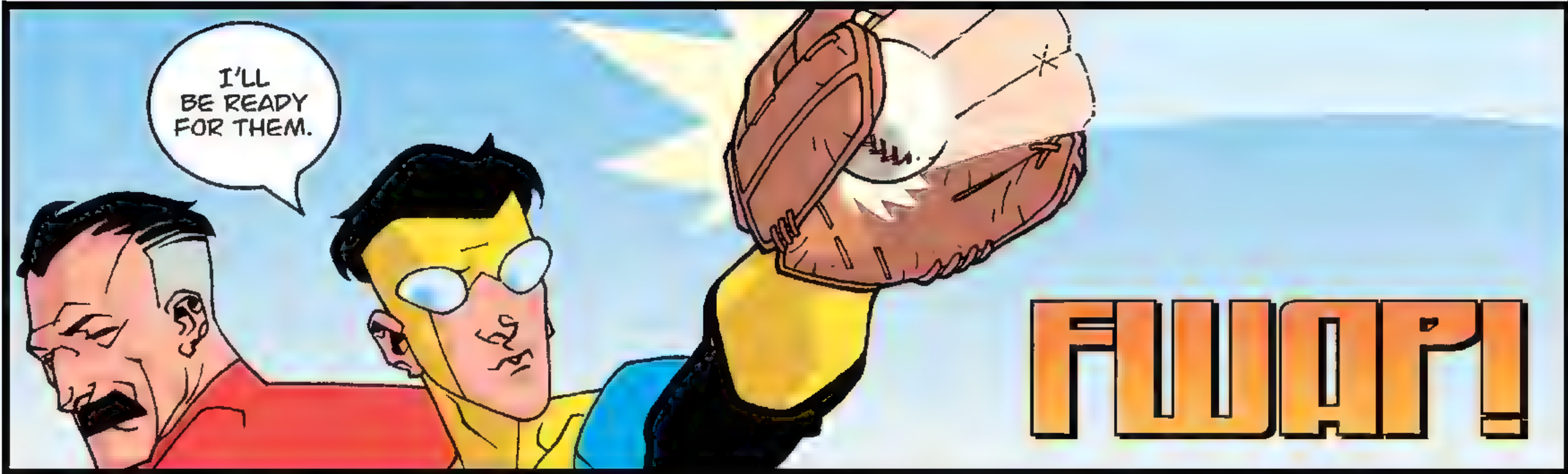
I
ALWAYS
ROUND **DOWN**...
I THINK IT
MAKES YOUR
MOTHER **FEEL**
BETTER.

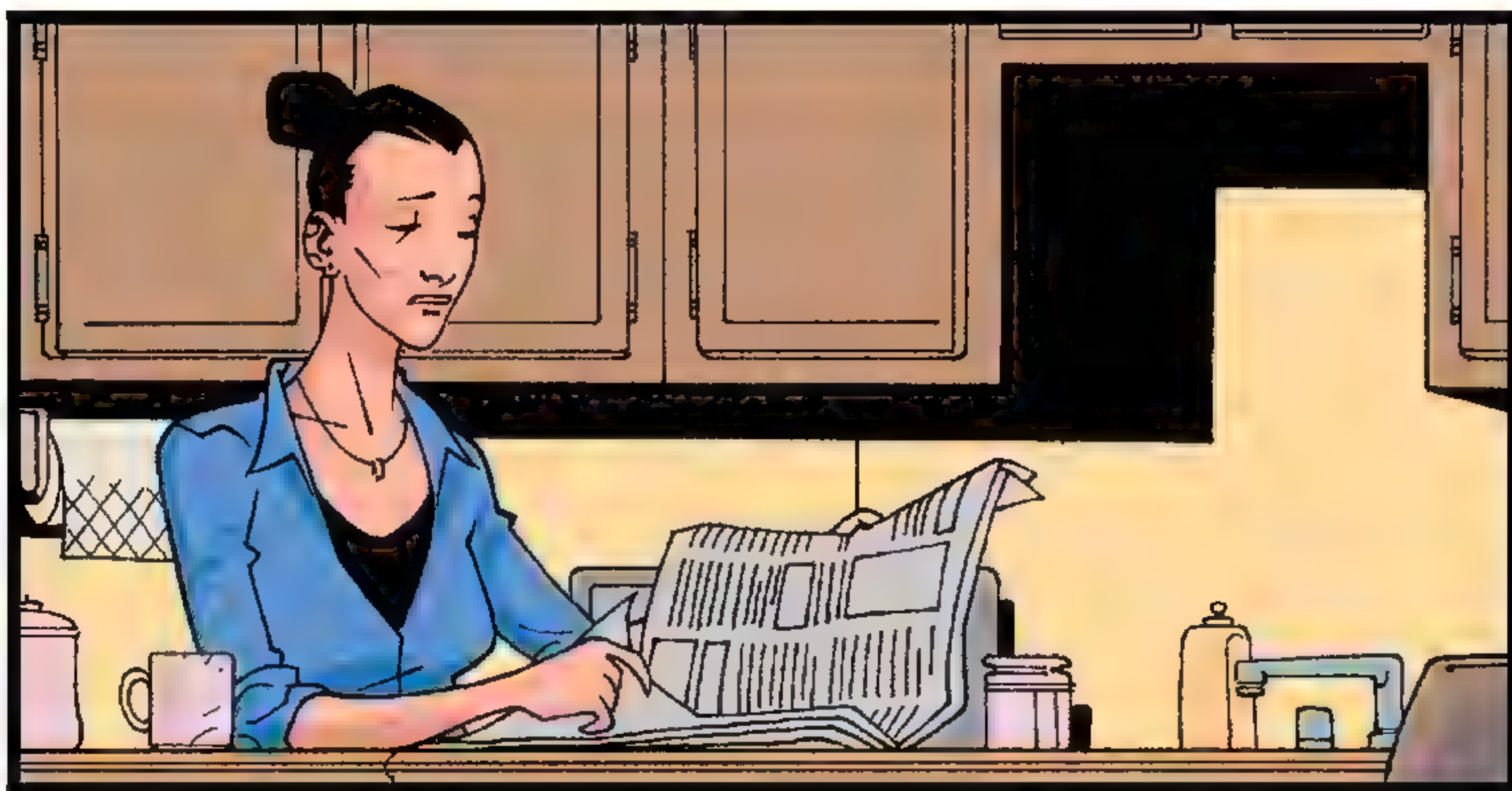
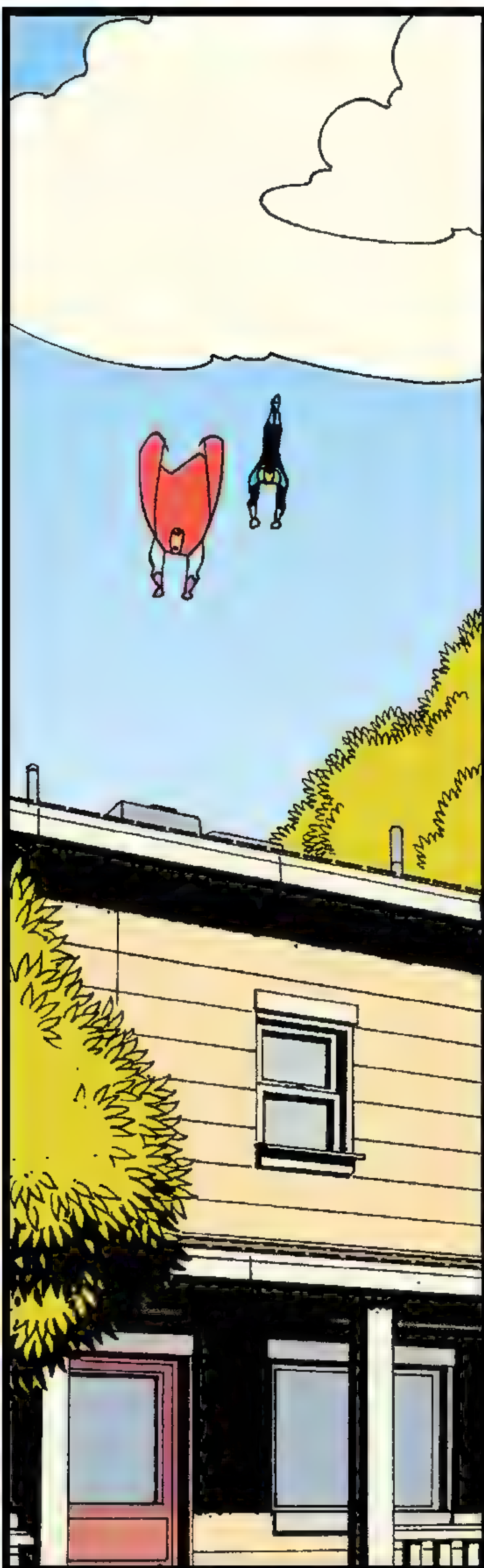


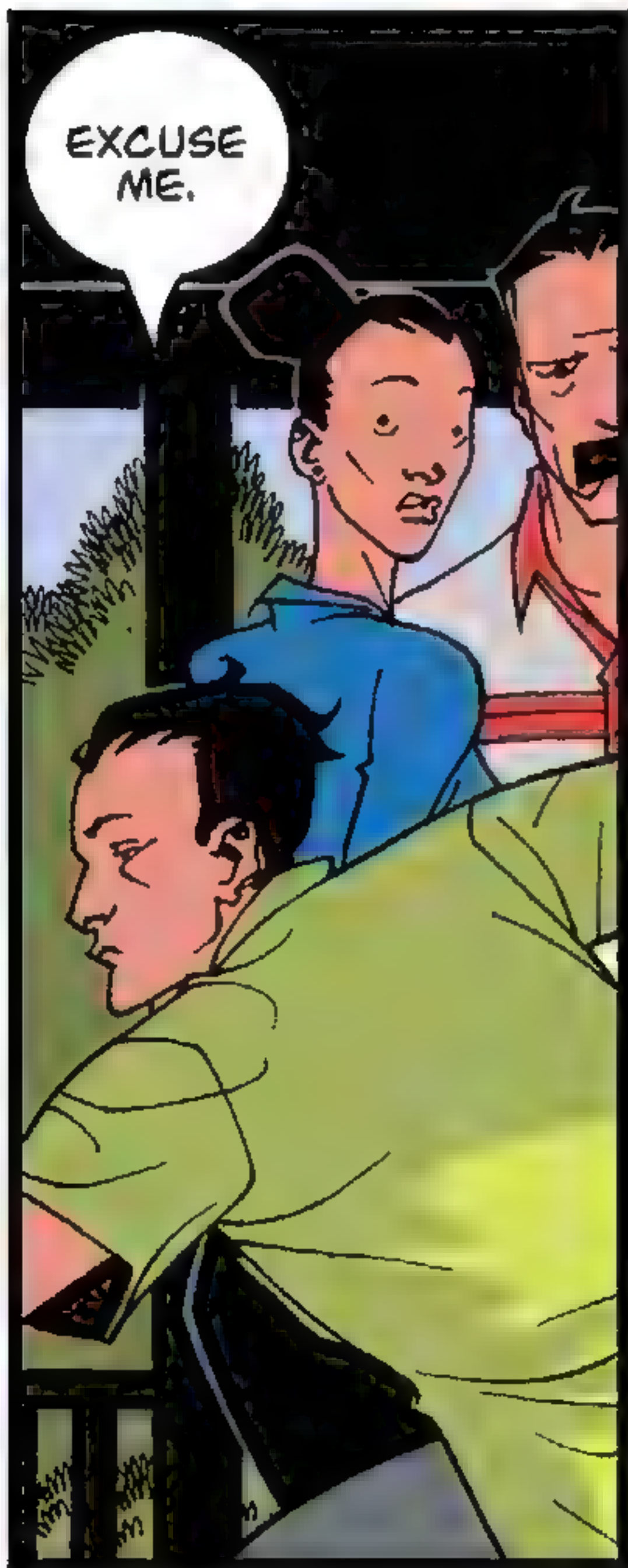
BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT.

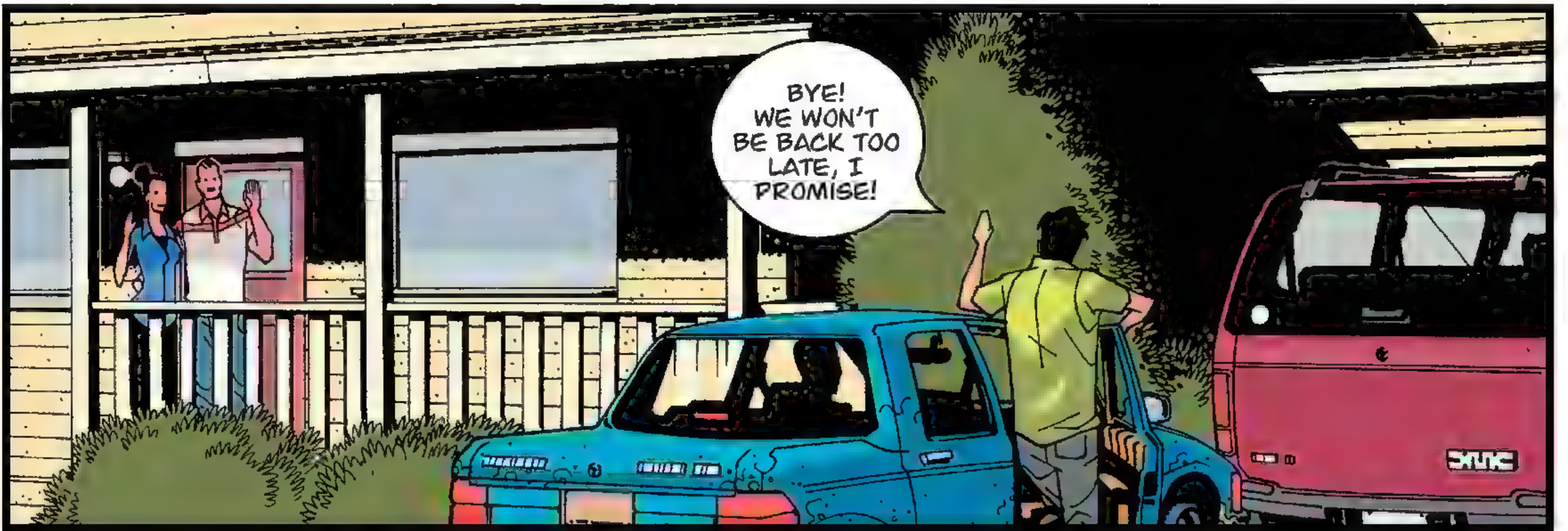
I HEAR THAT RIGHT AFTER THEY PULLED ME INTO THE PORTAL YOU CALLED OUT FOR ME...

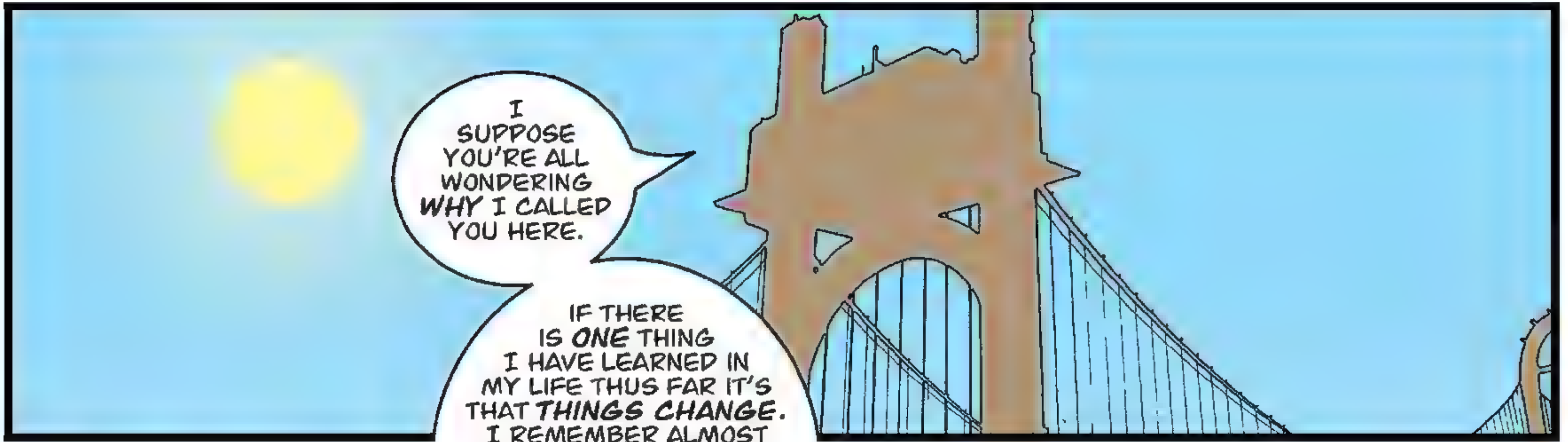
YEAH, SO...?





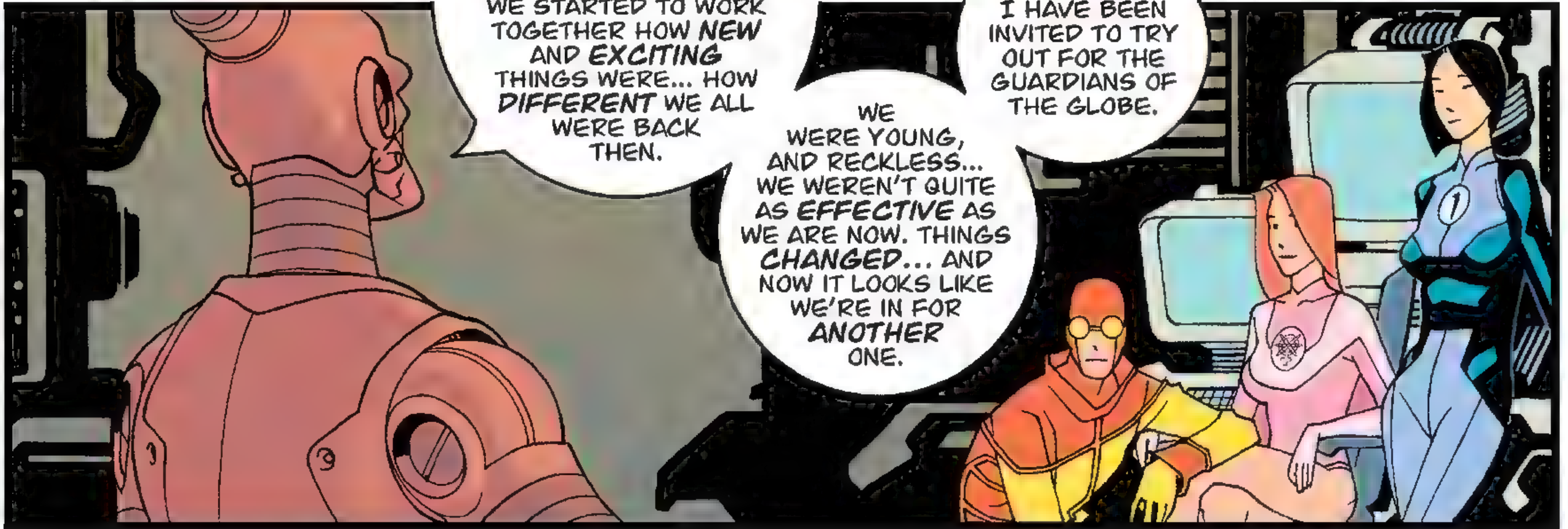






I SUPPOSE YOU'RE ALL WONDERING WHY I CALLED YOU HERE.

IF THERE IS **ONE** THING I HAVE LEARNED IN MY LIFE THUS FAR IT'S THAT **THINGS CHANGE**. I REMEMBER ALMOST FOUR YEARS AGO WHEN WE STARTED TO WORK TOGETHER HOW **NEW** AND **EXCITING** THINGS WERE... HOW **DIFFERENT** WE ALL WERE BACK THEN.



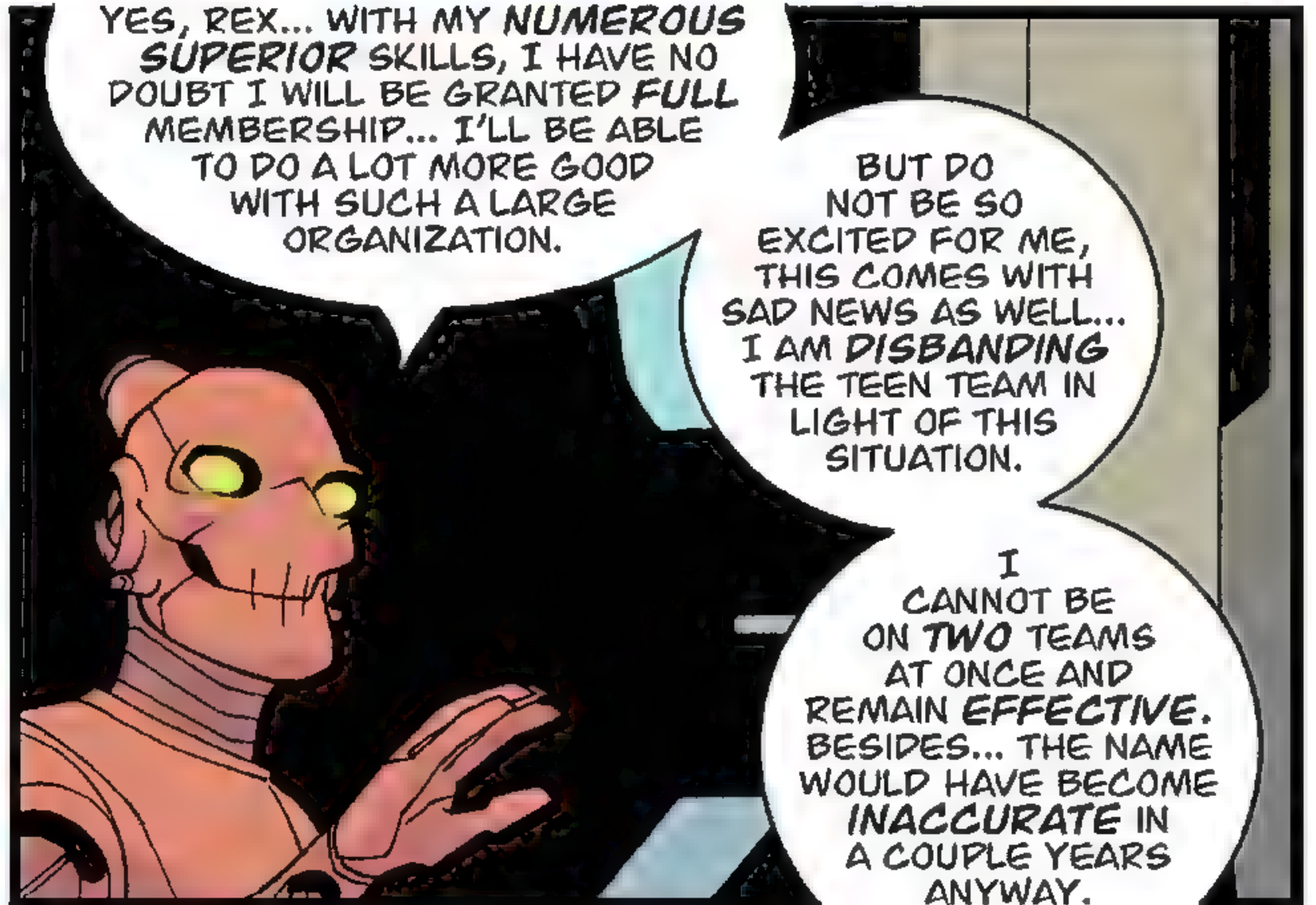
I HAVE BEEN INVITED TO TRY OUT FOR THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.

WE WERE YOUNG, AND RECKLESS... WE WEREN'T QUITE AS **EFFECTIVE** AS WE ARE NOW. THINGS **CHANGED**... AND NOW IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE IN FOR **ANOTHER** ONE.



OH, ROBOT-- THAT'S GREAT!

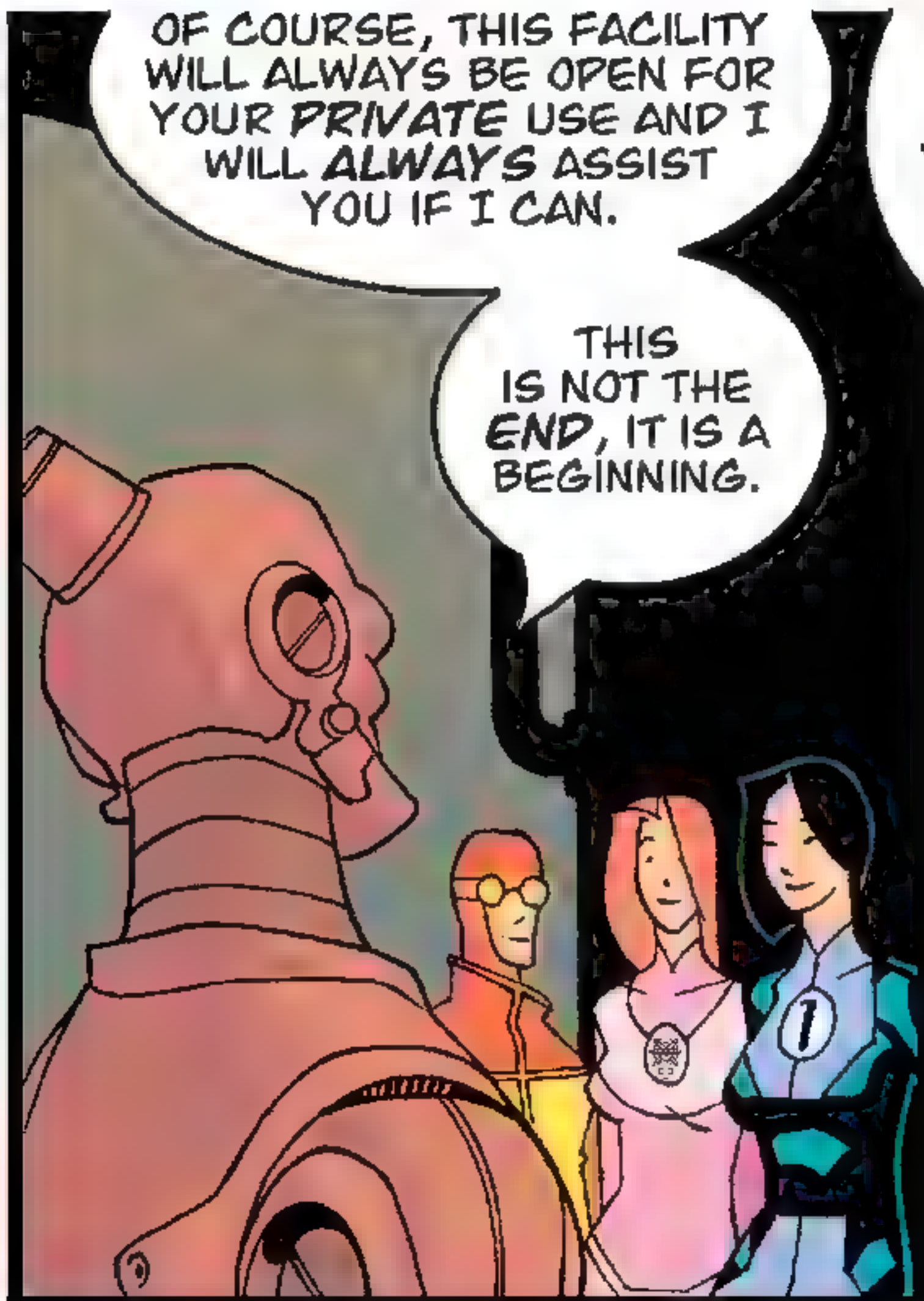
YEAH, MAN... WELL DONE! I'M SURE YOU'LL REALLY TURN SOME HEADS.



YES, REX... WITH MY **NUMEROUS SUPERIOR** SKILLS, I HAVE NO DOUBT I WILL BE GRANTED **FULL** MEMBERSHIP... I'LL BE ABLE TO DO A LOT MORE GOOD WITH SUCH A LARGE ORGANIZATION.

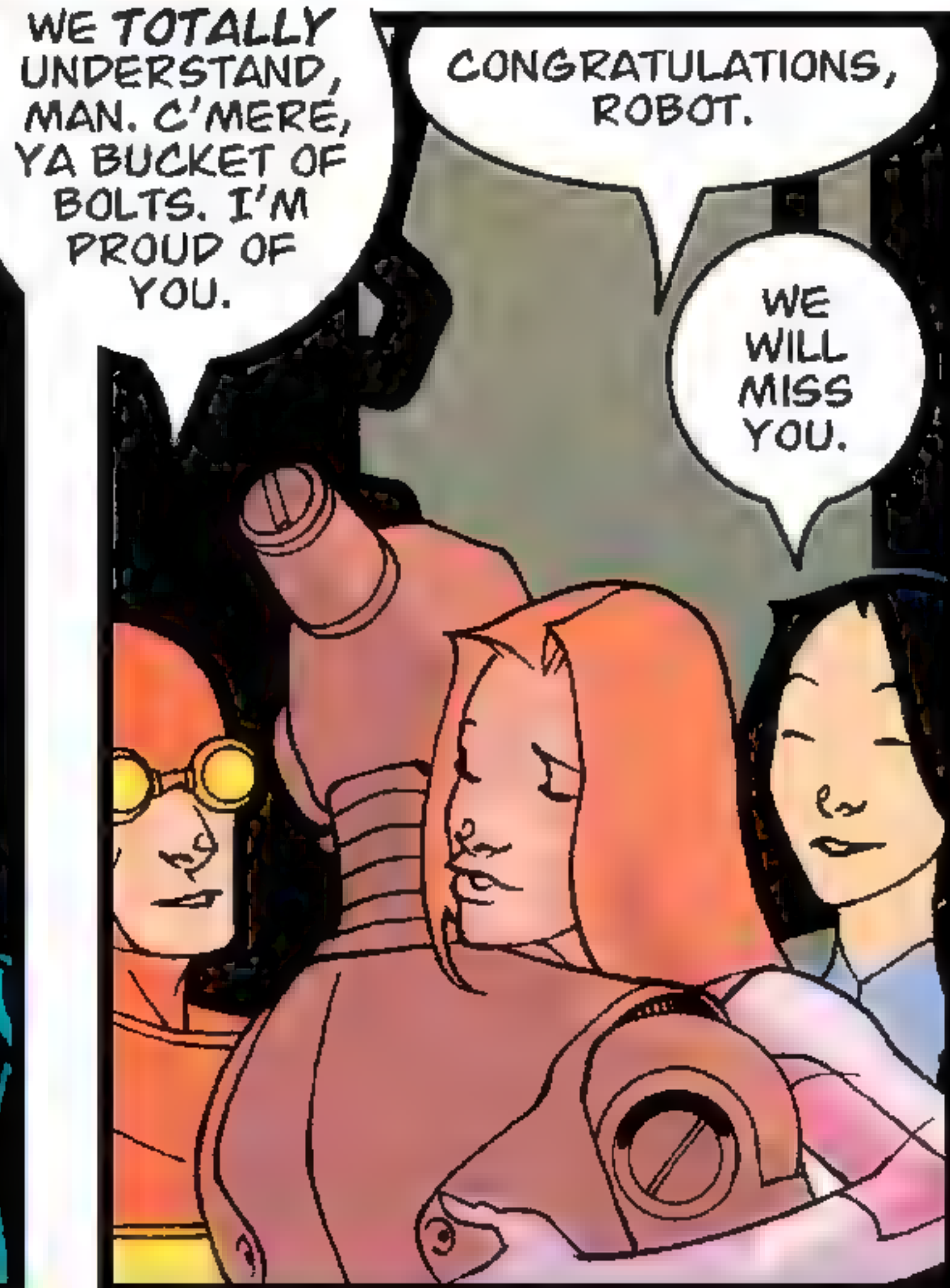
BUT DO NOT BE SO EXCITED FOR ME, THIS COMES WITH SAD NEWS AS WELL... I AM **DISBANDING** THE TEEN TEAM IN LIGHT OF THIS SITUATION.

I CANNOT BE ON **TWO** TEAMS AT ONCE AND REMAIN **EFFECTIVE**. BESIDES... THE NAME WOULD HAVE BECOME **INACCURATE** IN A COUPLE YEARS ANYWAY.



OF COURSE, THIS FACILITY WILL ALWAYS BE OPEN FOR YOUR **PRIVATE** USE AND I WILL ALWAYS ASSIST YOU IF I CAN.

THIS IS NOT THE **END**, IT IS A **BEGINNING**.



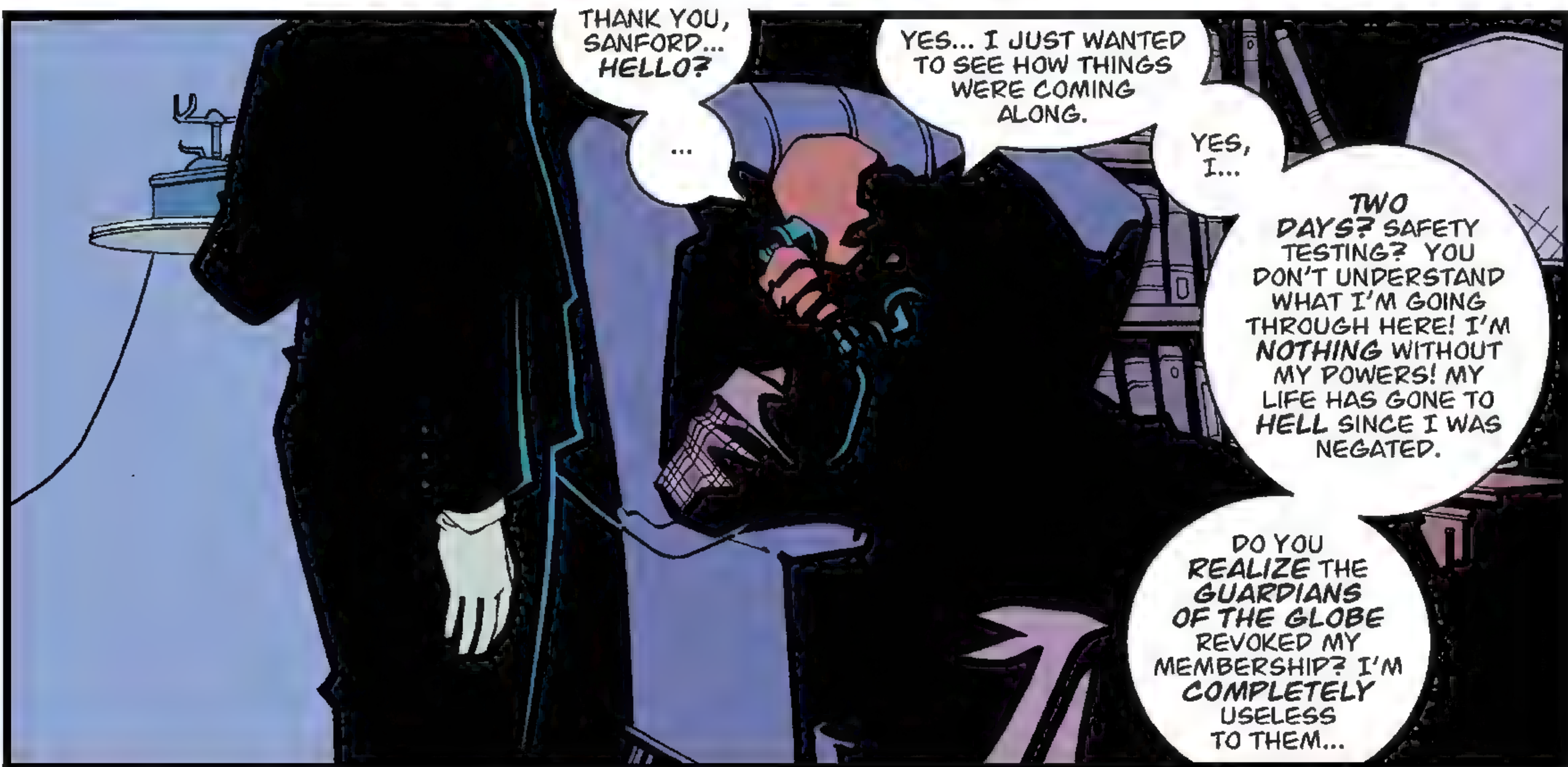
WE **TOTALLY** UNDERSTAND, MAN. C'MERE, YA BUCKET OF BOLTS. I'M PROUD OF YOU.

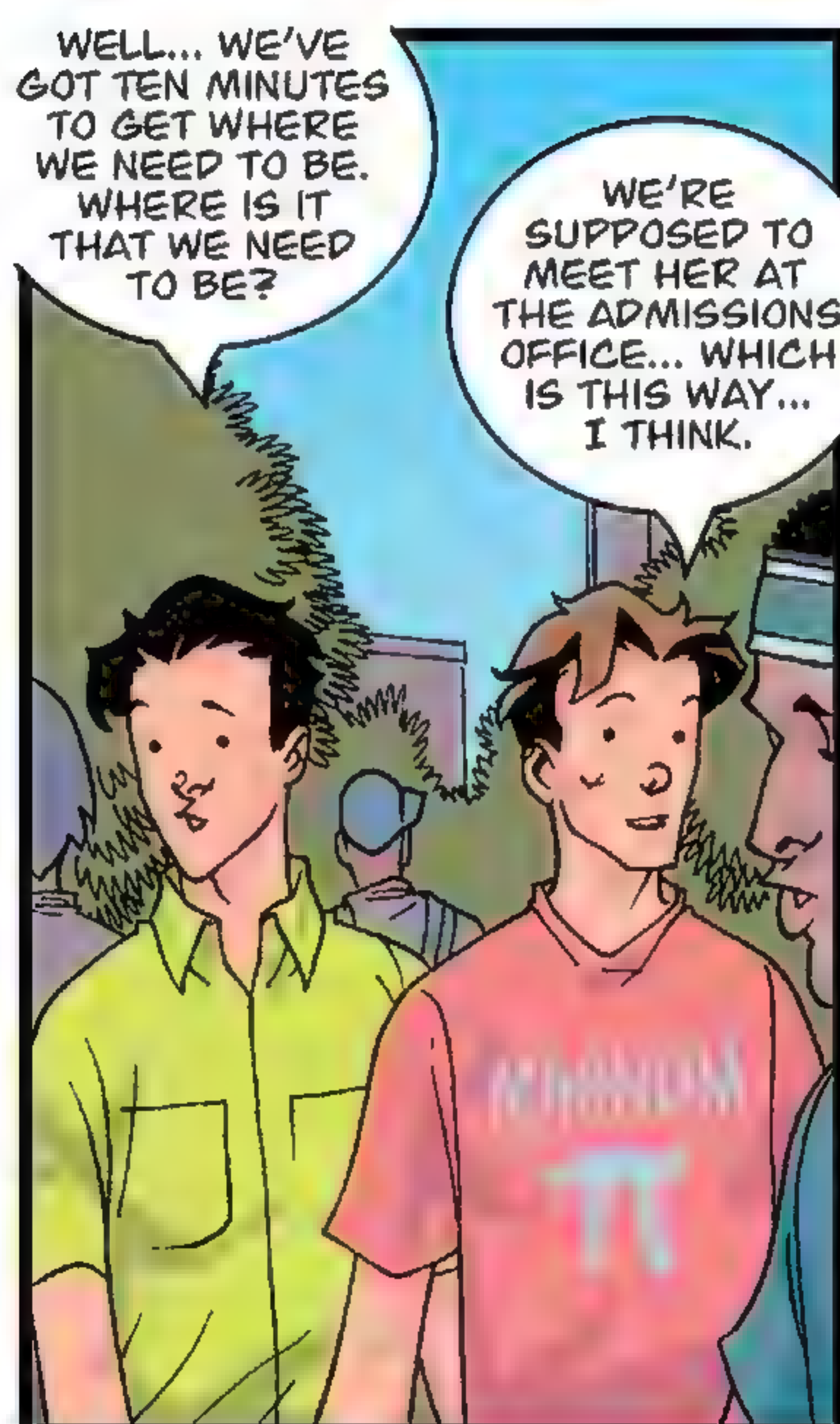
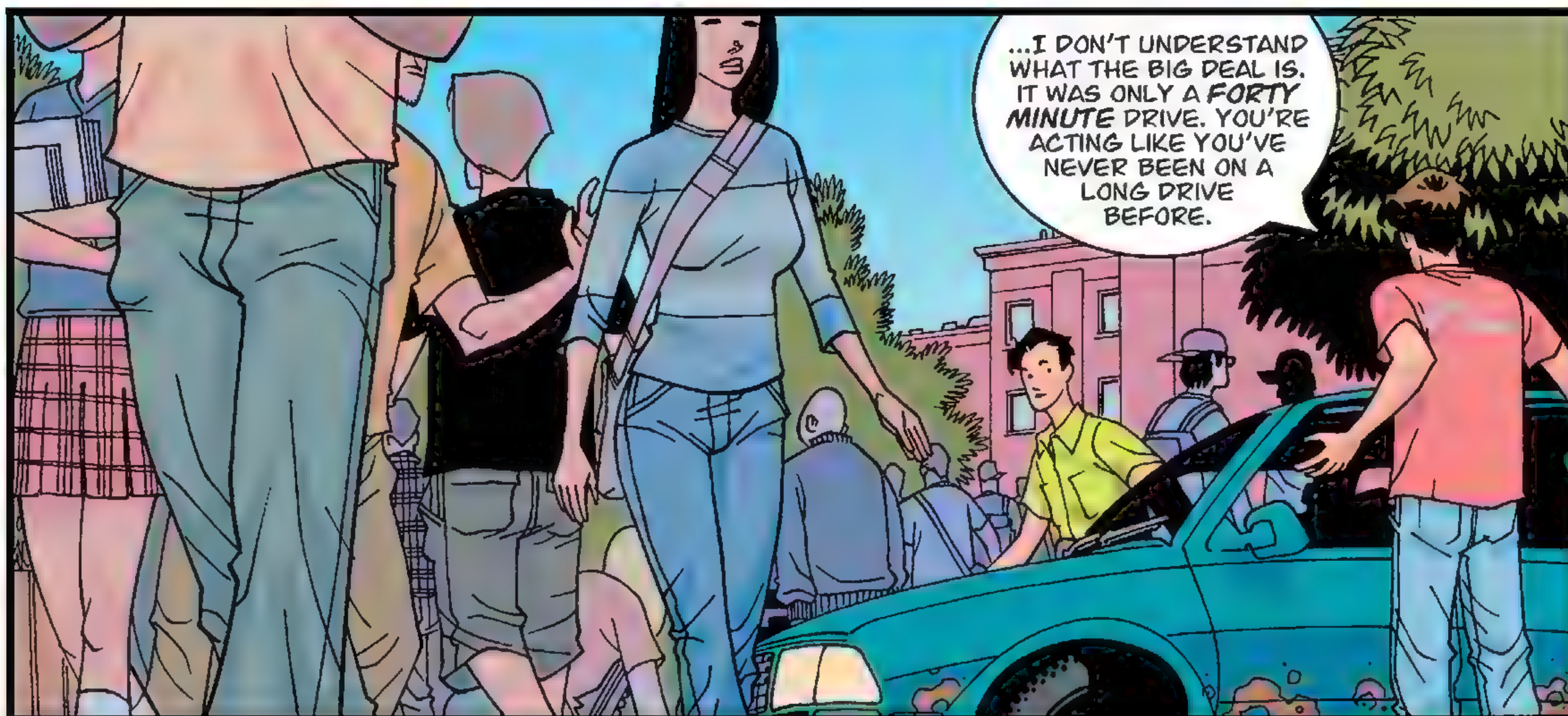
CONGRATULATIONS, ROBOT.

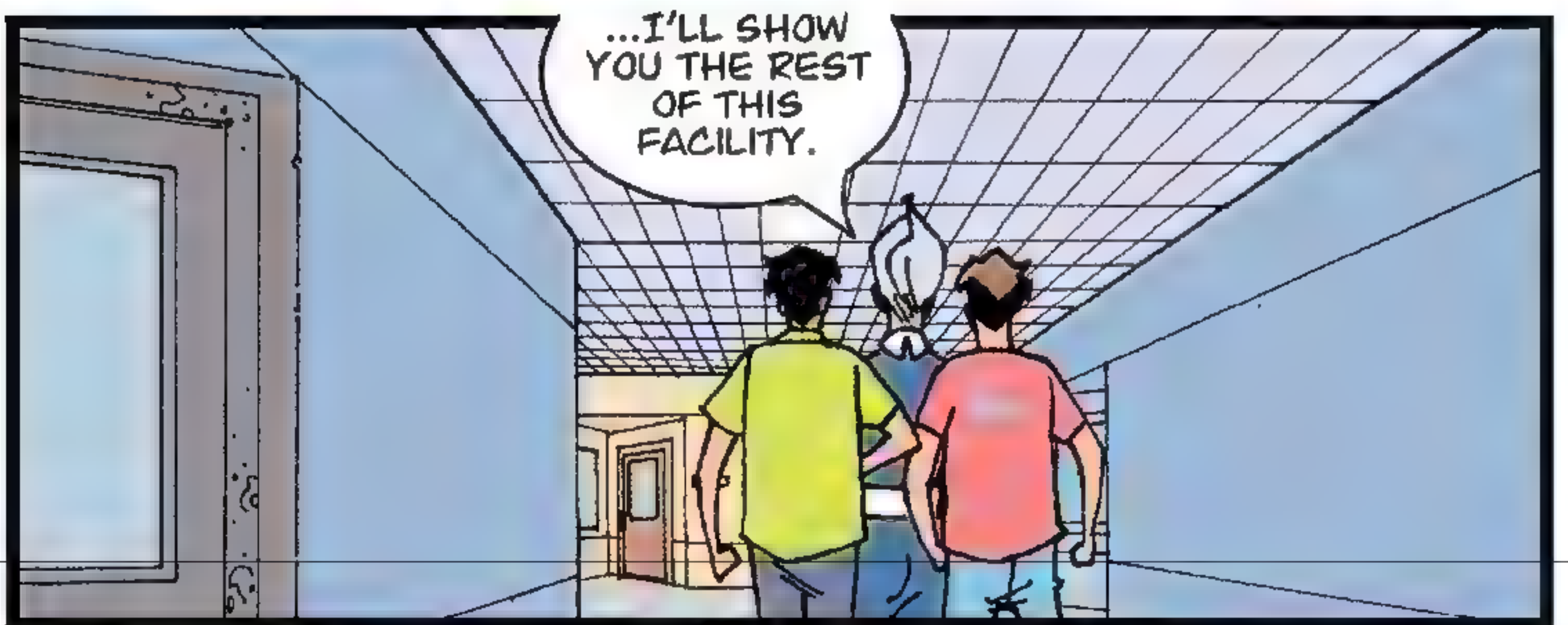
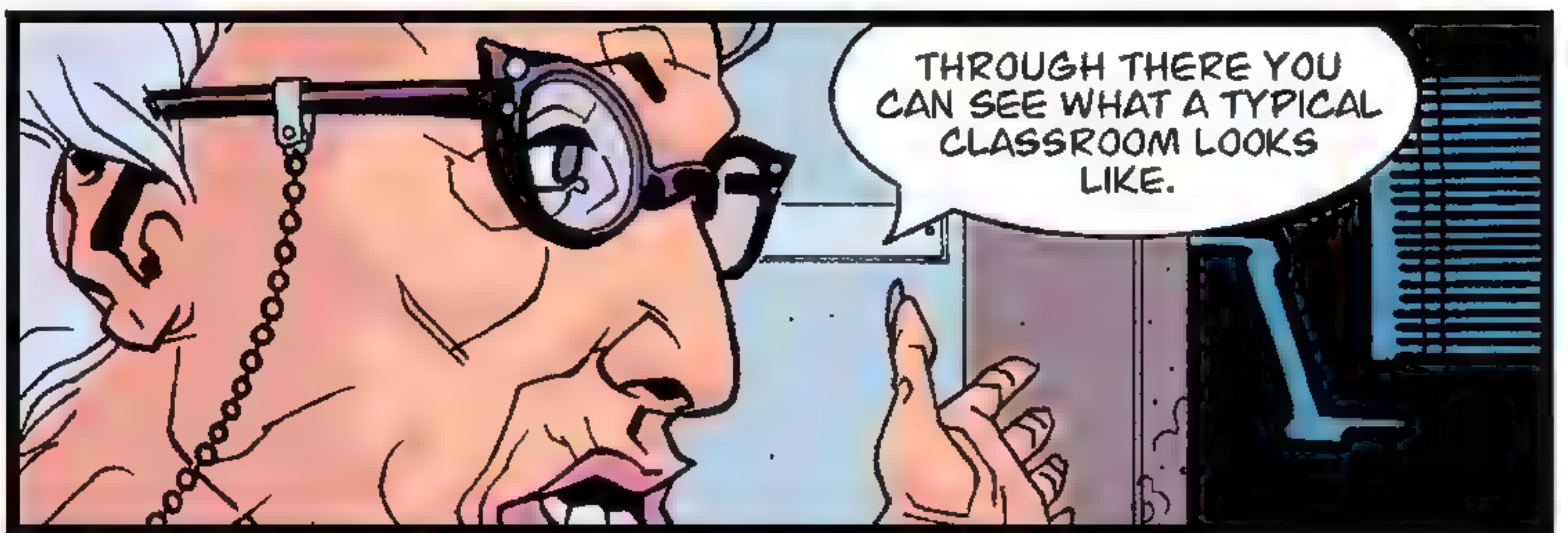
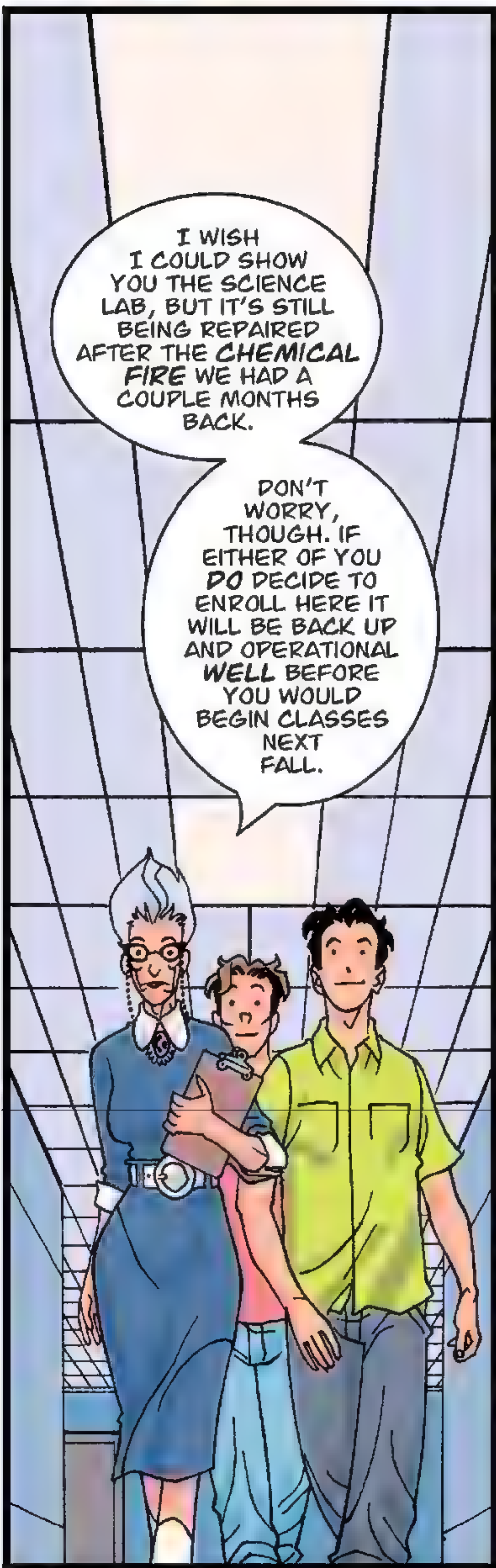
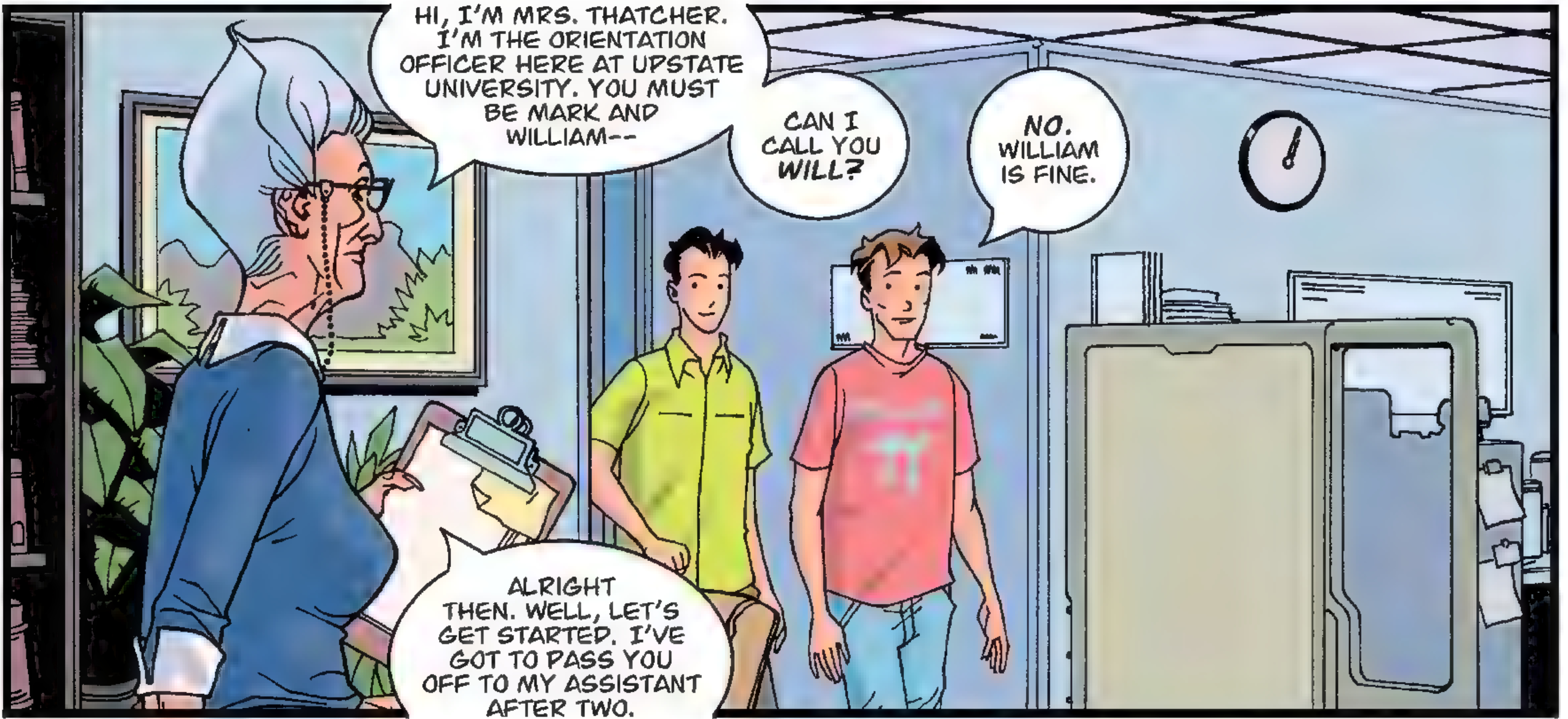
WE WILL MISS YOU.



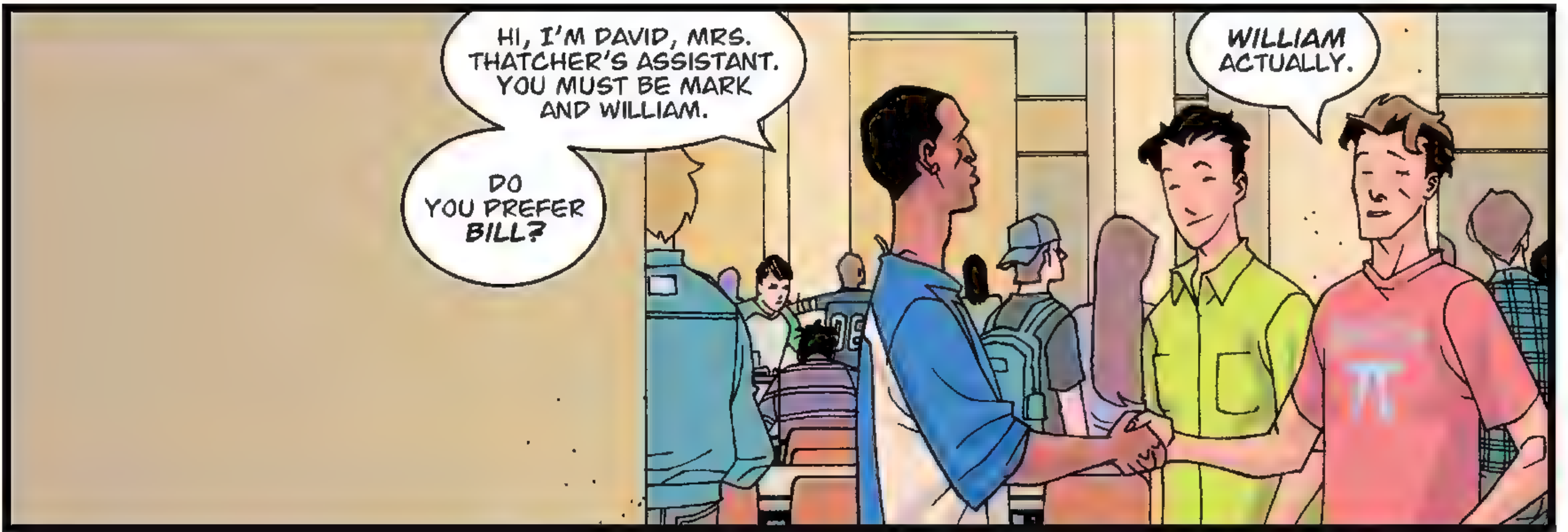
I WILL MISS YOU ALL, AS WELL.



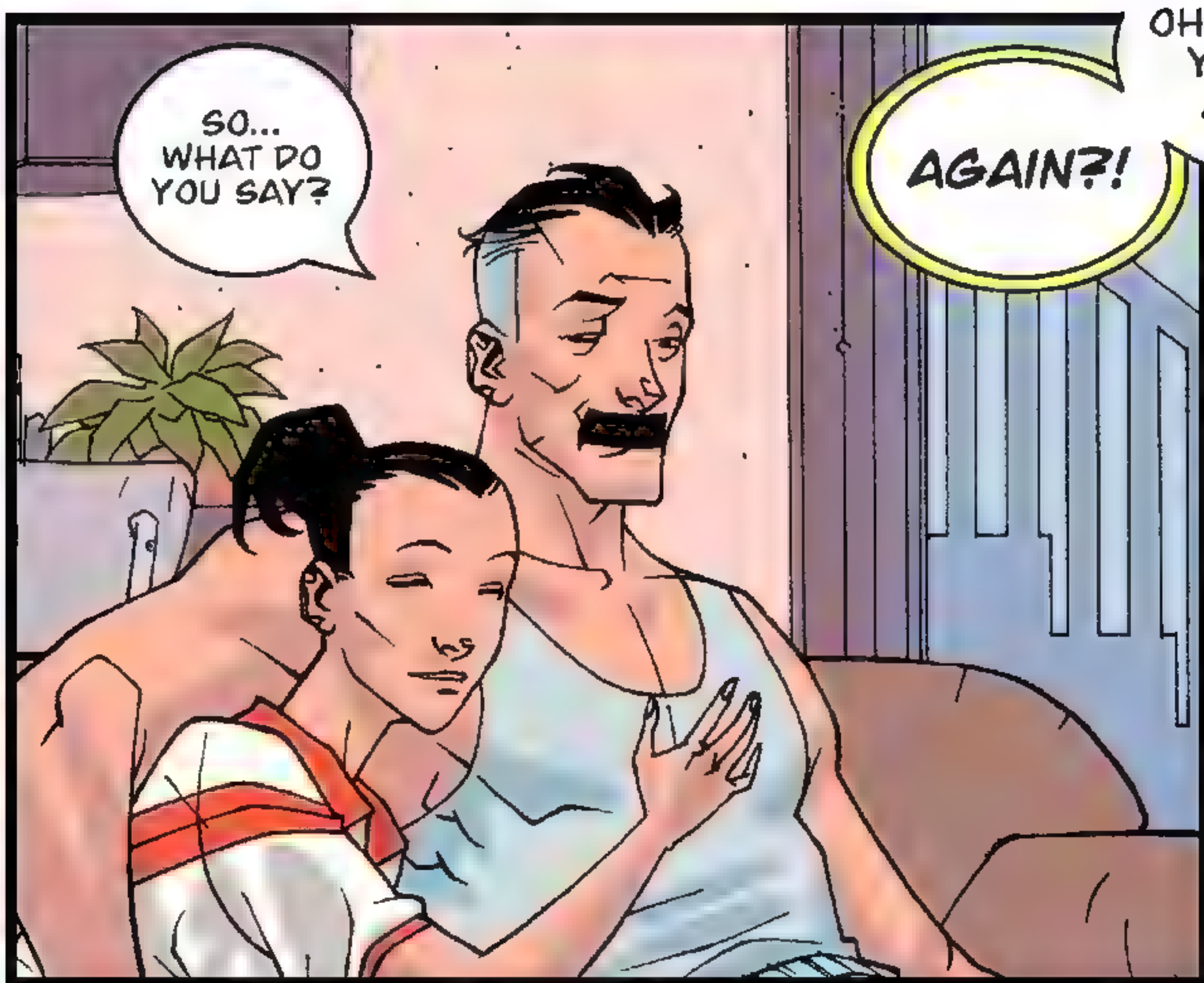


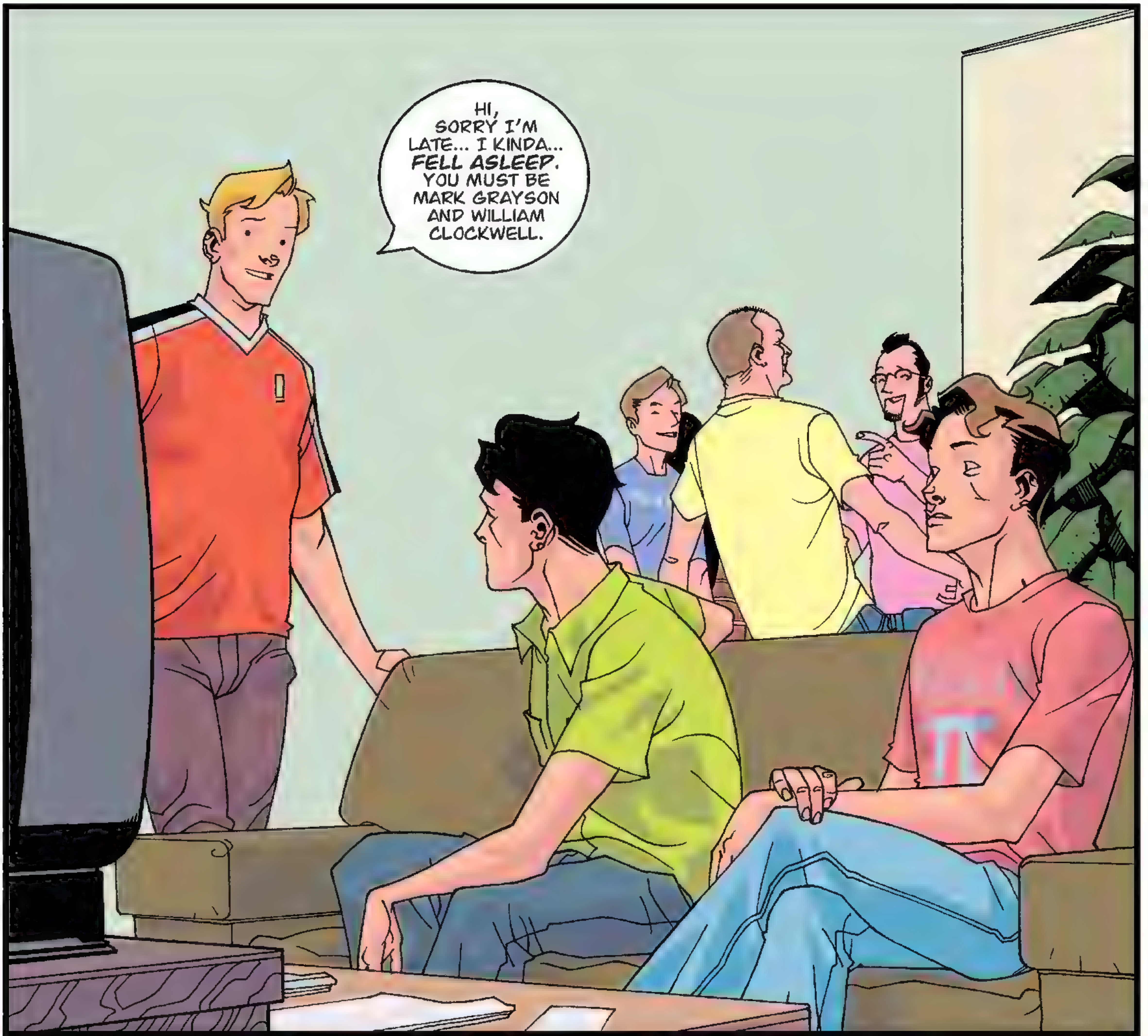


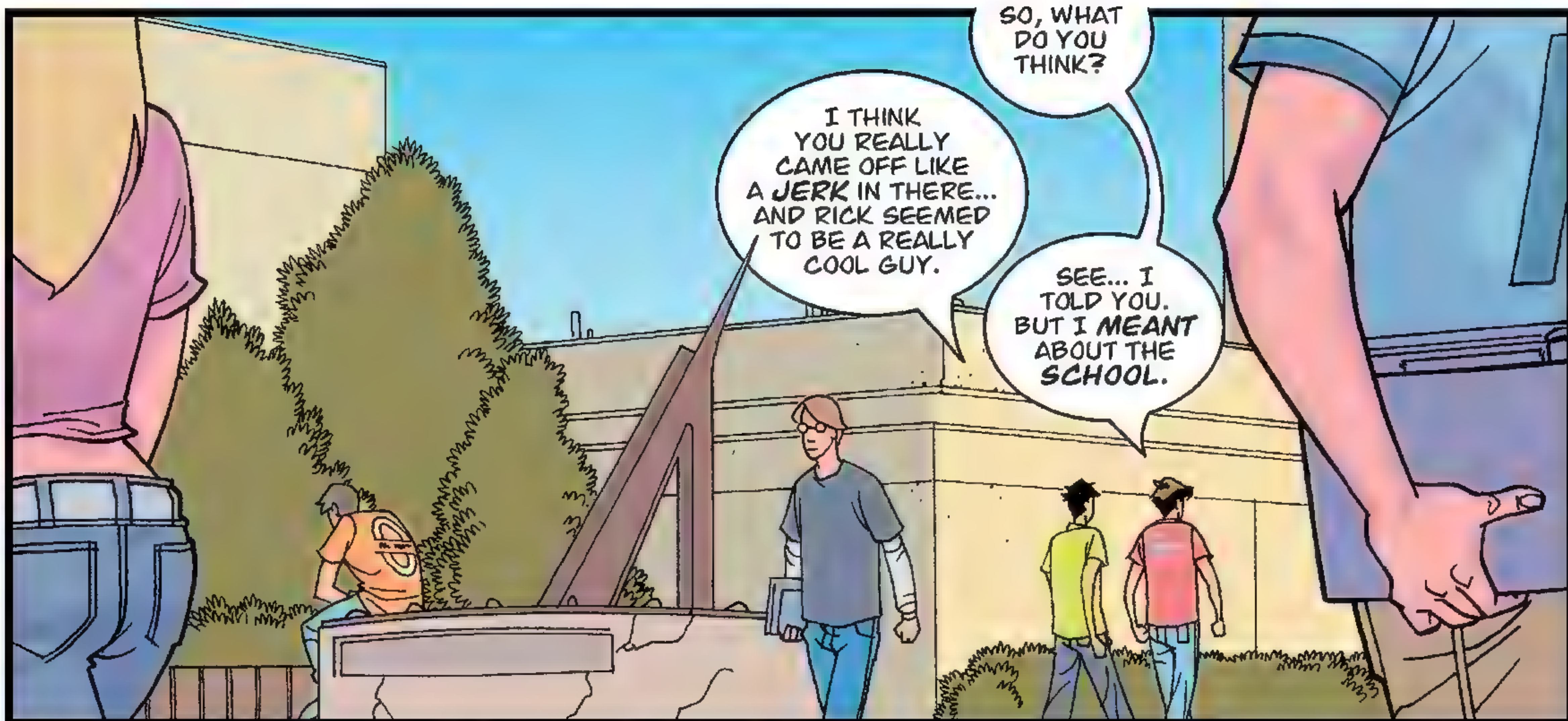








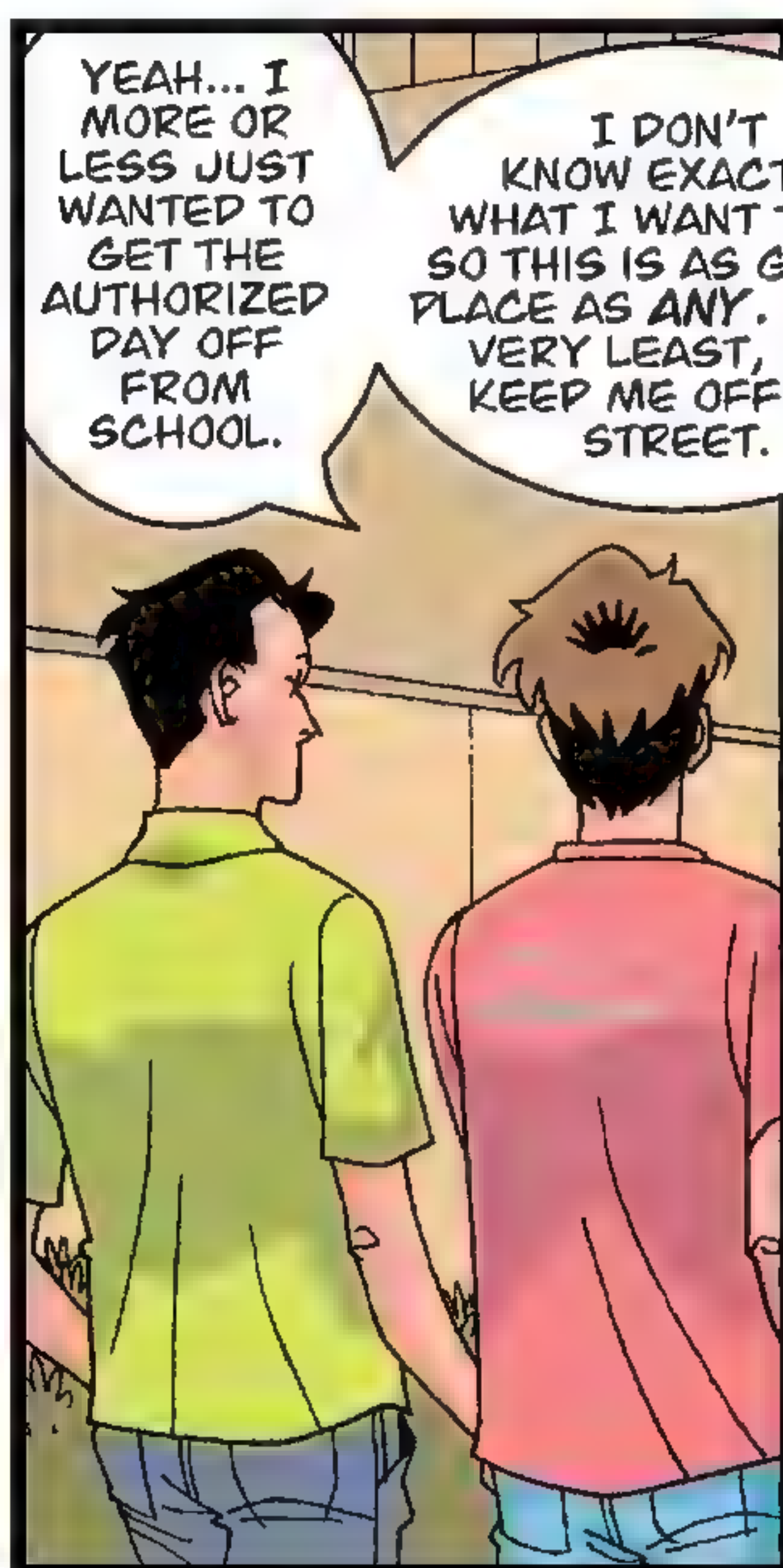




OH, I WAS PRETTY MUCH DECIDED BEFORE WE EVEN CAME HERE. IT'S GOT EVERYTHING I'M GOING TO NEED, AND IT'S NOT TOO EXPENSIVE... SO MY PARENTS CAN EASILY AFFORD IT, AND WITH MY S.A.T. SCORES IT'LL BE A BREEZE TO GET ACCEPTED.



UNLESS SOMETHING ELSE COMES UP... THIS IS THE PLACE.



YEAH... I MORE OR LESS JUST WANTED TO GET THE AUTHORIZED DAY OFF FROM SCHOOL.

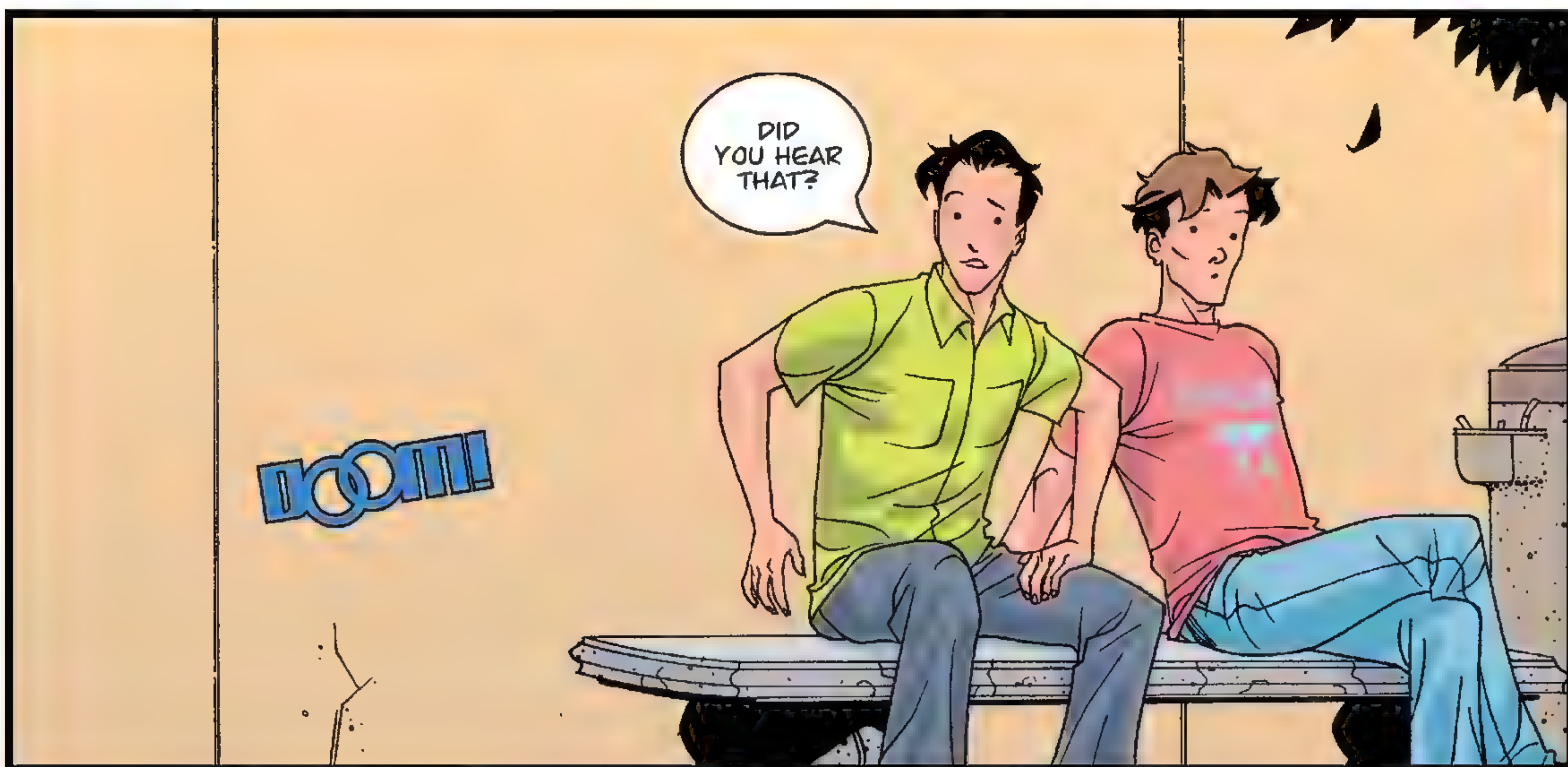
I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT I WANT TO DO, SO THIS IS AS GOOD A PLACE AS ANY. AT THE VERY LEAST, IT'LL KEEP ME OFF THE STREET.



COOL, THEN WE'LL GET TO ROOM TOGETHER LIKE WE WANTED TO.

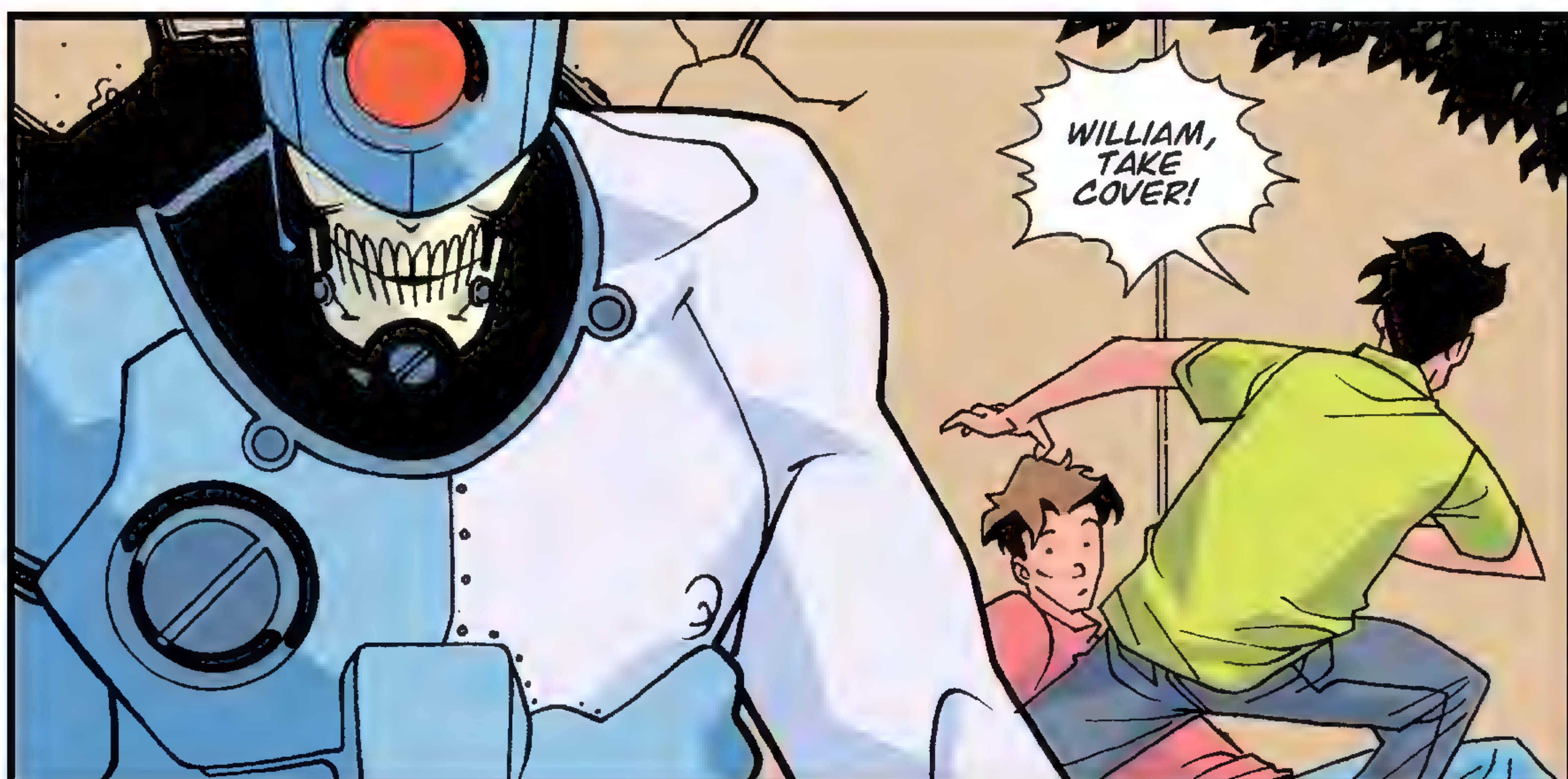
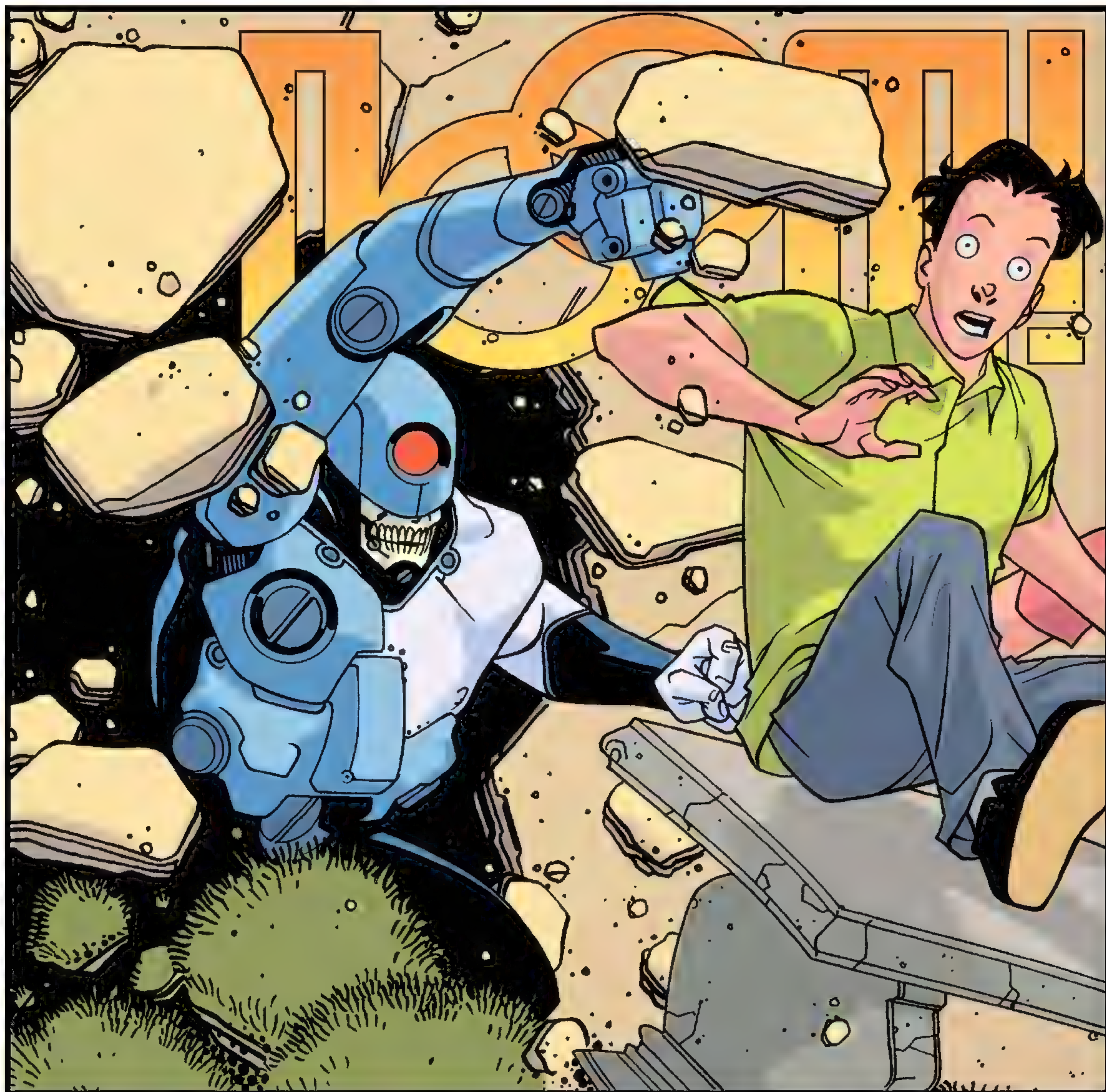
THIS IS GOING TO BE A HOOT.

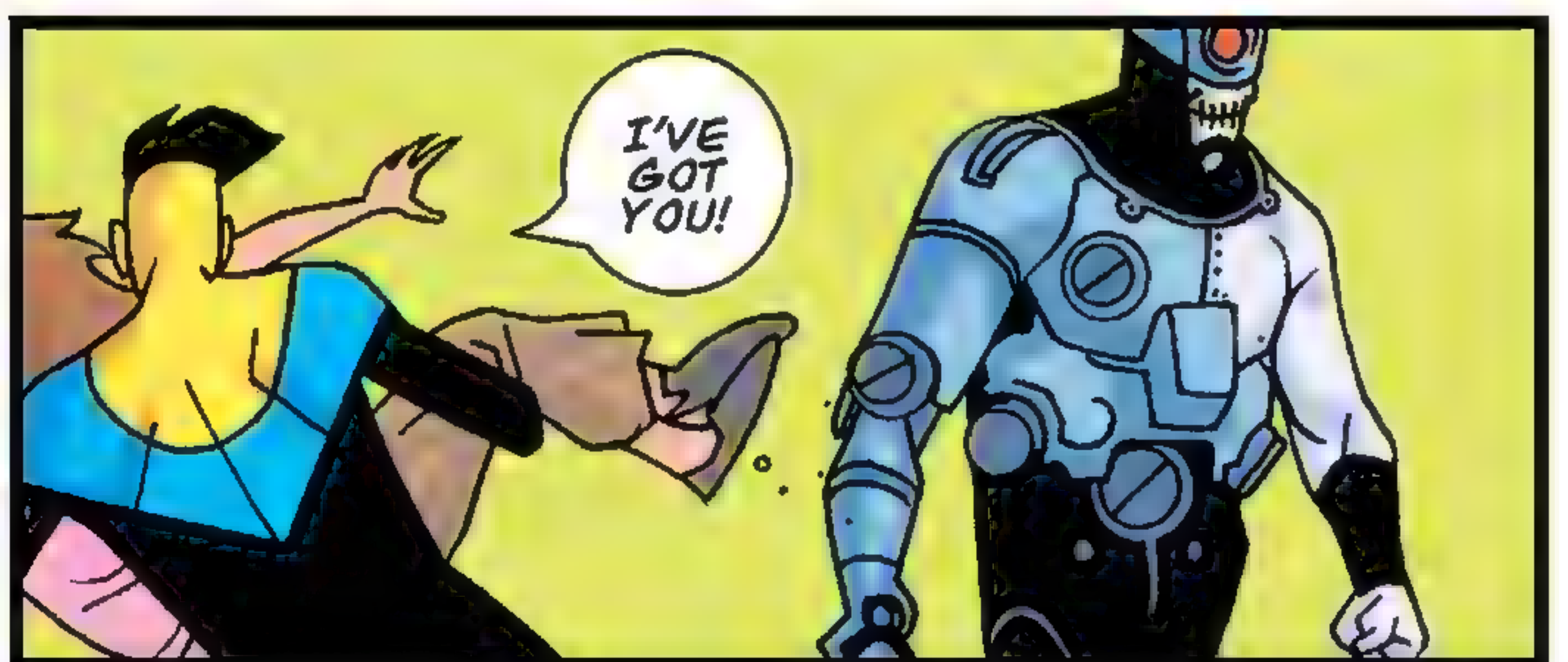
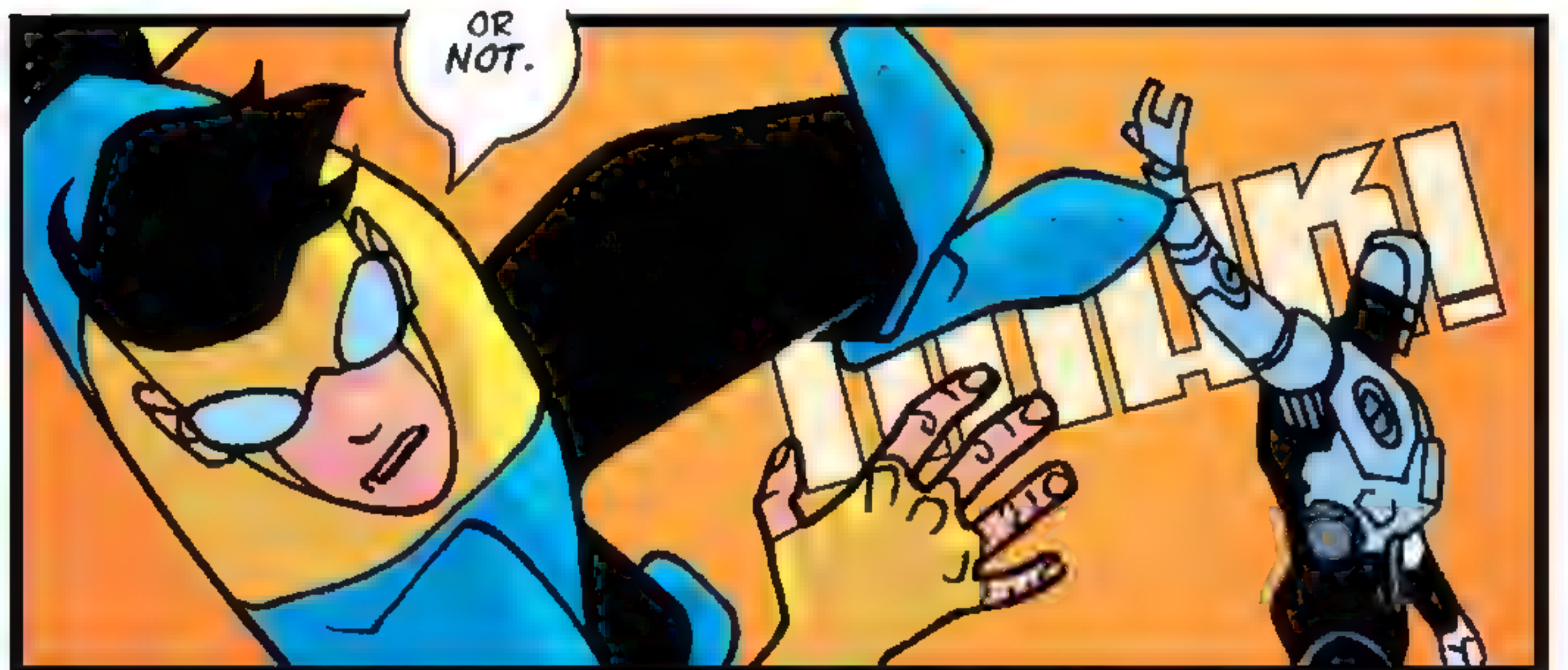
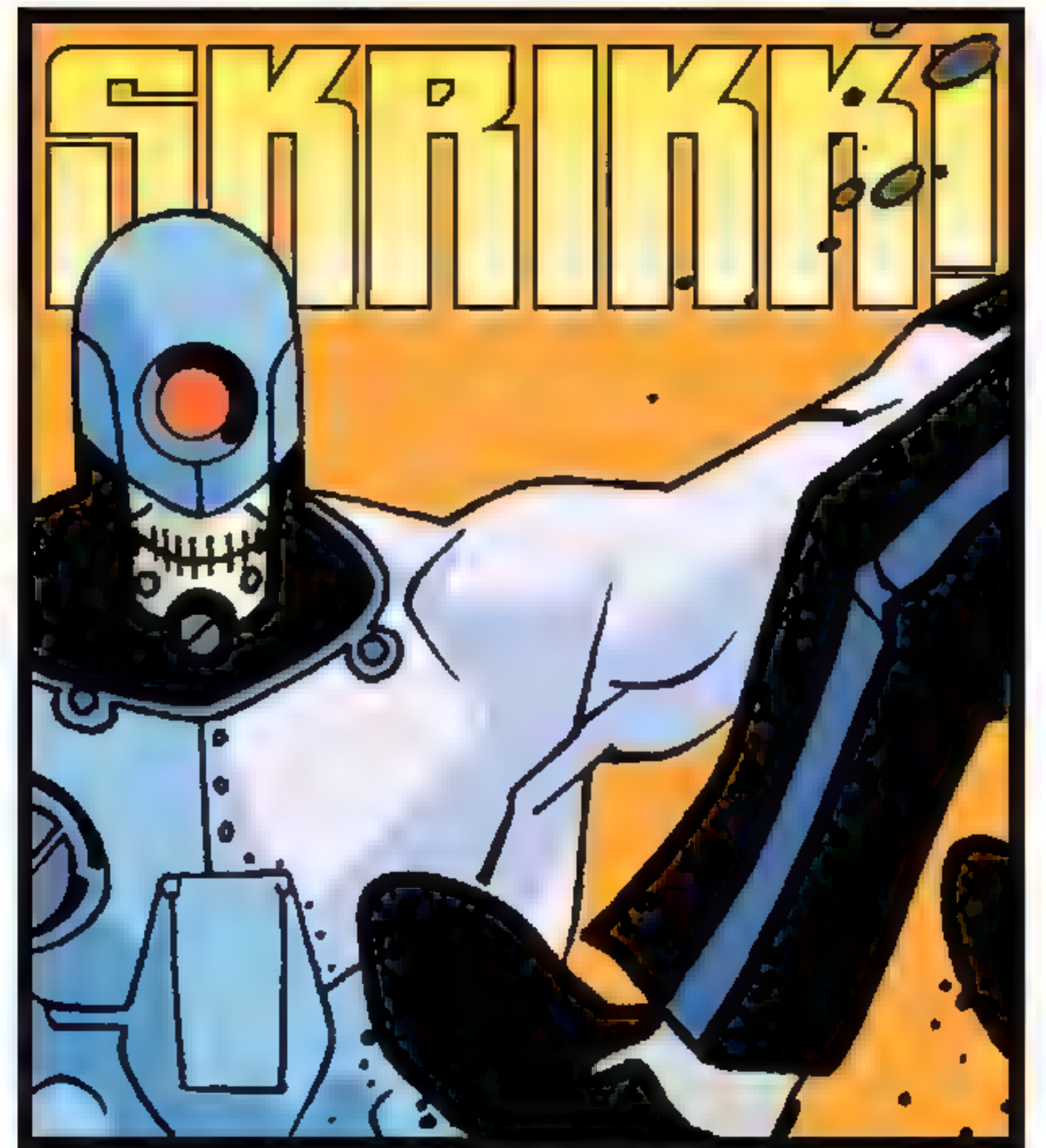
TWO CHICK MAGNETS LIKE US... THIS PLACE WILL NEVER BE THE SAME.

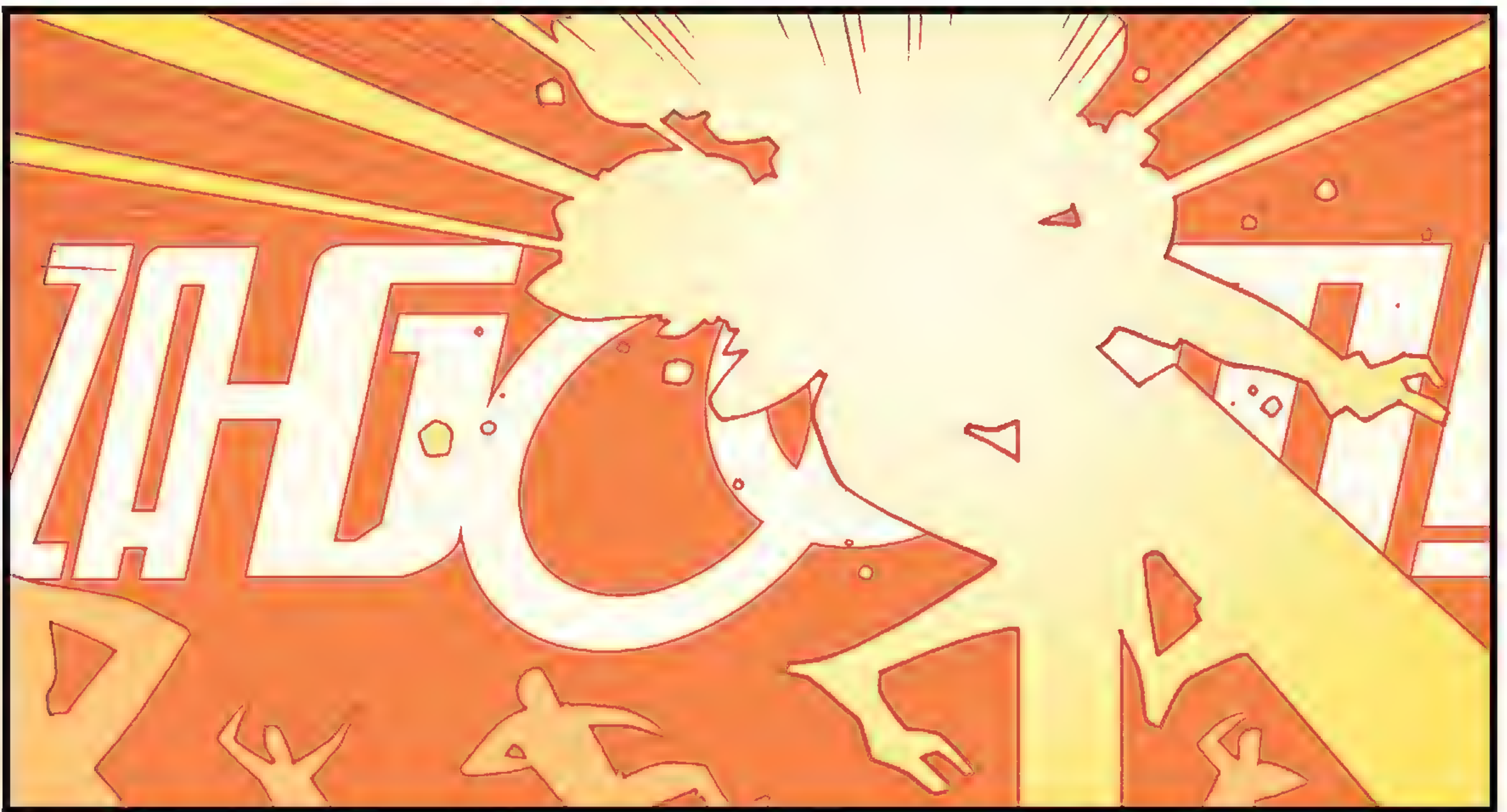
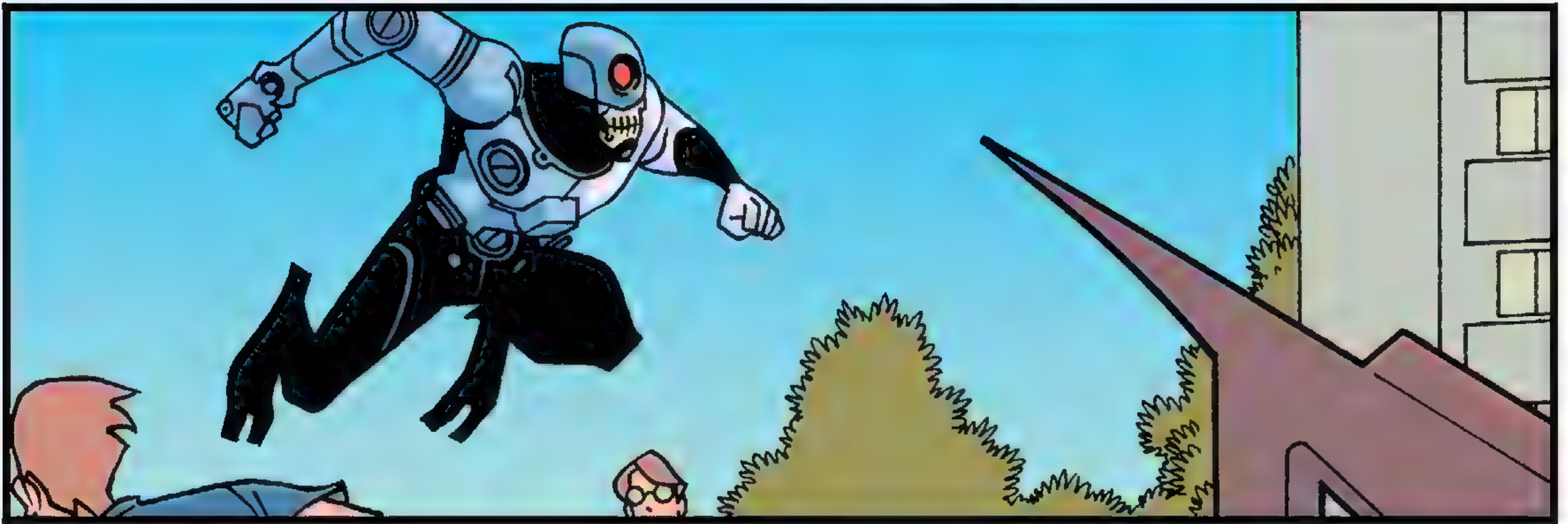
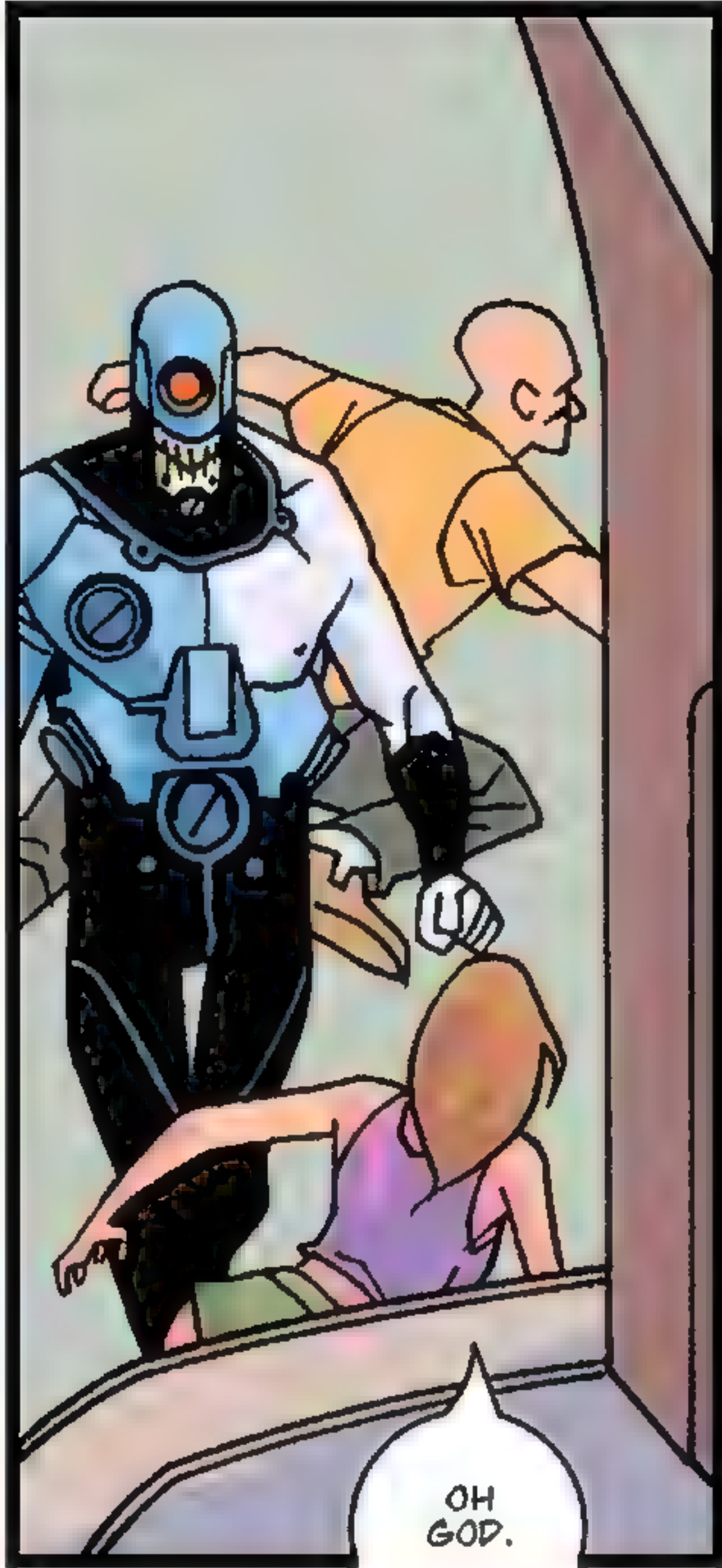
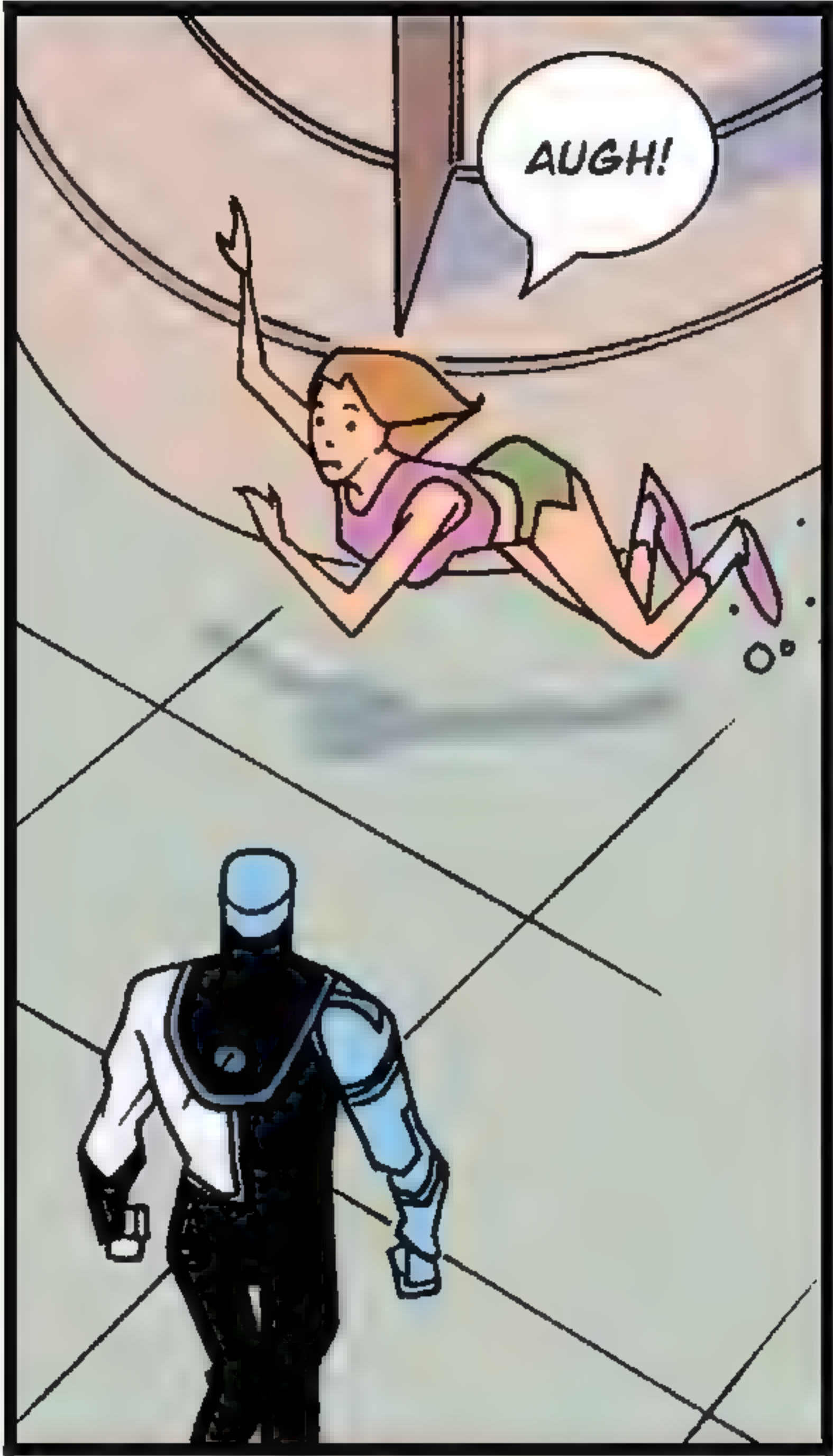


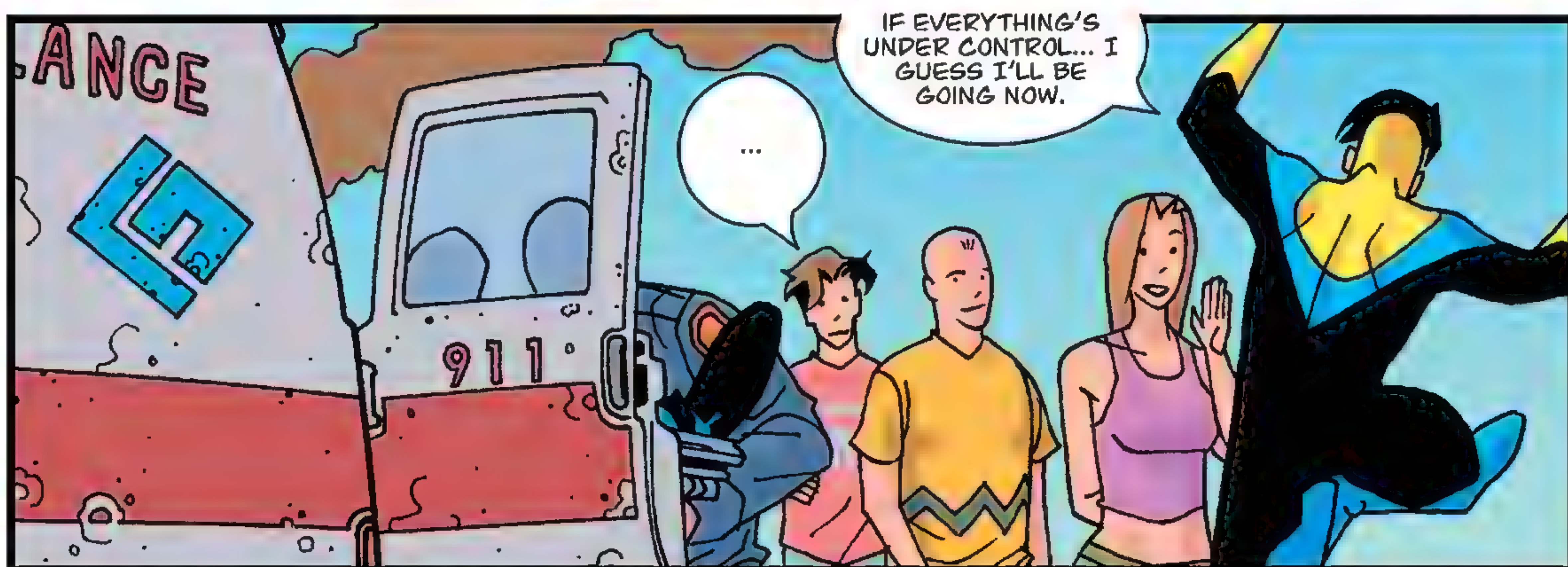
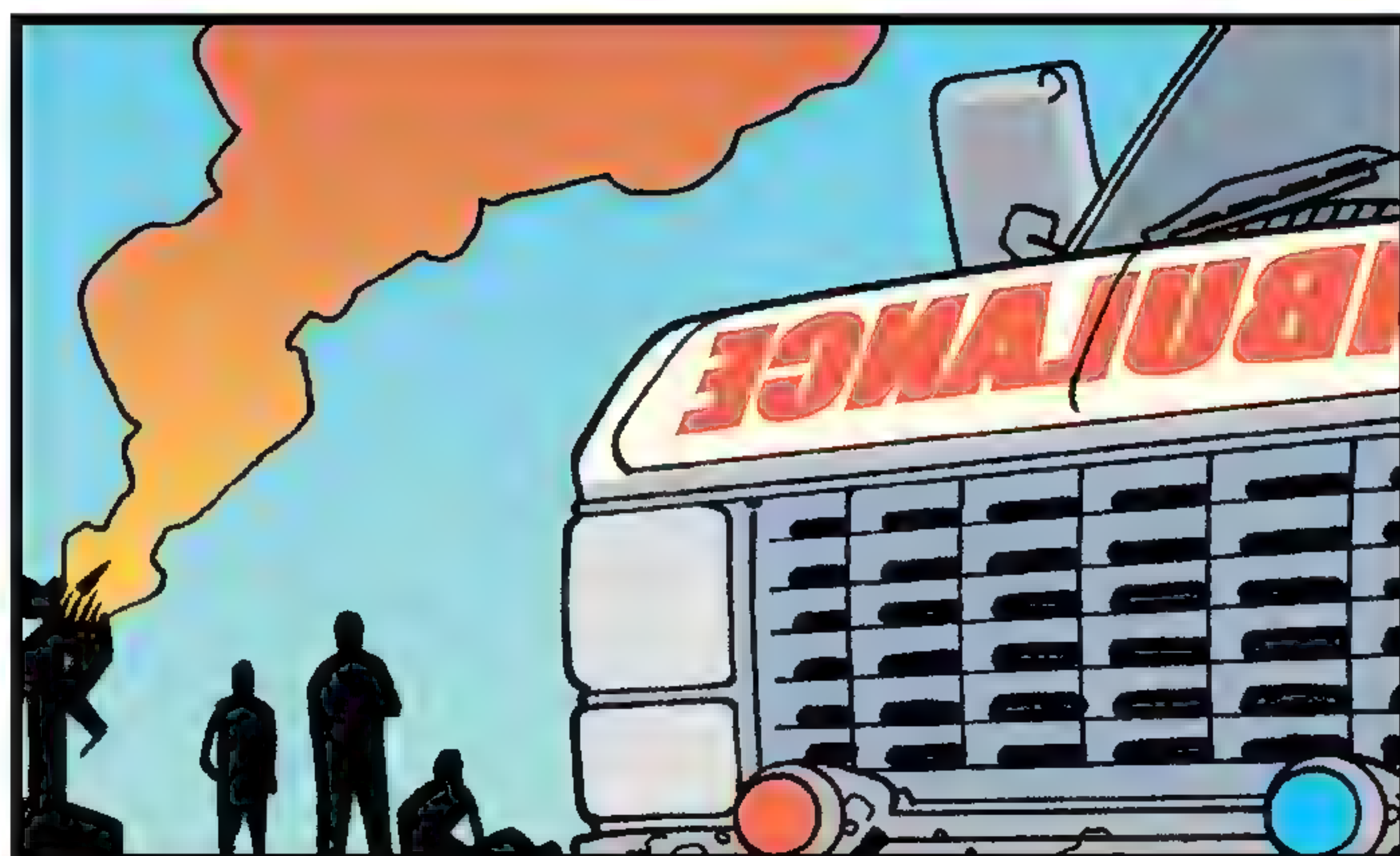
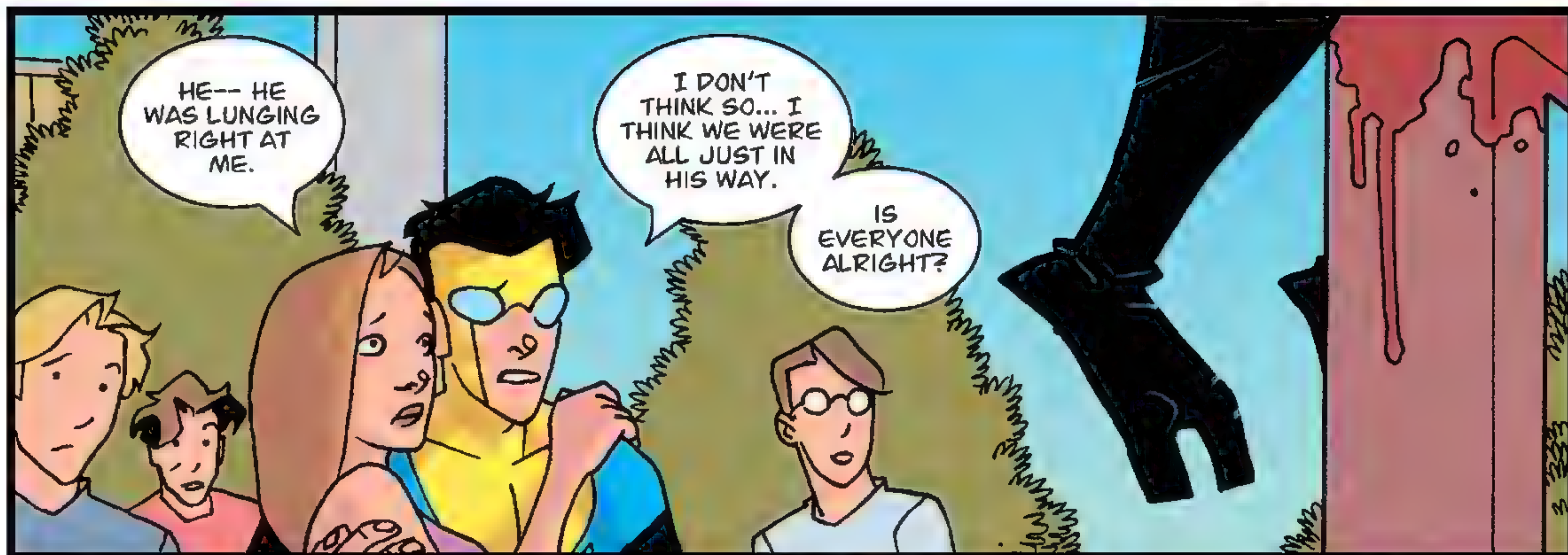
DID YOU HEAR THAT?

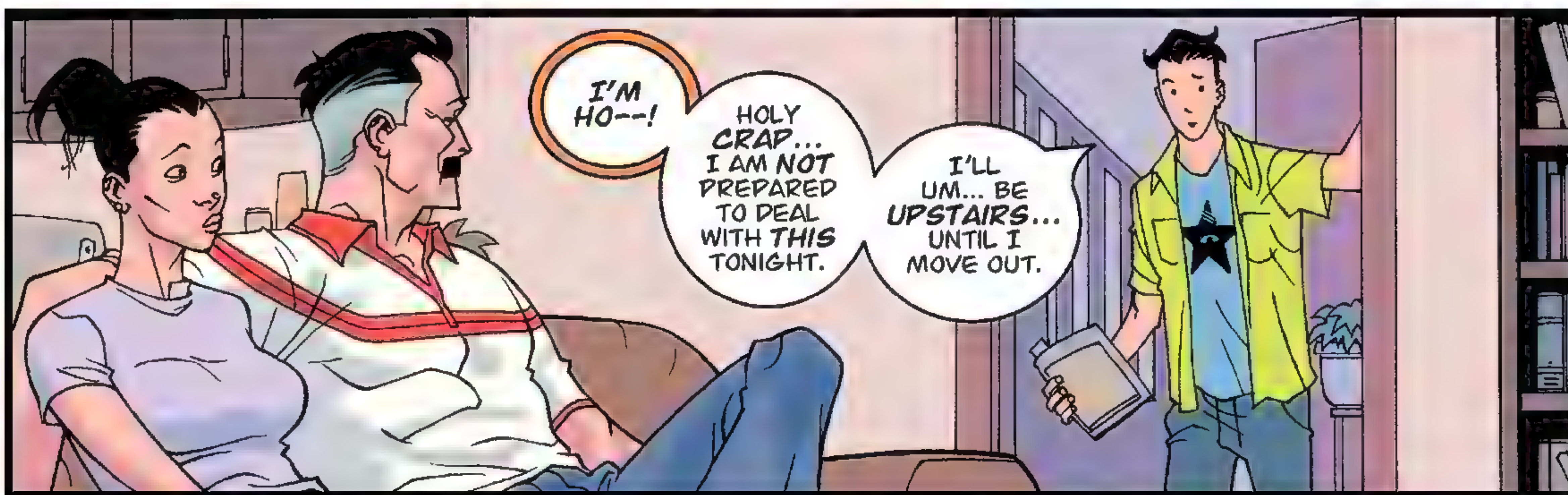
DOOM!







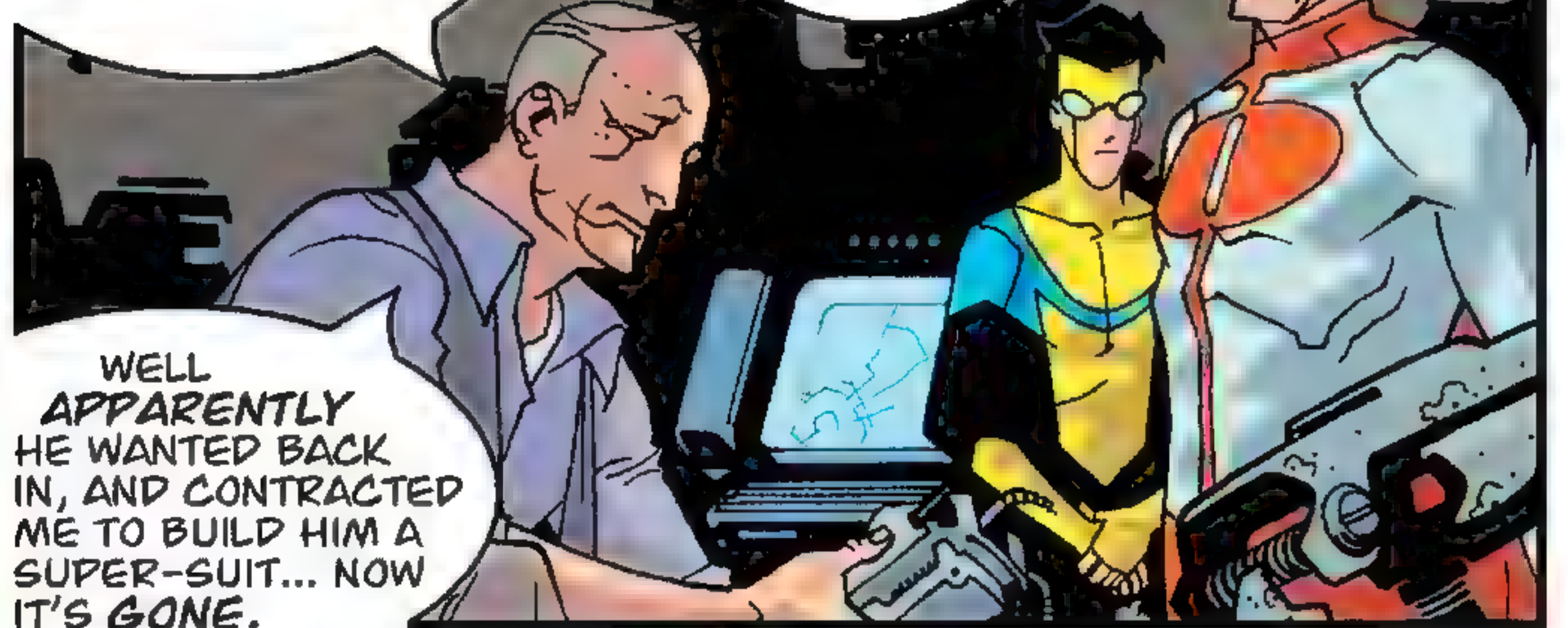






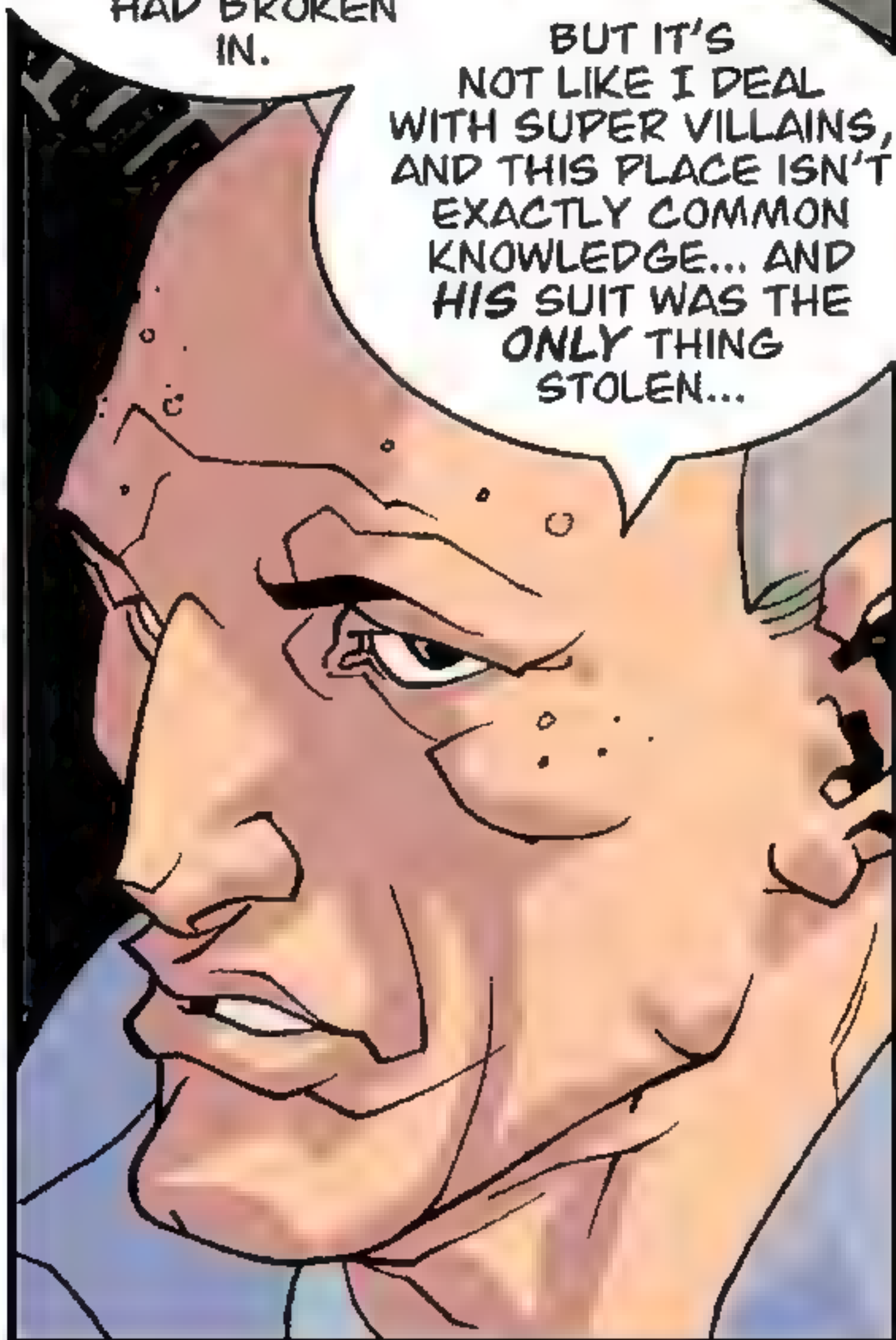
I... I WAS DEVELOPING A SUIT THAT WOULD RESTORE BLACK SAMSON'S POWERS. YOU KNEW ABOUT HIS INCIDENT, RIGHT?

YEAH, THE GUARDIANS TOLD ME THEY HAD TO LET HIM GO.



WELL APPARENTLY HE WANTED BACK IN, AND CONTRACTED ME TO BUILD HIM A SUPER-SUIT... NOW IT'S GONE.

I DIDN'T SEE WHO IT WAS... THEY KNOCKED ME OUT BEFORE I EVEN KNEW THEY HAD BROKEN IN.



BUT IT'S NOT LIKE I DEAL WITH SUPER VILLAINS, AND THIS PLACE ISN'T EXACTLY COMMON KNOWLEDGE... AND HIS SUIT WAS THE ONLY THING STOLEN...

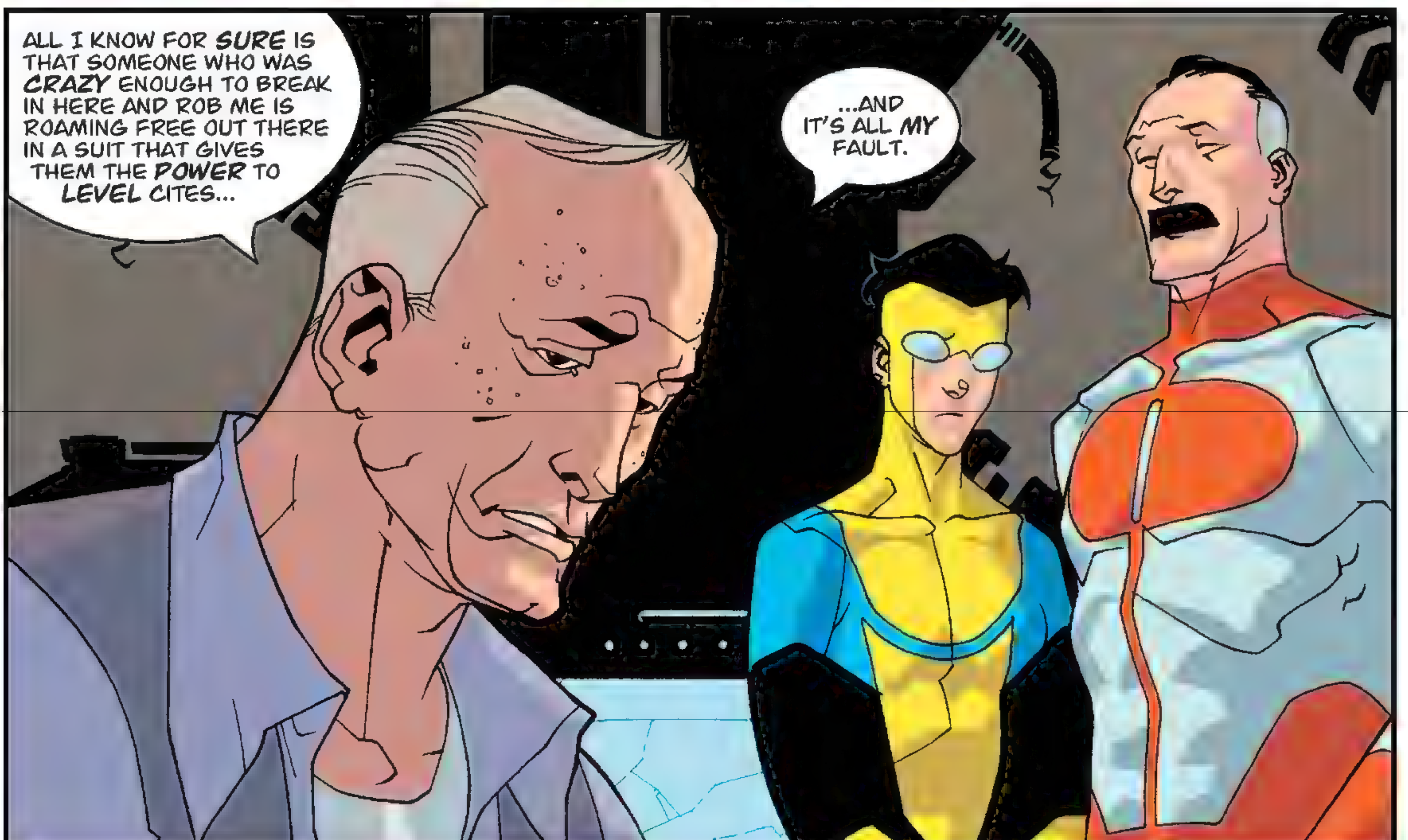
YOU'RE NOT SAYING...



I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M SAYING... I MEAN... I KNEW HE WAS UNSTABLE BUT I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST THE STRESS OF LOSING HIS POWERS... HE MAY VERY WELL HAVE GONE INSANE...



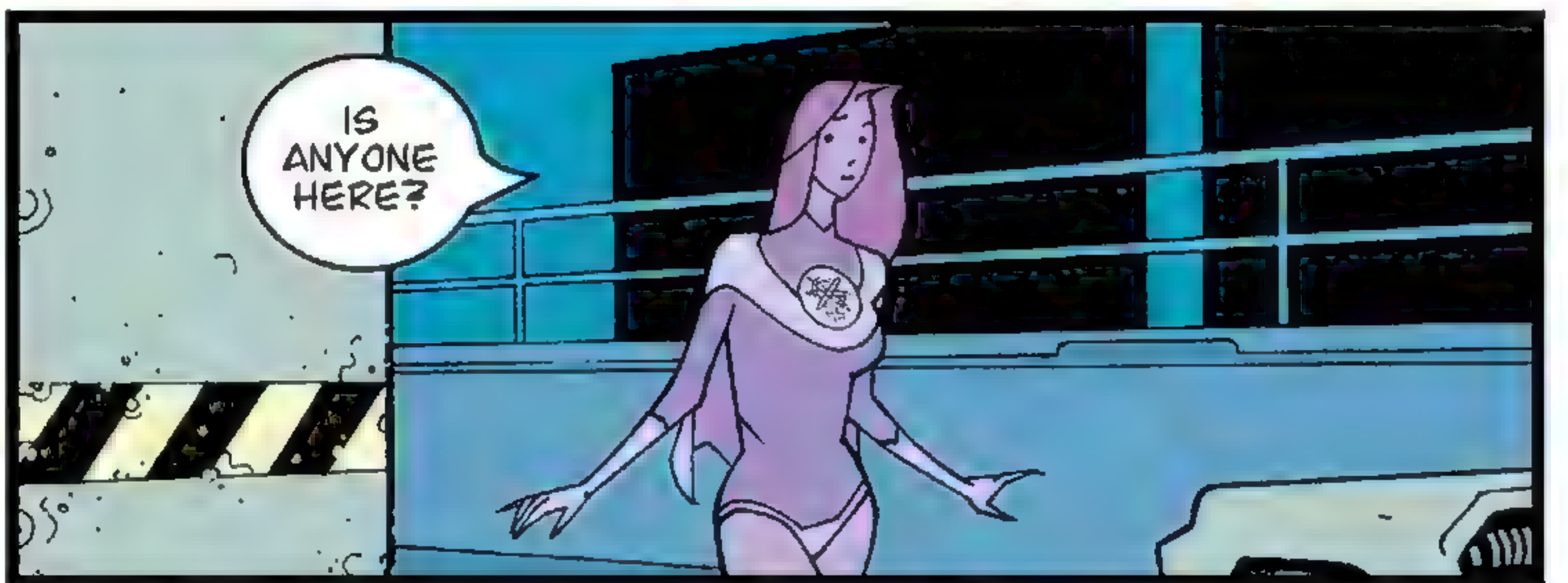
ALL I KNOW FOR SURE IS THAT SOMEONE WHO WAS CRAZY ENOUGH TO BREAK IN HERE AND ROB ME IS ROAMING FREE OUT THERE IN A SUIT THAT GIVES THEM THE POWER TO LEVEL CITIES...



...AND IT'S ALL MY FAULT.



HELLO?



IS ANYONE HERE?



NO.



NO.

NO.

NO.

NO.

NO.



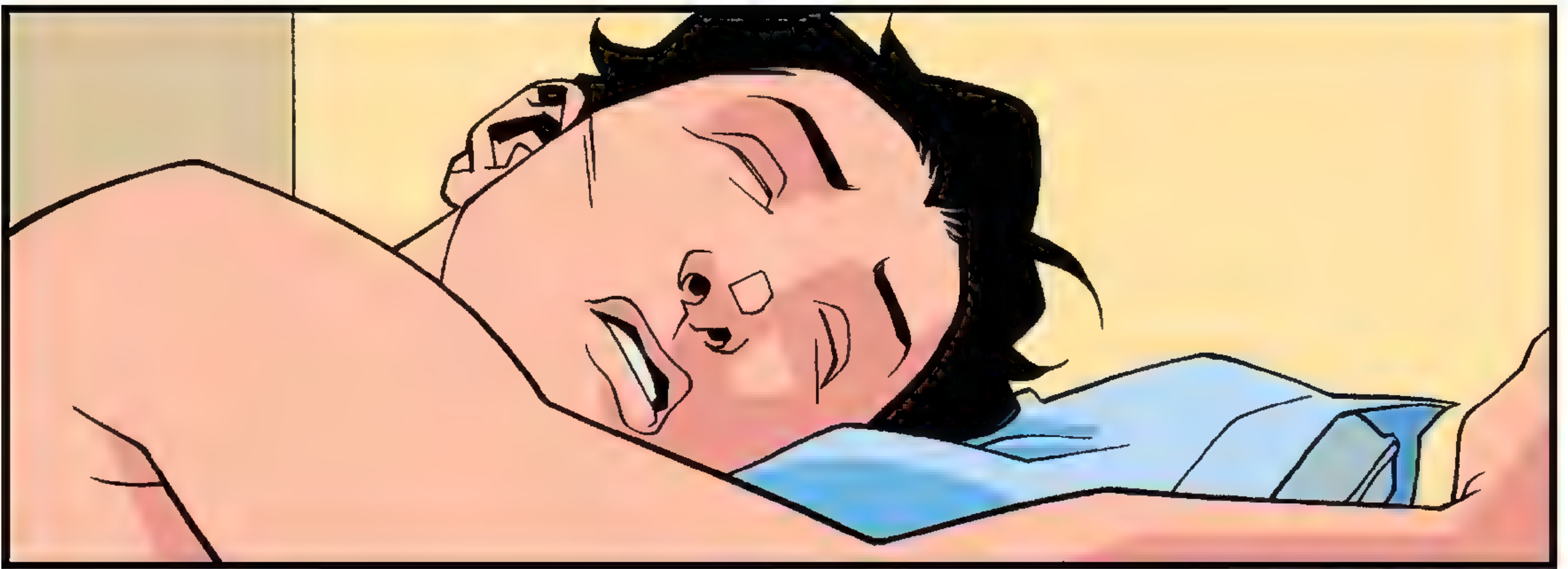
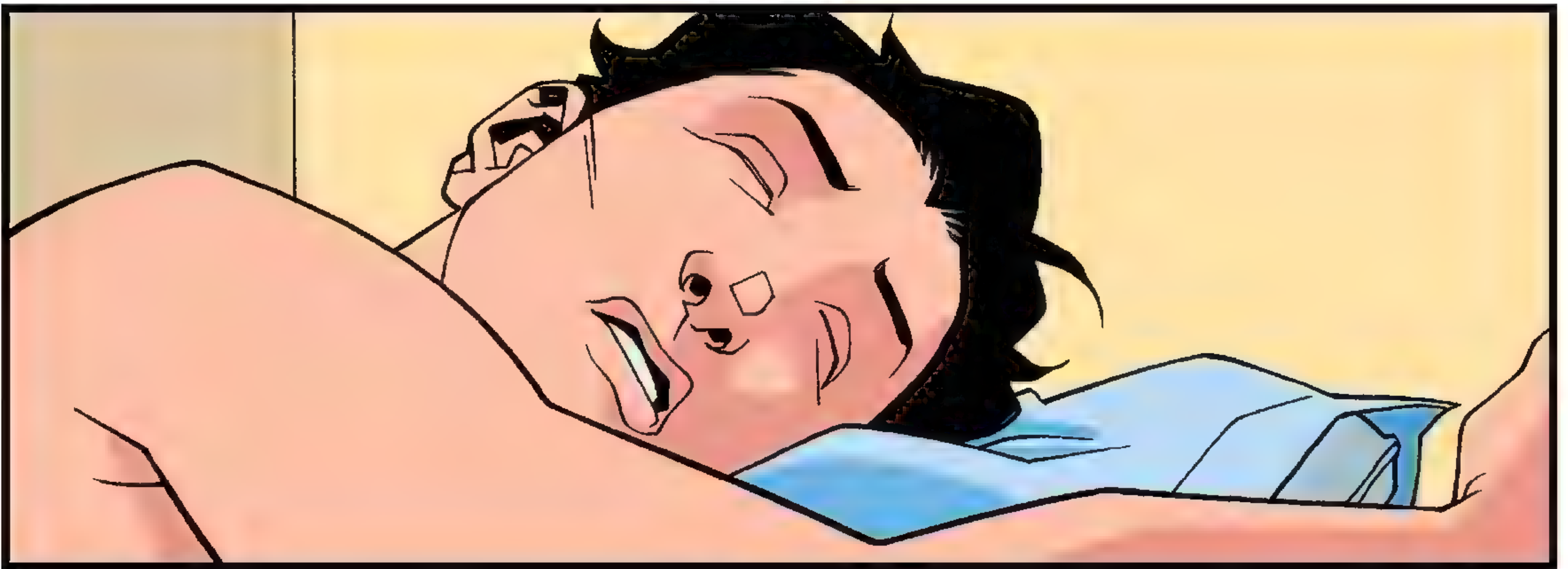
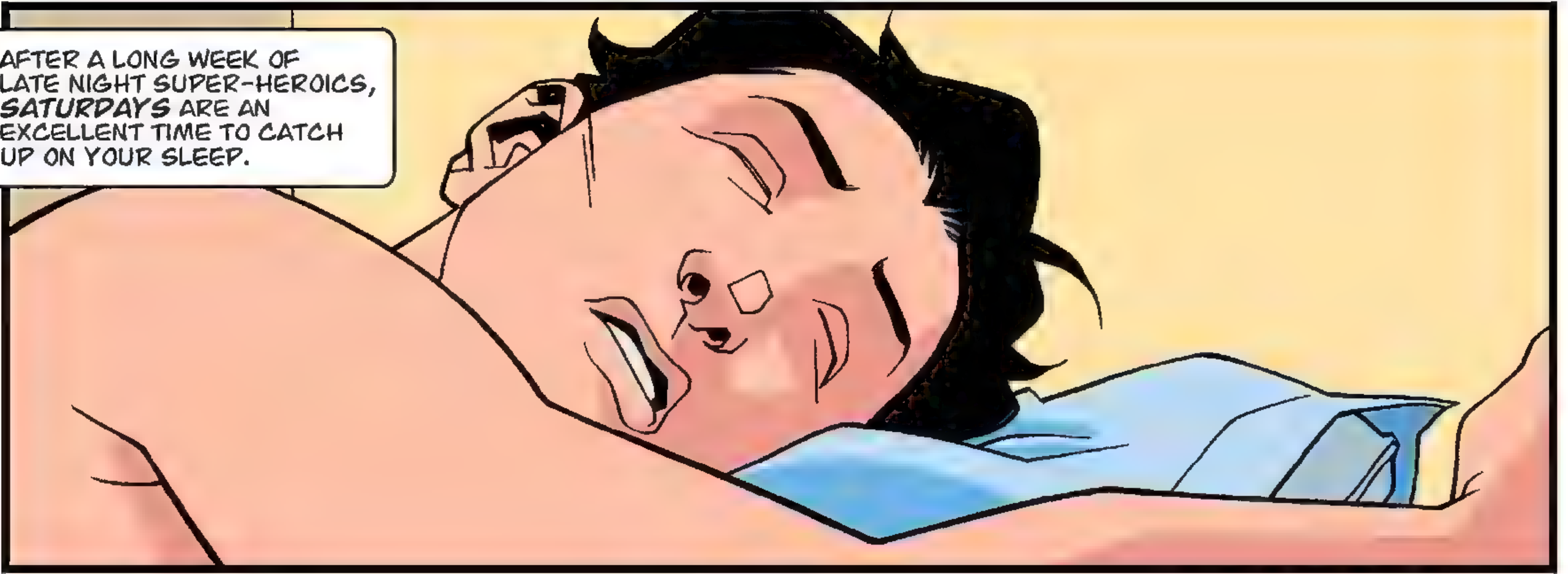
ISSUE SEVEN

ONE SIDE,
KIDDO! THIS
LOOKS LIKE A
JOB FOR--

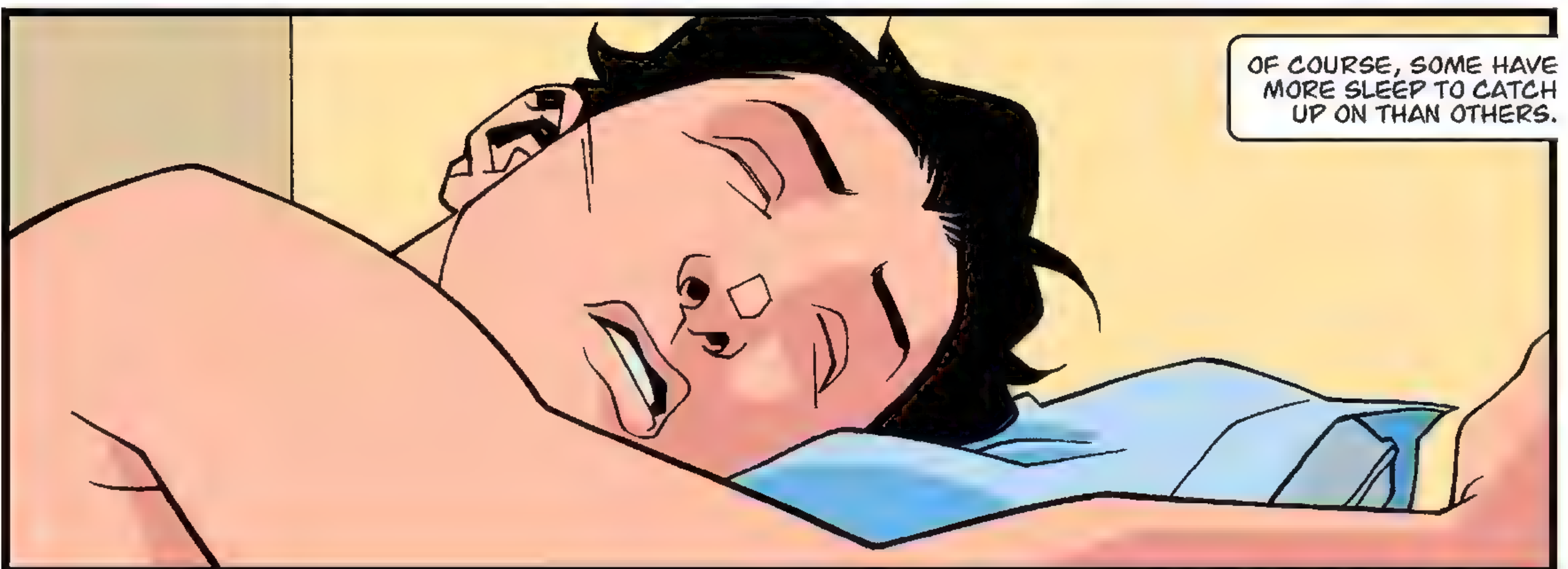
THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE!

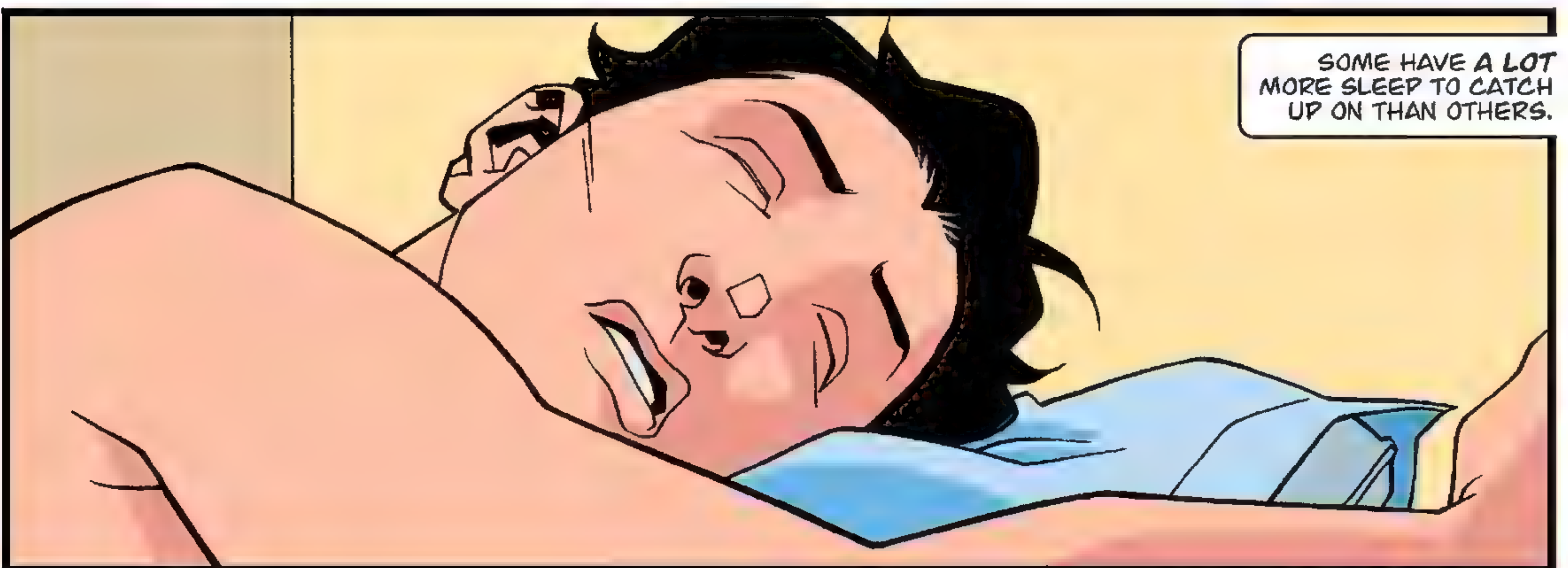
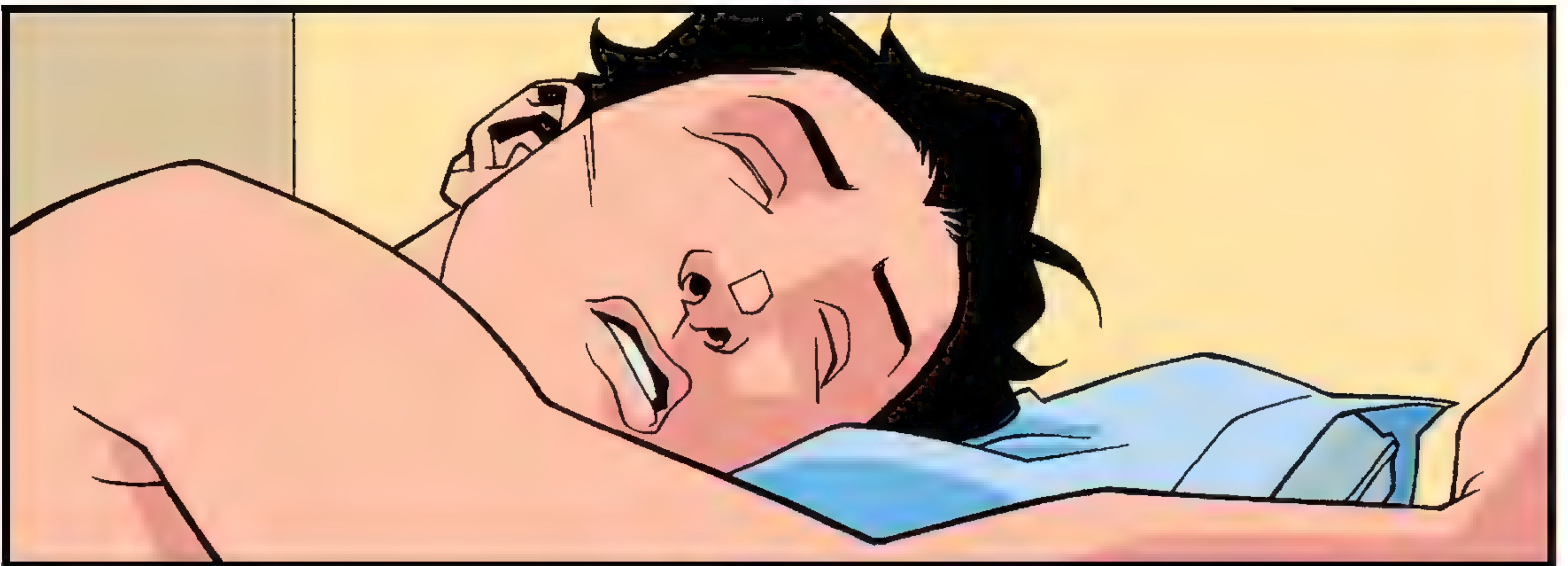
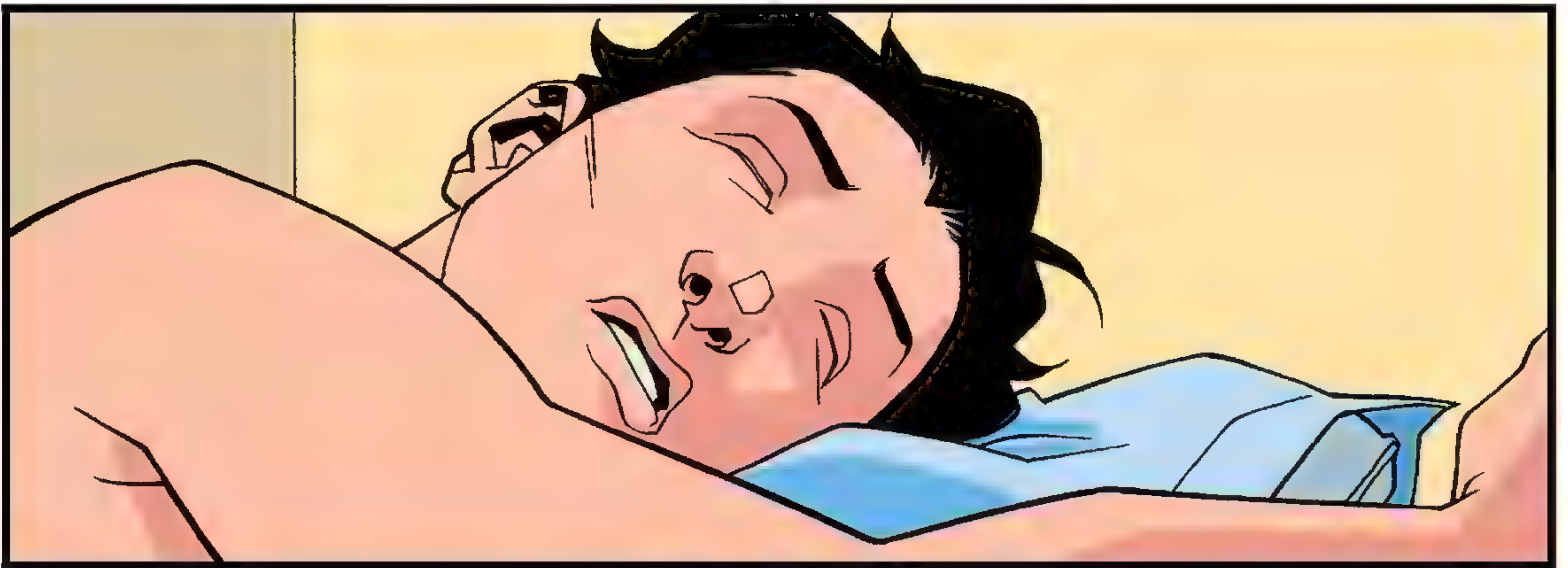
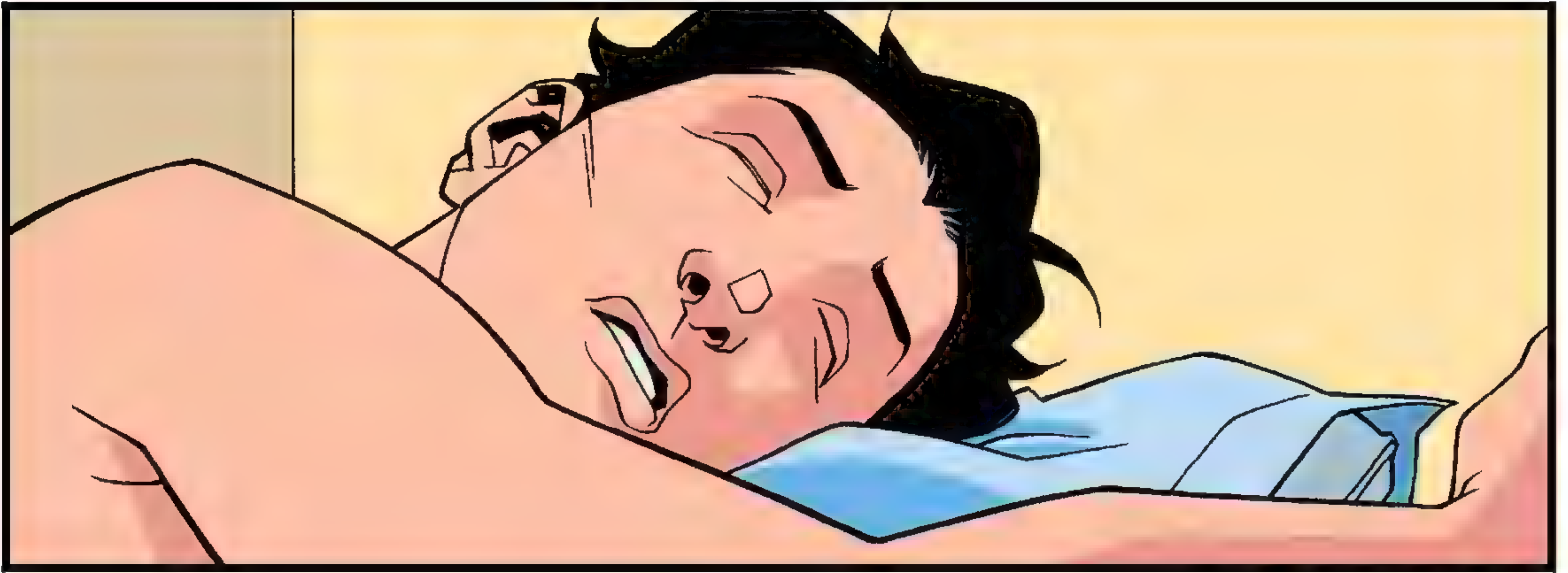


AFTER A LONG WEEK OF
LATE NIGHT SUPER-HEROICS,
SATURDAYS ARE AN
EXCELLENT TIME TO CATCH
UP ON YOUR SLEEP.



OF COURSE, SOME HAVE
MORE SLEEP TO CATCH
UP ON THAN OTHERS.





MIDNIGHT CITY.

NINE O'CLOCK... A.M.

I HAVEN'T BEEN UP
THIS EARLY IN YEARS...

OH, QUIT YOUR BELLY-
ACHING... WE'RE MAKING
GOOD TIME HERE.

AREN'T YOU AFRAID OF
GETTING CAUGHT?
ESPECIALLY THIS EARLY
IN THE DAY...

YOU'VE GOT A LOT TO LEARN
ABOUT MIDNIGHT CITY,
LITTLE BROTHER.

THERE IS NO DAY AND NIGHT...
NOT SINCE THE *MIDNIGHT
MAGICIAN* SUCCEEDED IN
HIS SUICIDE MISSION
THREE YEARS
AGO.

I
THOUGHT YOU
KNEW ABOUT
ALL THIS WHEN I
ASKED YOU TO
COME STAY
WITH ME!

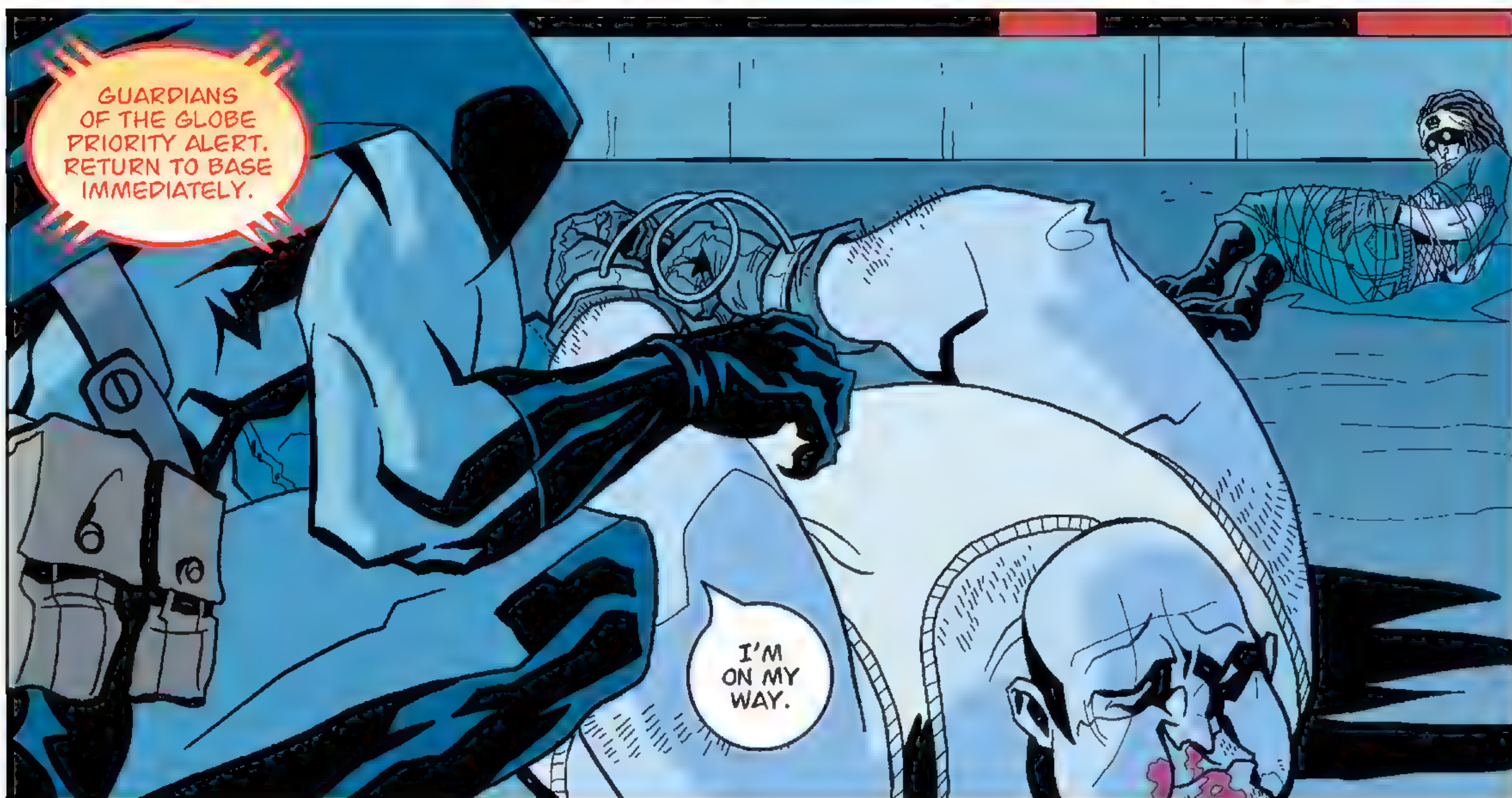
I KNEW A LITTLE BIT
ABOUT IT... BUT NOT ALL
THE DETAILS. WHAT
ABOUT COPS... WHAT
IF WE TRIP AN
ALARM?

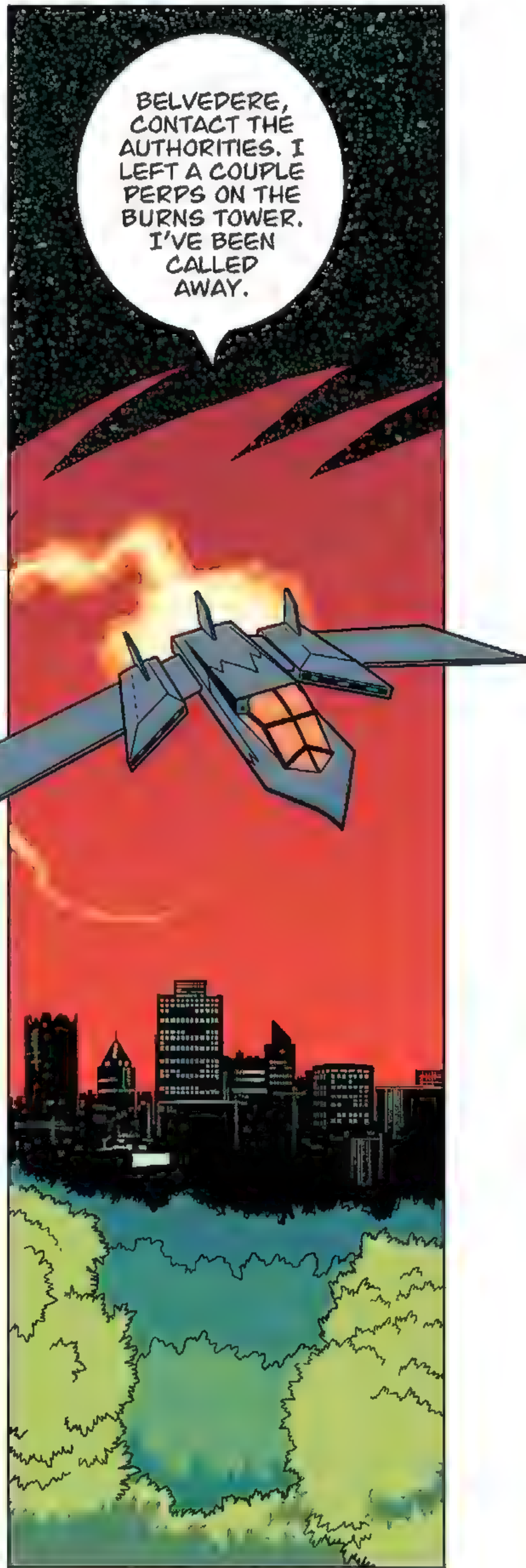
AFTER IT HAPPENED,
THE GOVERNMENT STARTED
PAYING PEOPLE TO LEAVE--
COVERING MOVING EXPENSES
AND WHATNOT. THERE AREN'T
MANY COPS LEFT EITHER.
ONLY PEOPLE HERE ARE THE
ONES THAT REFUSED TO
LEAVE AND PEOPLE LIKE
US WHO STAYED BEHIND
TO LOOT THE PLACE.
THERE'S ALMOST
NOBODY
LEFT...

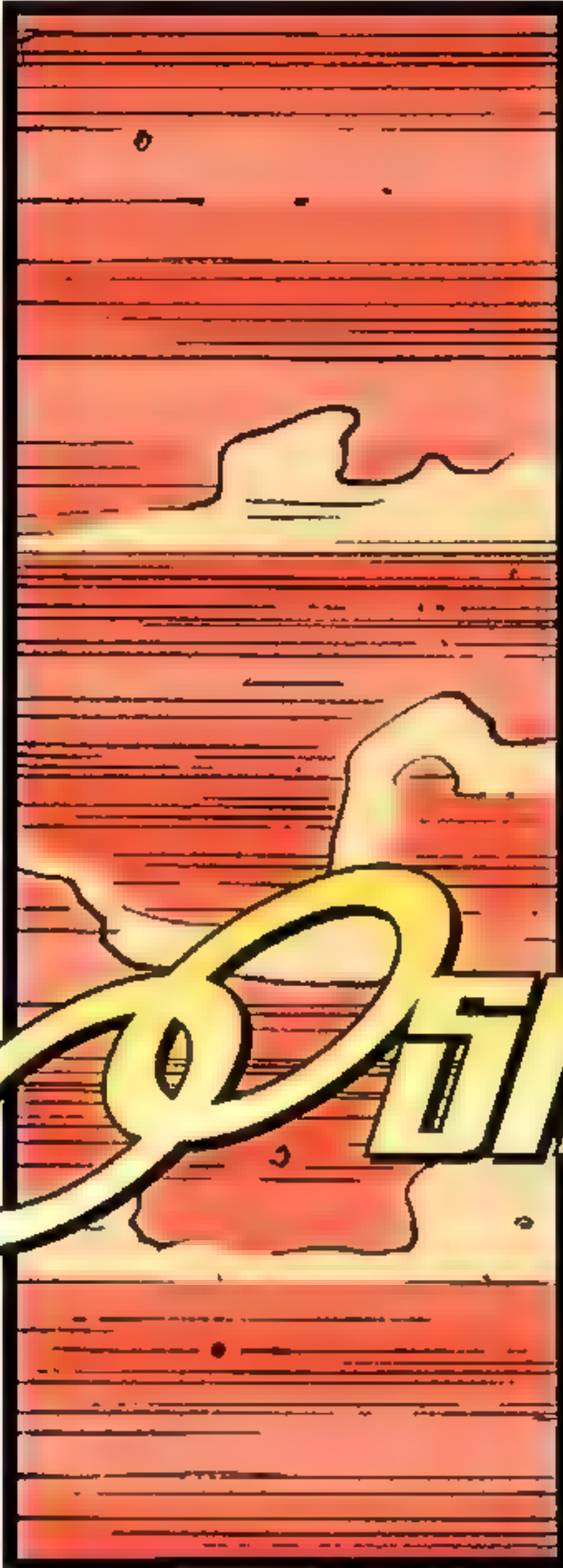
ONLY
REAL THREAT
TO US IS DARKWING
AND HE CAN'T BE
EVERYWHERE.

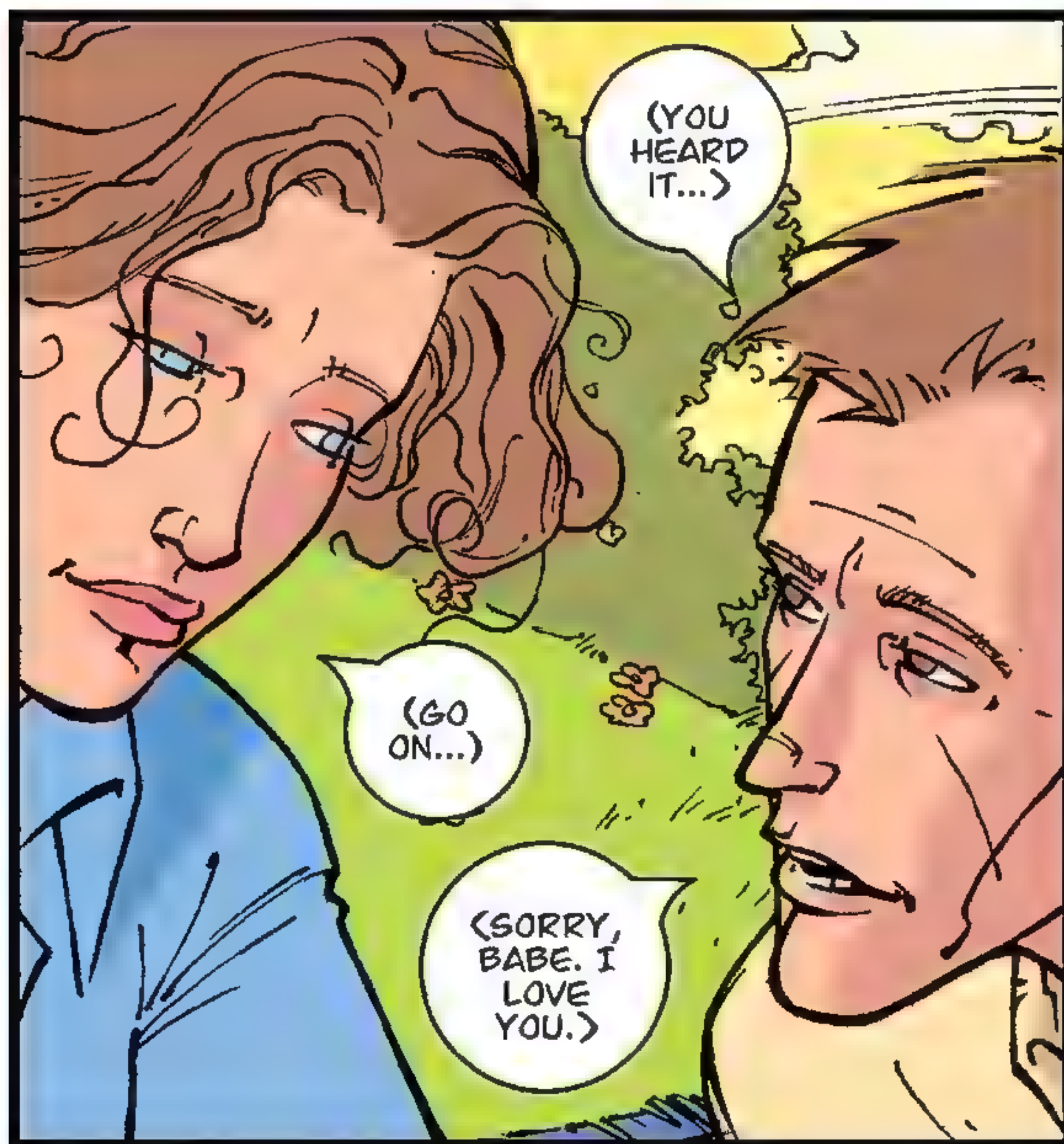
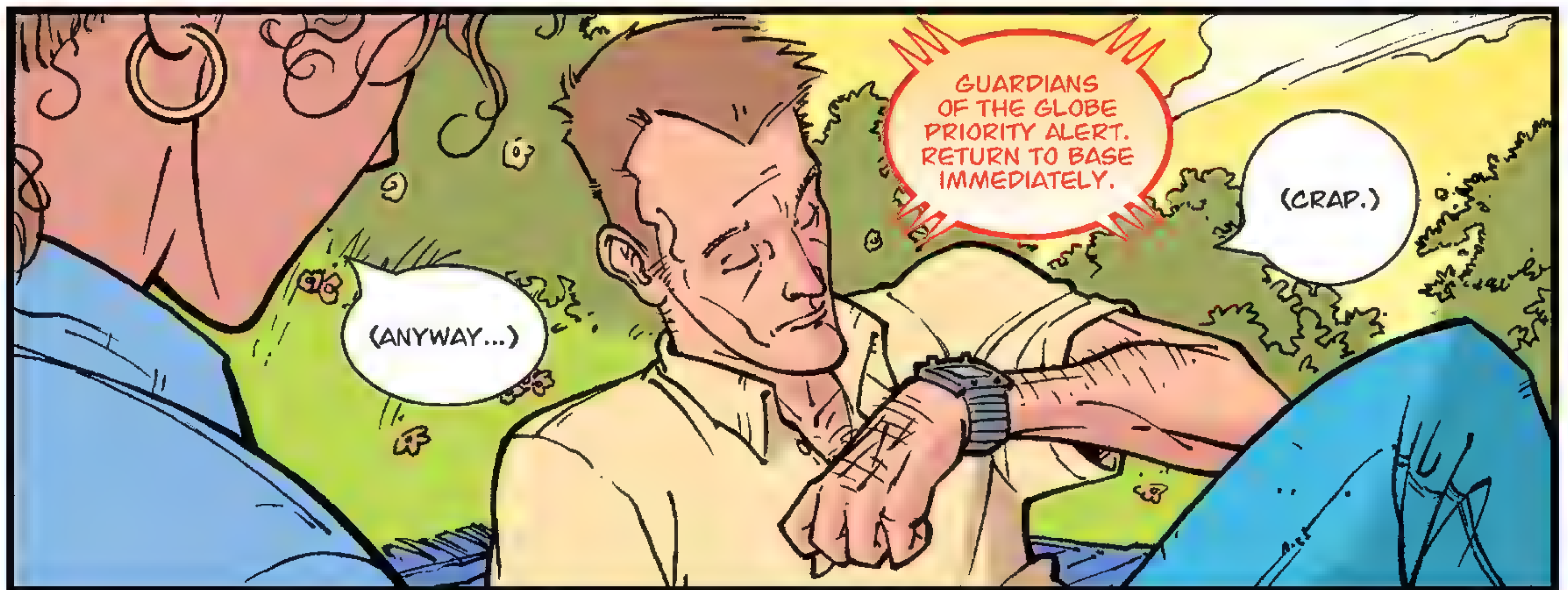
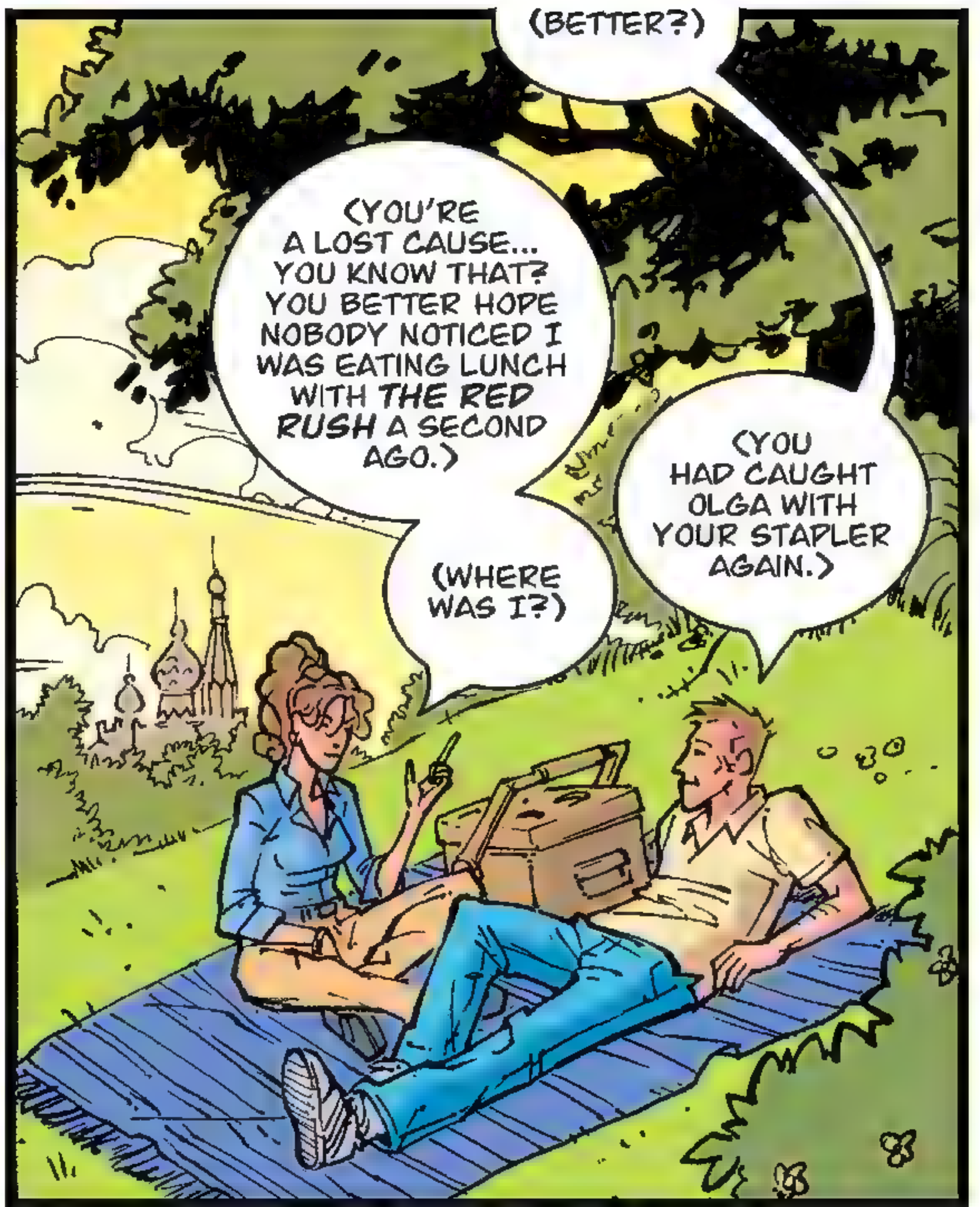
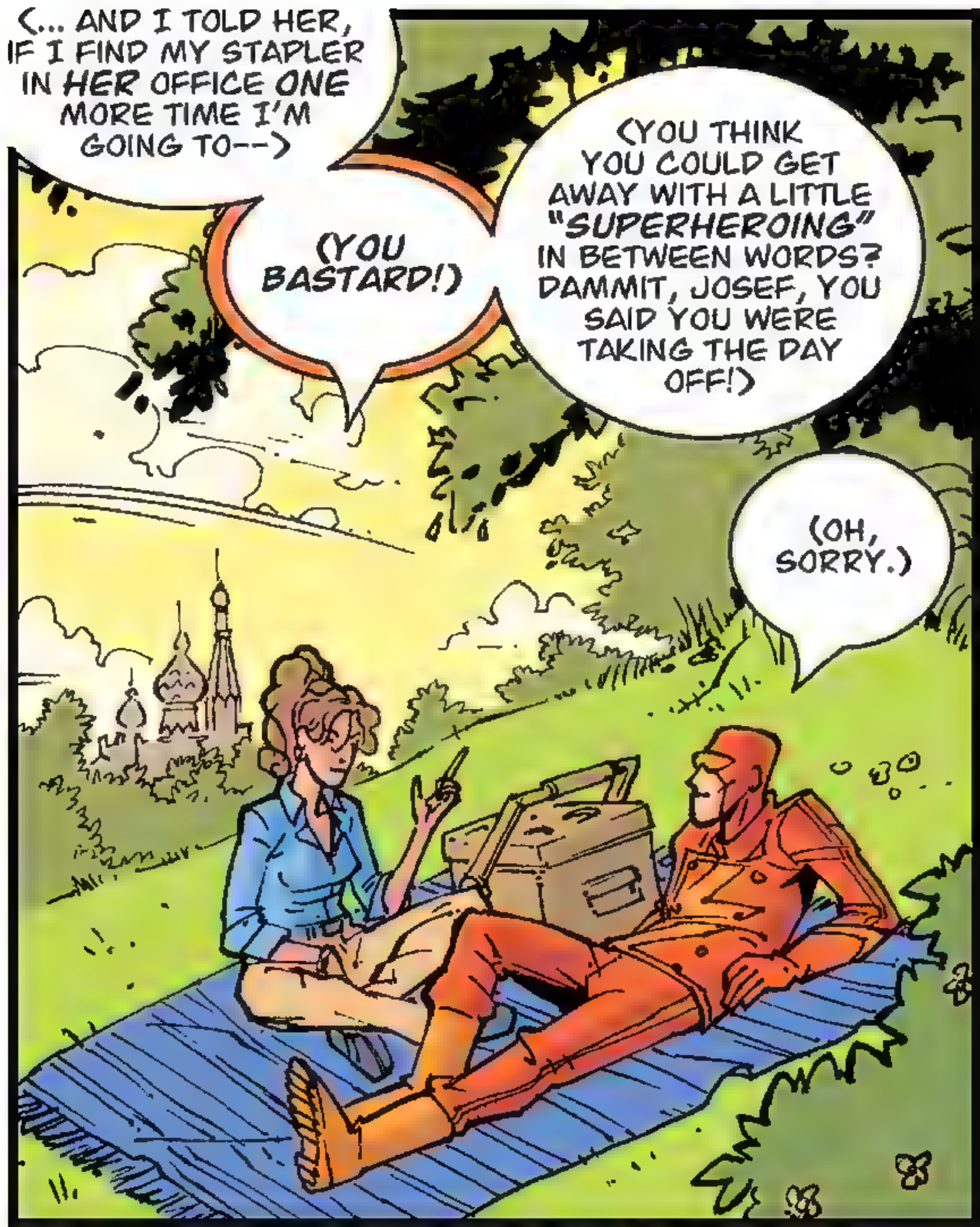


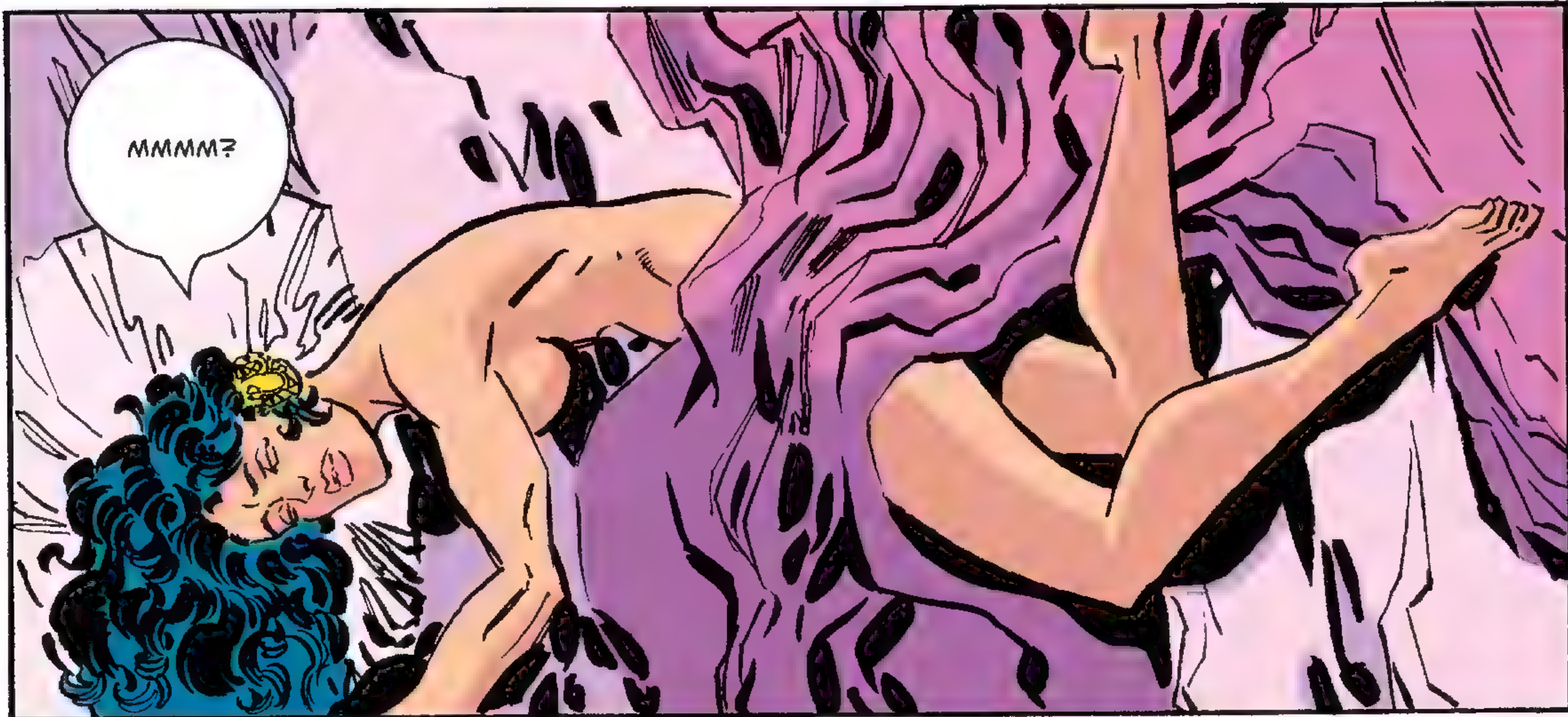
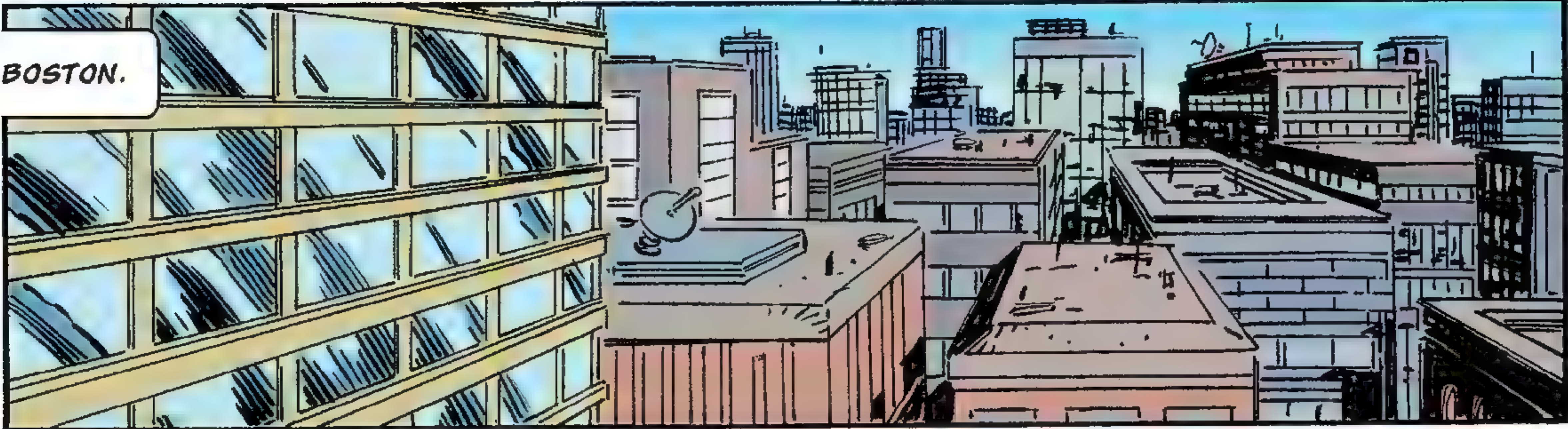
I
WOULDN'T
BE SO
SURE...

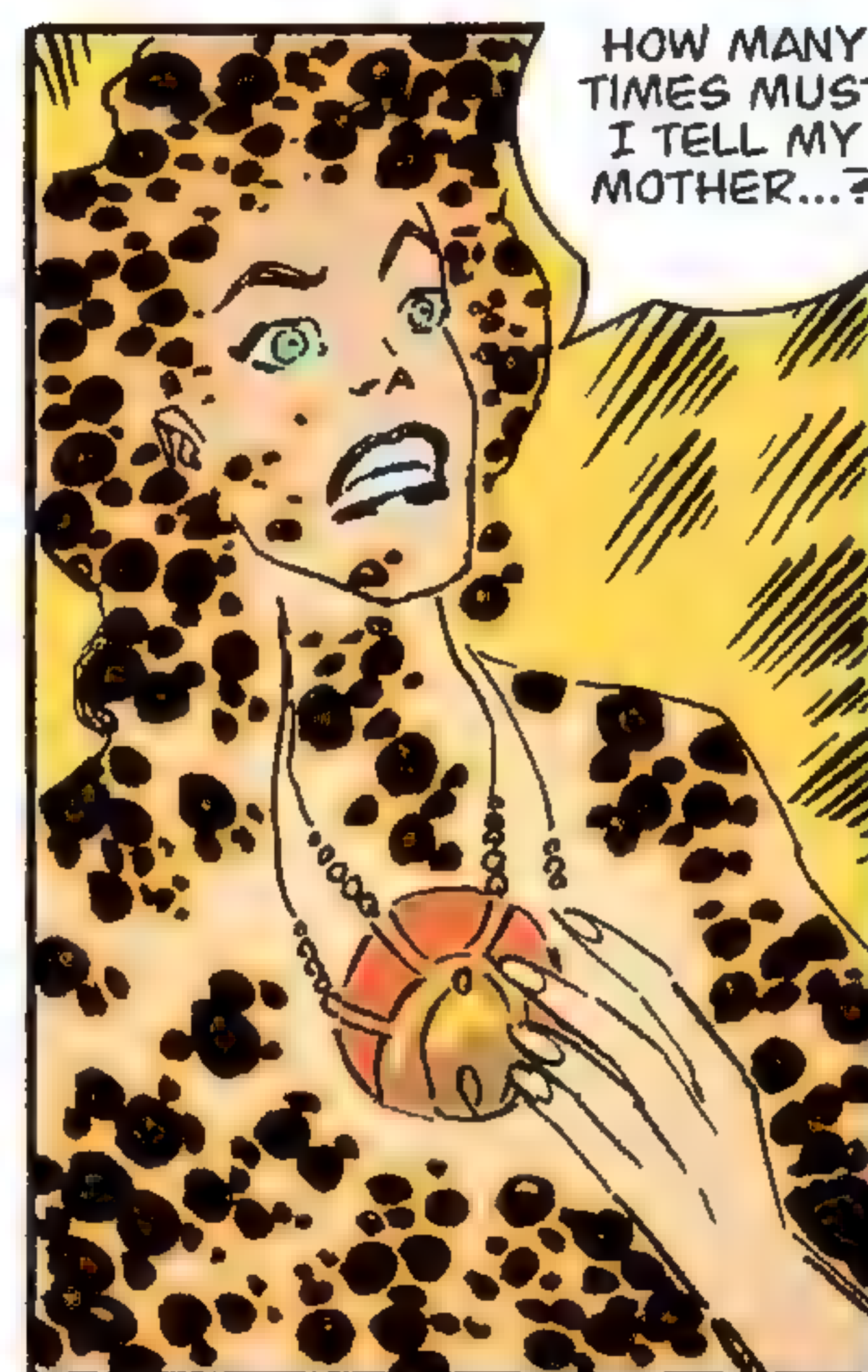
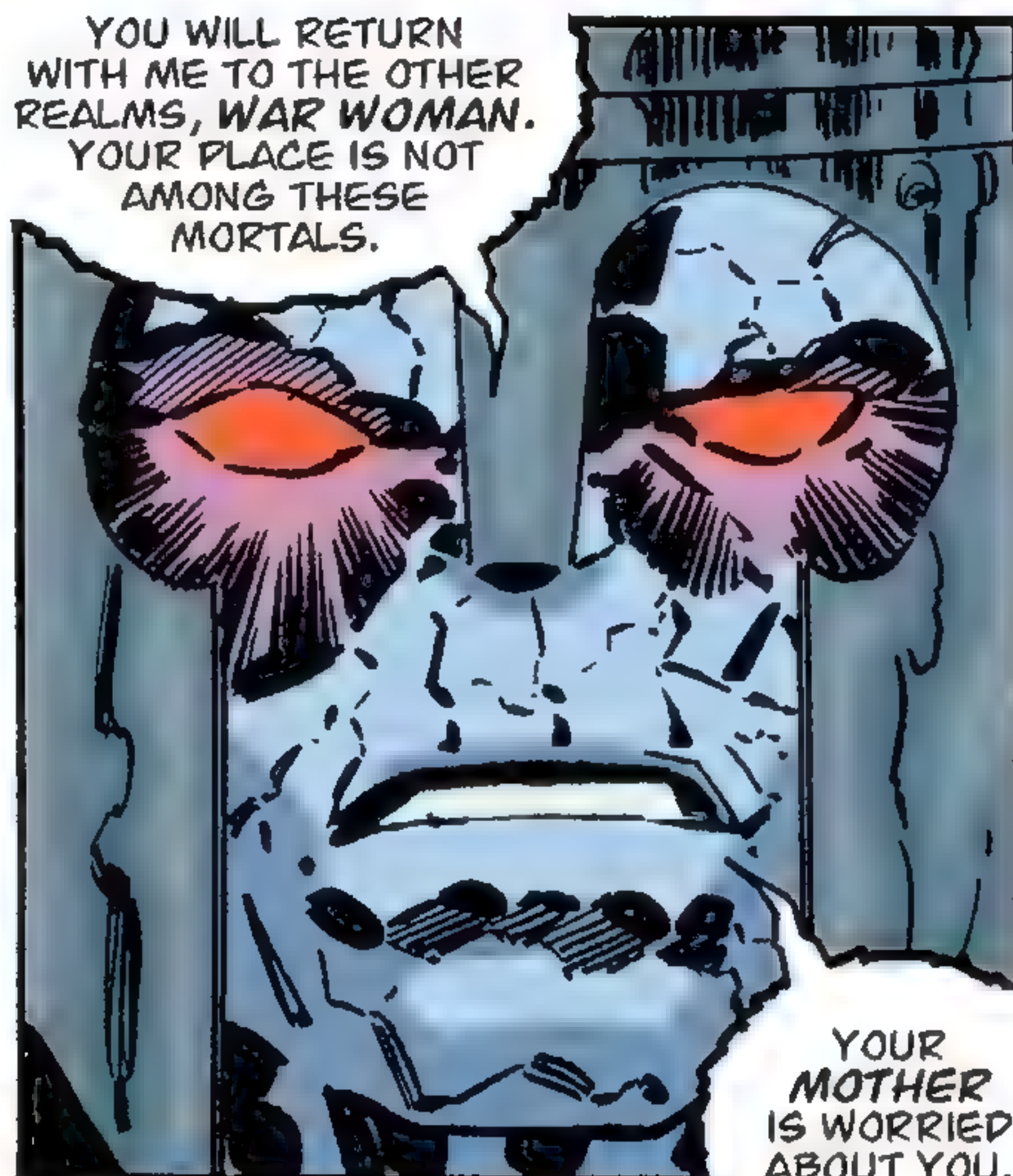


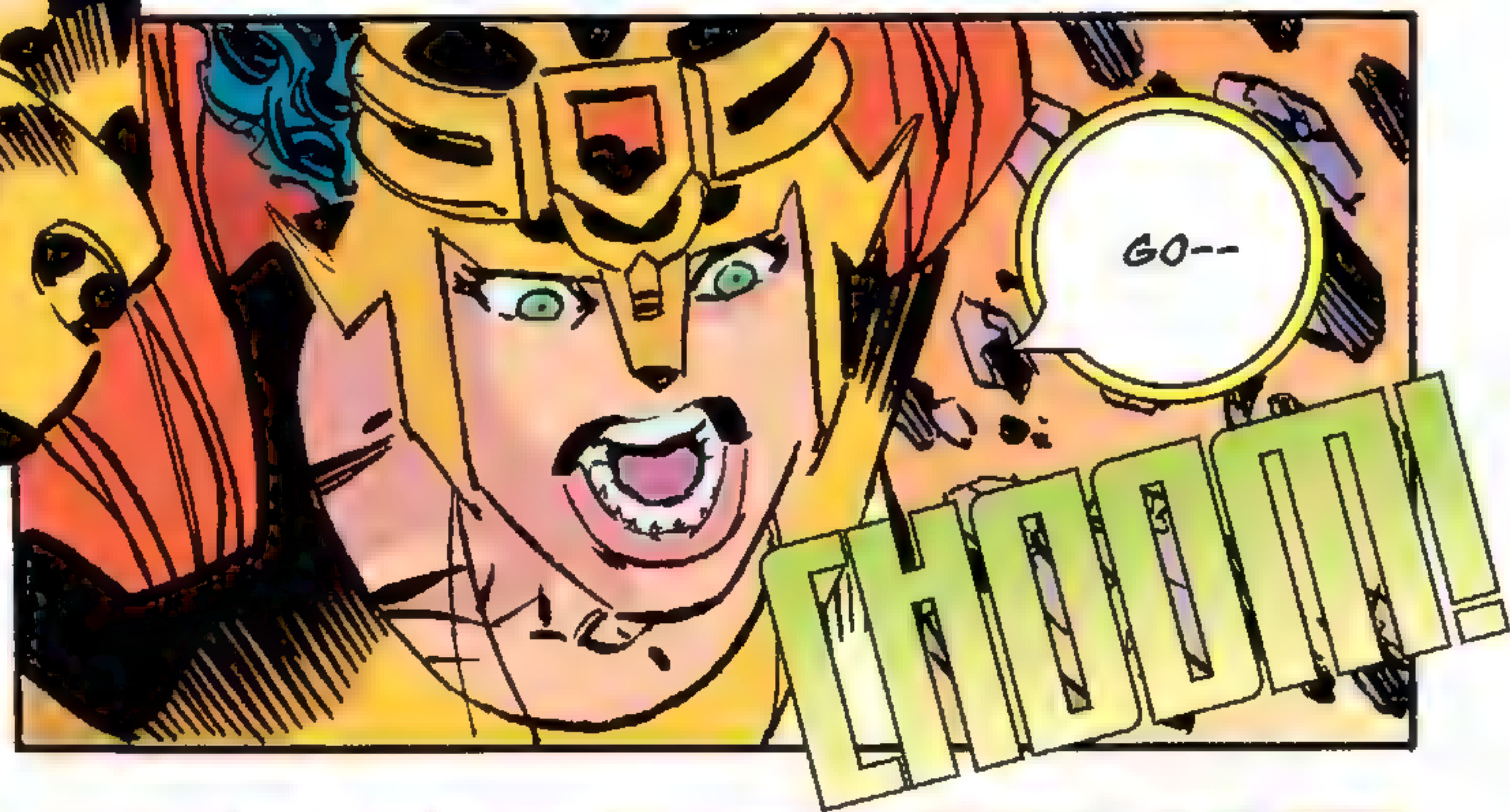
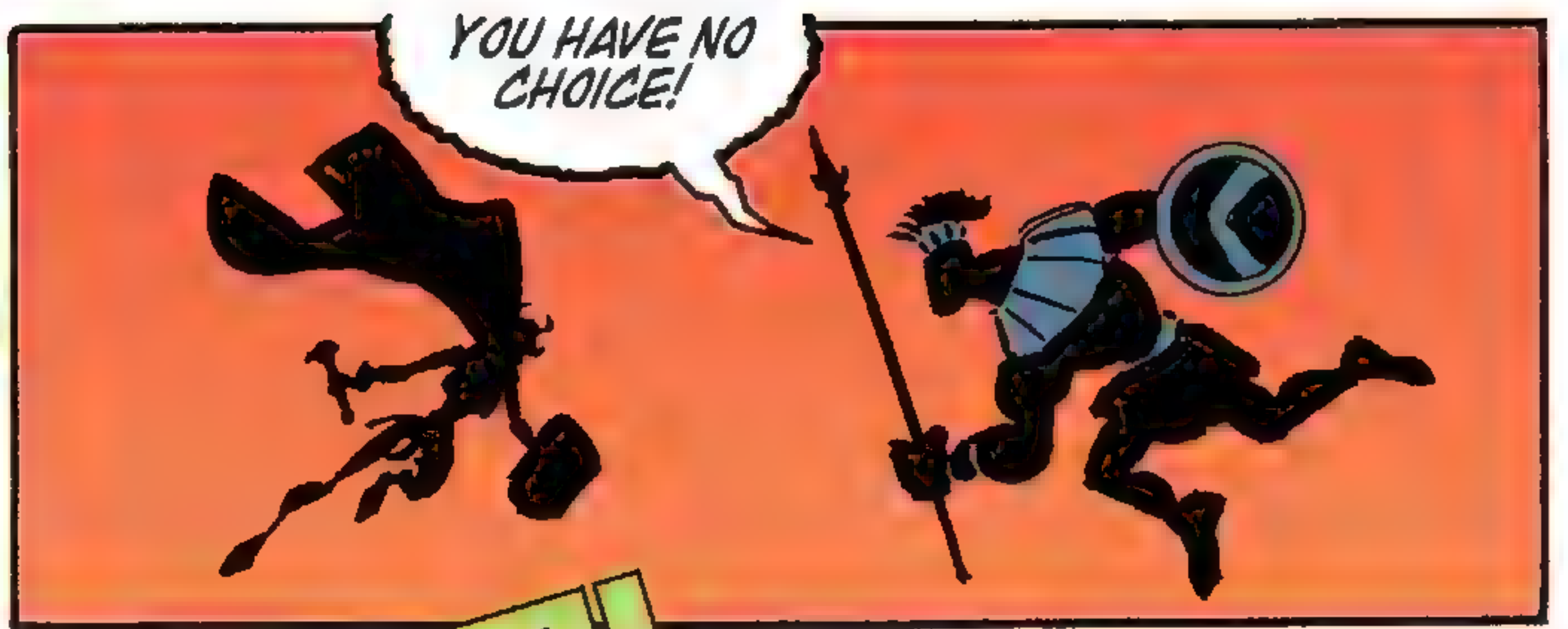
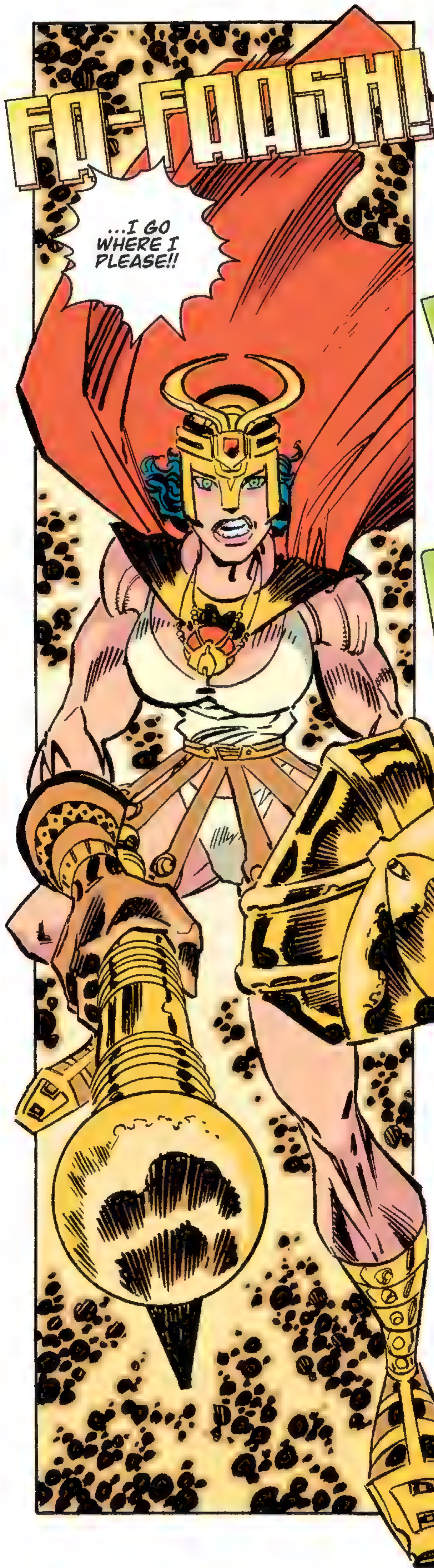






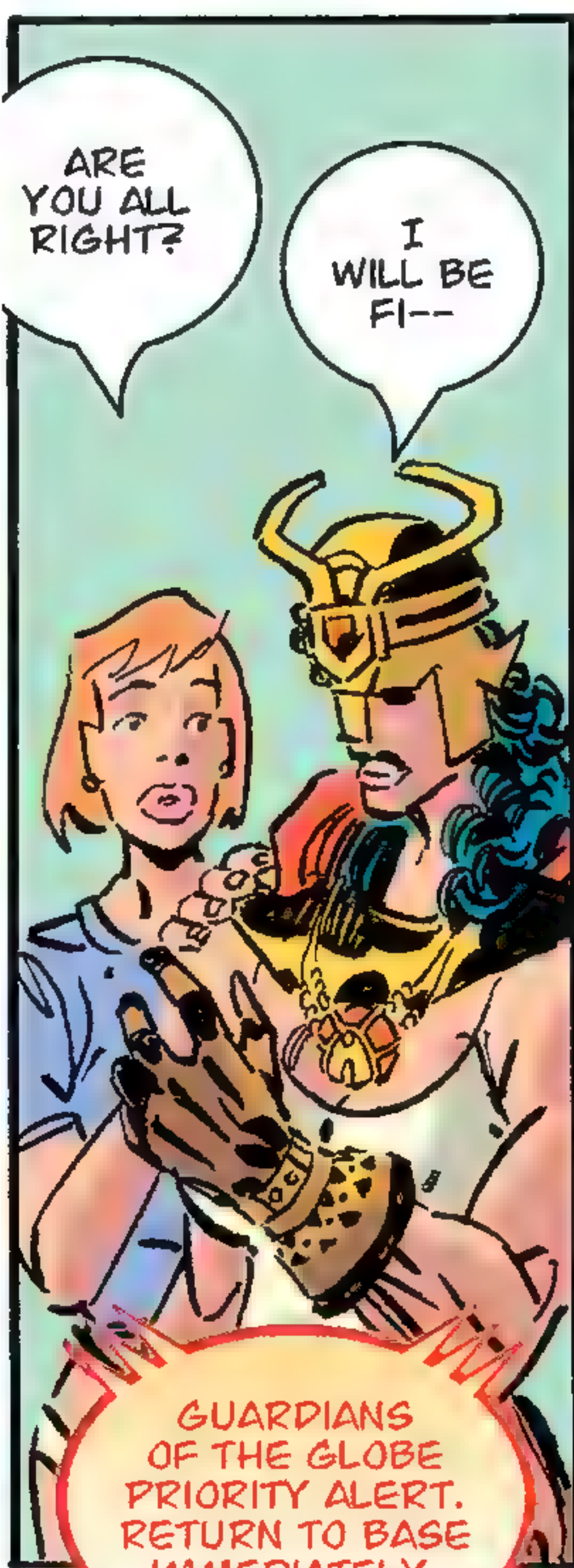








I WILL HAVE MY COMPANY HIRE SOMEONE TO MOVE YOU OUT OF HERE TODAY AND THEN REIMBURSE YOUR LANDLORD FOR THE DAMAGE. PICK A LARGER PLACE... I PLAN TO STAY OVER MORE OFTEN. LET ME KNOW IF YOU HAVE ANY TROUBLE REPLACING ANYTHING.



ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

I WILL BE FI--

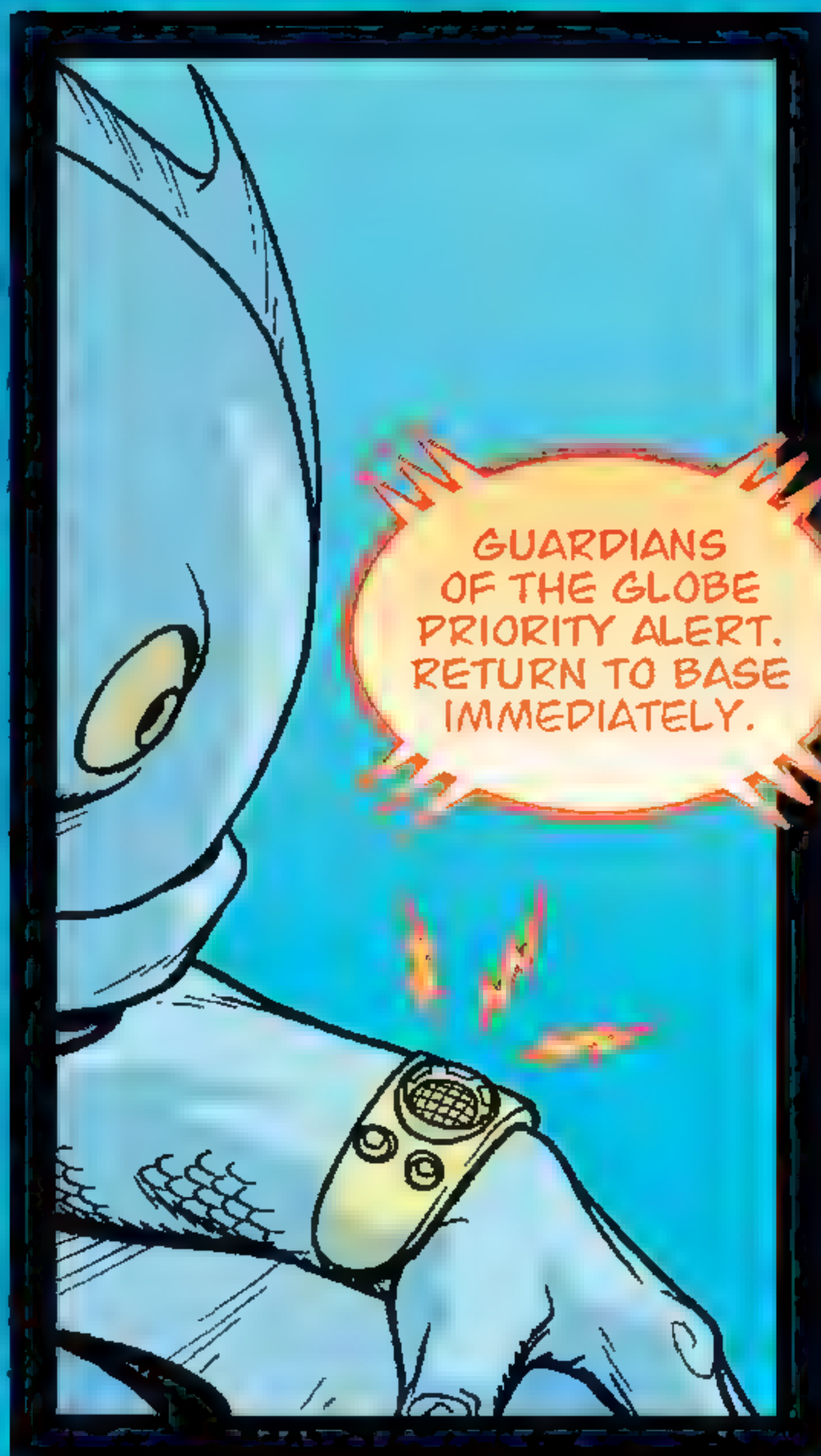
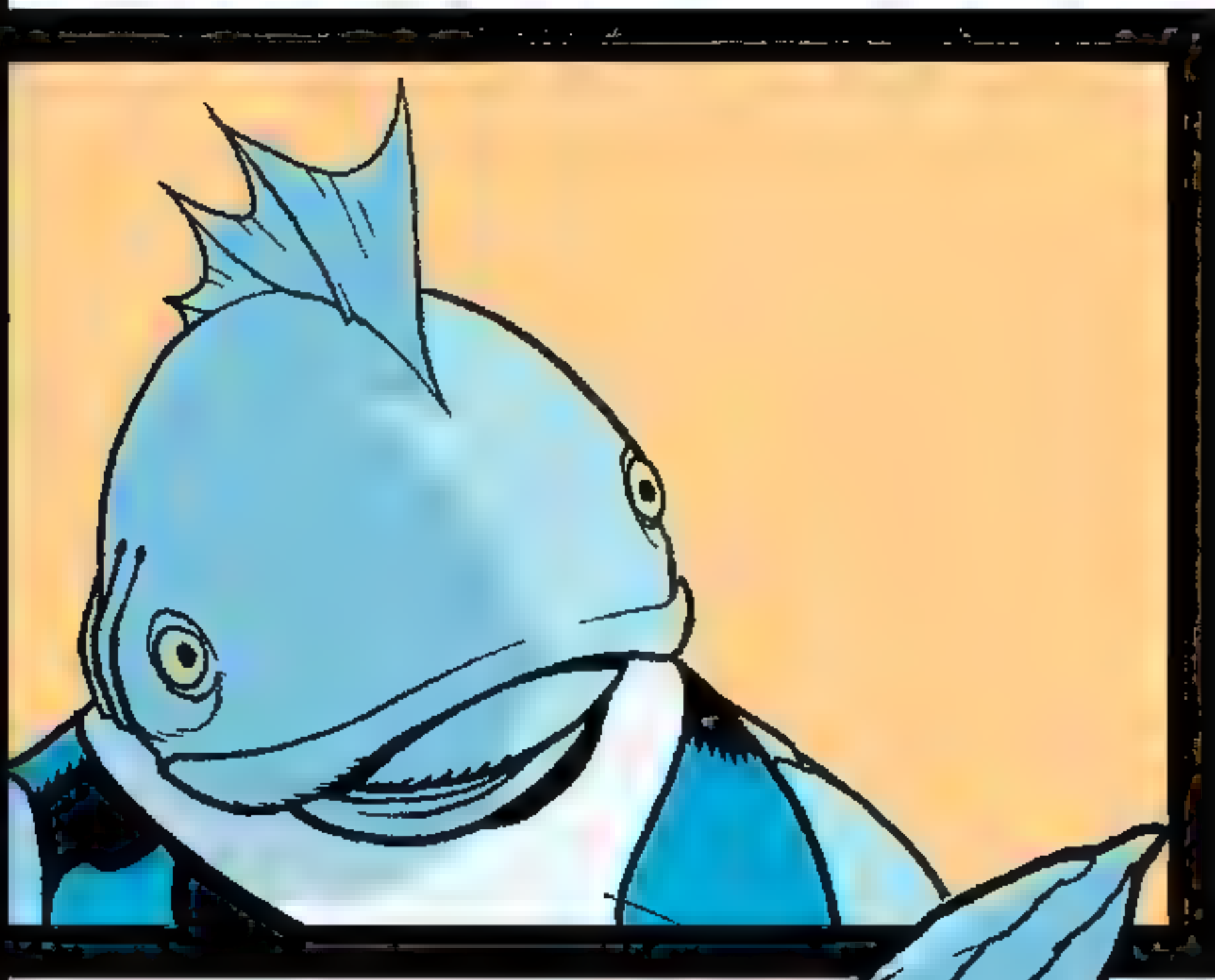
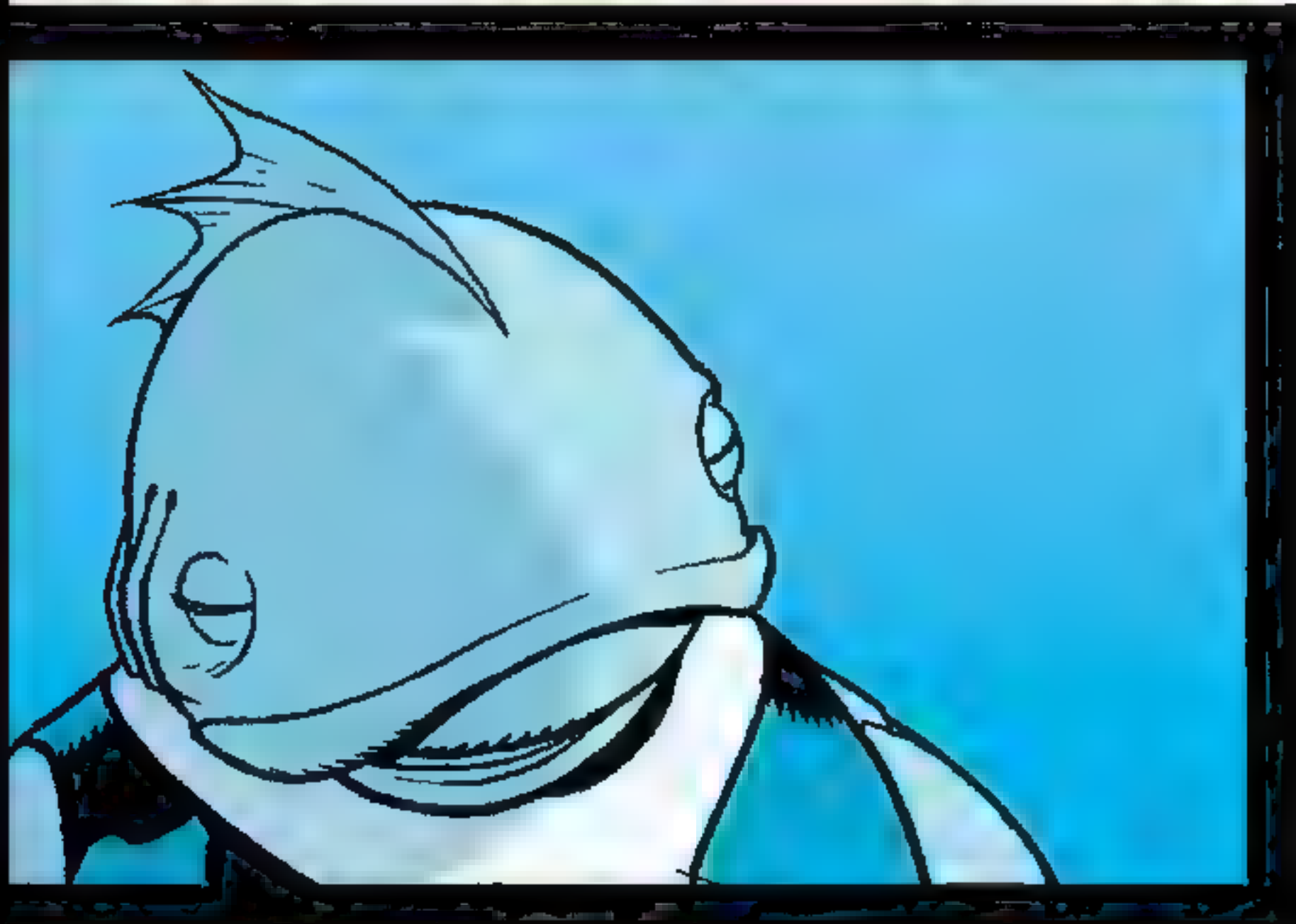
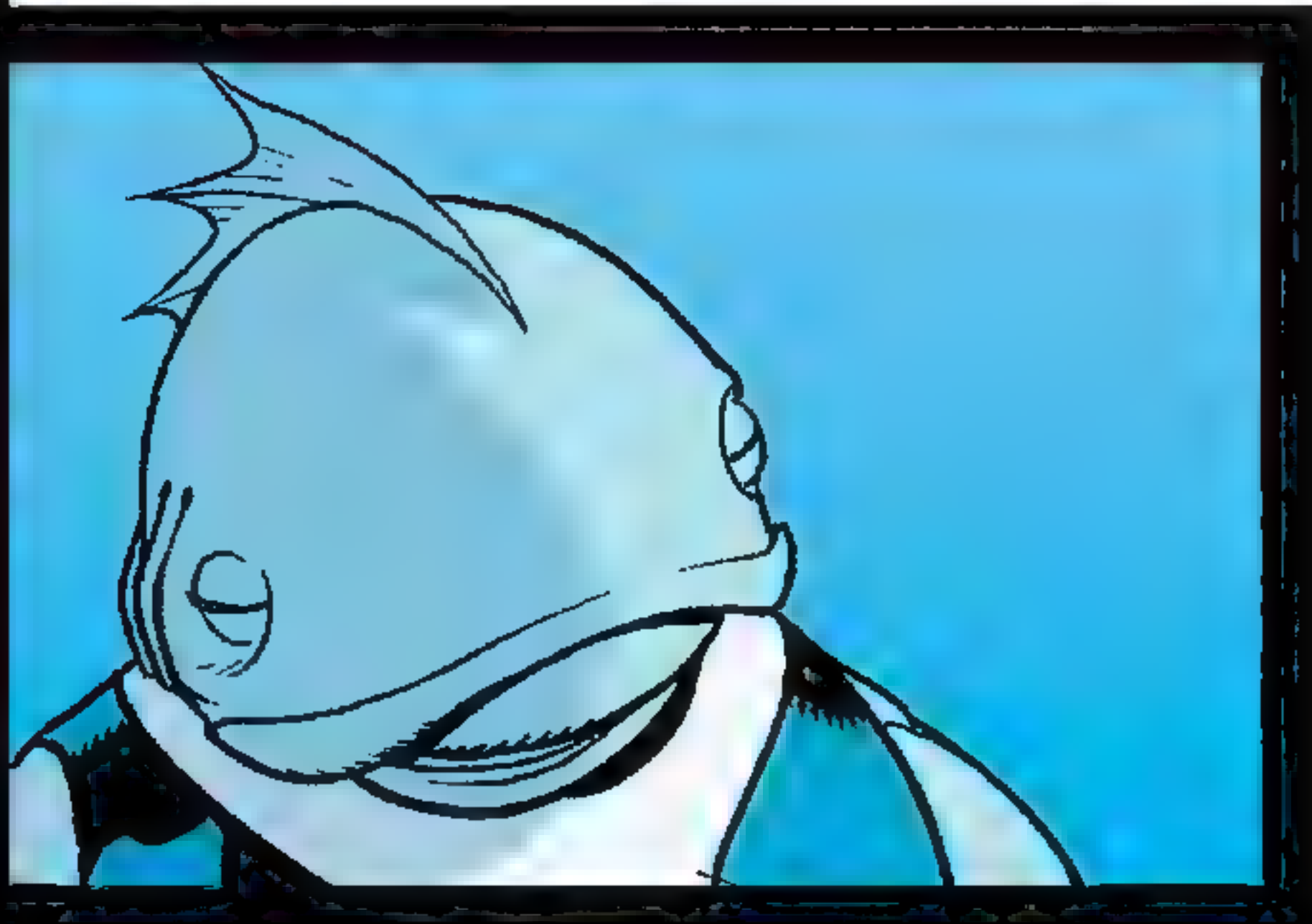
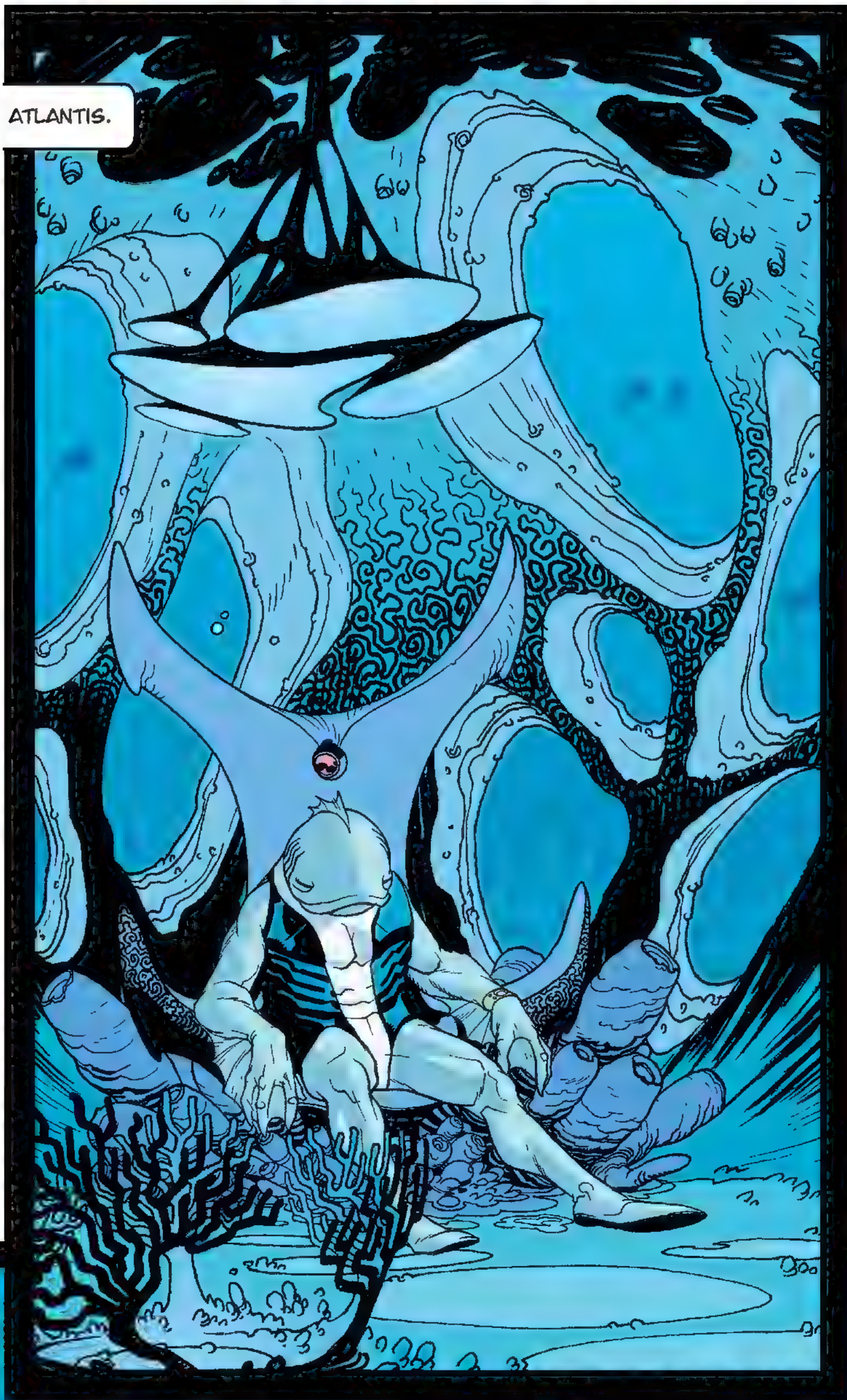
GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE PRIORITY ALERT. RETURN TO BASE IMMEDIATELY.



I MUST GO.

BE CAREFUL.

ATLANTIS.



FINALLY...
SOME
ACTION!

SPACE.

DIE--FLESH--DIE!

ITS...
CRUSHING...
ME...

QUICKLY...
BEFORE IT
KILLS US... GO
INTANGIBLE...
AND SCRAMBLE
ITS CIRCUITS!

OH,
YEAH... I
FORGOT I
COULD DO
THAT!

HERE
GOES
NOTHING!

DOES--NOT--
COMPUTE!



YOU
OKAY?

I AM
FINE... WERE
IT NOT FOR
YOUR DELAY I
WOULD BE
BETTER.

SORRY ABOUT THAT,
MARTIAN MAN... BUT
I'VE ONLY BEEN THE
GREEN GHOST FOR
A MONTH. I'M STILL
GETTING USED TO
THE POWERS.

YOU'RE
LEARNING
QUICKLY... YOU
JUST HAVE A
LONG WAY
TO GO.

YOU
WILL LEARN...
I AM CONFIDENT
YOU WERE CHOSEN
AS MY FRIEND'S
SUCCESSOR FOR
A REASON.

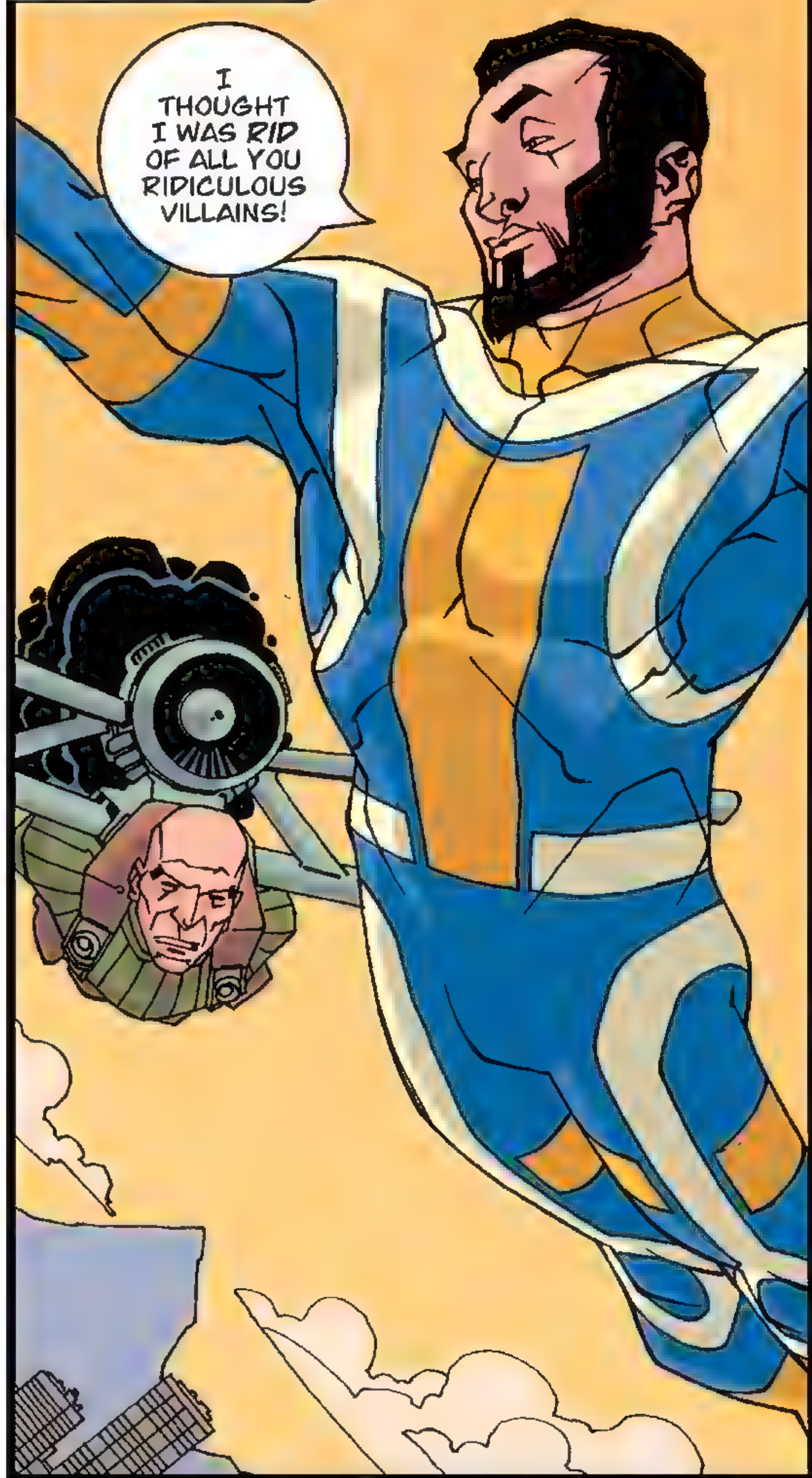
I
HOPE
YOU'RE
RIGHT.

BLAAAG!

THAT'S
SOMETHING
I'M NEVER
GOING TO
GET USED
TO.



HIGH ABOVE DENVER.



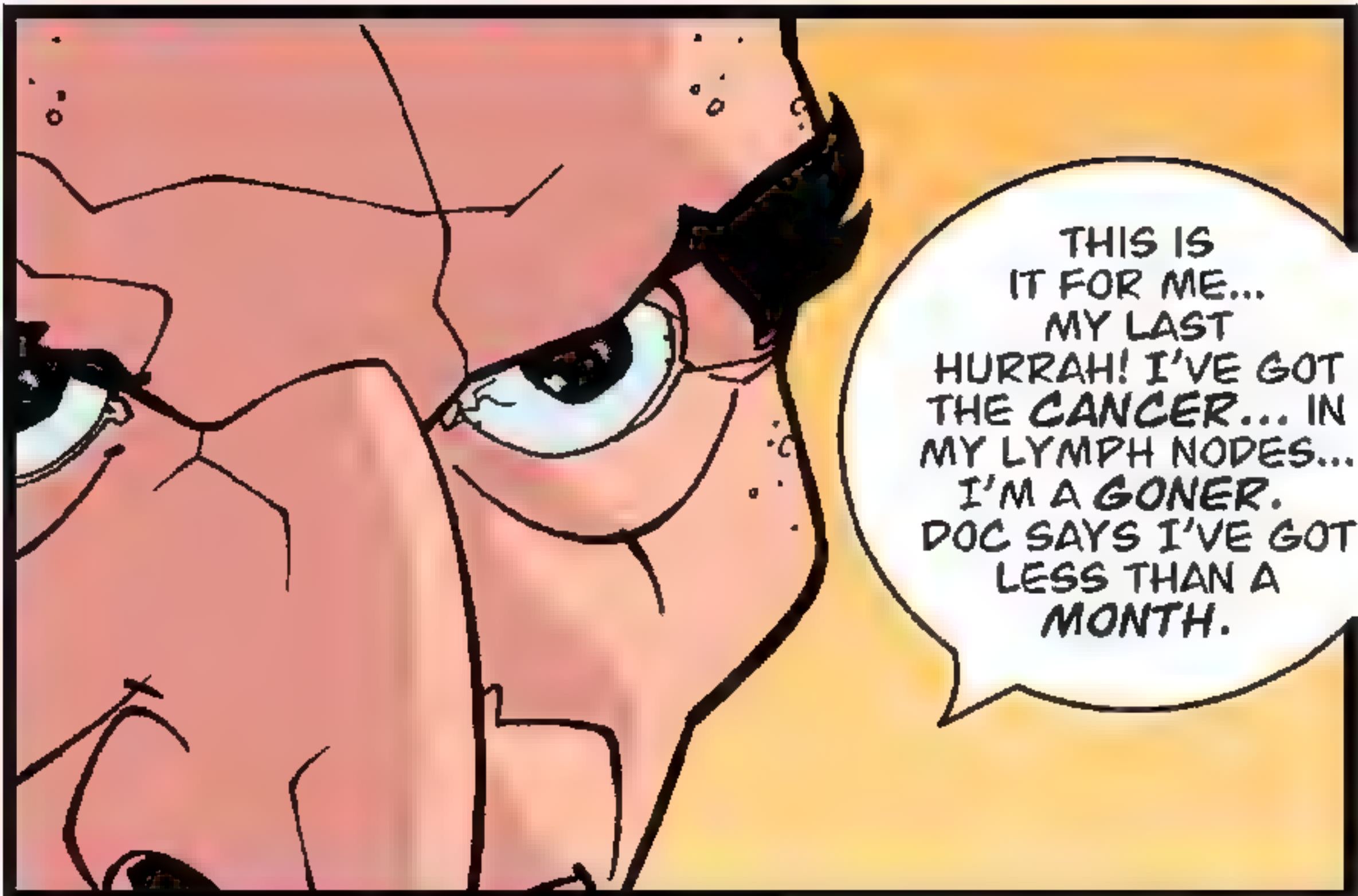
I
THOUGHT
I WAS RID
OF ALL YOU
RIDICULOUS
VILLAINS!



YOU
MAY THINK
OF BI-PLANE
AS A SILLY VILLAIN
NOW, IMMORTAL...
BUT SOON YOU'LL
SEE THE DAMAGE
I CAN DO.



PLEASE,
CHILD... THE
SUSPENSE
IS KILLING
ME.



THIS IS
IT FOR ME...
MY LAST
HURRAH! I'VE GOT
THE **CANCER**... IN
MY LYMPH NODES...
I'M A **GONER**.
DOC SAYS I'VE GOT
LESS THAN A
MONTH.



I'M
GOING OUT
WITH A
BANG!

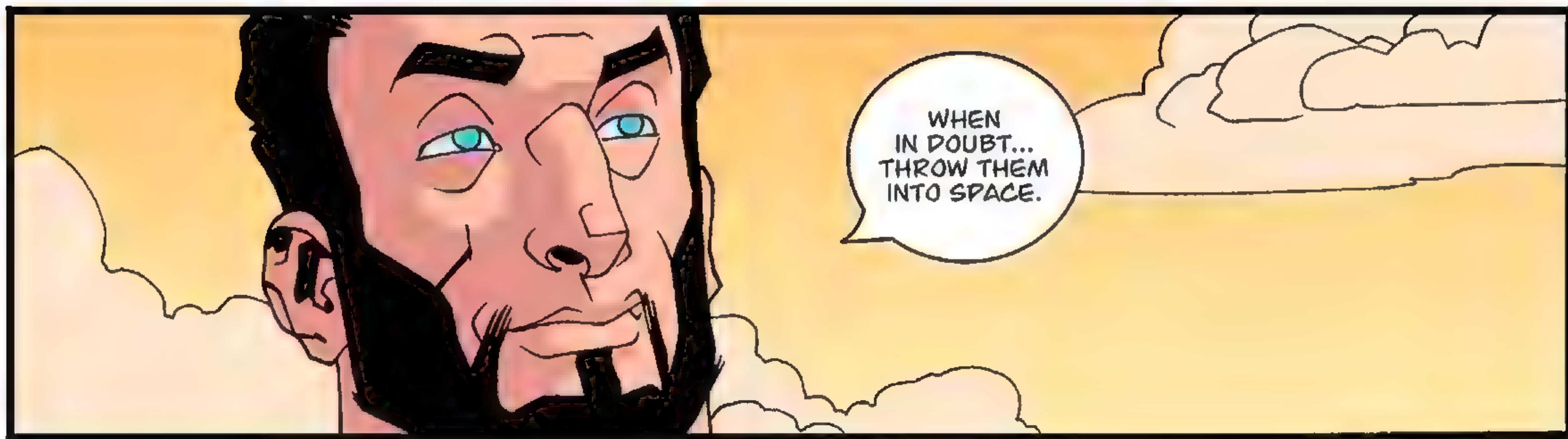
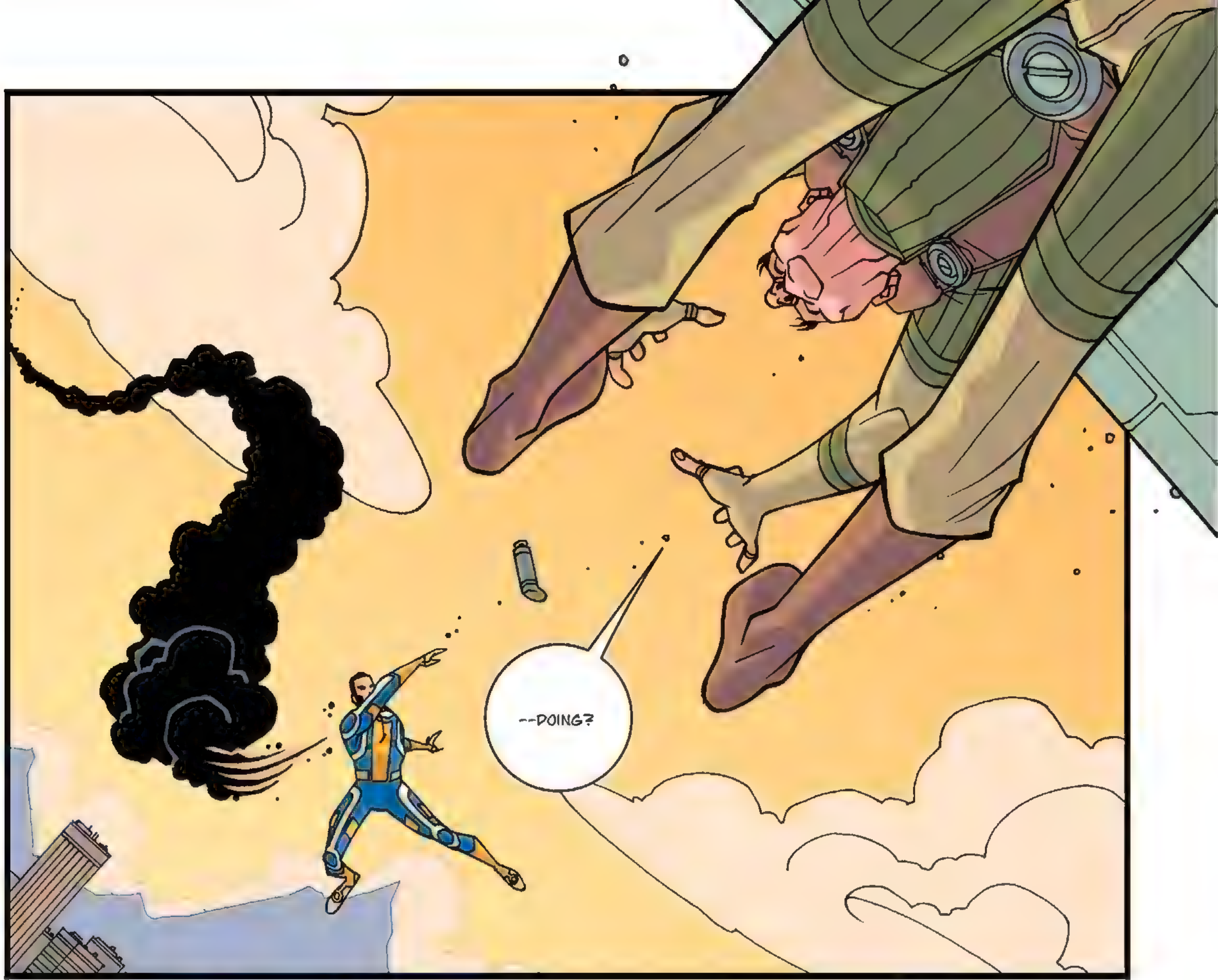
I'M LACED WITH
ENOUGH CARCINOGENS,
AND LOADED DOWN WITH
ENOUGH HAZARDOUS
MATERIALS TO MAKE
DENVER GLOW IN
THE DARK!

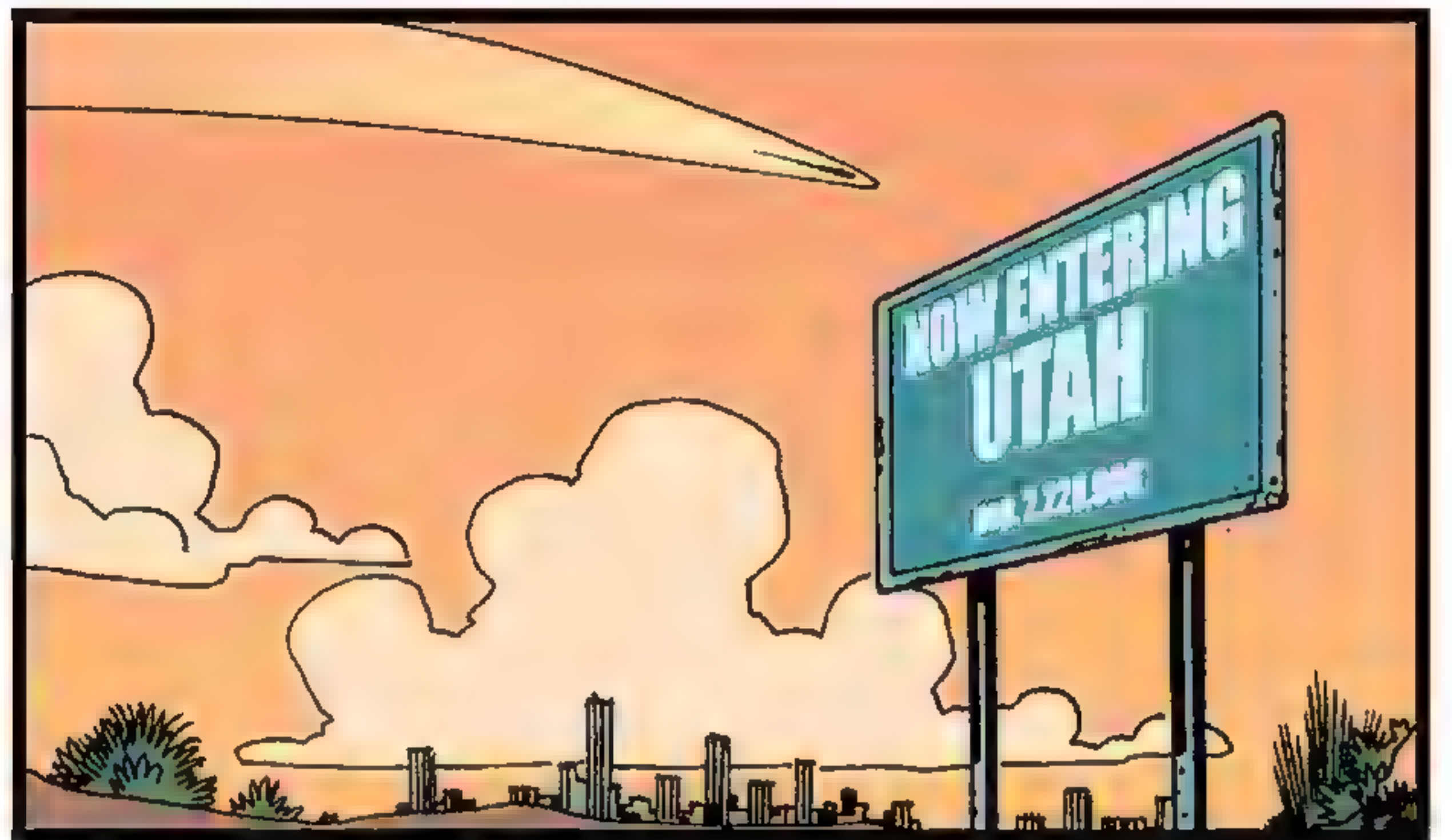
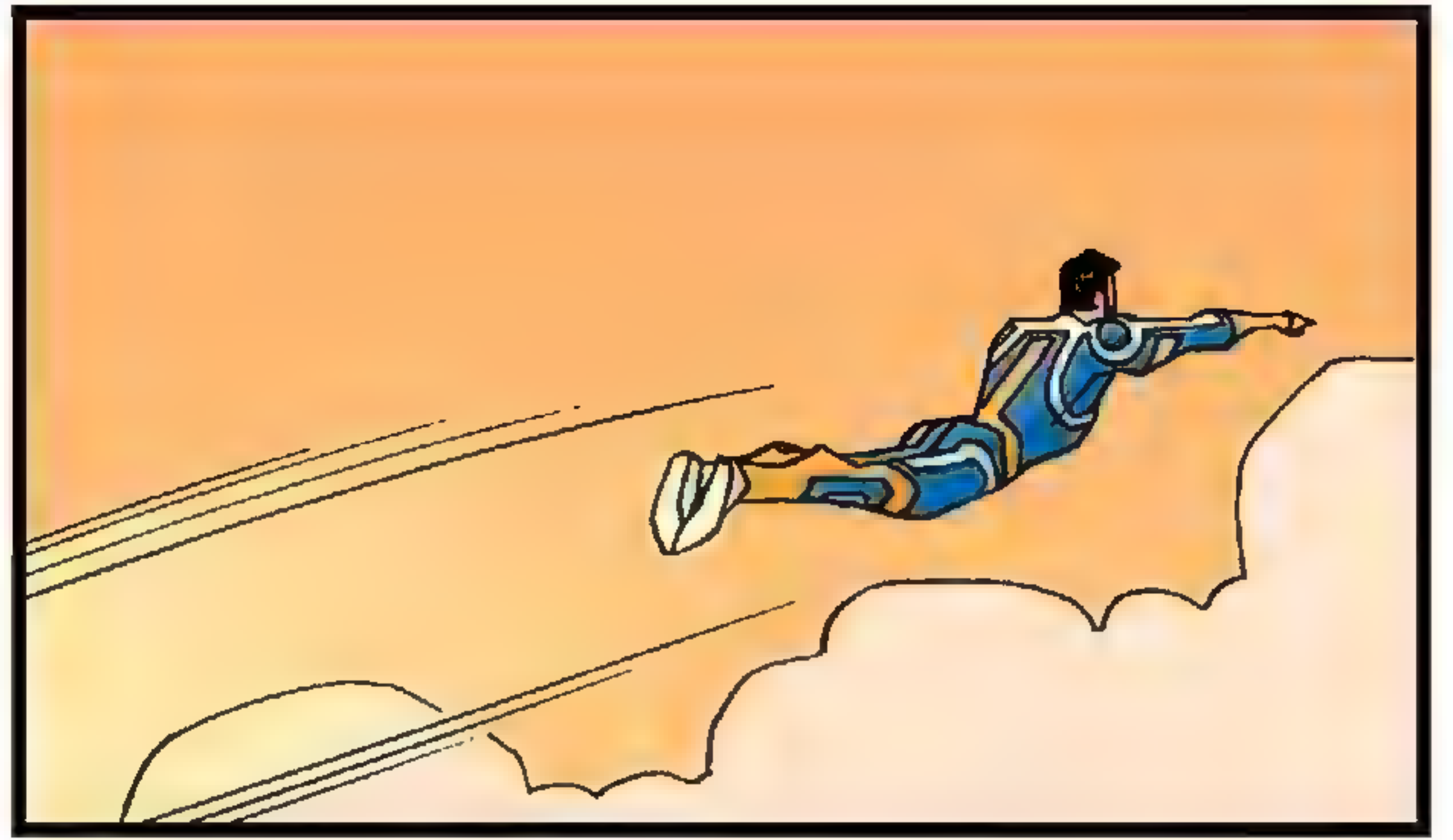
MY POWER
SOURCE IS
URANIUM! IT'S
ALL WE HAD TO
USE IN THE OLD
DAYS!

YES
SIREE! THEY
WON'T KNOW
WHAT HIT EM!



WAIT!
WHAT'RE
YOU--



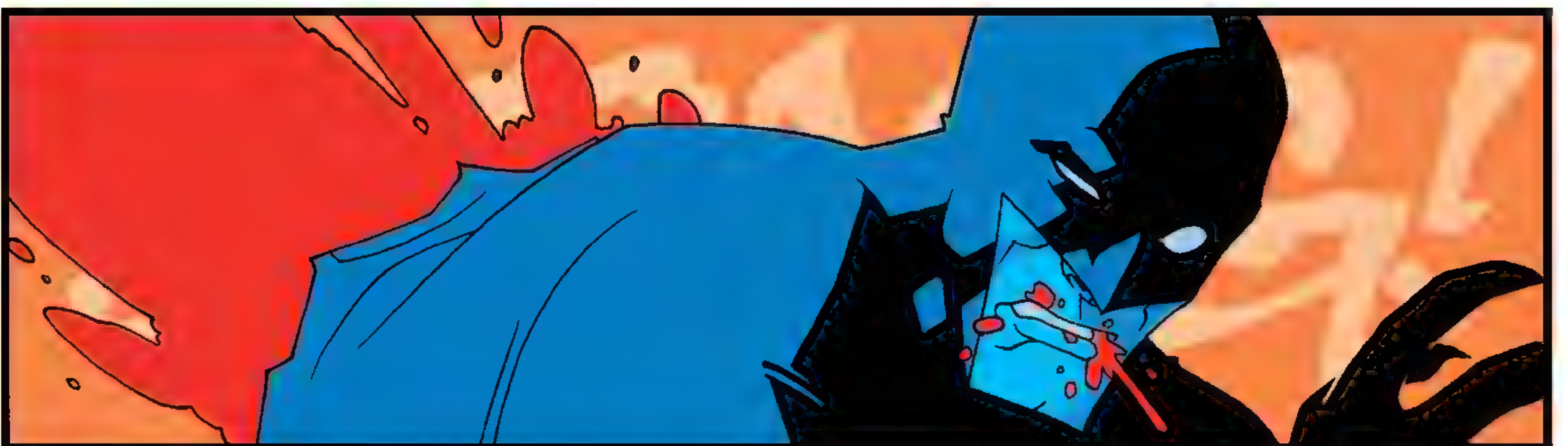
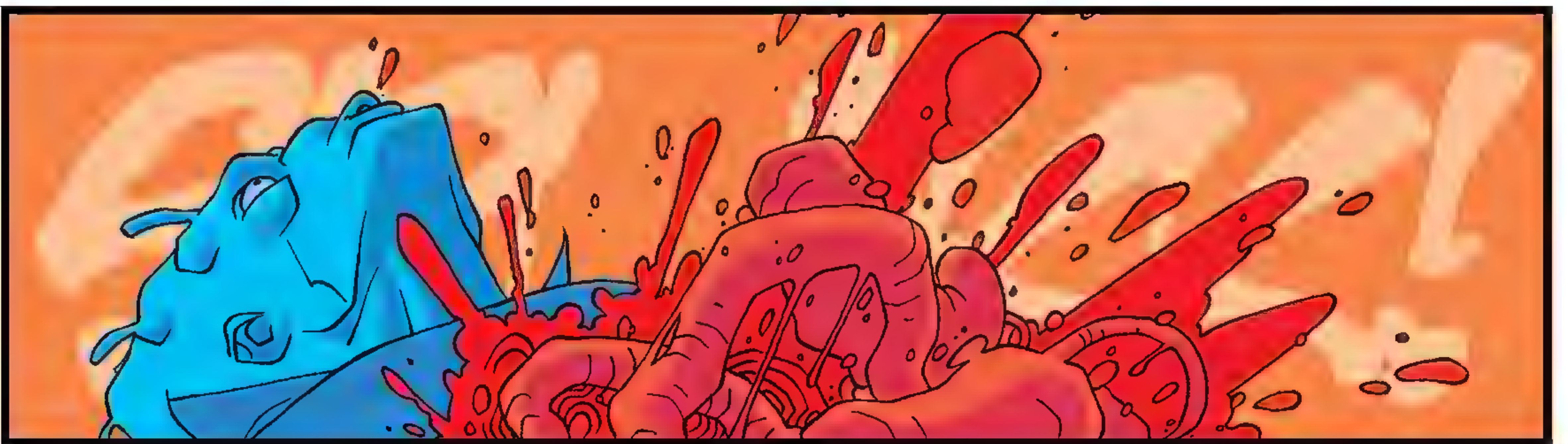
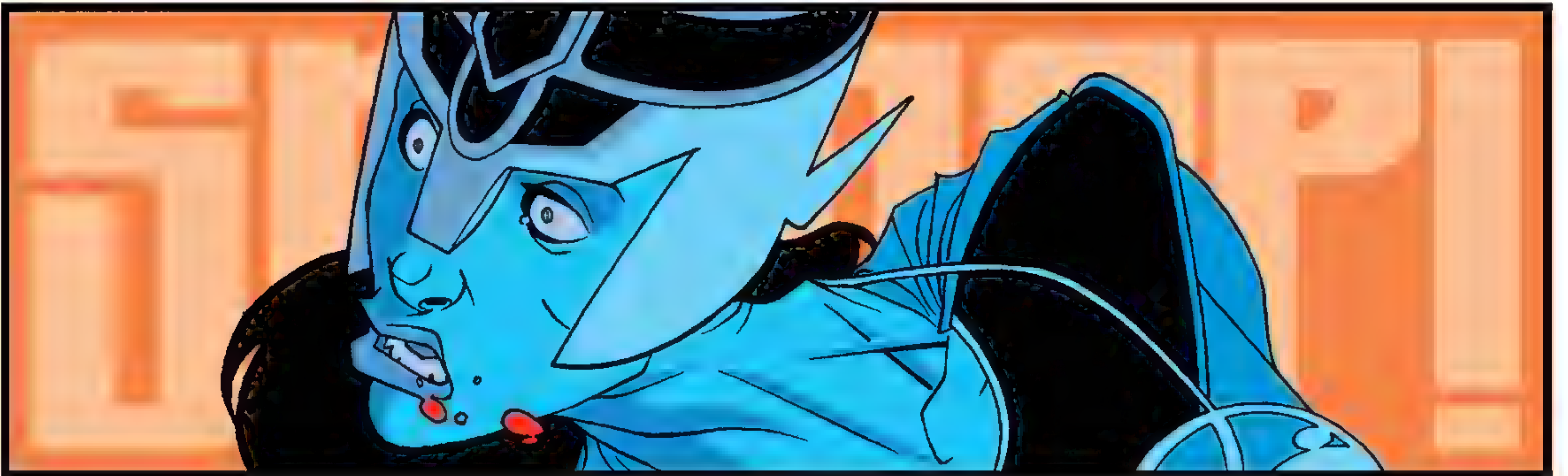
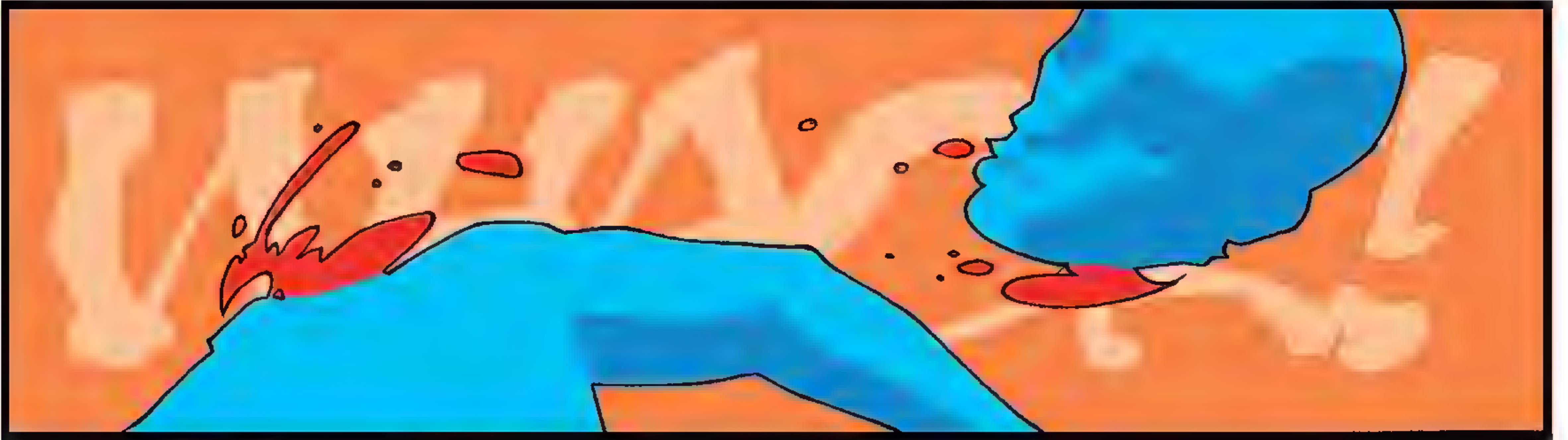


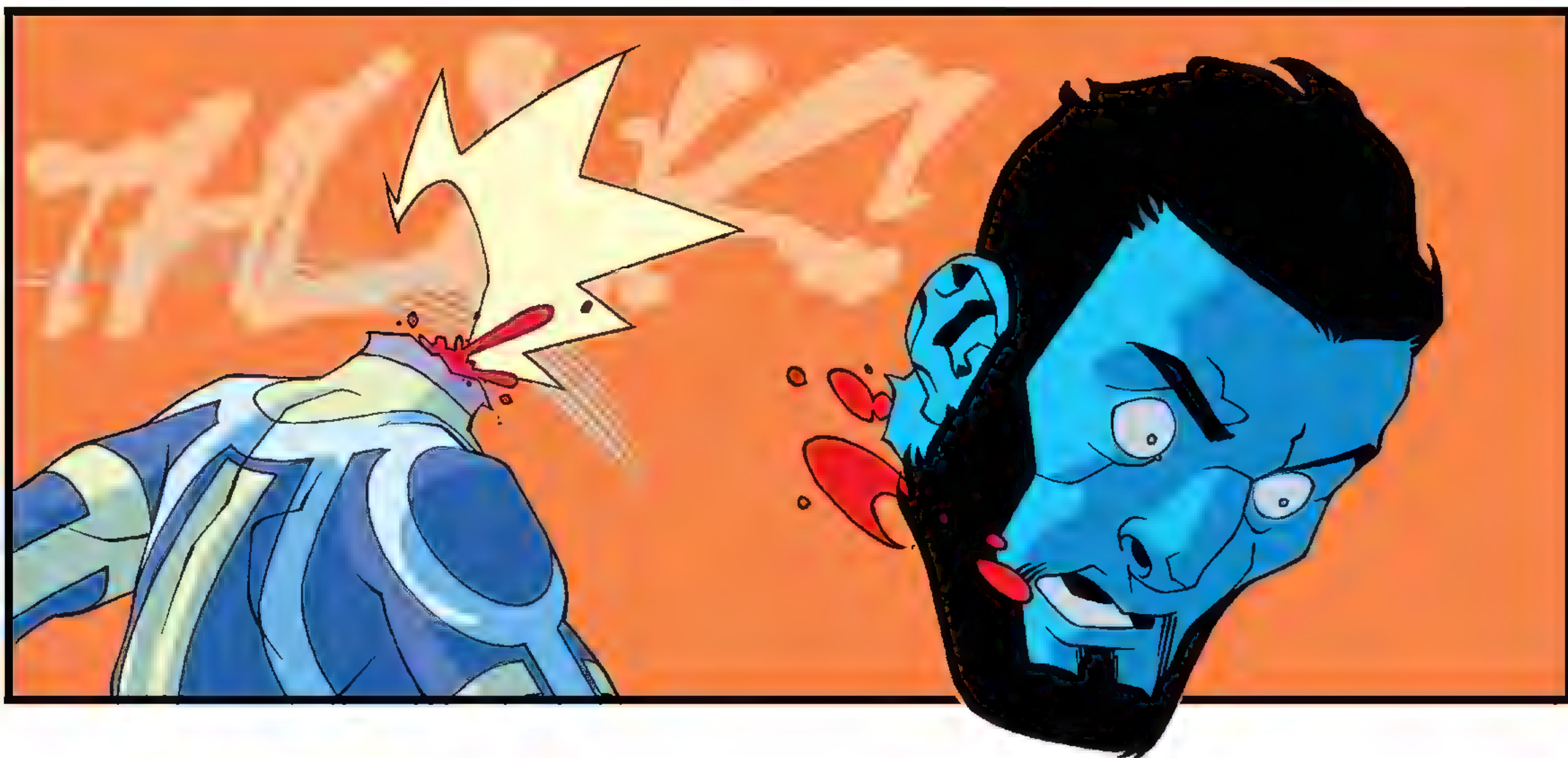


WELL...
WHAT'S
THE BIG
EMERGENCY?

YOU
DON'T KNOW?
WE THOUGHT
YOU WERE THE
ONE WHO CALLED US
HERE SINCE NONE
OF US KNEW WHAT
WAS GOING ON
AND YOU HADN'T
ARRIVED YET.

WHAT
THE HELL
IS GOING
ON?







THE
FEELING
WAS
MUTUAL.



ISSUE EIGHT





EVE?
WHAT ARE
YOU DOING
HERE?

OH,
MARK...

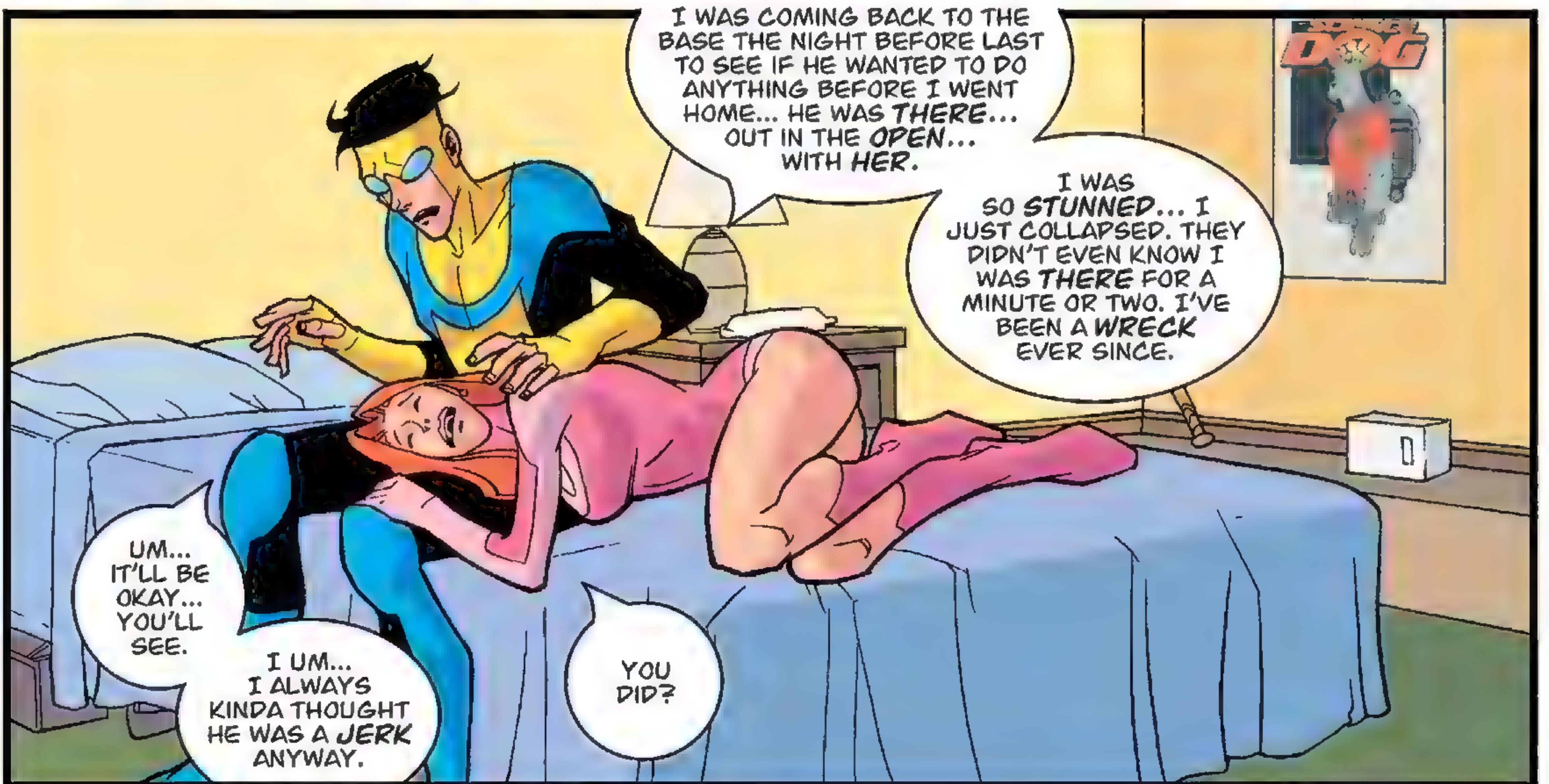
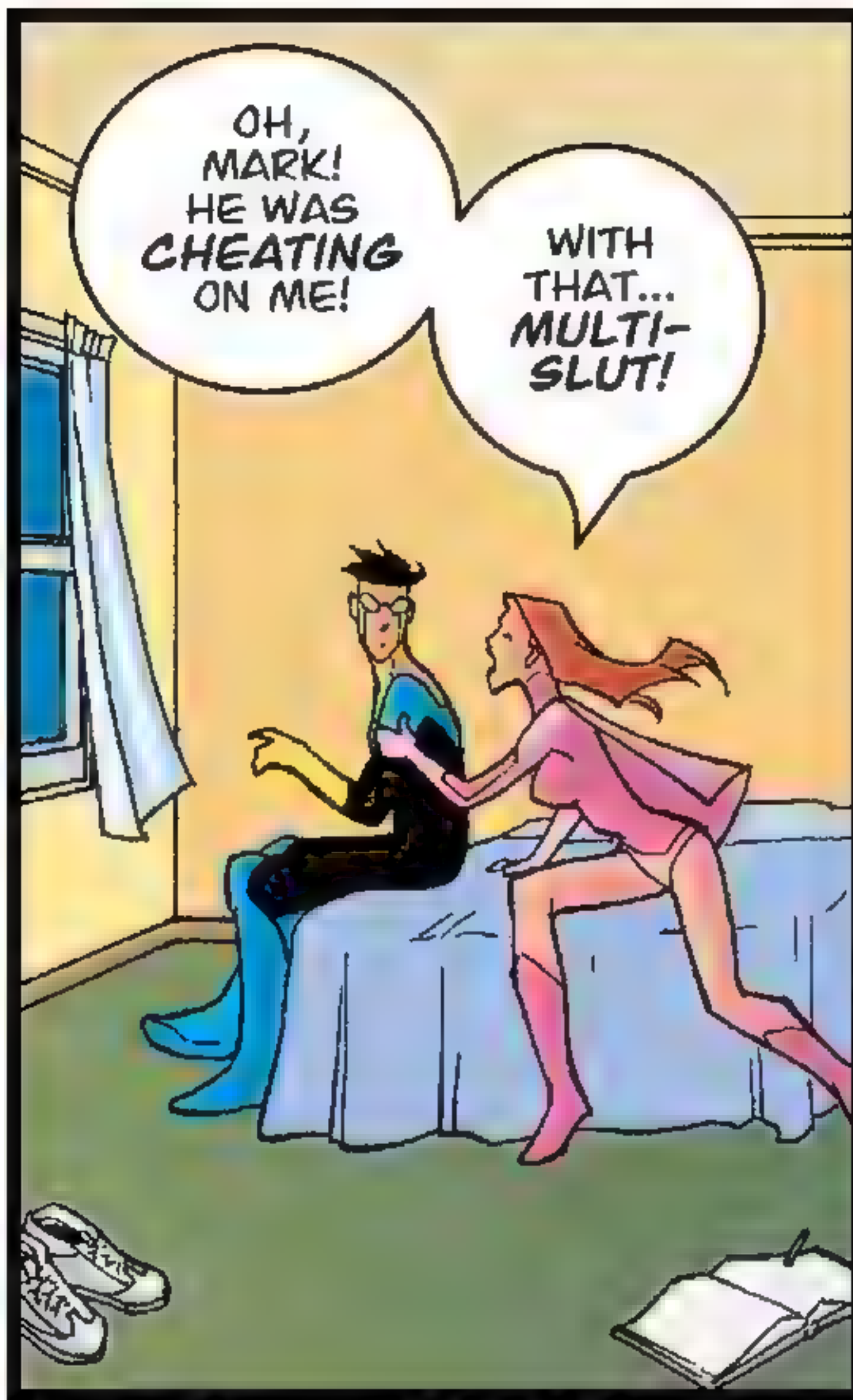
IT WAS
HORRIBLE!

IT WAS
REX... WITH
KATE...

...

...AND
THERE WAS
MORE THAN
ONE OF
HER!



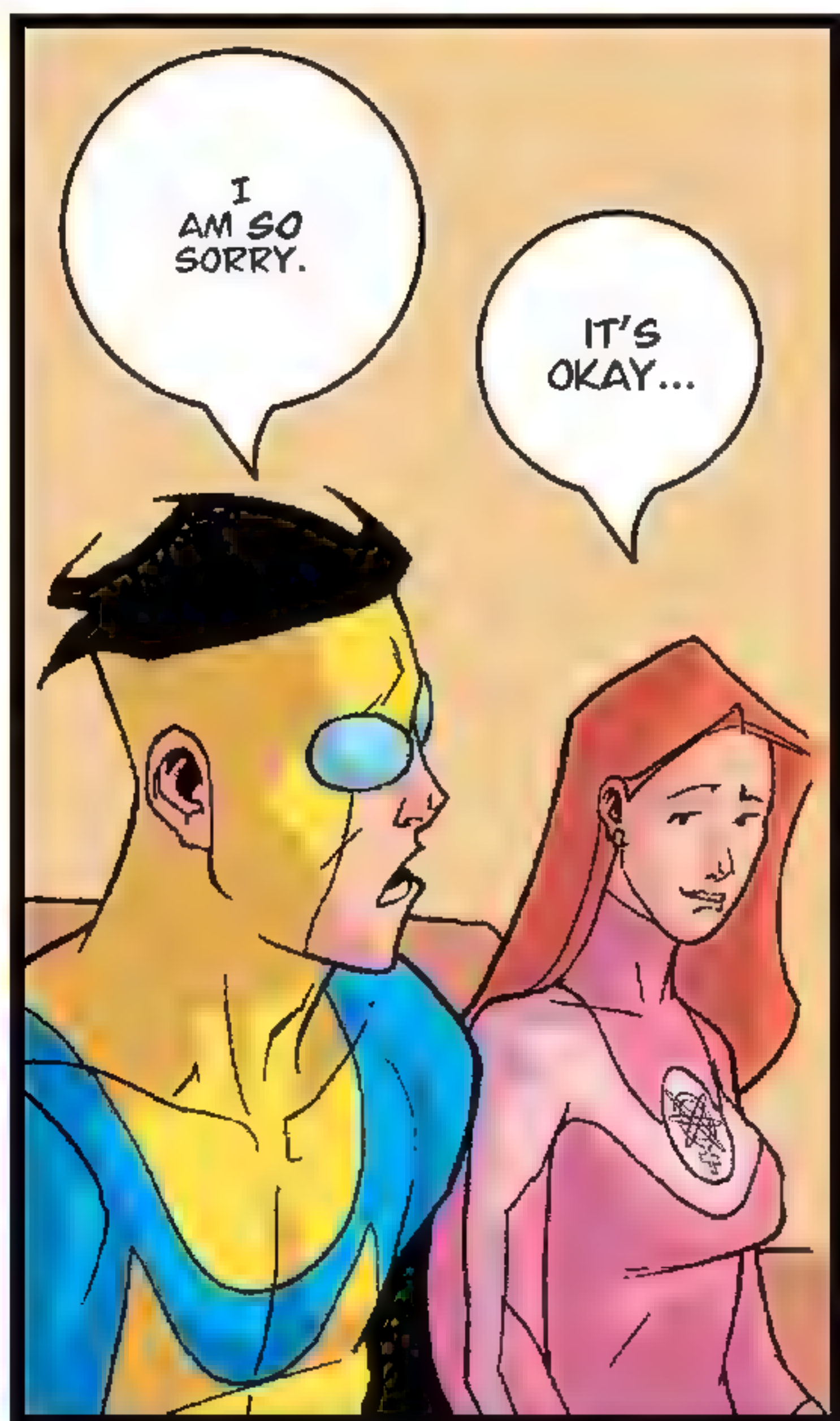




MOM! IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK! EVE AND I ARE JUST FRIENDS.

MARK, YOU'RE TOO YOUNG TO HAVE GIRLS SNEAKING INTO YOUR ROOM WITH YOU! I THOUGHT WE HAD BROUGHT YOU UP BETTER THAN THAT.

I WANT BOTH OF YOU TO SIT ON THE COUCH. WE'RE GOING TO TALK.



I AM SO SORRY.

IT'S OKAY...



LOOK, I REALIZE YOU'RE GETTING TO THAT AGE... BUT I JUST WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT YOU TWO UNDERSTAND THE CONSEQUENCES OF YOUR ACTIONS.

I CAN'T ALWAYS BE THERE TO KEEP AN EYE ON YOU... ESPECIALLY YOU TWO. YOU COULD FLY OFF TO A DESERTED ISLAND FOR AN HOUR AND I'D NEVER EVEN KNOW.

I JUST--



MOM! WE'RE REALLY JUST FRIENDS!

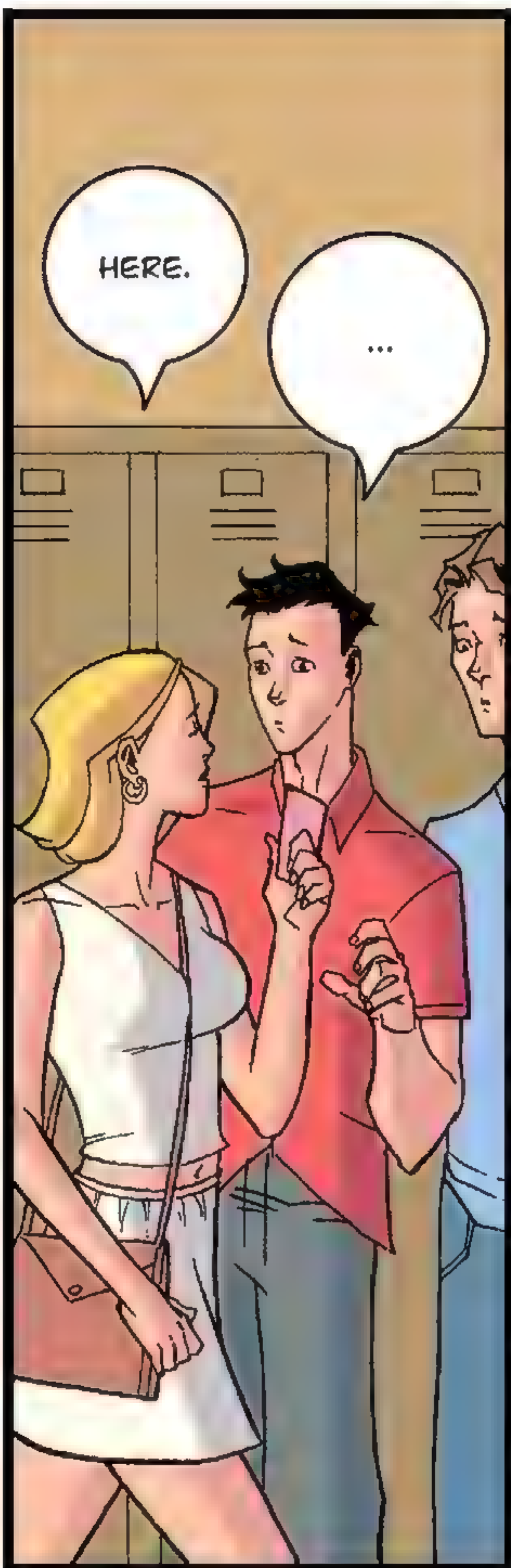
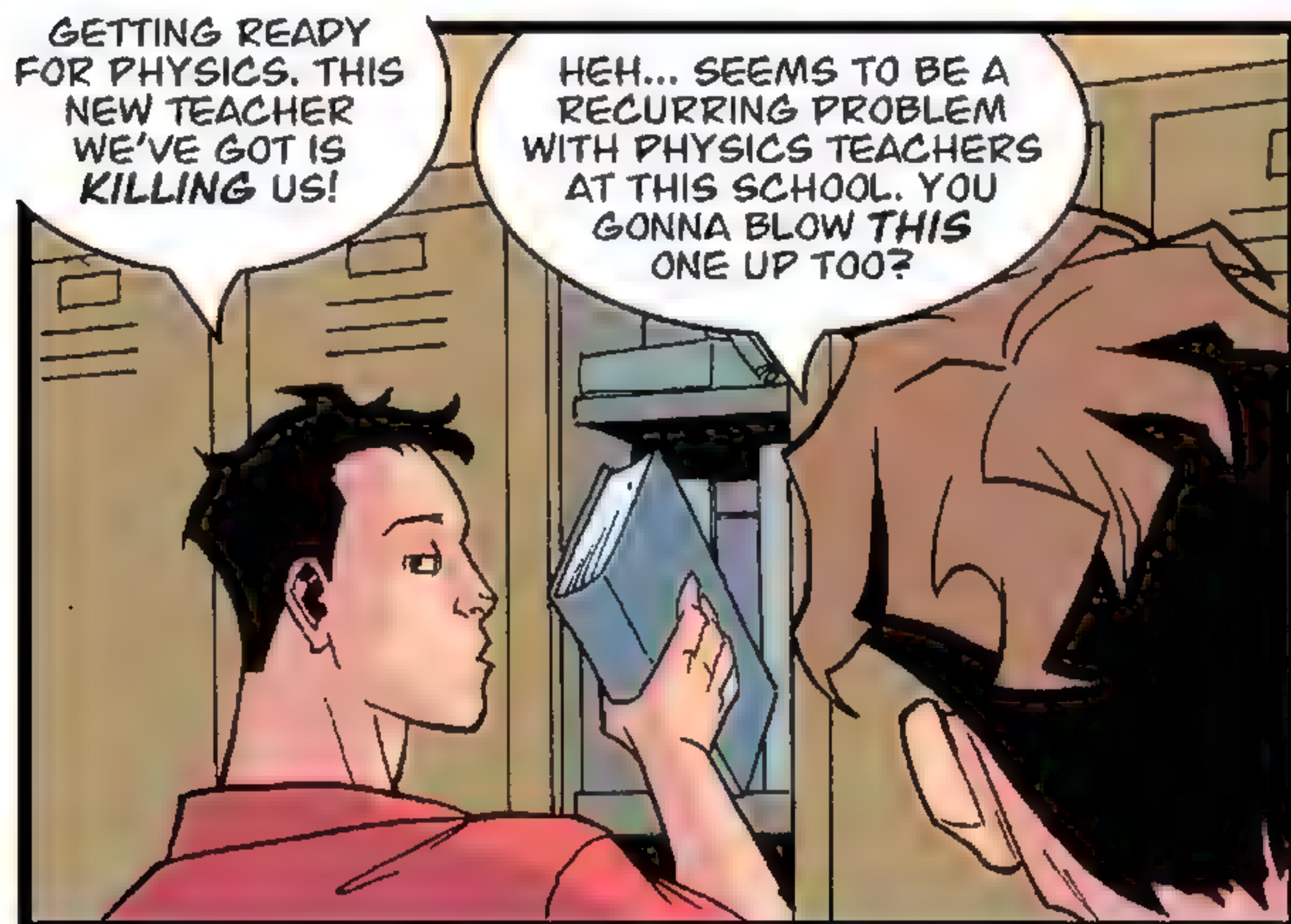
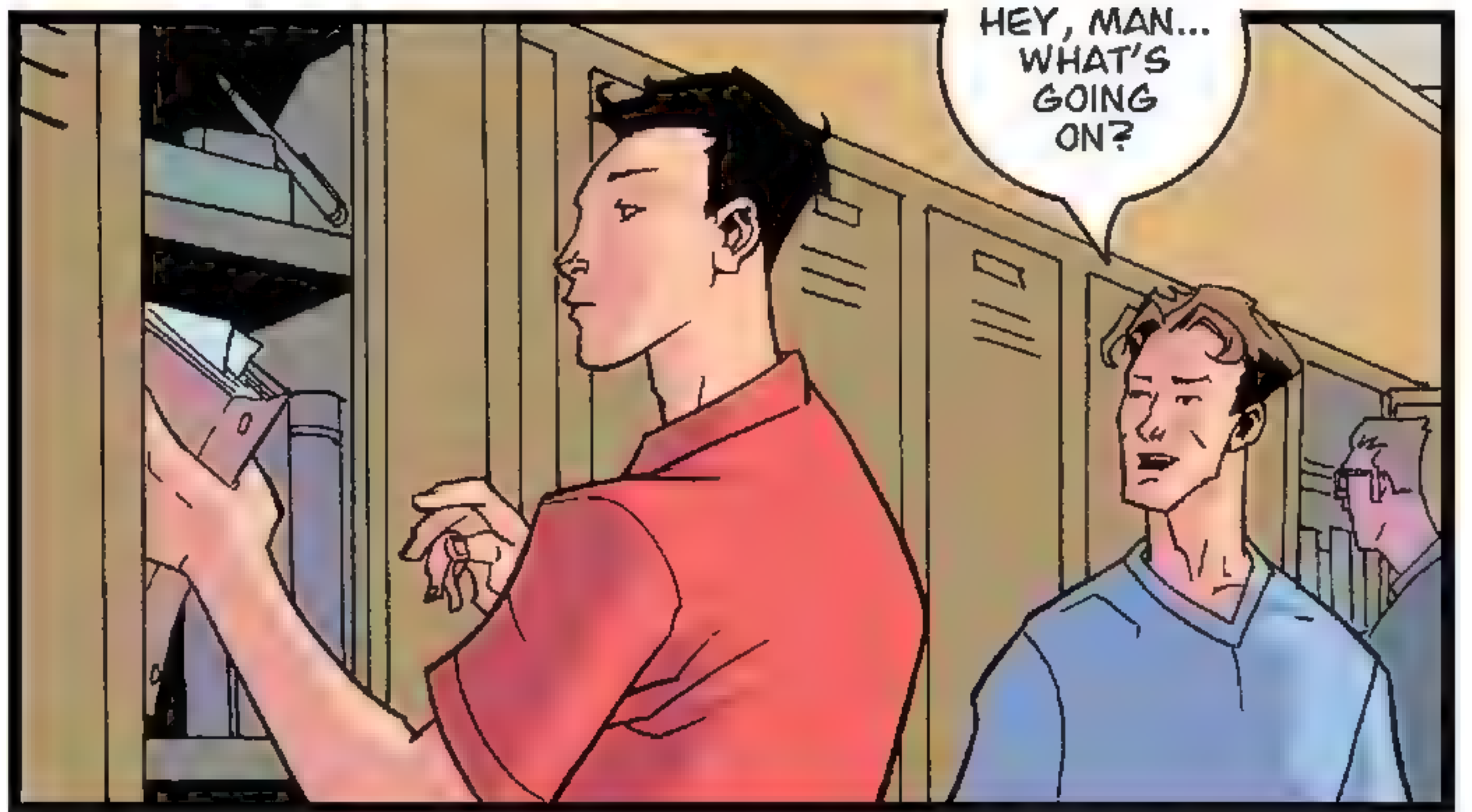


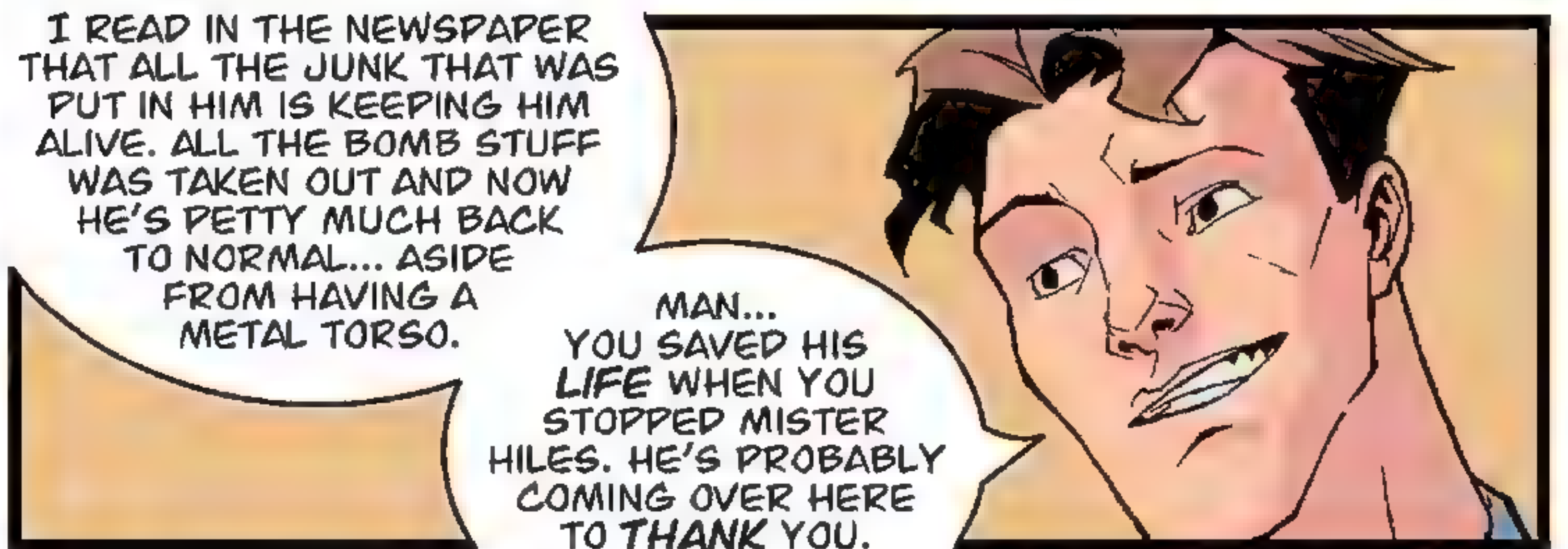
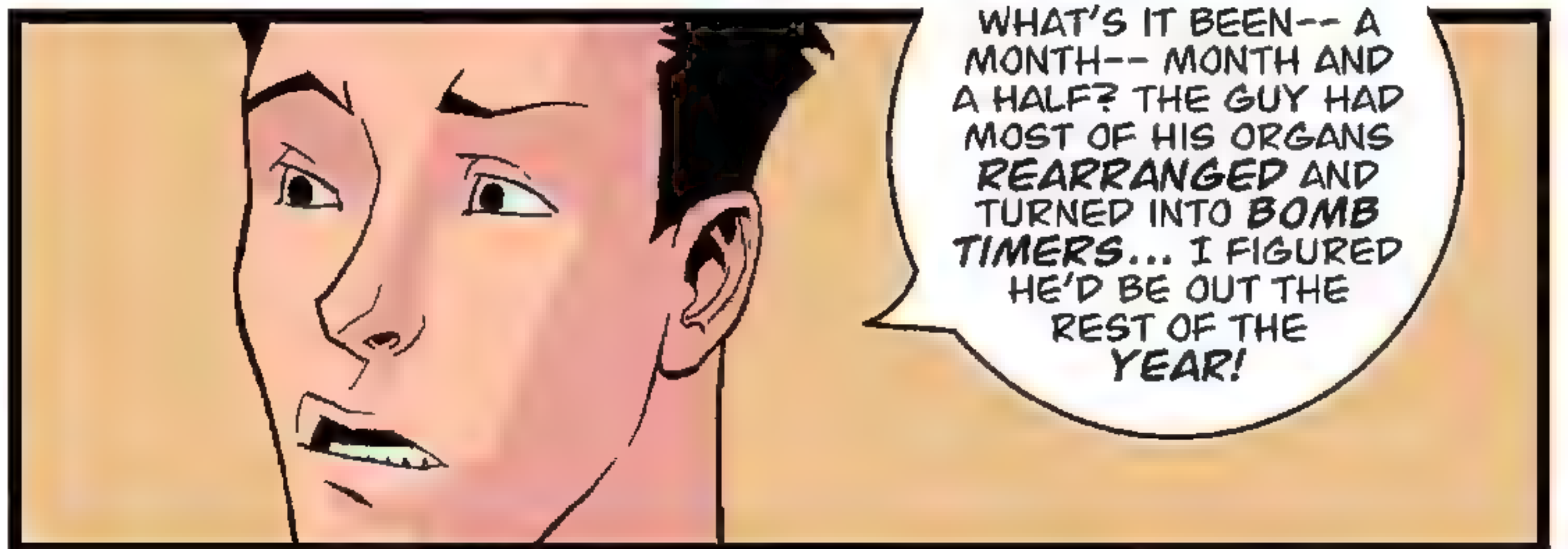
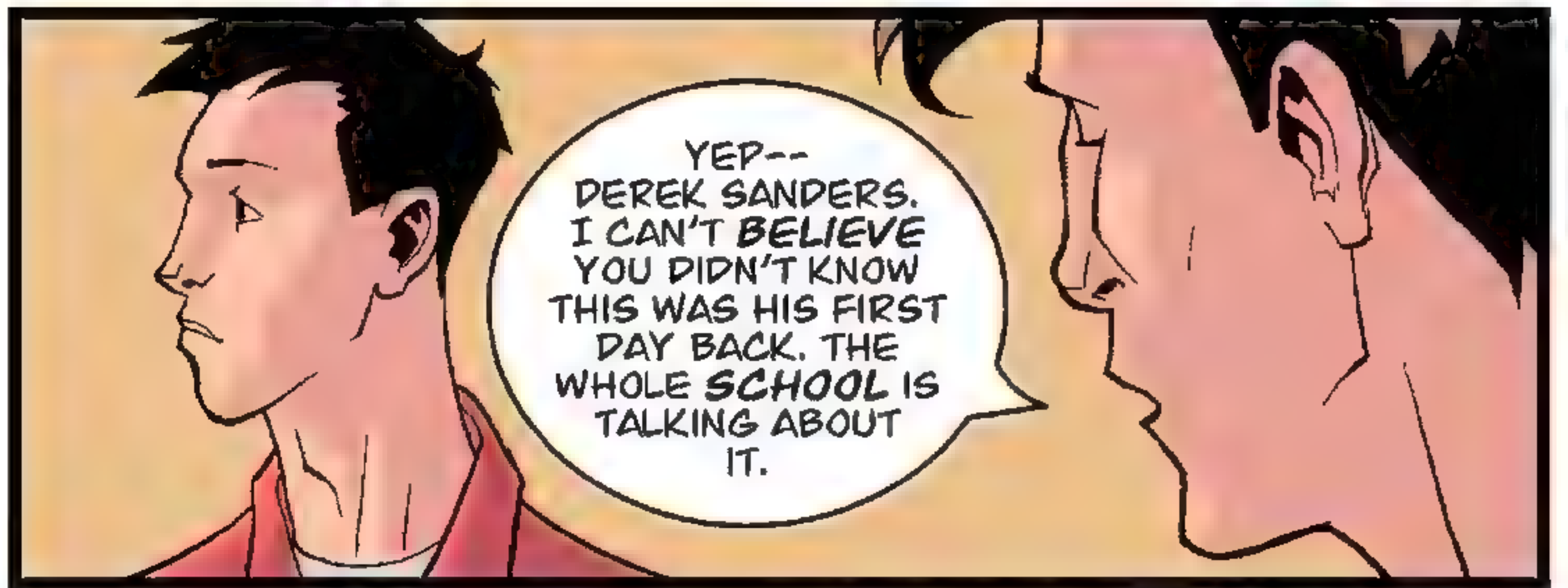
HI, EVE... I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE HERE.

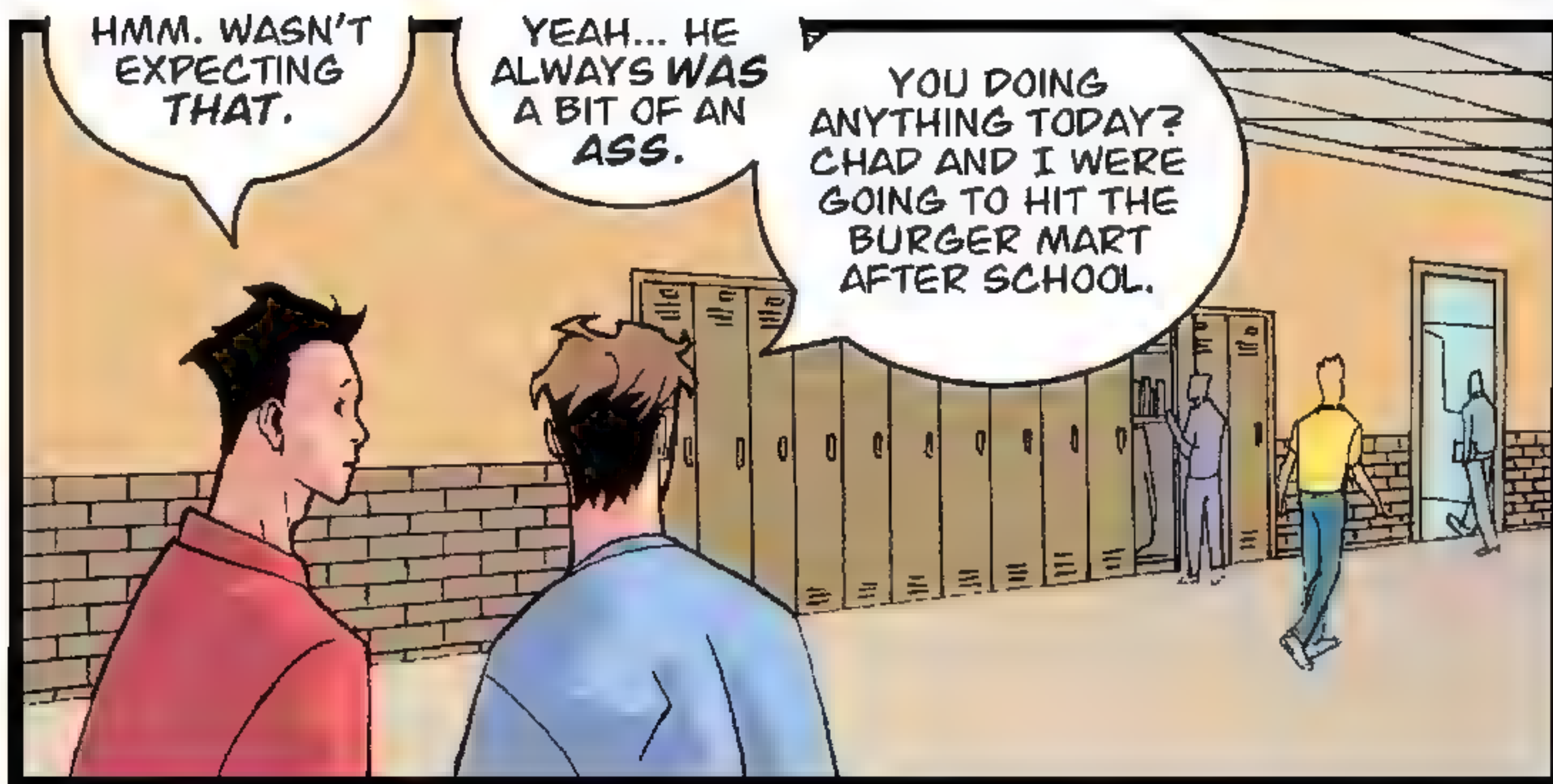
MARK... WE'VE GOT A FUNERAL TO ATTEND TOMORROW...



THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE ARE DEAD.







HMM. WASN'T EXPECTING THAT.

YEAH... HE ALWAYS WAS A BIT OF AN ASS.

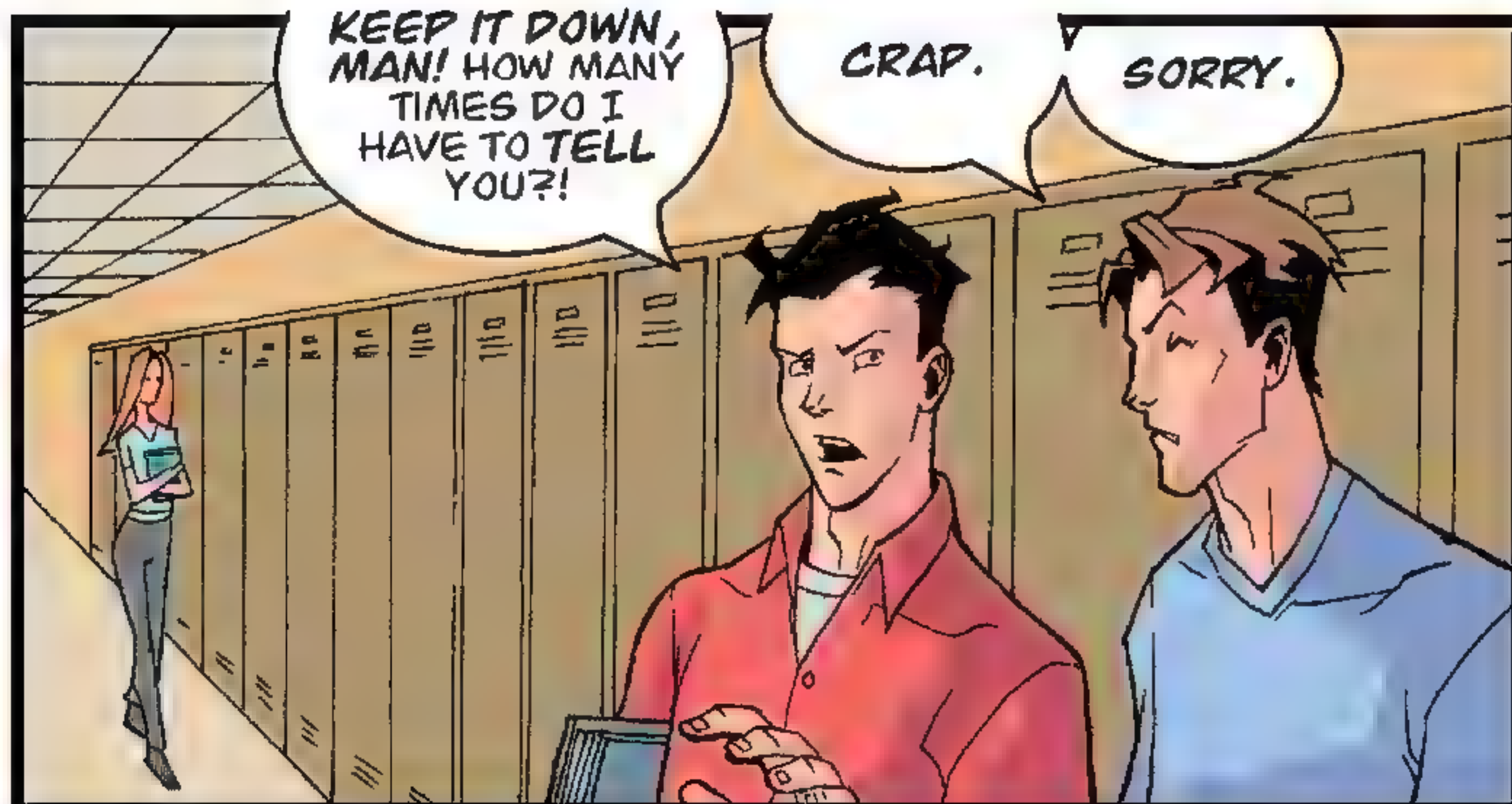
YOU DOING ANYTHING TODAY? CHAD AND I WERE GOING TO HIT THE BURGER MART AFTER SCHOOL.



I CAN'T, MAN... I'VE GOT A FUNERAL TO GO TO LATER TODAY.



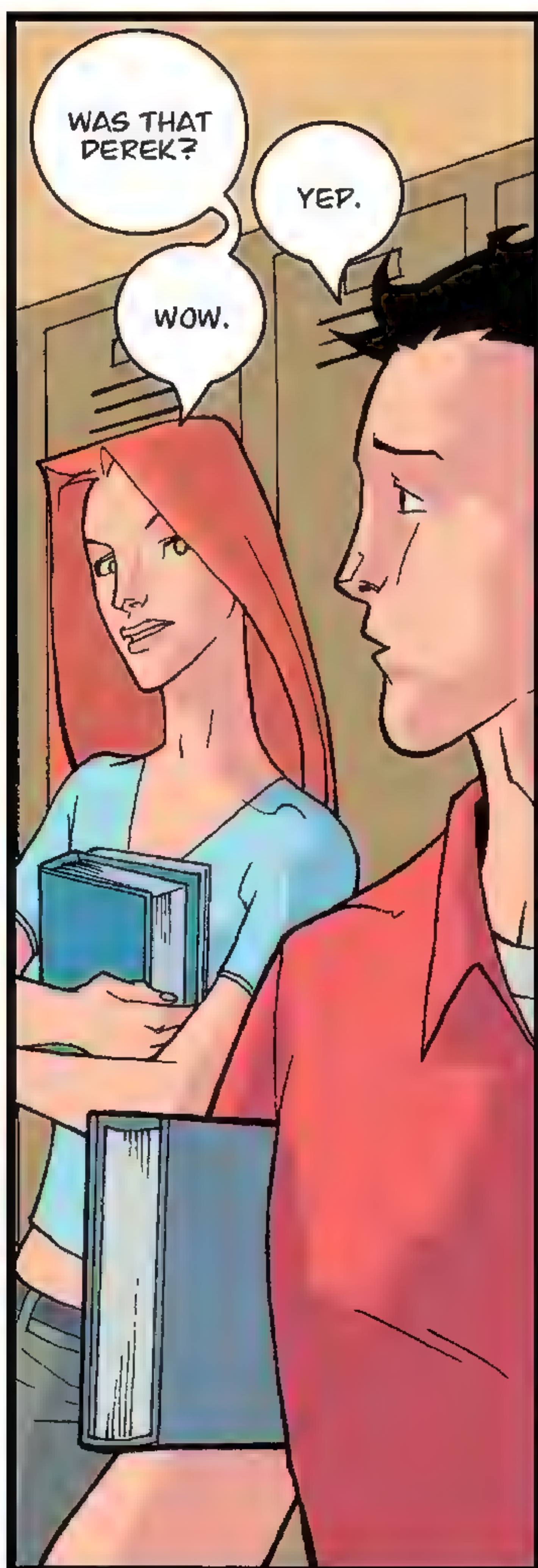
NO CRAP?! THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE THING, RIGHT? I GUESS YOU GOT INVITED BECAUSE OF YOUR DAD...



KEEP IT DOWN, MAN! HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU?!

CRAP.

SORRY.



WAS THAT DEREK?

YEP.

WOW.

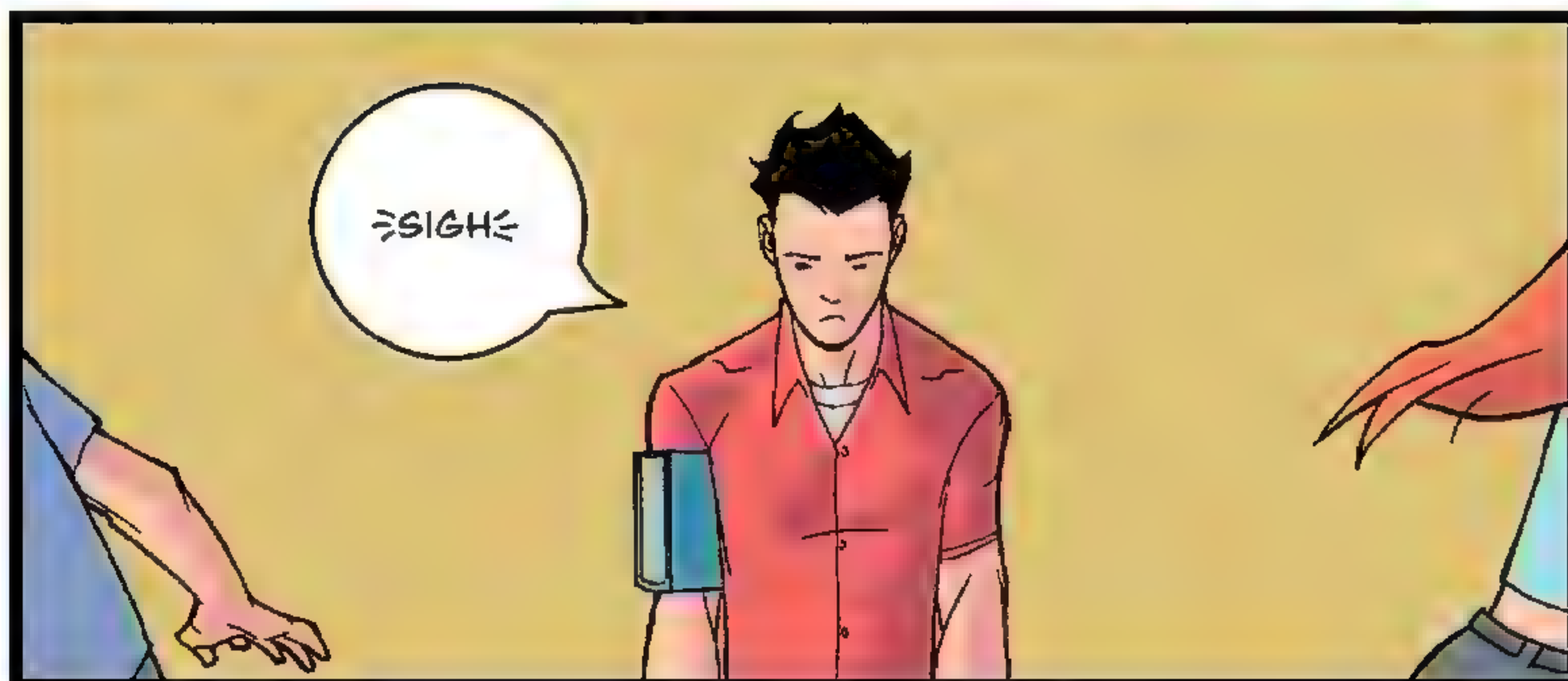


WELL, MARK... I NEED TO GET GOING OR I'M GOING TO BE LATE FOR MY CLASS.

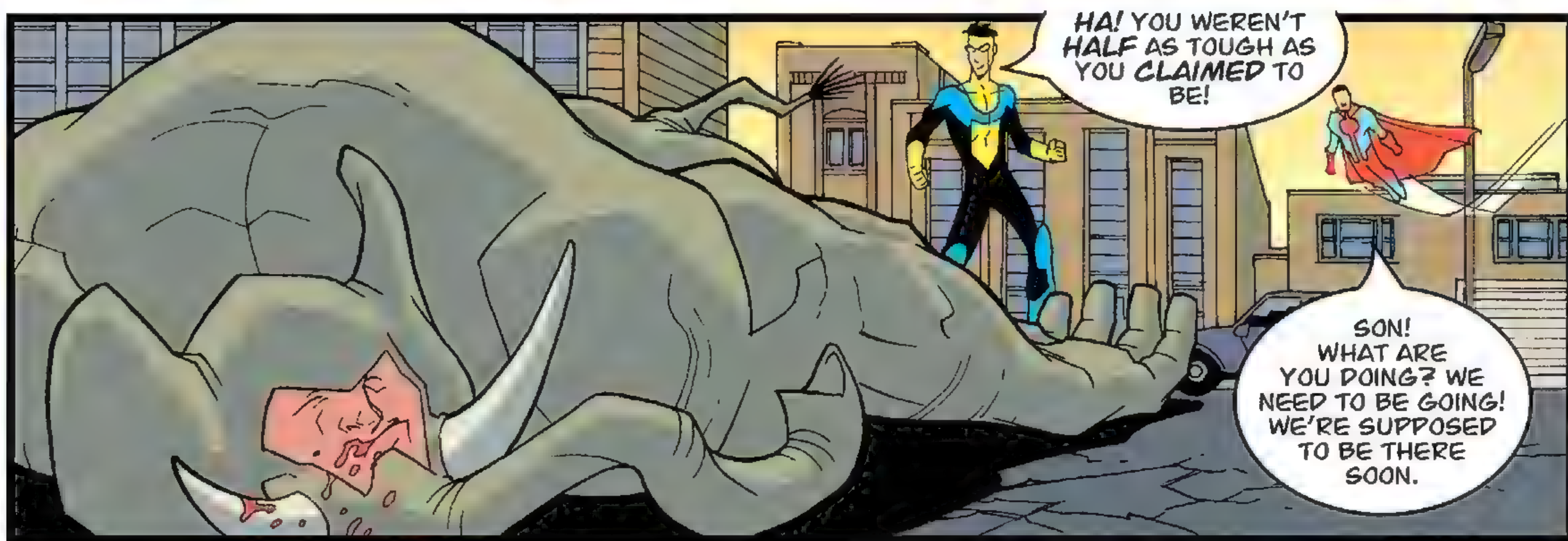
HAVE FUN AT THE... **THING** TONIGHT.

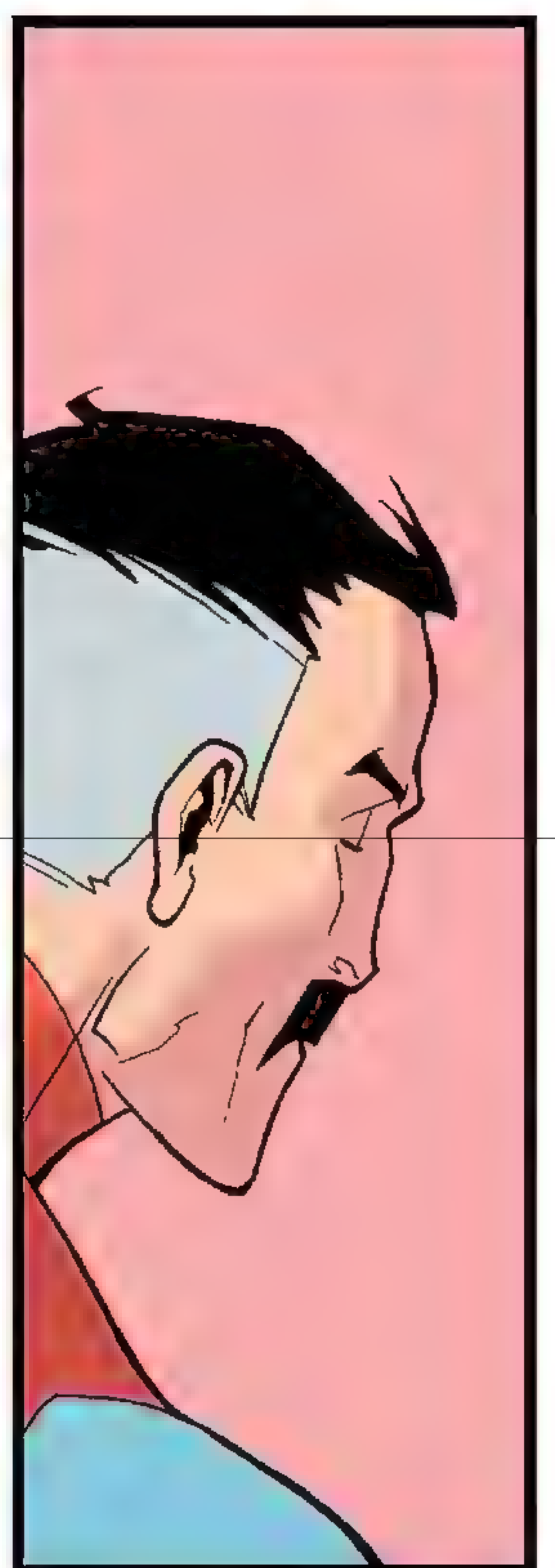
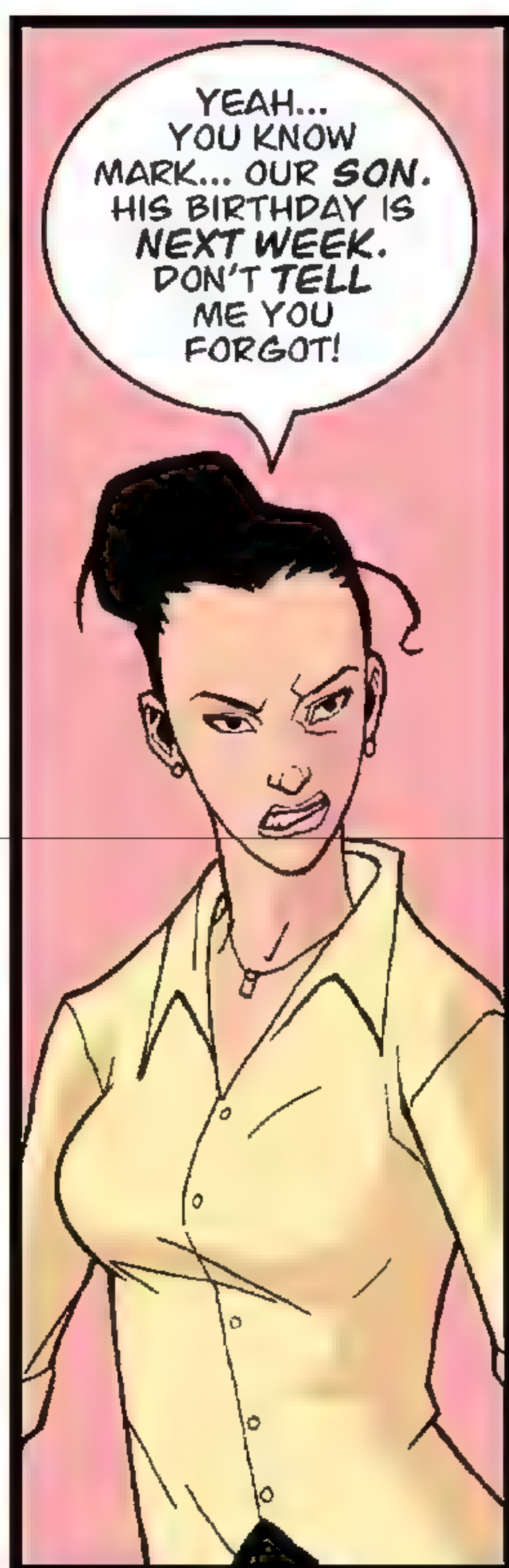
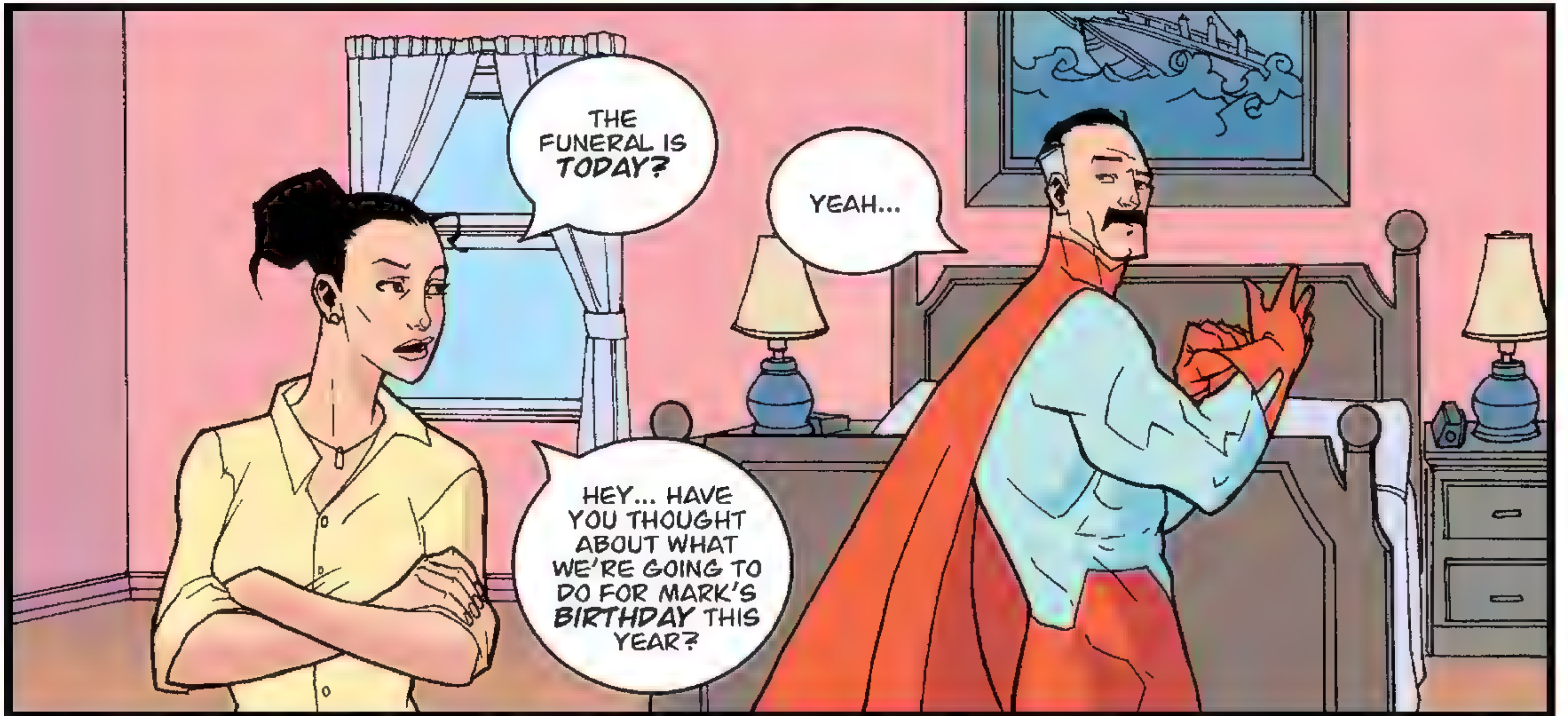
I'M ON MY WAY TO THE LITTLE GIRLS ROOM BEFORE I HEAD OFF TO PHYSICS...

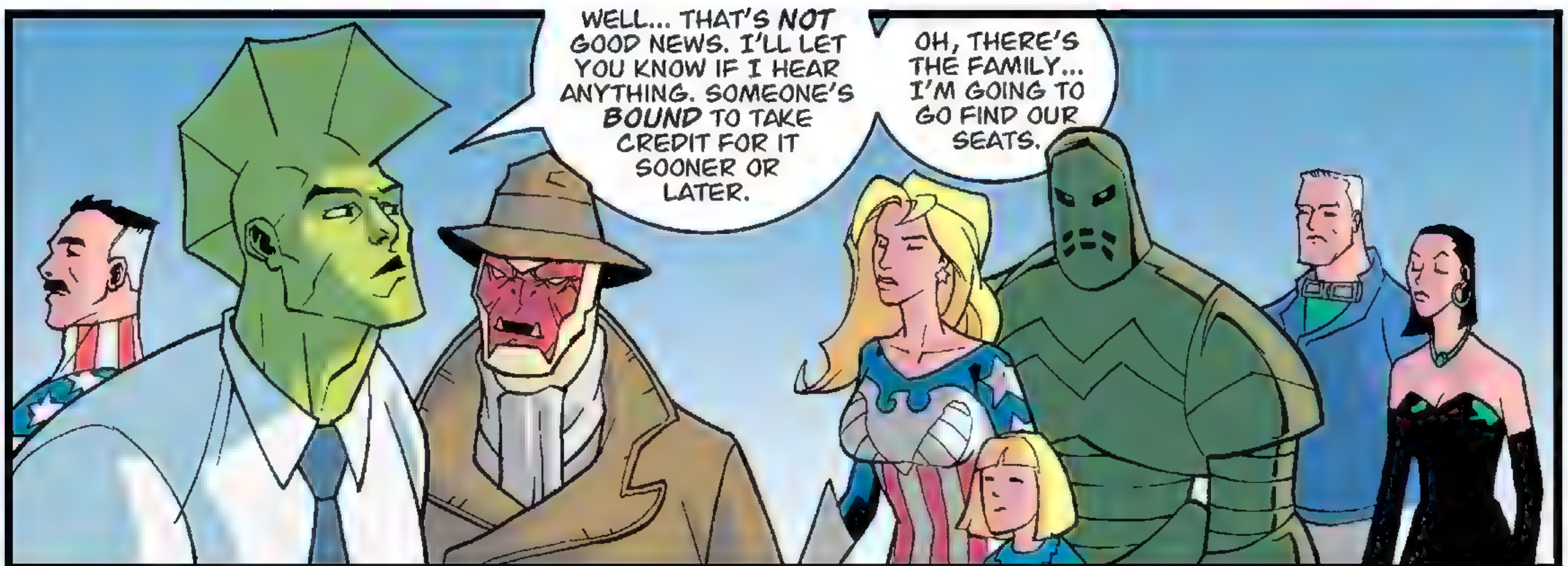
I JUST WANTED TO THANK YOU FOR TALKING TO ME ABOUT THAT... **STUFF**.



≡SIGHE≡





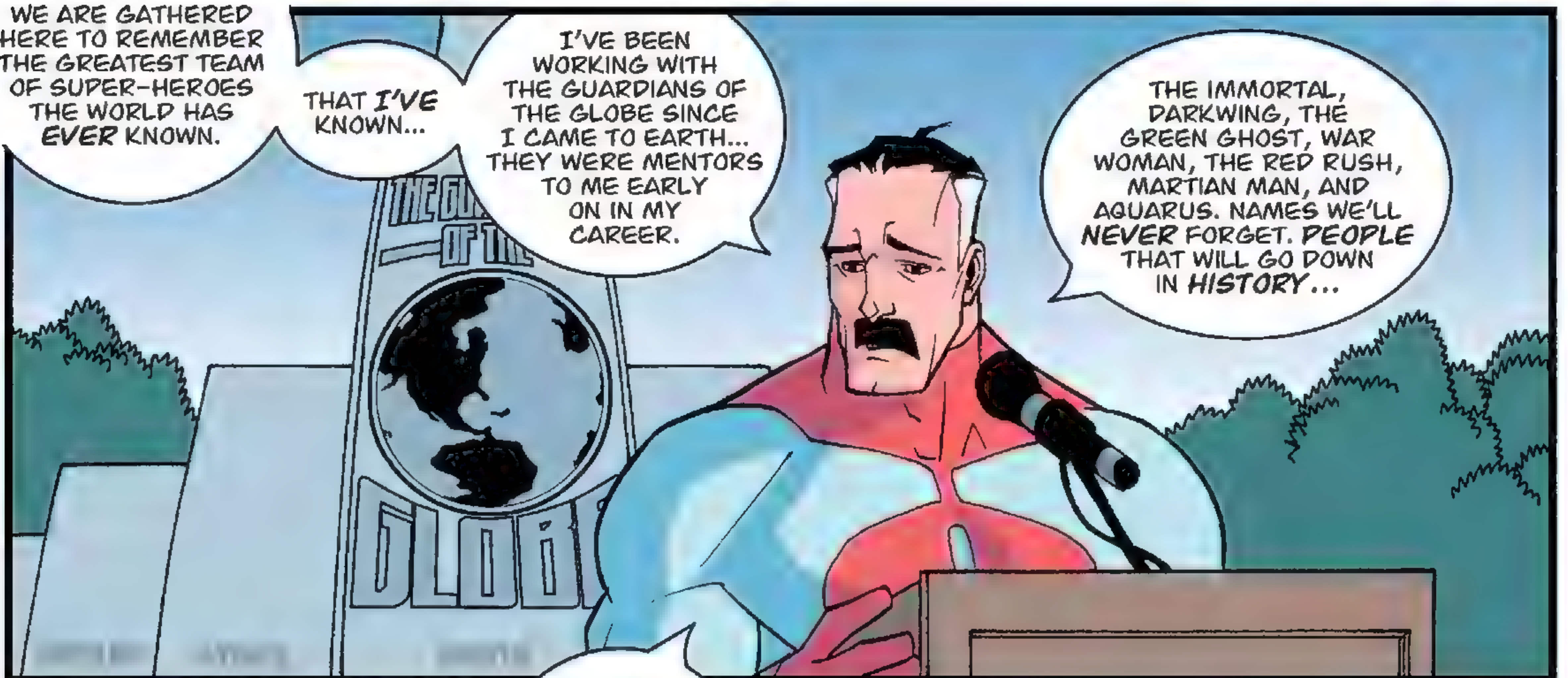


WE ARE GATHERED
HERE TO REMEMBER
THE GREATEST TEAM
OF SUPER-HEROES
THE WORLD HAS
EVER KNOWN.

THAT I'VE
KNOWN...

I'VE BEEN
WORKING WITH
THE GUARDIANS OF
THE GLOBE SINCE
I CAME TO EARTH...
THEY WERE MENTORS
TO ME EARLY
ON IN MY CAREER.

THE IMMORTAL,
DARKWING, THE
GREEN GHOST, WAR
WOMAN, THE RED RUSH,
MARTIAN MAN, AND
AQUARUS. NAMES WE'LL
NEVER FORGET. PEOPLE
THAT WILL GO DOWN
IN HISTORY...



LEGENDS...
TAKEN FROM
US BEFORE
THEIR TIME.
WE---



WHAT ARE
YOU DOING
HERE?!



PLEASE CONTINUE...
WE DO NOT WISH
TO CAUSE A
SCENE.

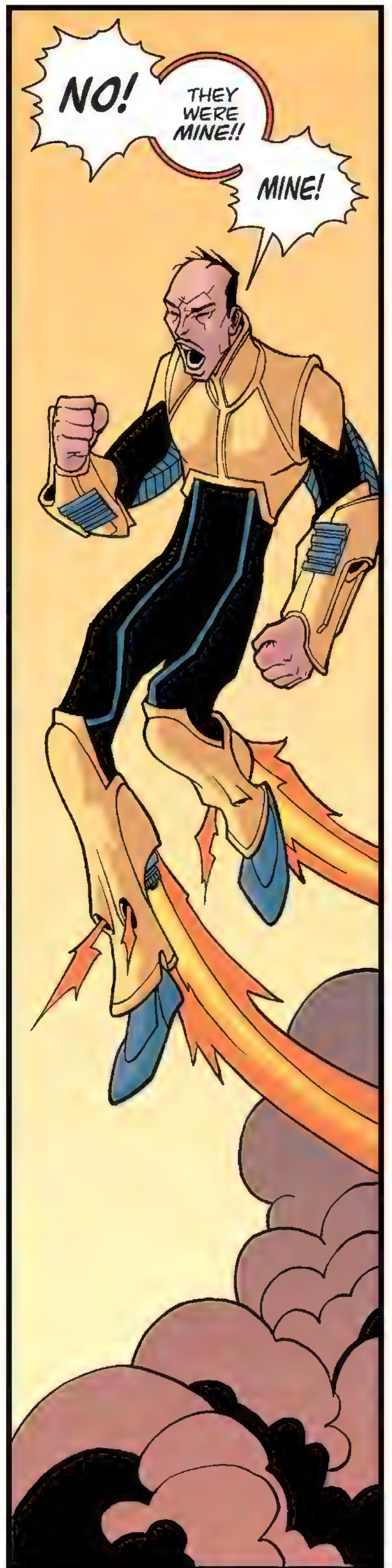
WE ARE
HERE TO PAY OUR
RESPECTS TO A WORTHY
ADVERSARY. NOTHING
MORE, WE WILL NOT
INTERFERE WITH THE
PROCEEDINGS.



DAD,
I'LL KEEP
AN EYE ON
THEM.

I DON'T
THINK THEY'LL
TRY ANYTHING
WITH ALL OF
US HERE.







S-SANFORD?



WE'VE GOT TO END THIS FAST PEOPLE! THERE ARE CIVILIANS PRESENT!

GET ANGEL TO SAFETY, JENNIFER.



THEY CAN'T BE DEAD!! NOT UNTIL I HAVE MY REVENGE!!

THEY HAVE TO PAY FOR WHAT THEY DID TO SAMSON!



WHO IS THIS CLOWN?

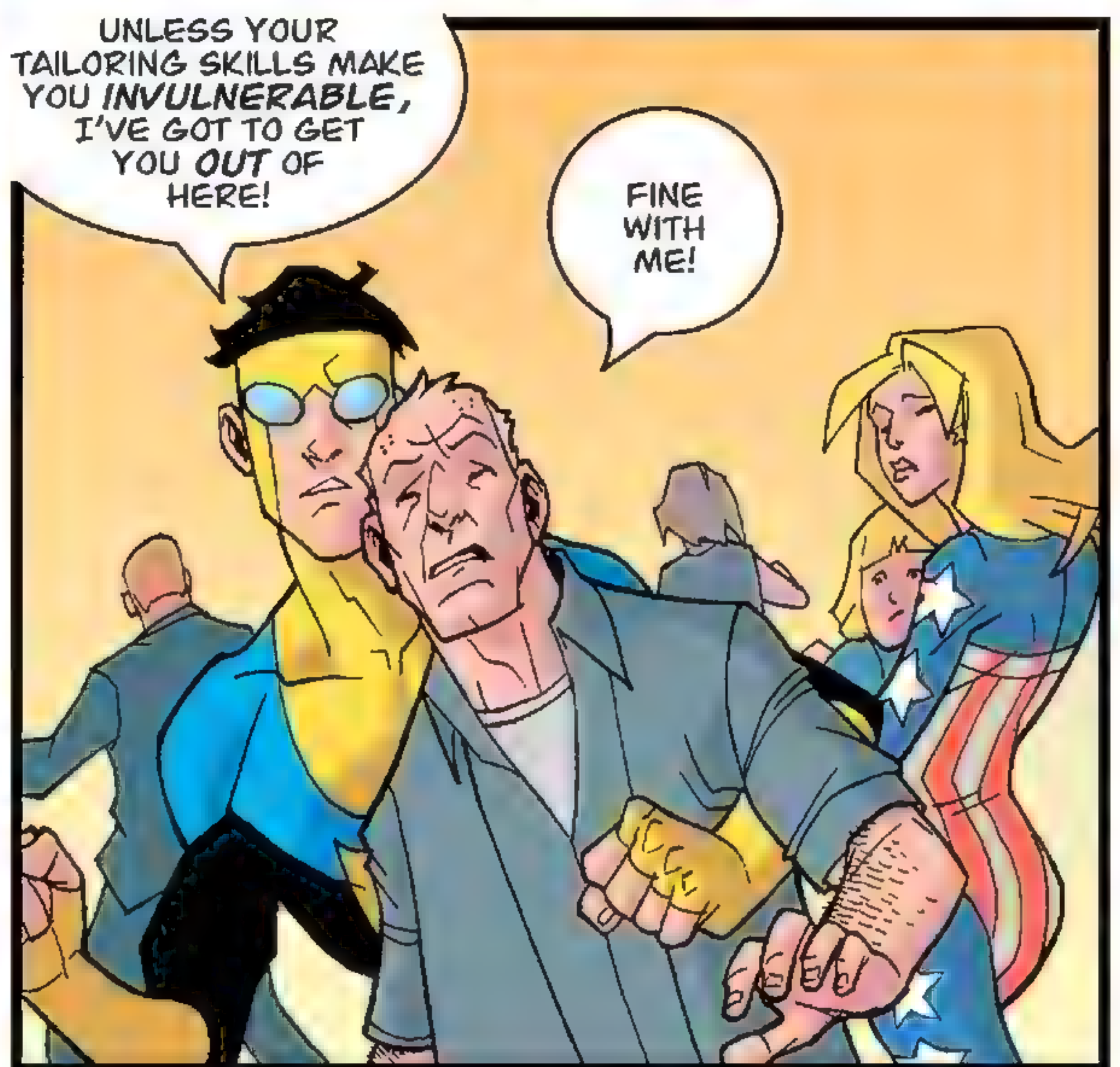
SAMSON'S BUTLER.

BOOM!!!



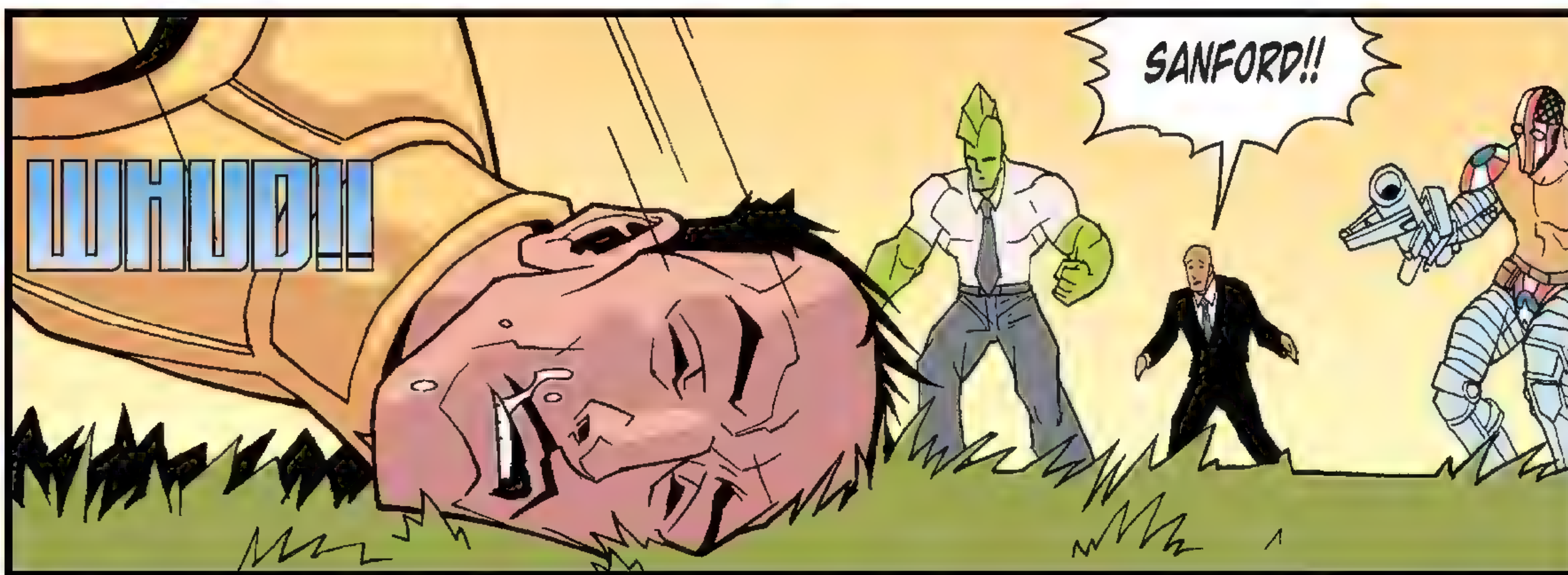
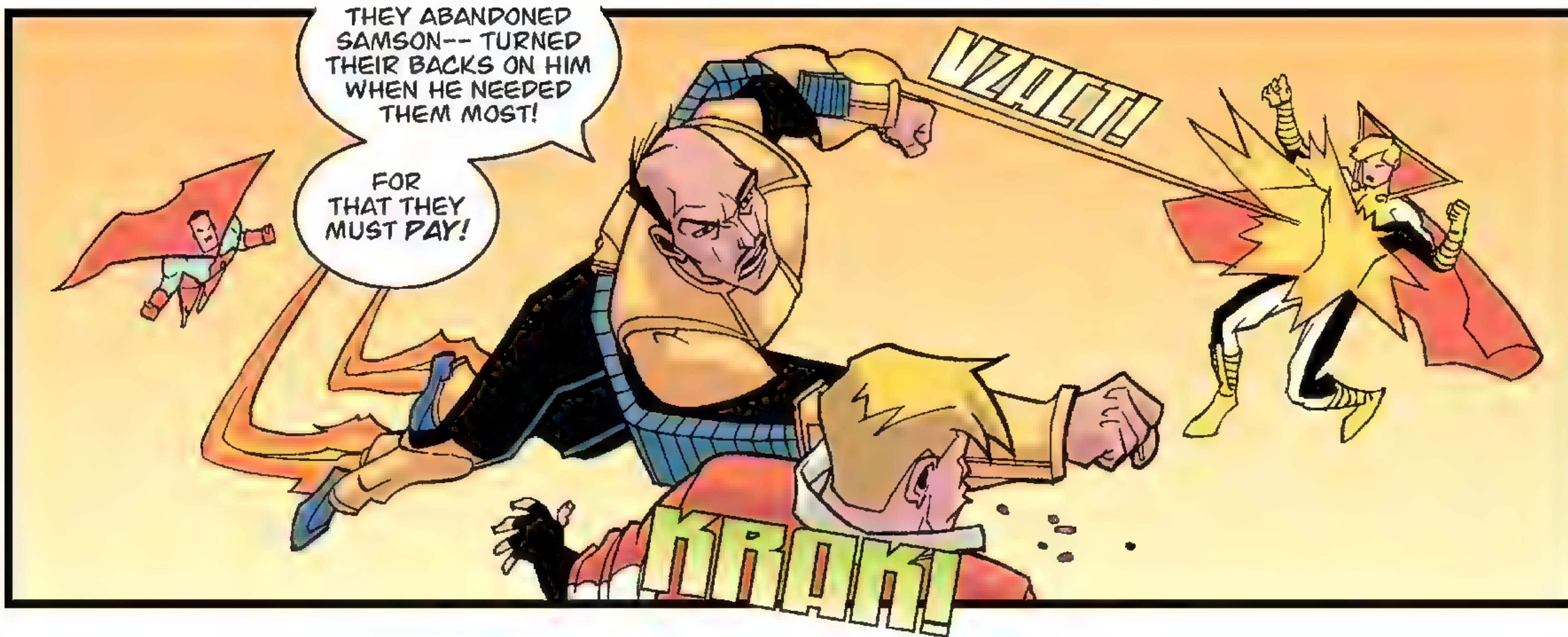
YOU CAN'T STOP ME! I WON'T QUIT UNTIL I SEE THEIR BODIES DESTROYED!

CLANG!

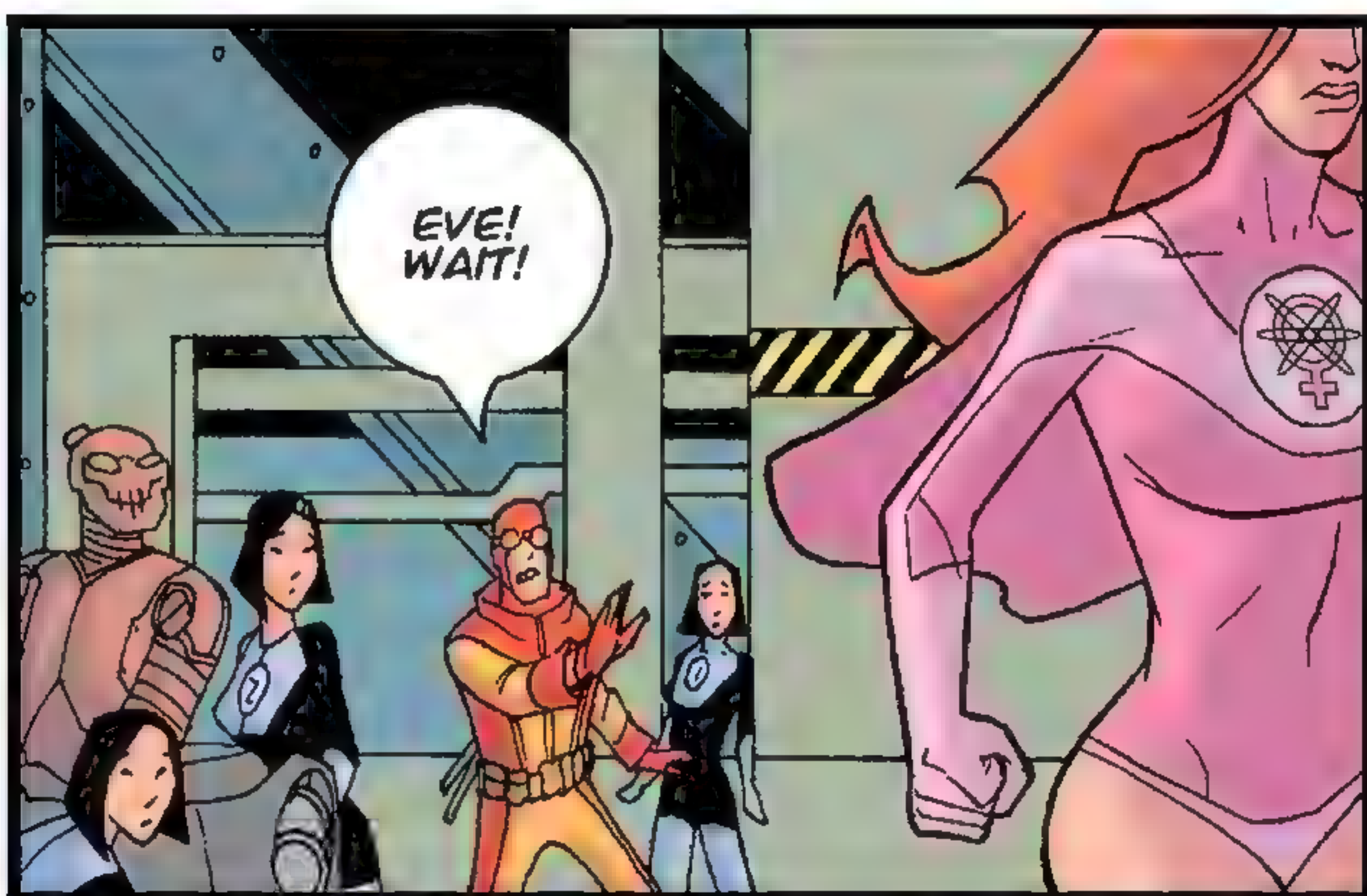
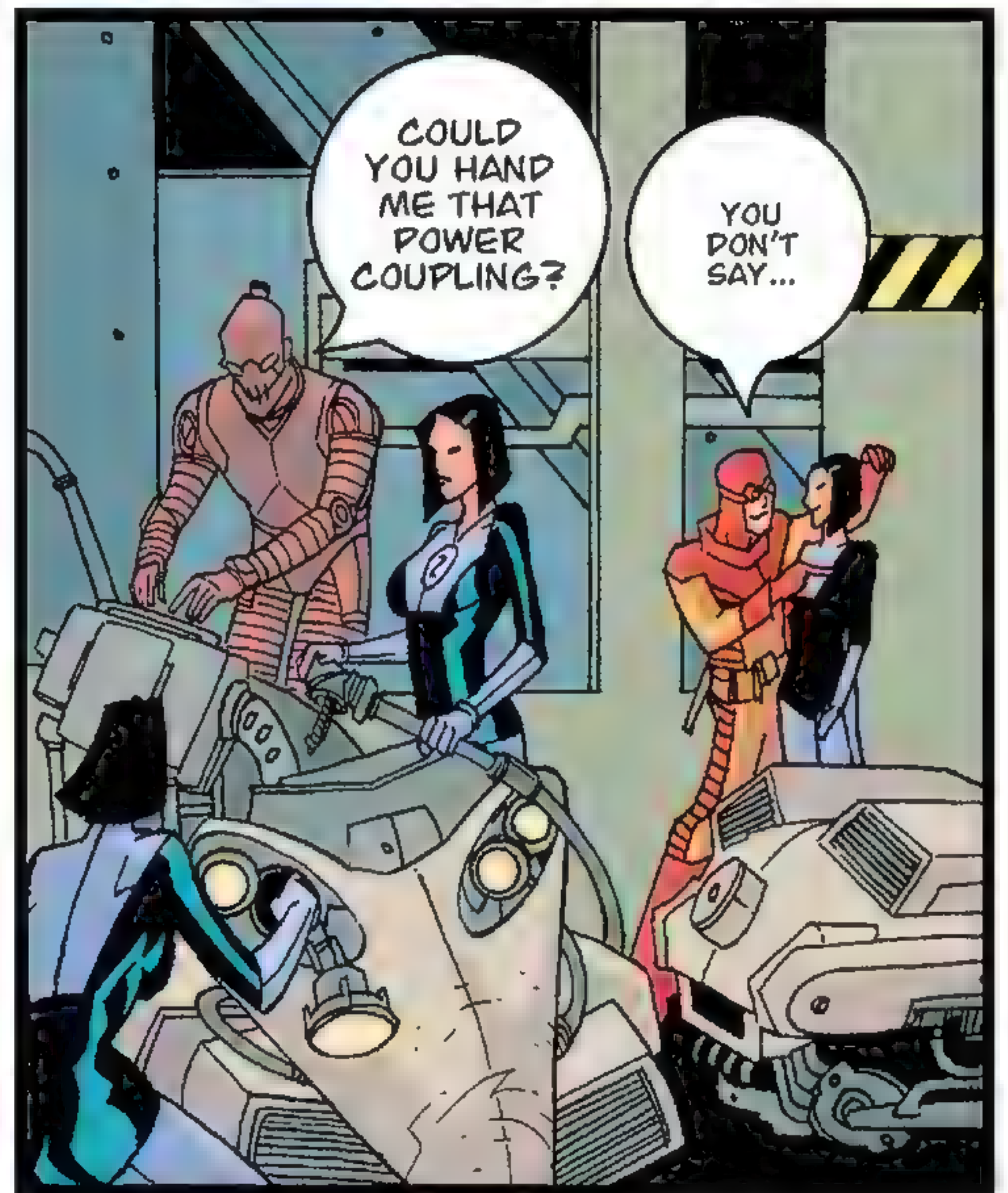
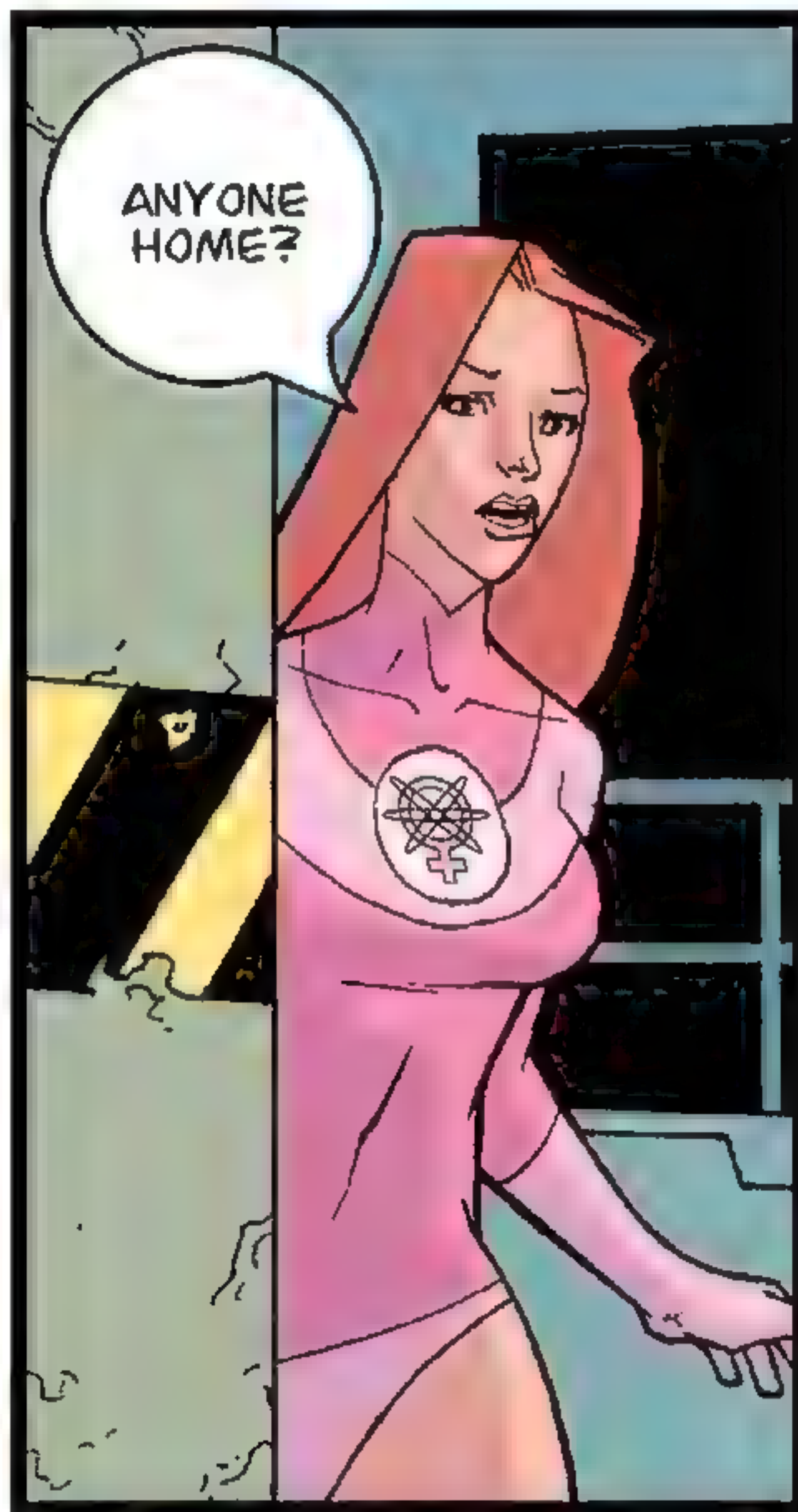
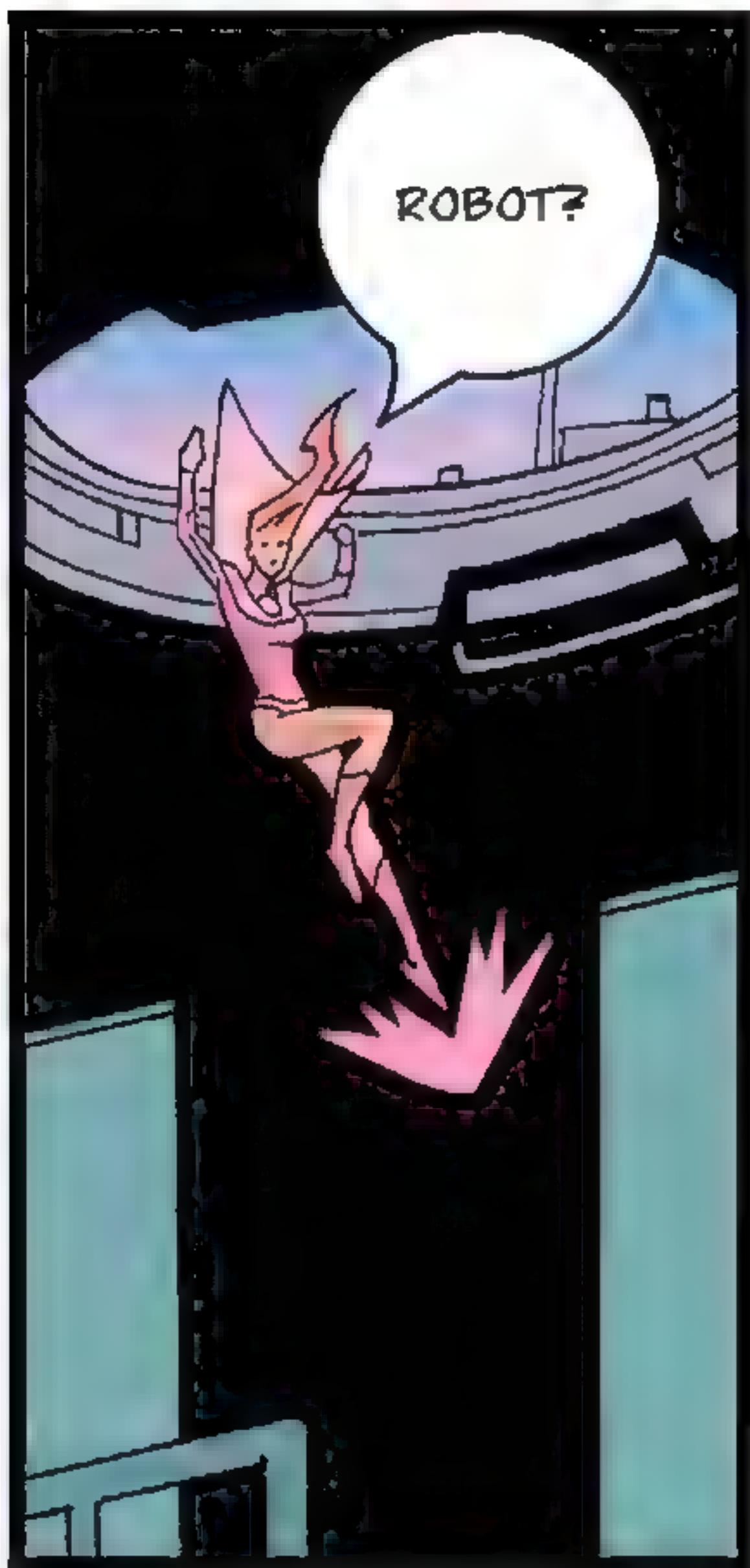


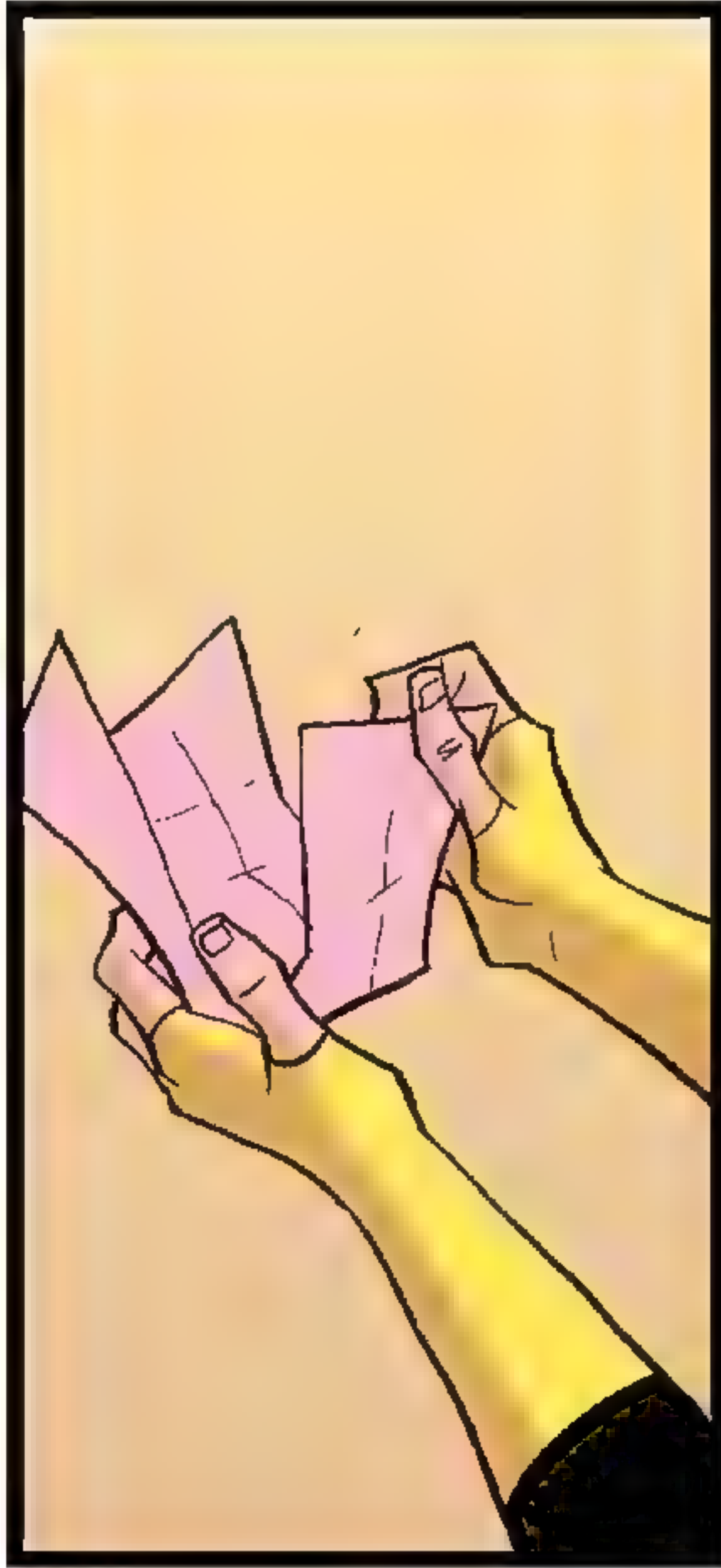
UNLESS YOUR TAILORING SKILLS MAKE YOU INVULNERABLE, I'VE GOT TO GET YOU OUT OF HERE!

FINE WITH ME!

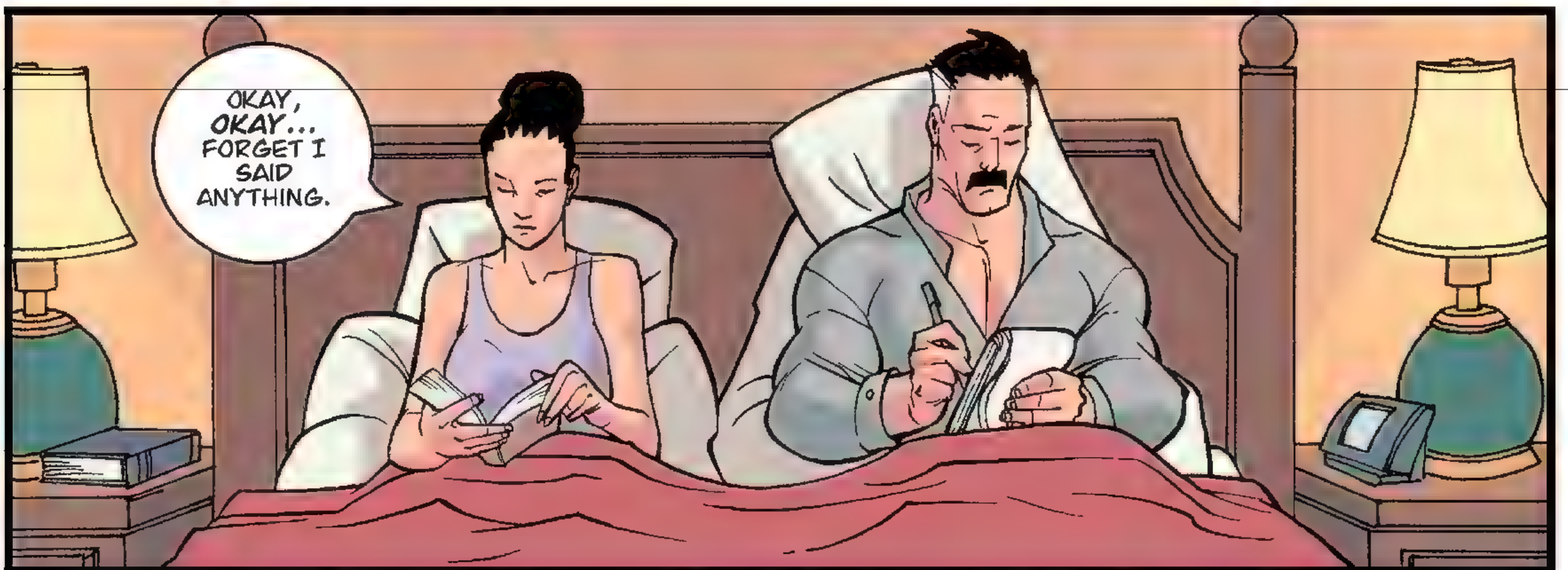
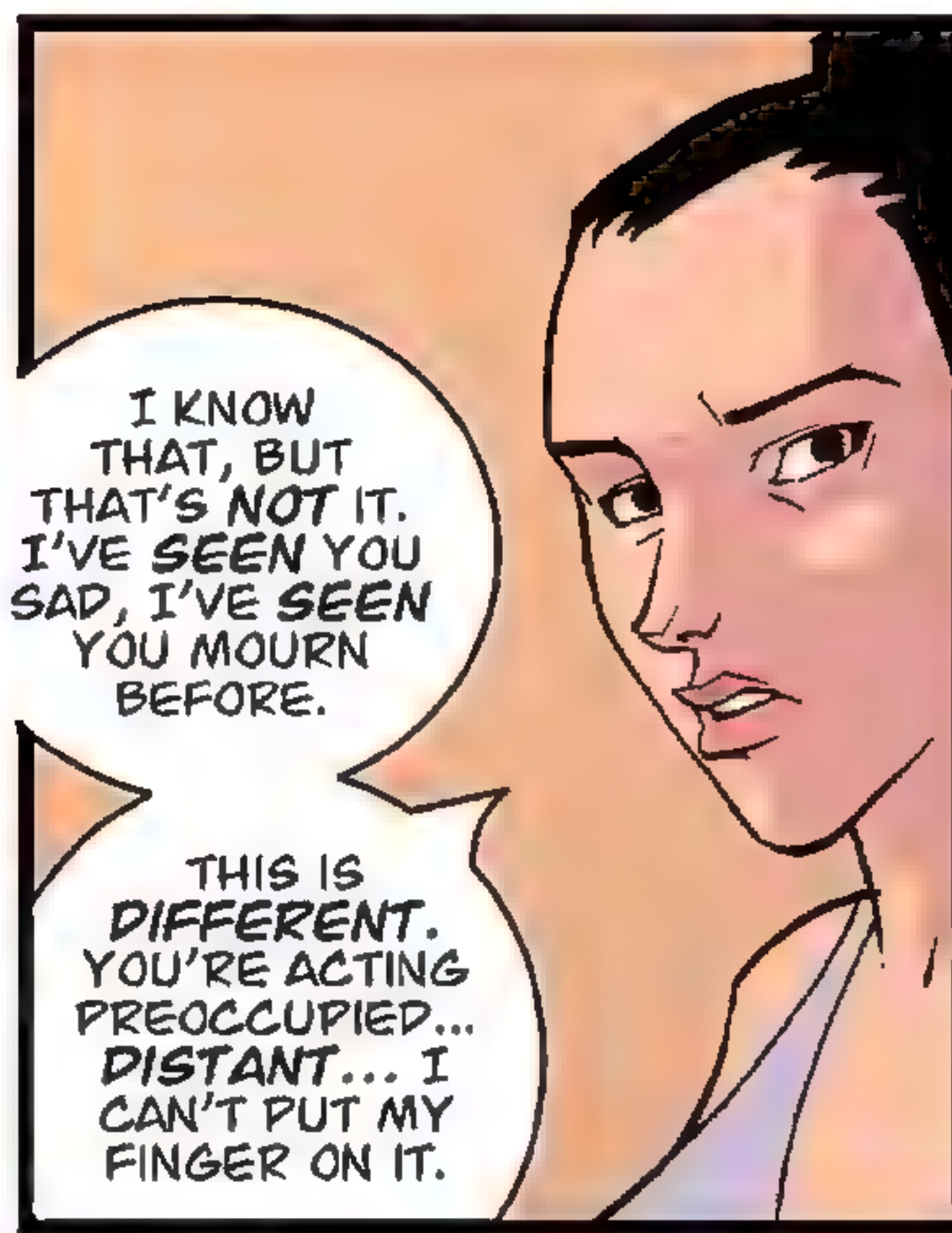
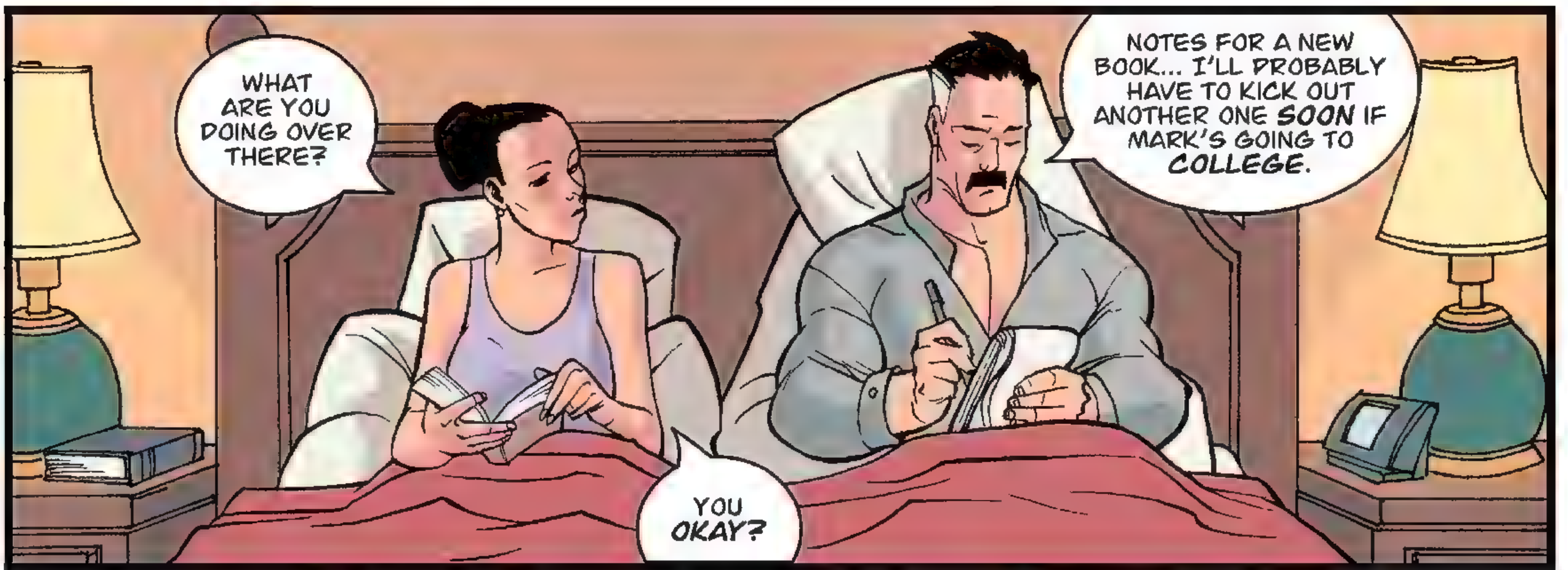


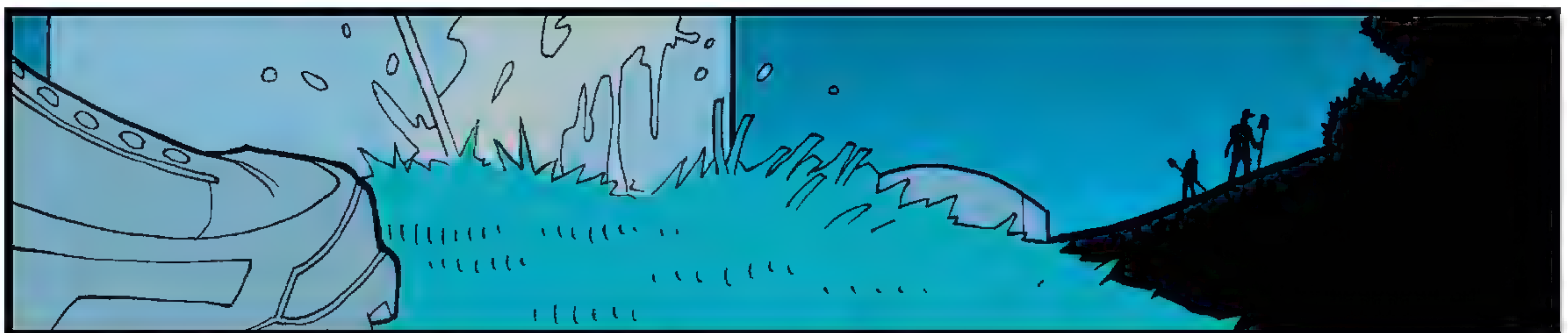
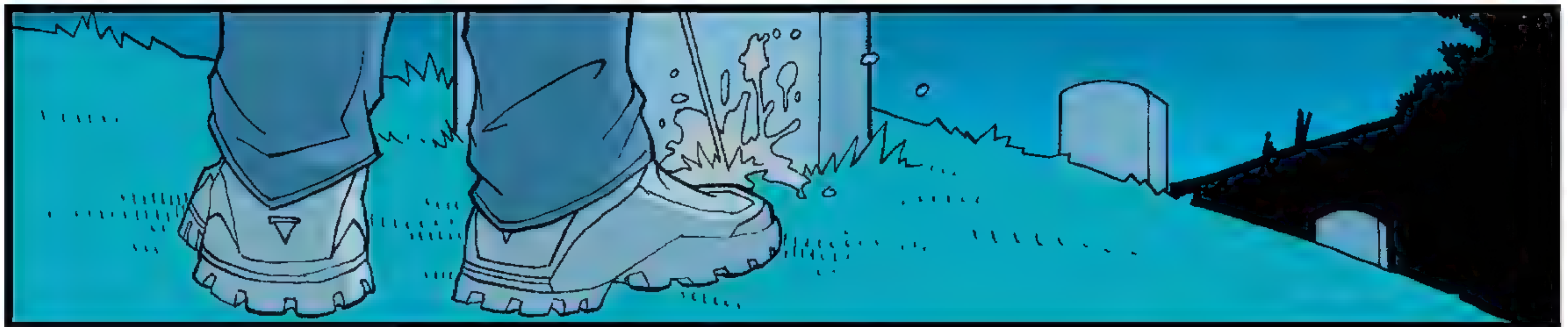
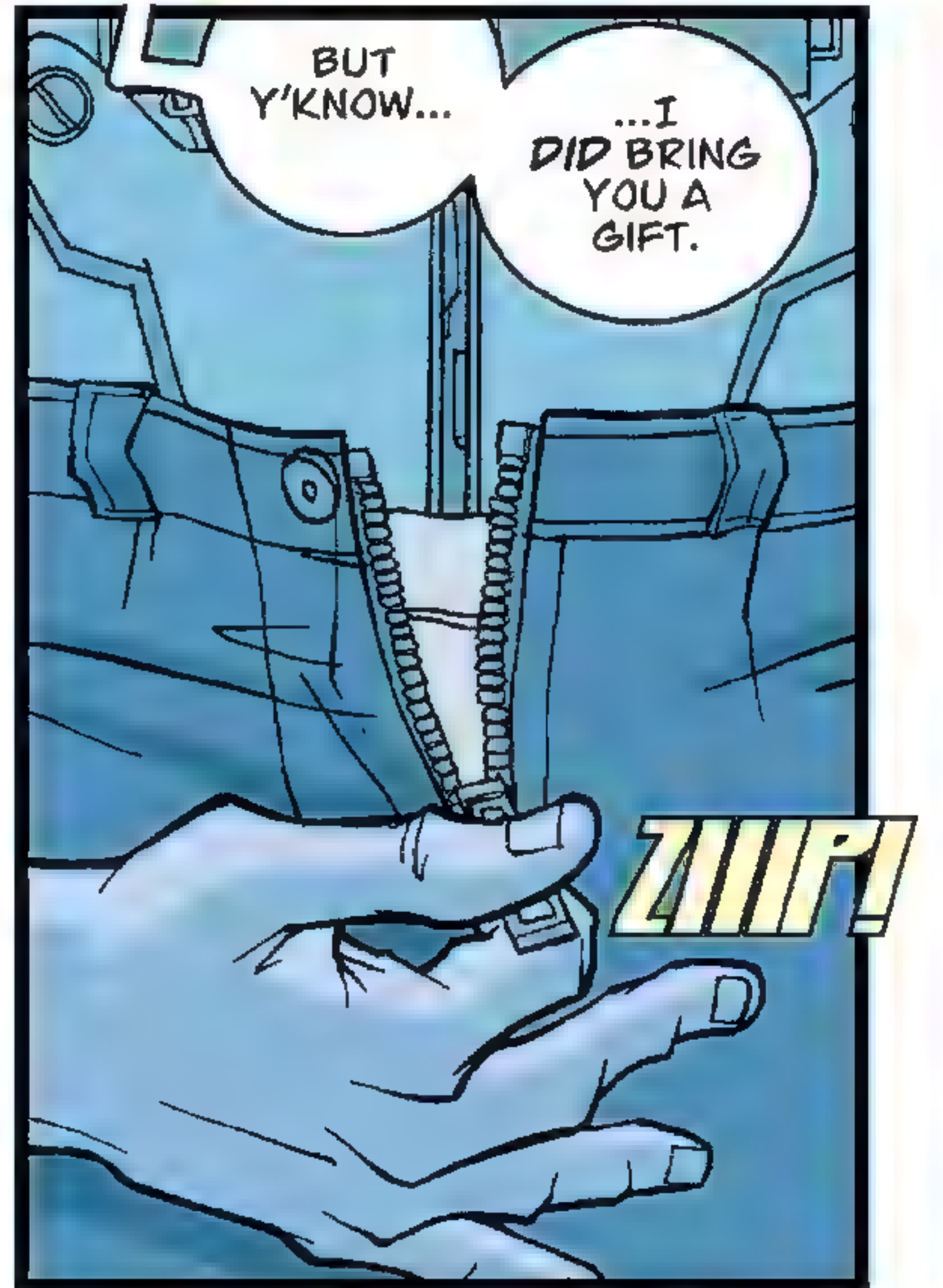
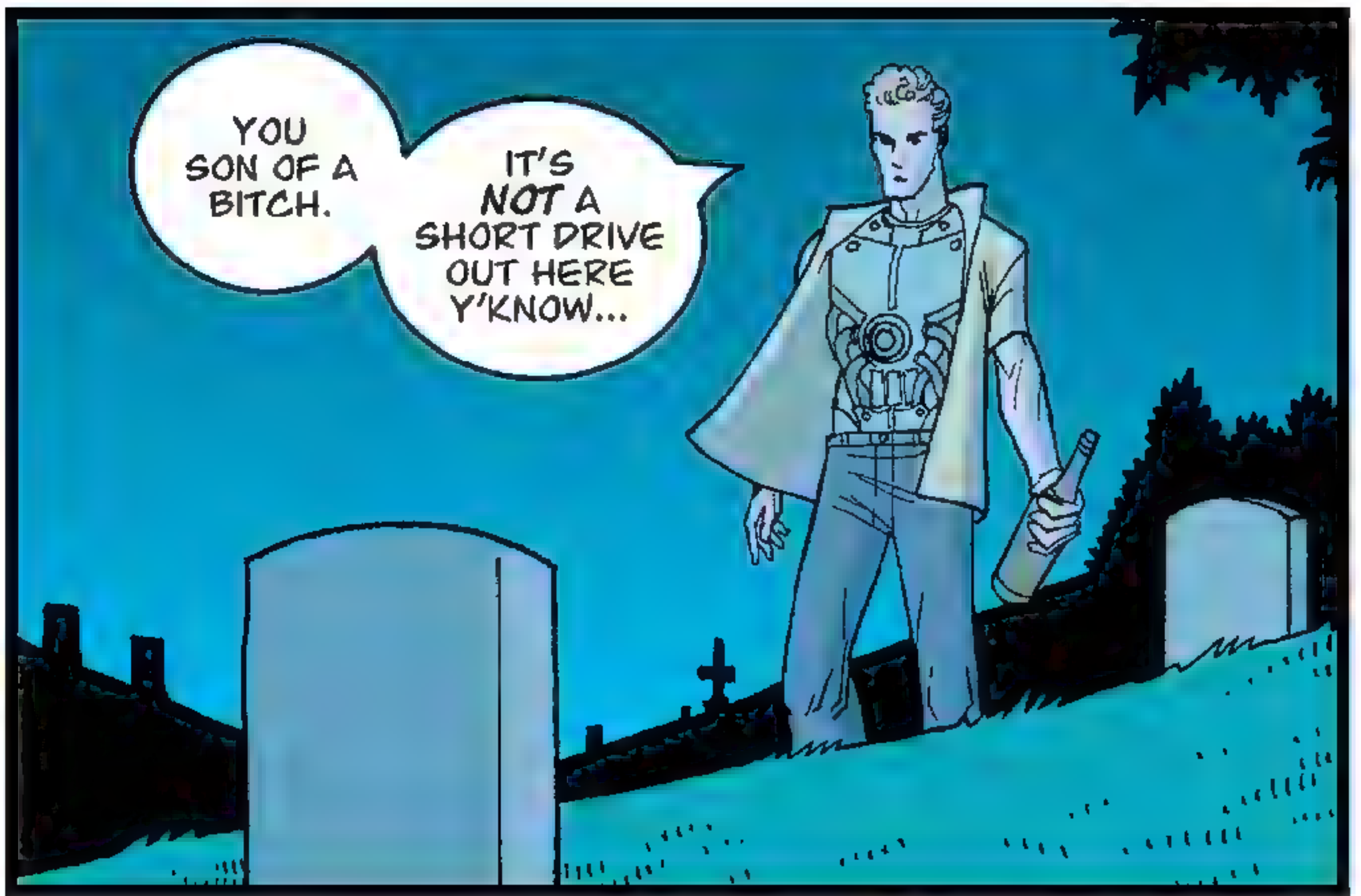


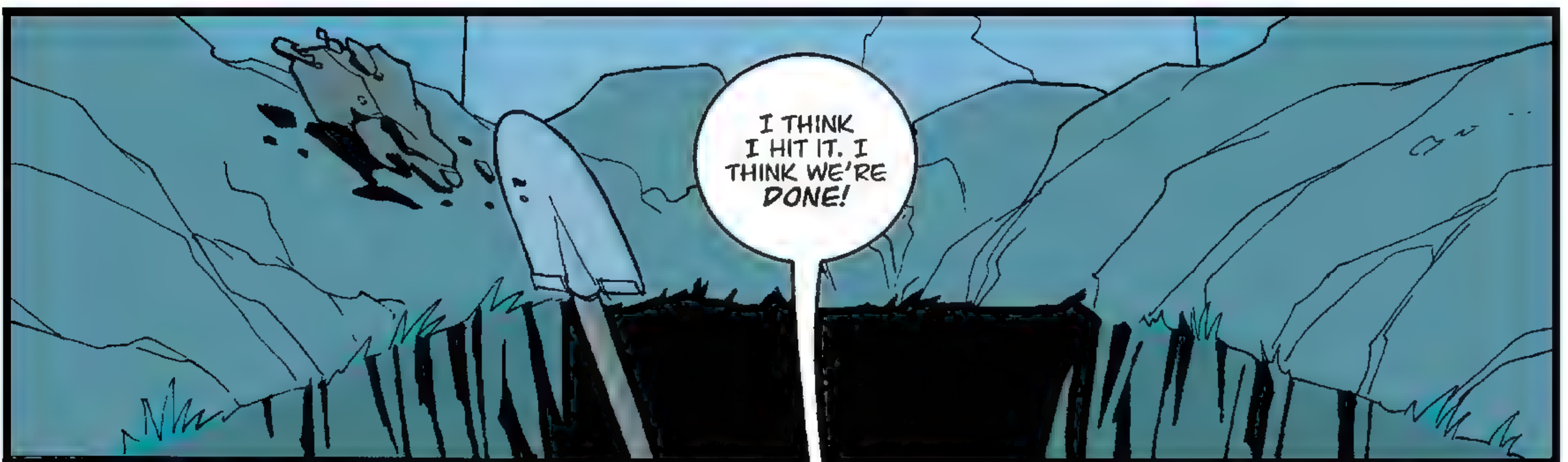
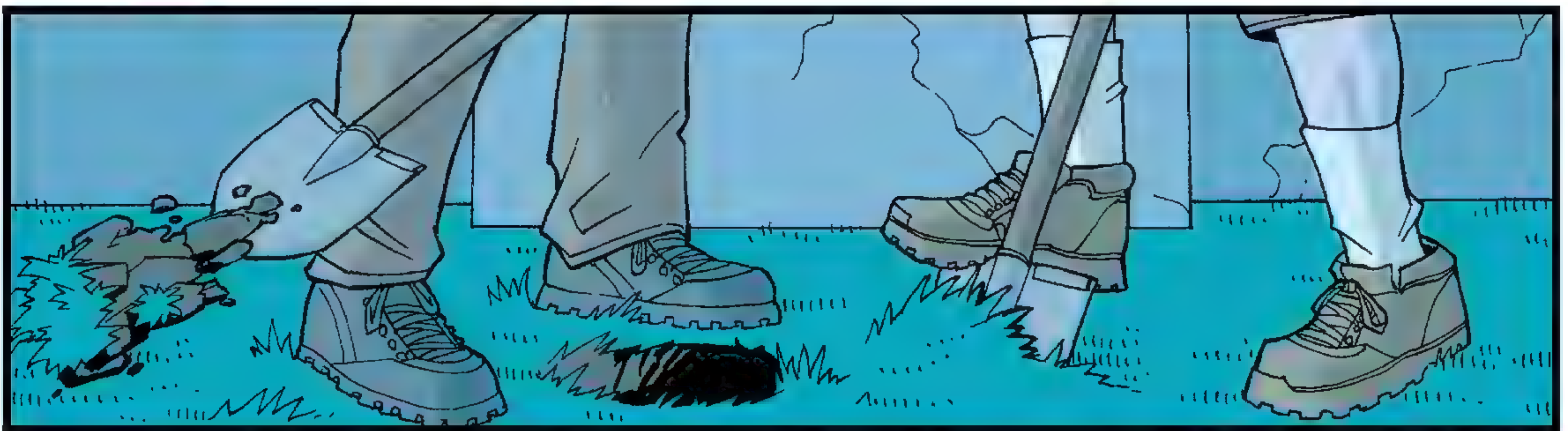












WE'LL
TAKE IT FROM
HERE, BOYS. YOU
HAVE NO IDEA
THE TIME
YOU'VE SAVED
US.

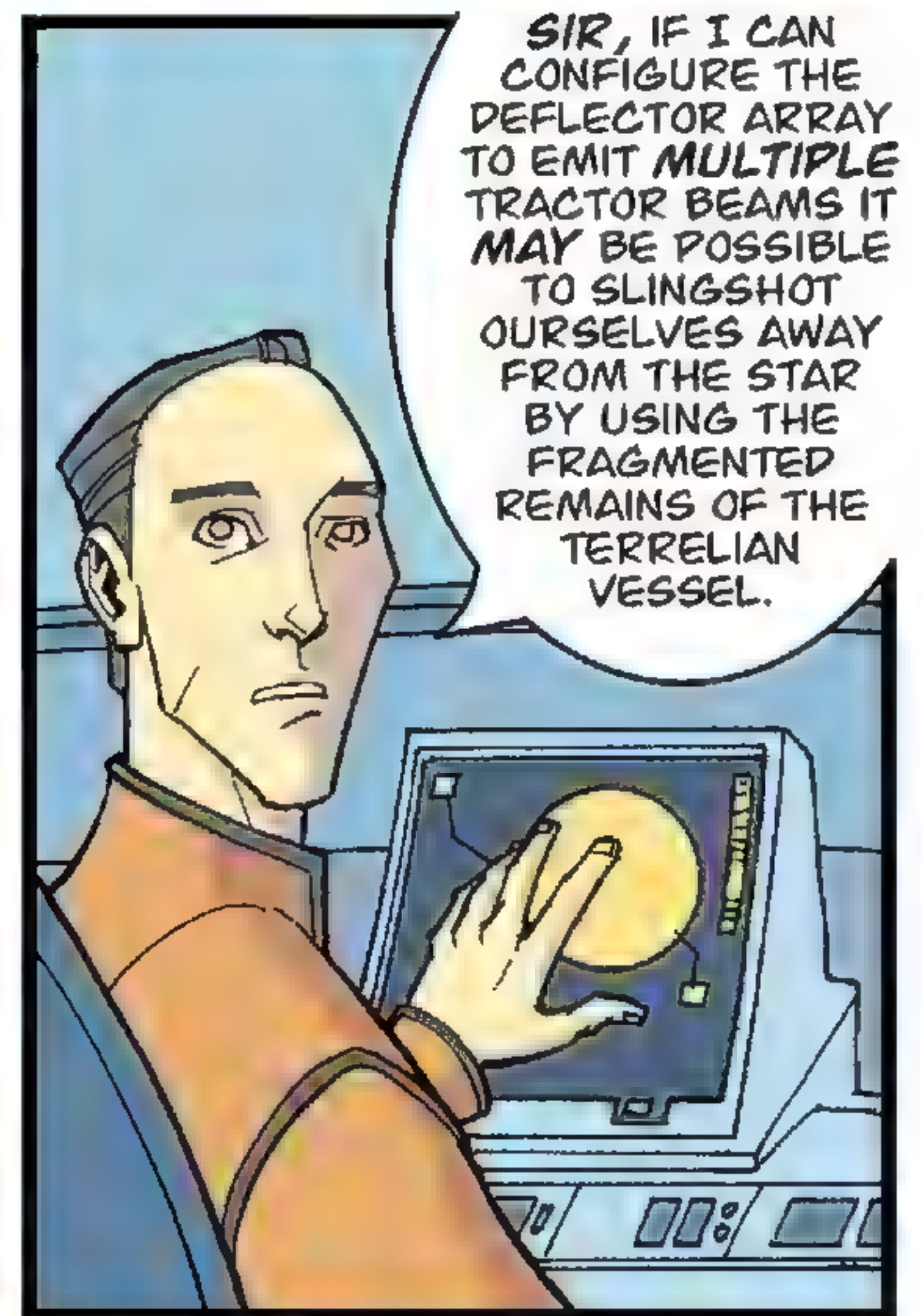
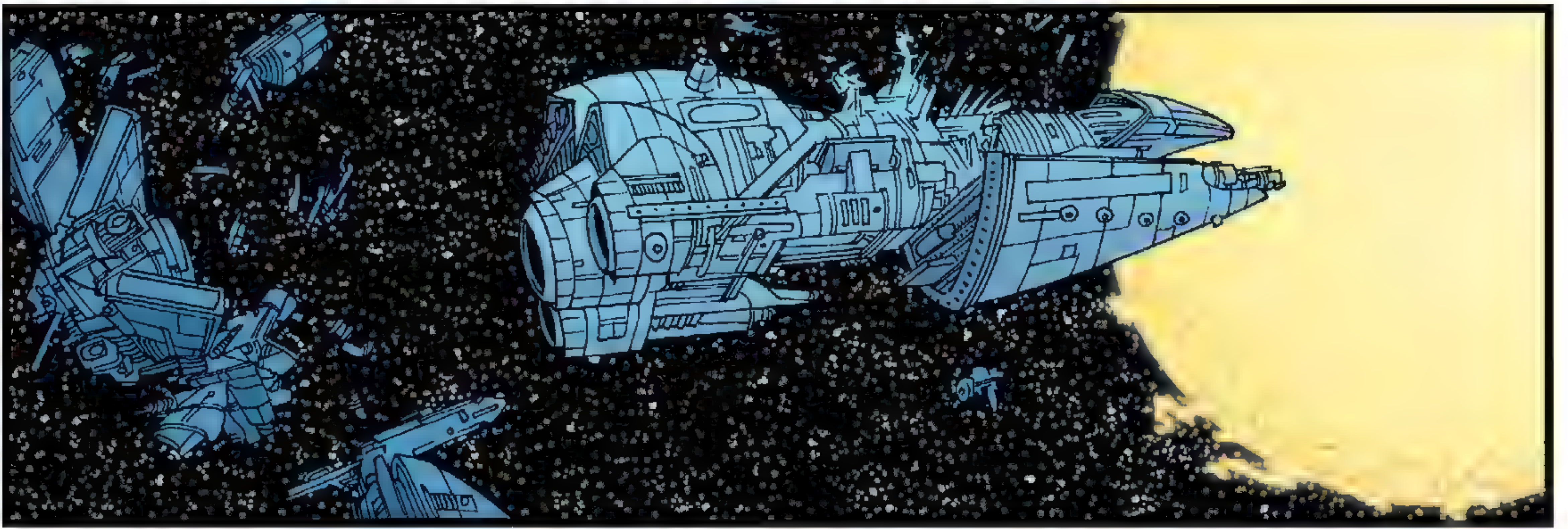
INDEED.





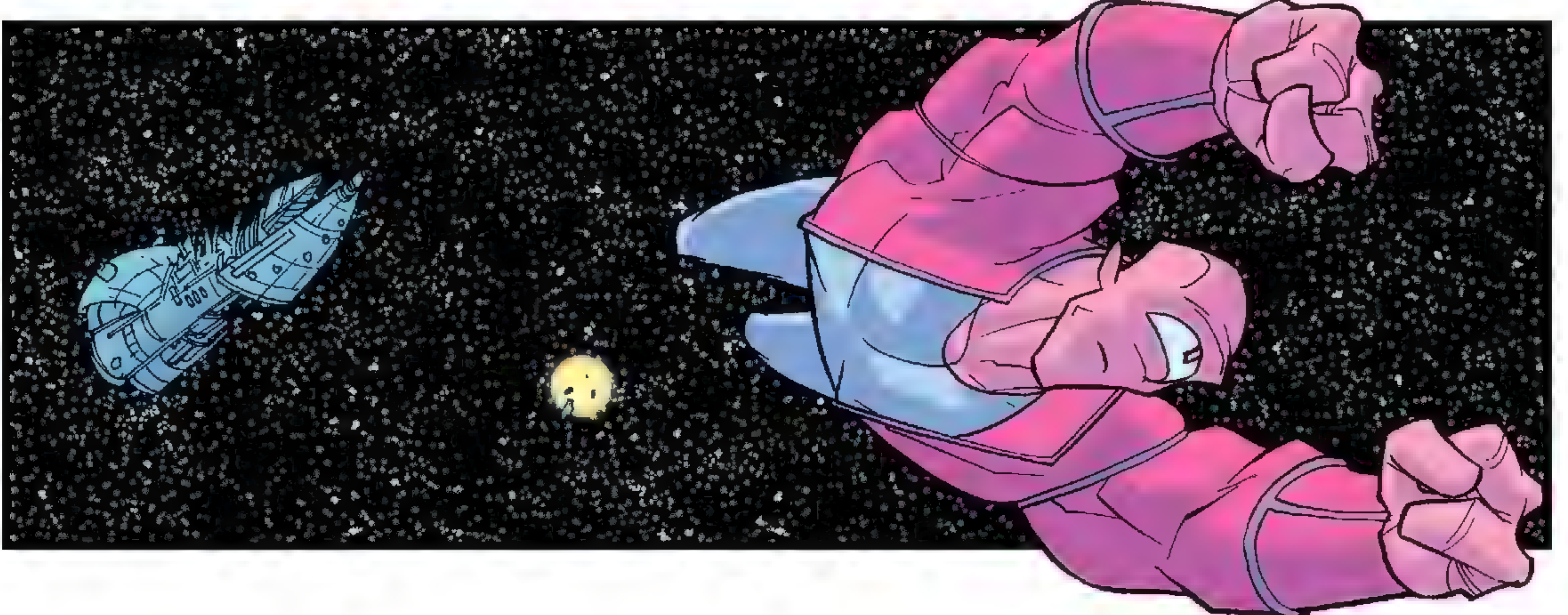
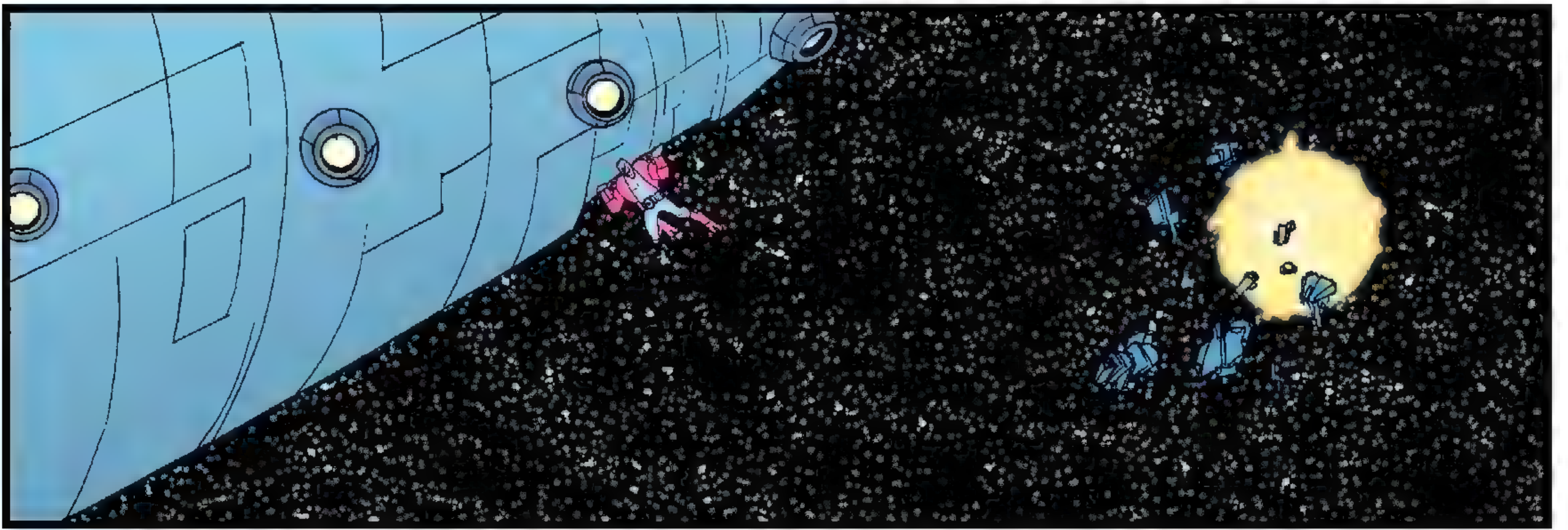
ISSUE NINE

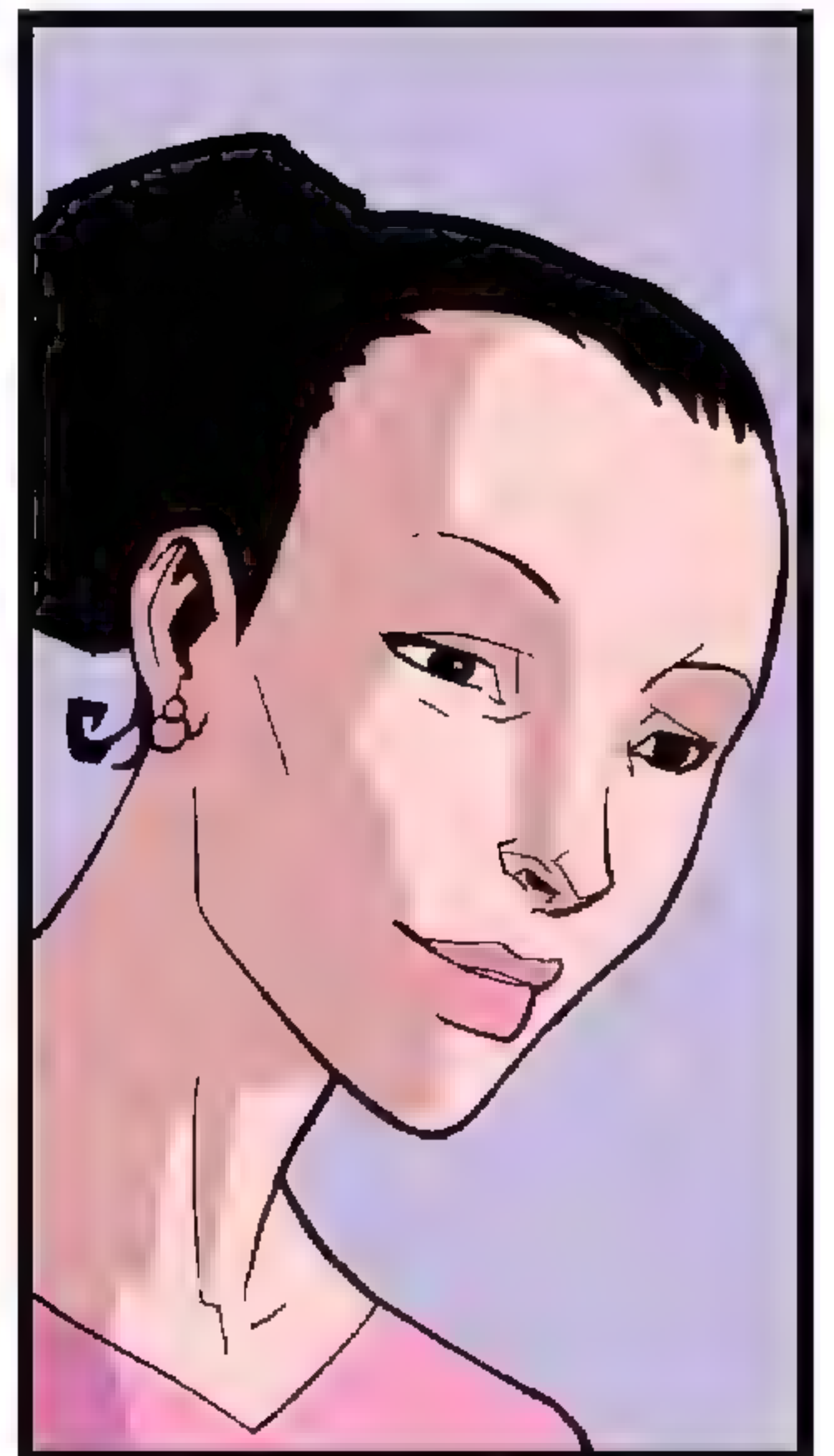
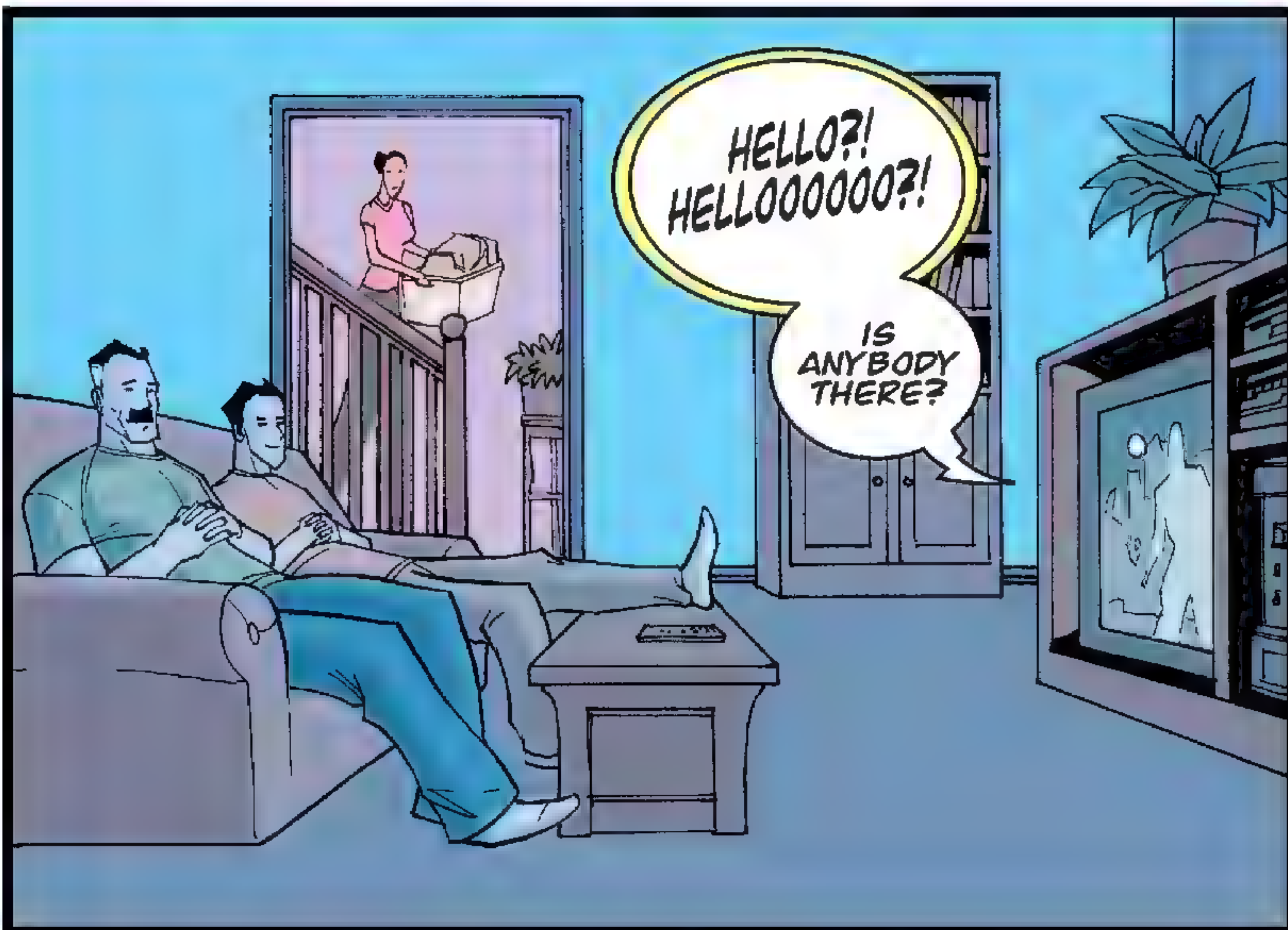
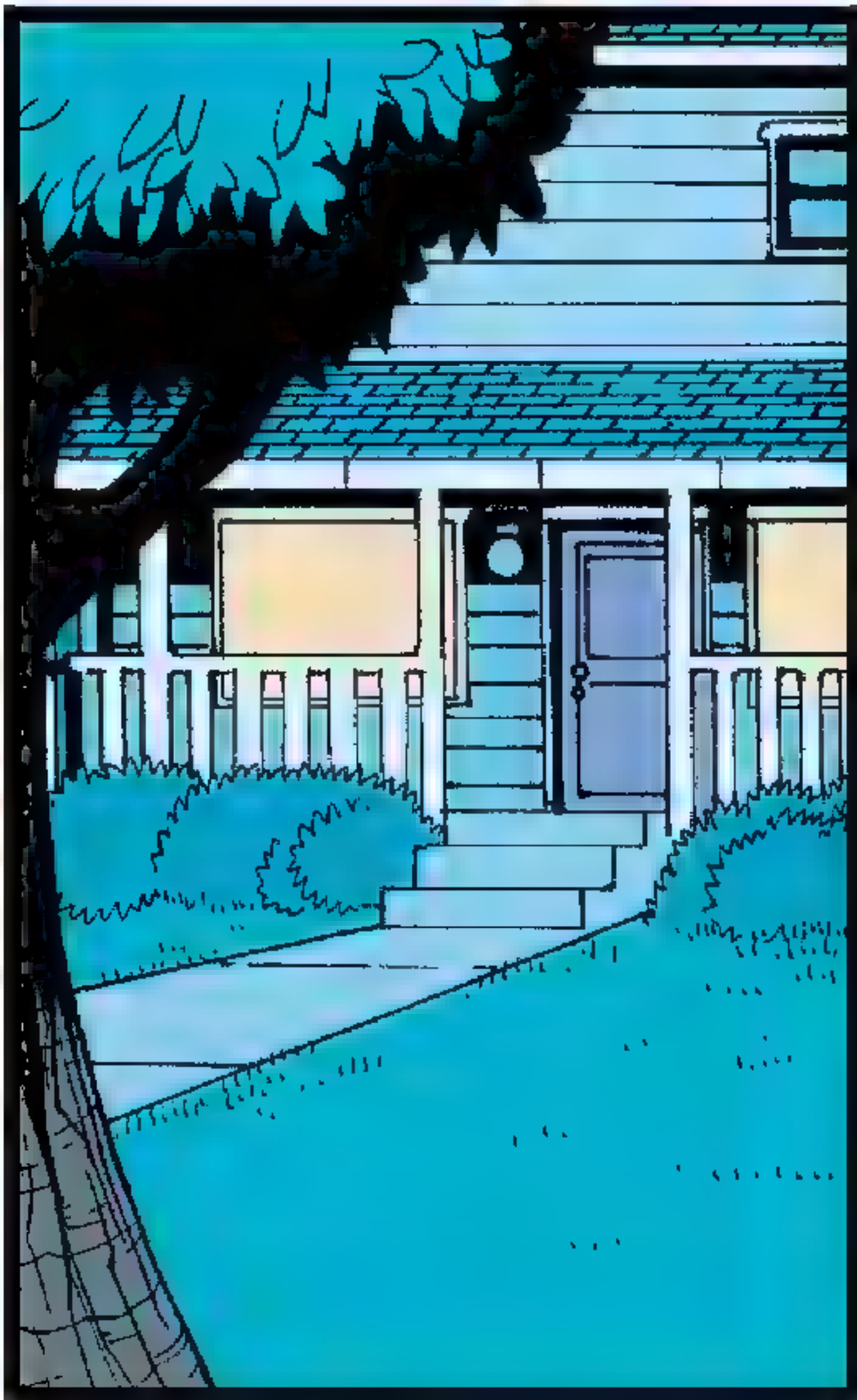


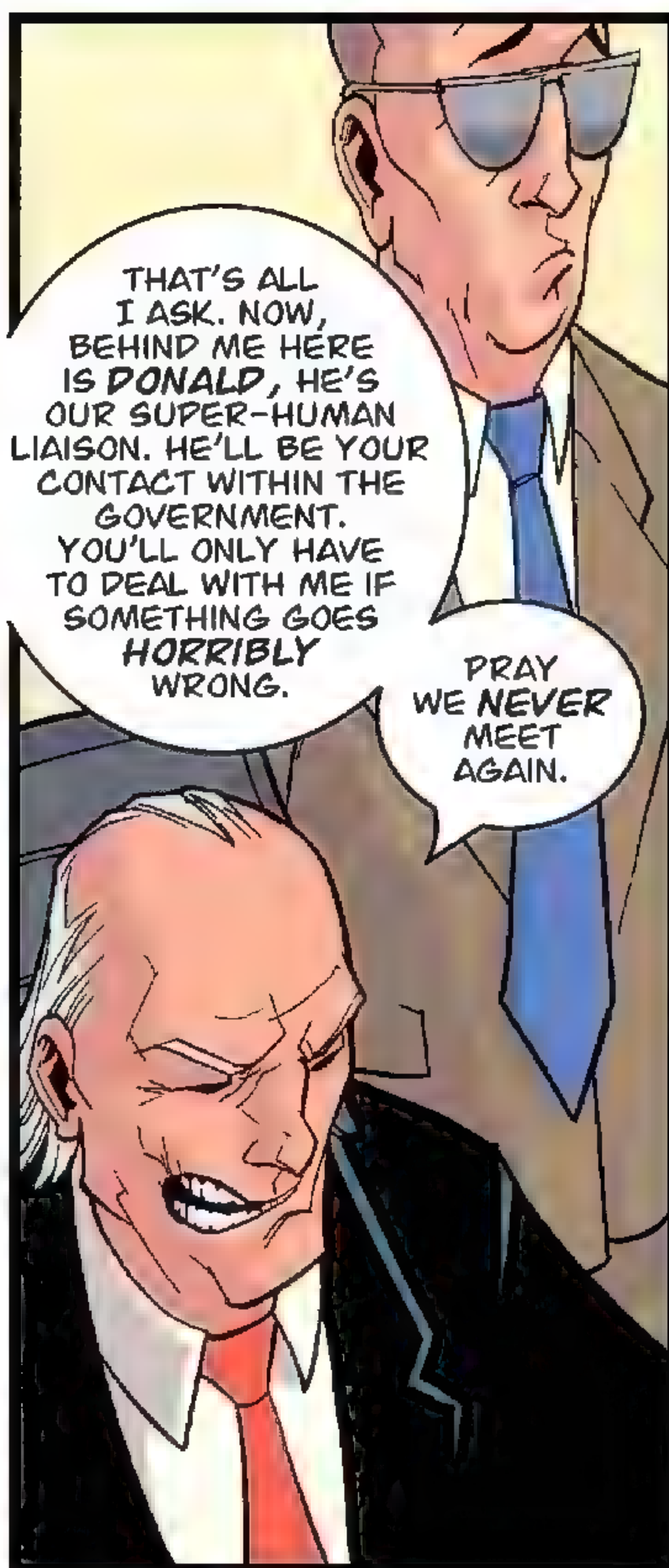
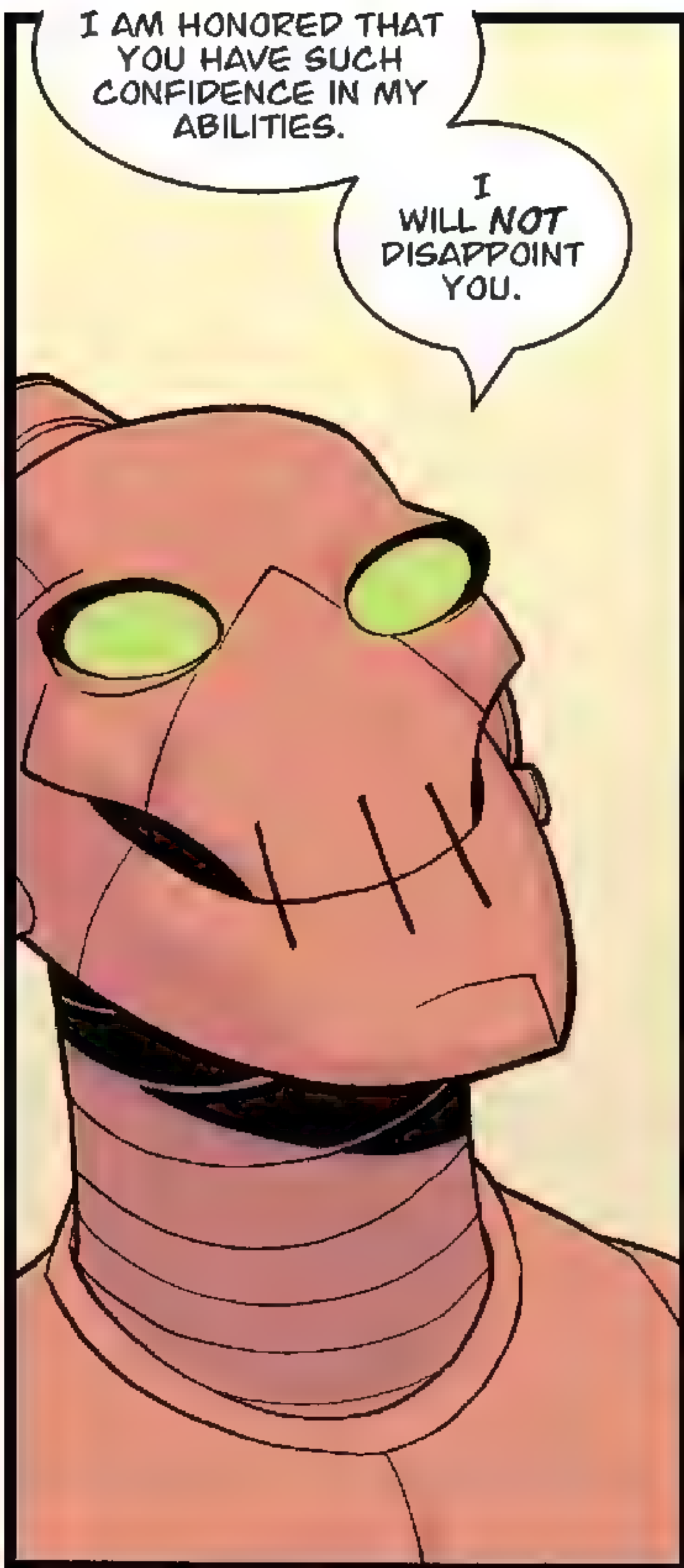
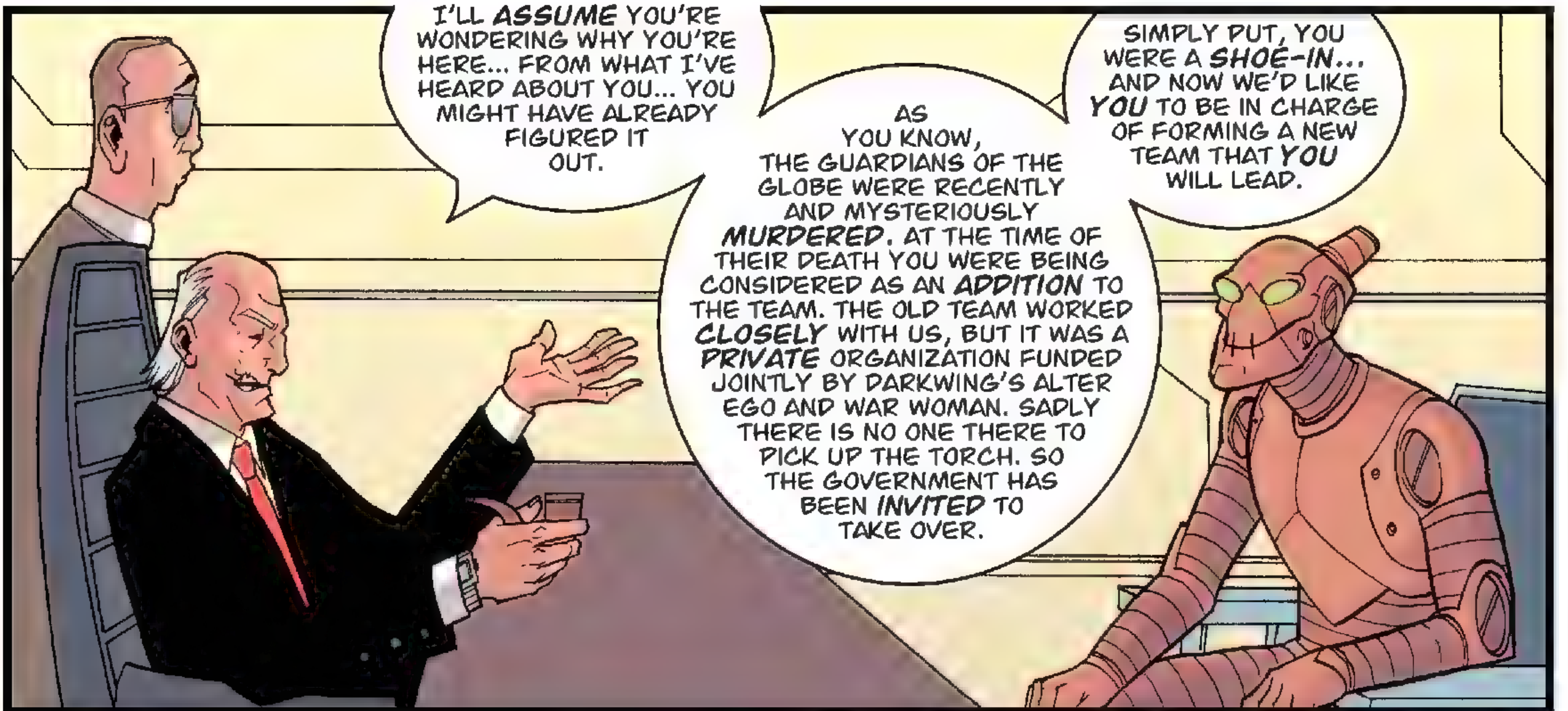
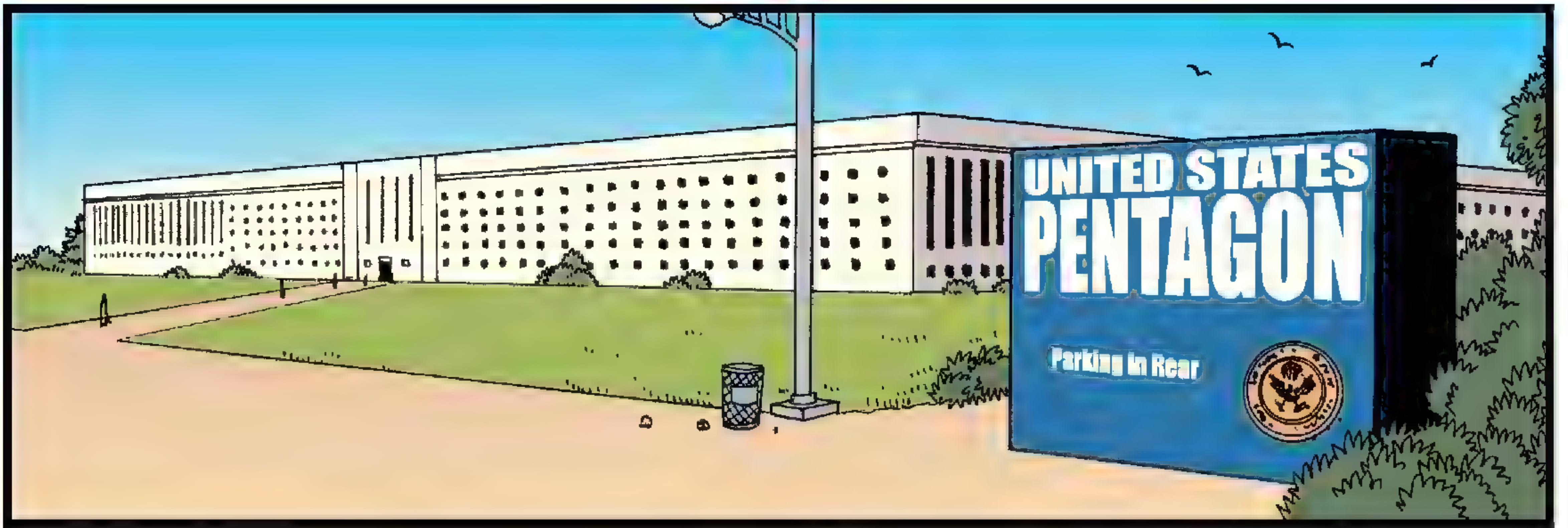


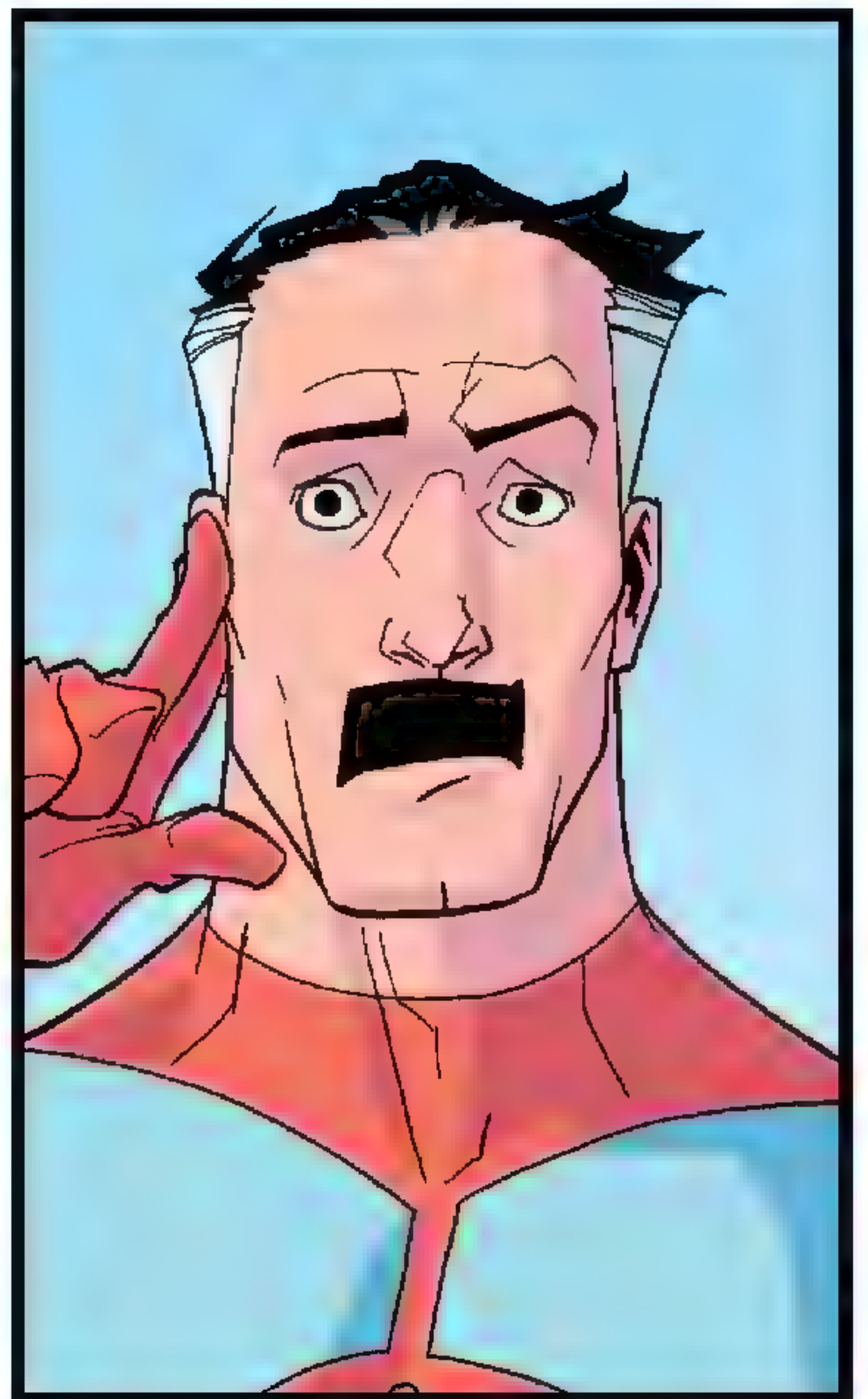
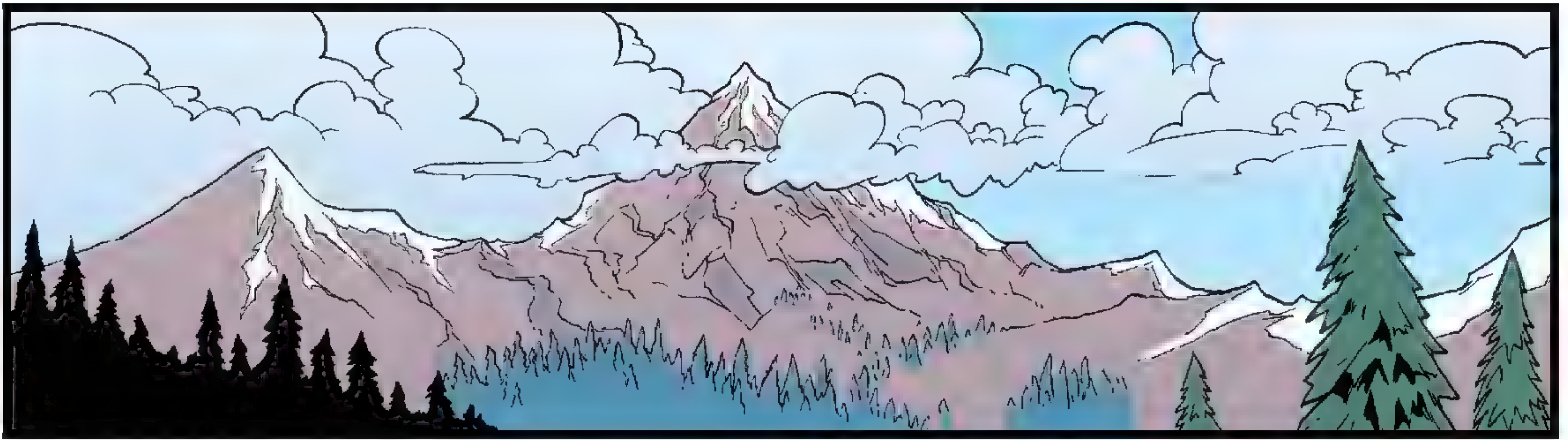
AMATEURS.

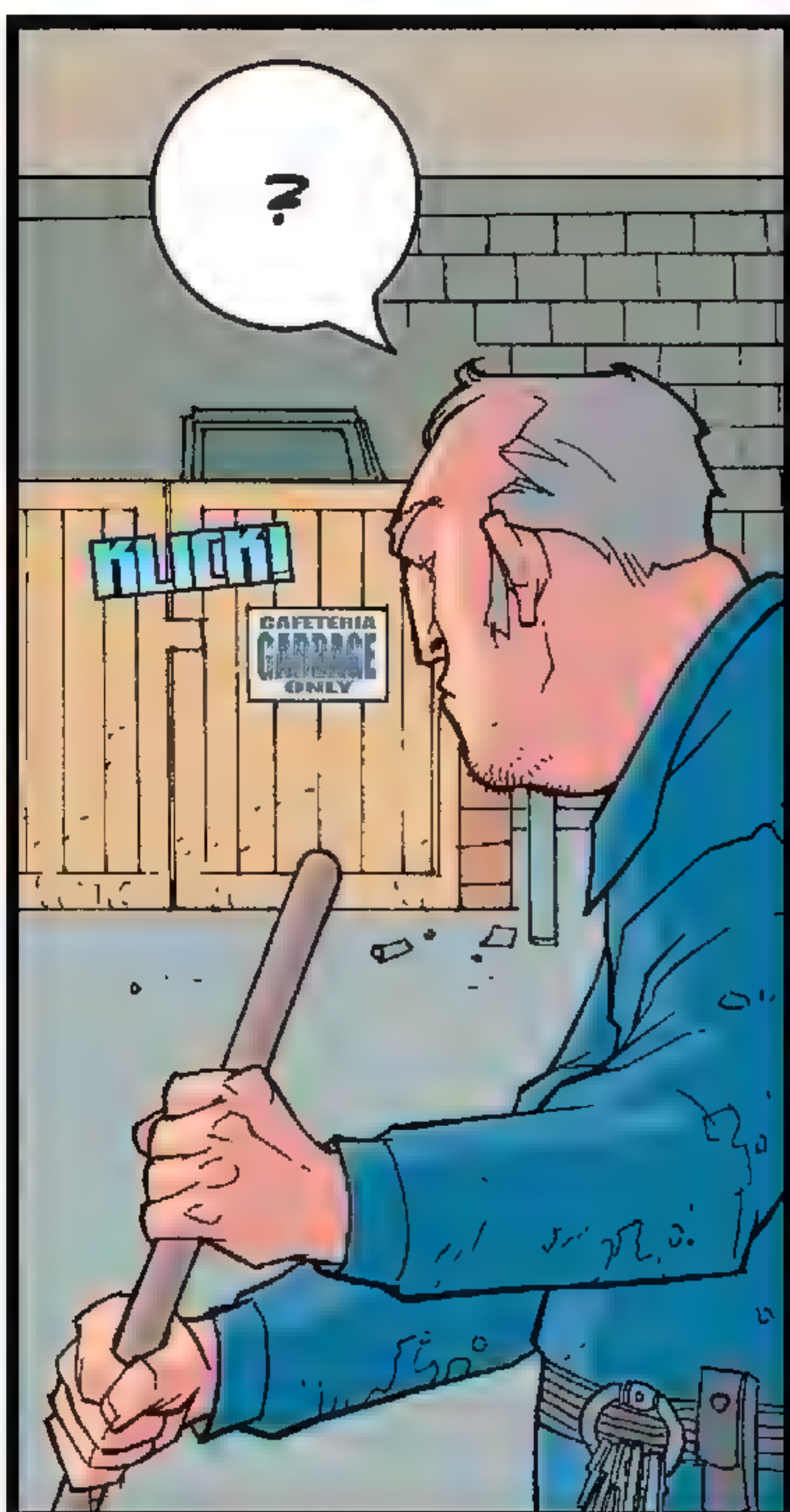
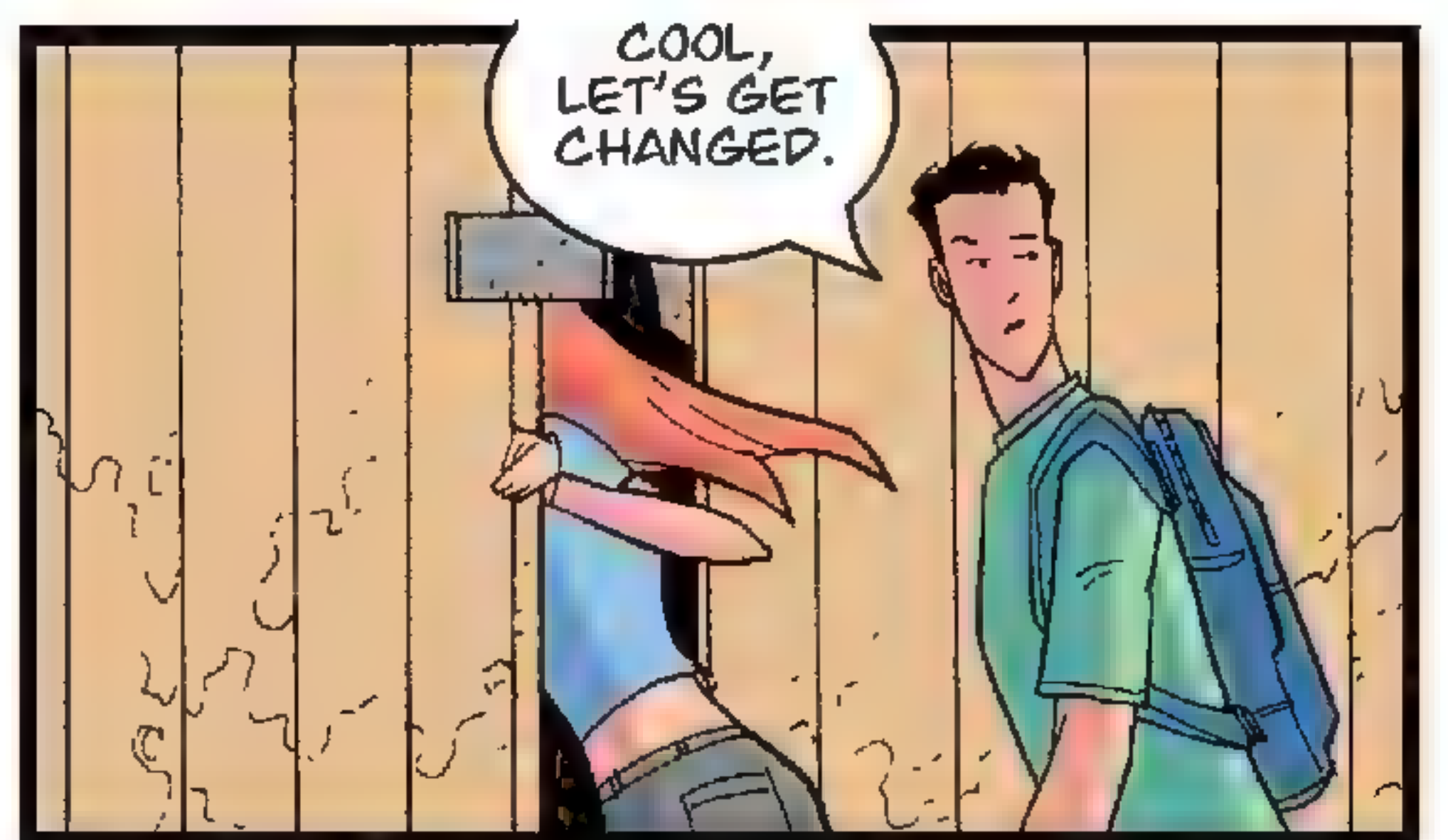
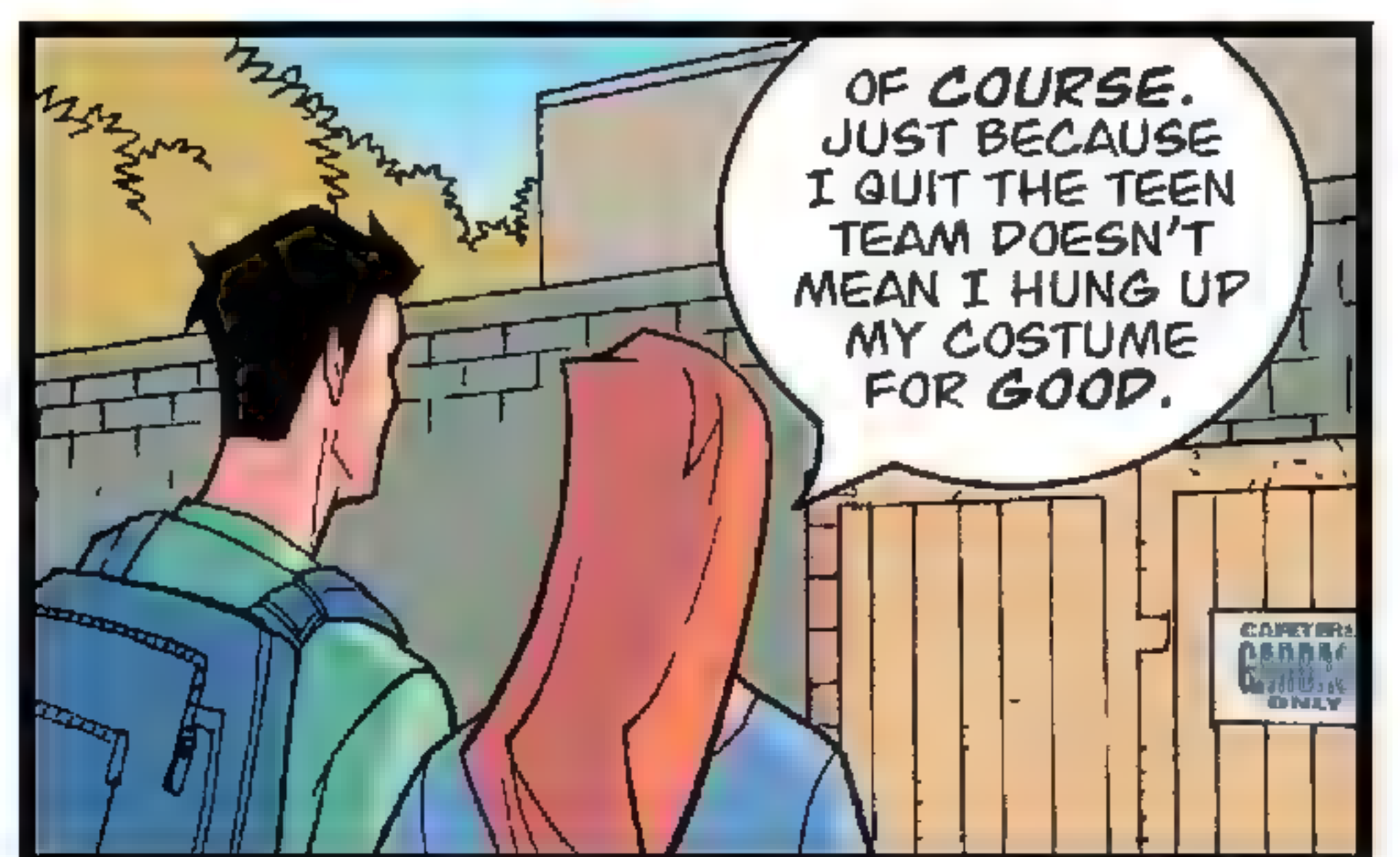
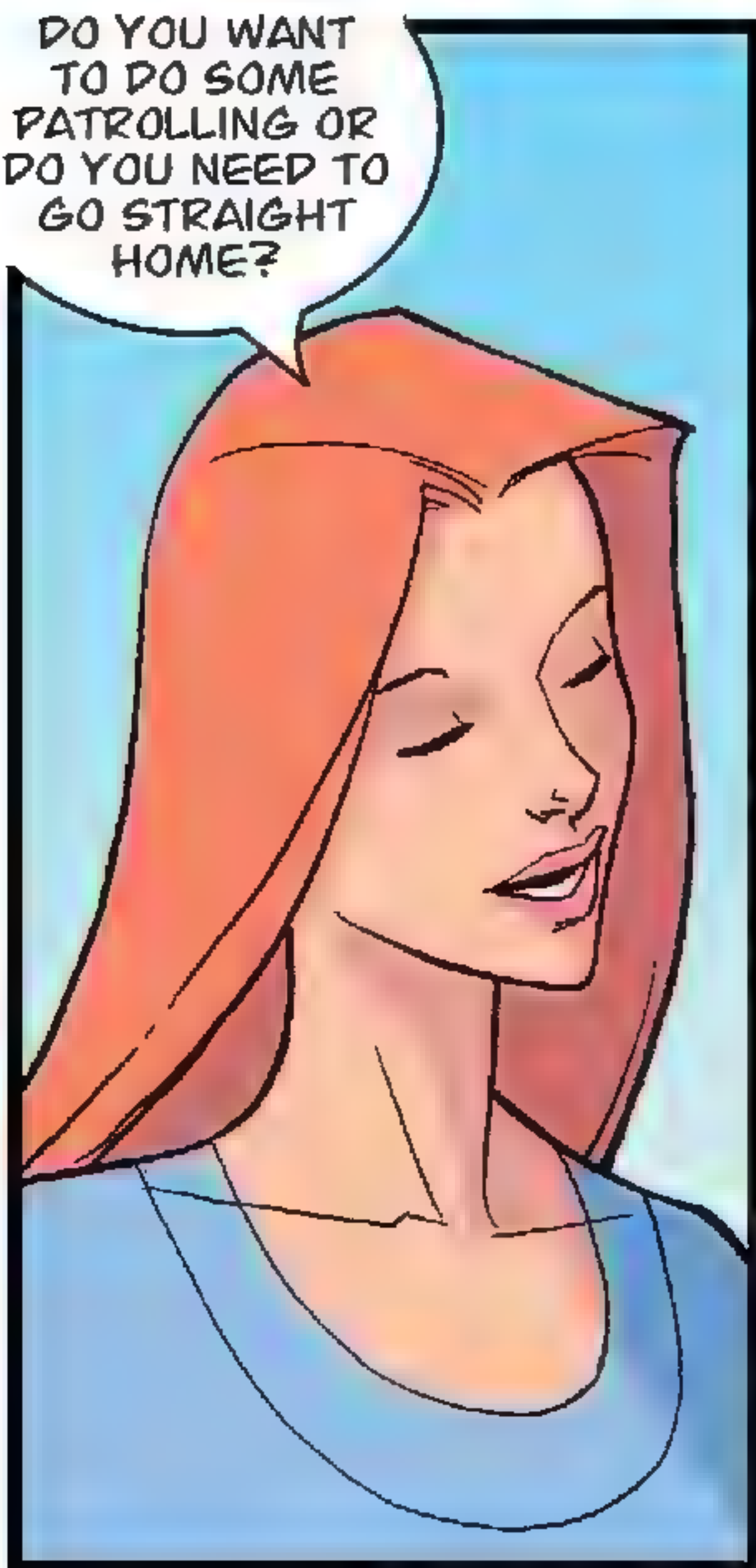
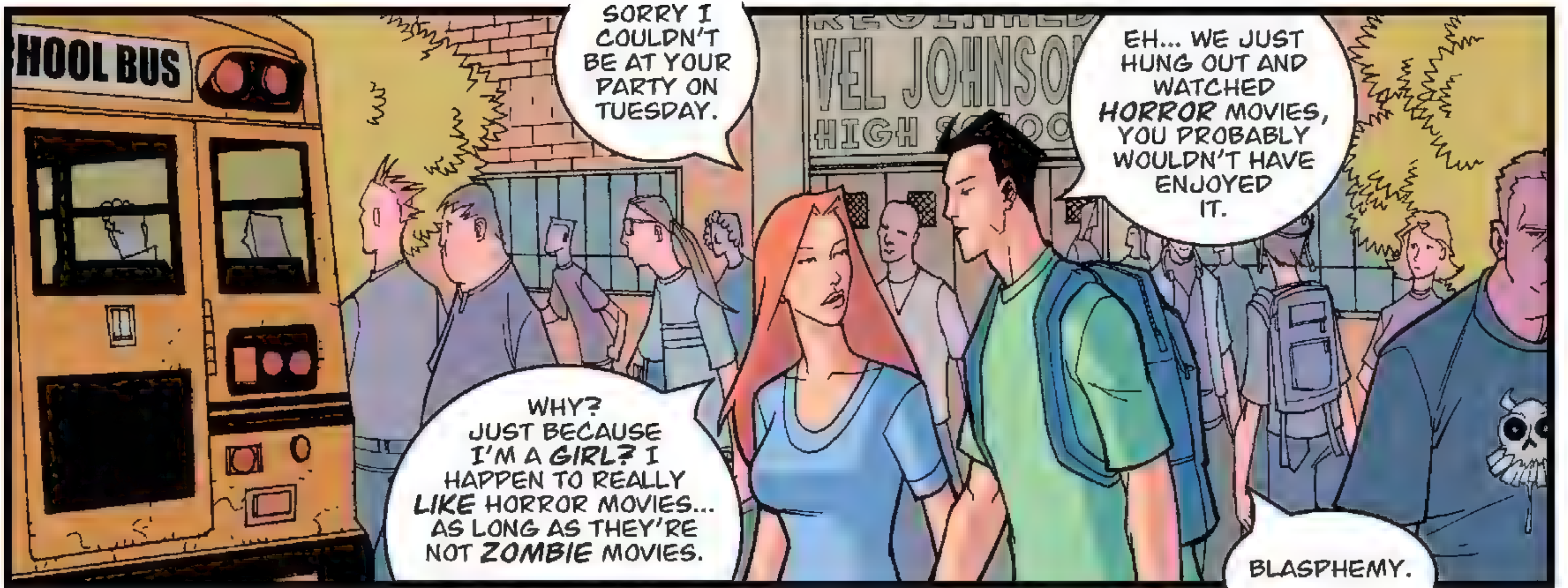


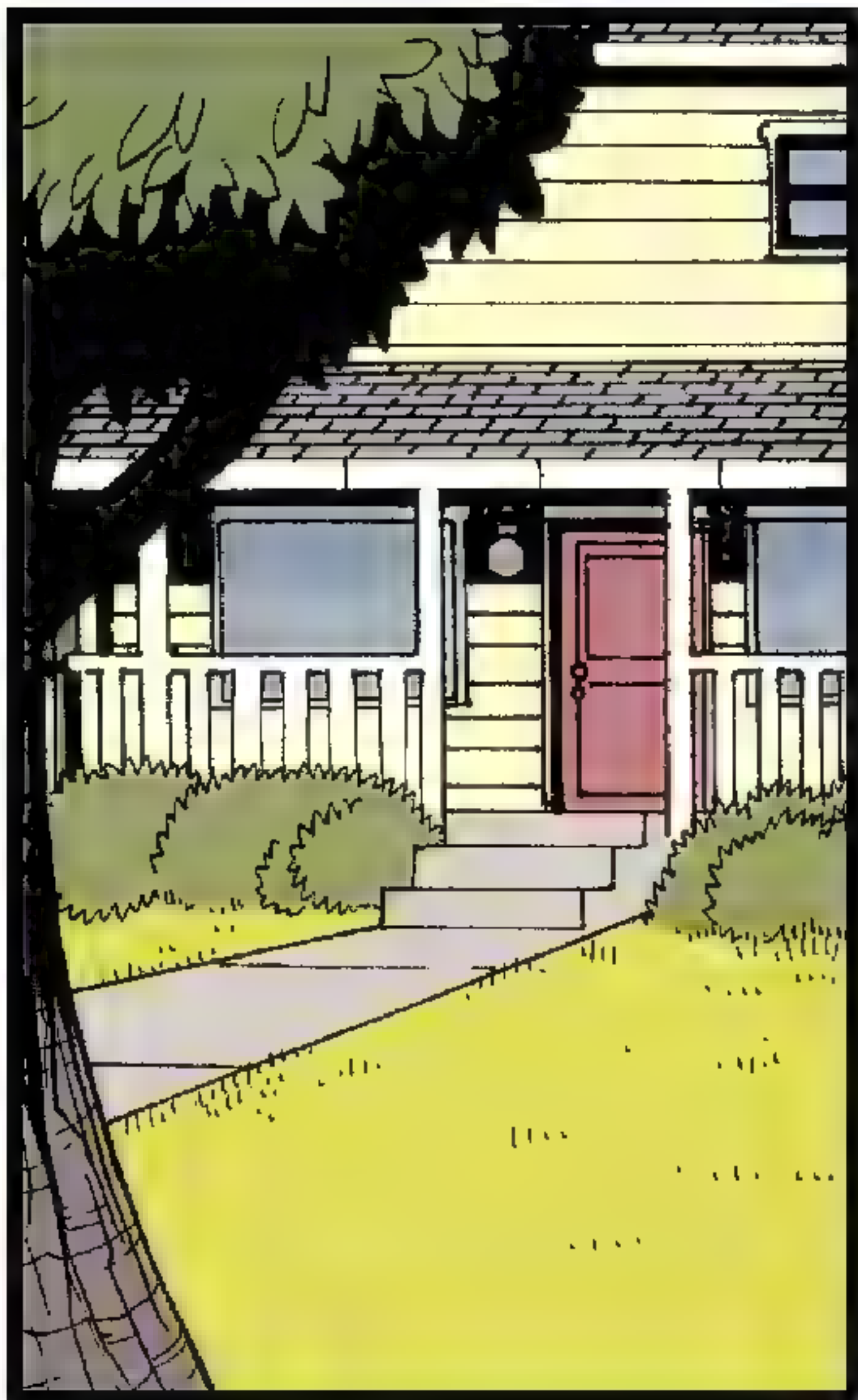






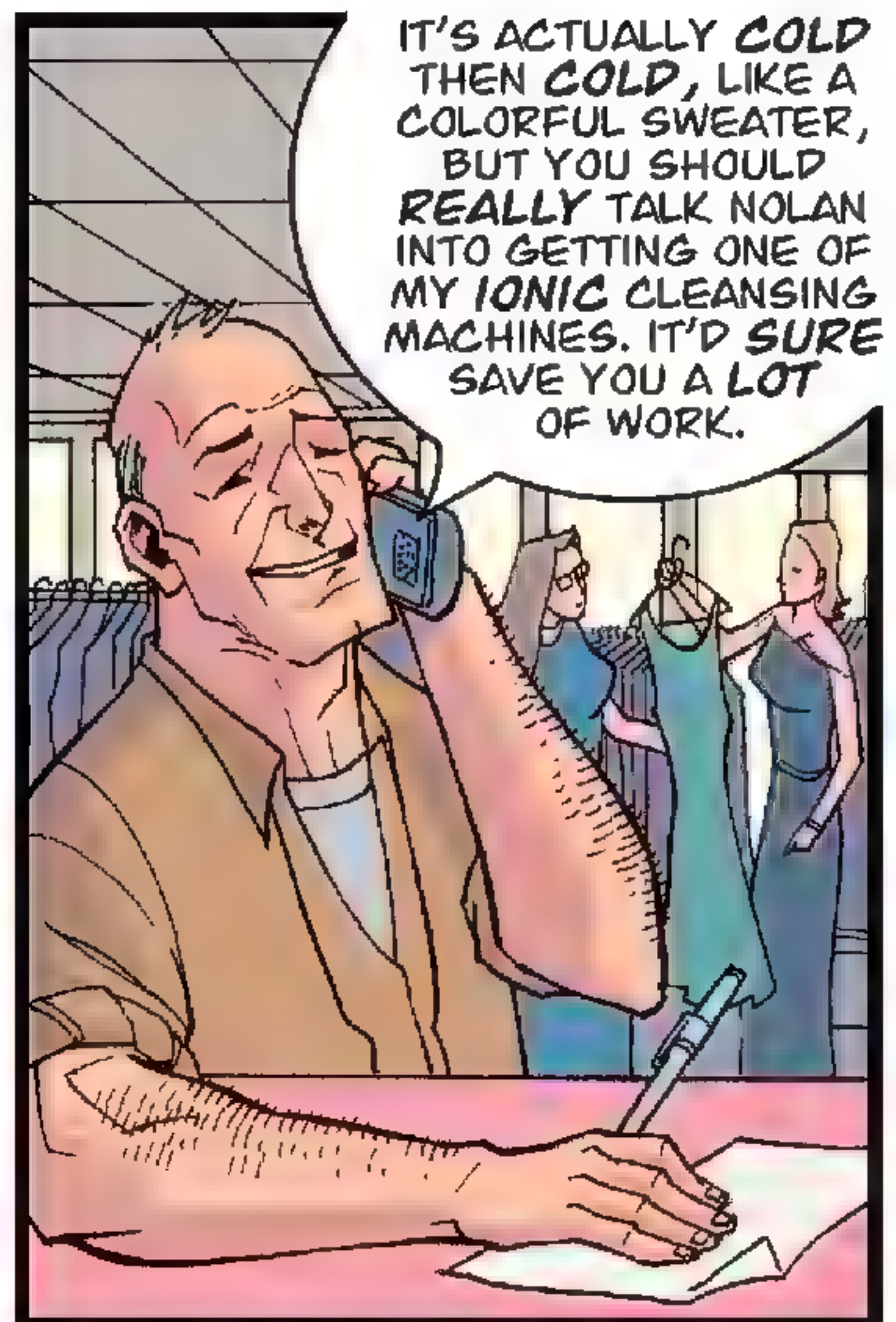






JEEZ.

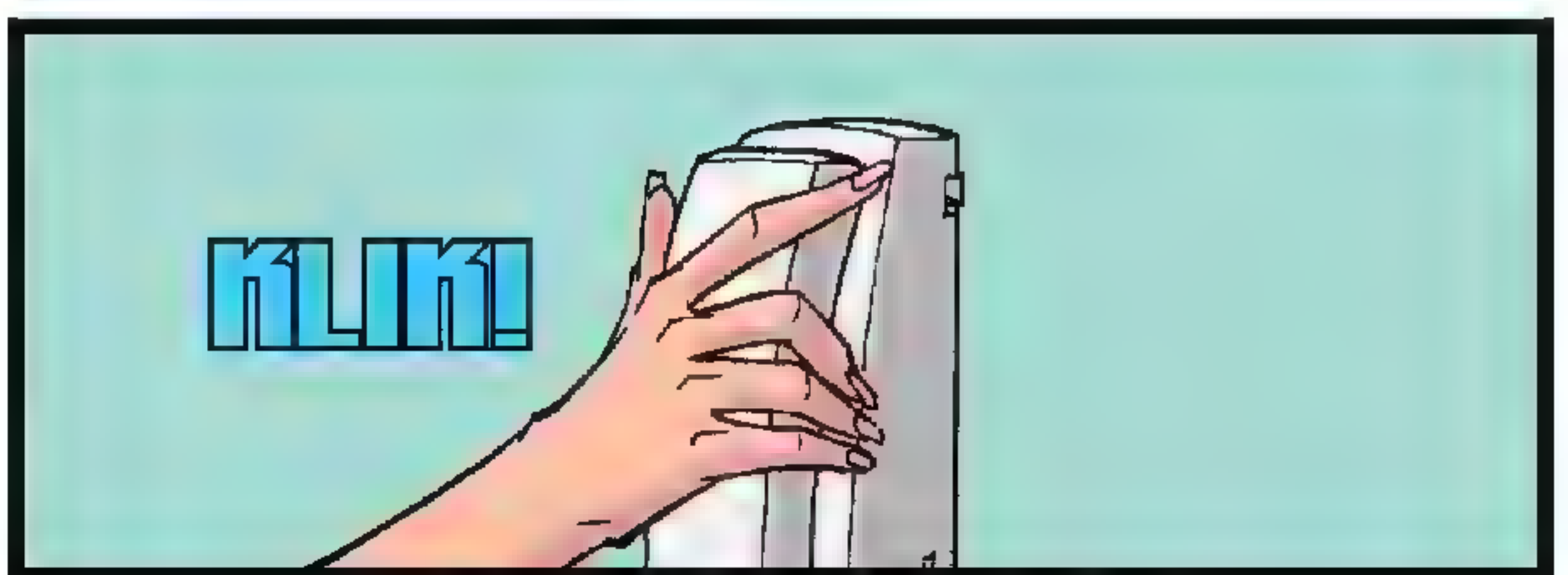
YEAH, ARE WE ON A SECURE LINE? SORRY TO BOTHER YOU IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DAY BUT MARK **FINALLY** PUT ANOTHER ONE OF HIS COSTUMES IN THE WASH AND I CAN'T REMEMBER IF IT'S COLD THEN WARM OR WARM THEN COLD. YOU'D THINK I WOULD **KNOW** THIS BUT NOLAN HAS BEEN CLEANING HIS UNIFORMS WITH SOLAR RADIATION SINCE I SHRANK HIS **FIRST** ONE ON ACCIDENT.



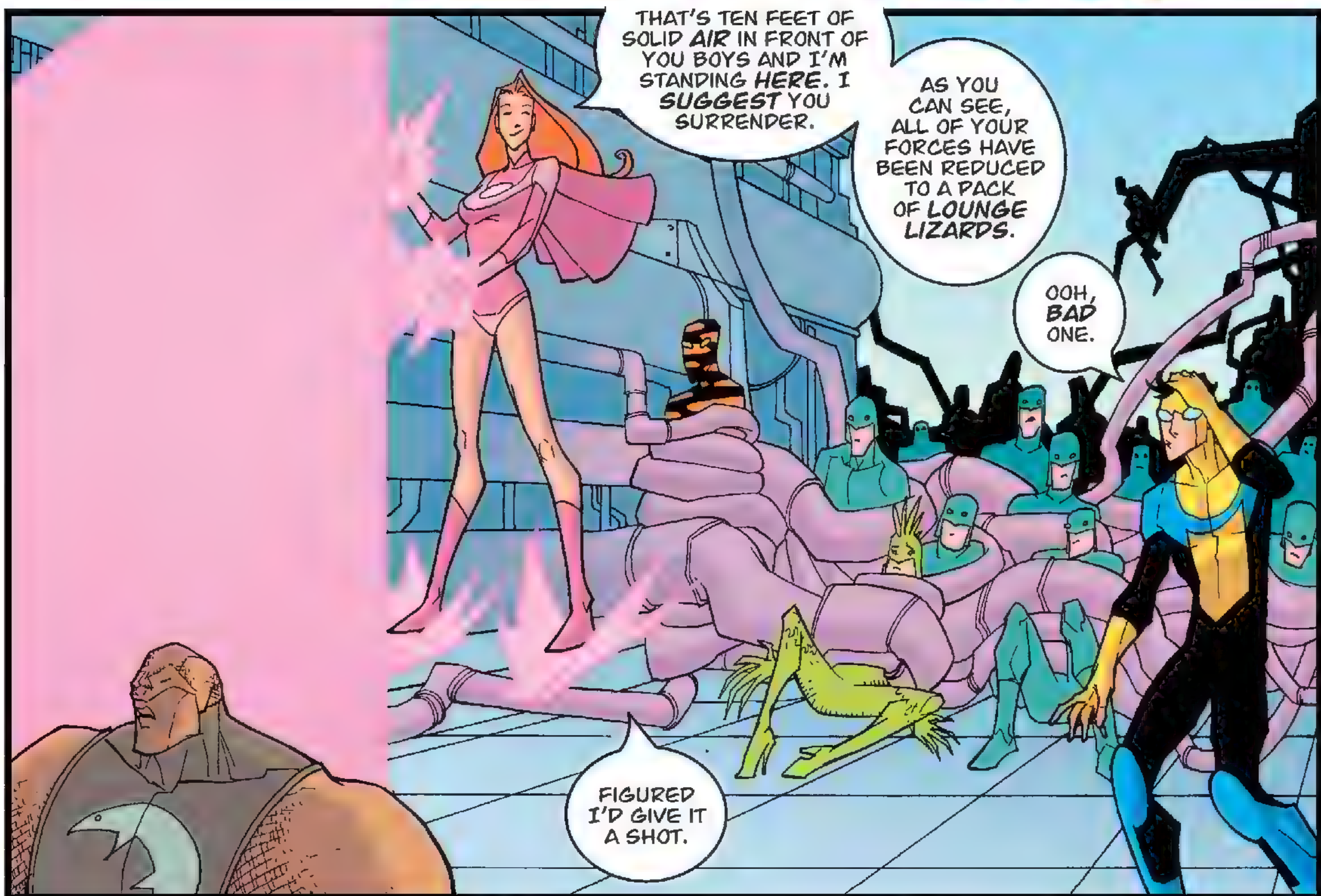
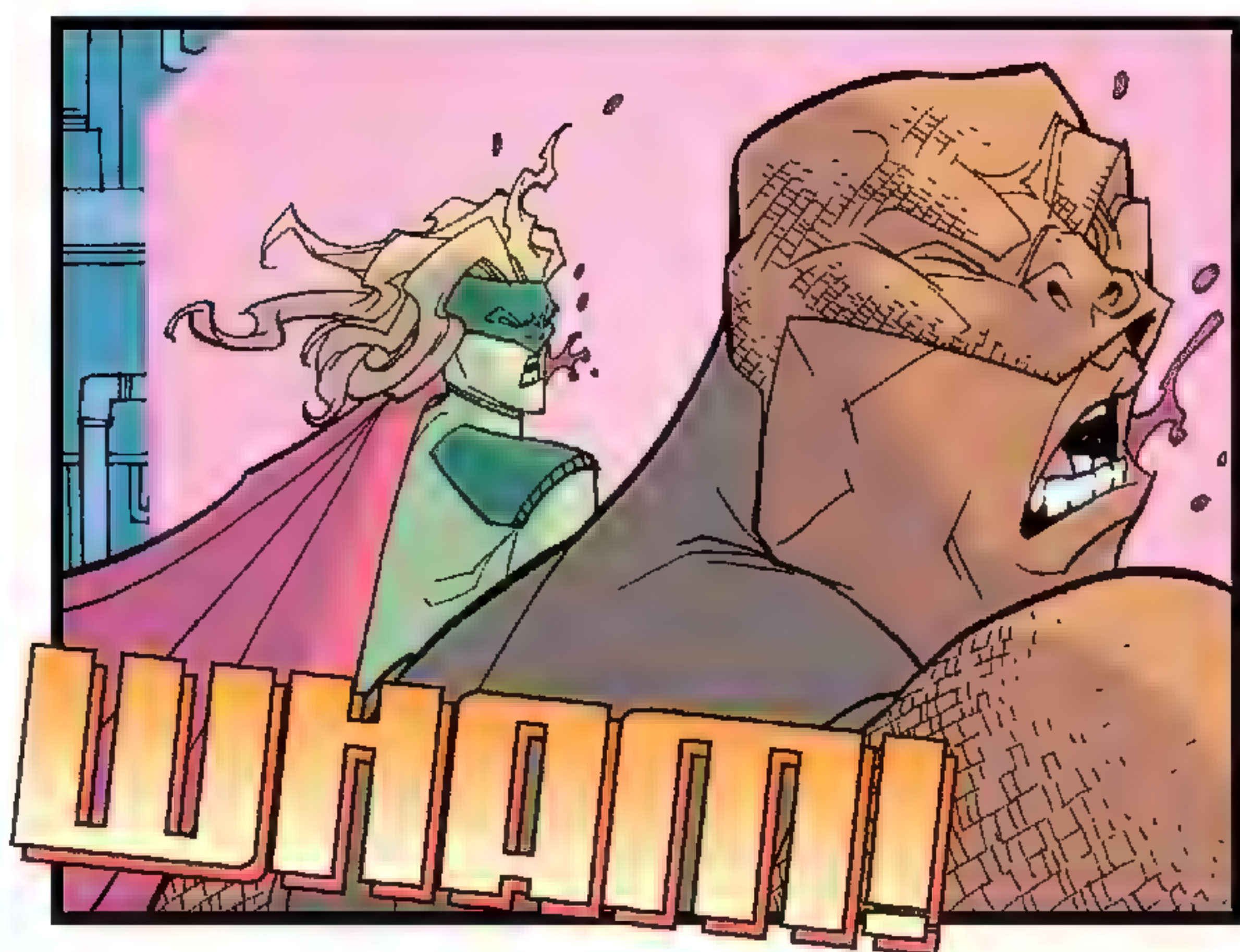
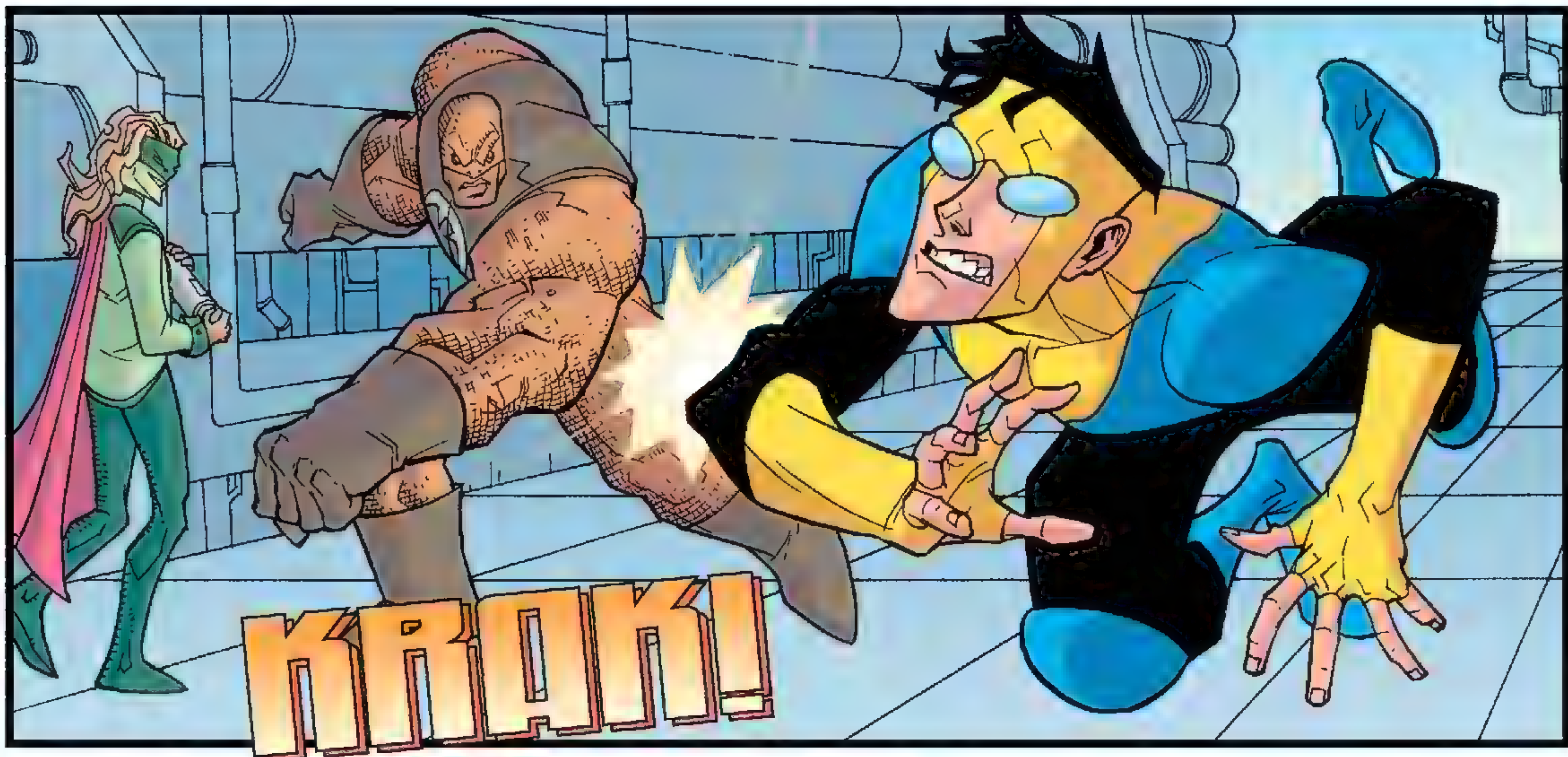
IT'S ACTUALLY **COLD** THEN **COLD**, LIKE A COLORFUL SWEATER, BUT YOU SHOULD **REALLY** TALK NOLAN INTO GETTING ONE OF MY **IONIC** CLEANSING MACHINES. IT'D **SURE** SAVE YOU A LOT OF WORK.

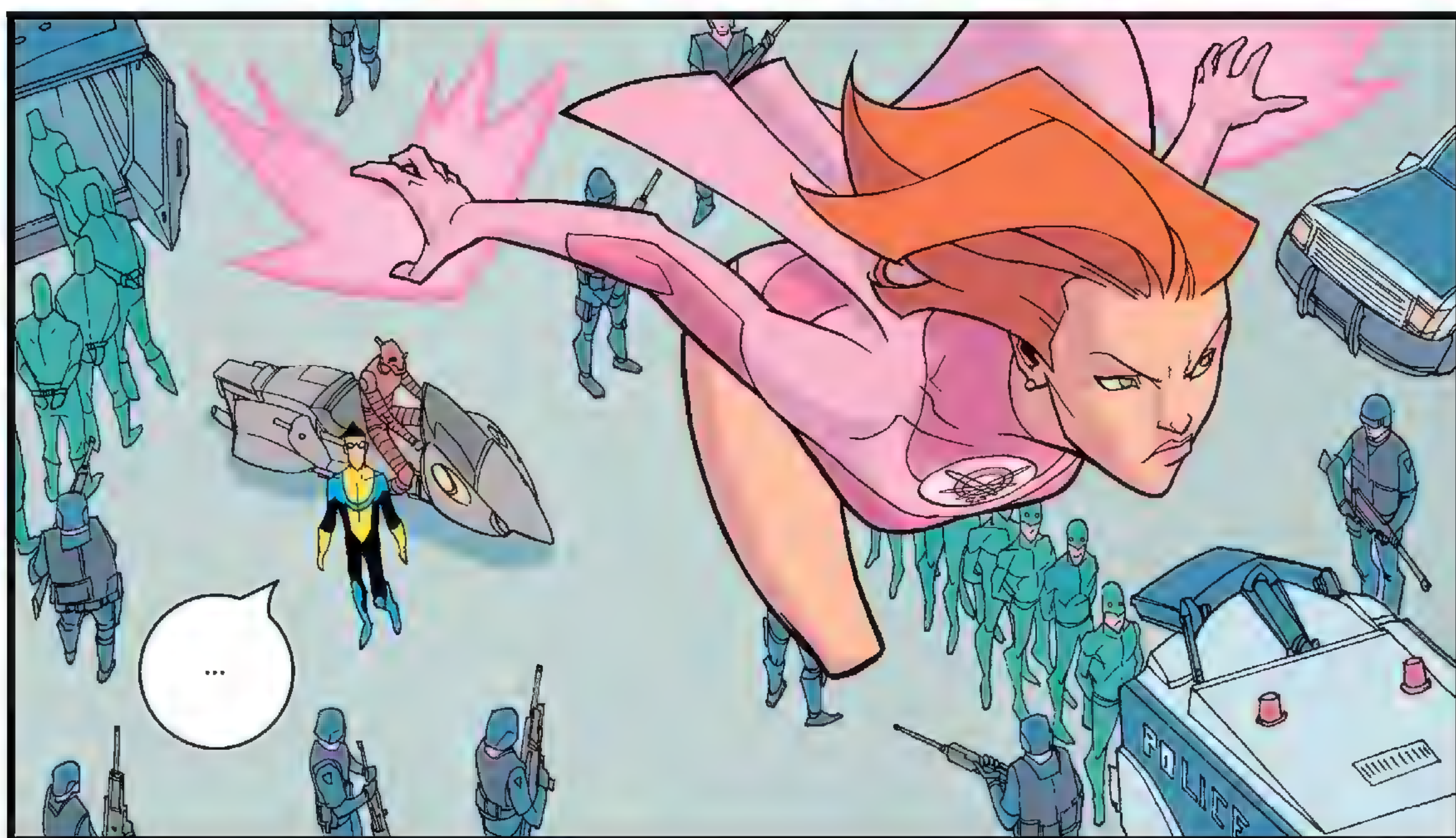
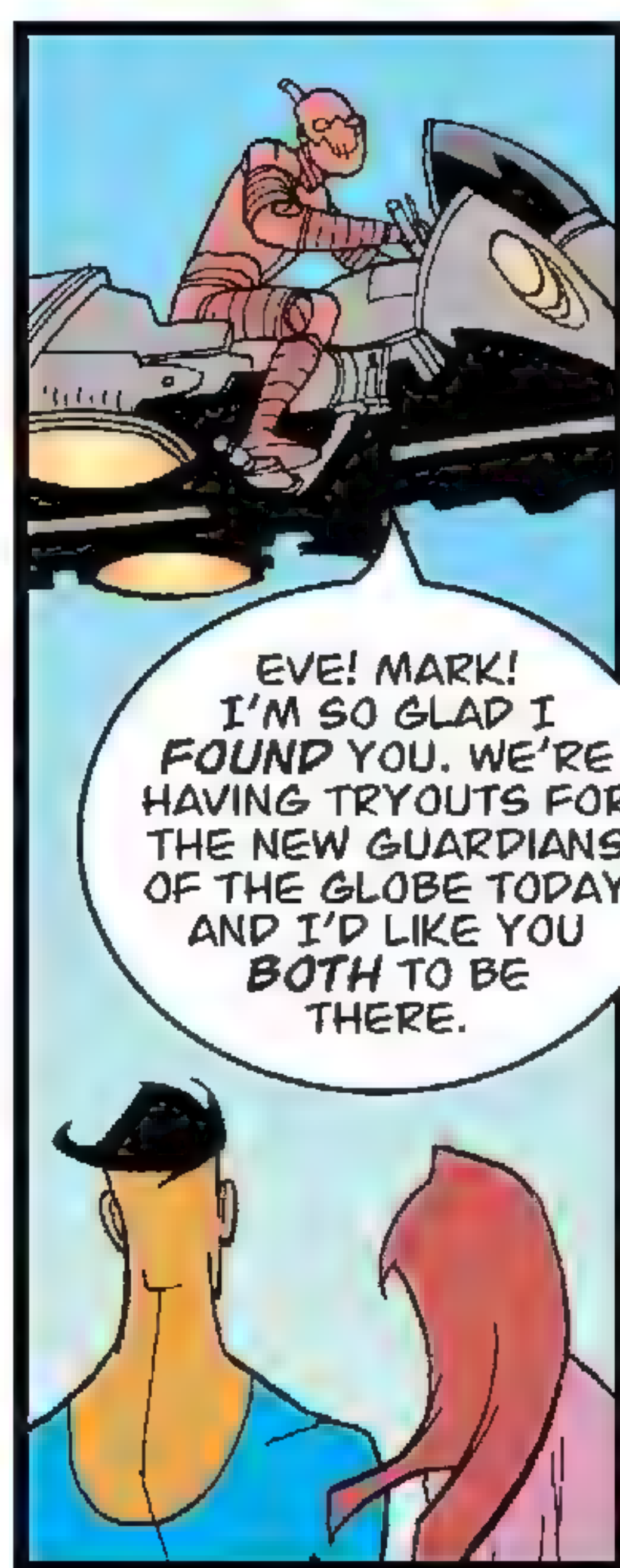
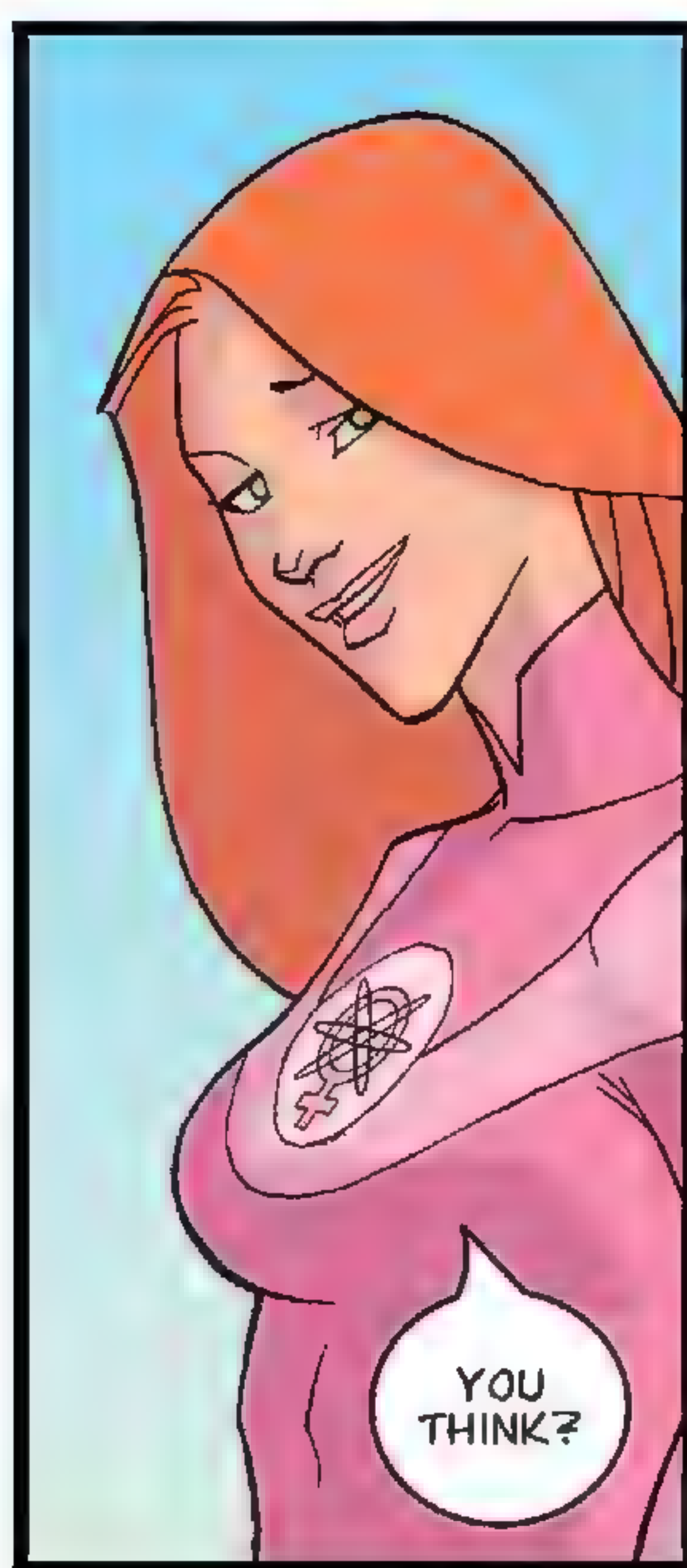
OH, SILLY ME... I REMEMBER THAT, NOW! AND I'VE **GIVEN UP** ON THE **ION** THING. NOLAN DOESN'T SEEM TO **WORRY** ABOUT GIVING ME MORE READING TIME... AND WE'RE TRYING TO **SAVE** FOR MARK'S **COLLEGE**.

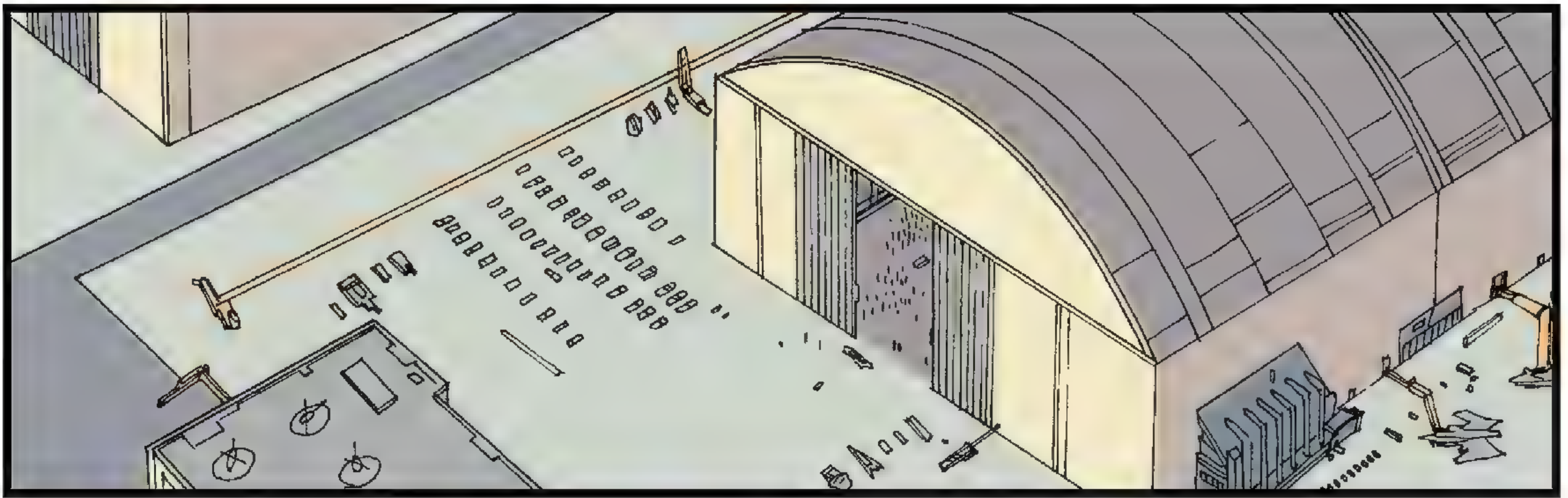
THANKS FOR THE HELP.

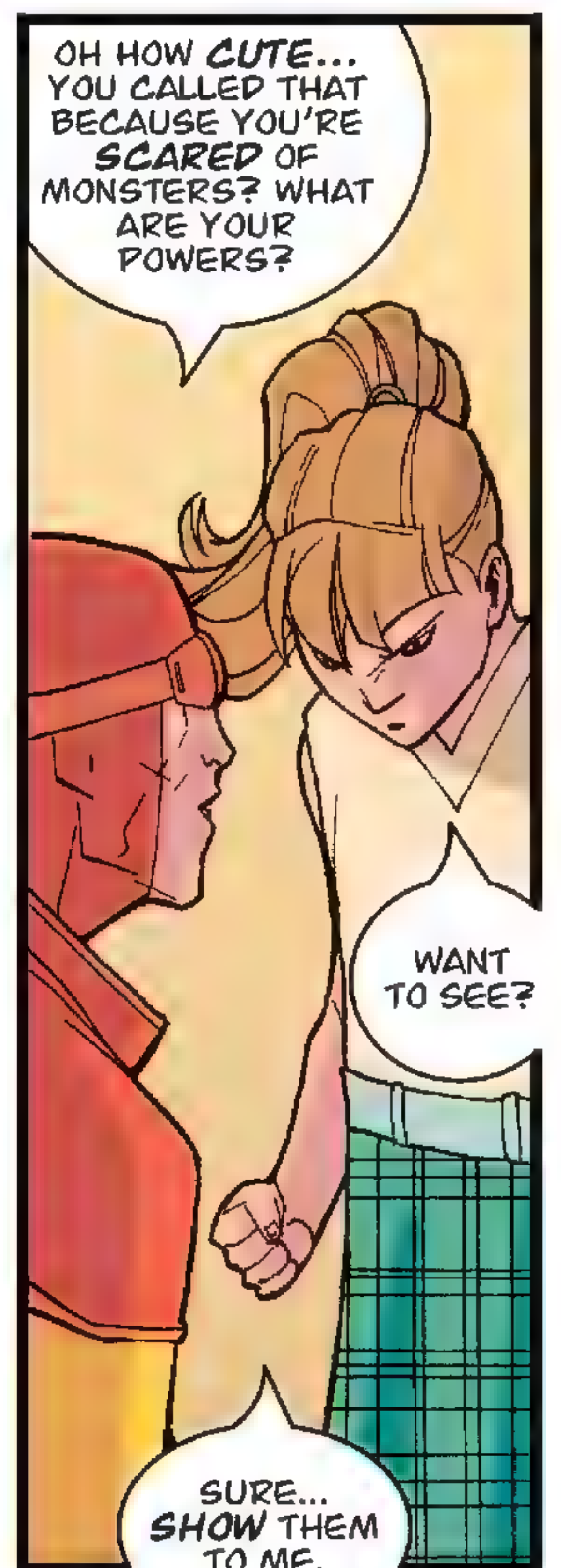
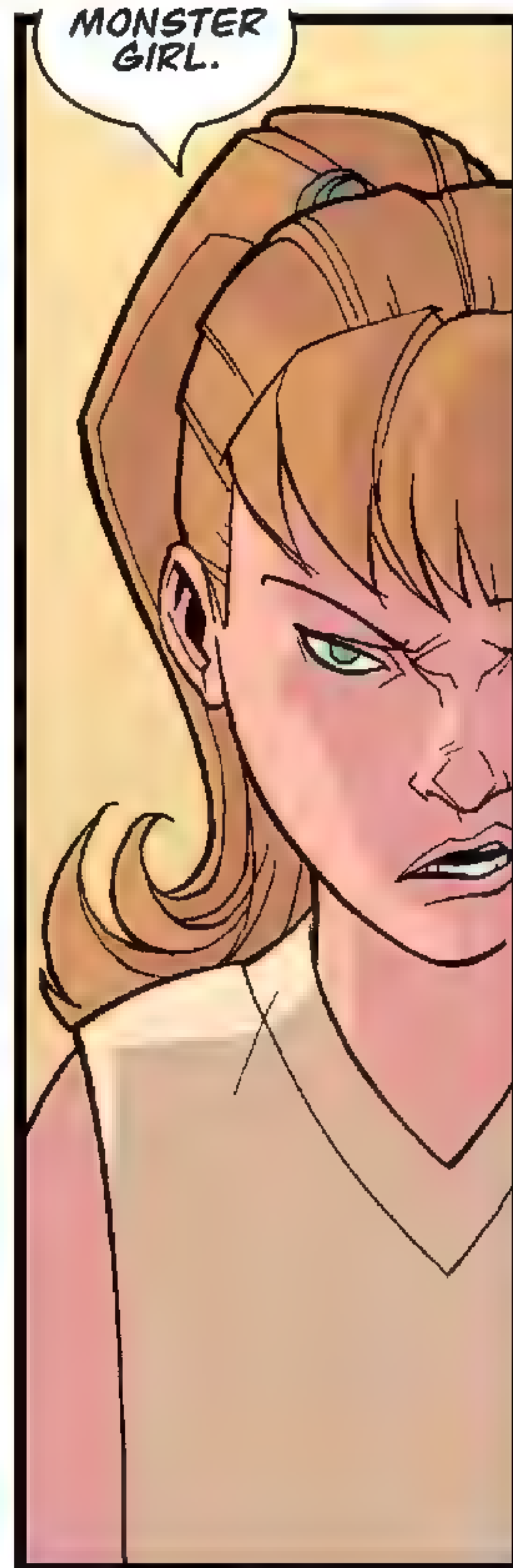
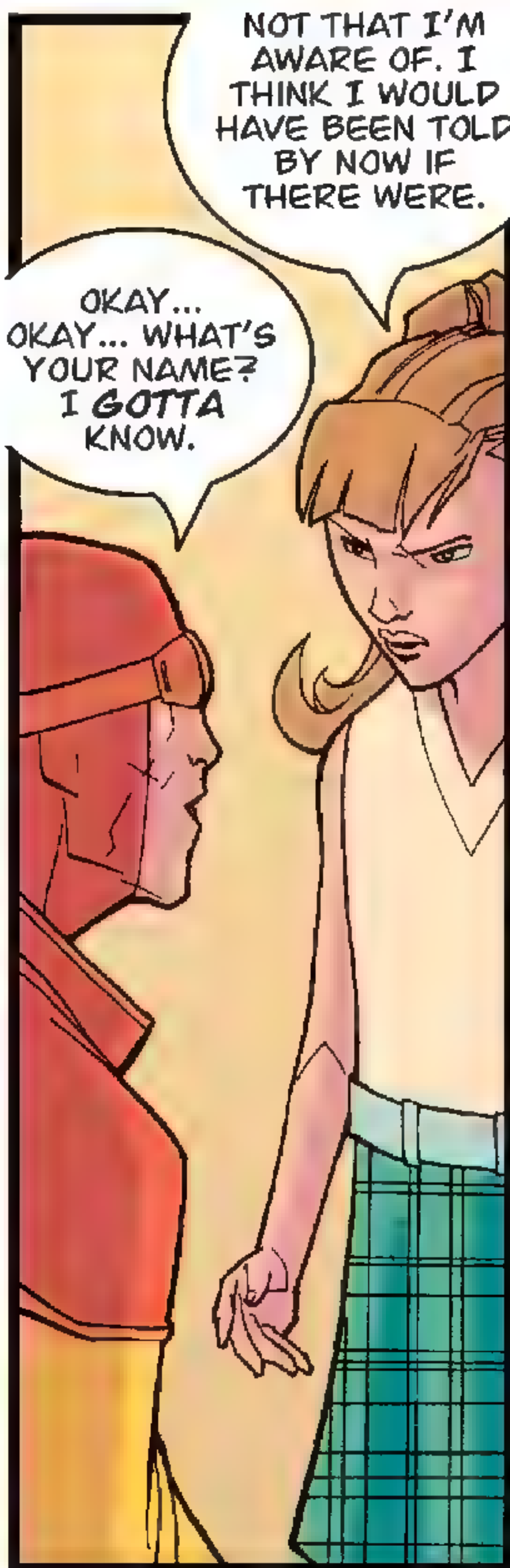
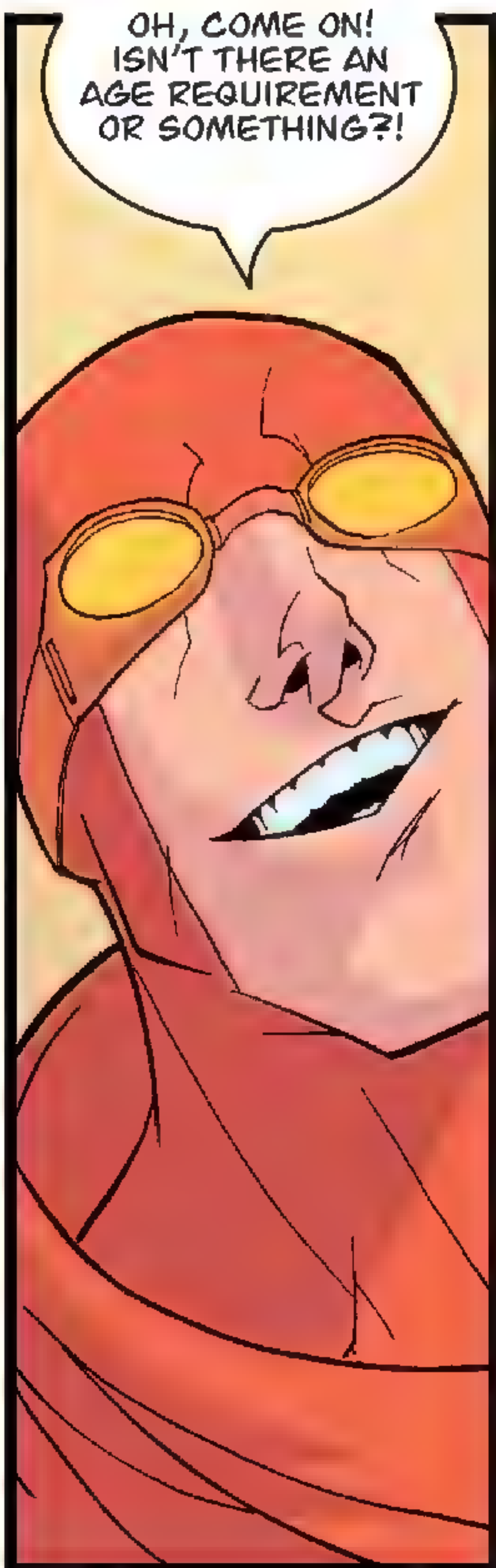
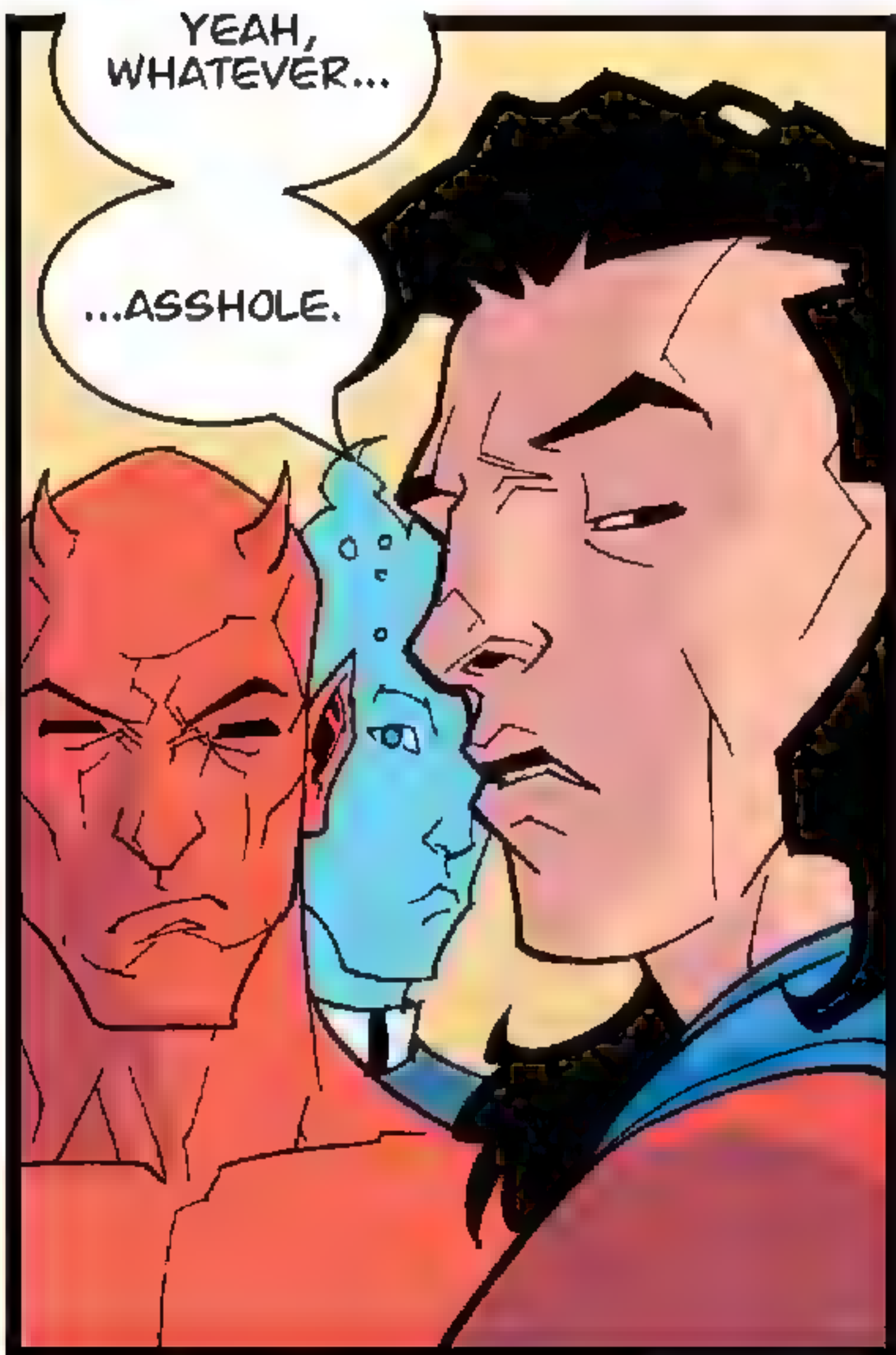




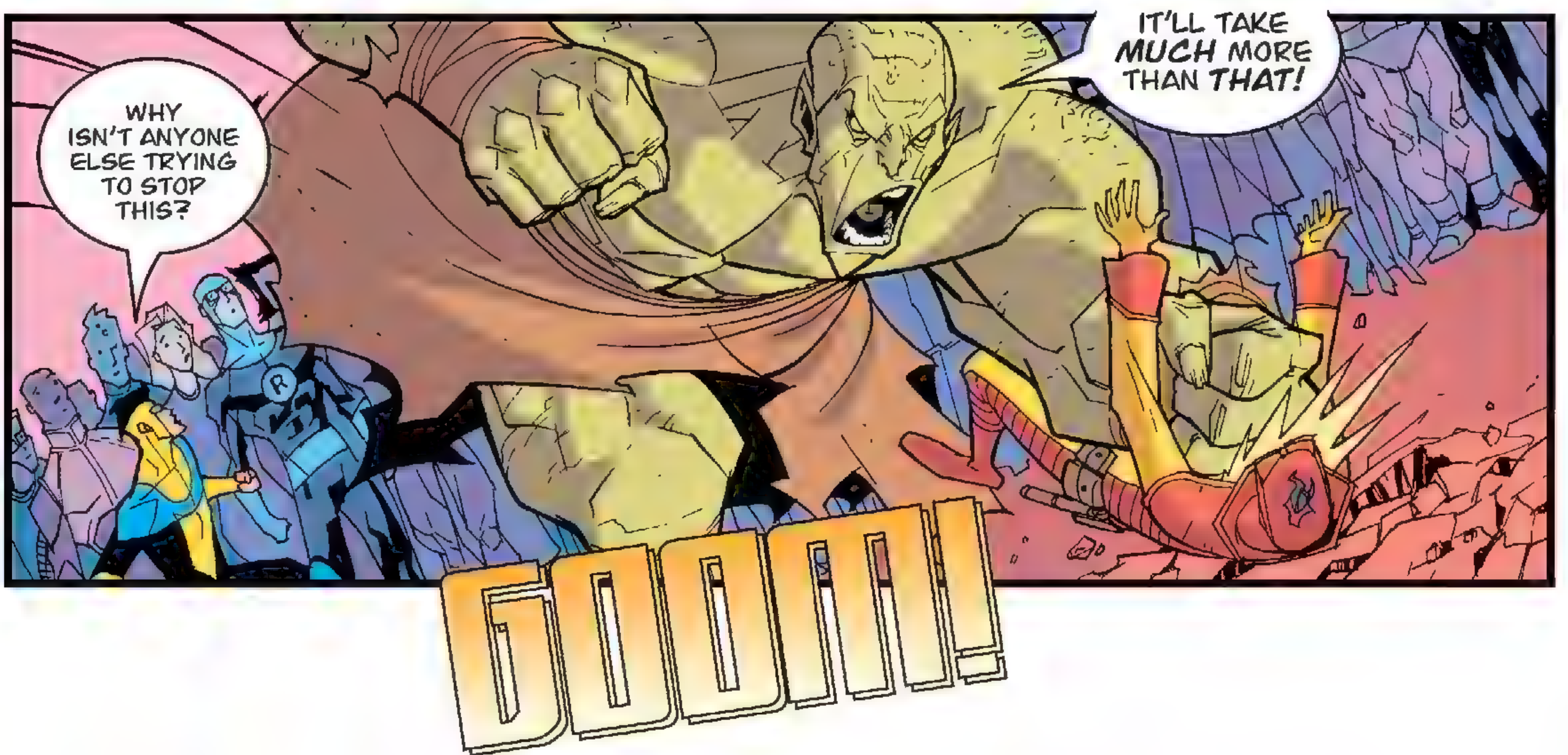
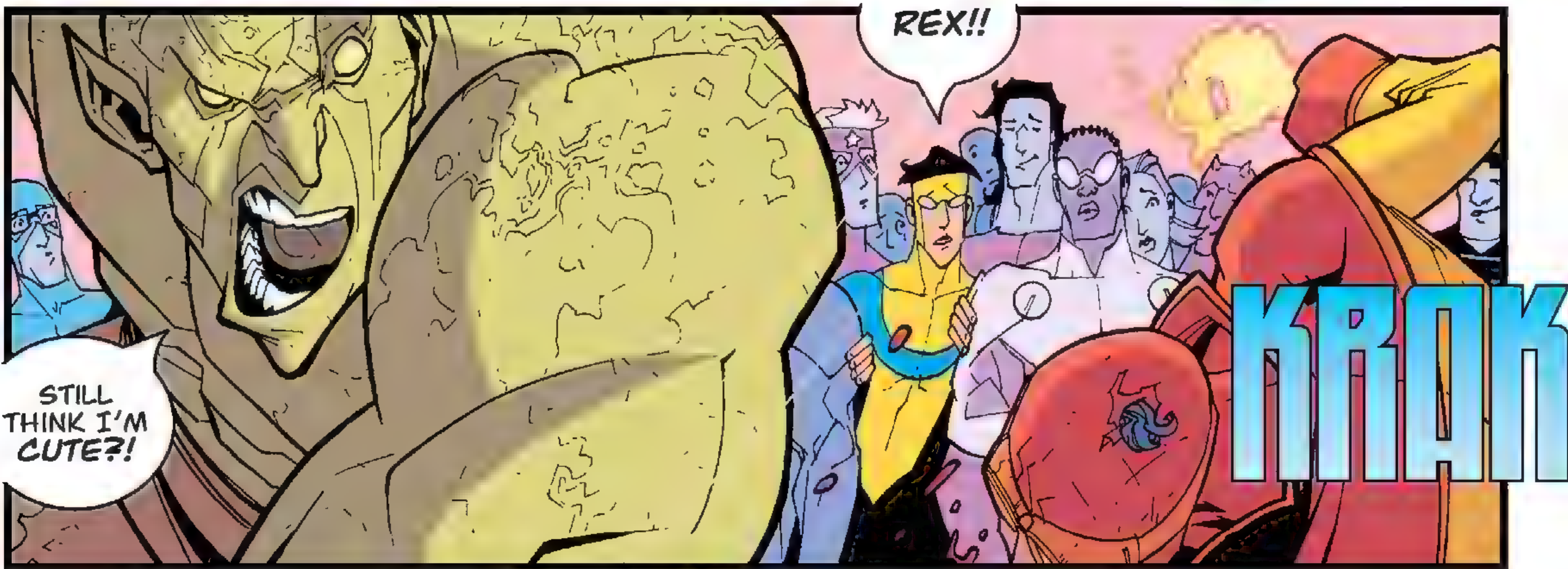
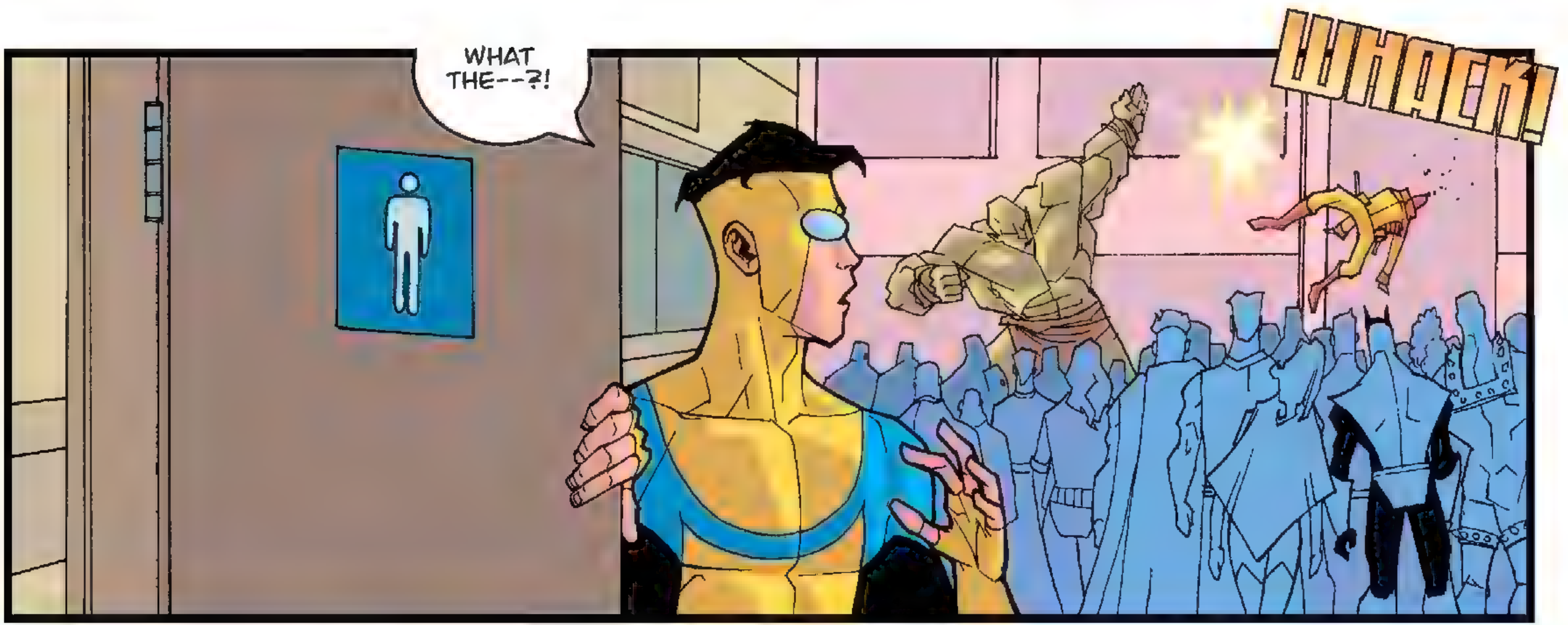


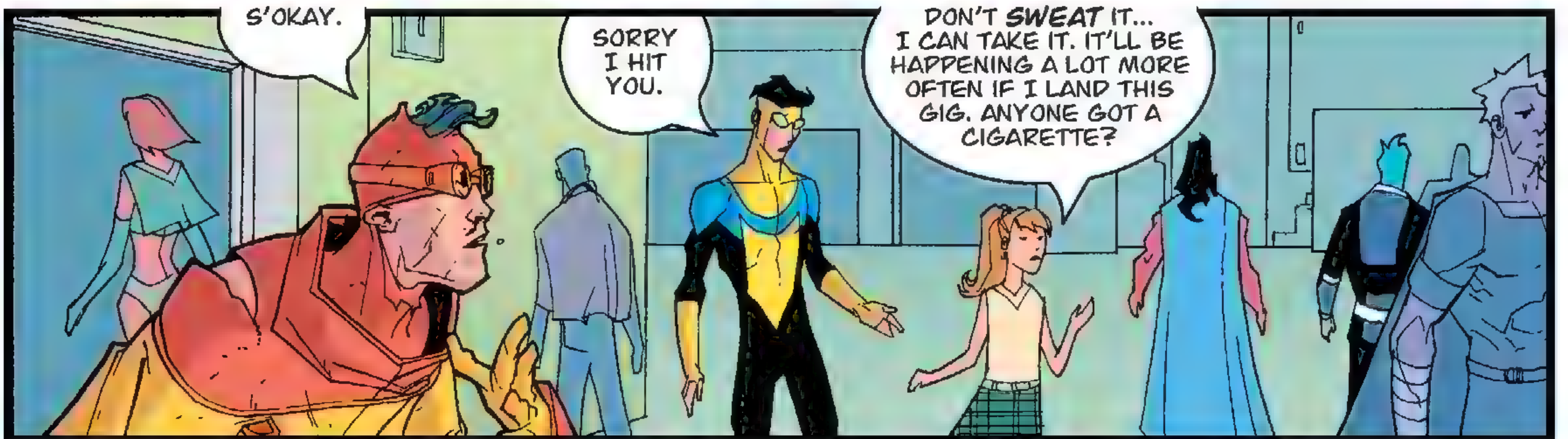
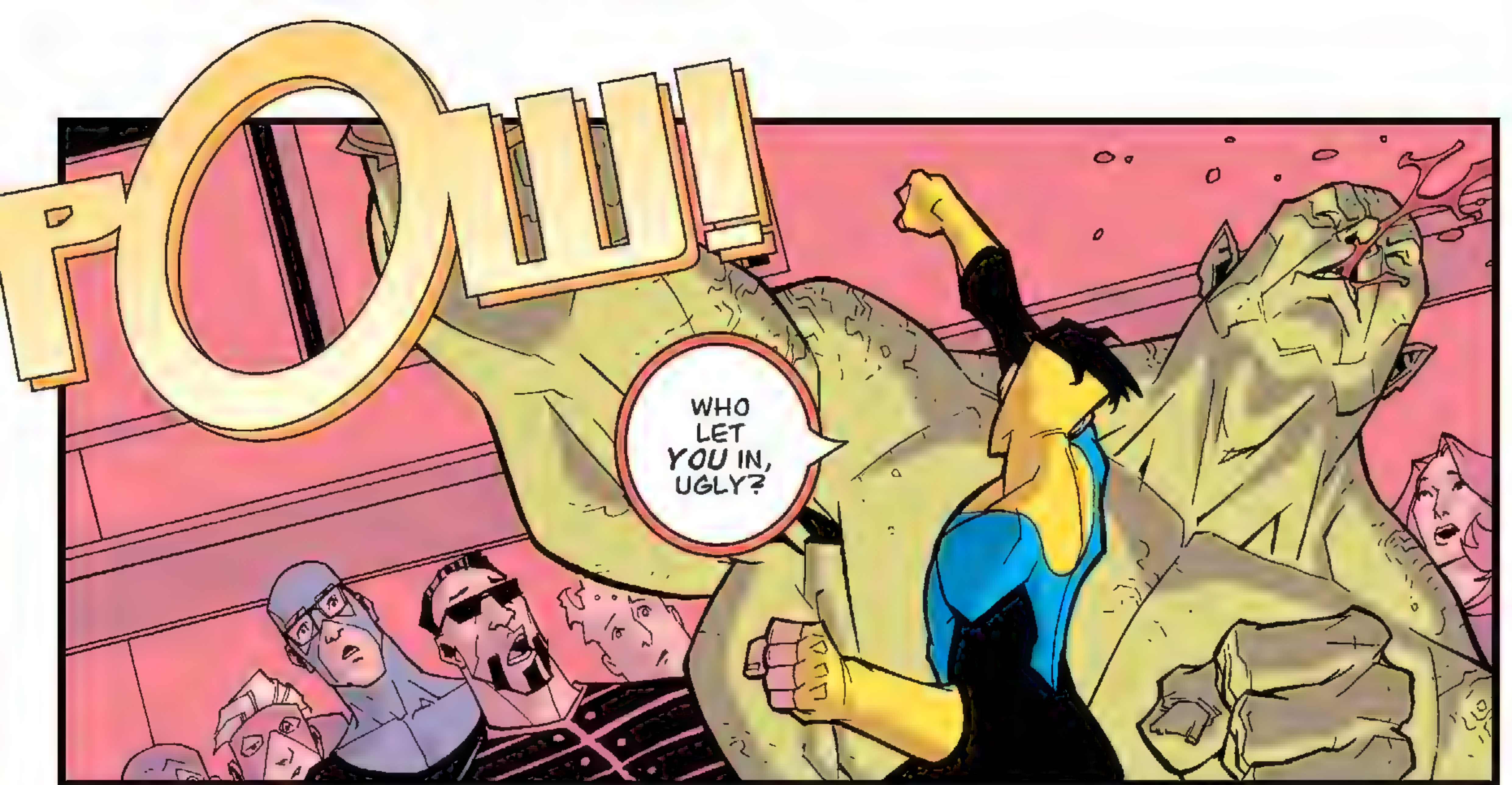


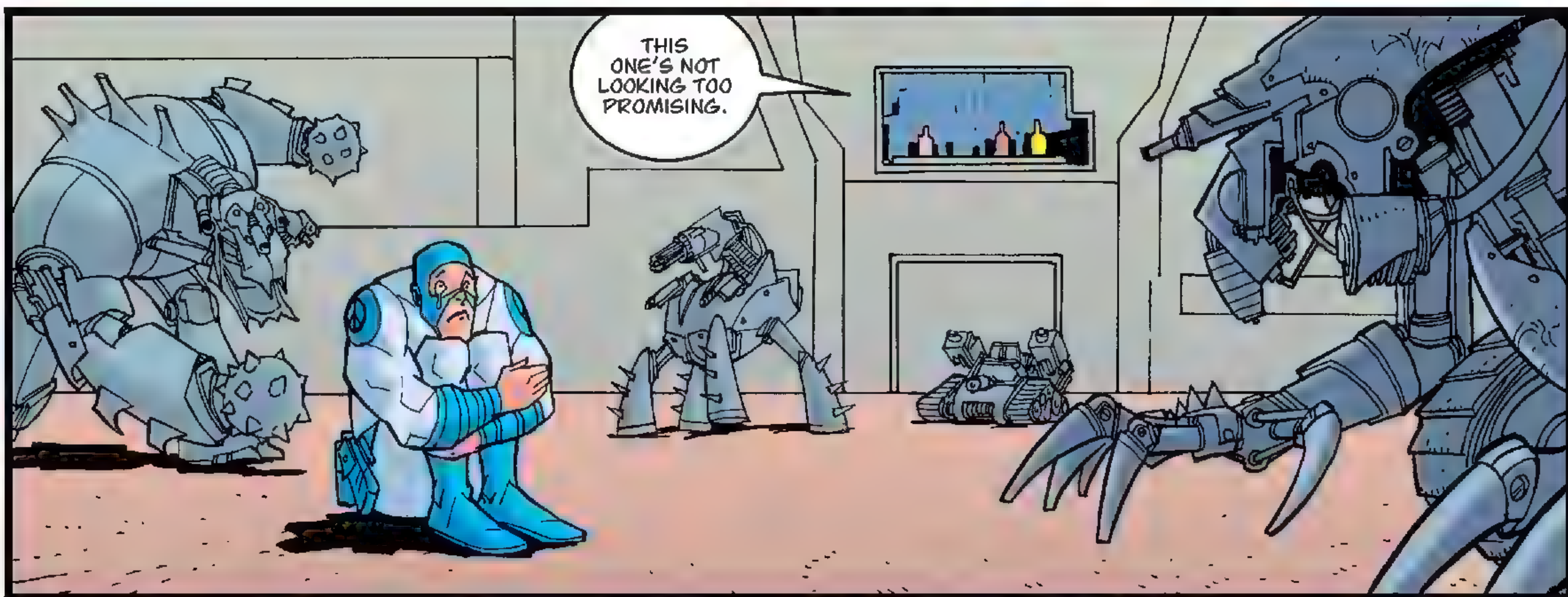
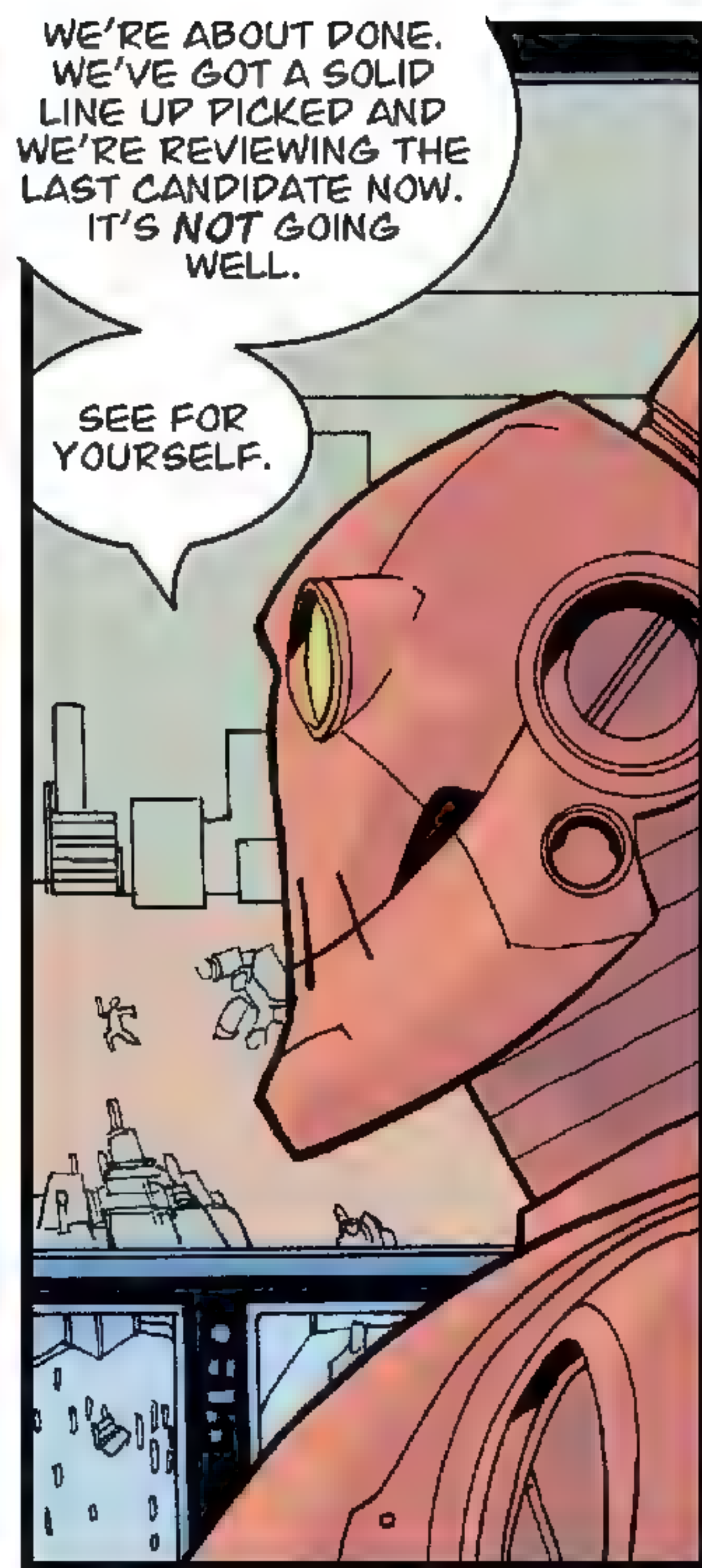










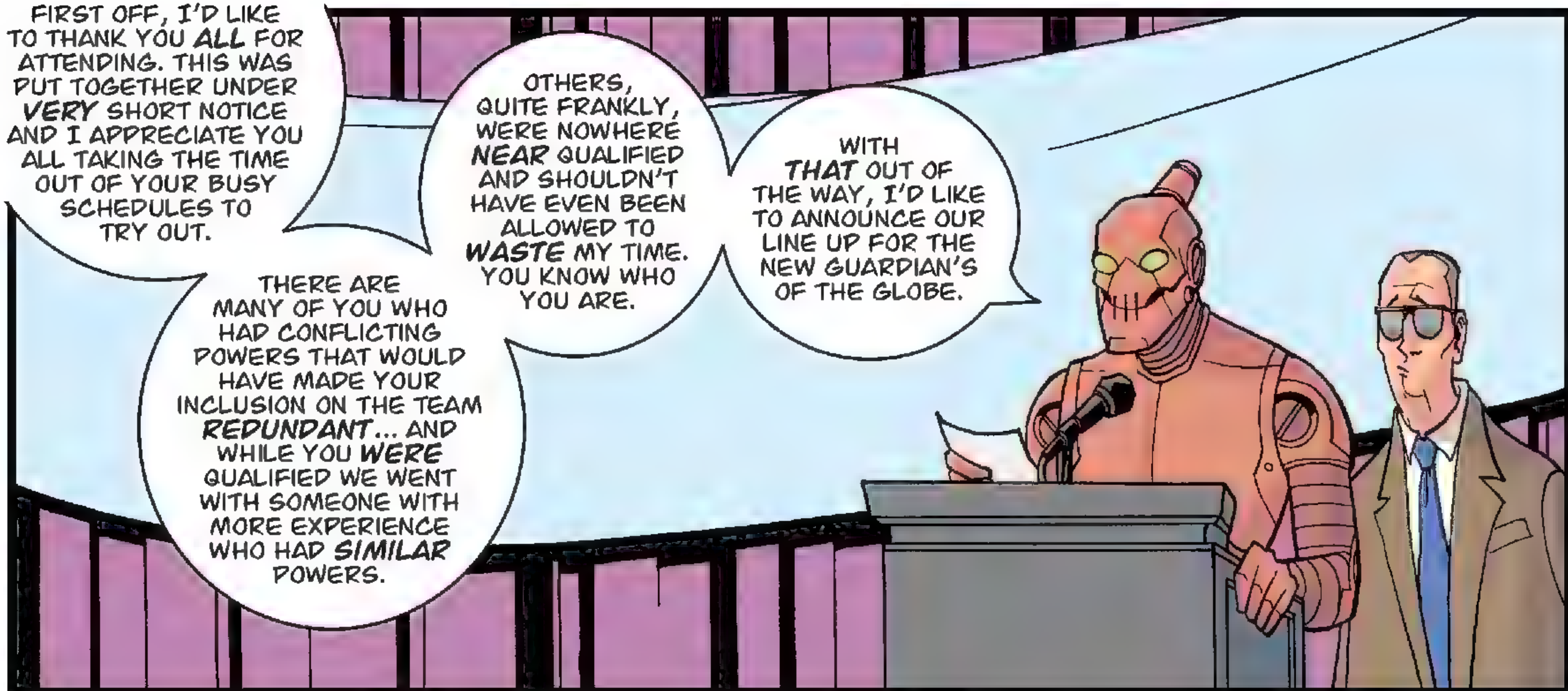


FIRST OFF, I'D LIKE TO THANK YOU **ALL** FOR ATTENDING. THIS WAS PUT TOGETHER UNDER **VERY** SHORT NOTICE AND I APPRECIATE YOU ALL TAKING THE TIME OUT OF YOUR BUSY SCHEDULES TO TRY OUT.

THERE ARE MANY OF YOU WHO HAD CONFLICTING POWERS THAT WOULD HAVE MADE YOUR INCLUSION ON THE TEAM **REDUNDANT**... AND WHILE YOU **WERE** QUALIFIED WE WENT WITH SOMEONE WITH MORE EXPERIENCE WHO HAD **SIMILAR** POWERS.

OTHERS, QUITE FRANKLY, WERE NOWHERE NEAR QUALIFIED AND SHOULDN'T HAVE EVEN BEEN ALLOWED TO **WASTE** MY TIME. YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE.

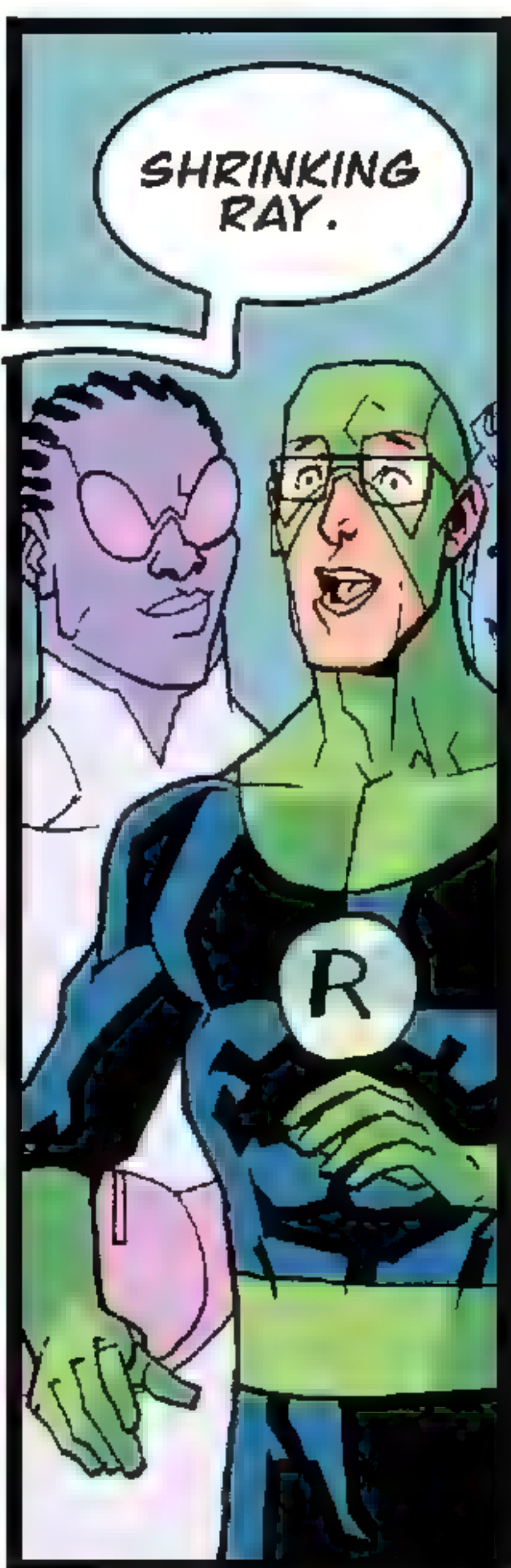
WITH **THAT** OUT OF THE WAY, I'D LIKE TO ANNOUNCE OUR LINE UP FOR THE NEW GUARDIAN'S OF THE GLOBE.



DUPLI-KATE.



SHRINKING RAY.



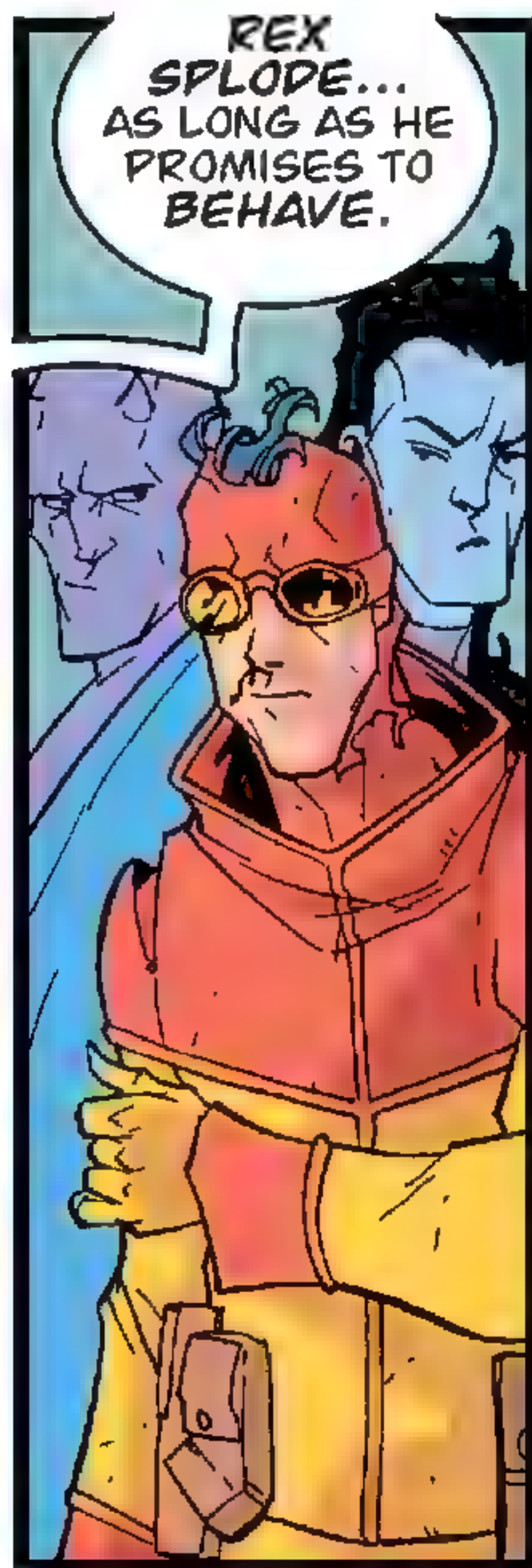
MONSTER GIRL.



BLACK SAMSON.



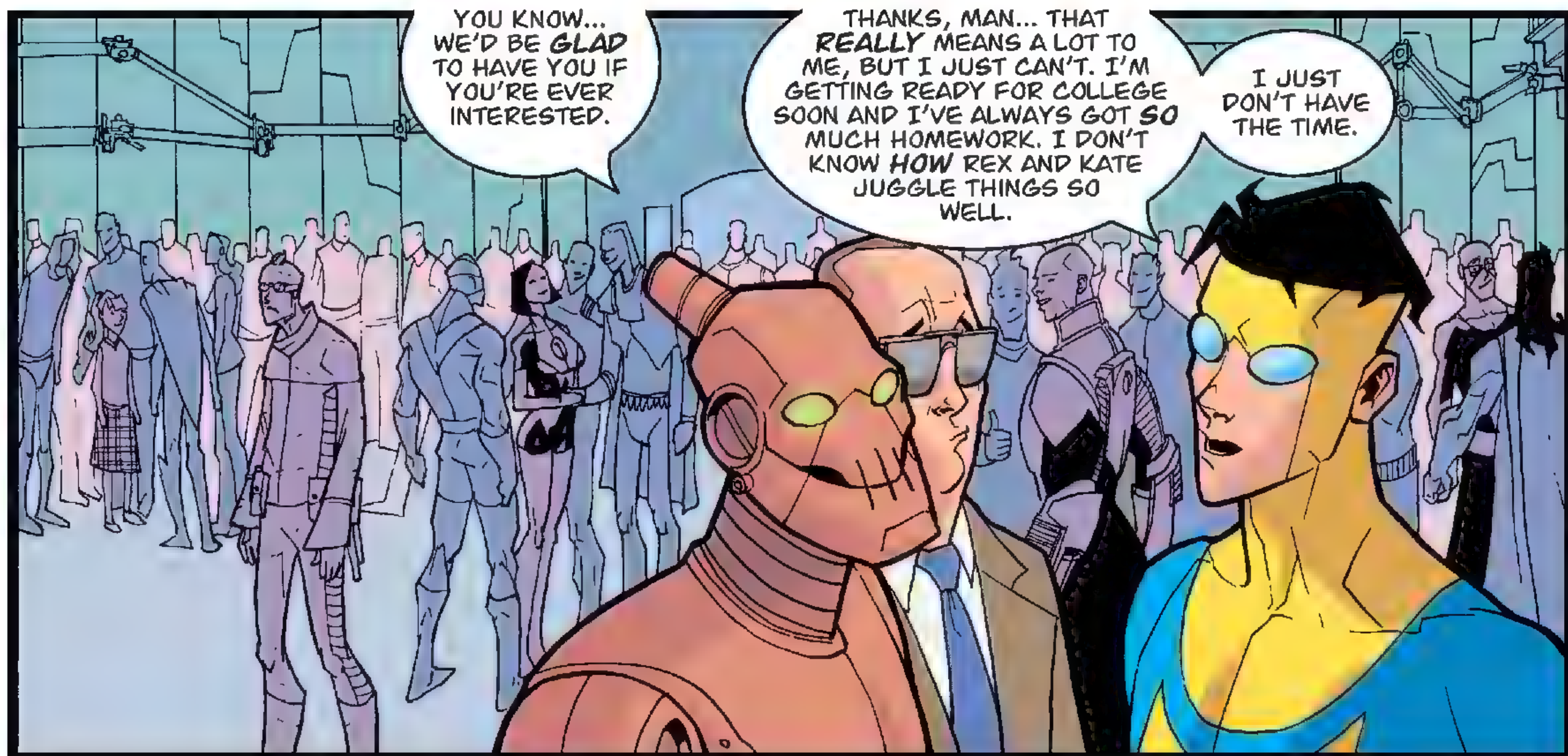
REX SPLODE... AS LONG AS HE PROMISES TO BEHAVE.

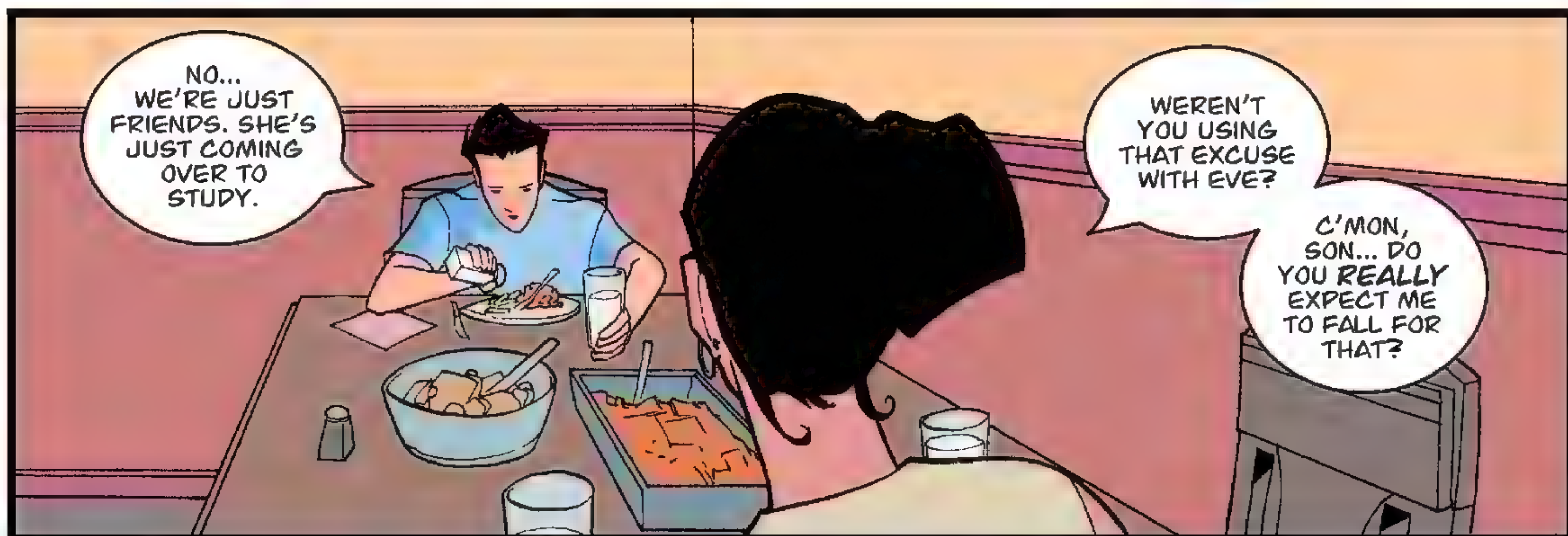
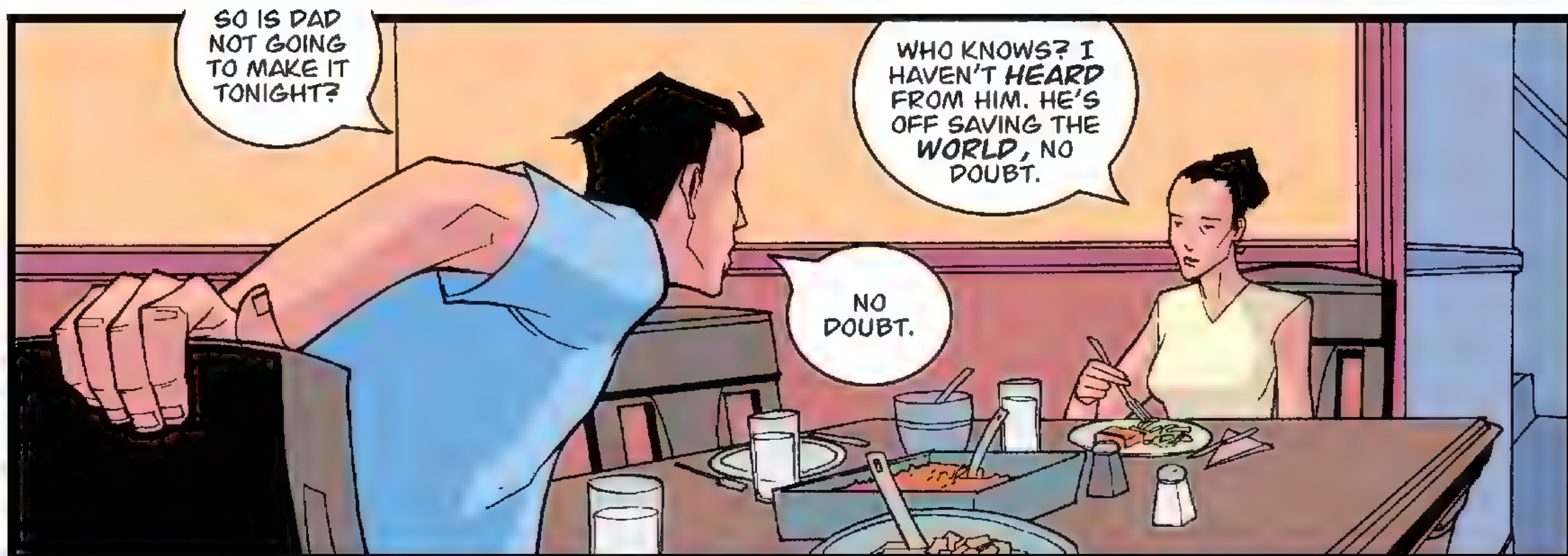


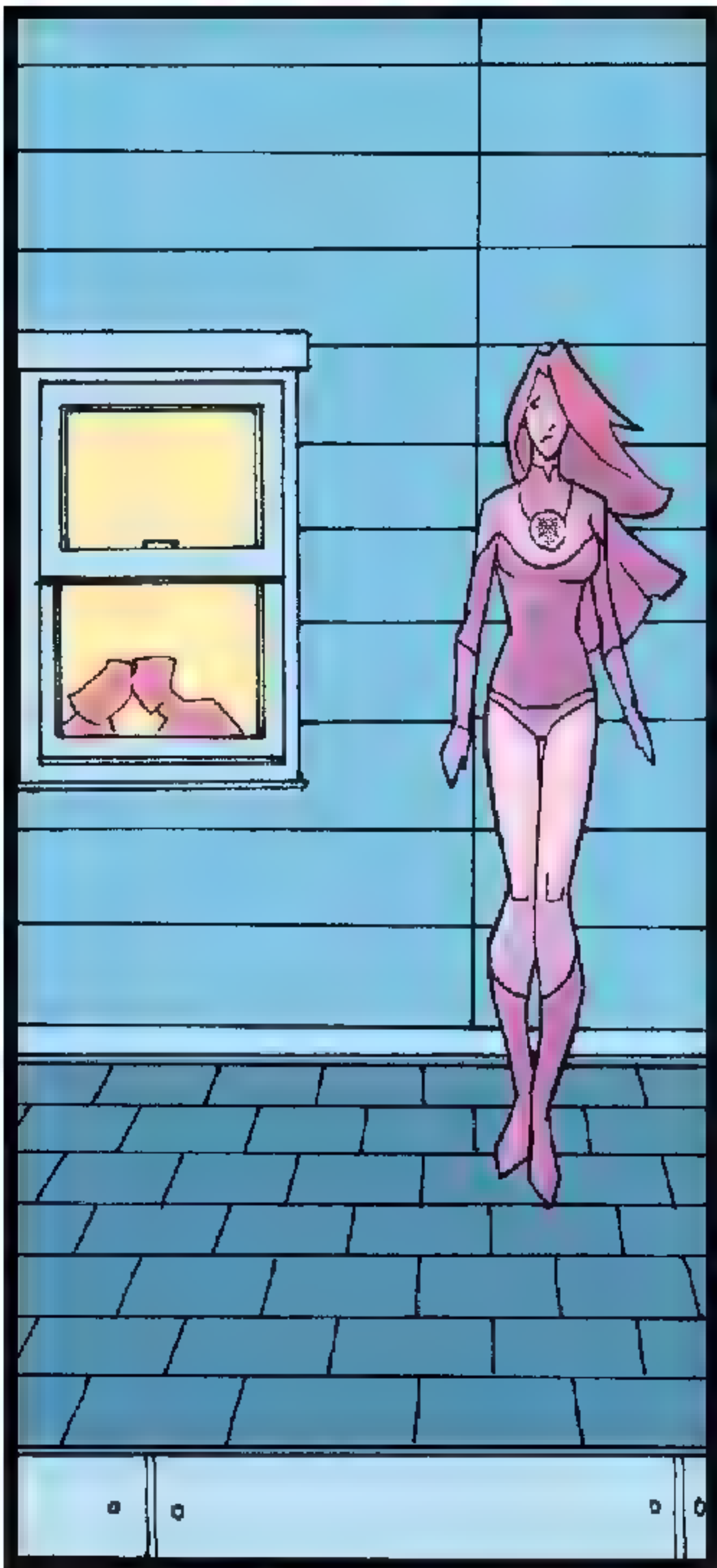
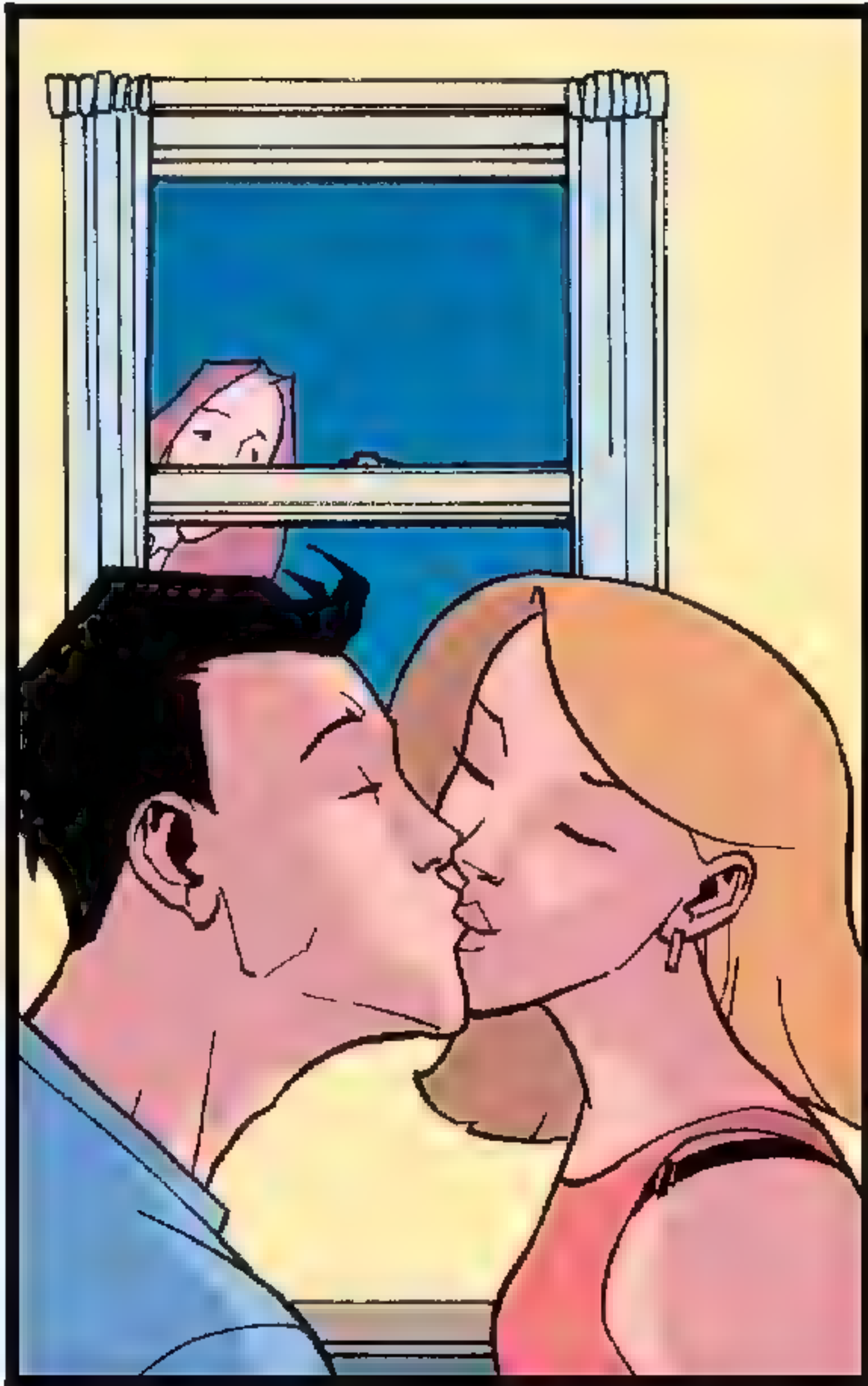
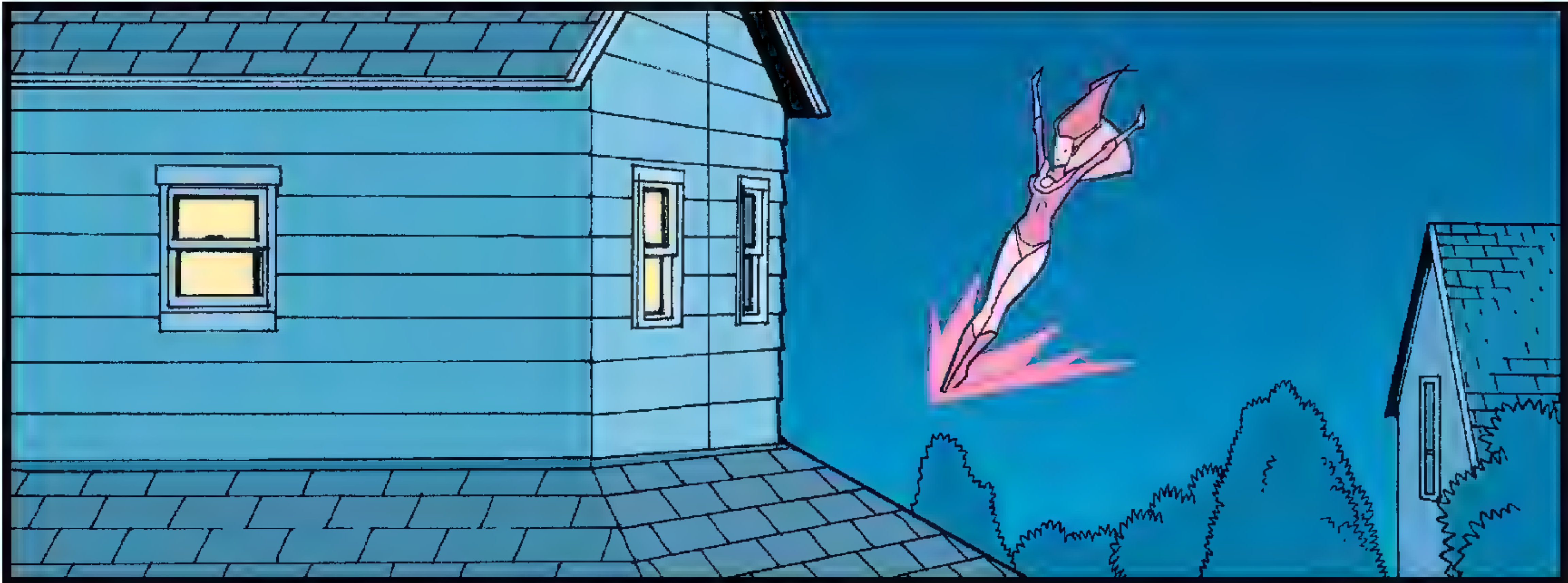
YOU KNOW... WE'D BE **GLAD** TO HAVE YOU IF YOU'RE EVER INTERESTED.

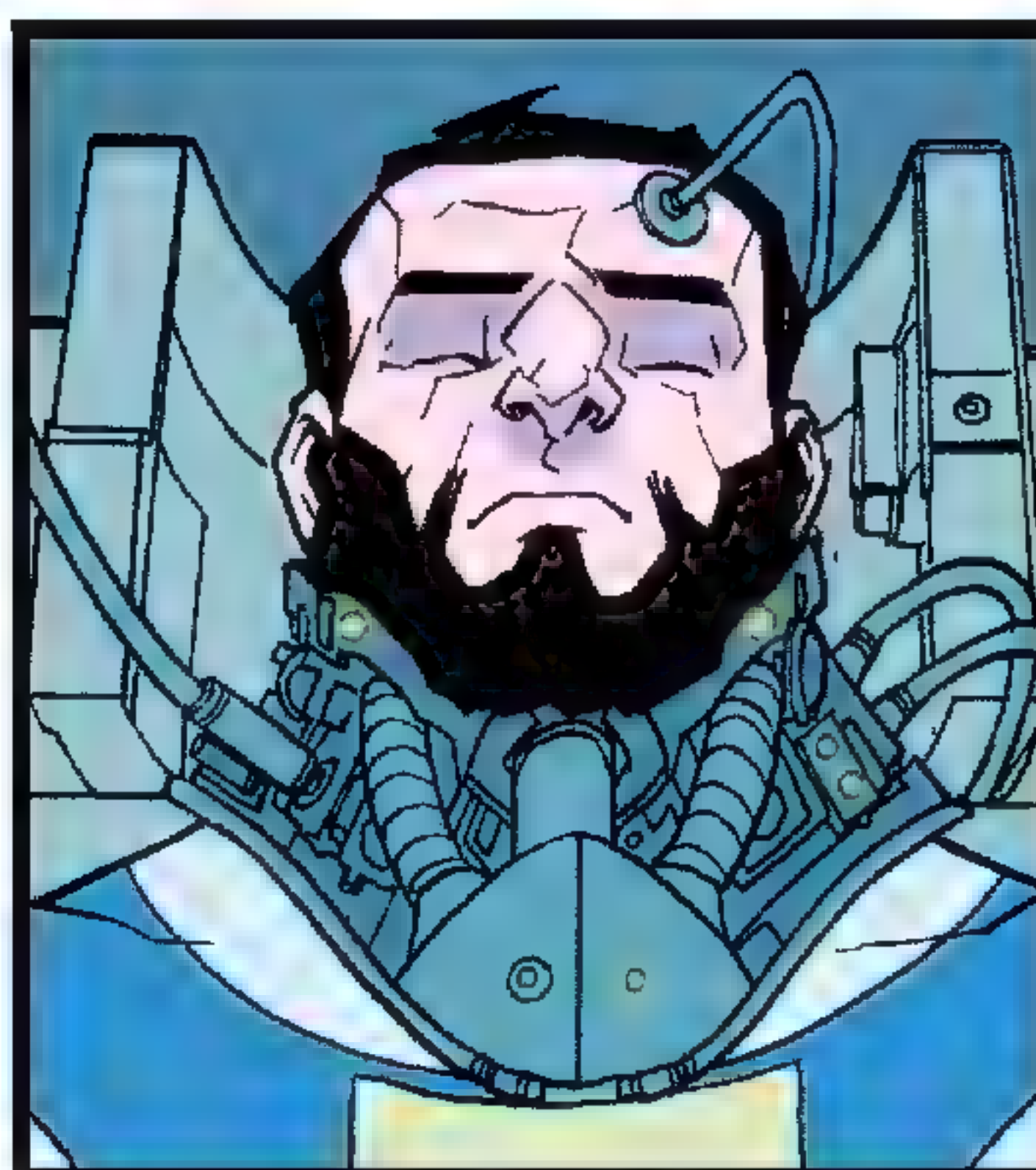
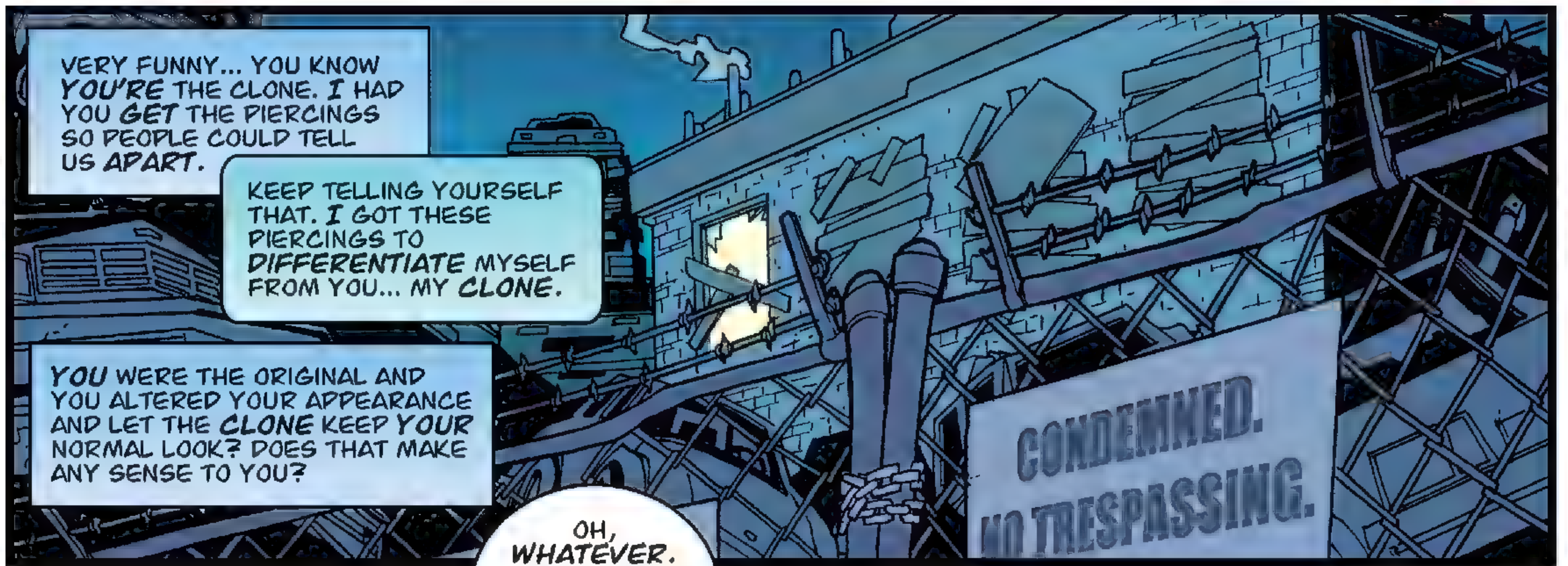
THANKS, MAN... THAT **REALLY** MEANS A LOT TO ME, BUT I JUST CAN'T. I'M GETTING READY FOR COLLEGE SOON AND I'VE ALWAYS GOT **SO** MUCH HOMEWORK. I DON'T KNOW **HOW** REX AND KATE JUGGLE THINGS SO WELL.

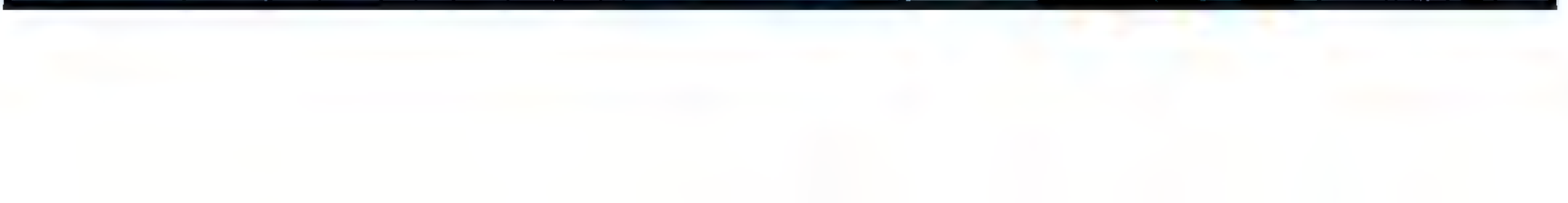
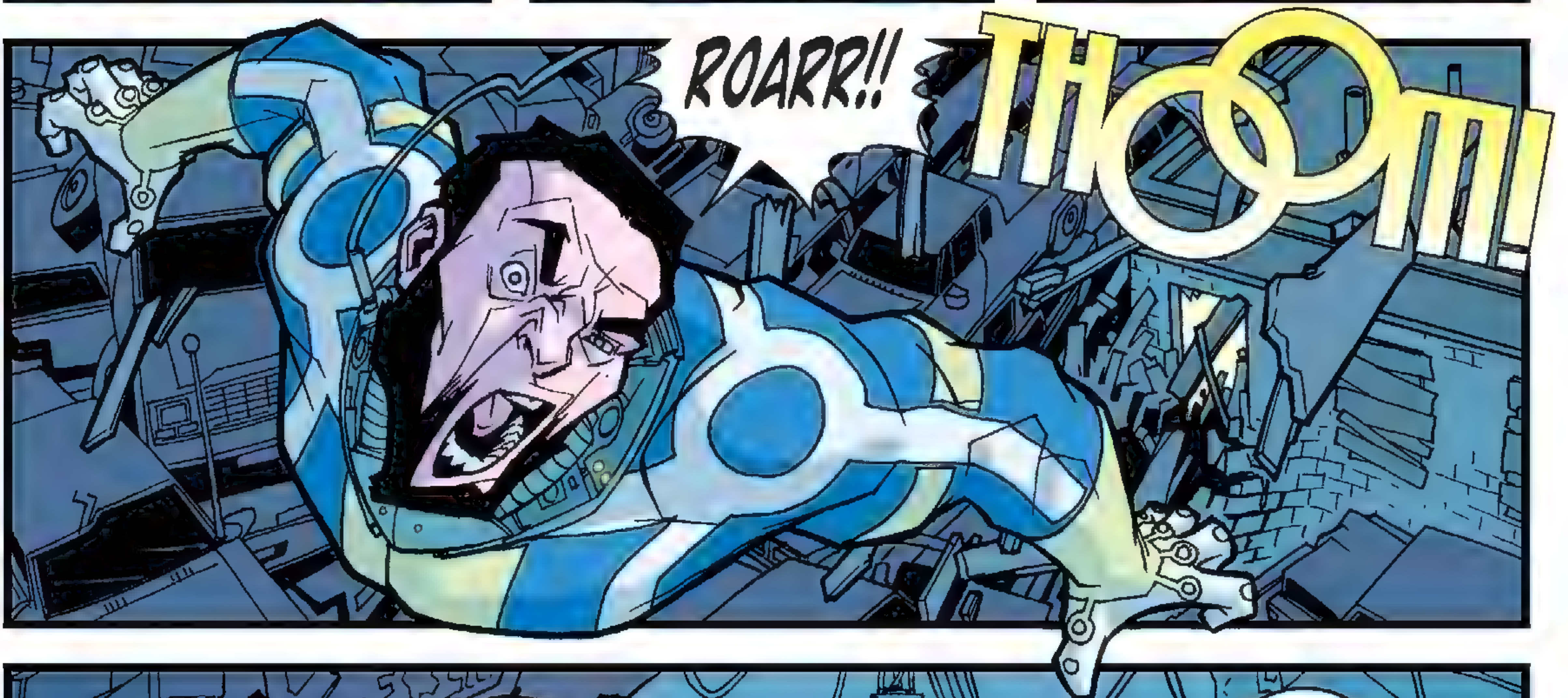
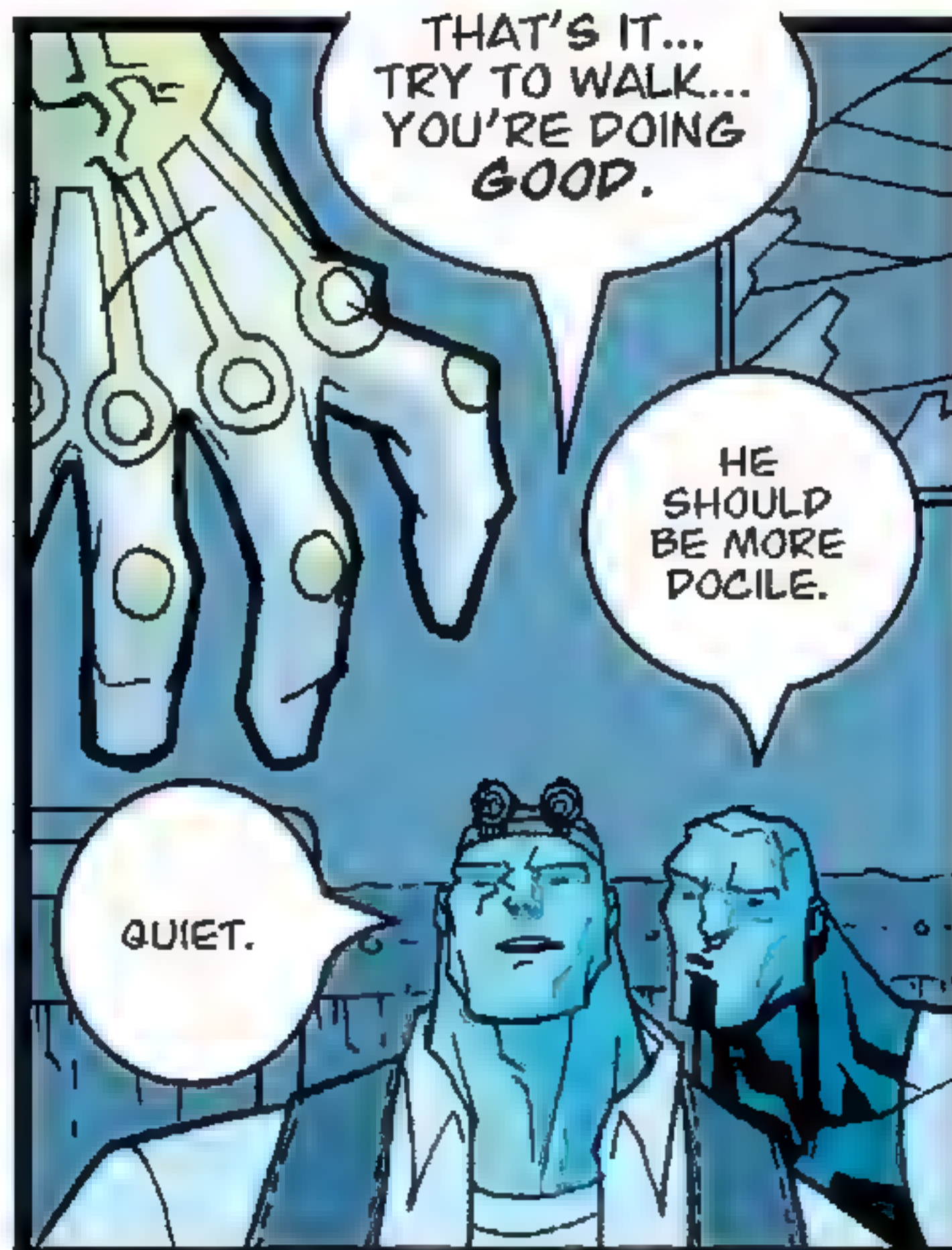
I JUST DON'T HAVE THE TIME.

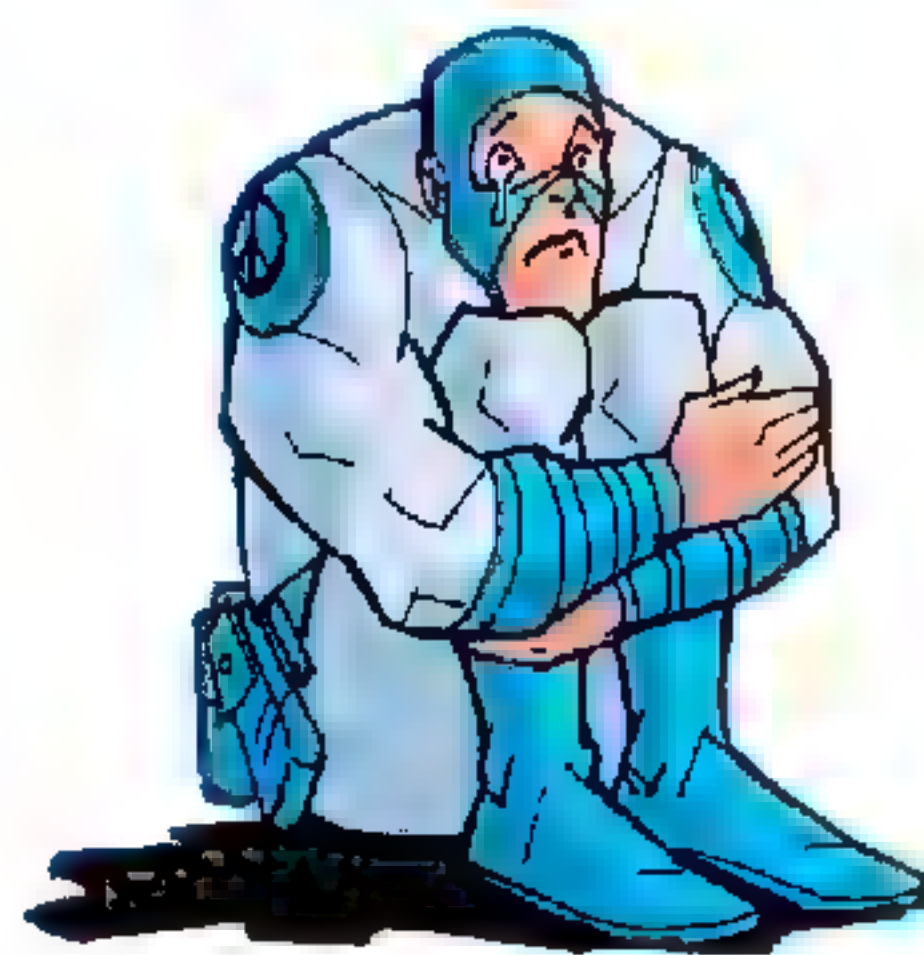








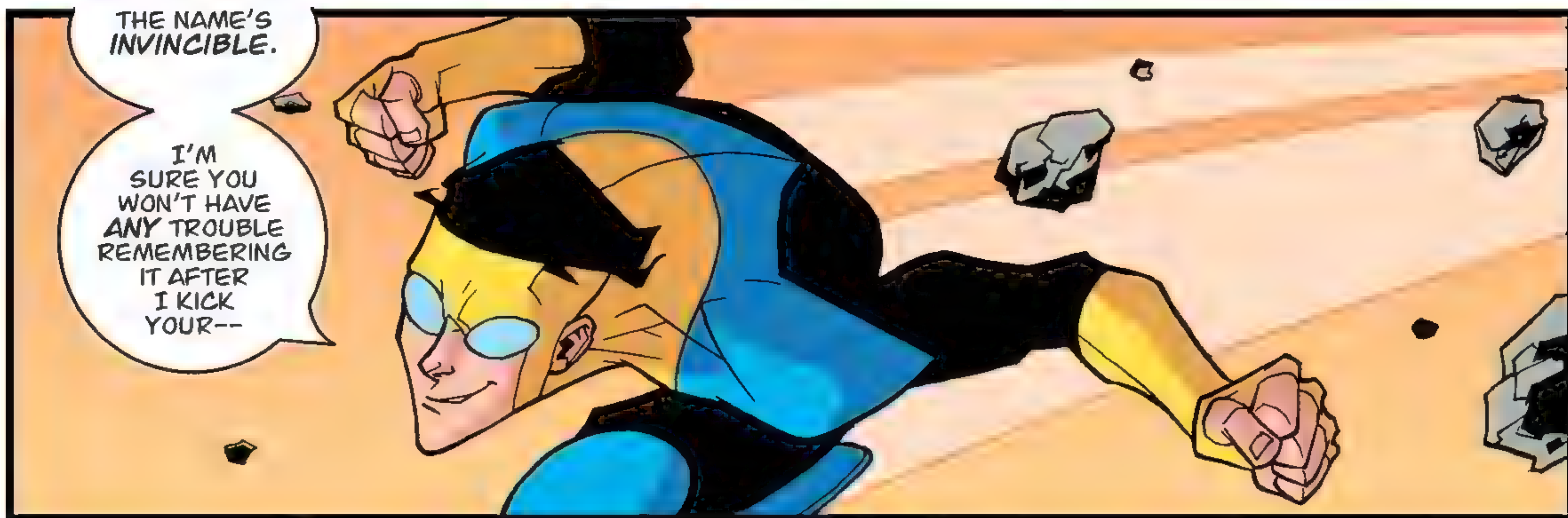


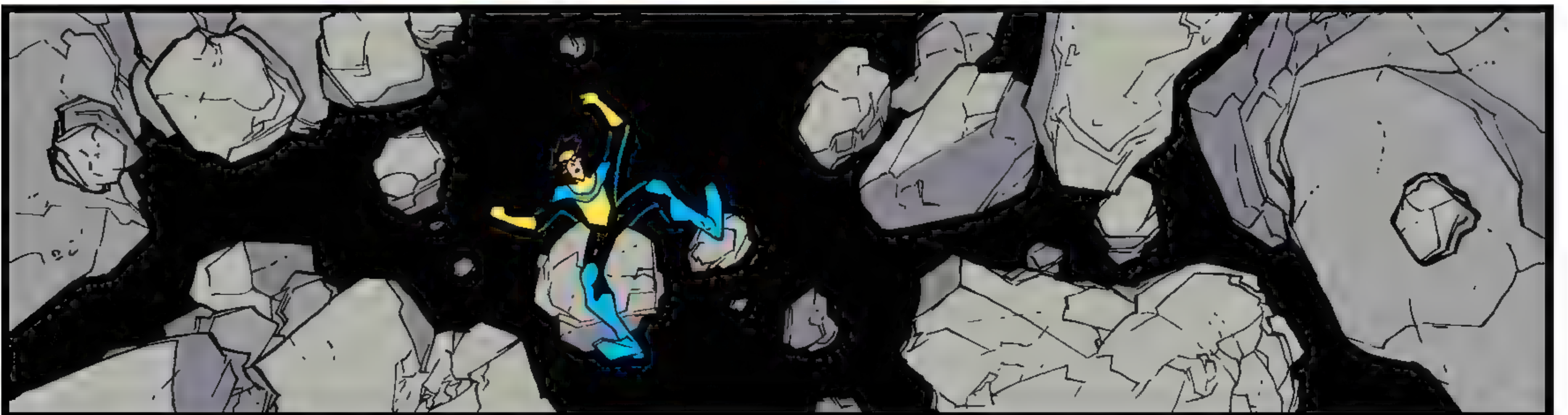


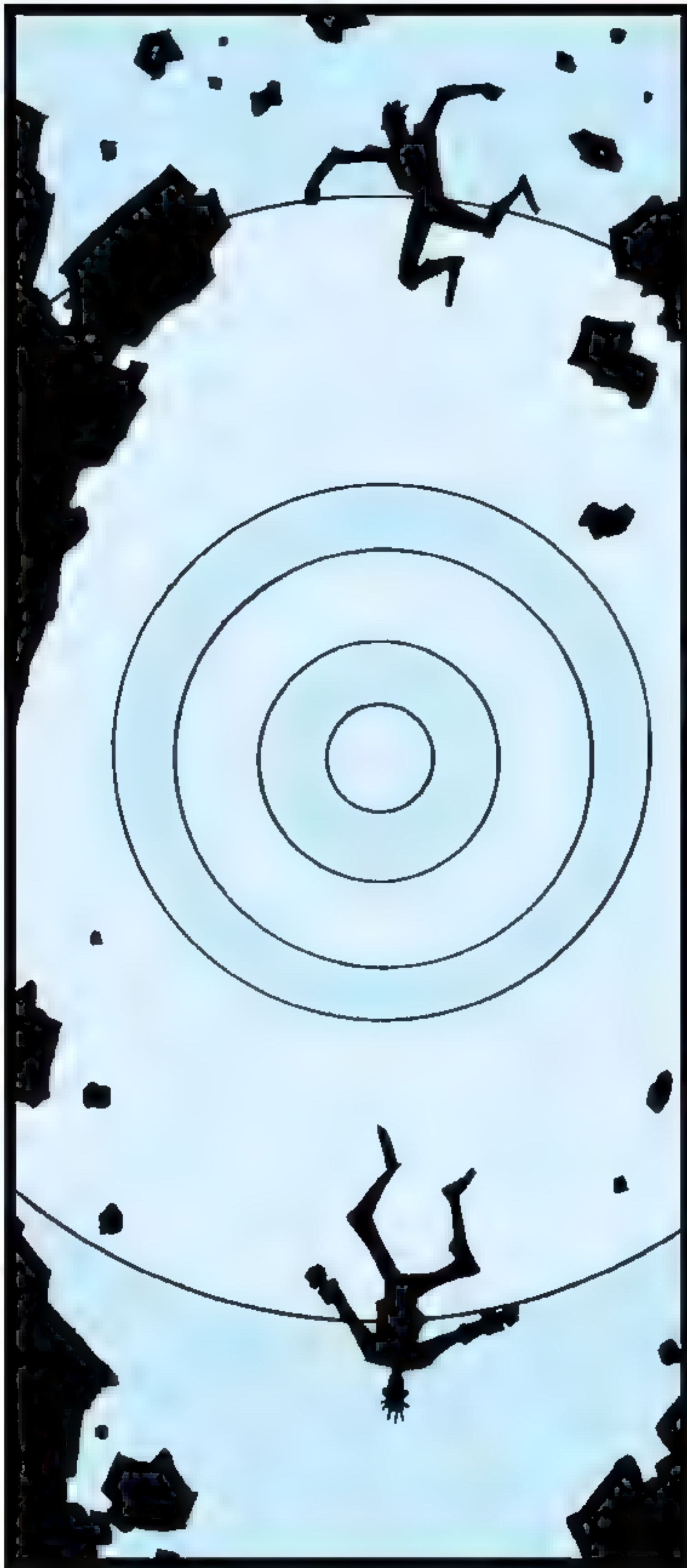
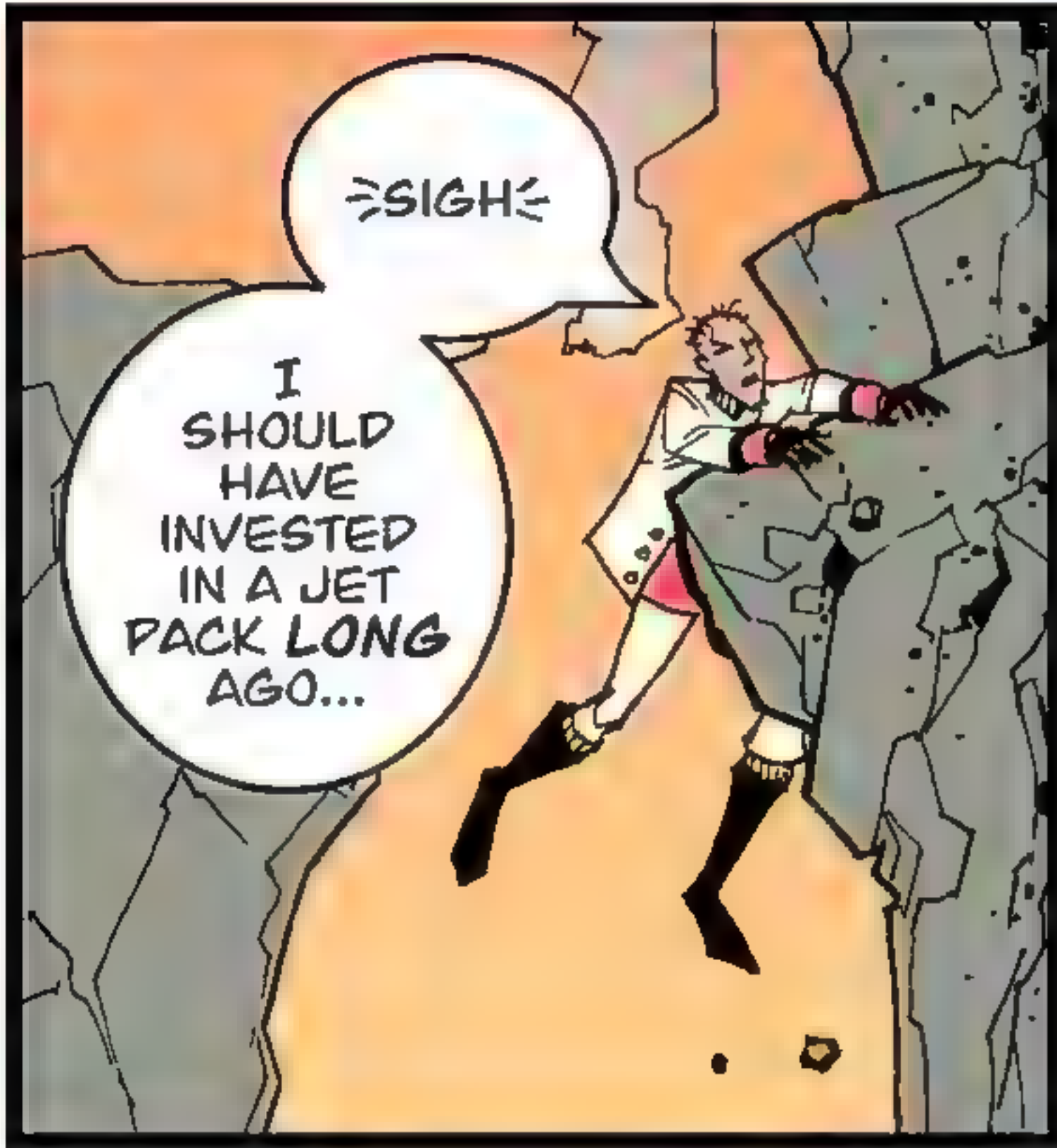
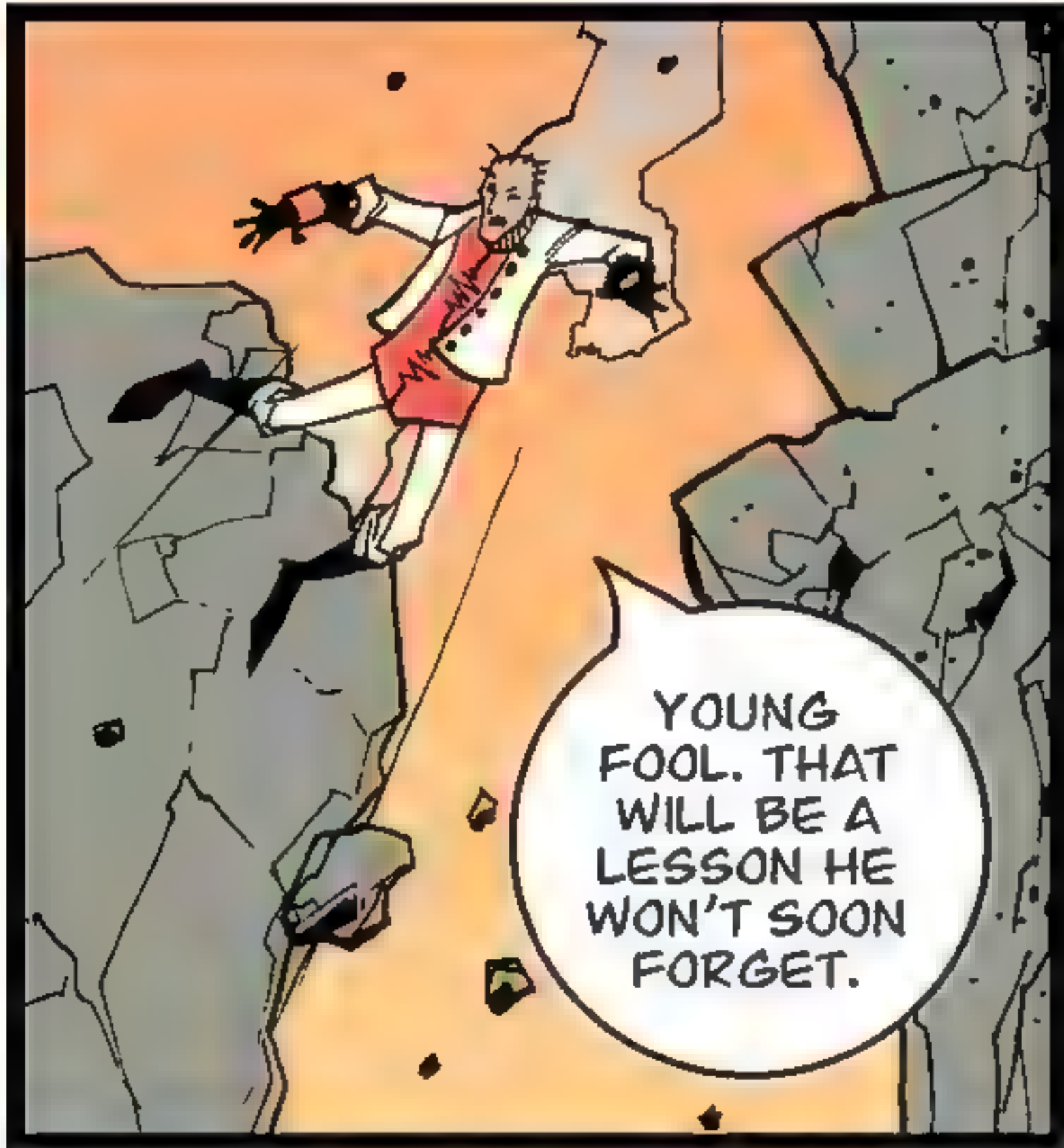
ISSUE TEN





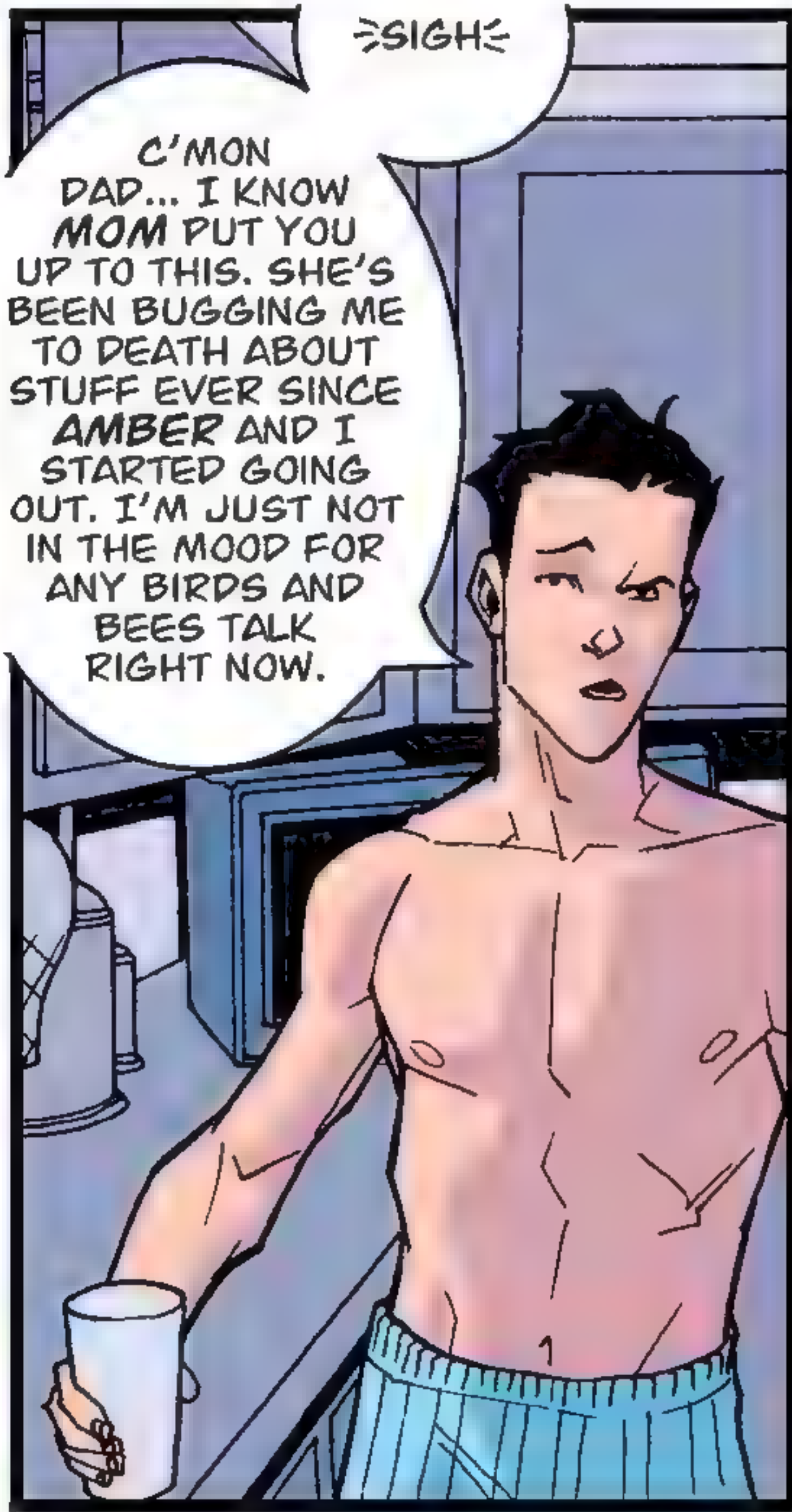
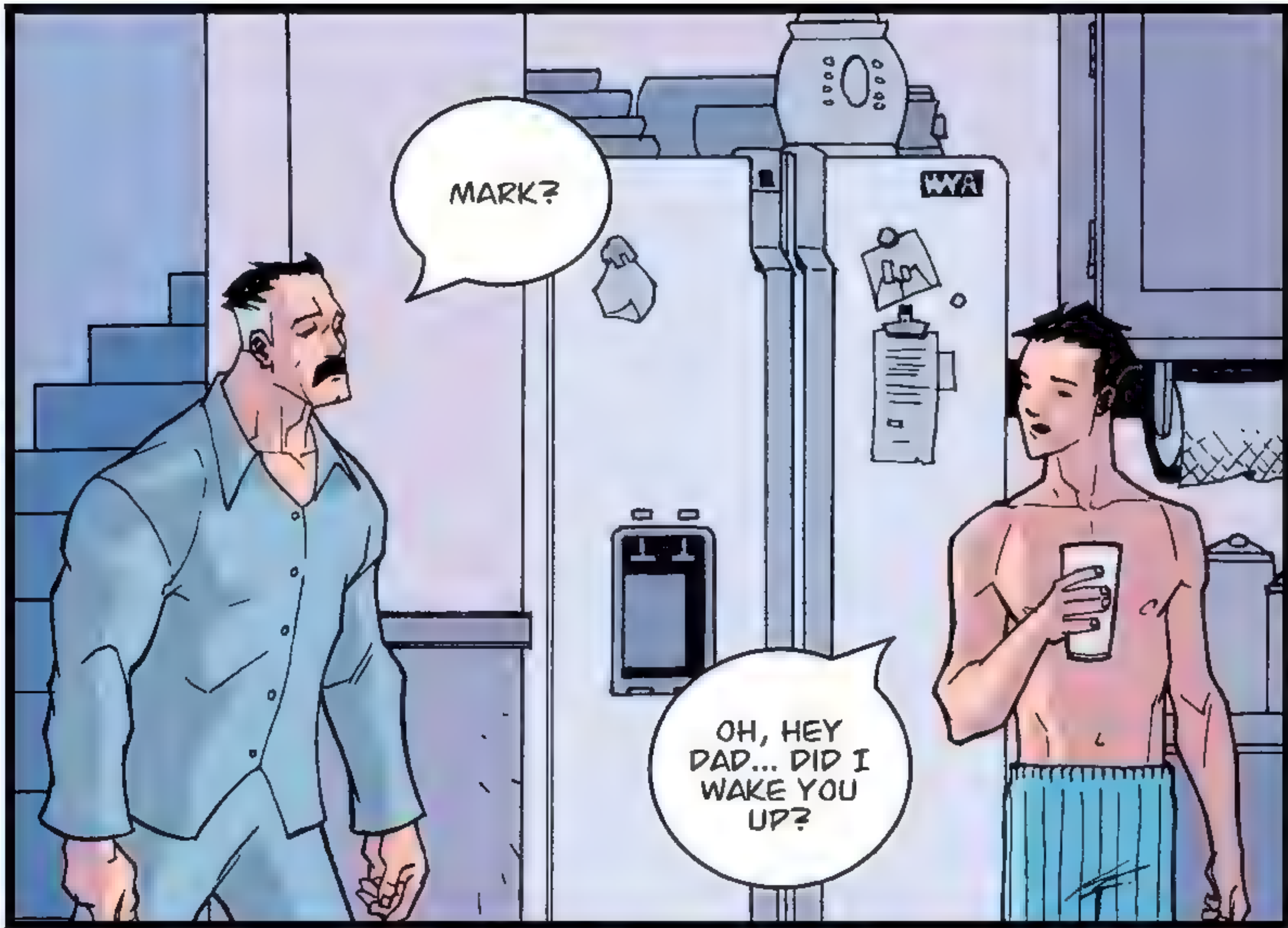
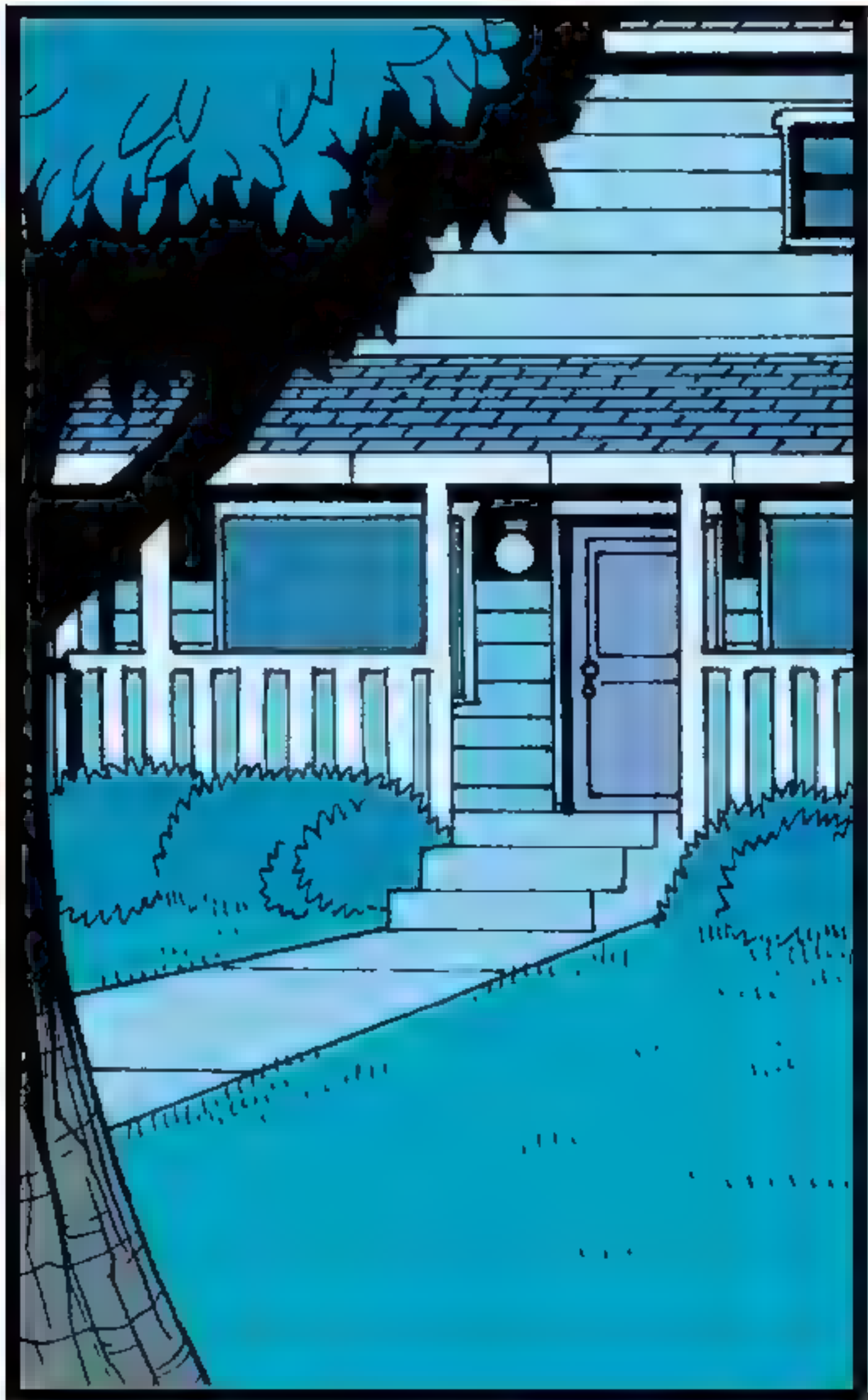


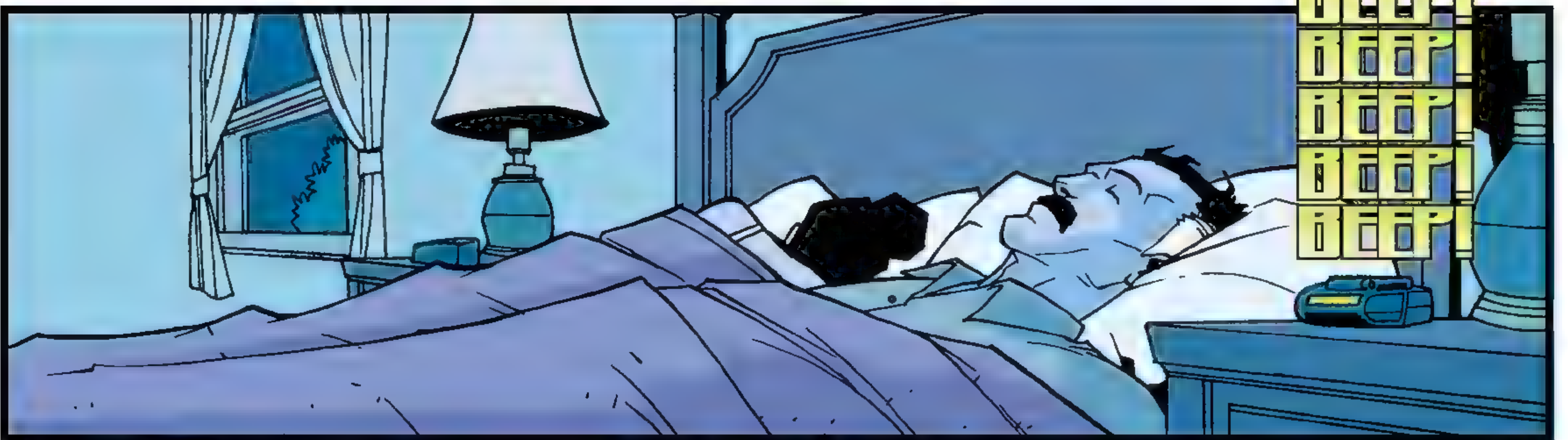




BROKKO-FOOM!







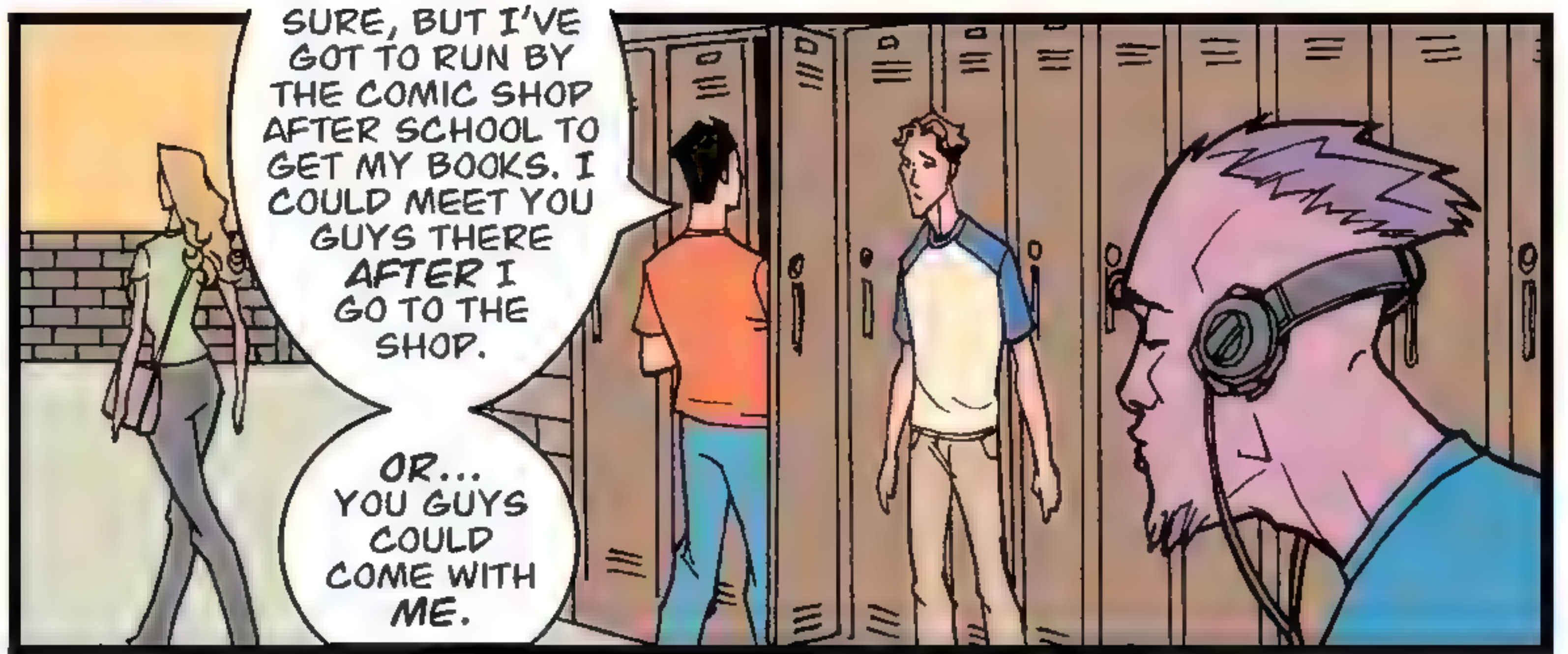
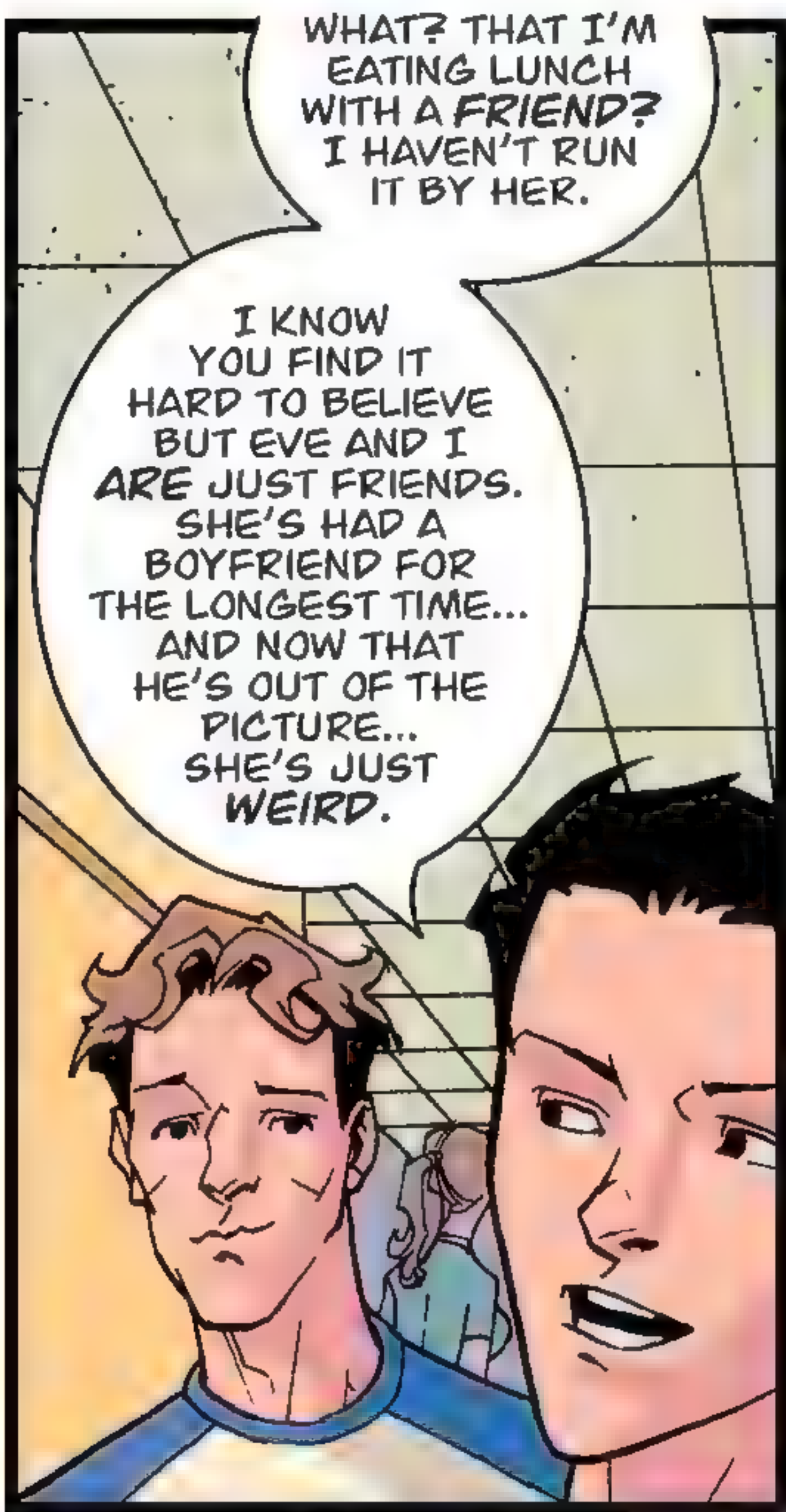
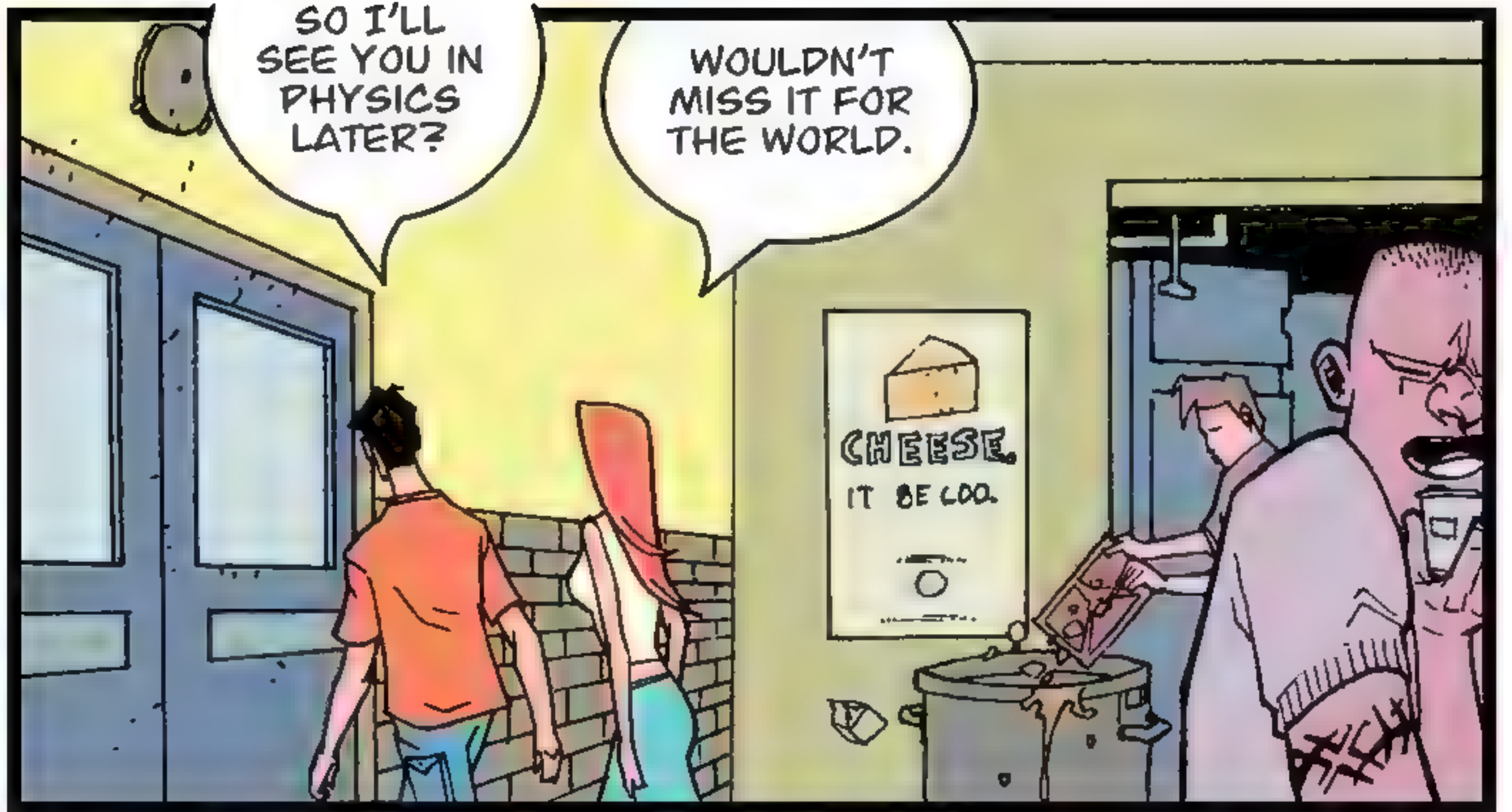
BEEP!
BEEP!
BEEP!
BEEP!
BEEP!

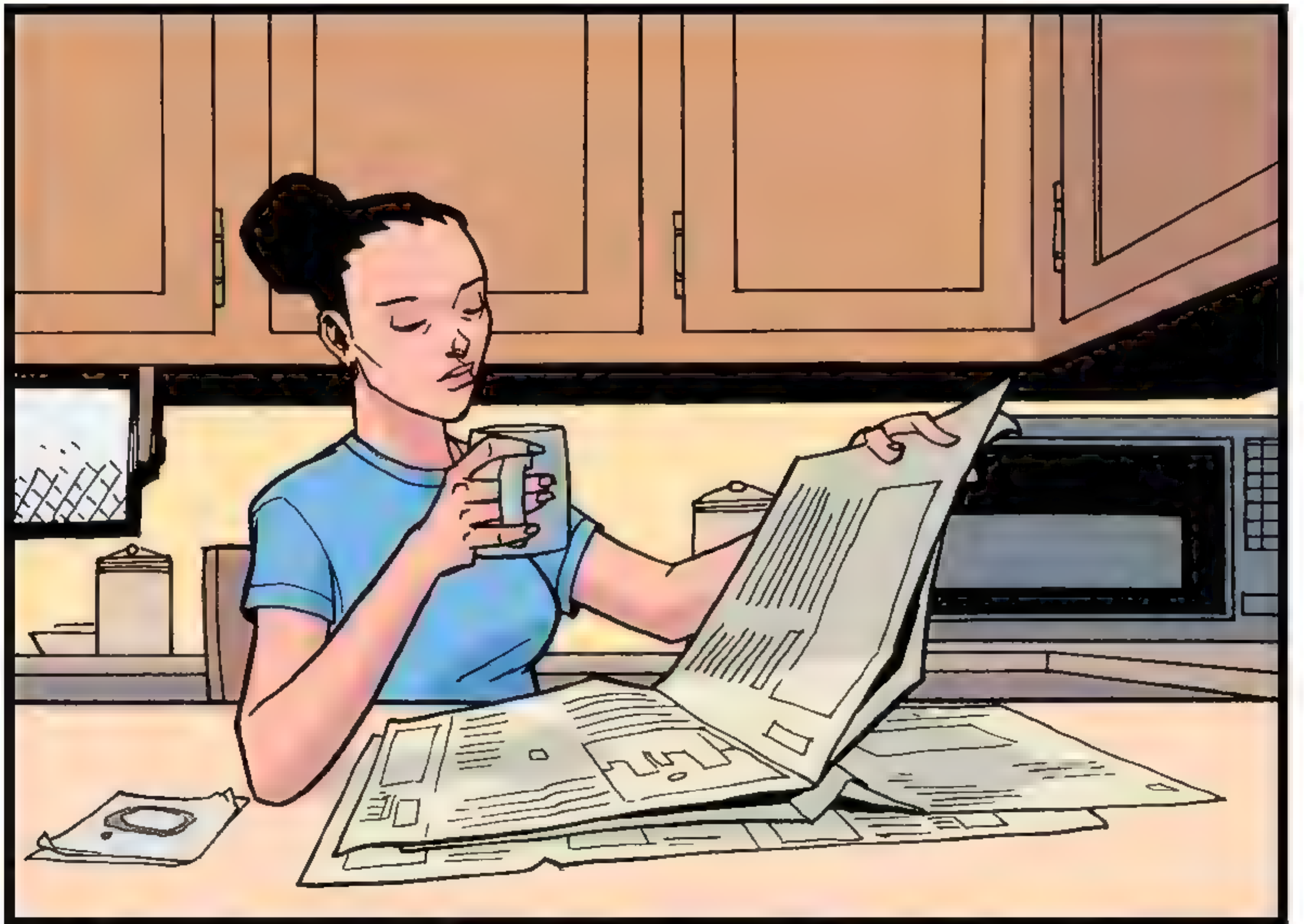
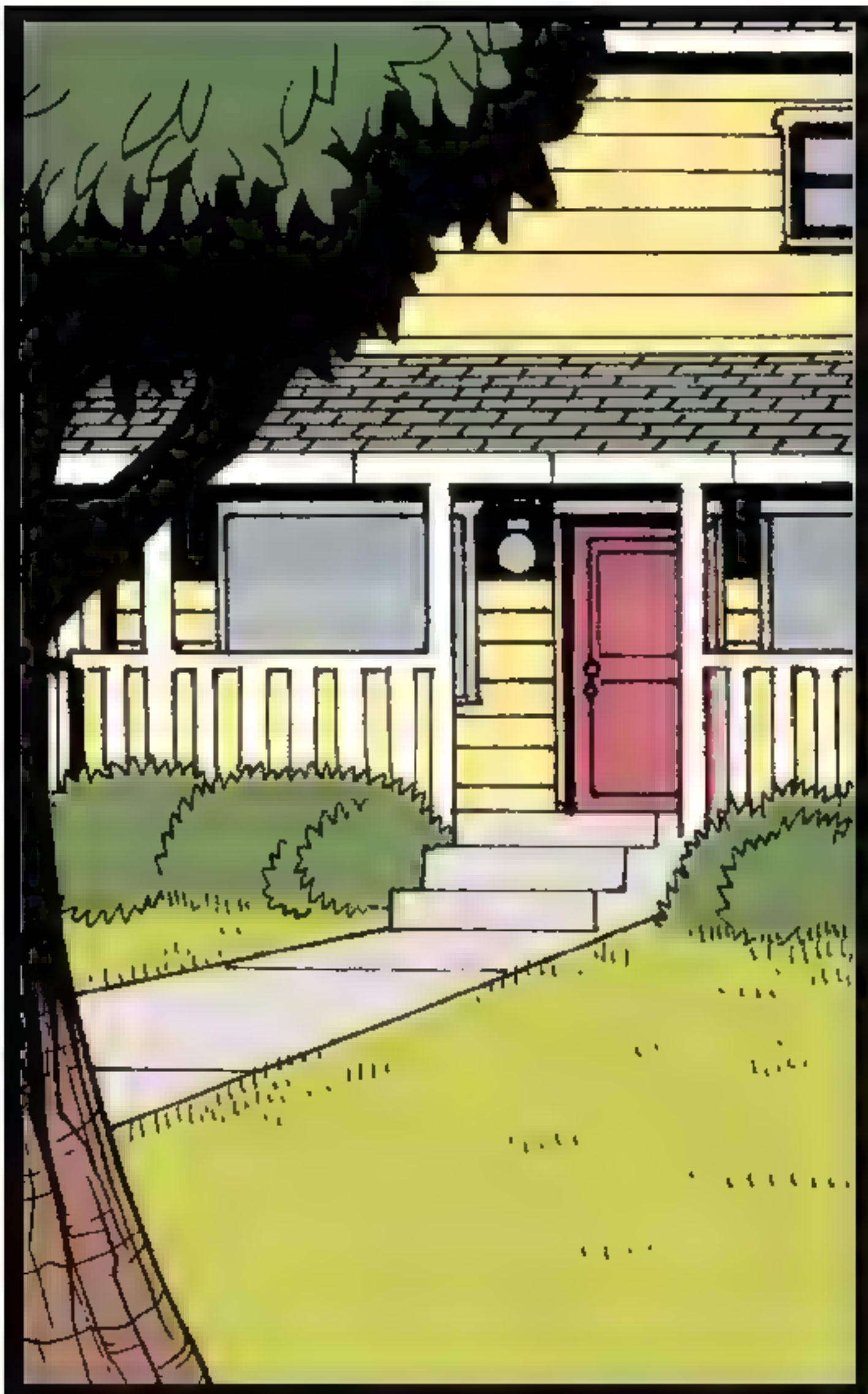


VOOOOSH!!!



DAMN
BEEPER.







TRUST ME...
I HAVE
CLEARANCE.

DAMIEN
DARKBLOOD,
DEMON DETECTIVE...
I WORK FOR PEOPLE
YOUR BOSSES'
BOSSES AREN'T
IMPORTANT ENOUGH
TO MEET.

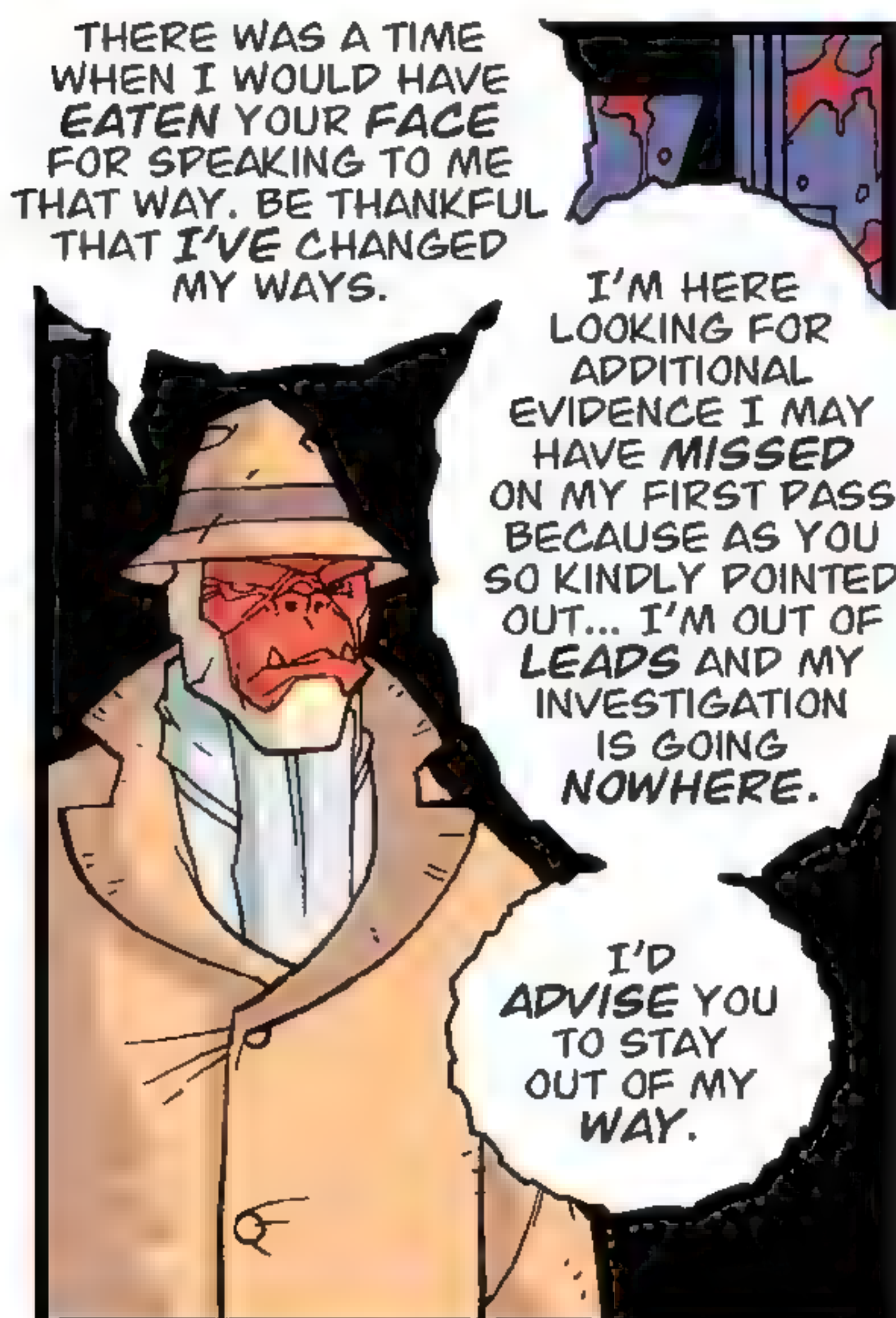


HURM.



LOOK
AT WHAT
THE CAT
DRAGGED
IN.

YOU
KNOW... THE
BOSS THREW
US ON THIS
FOR A REASON.
YOU'RE JUST
NOT CUTTING THE
MUSTARD. YOUR
INVESTIGATION
IS TAKING TOO
LONG.



THERE WAS A TIME
WHEN I WOULD HAVE
EATEN YOUR FACE
FOR SPEAKING TO ME
THAT WAY. BE THANKFUL
THAT I'VE CHANGED
MY WAYS.

I'M HERE
LOOKING FOR
ADDITIONAL
EVIDENCE I MAY
HAVE **MISSED**
ON MY FIRST PASS
BECAUSE AS YOU
SO KINDLY POINTED
OUT... I'M OUT OF
LEADS AND MY
INVESTIGATION
IS GOING
NOWHERE.

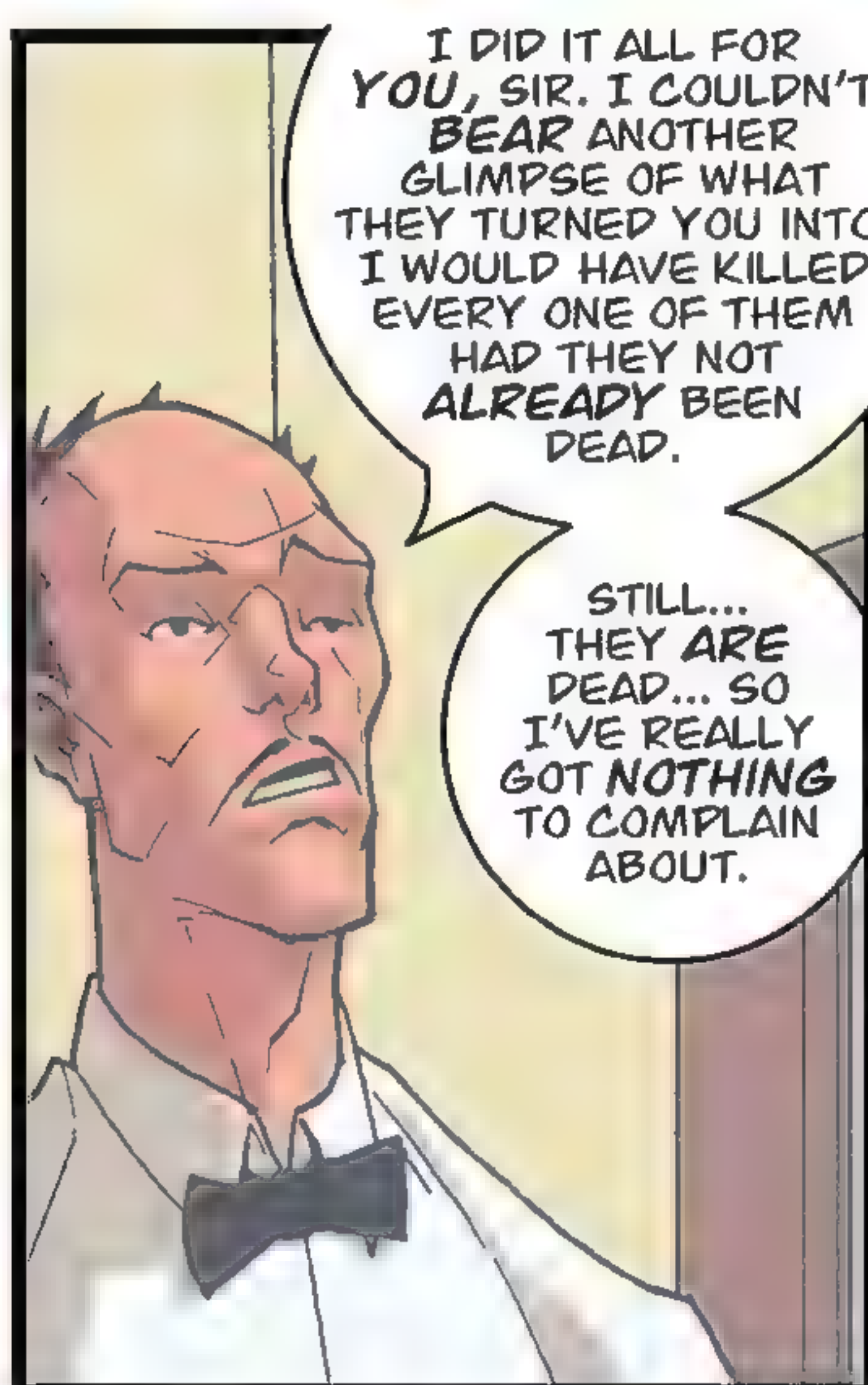
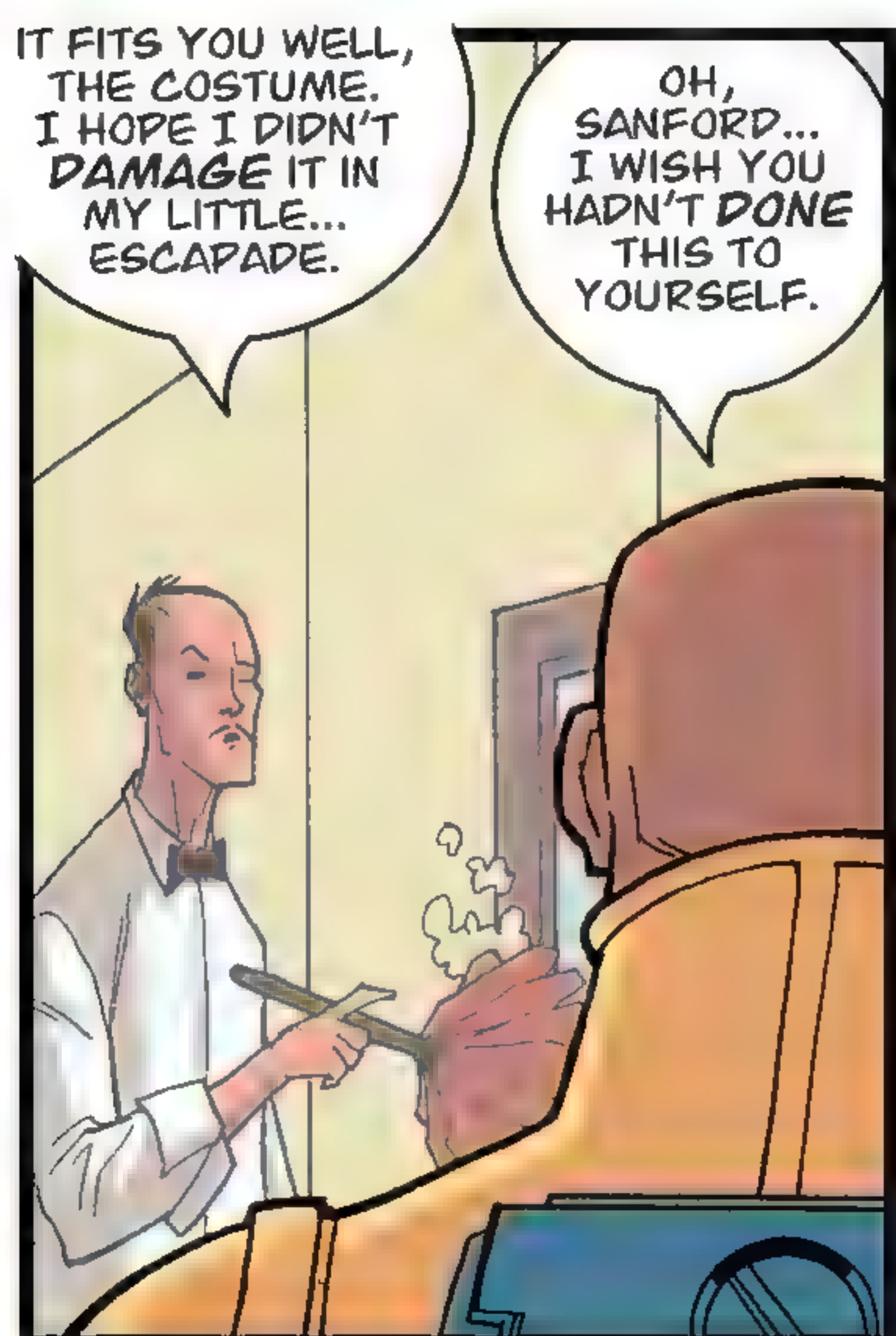
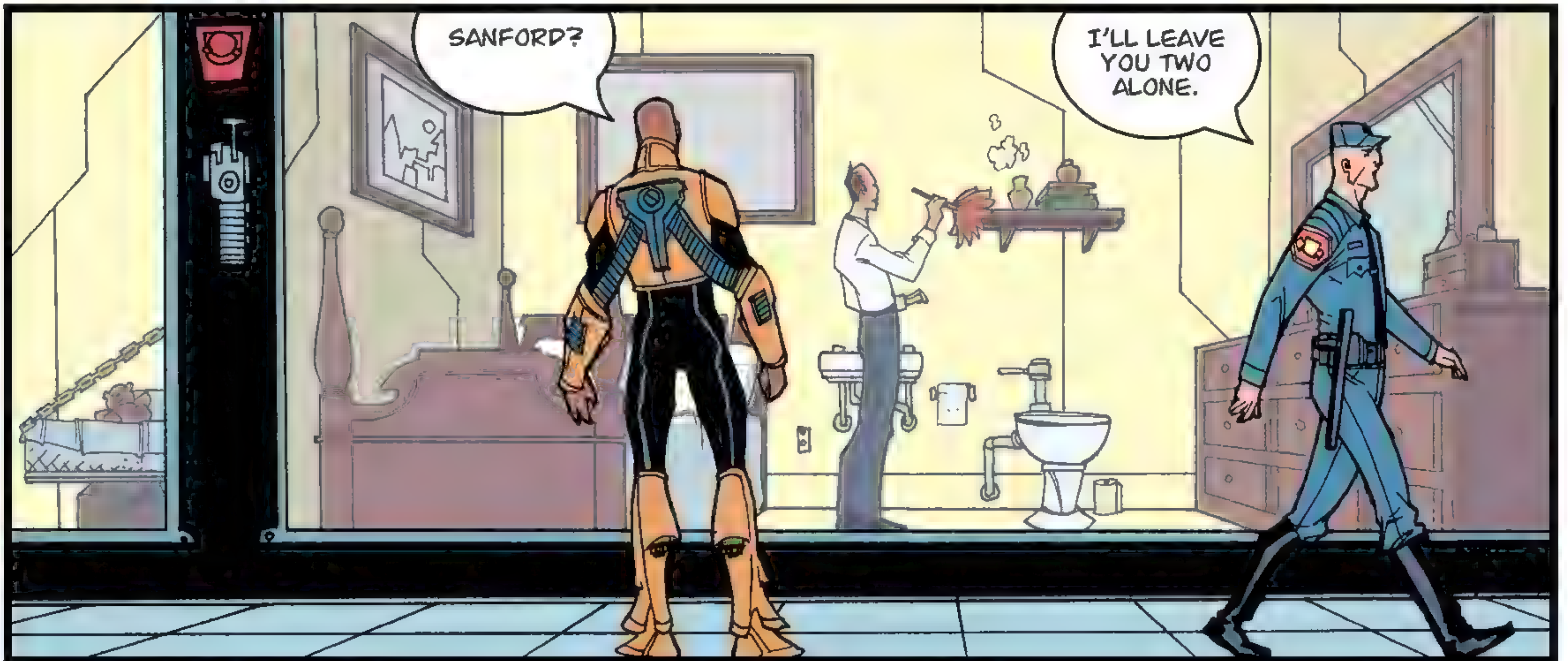
I'D
ADVISE YOU
TO STAY
OUT OF MY
WAY.

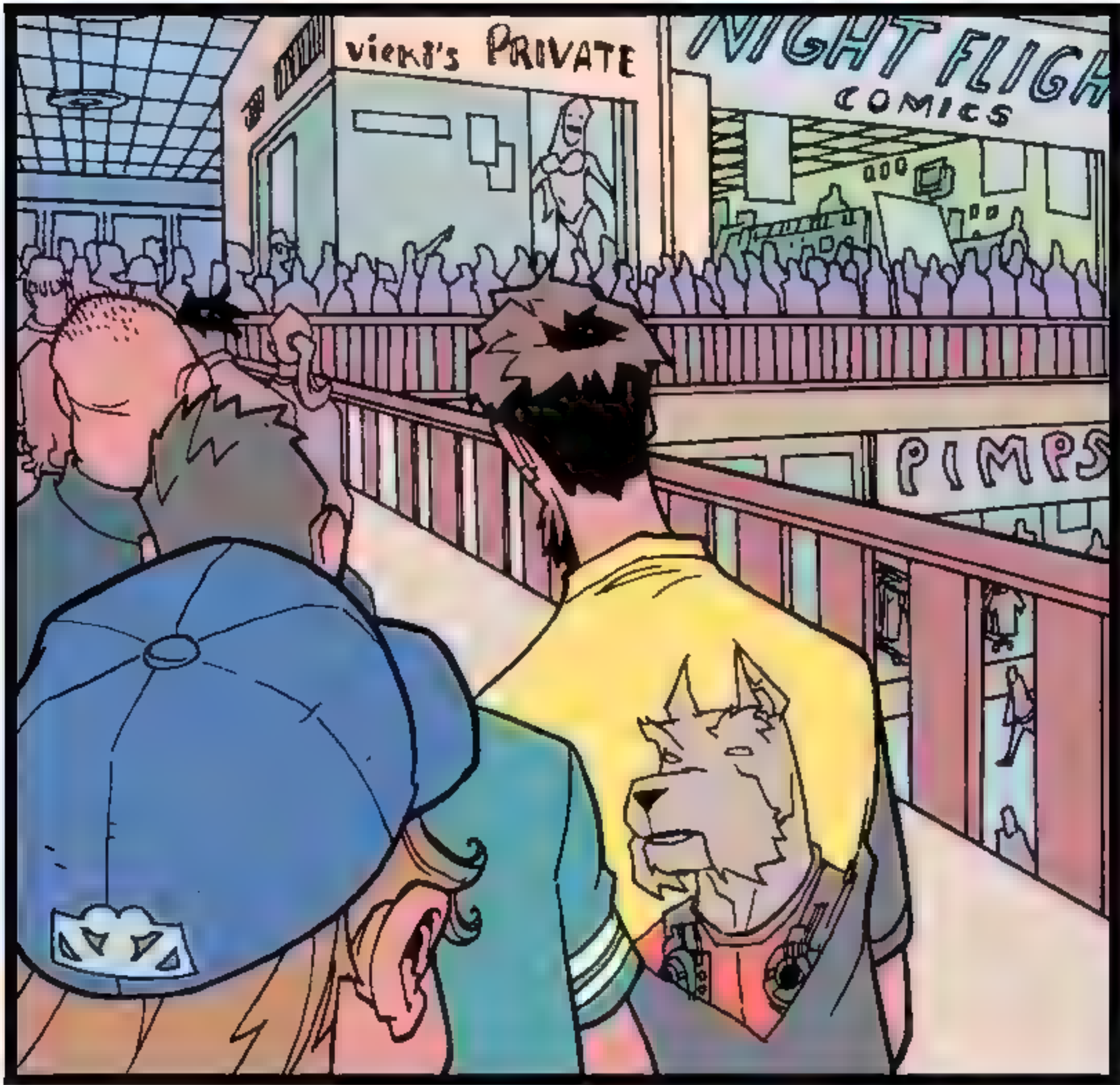


...



HURM.







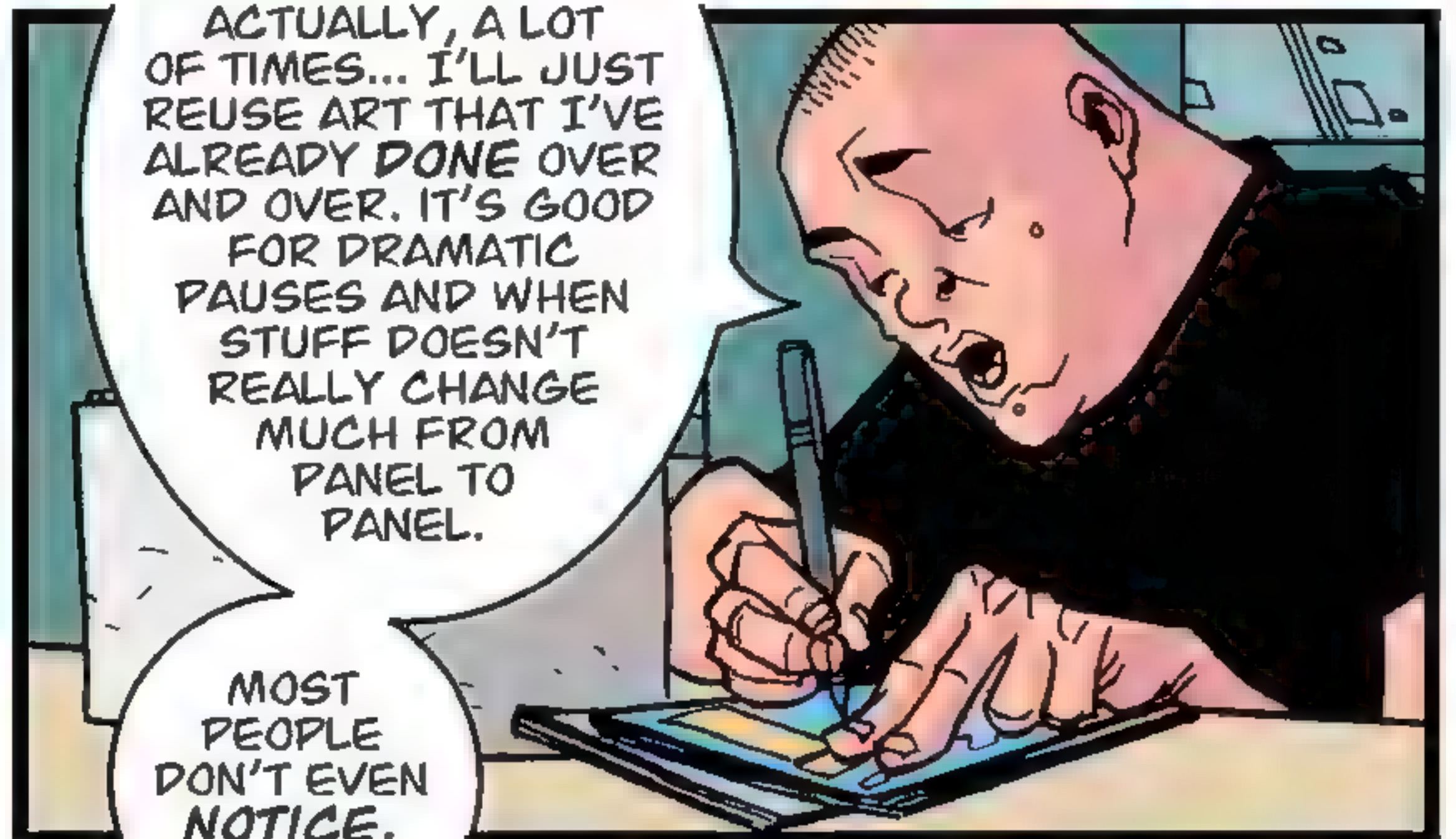
HI, MISTER SCHAFF... IT'S GREAT TO MEET YOU. I BROUGHT A LOT OF STUFF... YOU DON'T HAVE TO SIGN IT ALL IF YOU DON'T WANT TO.

LAY IT ON ME, KIDDO. YOU PAID HARD EARNED MONEY FOR THE STUFF... THE LEAST I CAN DO IS DEFACE IT WITH MY ILLEGIBLE SCRIBBLE.

COOL!

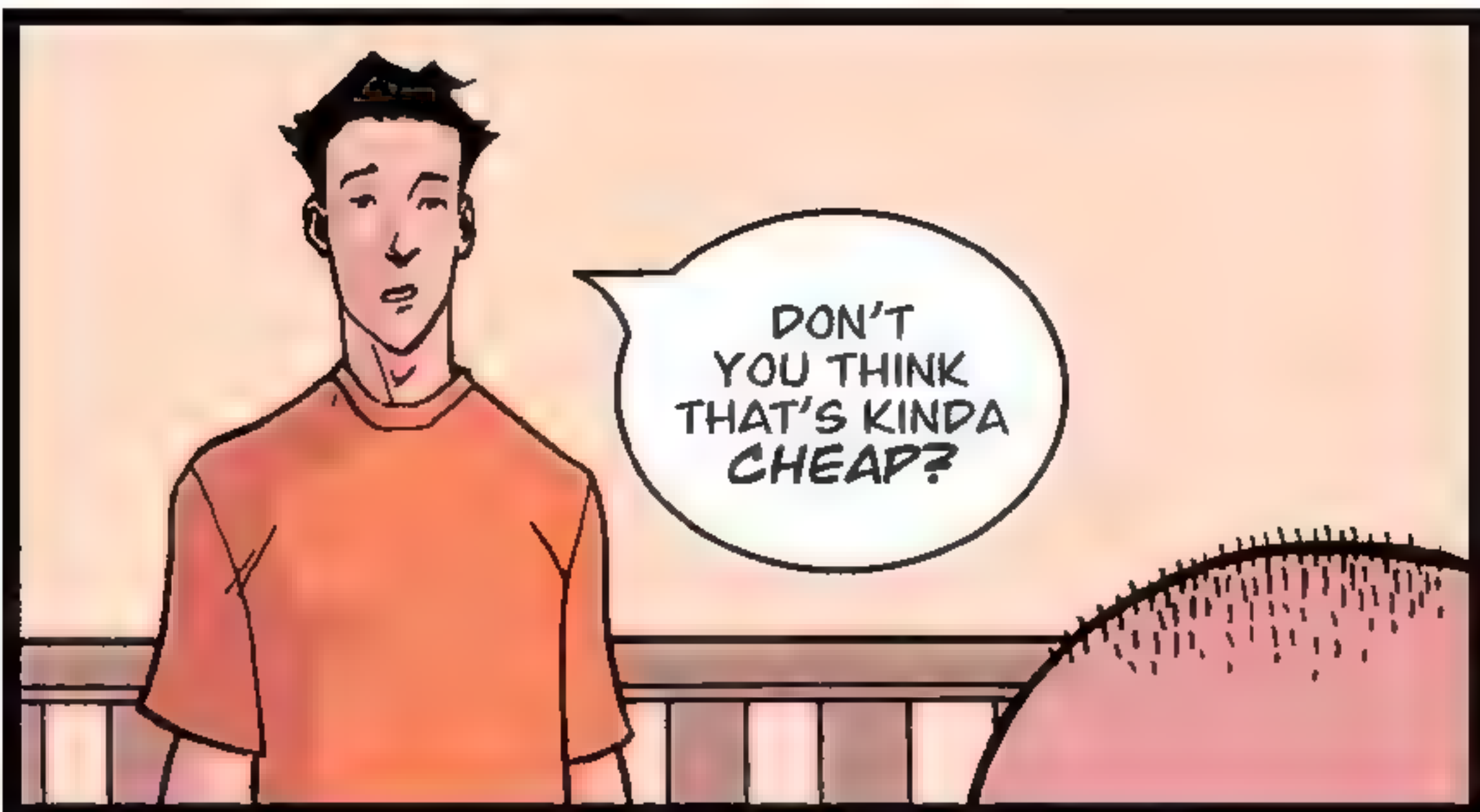
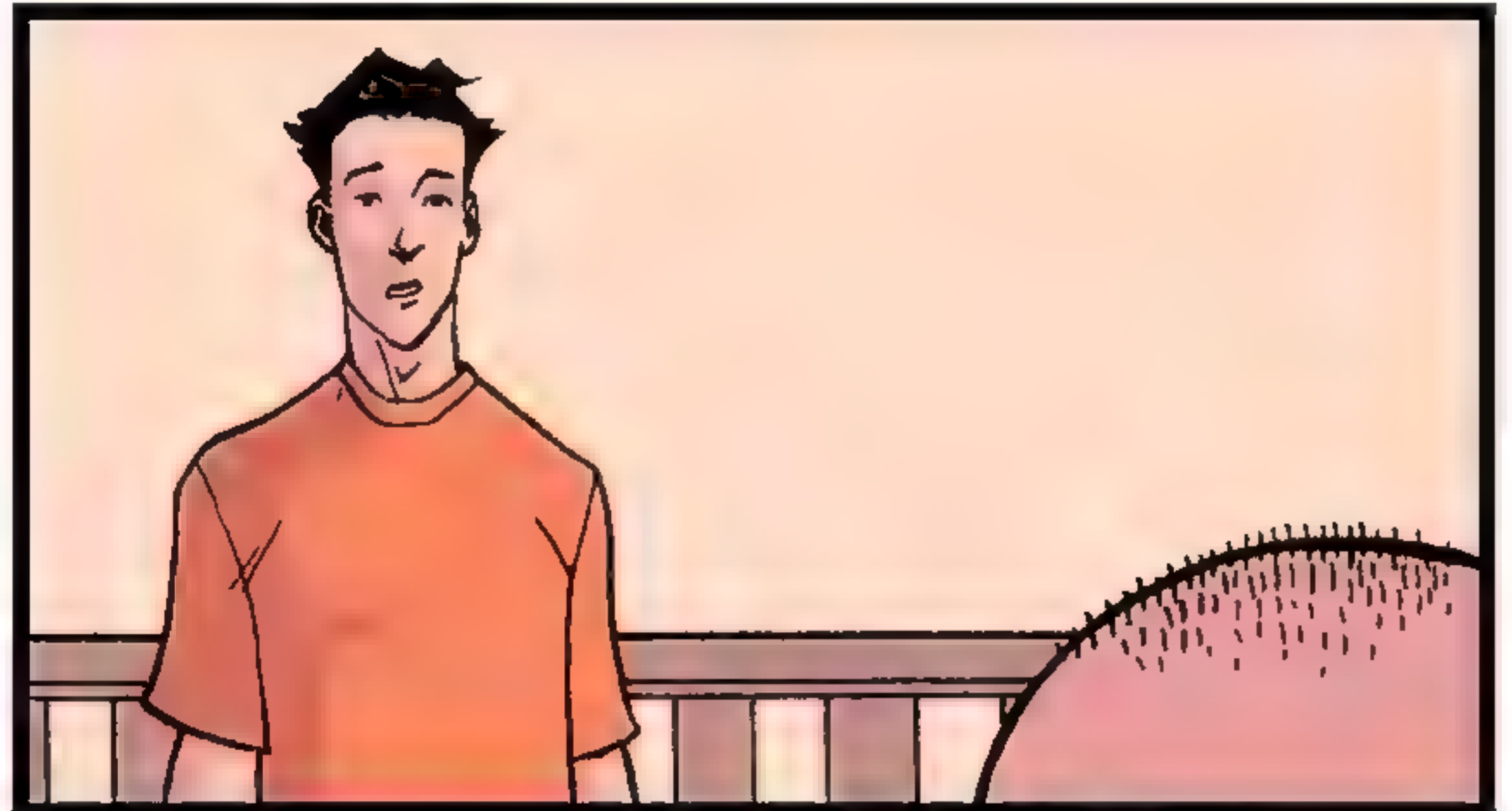
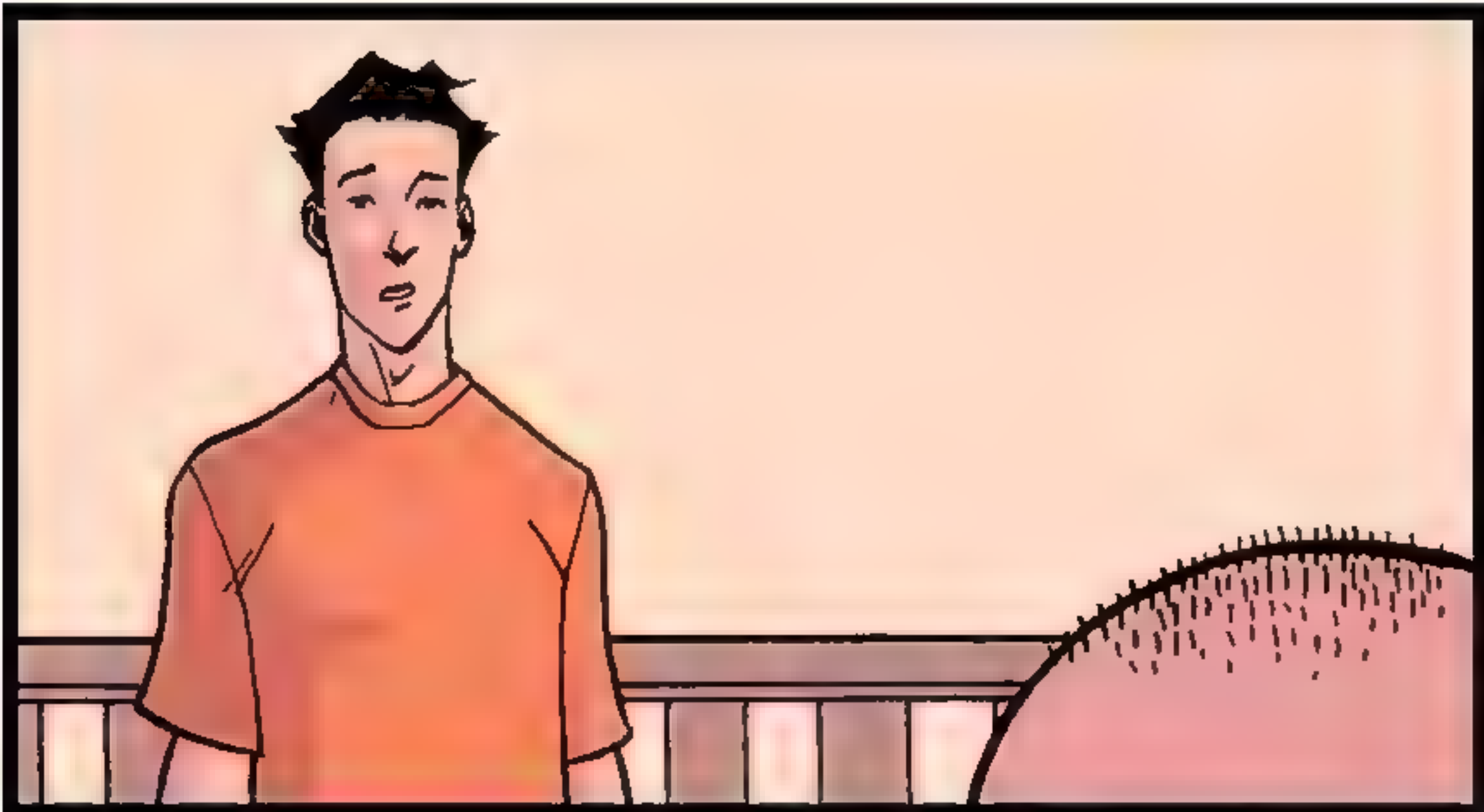


I GOTTA SAY, MAN... I'M AMAZED AT HOW YOU GET THESE THINGS OUT ON A MONTHLY BASIS. IT SEEMS LIKE SO MUCH WORK TO DO IN SUCH A SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME... AND YOU'RE NEVER LATE.



ACTUALLY, A LOT OF TIMES... I'LL JUST REUSE ART THAT I'VE ALREADY DONE OVER AND OVER. IT'S GOOD FOR DRAMATIC PAUSES AND WHEN STUFF DOESN'T REALLY CHANGE MUCH FROM PANEL TO PANEL.

MOST PEOPLE DON'T EVEN NOTICE.



DON'T YOU THINK THAT'S KINDA CHEAP?

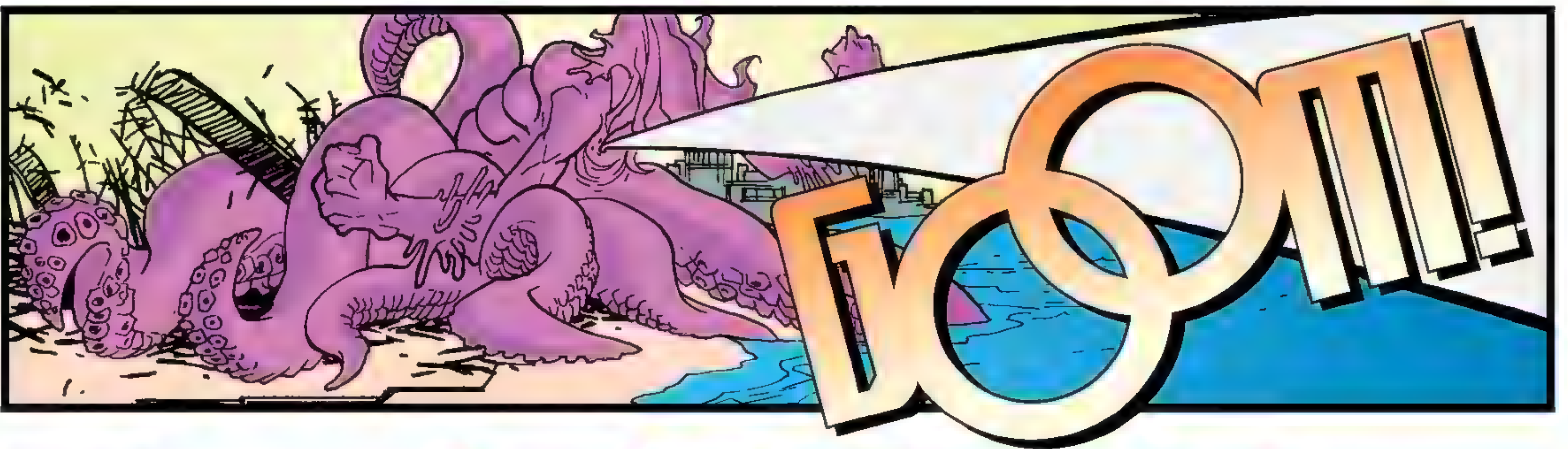


NOT REALLY.

RAWK!

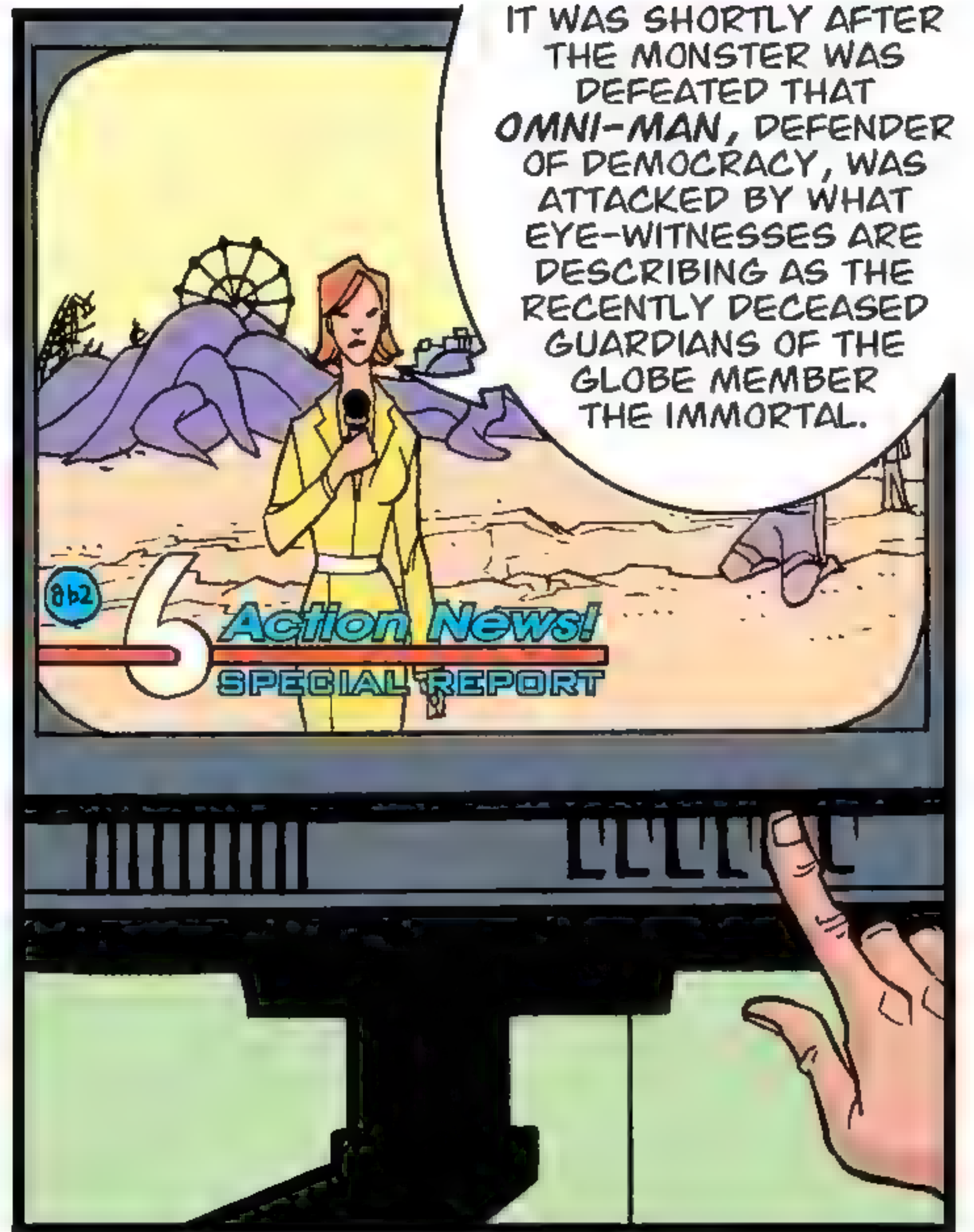
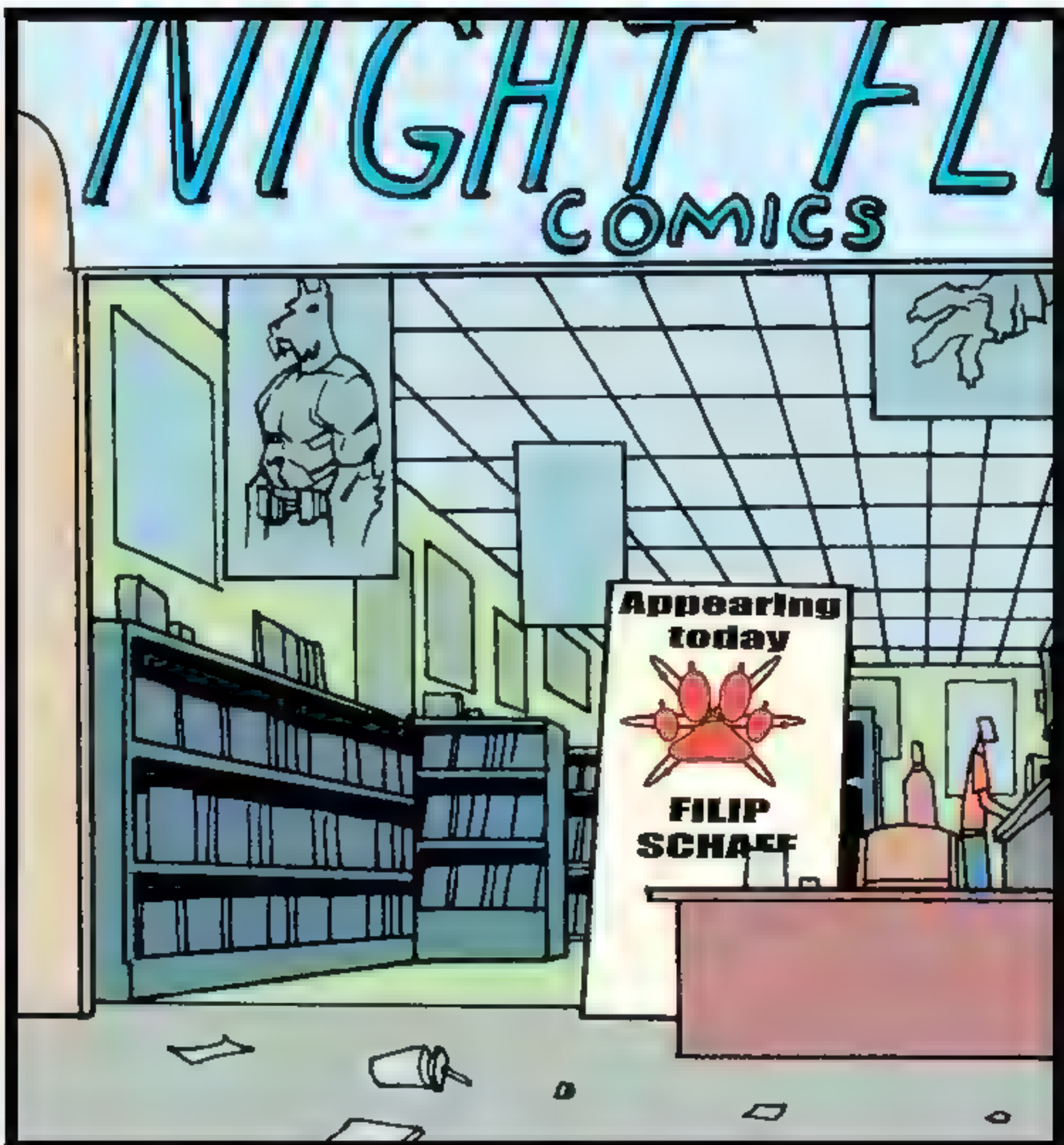


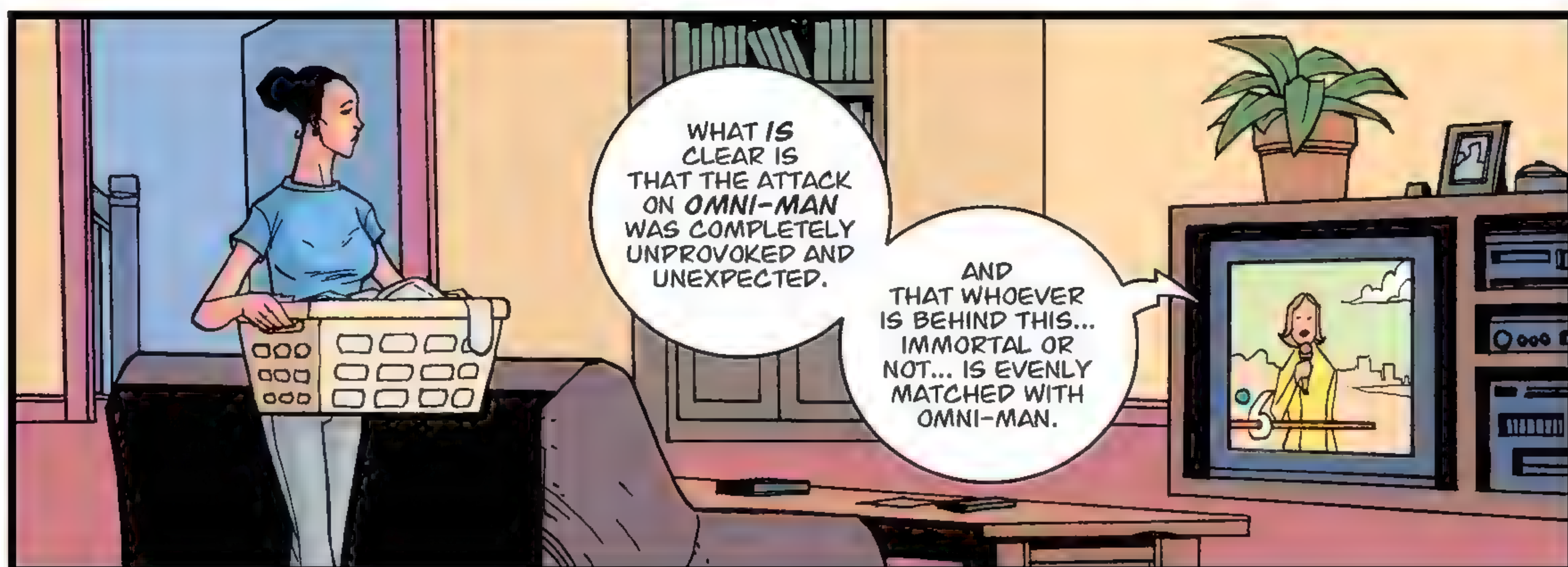
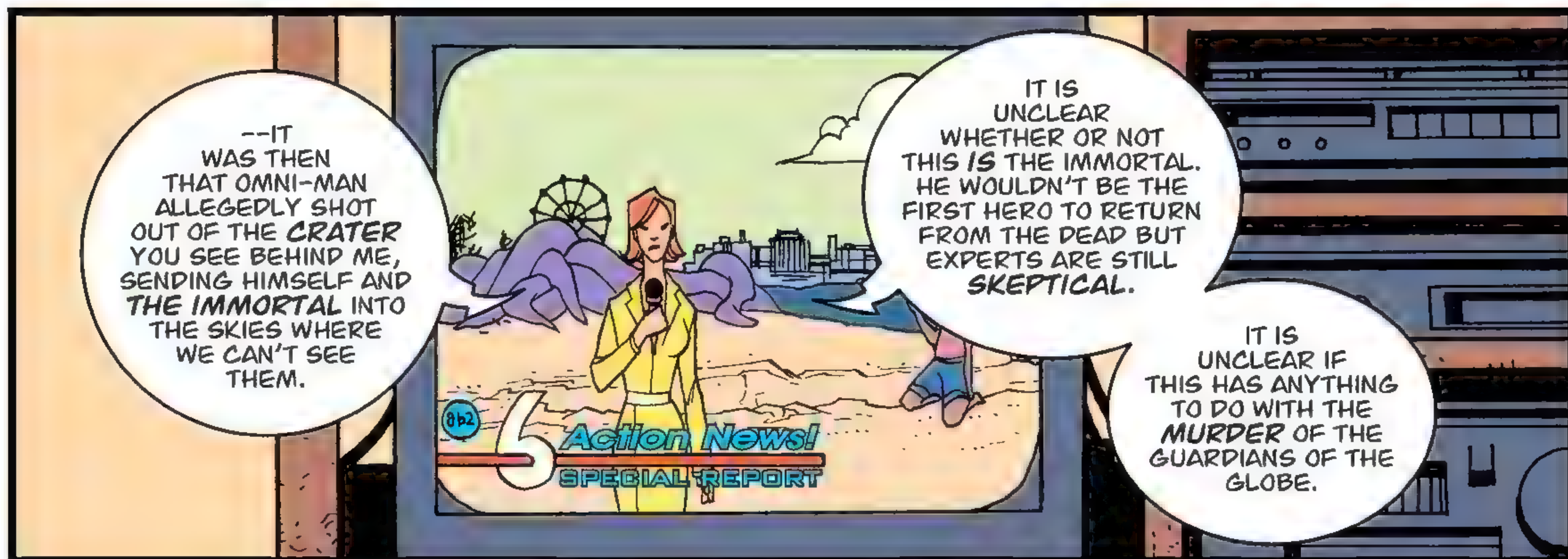
KRRON!

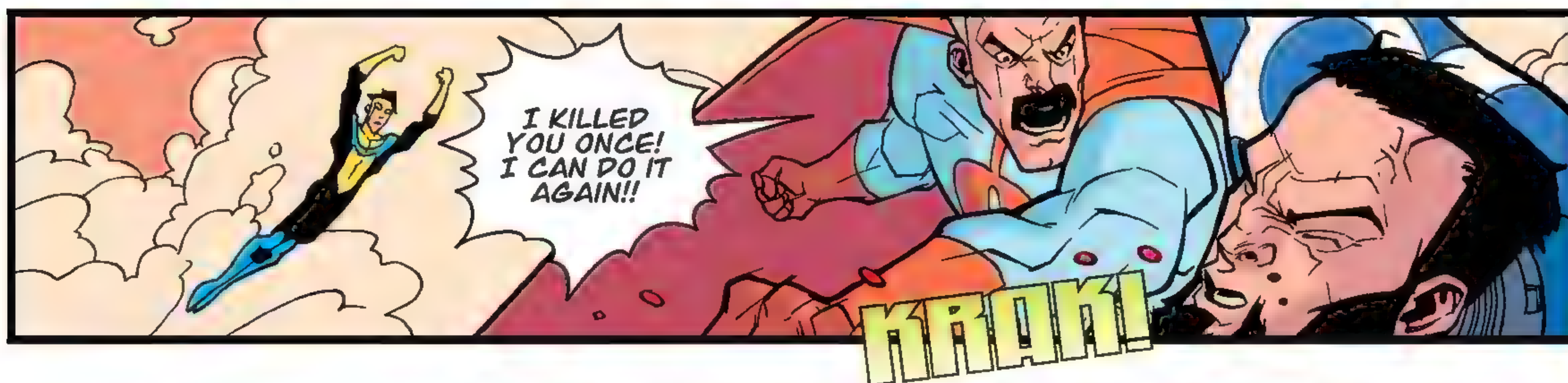
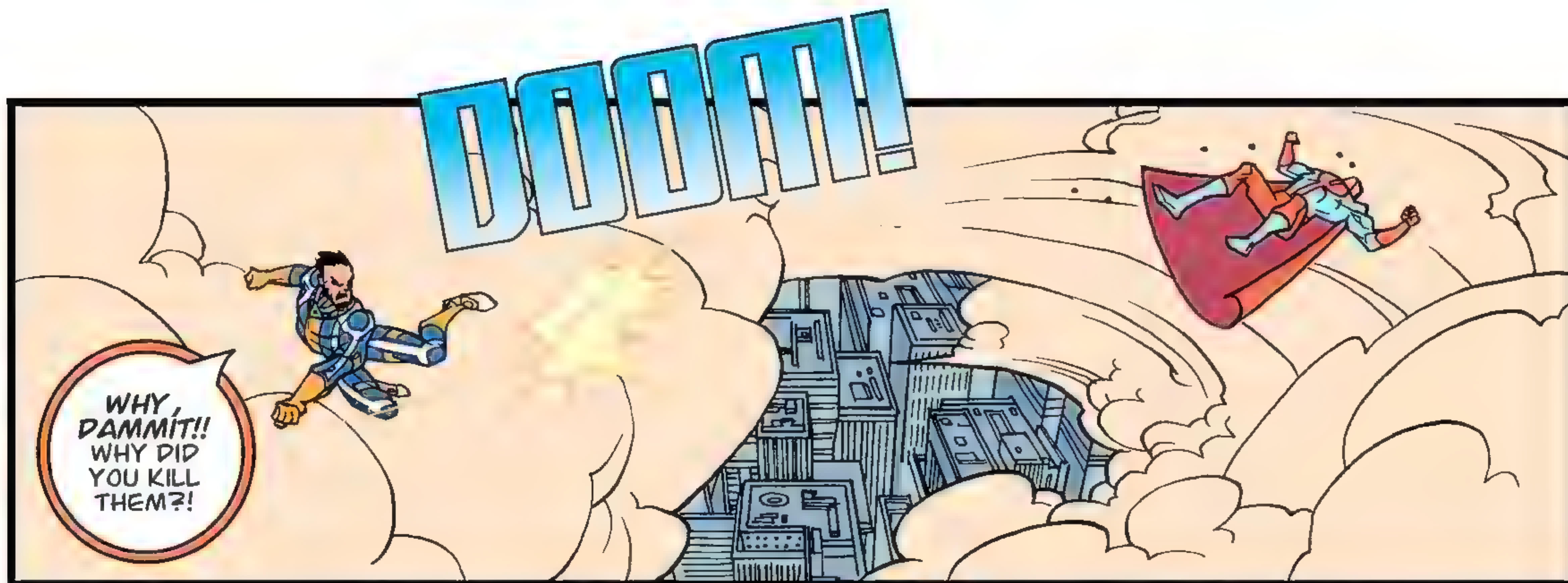


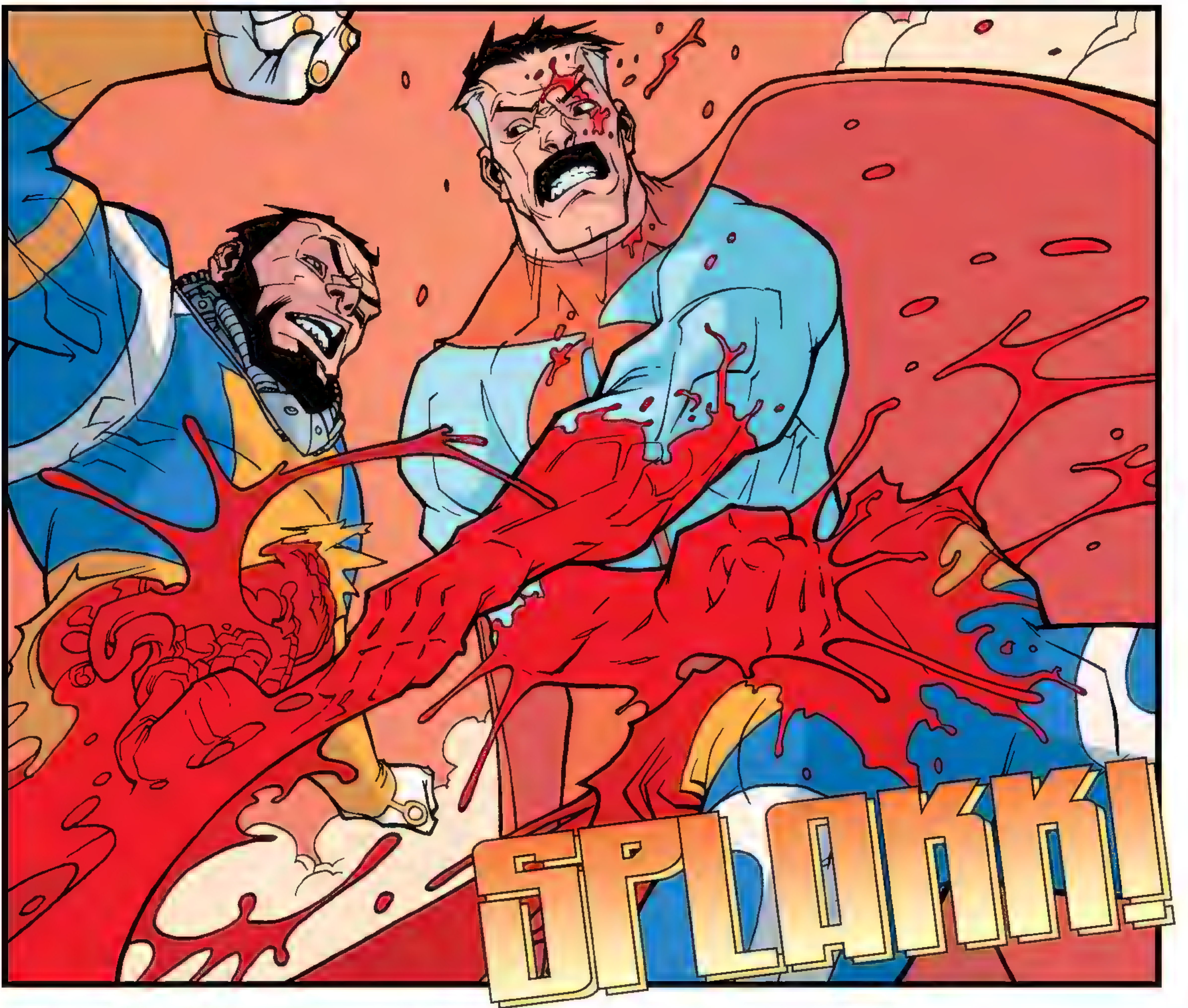








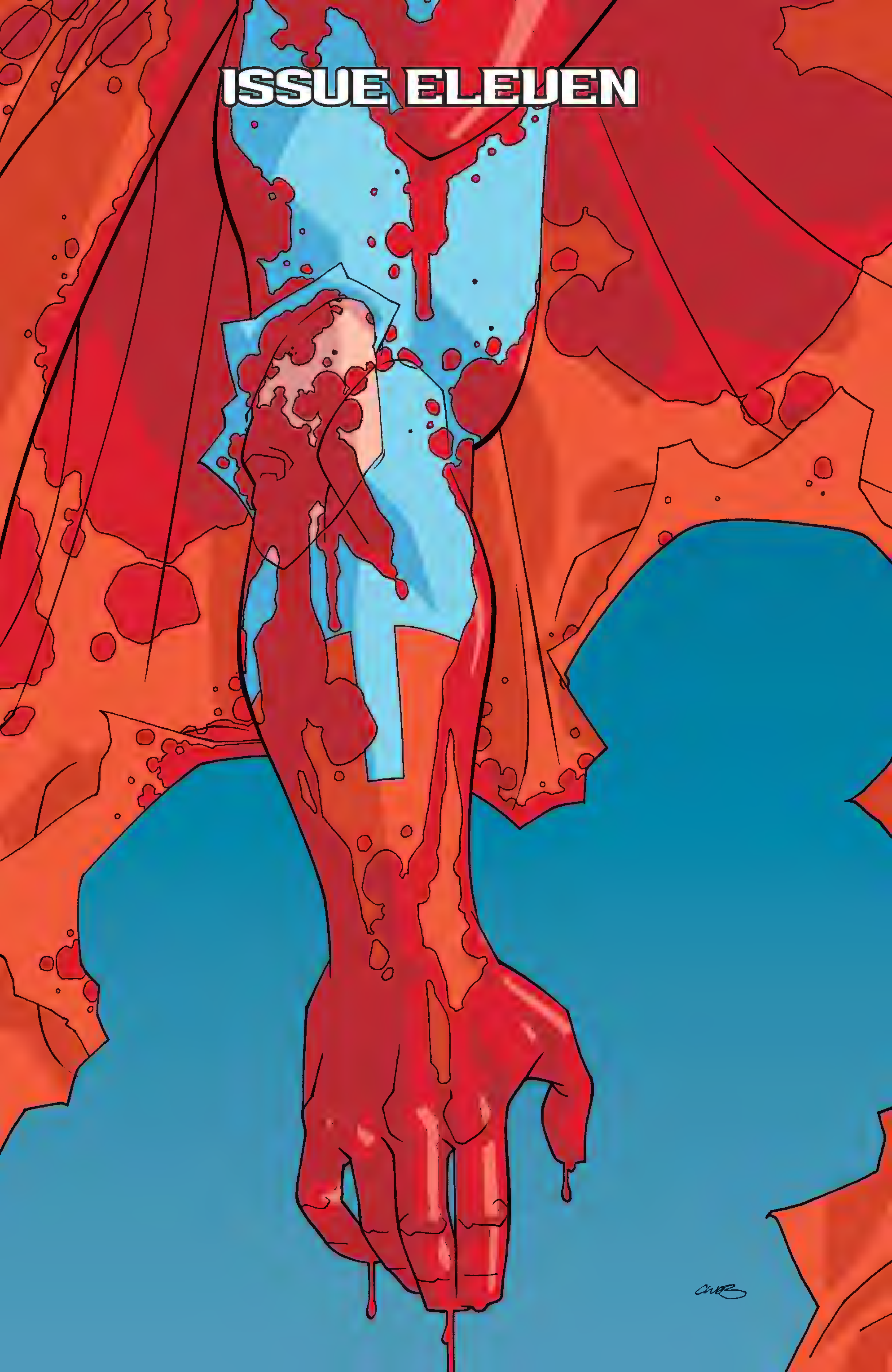








ISSUE ELEVEN



CWZ



OKAY,
SON... I'VE
DECIDED TO
TELL YOU THE
TRUTH.

I
THINK YOU'RE
OLD ENOUGH TO
KNOW WHERE I
REALLY COME
FROM.



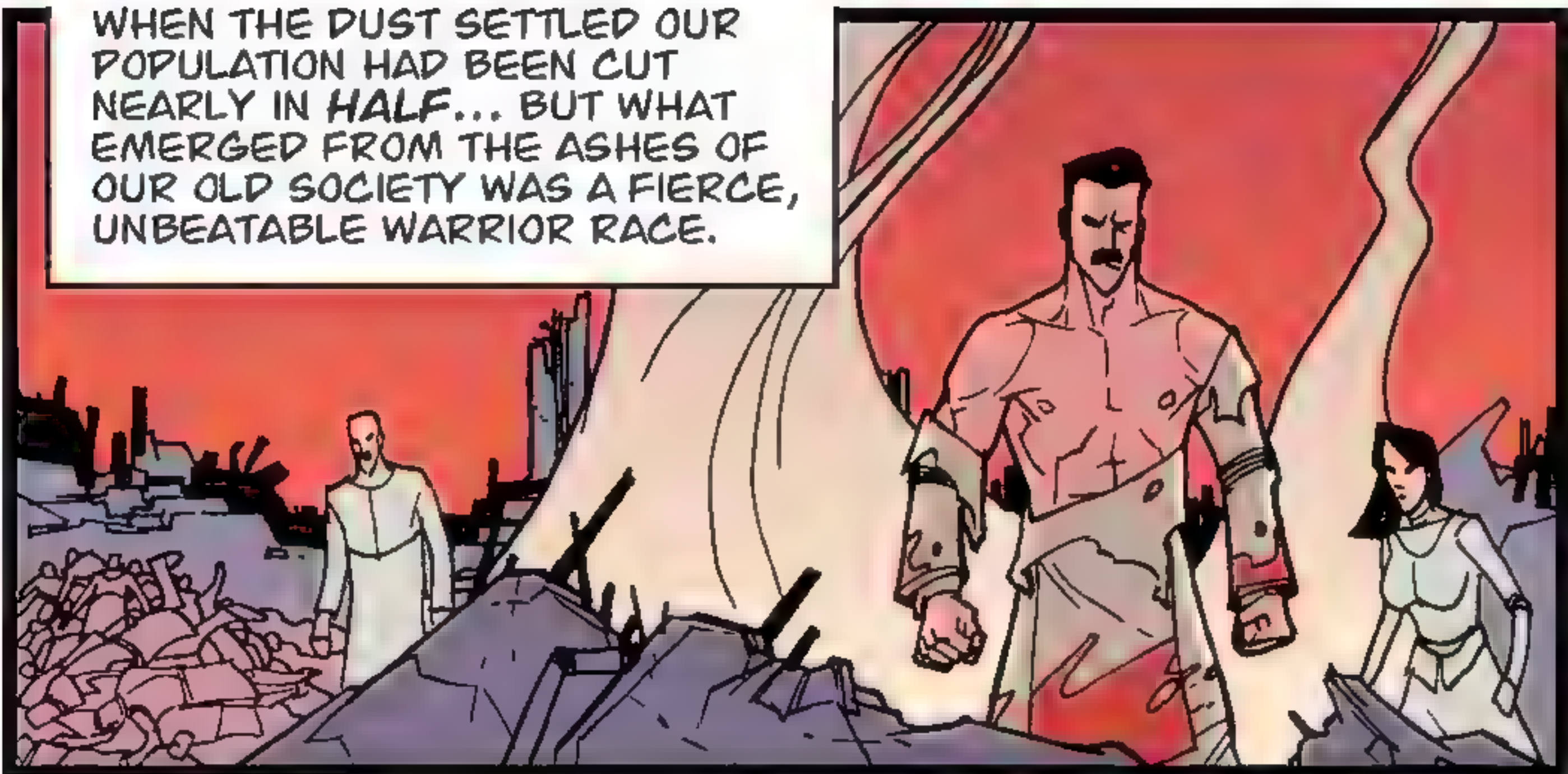
I AM FROM THE PLANET VILTRUM... THAT MUCH IS TRUE. ALTHOUGH, IT IS NOT THE PLANET THAT I HAVE TOLD YOU ABOUT SO MANY TIMES.

VILTRUM WAS A PLANET THAT HAD ACHIEVED A PERFECT GLOBAL SOCIETY... BUT IT DIDN'T HAPPEN OVER NIGHT.



IT WAS DECIDED THAT IN ORDER FOR OUR PEOPLE TO OBTAIN INTERGALACTIC DOMINANCE WE MUST ELIMINATE THE WEAK FROM OUR PLANET.

IT WAS A VERY MESSY PROCESS.

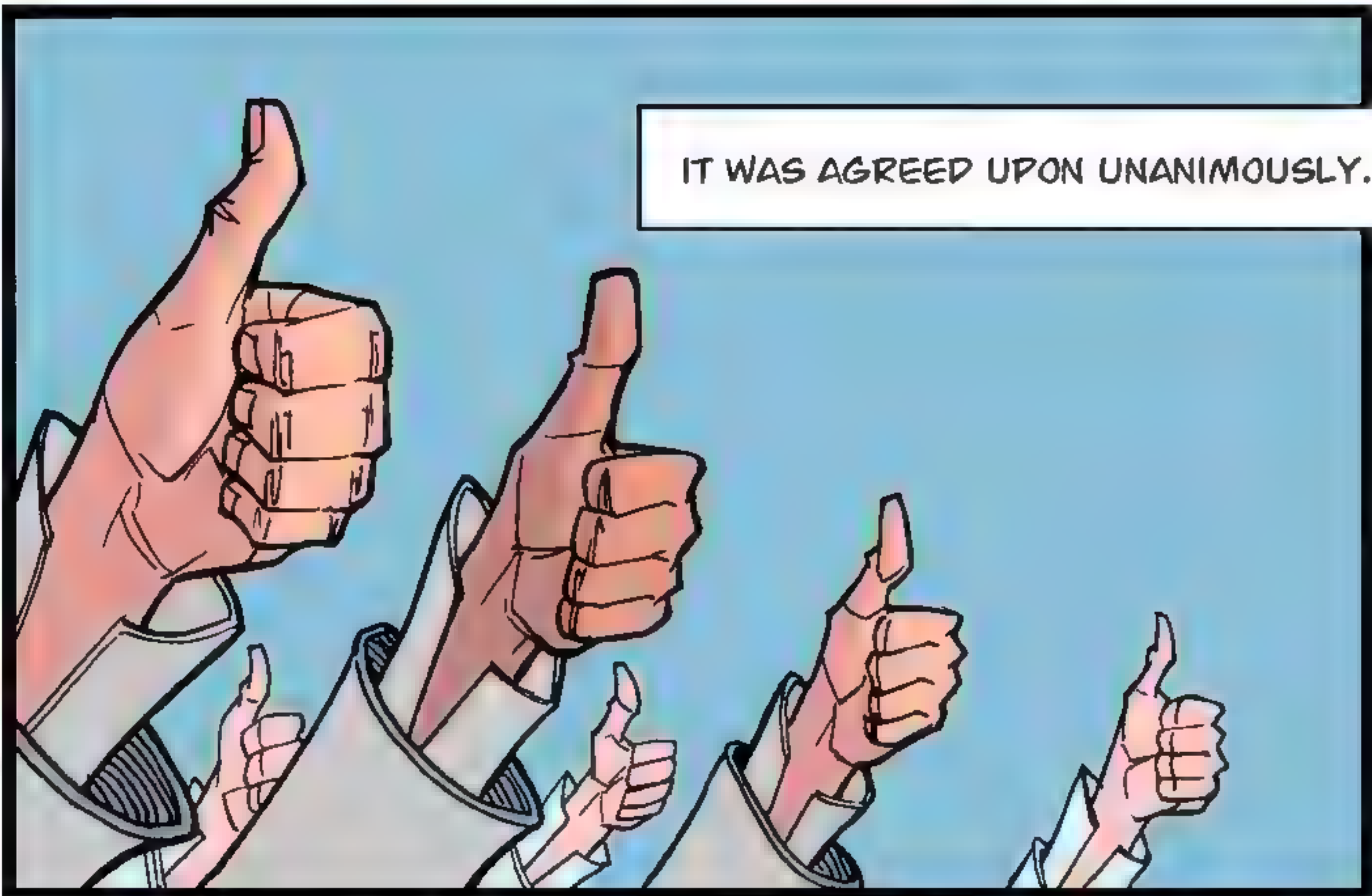


WHEN THE DUST SETTLED OUR POPULATION HAD BEEN CUT NEARLY IN HALF... BUT WHAT EMERGED FROM THE ASHES OF OUR OLD SOCIETY WAS A FIERCE, UNBEATABLE WARRIOR RACE.



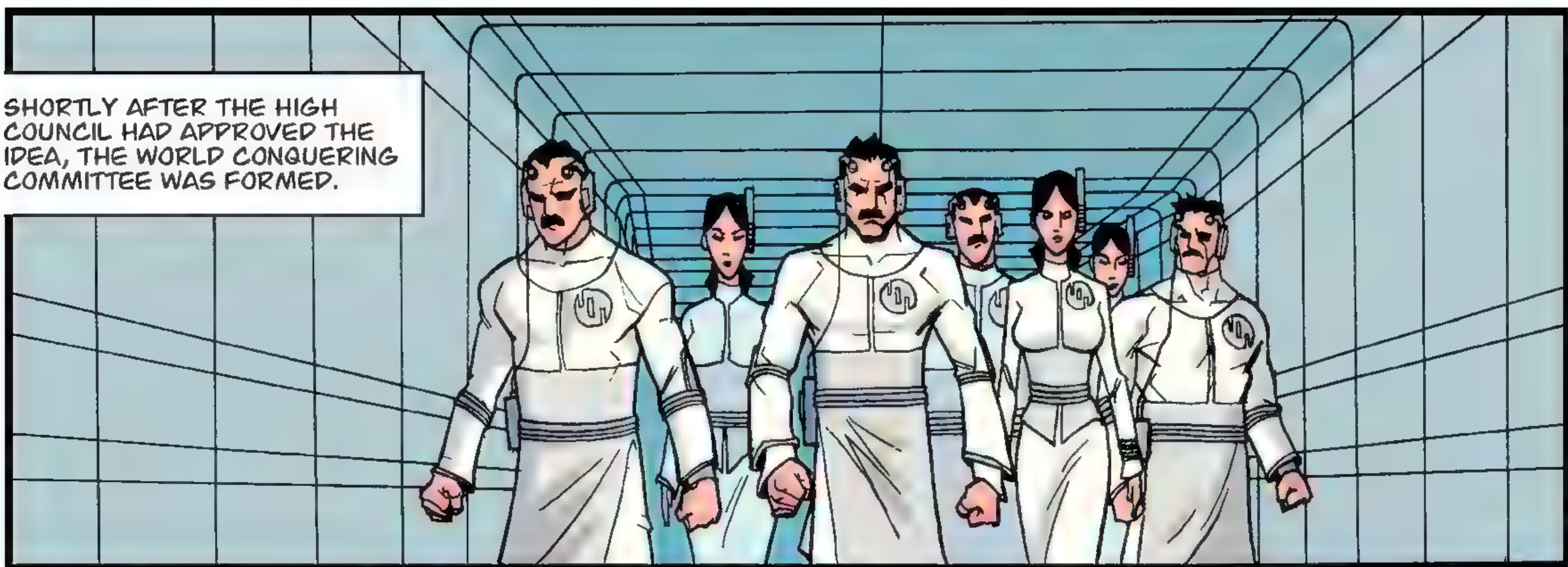
ONCE OUR BATTLE-SCARRED PLANET HAD BEEN REPAIRED... WE SET OUR SIGHTS OUTWARD. IT WAS PROPOSED THAT WE BRING OUR NEW WORLD ORDER TO OTHER WORLDS.

OUR GOAL WAS TO ESTABLISH AND EXPAND A PLANETARY EMPIRE.



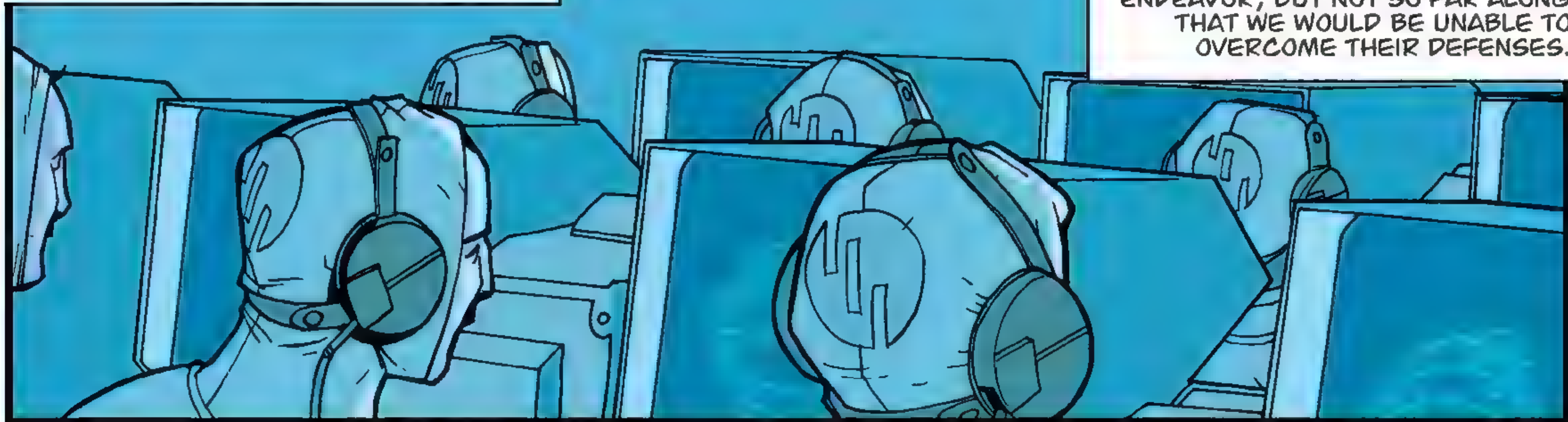
IT WAS AGREED UPON UNANIMOUSLY.

SHORTLY AFTER THE HIGH COUNCIL HAD APPROVED THE IDEA, THE WORLD CONQUERING COMMITTEE WAS FORMED.

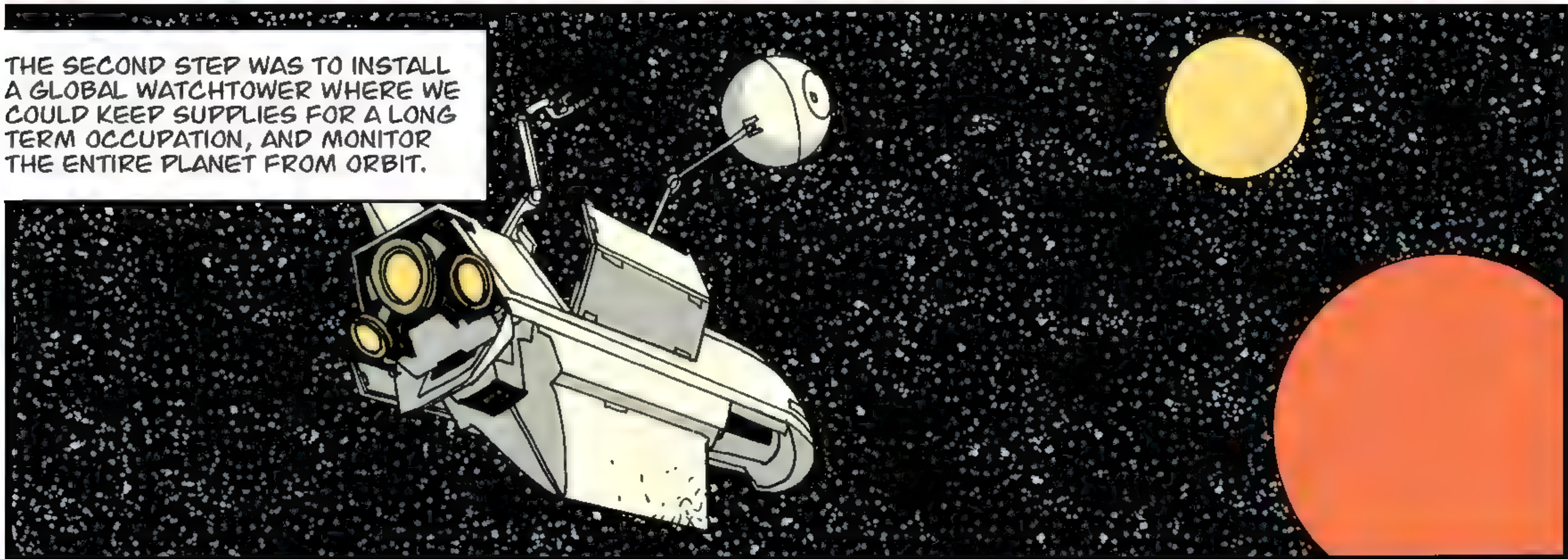


THE FIRST STEP OF THE INITIATIVE WAS TO LOCATE OTHER PLANETS THAT WERE IN A CRUCIAL STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT...

...PLANETS THAT WERE FAR ENOUGH ALONG THAT ADDING THEM TO THE EMPIRE WOULD BE A WORTHWHILE ENDEAVOR, BUT NOT SO FAR ALONG THAT WE WOULD BE UNABLE TO OVERCOME THEIR DEFENSES.



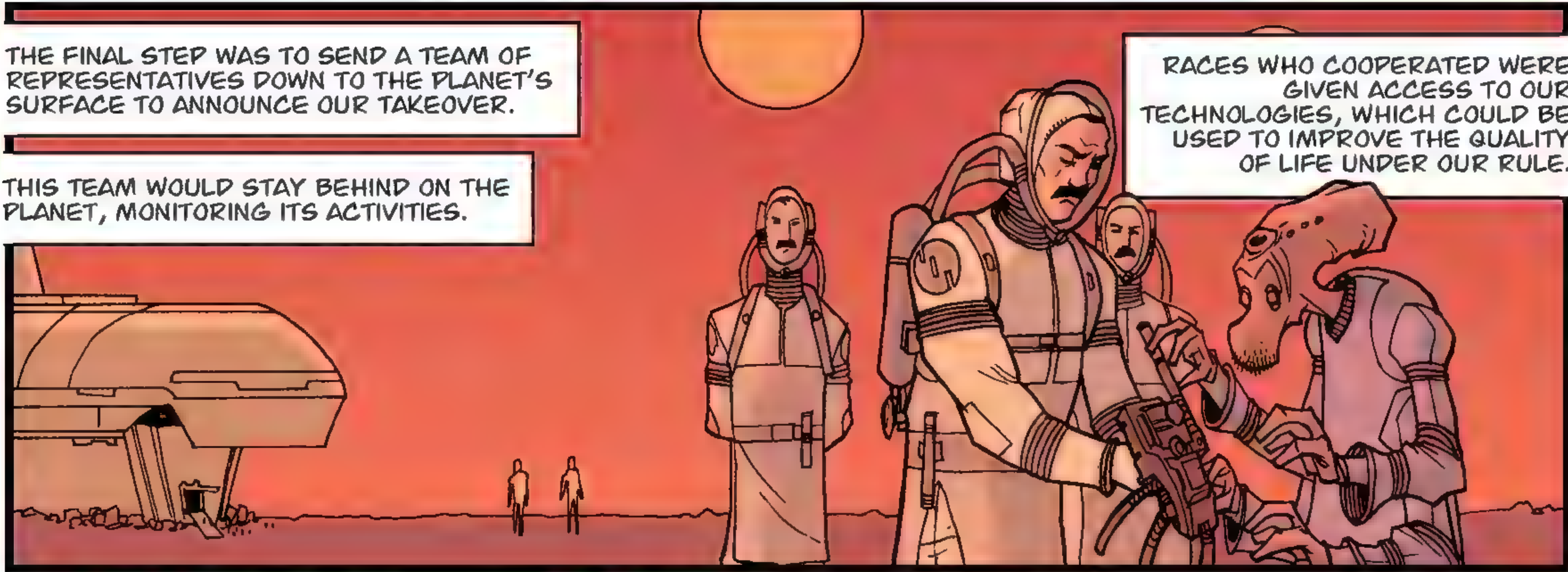
THE SECOND STEP WAS TO INSTALL A GLOBAL WATCHTOWER WHERE WE COULD KEEP SUPPLIES FOR A LONG TERM OCCUPATION, AND MONITOR THE ENTIRE PLANET FROM ORBIT.



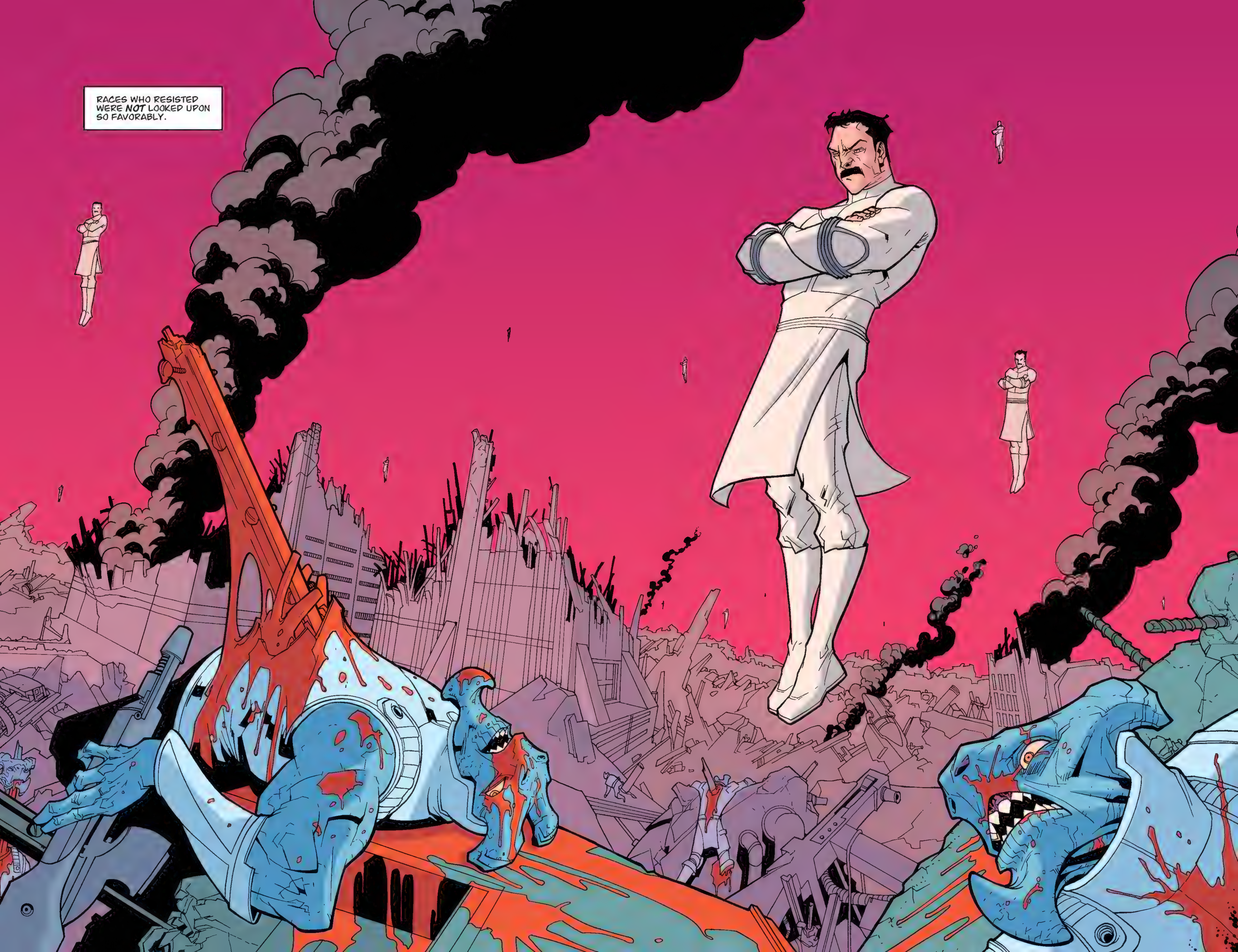
THE FINAL STEP WAS TO SEND A TEAM OF REPRESENTATIVES DOWN TO THE PLANET'S SURFACE TO ANNOUNCE OUR TAKEOVER.

THIS TEAM WOULD STAY BEHIND ON THE PLANET, MONITORING ITS ACTIVITIES.

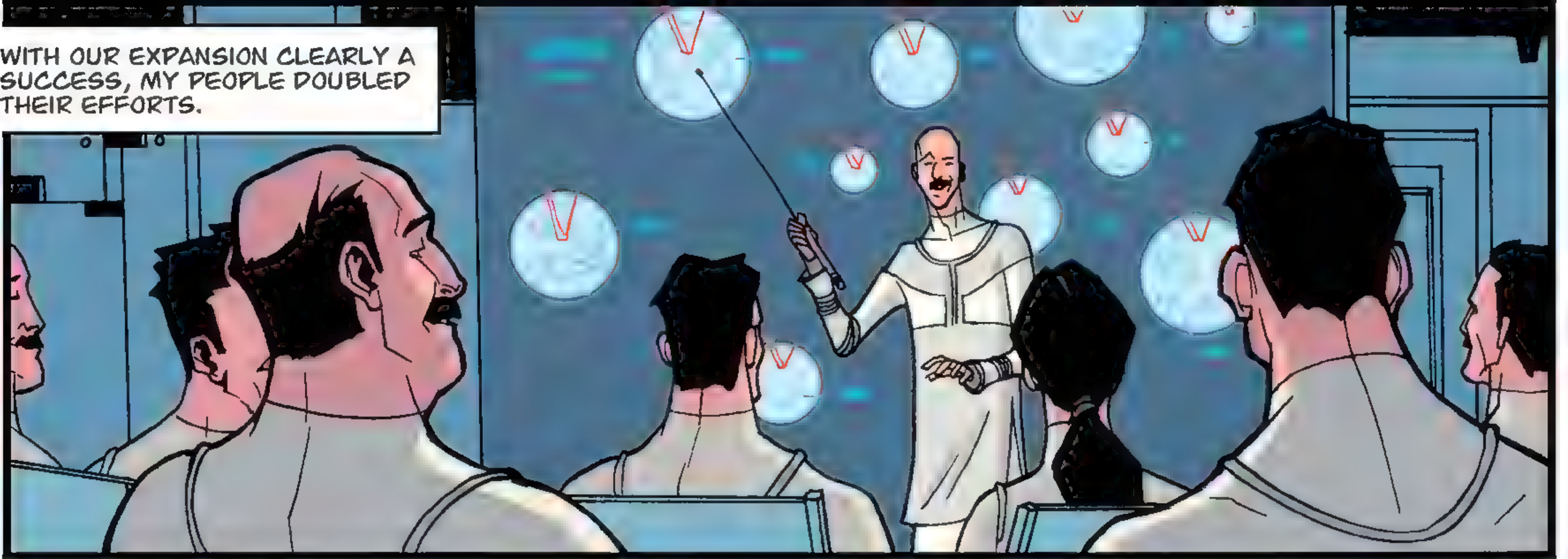
RACES WHO COOPERATED WERE GIVEN ACCESS TO OUR TECHNOLOGIES, WHICH COULD BE USED TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE UNDER OUR RULE.



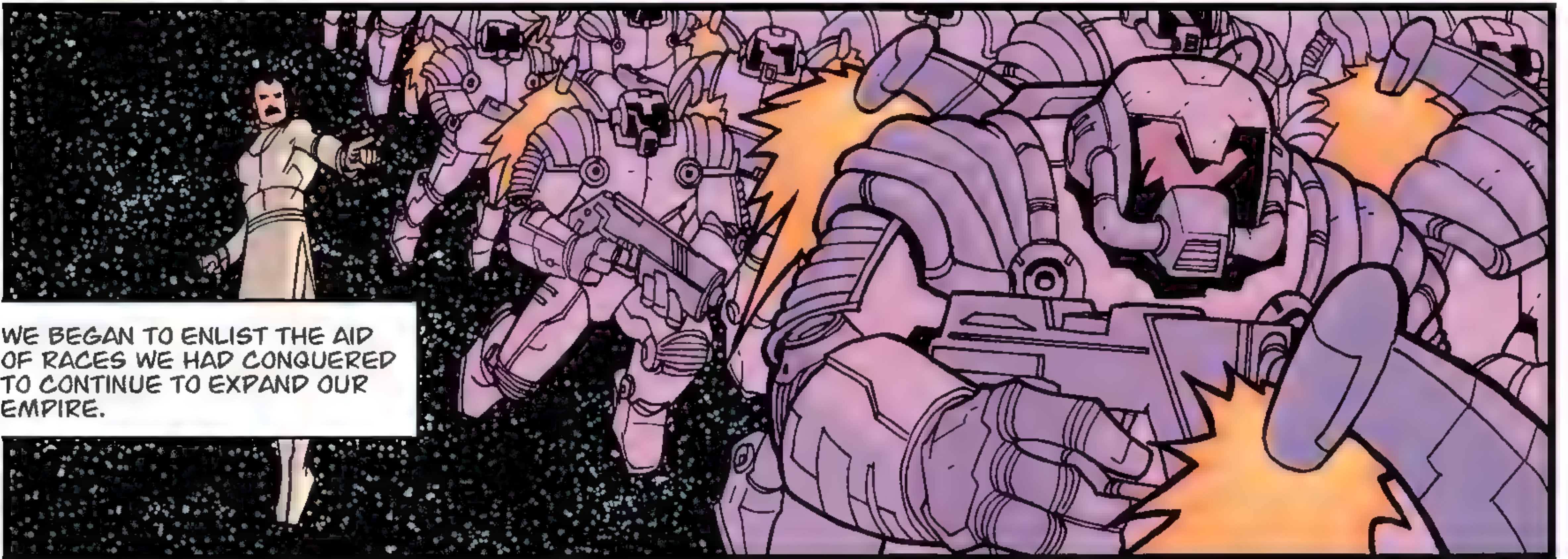
RACES WHO RESISTED
WERE **NOT** LOOKED UPON
SO FAVORABLY.



WITH OUR EXPANSION CLEARLY A SUCCESS, MY PEOPLE DOUBLED THEIR EFFORTS.



WE BEGAN TO ENLIST THE AID OF RACES WE HAD CONQUERED TO CONTINUE TO EXPAND OUR EMPIRE.

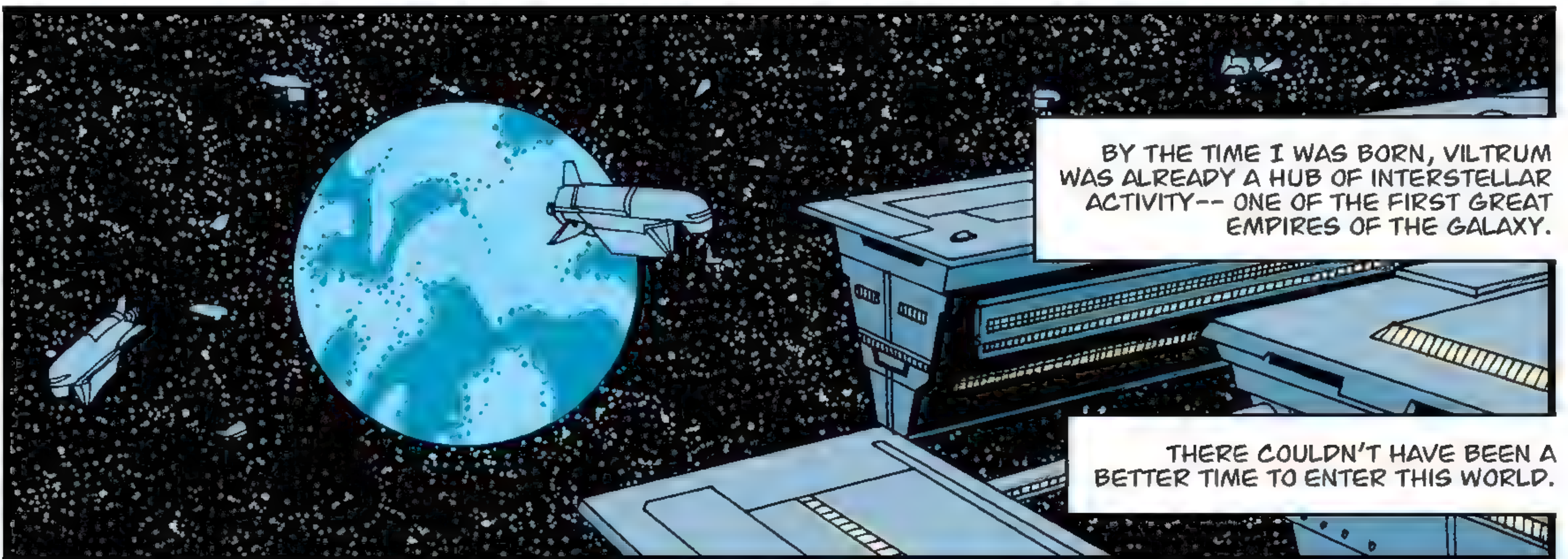


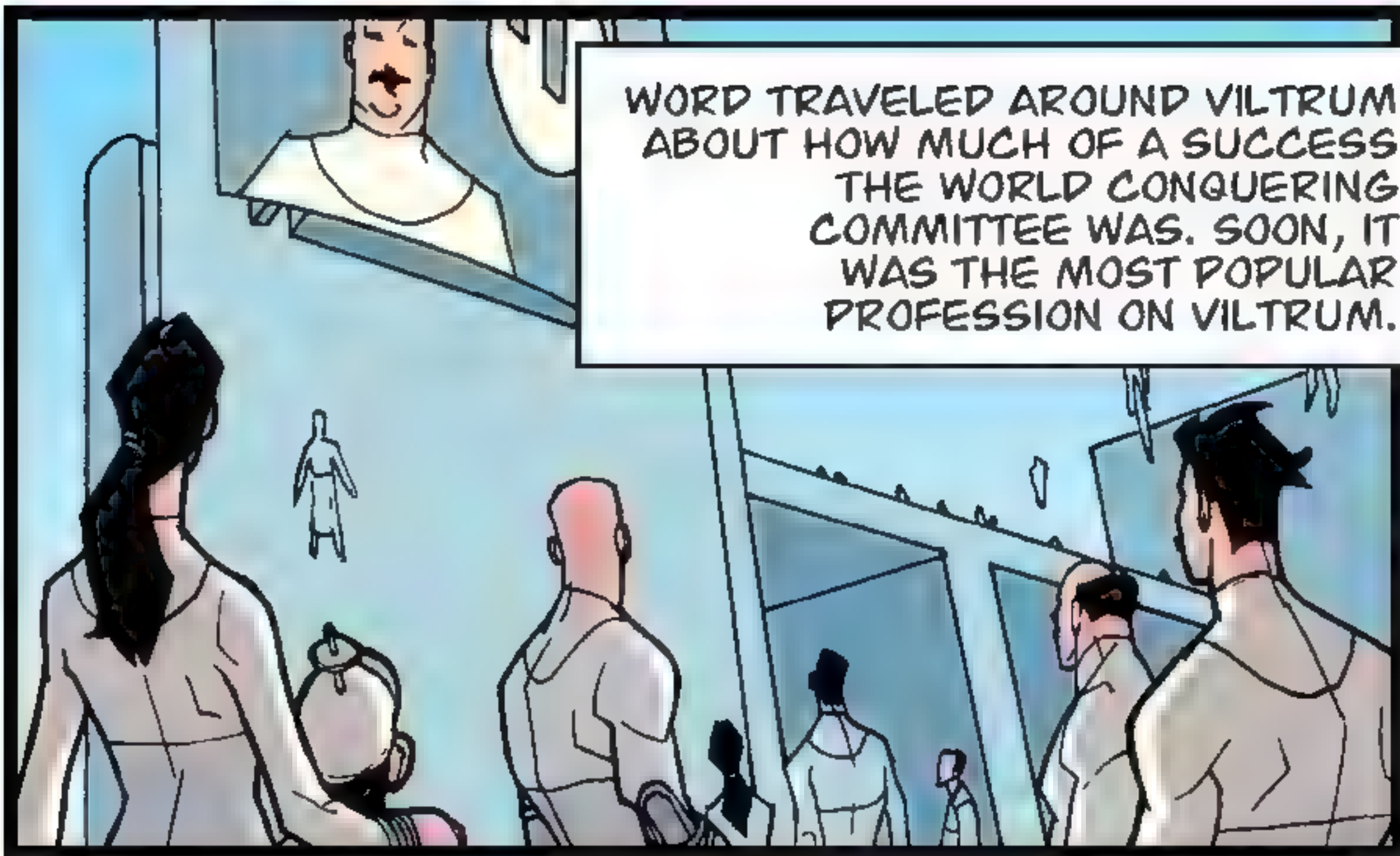
THOUGH THEY WERE NOT QUITE AS EFFICIENT AS OUR OWN FORCES... IT DID HELP WITH OUR EXPANSION EFFORTS.



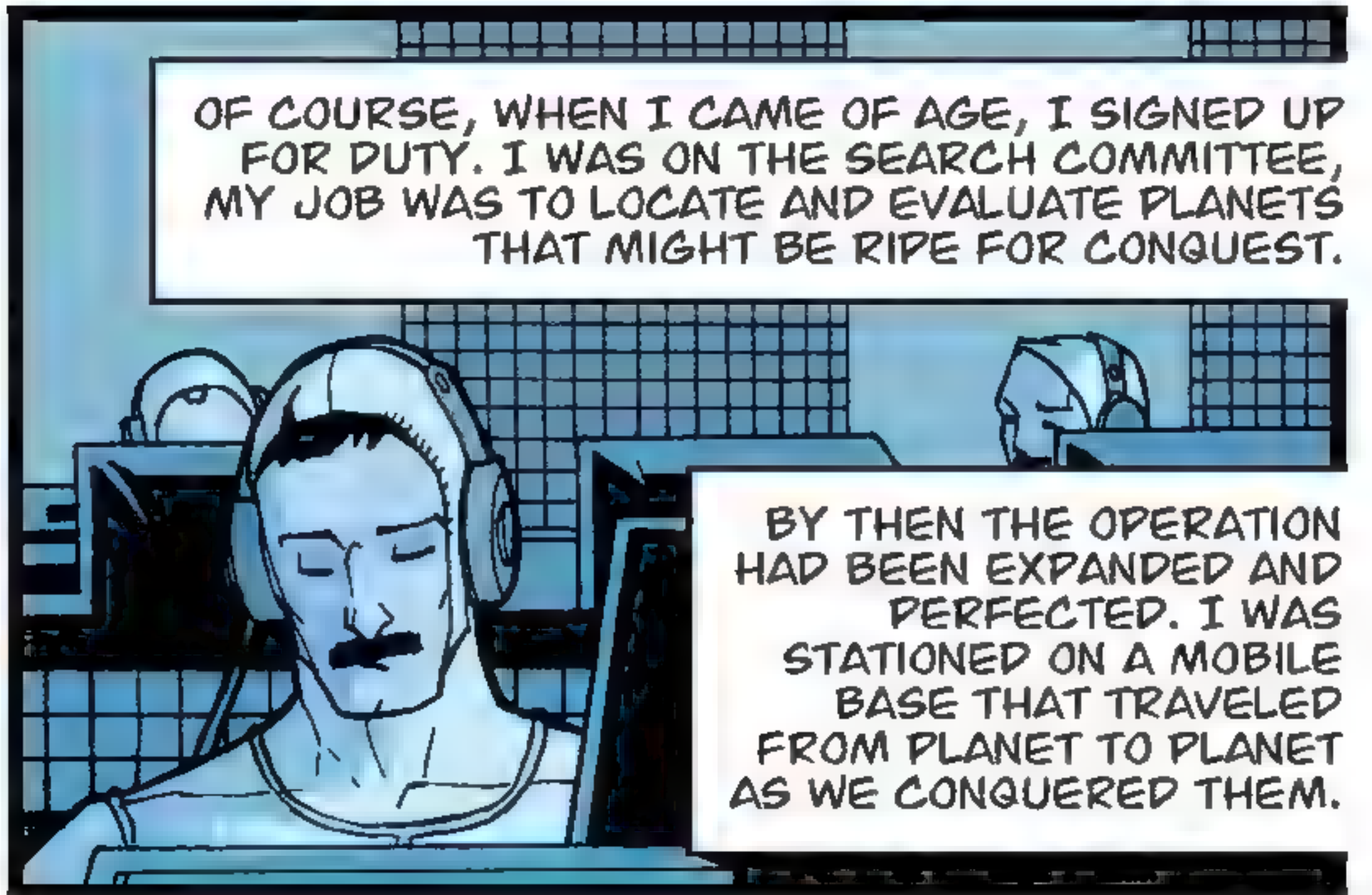
BY THE TIME I WAS BORN, VILTRUM WAS ALREADY A HUB OF INTERSTELLAR ACTIVITY-- ONE OF THE FIRST GREAT EMPIRES OF THE GALAXY.

THERE COULDN'T HAVE BEEN A BETTER TIME TO ENTER THIS WORLD.



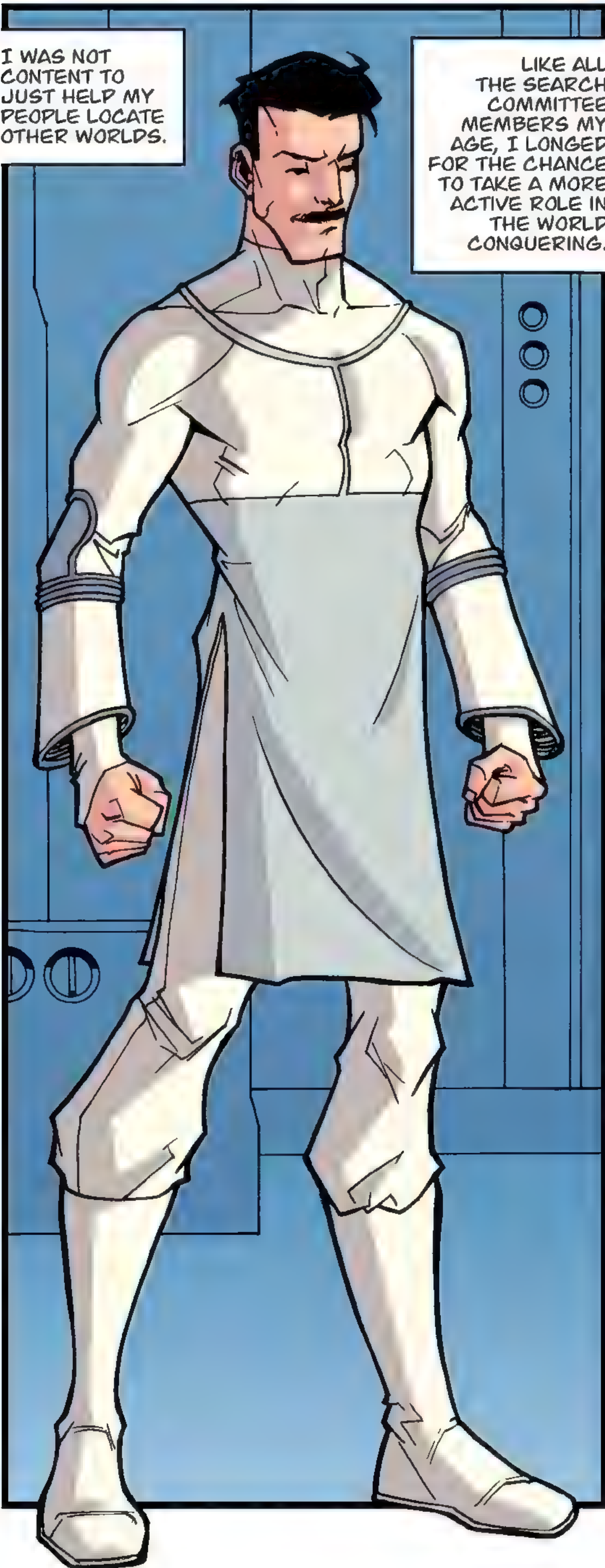


WORD TRAVELED AROUND VILTRUM ABOUT HOW MUCH OF A SUCCESS THE WORLD CONQUERING COMMITTEE WAS. SOON, IT WAS THE MOST POPULAR PROFESSION ON VILTRUM.



OF COURSE, WHEN I CAME OF AGE, I SIGNED UP FOR DUTY. I WAS ON THE SEARCH COMMITTEE, MY JOB WAS TO LOCATE AND EVALUATE PLANETS THAT MIGHT BE RIPE FOR CONQUEST.

BY THEN THE OPERATION HAD BEEN EXPANDED AND PERFECTED. I WAS STATIONED ON A MOBILE BASE THAT TRAVELED FROM PLANET TO PLANET AS WE CONQUERED THEM.



I WAS NOT CONTENT TO JUST HELP MY PEOPLE LOCATE OTHER WORLDS.

LIKE ALL THE SEARCH COMMITTEE MEMBERS MY AGE, I LONGED FOR THE CHANCE TO TAKE A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN THE WORLD CONQUERING.



FOR THREE YEARS STRAIGHT I ATTENDED AUDITIONS UNTIL AT LAST... I HAD PROVEN MYSELF.



I HAD IMPRESSED THE HEADS OF RECRUITMENT SO MUCH THAT I GOT ONE OF THE BEST POSTS IN THE CONQUERING COMMITTEE.



I WAS STATIONED AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE EXPANSION EFFORTS... AT THE VERY EDGE OF OUR EVER-GROWING EMPIRE.

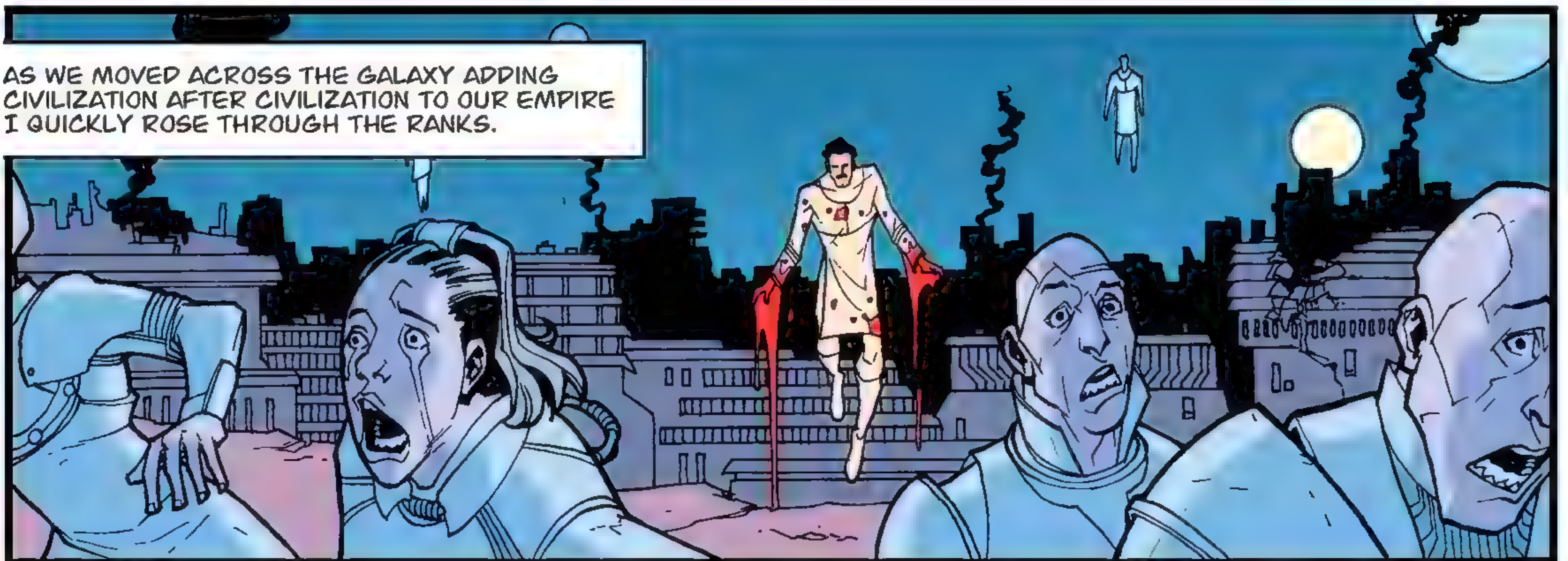
I THREW MYSELF INTO MY WORK.

IT WAS MESSY WORK... BUT I'D BE LYING IF I SAID I DIDN'T ENJOY IT. THERE WAS NOTHING I WOULDN'T DO FOR VILTRUM.

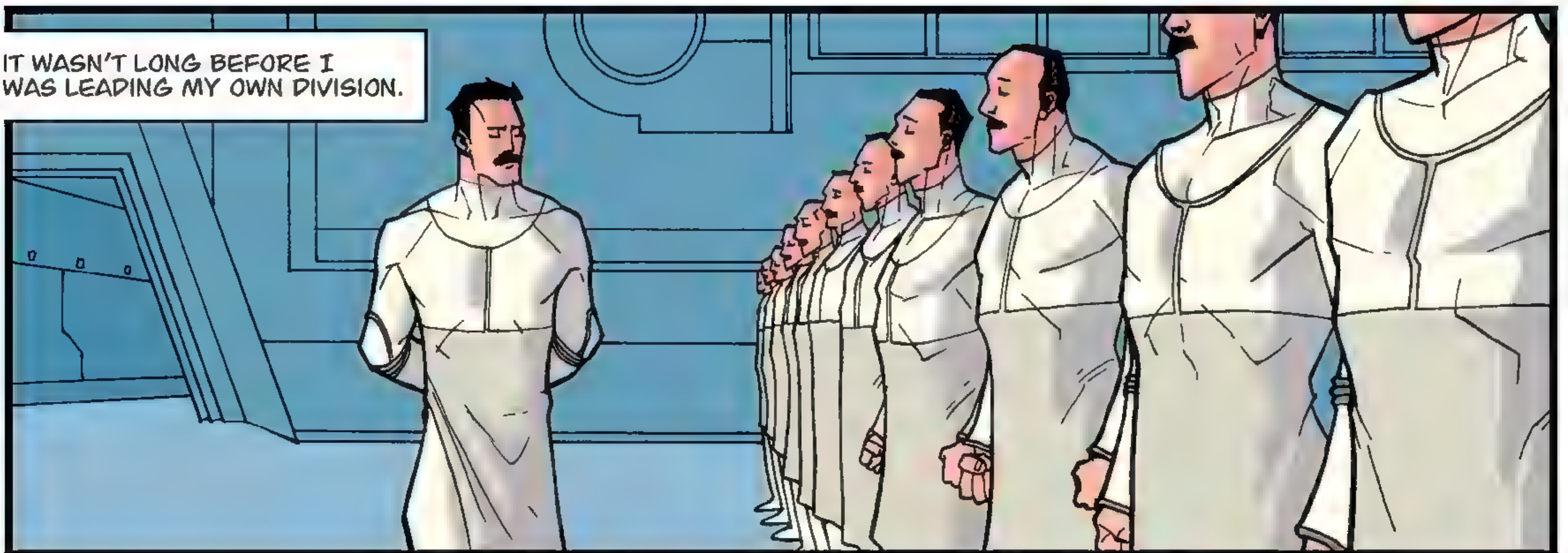
THERE STILL ISN'T.



AS WE MOVED ACROSS THE GALAXY ADDING CIVILIZATION AFTER CIVILIZATION TO OUR EMPIRE I QUICKLY ROSE THROUGH THE RANKS.



IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE I WAS LEADING MY OWN DIVISION.



IT DIDN'T MATTER IF IT TOOK ONE HUNDRED HOURS OR ONE HUNDRED YEARS. NO CIVILIZATION WE SET OUR SIGHTS ON WENT UNCONQUERED.

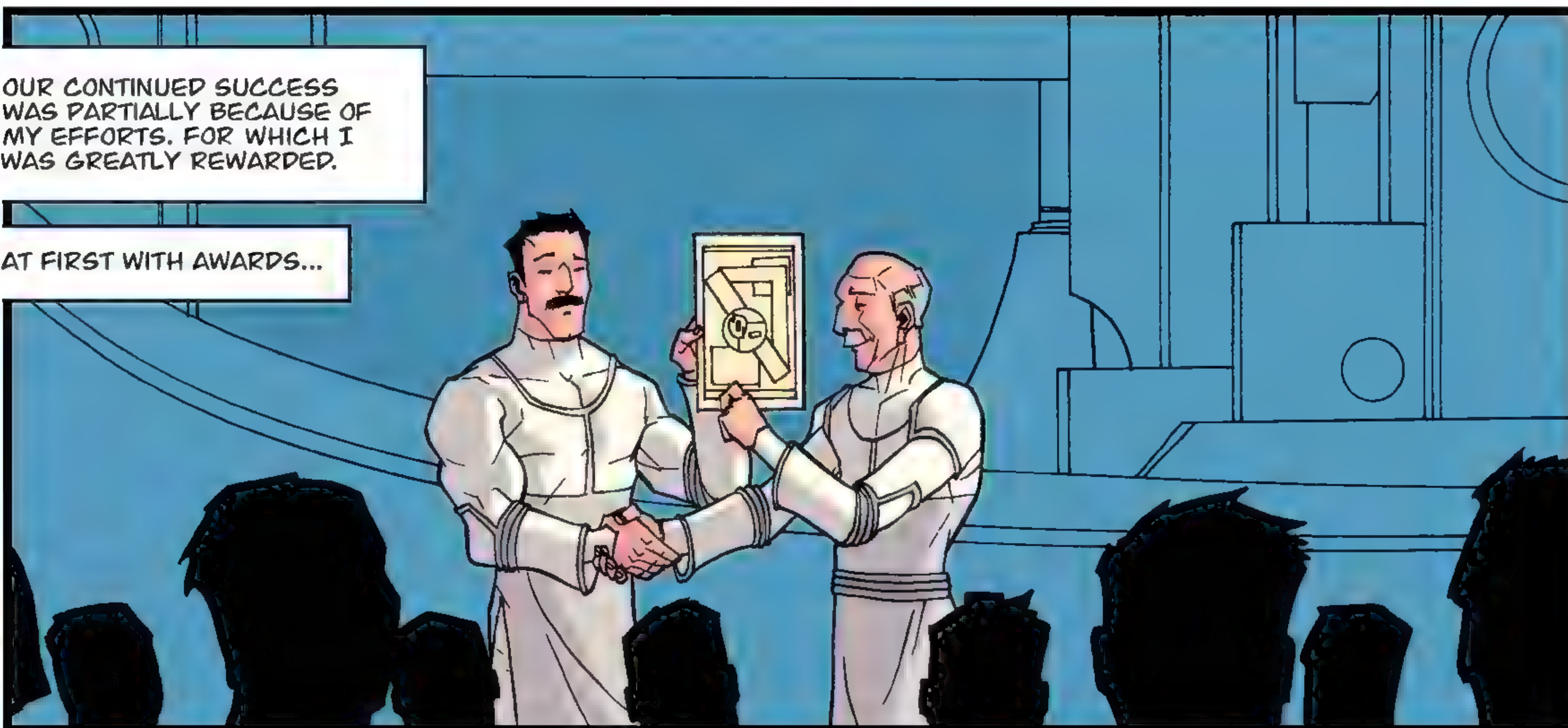


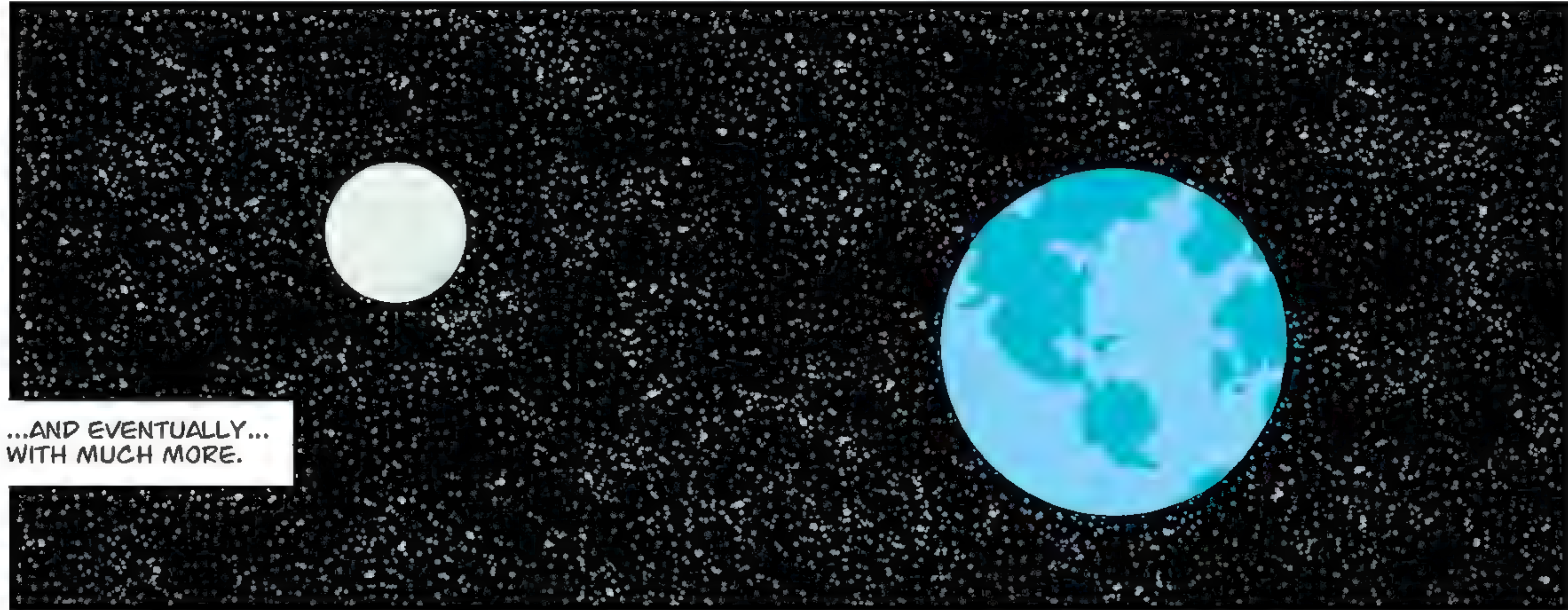
WE WERE UNSTOPPABLE.



OUR CONTINUED SUCCESS
WAS PARTIALLY BECAUSE OF
MY EFFORTS. FOR WHICH I
WAS GREATLY REWARDED.

AT FIRST WITH AWARDS...





...AND EVENTUALLY...
WITH MUCH MORE.



AS OUR EMPIRE GREW, OUR
FORCES BECAME STRETCHED
TOO THIN JUST TRYING TO
MAINTAIN IT.

OUR EXPANSION SCREECHED
TO AN ABRUPT HALT.



IT WAS CLEAR THAT WE NEEDED
A MORE EFFICIENT METHOD OF
WORLD CONQUERING.

SO ONE WAS DEVISED.

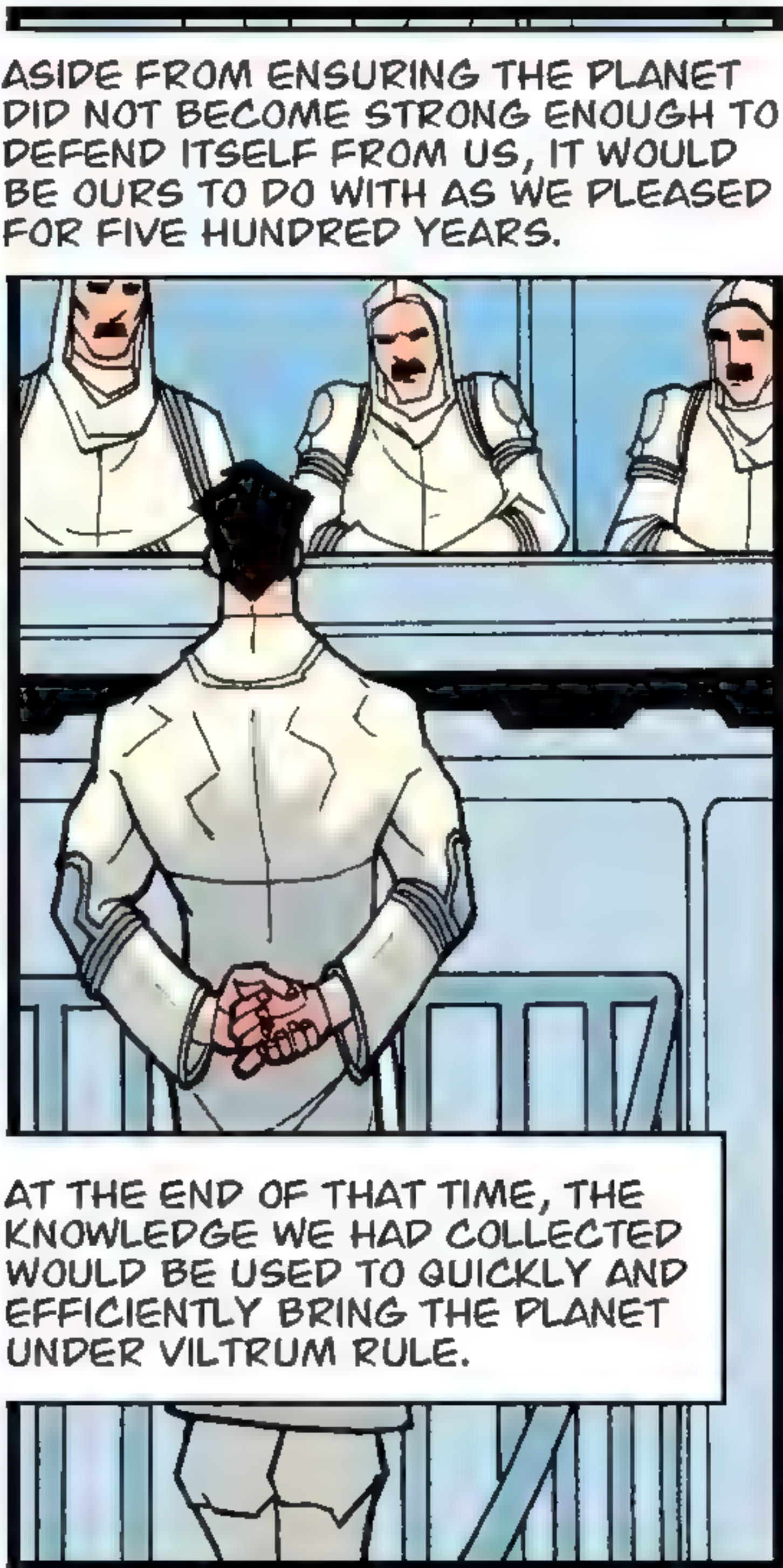


RATHER THAN COME IN LARGE NUMBERS
AND CONQUER A PLANET BY FORCE, OUR
HIGHEST RANKED AND MOST TRUSTED
OFFICERS WOULD BE ESSENTIALLY GIVEN
PLANETS TO SURVEY AND WEAKEN OVER
TIME.



I WAS ONE OF THE FIRST
CHOSEN FOR THIS ASSIGNMENT.

WE WERE TO ACCLIMATE
OURSELVES WITH THE PLANET'S
ENVIRONMENT... EVENTUALLY
BECOMING A MEMBER OF
SOCIETY.



ASIDE FROM ENSURING THE PLANET
DID NOT BECOME STRONG ENOUGH TO
DEFEND ITSELF FROM US, IT WOULD
BE OURS TO DO WITH AS WE PLEASED
FOR FIVE HUNDRED YEARS.

AT THE END OF THAT TIME, THE
KNOWLEDGE WE HAD COLLECTED
WOULD BE USED TO QUICKLY AND
EFFICIENTLY BRING THE PLANET
UNDER VILTRUM RULE.



IT WAS A PRIVILEGE TO BE GIVEN
THIS ASSIGNMENT-- A REWARD
FOR ALL MY HARD WORK.

IT WAS THE CLOSEST
THING TO A VACATION
THAT EXISTED ON
VILTRUM.

UPON MY ARRIVAL, I SPENT DAYS SURVEYING MY NEW HOME.



EARTH WAS A VIBRANT NEST OF INDIVIDUALITY THAT WAS VERY MUCH ALIEN TO ME.

AT FIRST I HATED IT... AND REGRETTED ACCEPTING THE MISSION.



IT WAS A STRANGE PLANET FULL OF STRANGE PEOPLE.



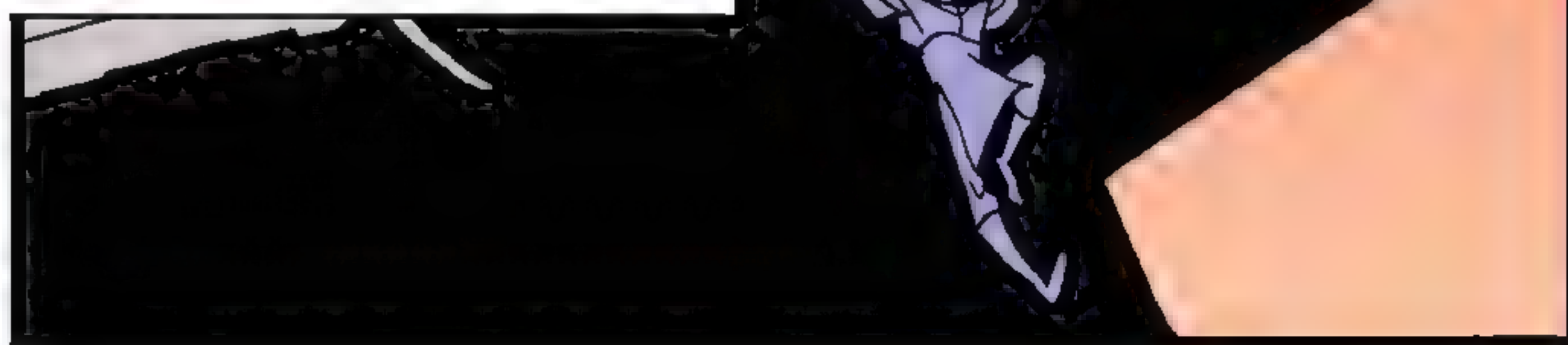
BUT IT WAS MINE.

IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE I REALIZED THIS WOULD BE NO EASY ASSIGNMENT.

HAD THE WORLD CONQUERING COMMITTEE KNOWN EARTH WAS SUCH A VOLATILE ENVIRONMENT, THEY MAY NOT HAVE CHOSEN IT.



IT SEEMED ITS PEOPLE WERE ALMOST ALWAYS IN SOME KIND OF DANGER.



EVERY TIME I TURNED AROUND THERE WAS A NEW THREAT OUT TO CONQUER THE PLANET BEFORE VILTRUM EVEN HAD A CHANCE.



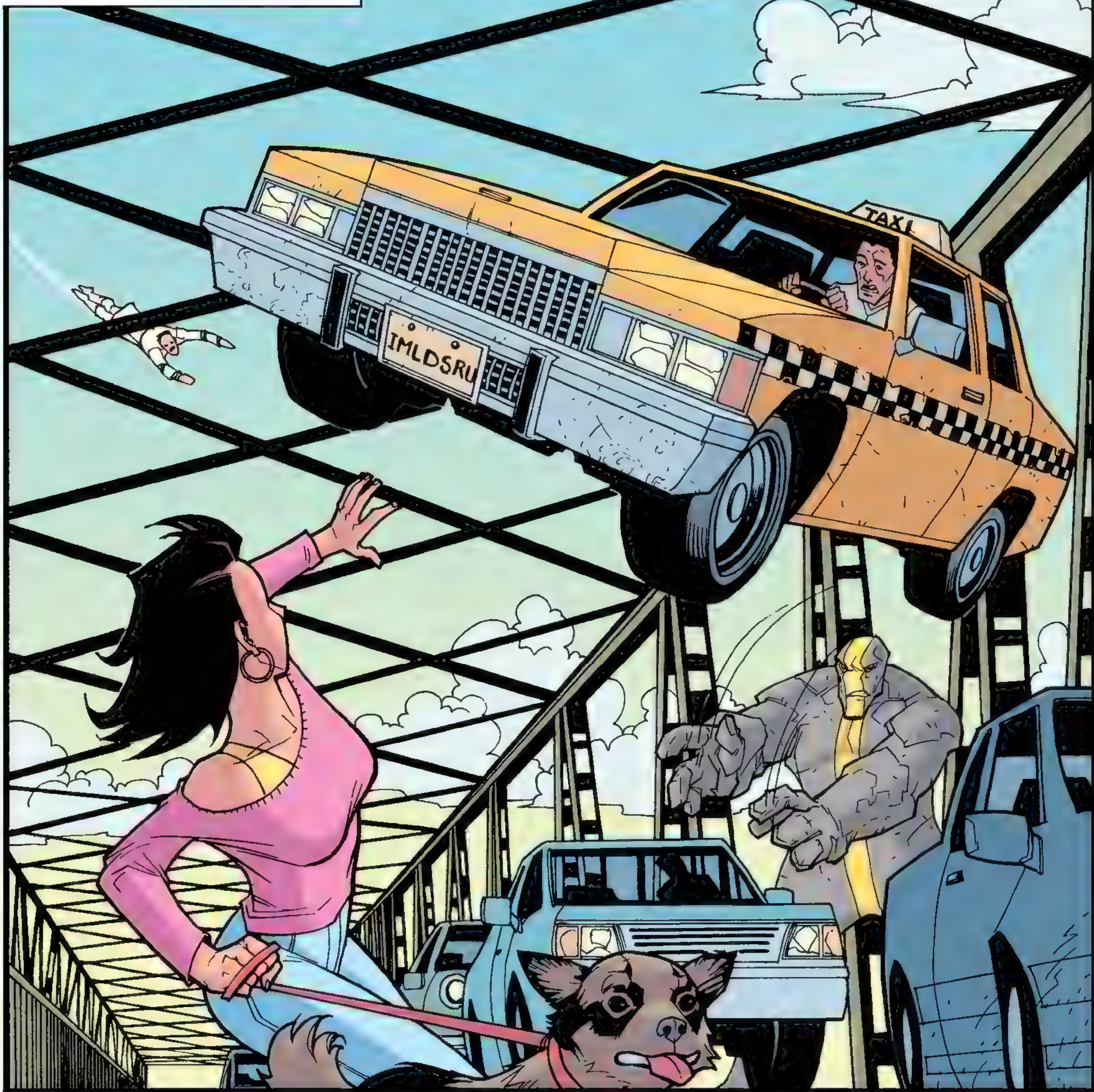
WE HAD LAID CLAIM TO THIS PLANET... I WAS NOT ABOUT TO LET IT FALL TO ANOTHER INVADER.



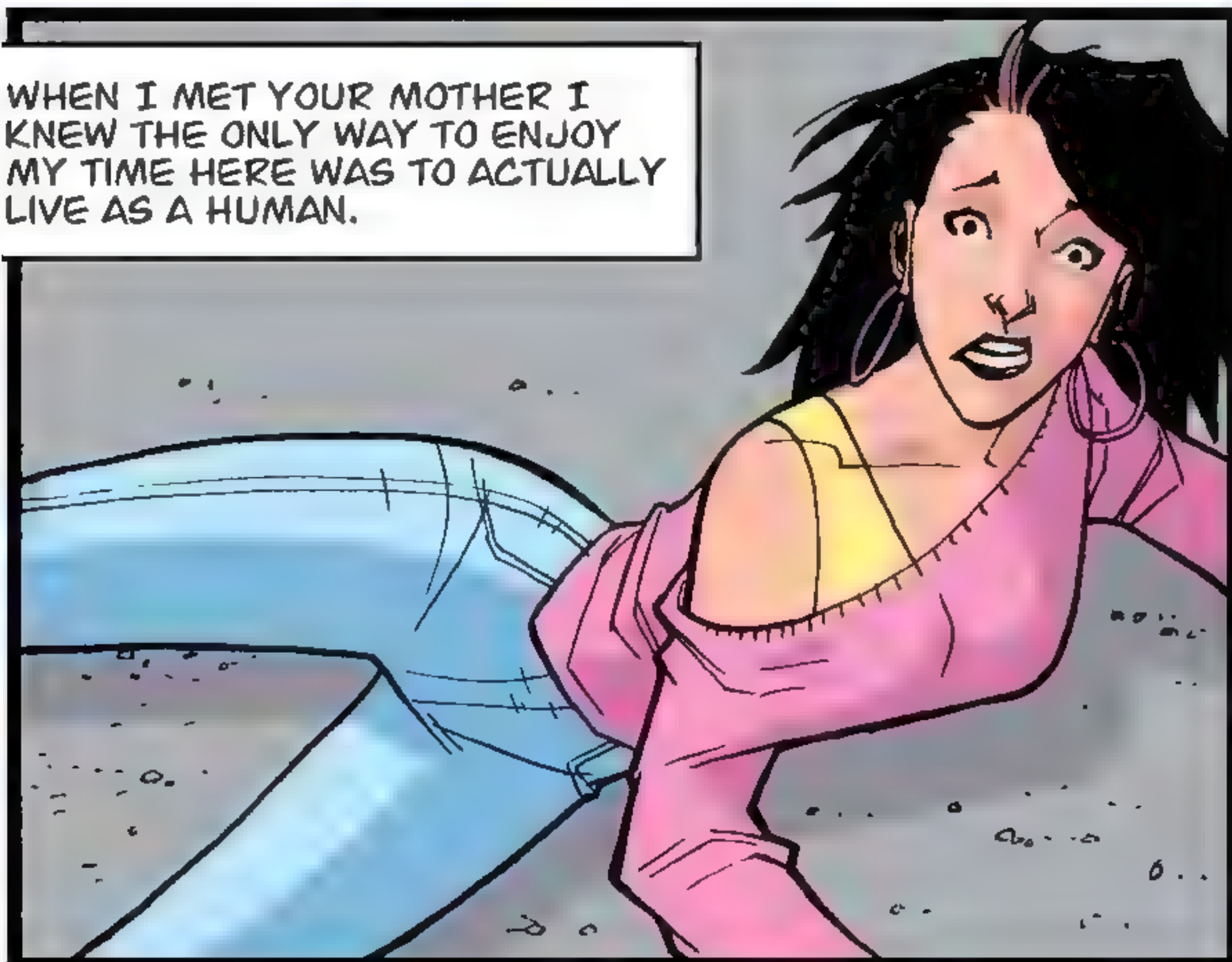
AFTER ONLY A FEW MONTHS, MY LIFE HAD SETTLED INTO A ROUTINE THAT INVOLVED LITTLE MORE THAN ENDING THREAT AFTER THREAT TO THE HUMAN RACE.



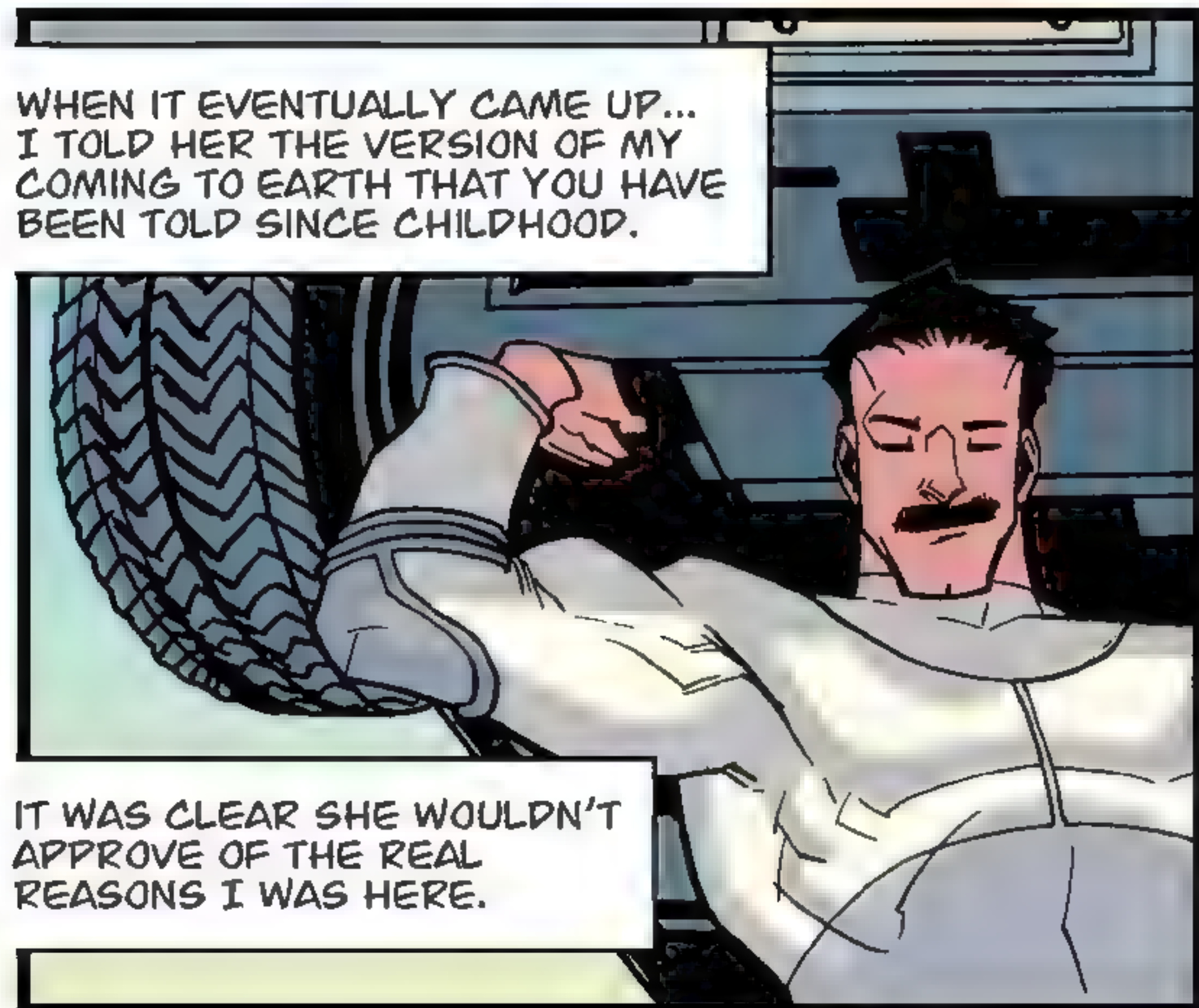
BUT ALL THAT WAS ABOUT TO CHANGE.



WHEN I MET YOUR MOTHER I KNEW THE ONLY WAY TO ENJOY MY TIME HERE WAS TO ACTUALLY LIVE AS A HUMAN.



WHEN IT EVENTUALLY CAME UP... I TOLD HER THE VERSION OF MY COMING TO EARTH THAT YOU HAVE BEEN TOLD SINCE CHILDHOOD.



IT WAS CLEAR SHE WOULDN'T APPROVE OF THE REAL REASONS I WAS HERE.

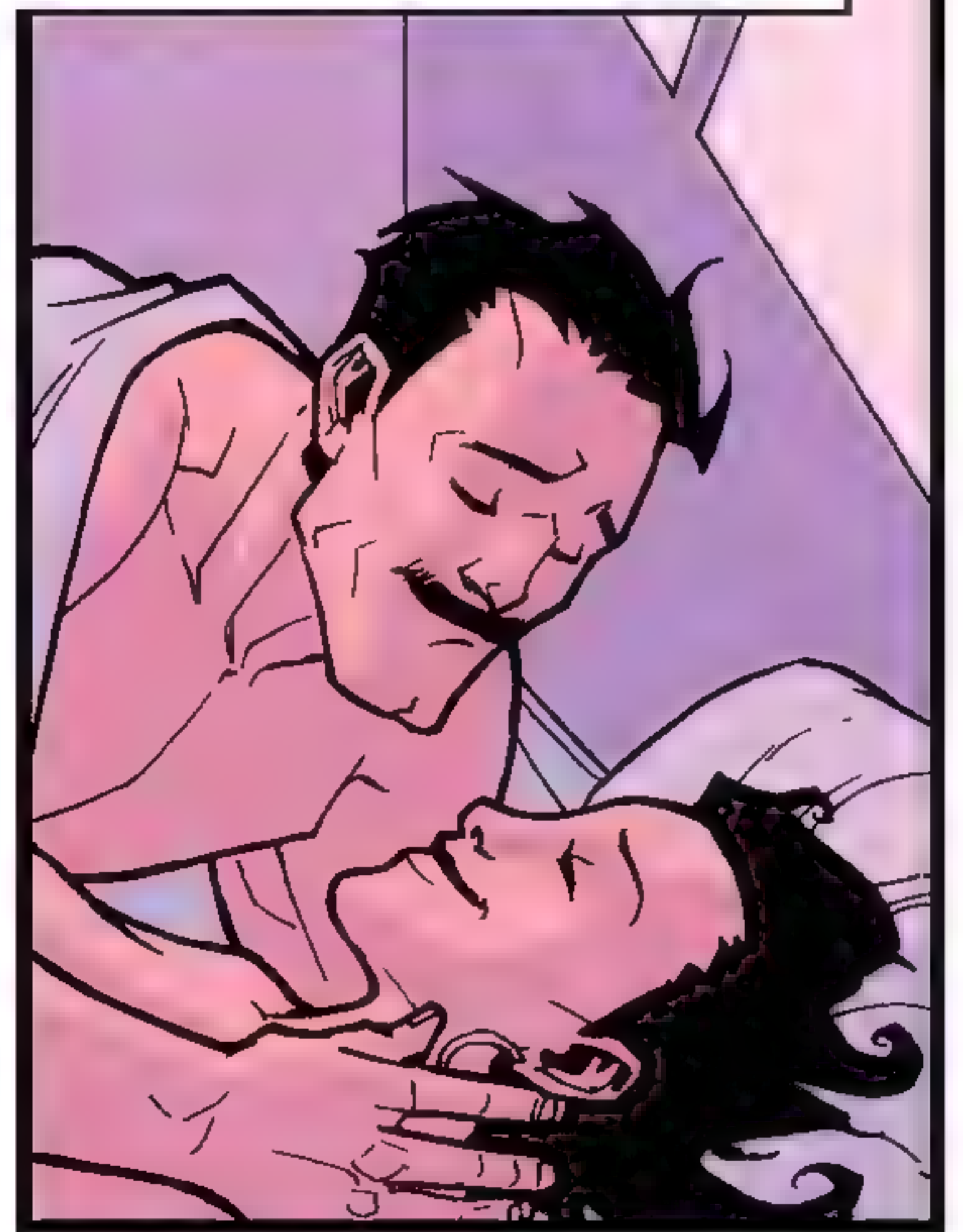
LIVING LIFE AS A HUMAN WAS NOT EASY AT FIRST.



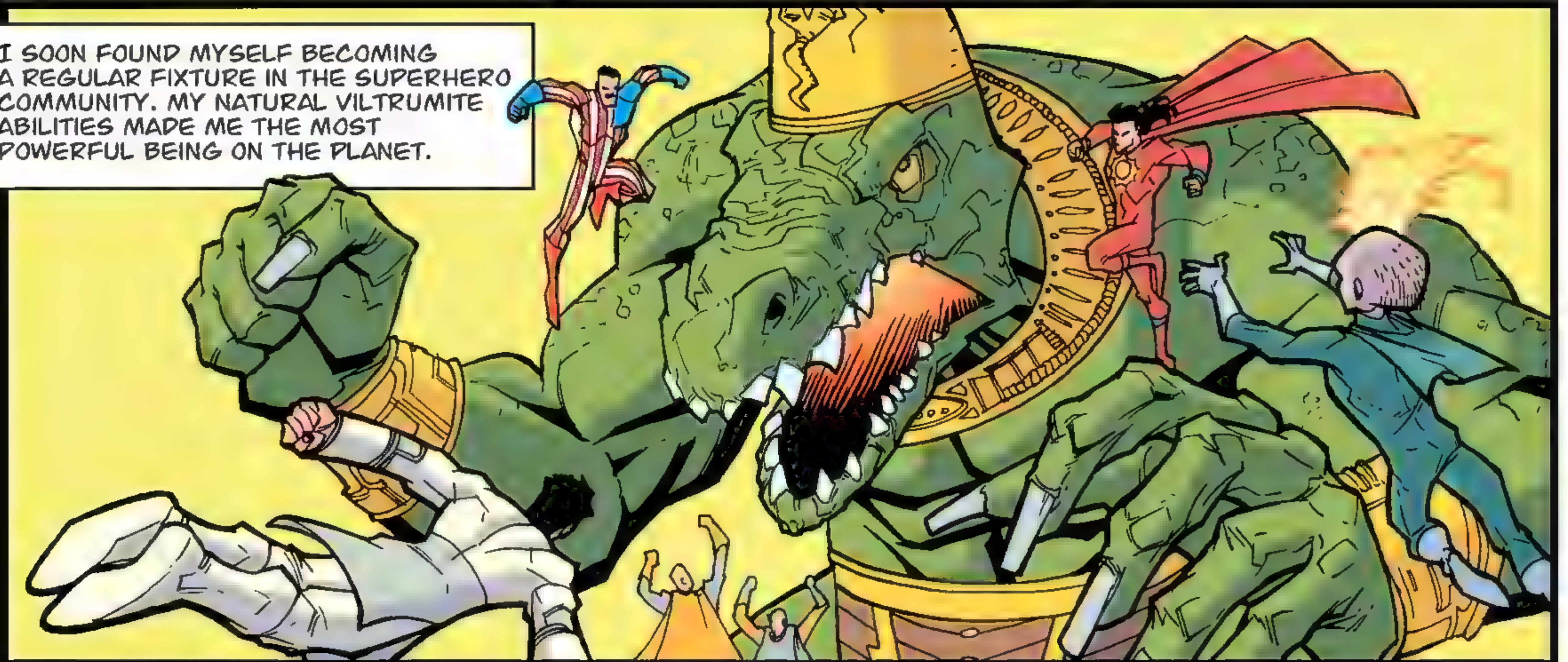
SIMPLE CONCEPTS LIKE MENIAL LABOR BEING REQUIRED TO EARN A LIVING WERE COMPLETELY ALIEN TO ME.



THOUGH, THE ACT OF PHYSICAL LOVE MADE FOR ANYTHING OTHER THAN PROCREATION WAS A WELCOME SURPRISE.



I SOON FOUND MYSELF BECOMING A REGULAR FIXTURE IN THE SUPERHERO COMMUNITY. MY NATURAL VILTRUMITE ABILITIES MADE ME THE MOST POWERFUL BEING ON THE PLANET.



I FOUND MYSELF ON ADVENTURE AFTER ADVENTURE. AFTER A TIME, I REALIZED THAT MY TRUE MOTIVES HAD BEGUN TO SLIP FROM MY MIND.

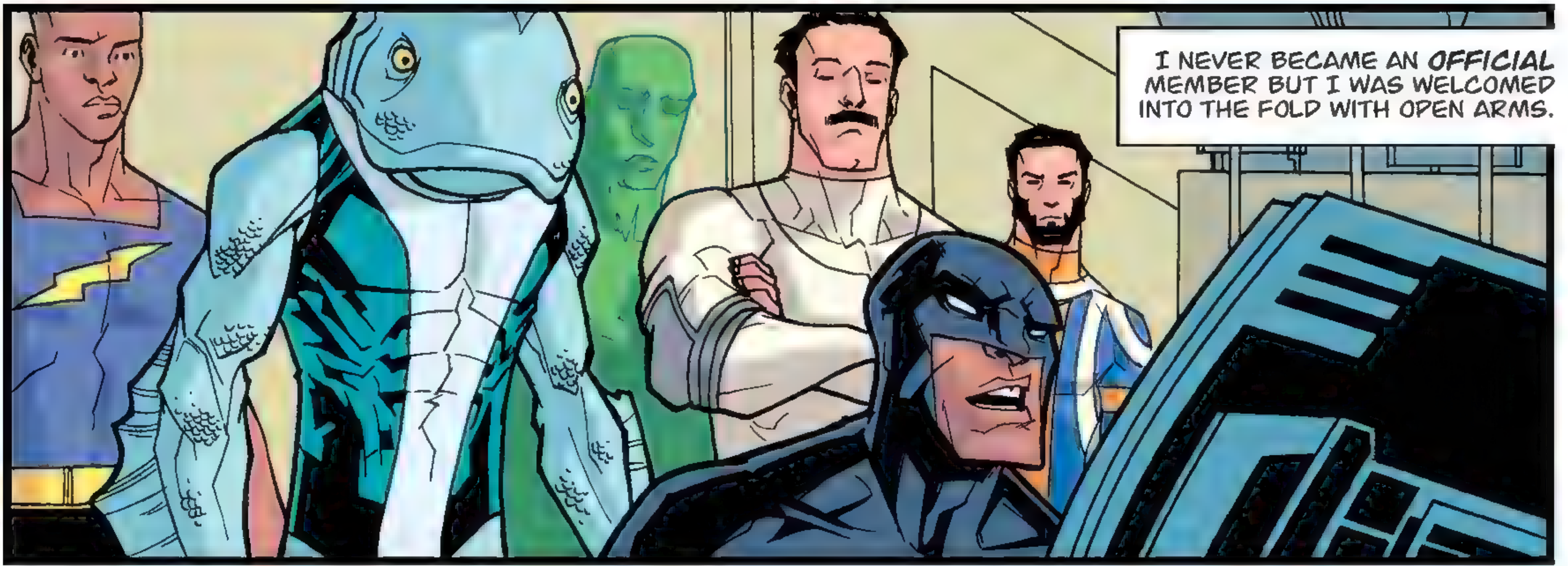


I WAS LIVING THE LIE A BIT TOO WELL.

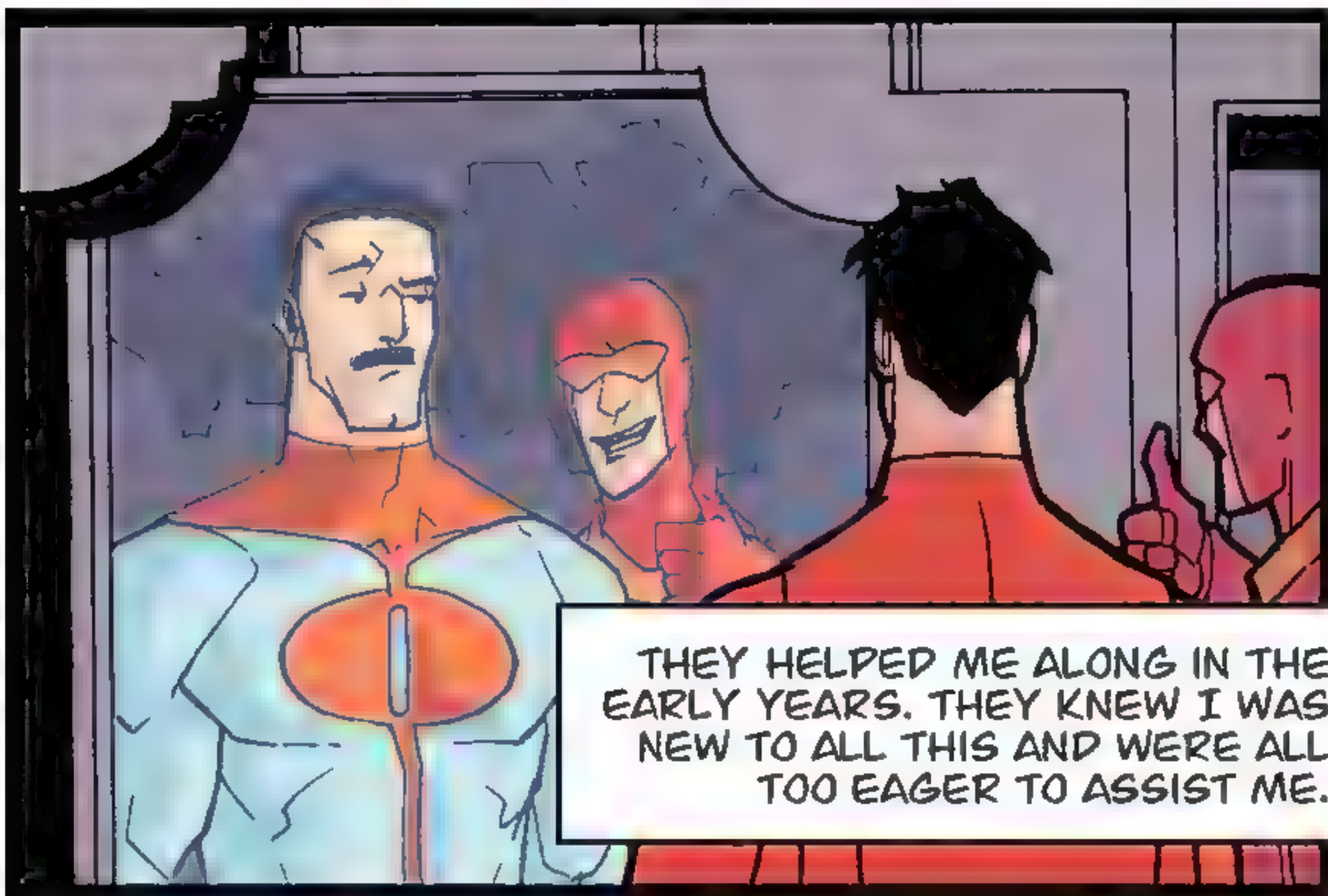


IT WASN'T LONG AFTER YOUR
MOTHER AND I MARRIED THAT
I FIRST RAN INTO THE
GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.





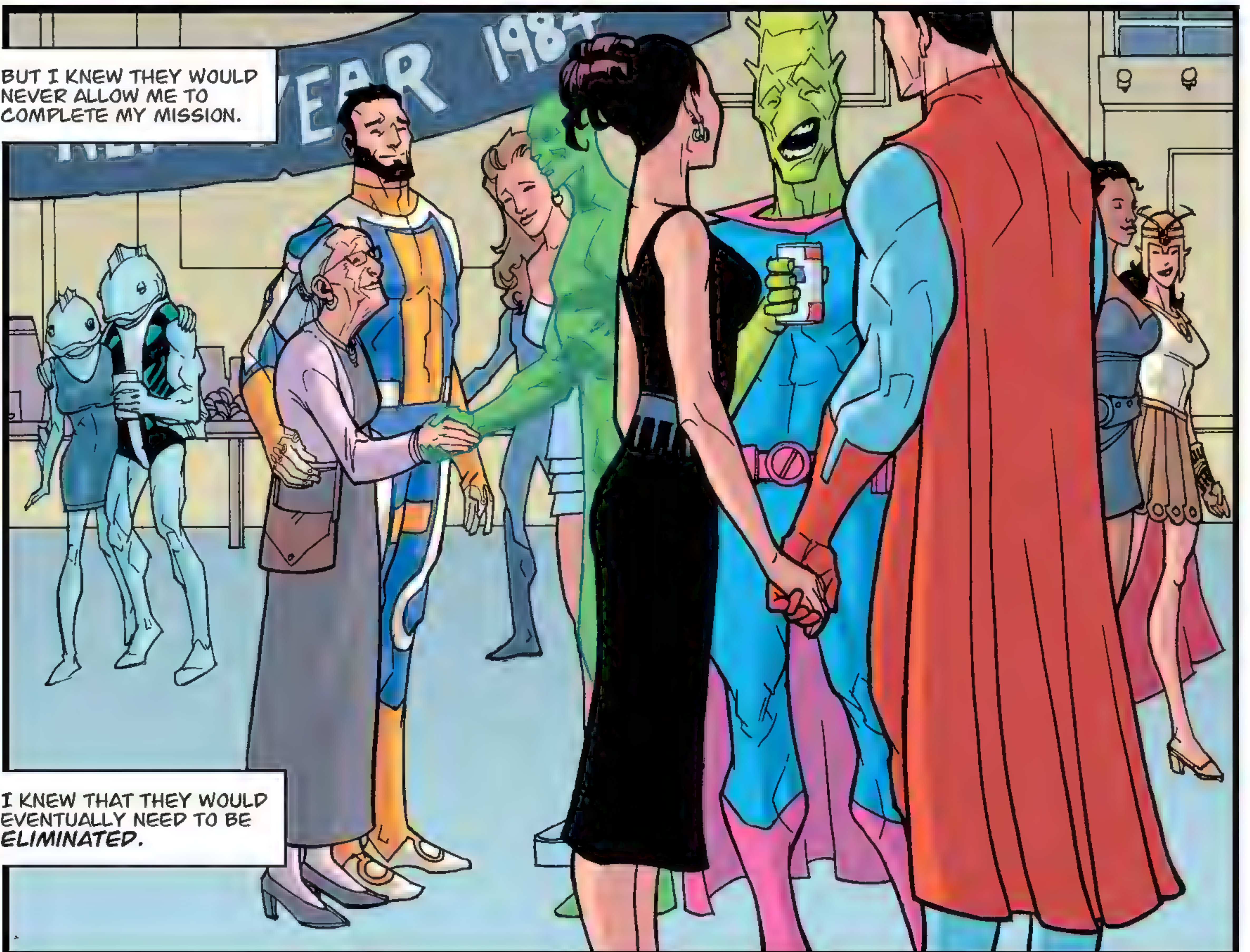
I NEVER BECAME AN OFFICIAL MEMBER BUT I WAS WELCOMED INTO THE FOLD WITH OPEN ARMS.



THEY HELPED ME ALONG IN THE EARLY YEARS. THEY KNEW I WAS NEW TO ALL THIS AND WERE ALL TOO EAGER TO ASSIST ME.



SOME OF THEM I WOULD EVEN EVENTUALLY COME TO CONSIDER FRIENDS.



BUT I KNEW THEY WOULD NEVER ALLOW ME TO COMPLETE MY MISSION.

I KNEW THAT THEY WOULD EVENTUALLY NEED TO BE ELIMINATED.

AS MY YEARS ON EARTH GREW LONGER...
I FOUND MYSELF BECOMING MORE AND
MORE COMFORTABLE LIVING LIFE AMONG
ITS INHABITANTS.

IT WAS SOMETHING THAT
WORRIED ME A GREAT DEAL.

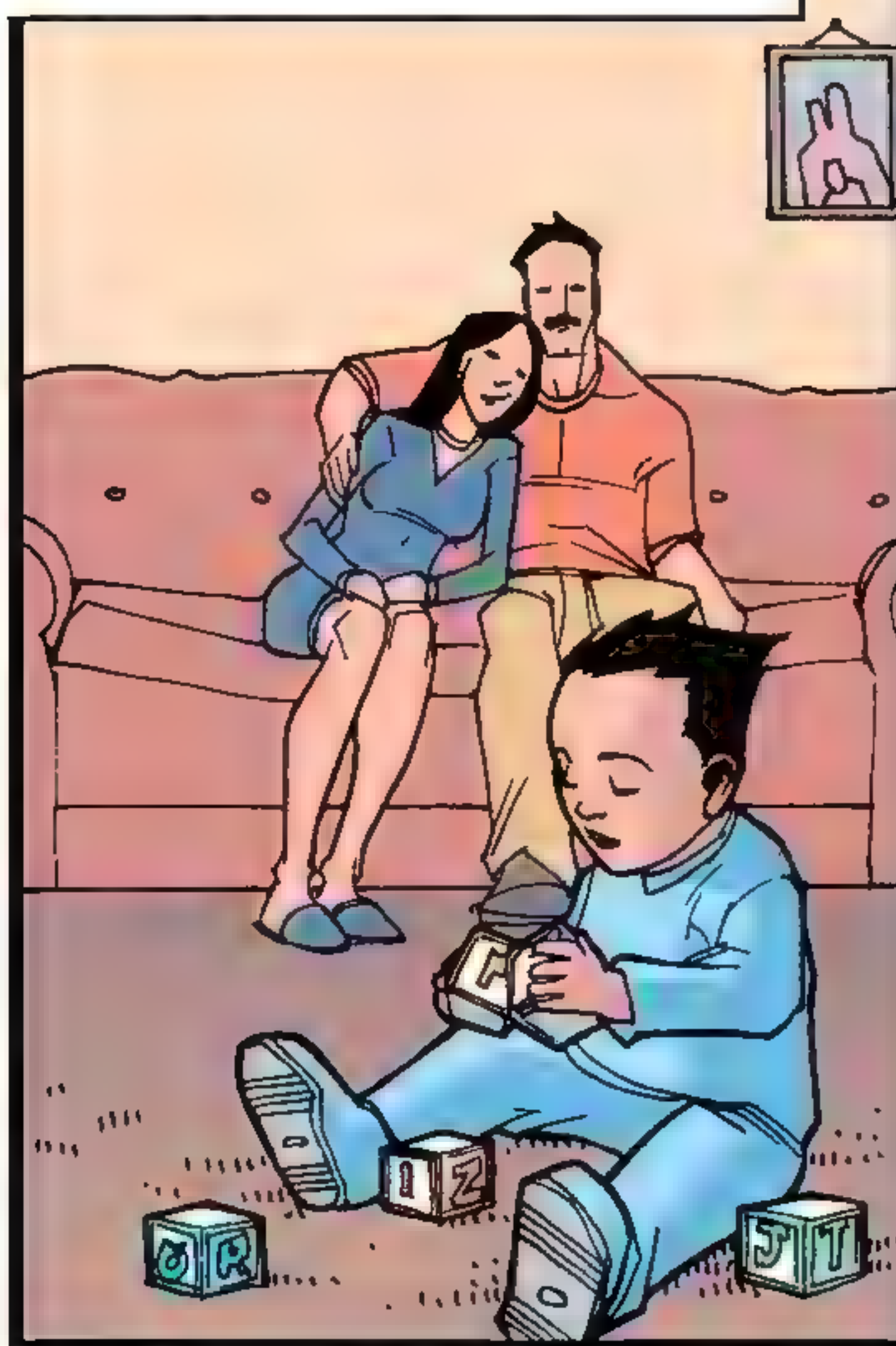


THEN EVERYTHING CHANGED.

YOUR MOTHER
WAS SO HAPPY...
I HAD NO CHOICE
BUT TO RAISE
YOU AS A HUMAN.



I COULDN'T RISK **HER** FINDING
OUT THE TRUTH ABOUT ME... SO
I COULDN'T RISK TELLING **YOU**
THE TRUTH ABOUT ME.



I OFTEN THOUGHT ABOUT
TAKING YOU... AND RAISING
YOU AS A VILTRUMITE IN A
SECLUDED AREA OF THE
PLANET.



I COULD NEVER BRING
MYSELF TO DO IT.

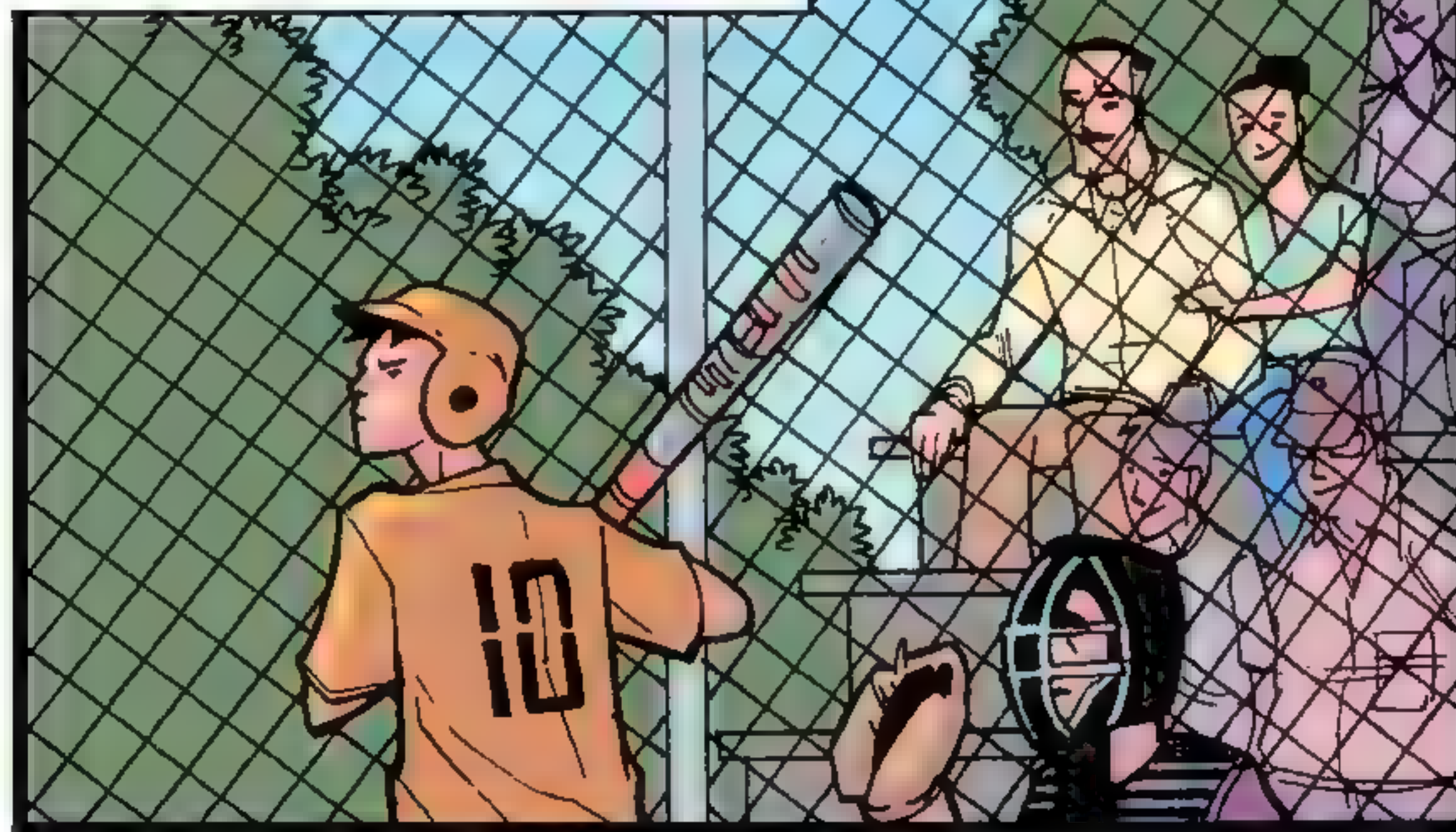


NO MATTER HOW I TRIED TO DISTANCE
MYSELF FROM HER EMOTIONALLY... I
COULDN'T DENY THAT I HAD GROWN
QUITE FOND OF HER.

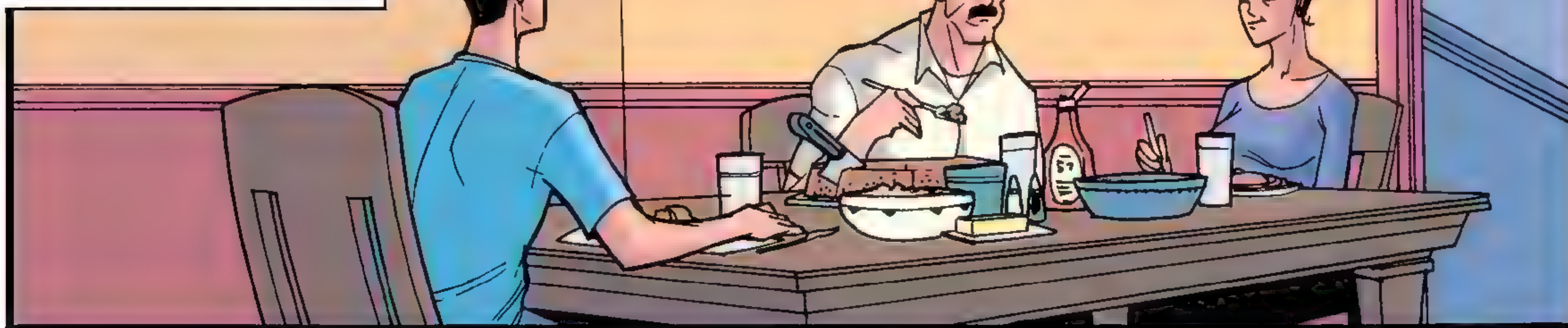
I DECIDED THAT FOR A TIME
I WOULD TURN MY BACK ON
MY DUTIES AND FOCUS ON
RAISING YOU.



I THOUGHT THAT YOU WOULD
BE ABLE TO PROVIDE A UNIQUE
PERSPECTIVE TO THE WORLD
CONQUERING COMMITTEE,
HAVING GROWN UP IN THIS
ALIEN ENVIRONMENT.



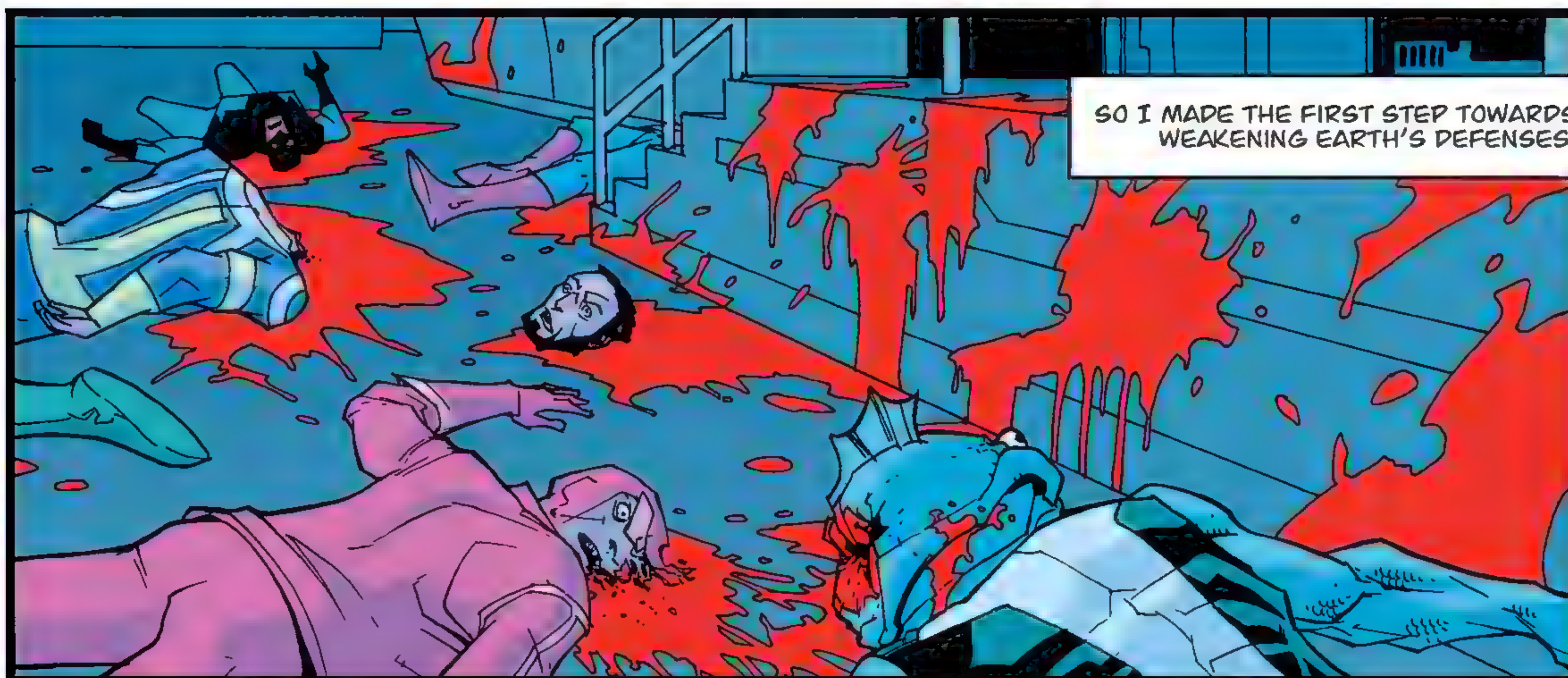
HONESTLY, I WAS HAPPY IN
MY NEW LIFE... BUT I KNEW
IT COULDN'T LAST.



WHEN YOU STARTED TO DEVELOP
YOUR POWERS... I KNEW I COULDN'T
WAIT MUCH LONGER.



SO I MADE THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS
WEAKENING EARTH'S DEFENSES.



...AND NOW IT'S TIME
FOR YOU TO JOIN ME
AND HELP ME PREPARE
THIS PLANET FOR ITS
IMMINENT TAKEOVER
AT THE HANDS OF
OUR PEOPLE.



I KNOW
THIS IS ALL
HARD TO TAKE
IN AT ONCE...
BUT OVER TIME...
IF YOU GIVE IT A
CHANCE...
YOU'LL BEGIN TO
UNDERSTAND.

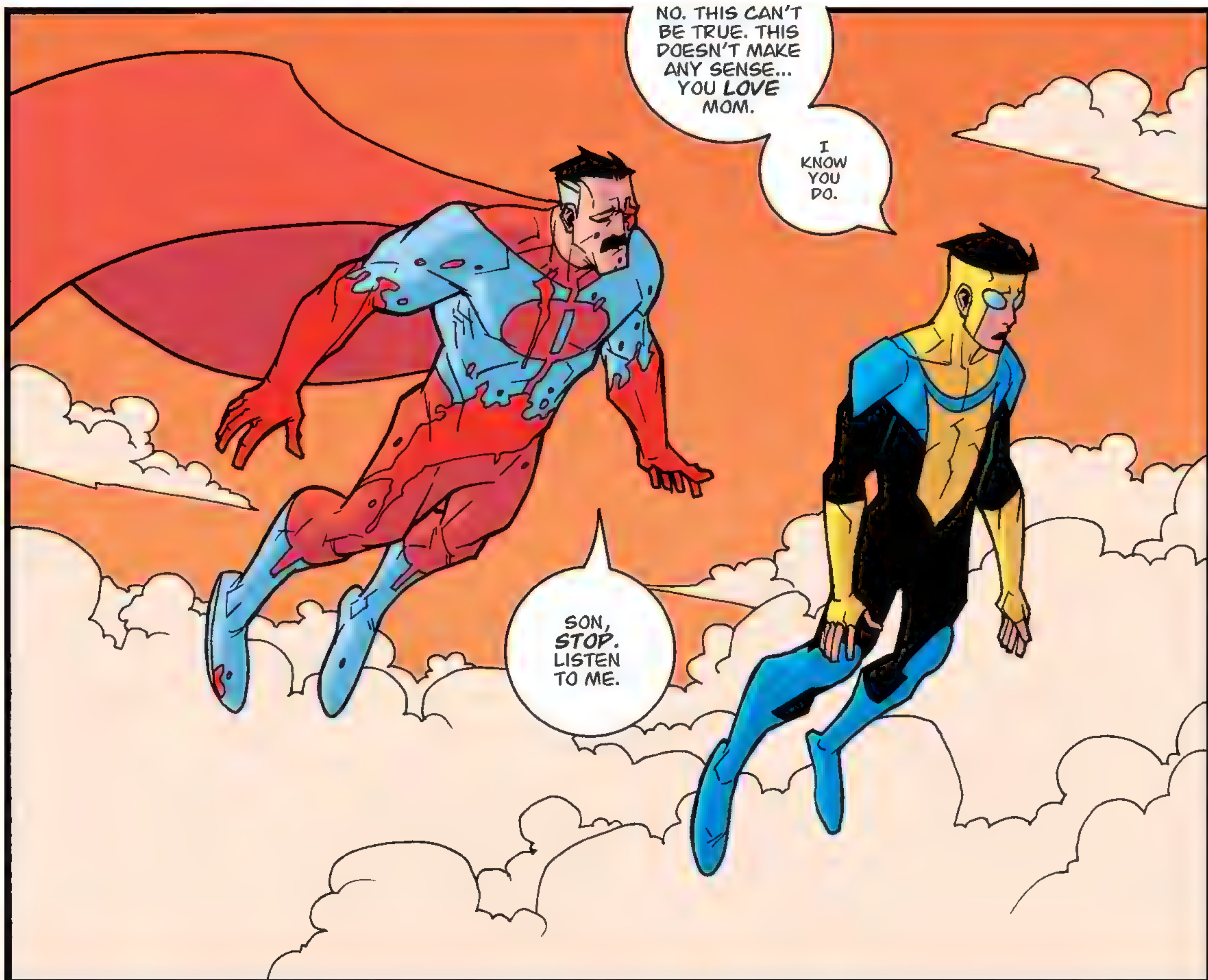
I'M SORRY
YOU HAD TO
LEARN ABOUT ALL
THIS UNDER THESE
CIRCUMSTANCES...
I TRIED TO TALK TO
YOU EARLIER. SEEING
THIS, I KNOW, IS NOT
THE BEST WAY TO
LEAD INTO THIS
SPEECH.



NO. THIS CAN'T
BE TRUE. THIS
DOESN'T MAKE
ANY SENSE...
YOU LOVE
MOM.

I
KNOW
YOU
DO.

SON,
STOP.
LISTEN
TO ME.





DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT OUR LIFE SPAN IS? THE OLDER WE GET THE SLOWER WE AGE. WE CAN'T LIVE AMONG THESE FRAIL THINGS...

YOUR MOTHER IS LITTLE MORE THAN A PET.

VILTRUMITE DNA IS SO PURE AND COMPLETE THAT YOU ARE NEARLY FULL BLOODED. I COULD MATE WITH NEARLY ANY ALIEN BEING OF COMPARABLE EVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT AND PRODUCE A SIMILAR OFFSPRING.



THIS MEANS YOU WILL EVENTUALLY BE AS STRONG AS ME. YOU COULD POTENTIALLY BE STRONGER... AND YOU WILL LIVE FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS.

DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT THIS MEANS?



EVERYTHING YOU KNOW AND LOVE WILL BE GONE BEFORE YOU LOOK THIRTY YEARS OLD. YOU DO NOT BELONG HERE.

DO YOU REALLY WANT TO WATCH YOUR WORLD DIE AROUND YOU?



I KNOW THIS IS CONFUSING, BUT EVERYTHING YOU KNOW IS **WRONG**. WE DON'T **BELONG** HERE... THIS WORLD IS **BENEATH** US... THESE PEOPLE ARE **BENEATH** US.

THINK ABOUT IT, SON. YOU MUST **REALIZE** THIS IS RIGHT.

THIS PLANET AND ITS RESOURCES ARE VALUABLE TO THE VILTRUM EMPIRE. WITH YOU AT MY SIDE, WE COULD RULE THIS PLANET FOR **CENTURIES** BEFORE WE HAD TO TURN IT OVER.



TRUST ME, SON. THIS IS THE ONLY WAY.





YOU'RE
NOT THINKING
THIS THROUGH.
WE HAVE A
RESPONSIBILITY
TO OUR HOME
WORLD. YOU MAY
NOT UNDERSTAND
NOW, BUT--



I DON'T
GIVE A DAMN
ABOUT VILTRUM,
OR ANYTHING
YOU'RE
TELLING
ME!

I
DON'T CARE
IF I LIVE A
MILLION YEARS.
THIS IS MY HOME
AND I WILL NOT
LET YOU
DESTROY IT!



SON,
YOU DON'T
UNDERSTAND
WHAT YOU'RE
SAYING. I
CAN'T LET YOU
INTERFERE.



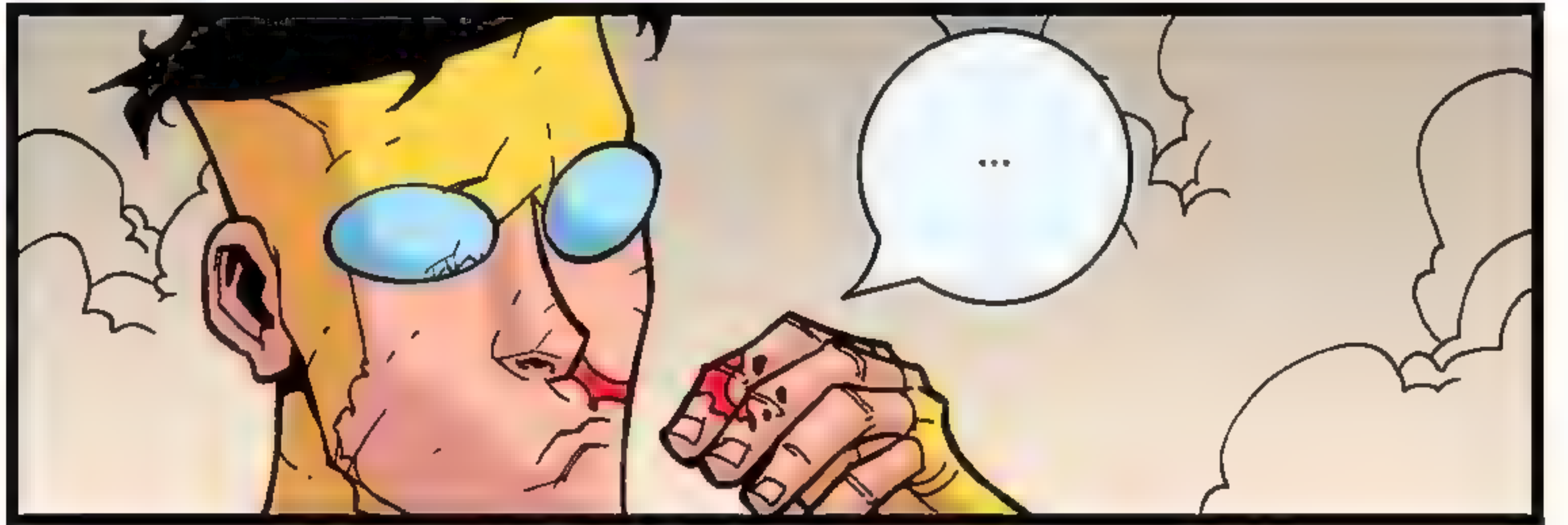
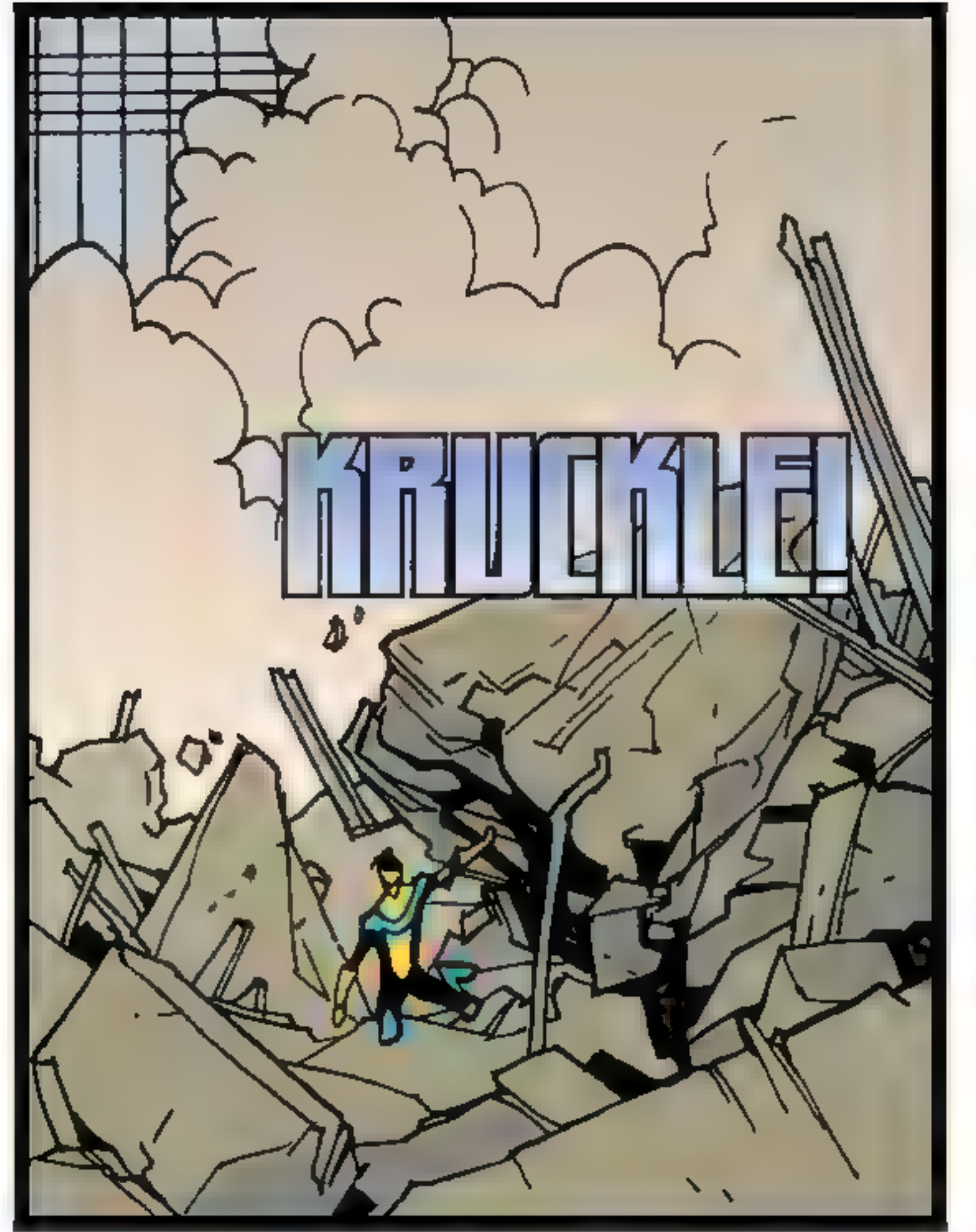


ISSUE TWELVE

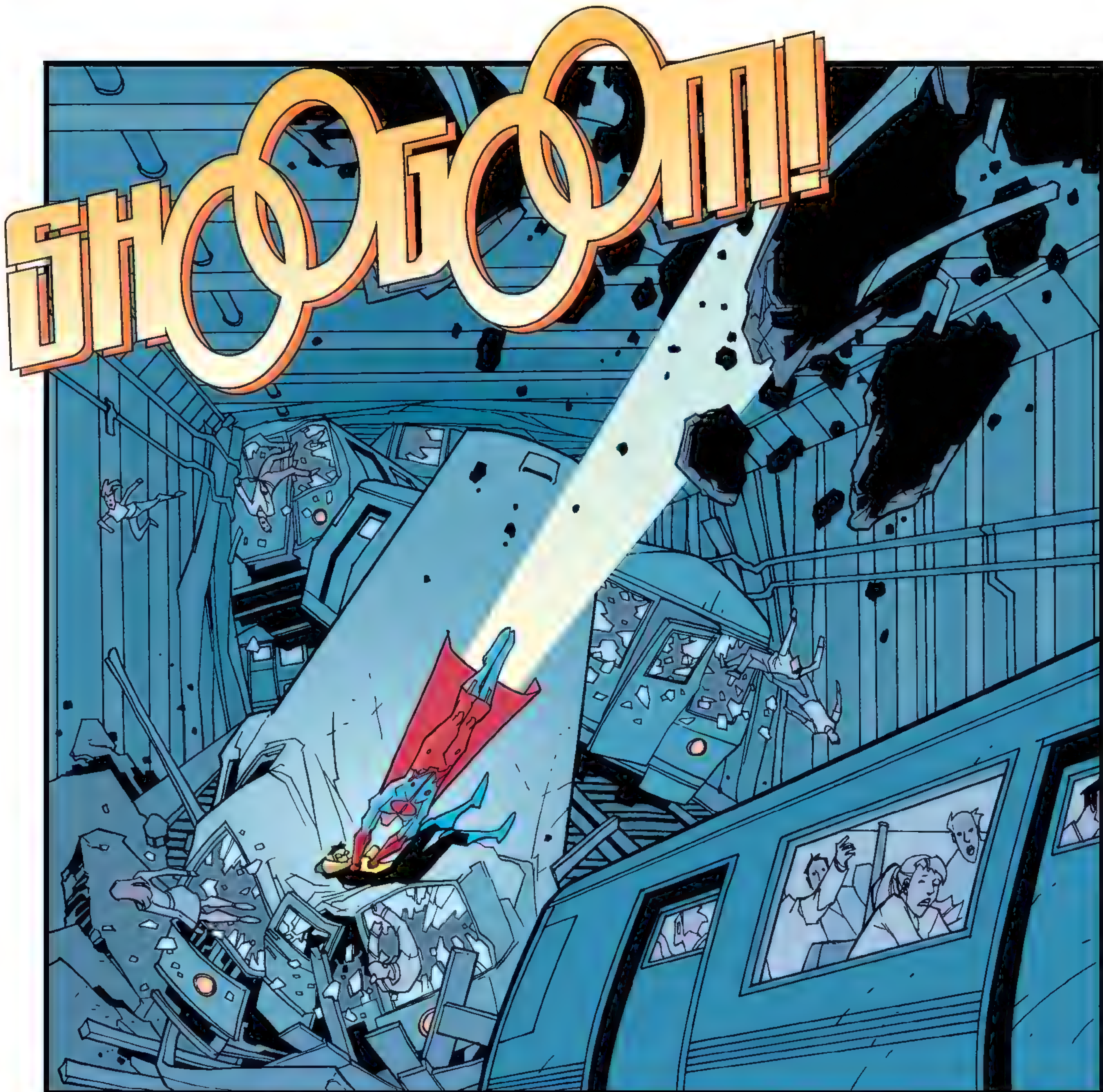


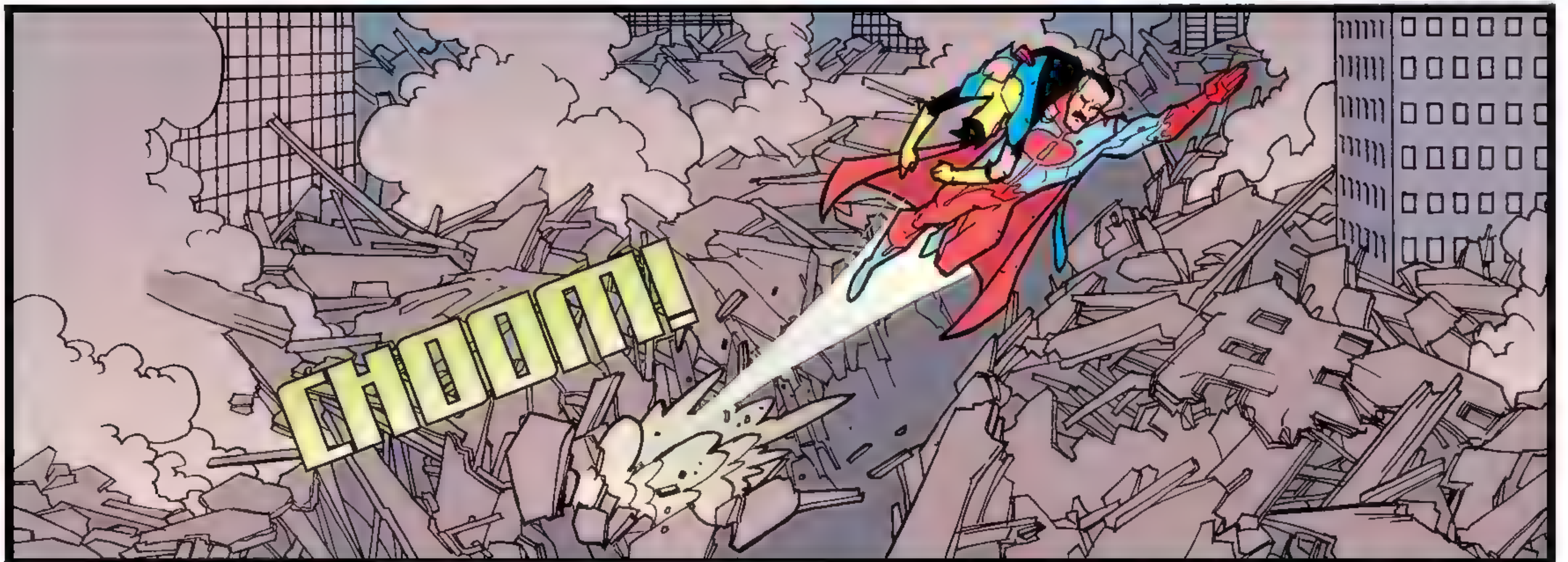
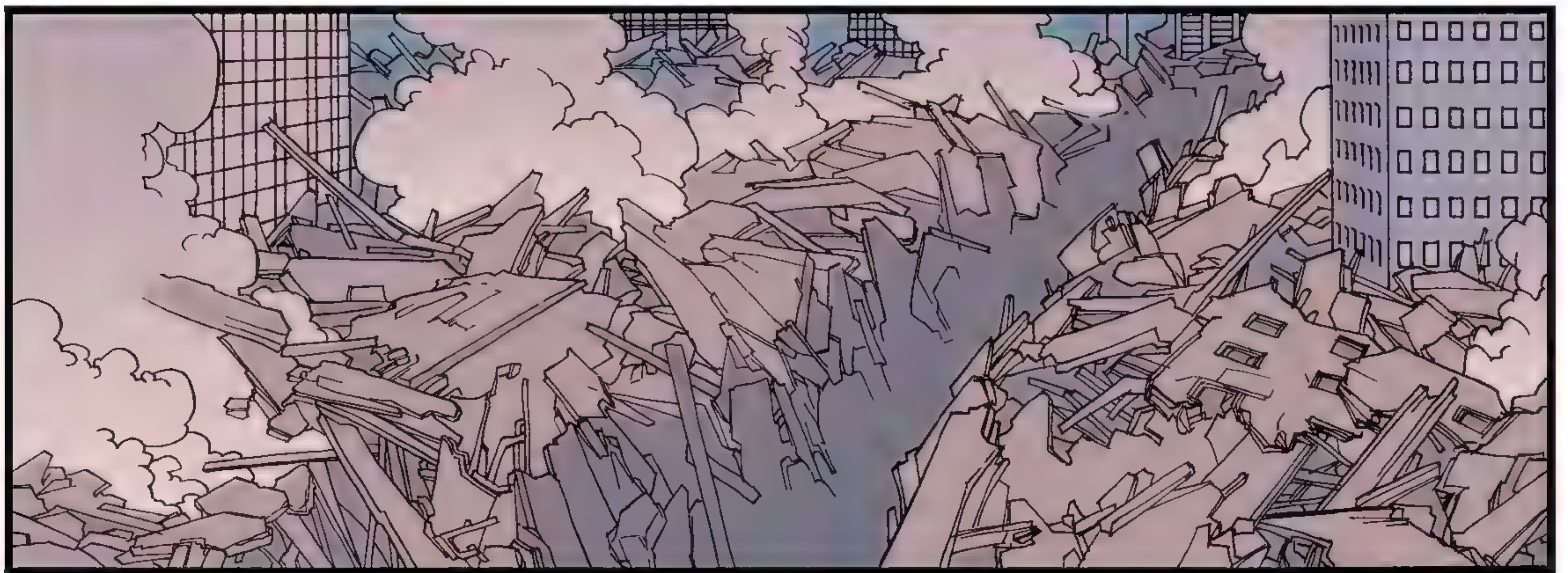


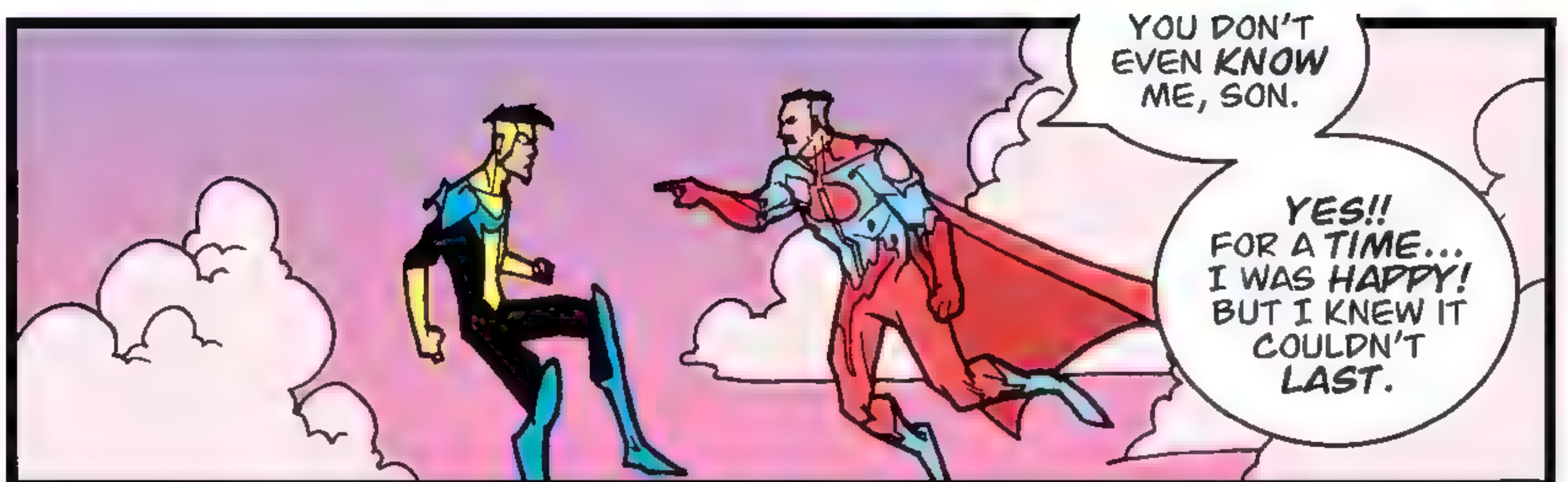


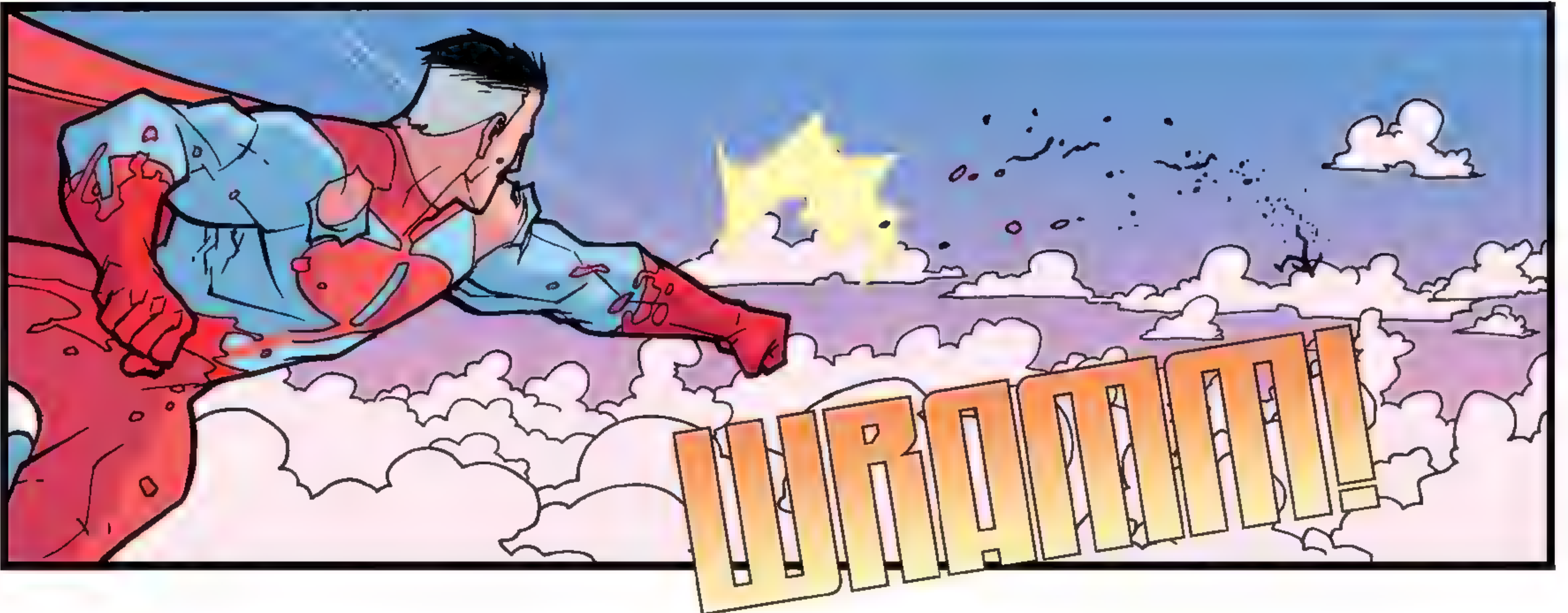
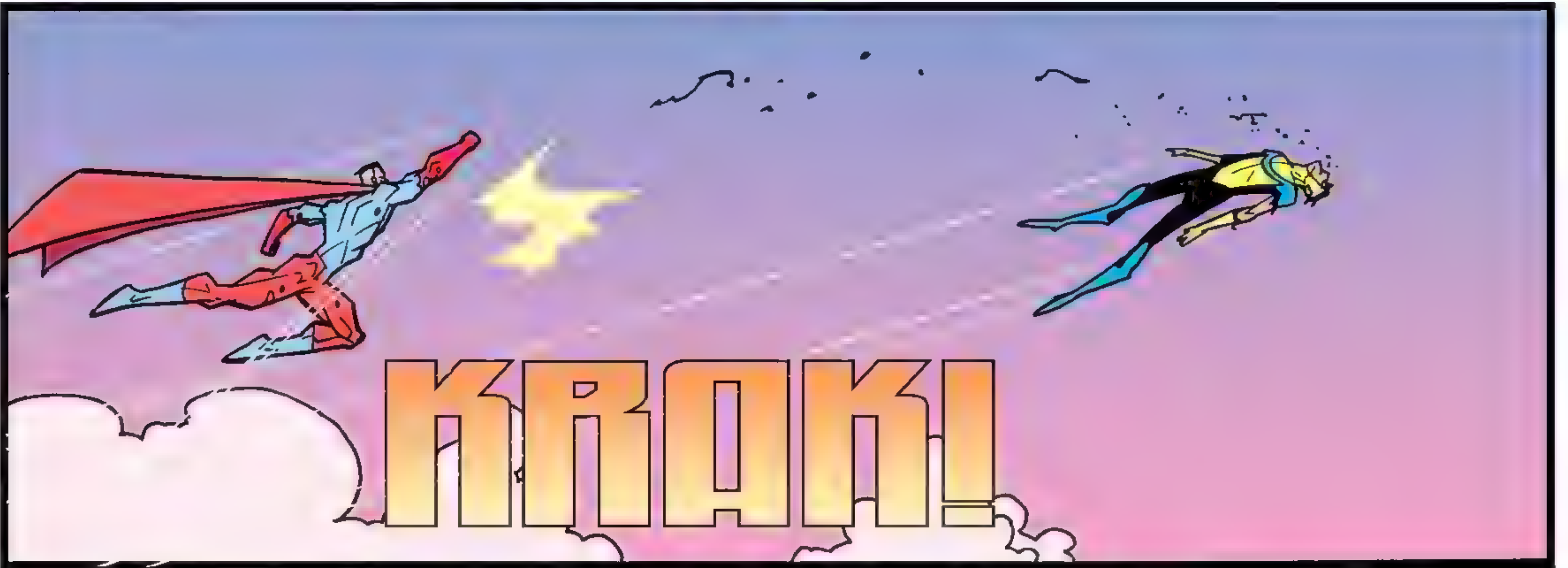




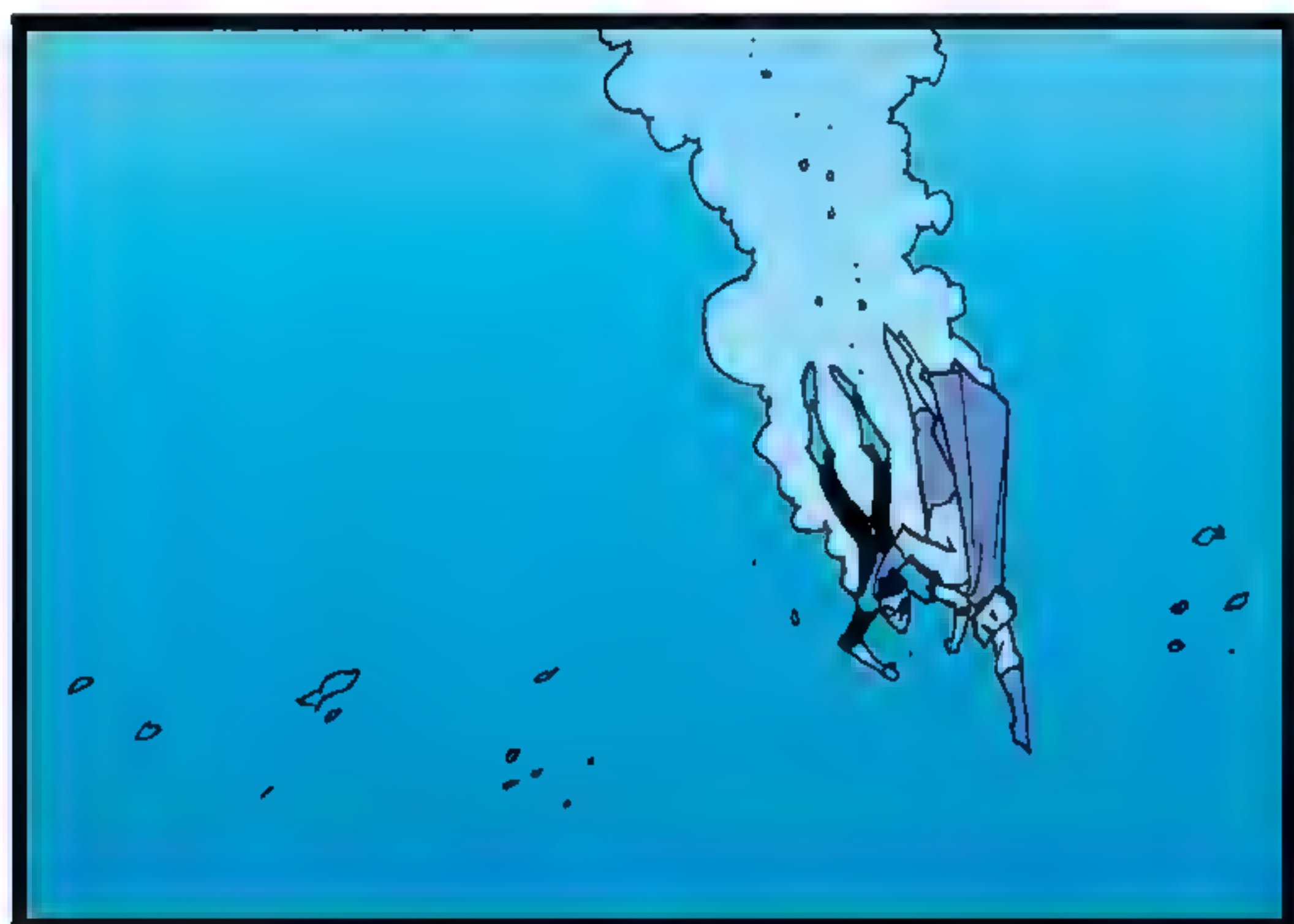
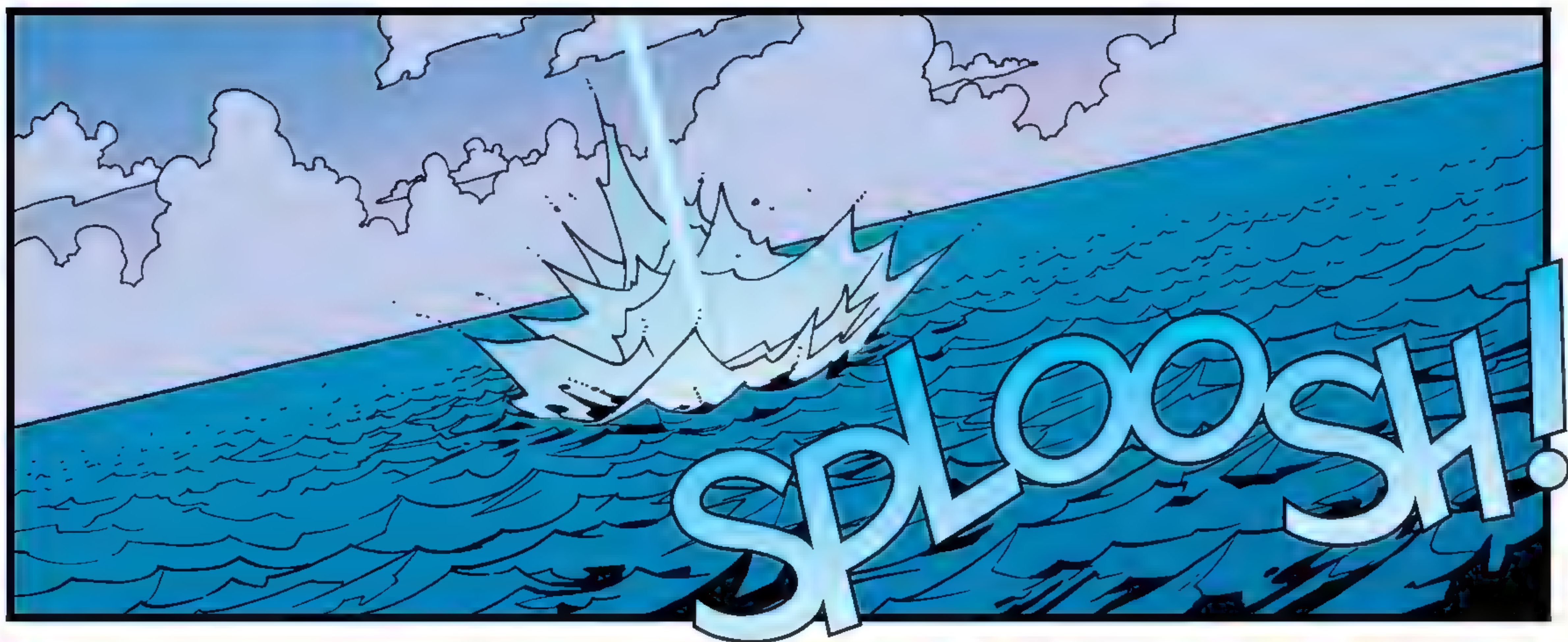


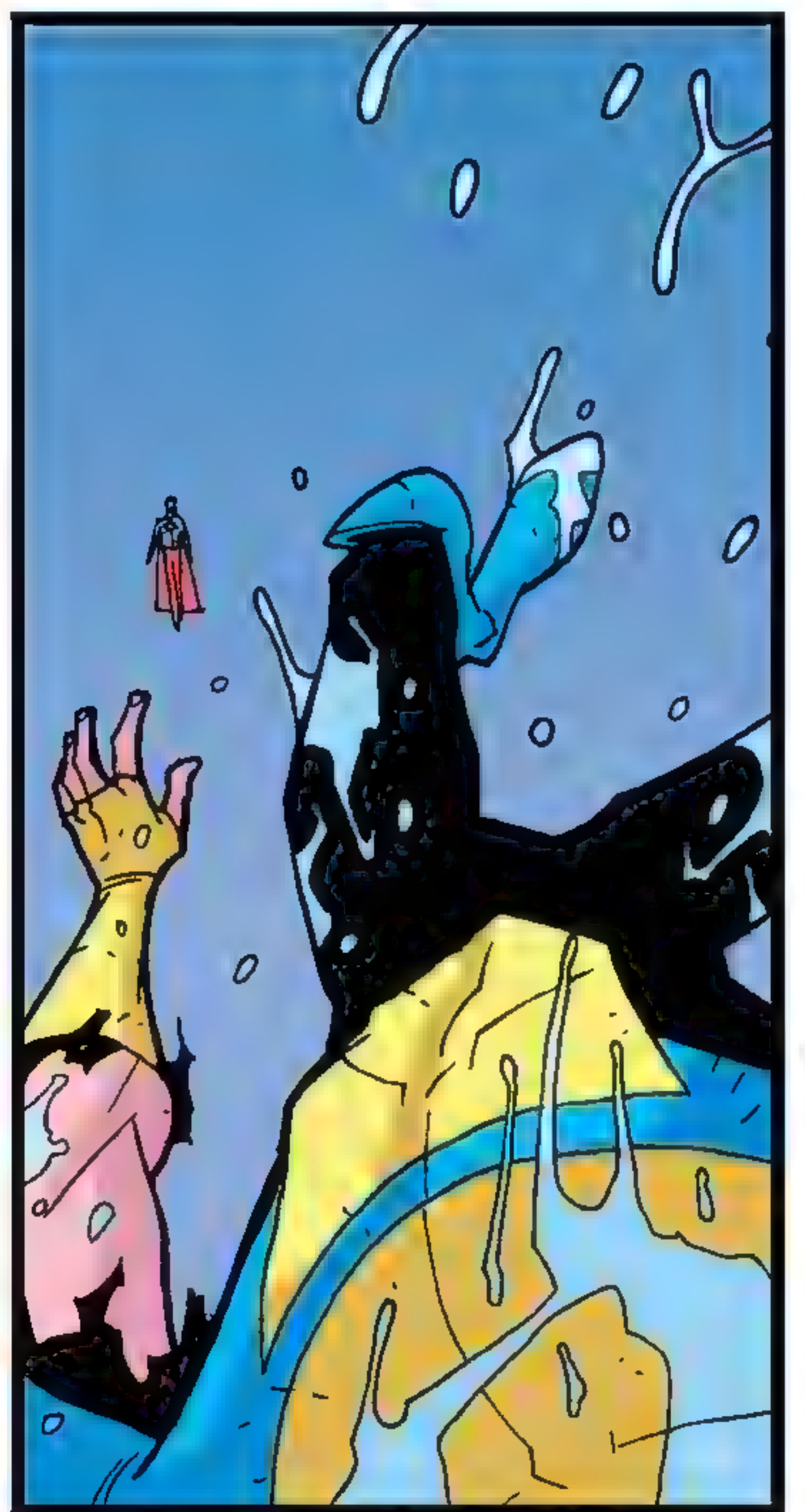
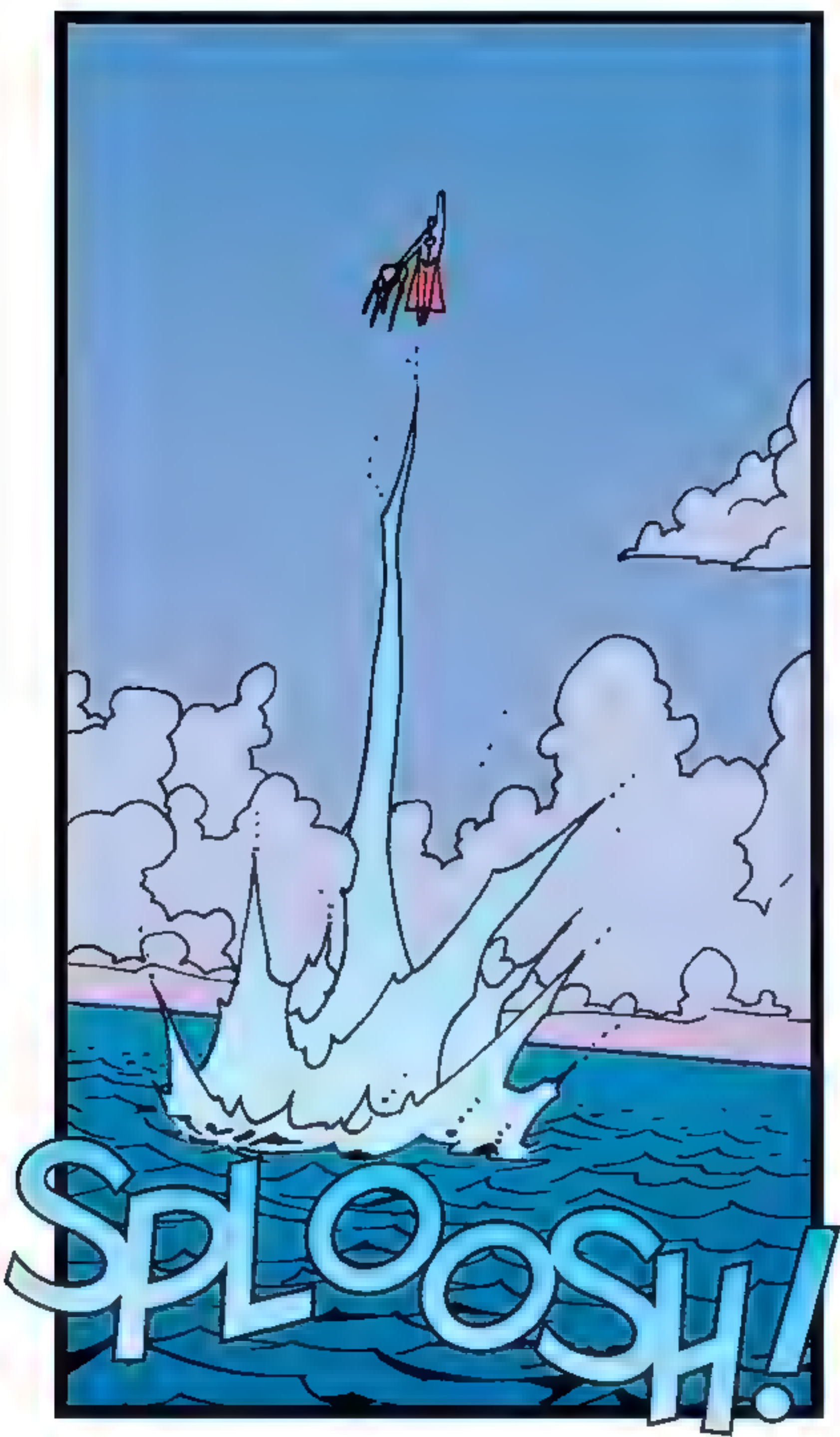




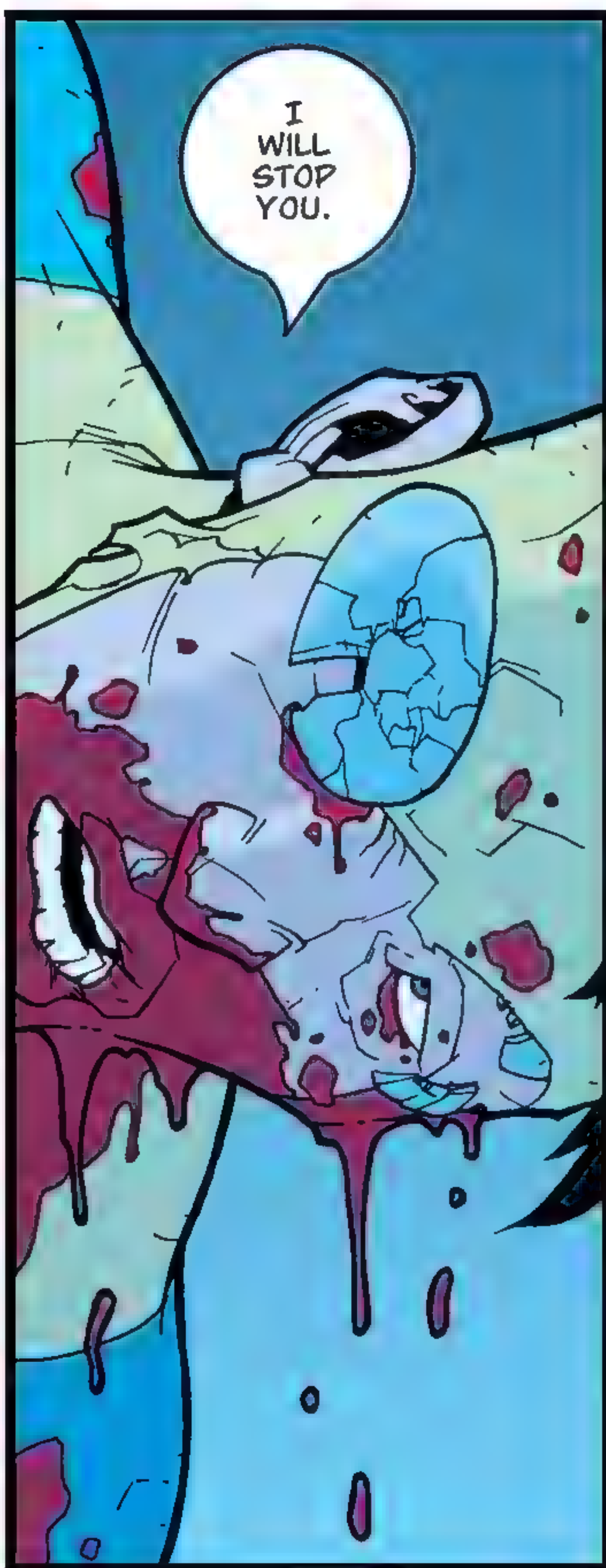


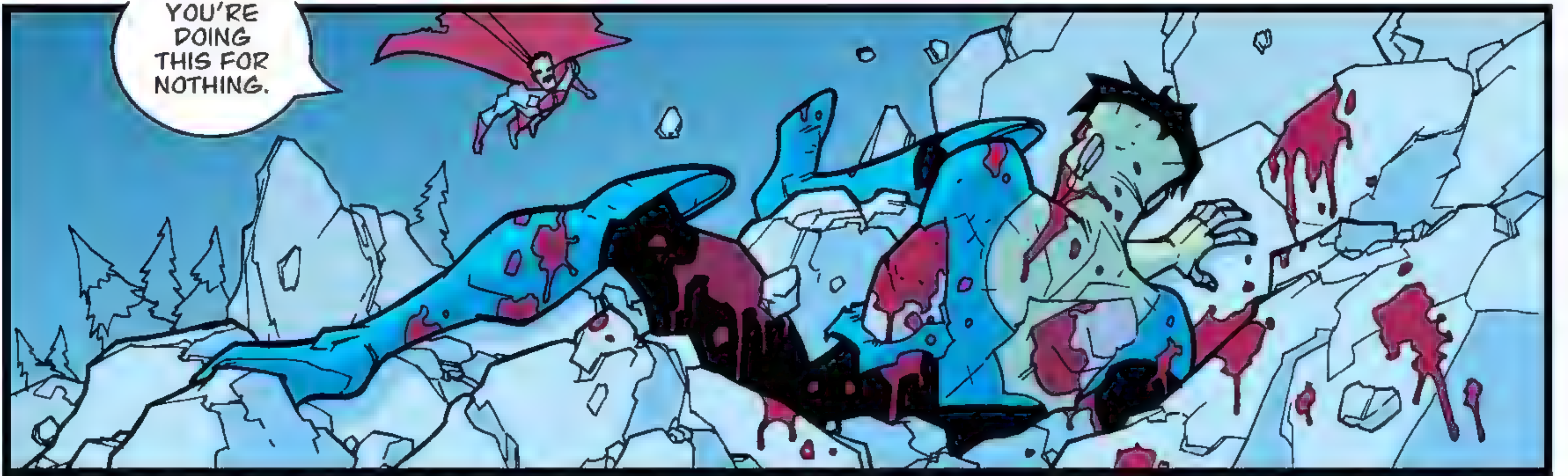
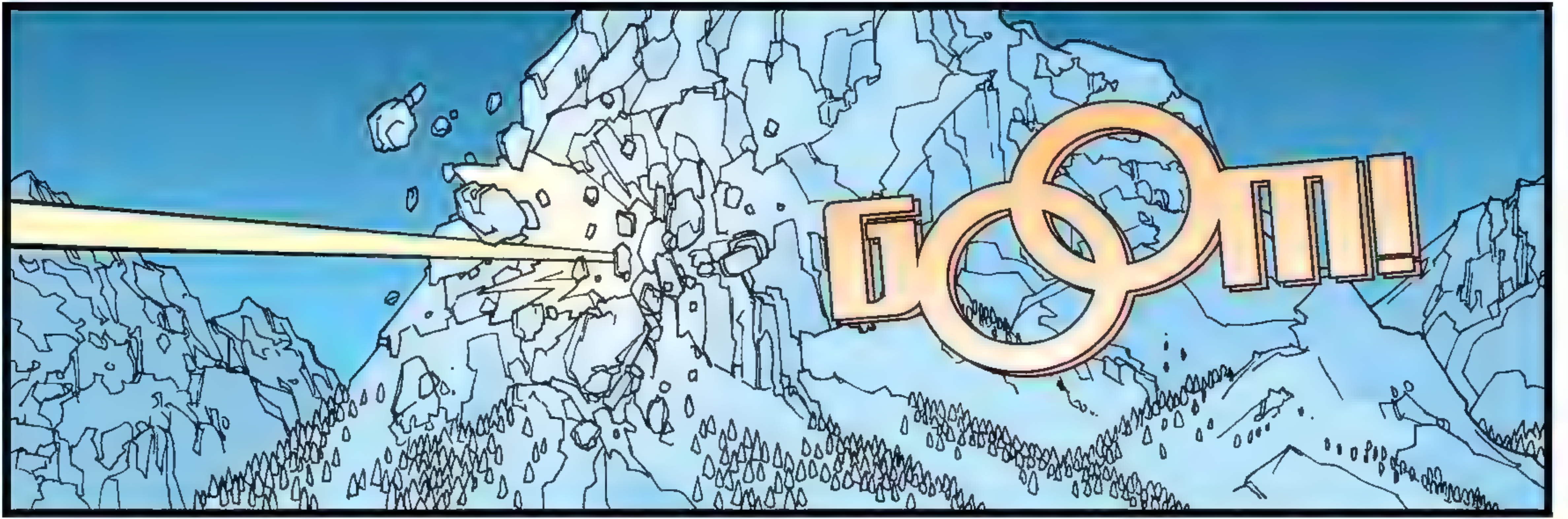


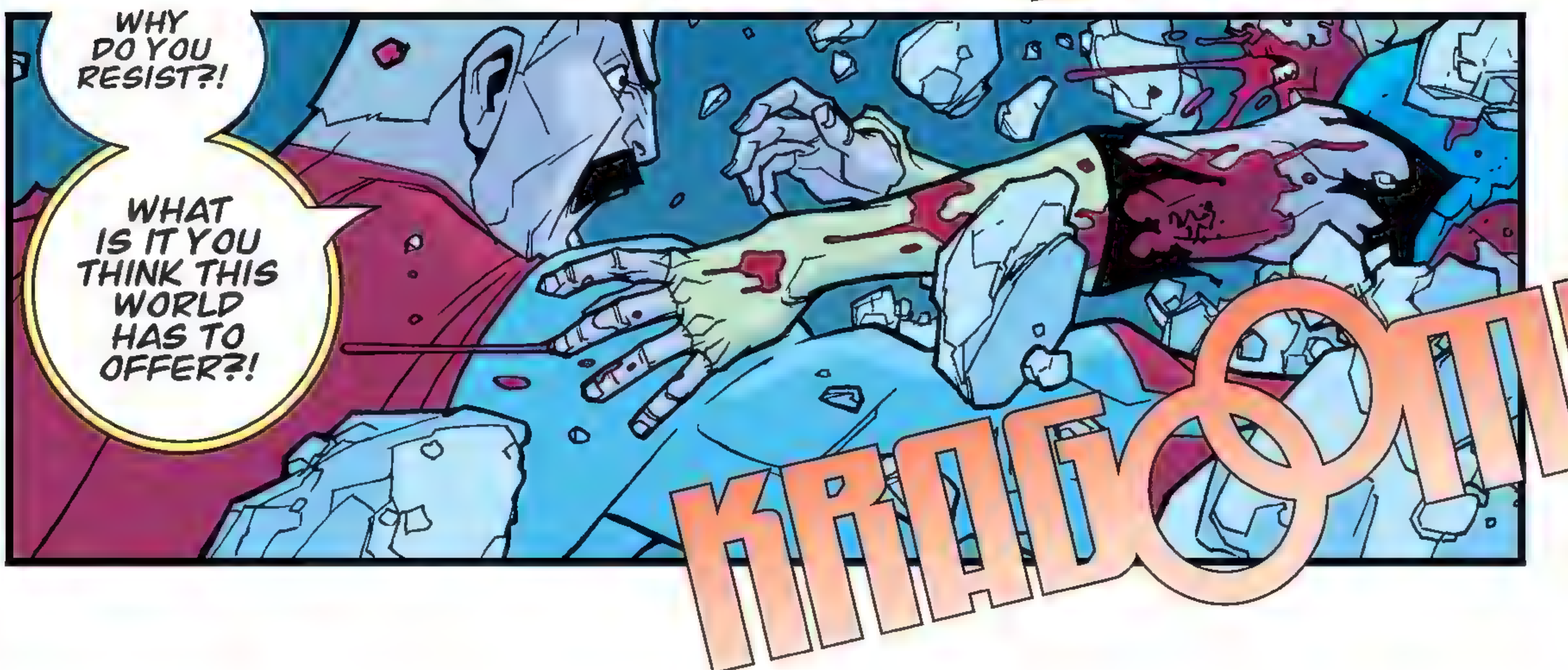




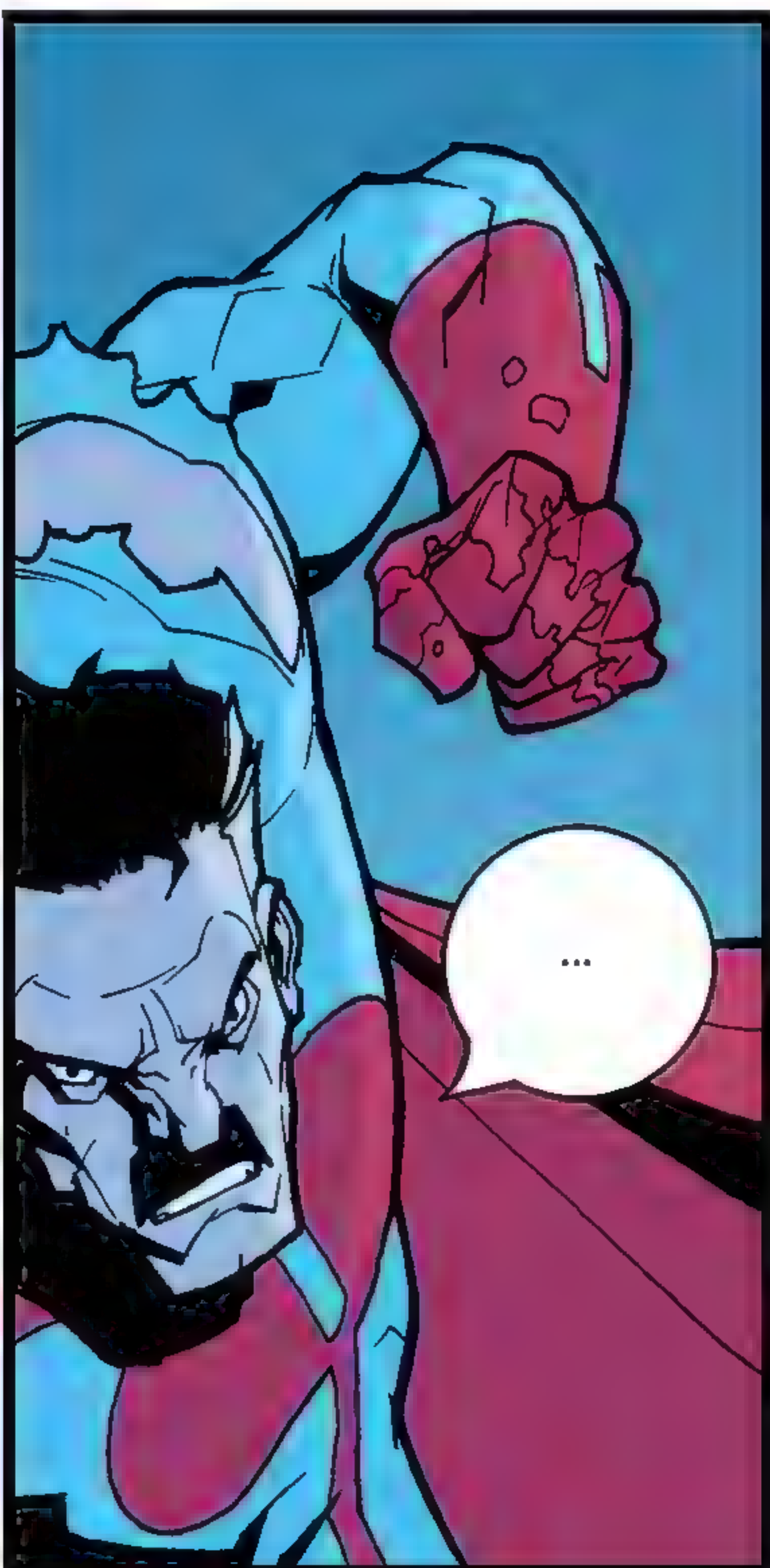














DAD?



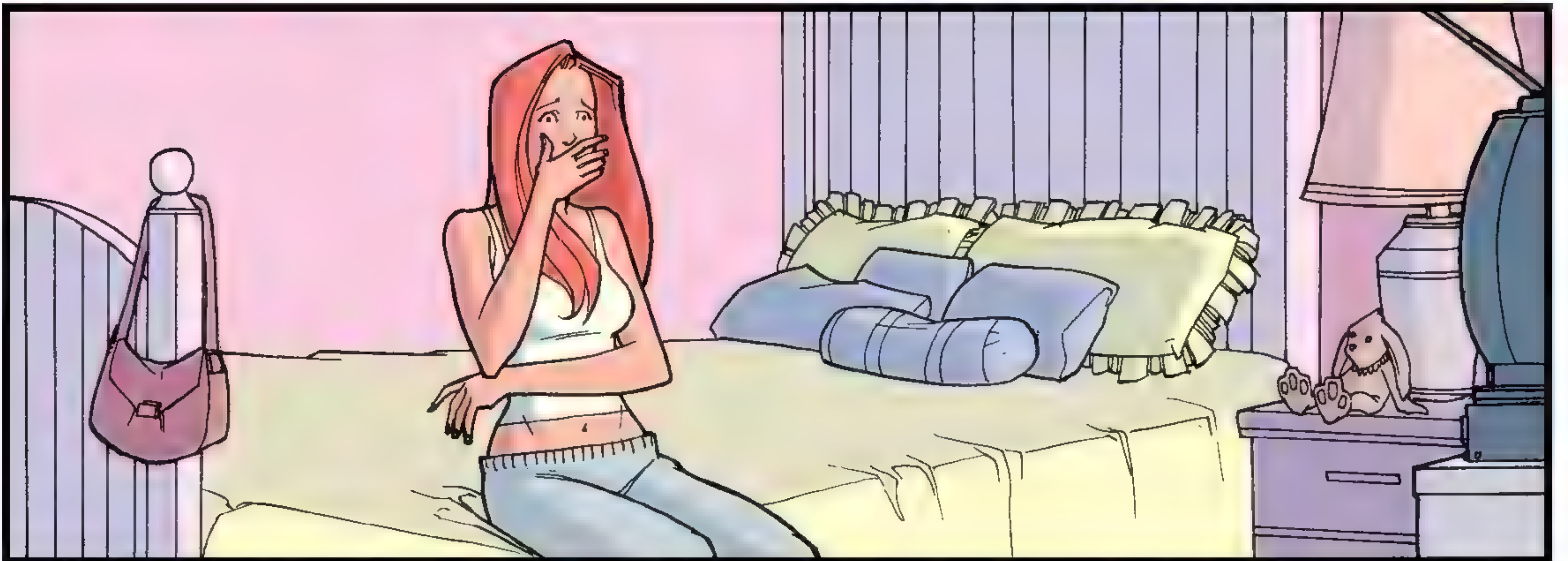
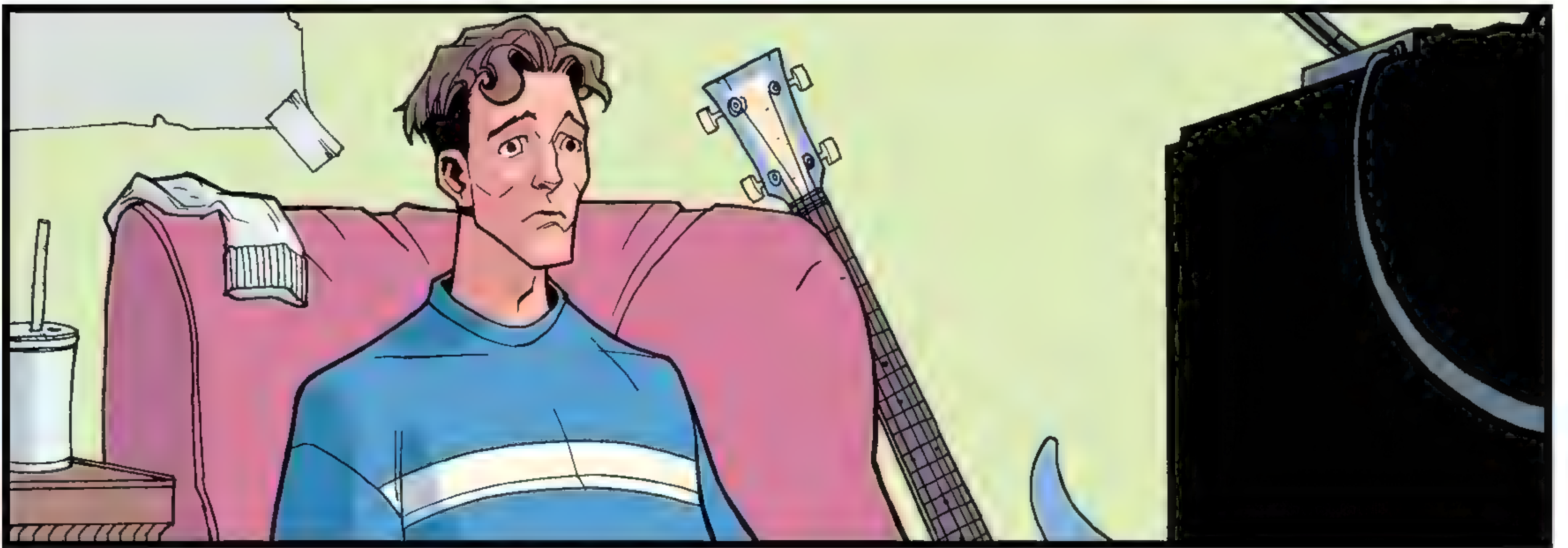
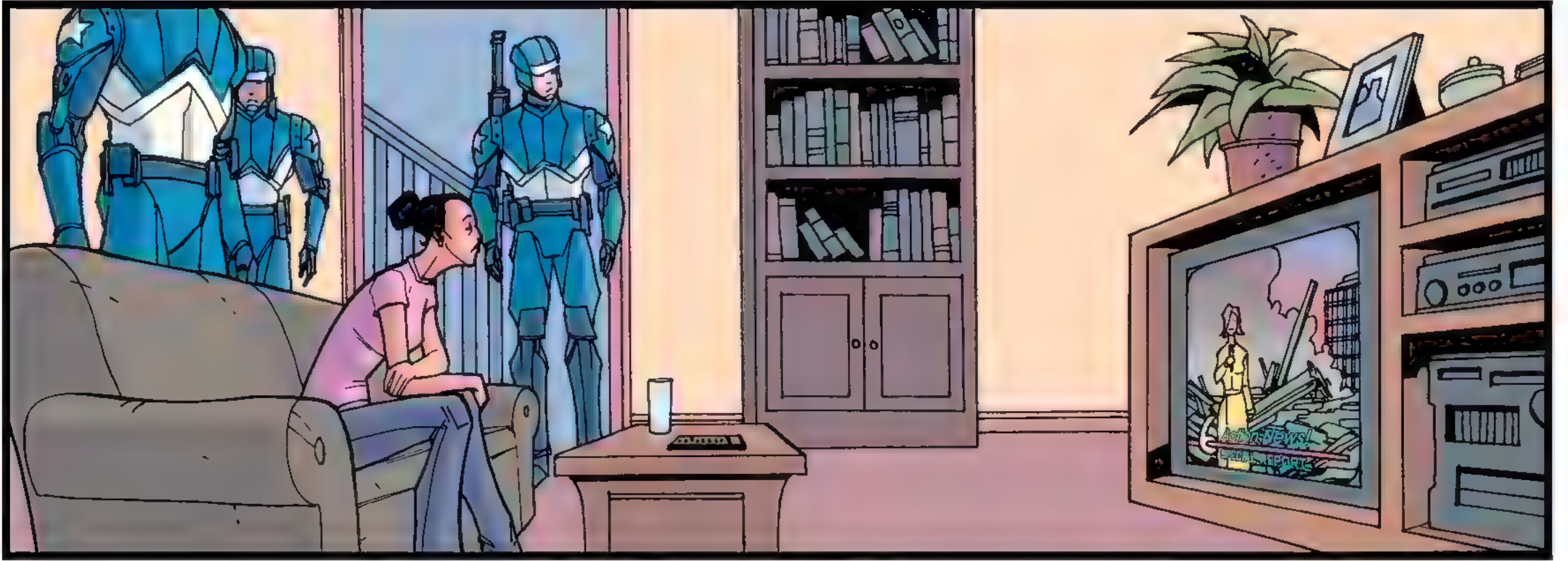


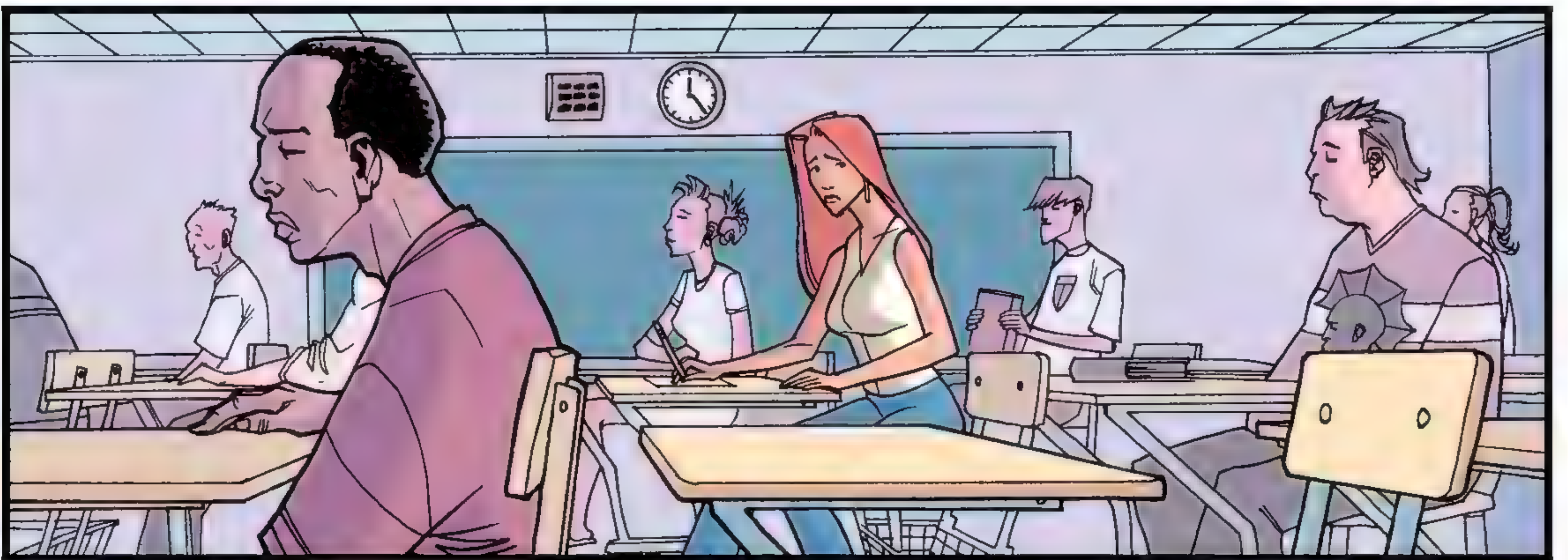
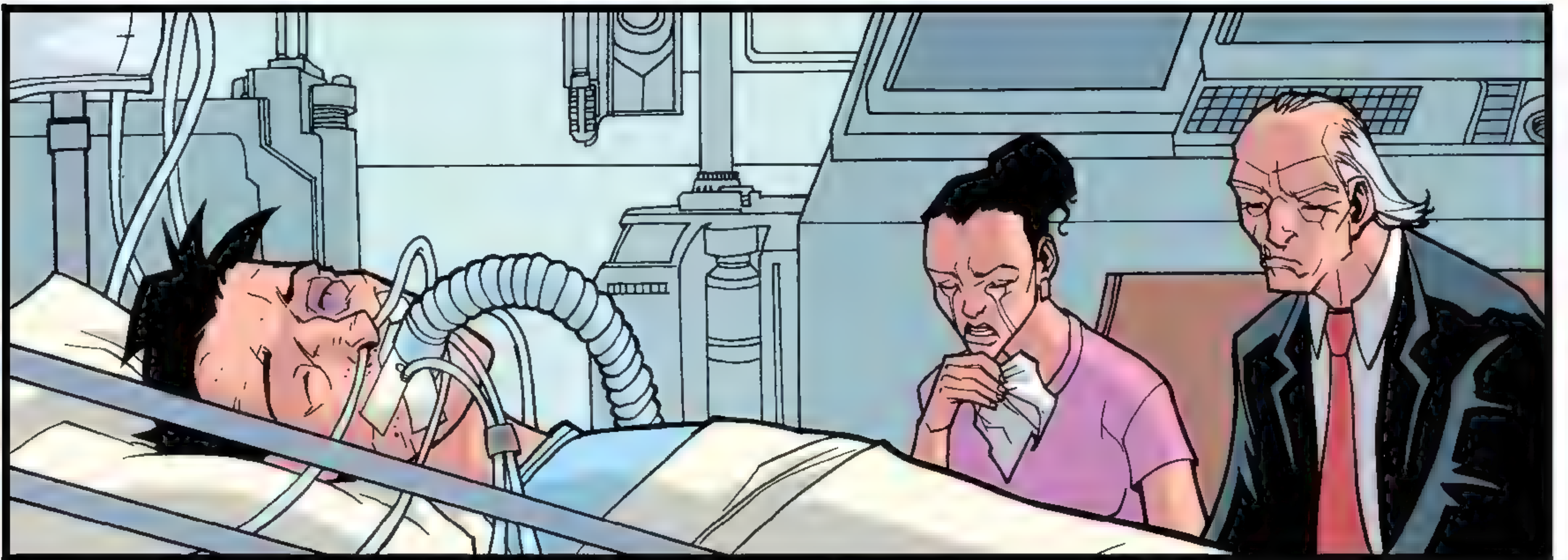
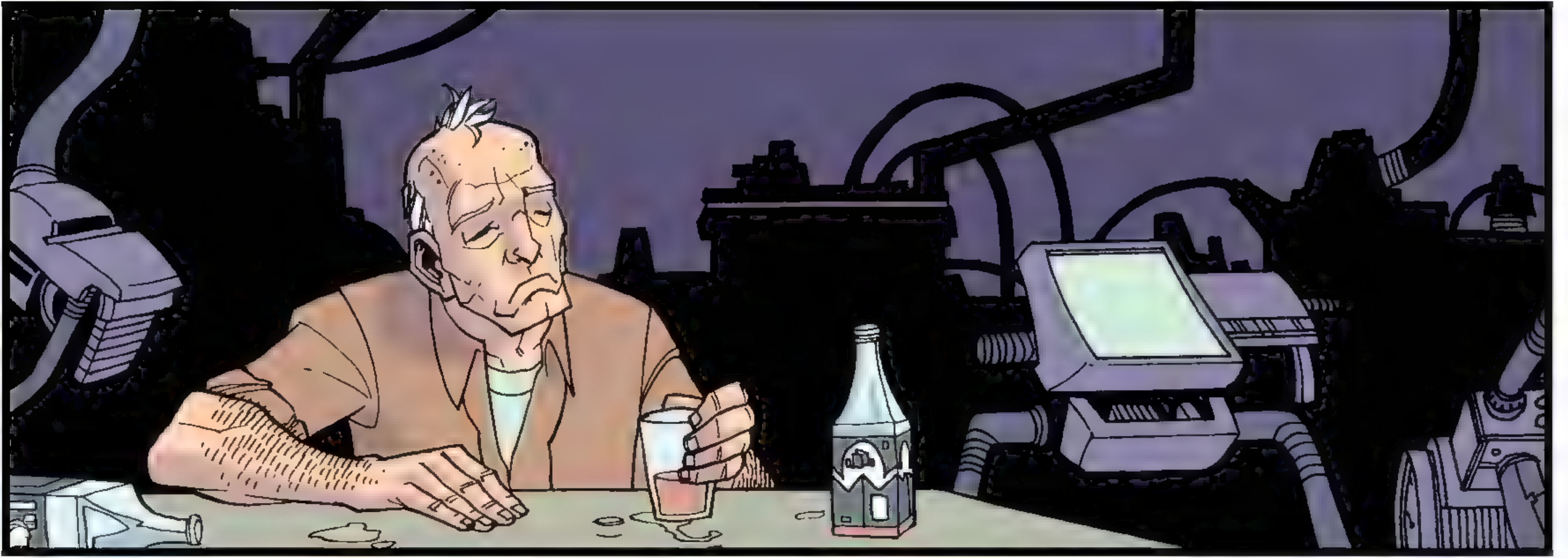
ISSUE THIRTEEN

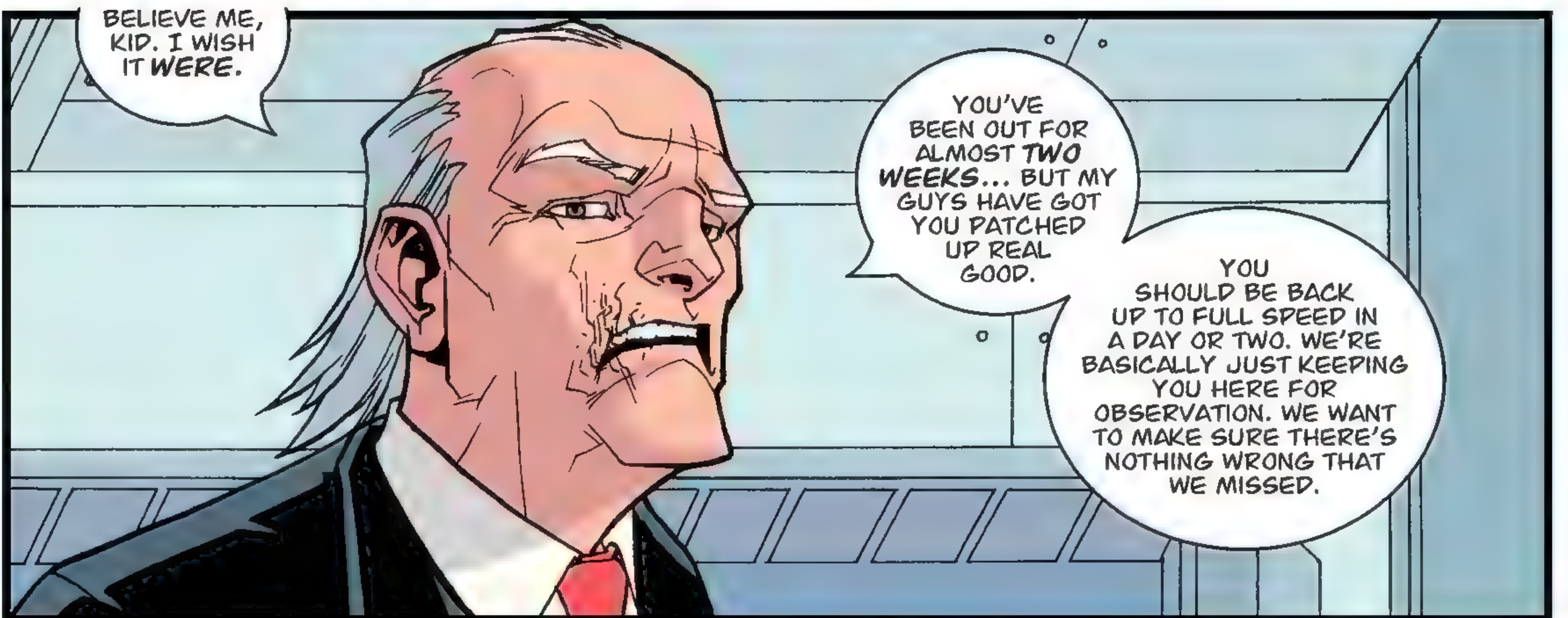
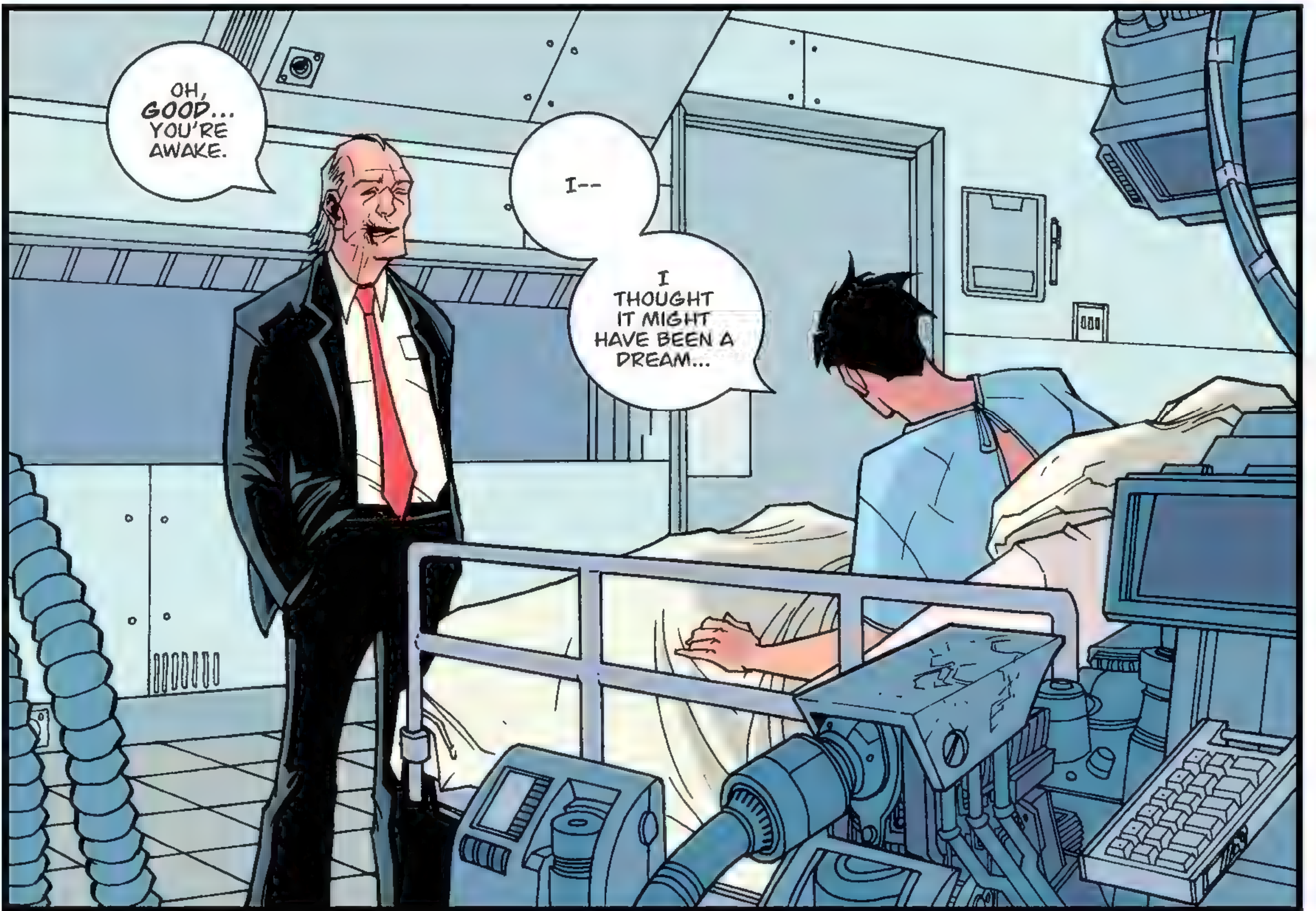


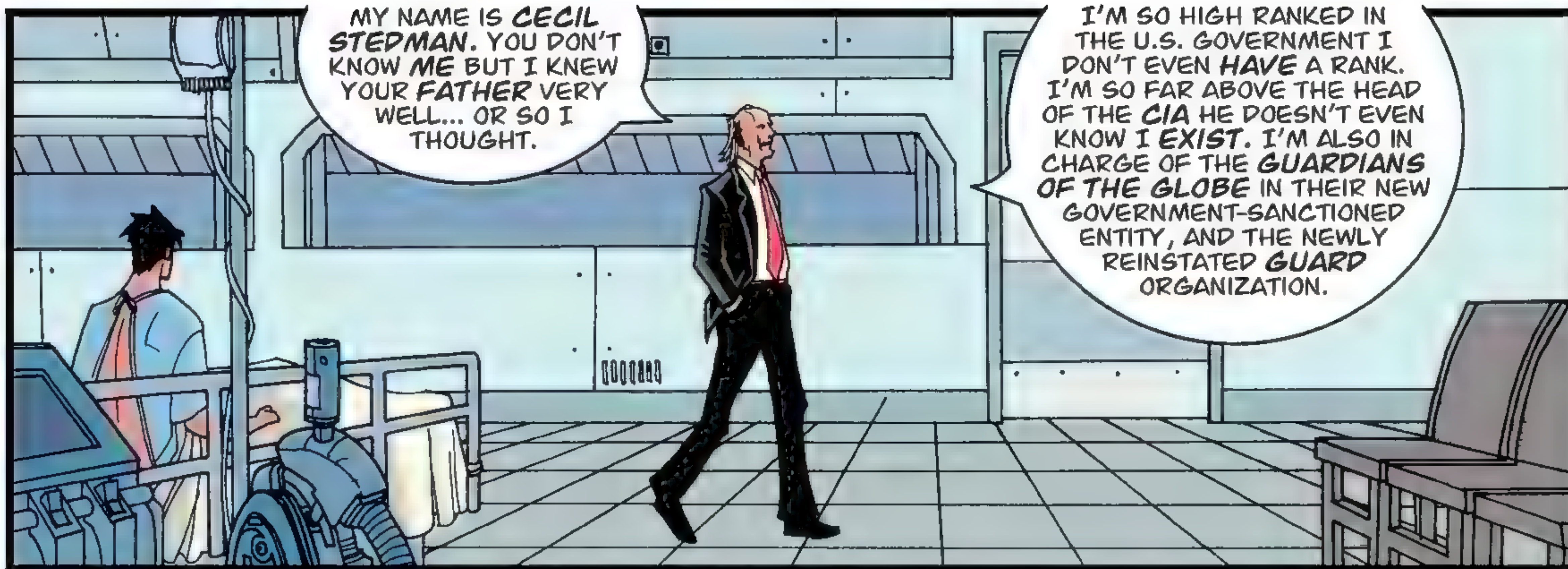
WYF





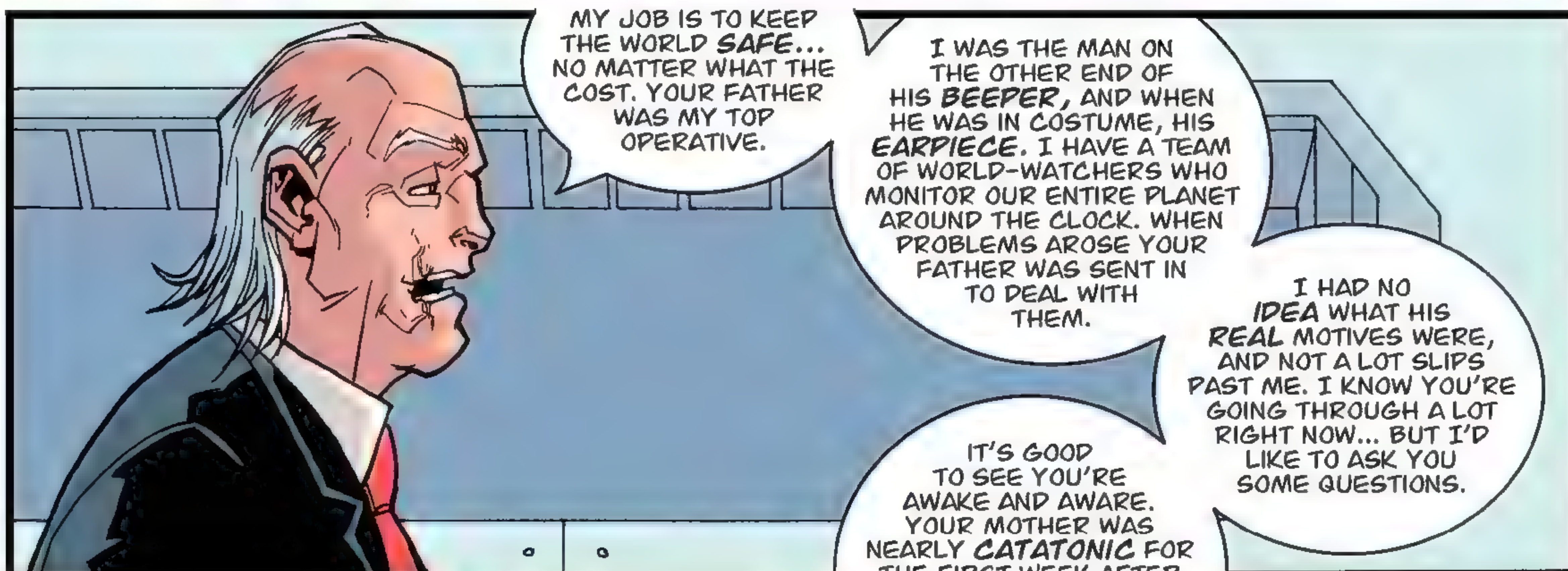






MY NAME IS **CECIL STEPMAN**. YOU DON'T KNOW ME BUT I KNEW YOUR FATHER VERY WELL... OR SO I THOUGHT.

I'M SO HIGH RANKED IN THE U.S. GOVERNMENT I DON'T EVEN HAVE A RANK. I'M SO FAR ABOVE THE HEAD OF THE CIA HE DOESN'T EVEN KNOW I EXIST. I'M ALSO IN CHARGE OF THE **GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE** IN THEIR NEW GOVERNMENT-SANCTIONED ENTITY, AND THE NEWLY REINSTATED **GUARD** ORGANIZATION.

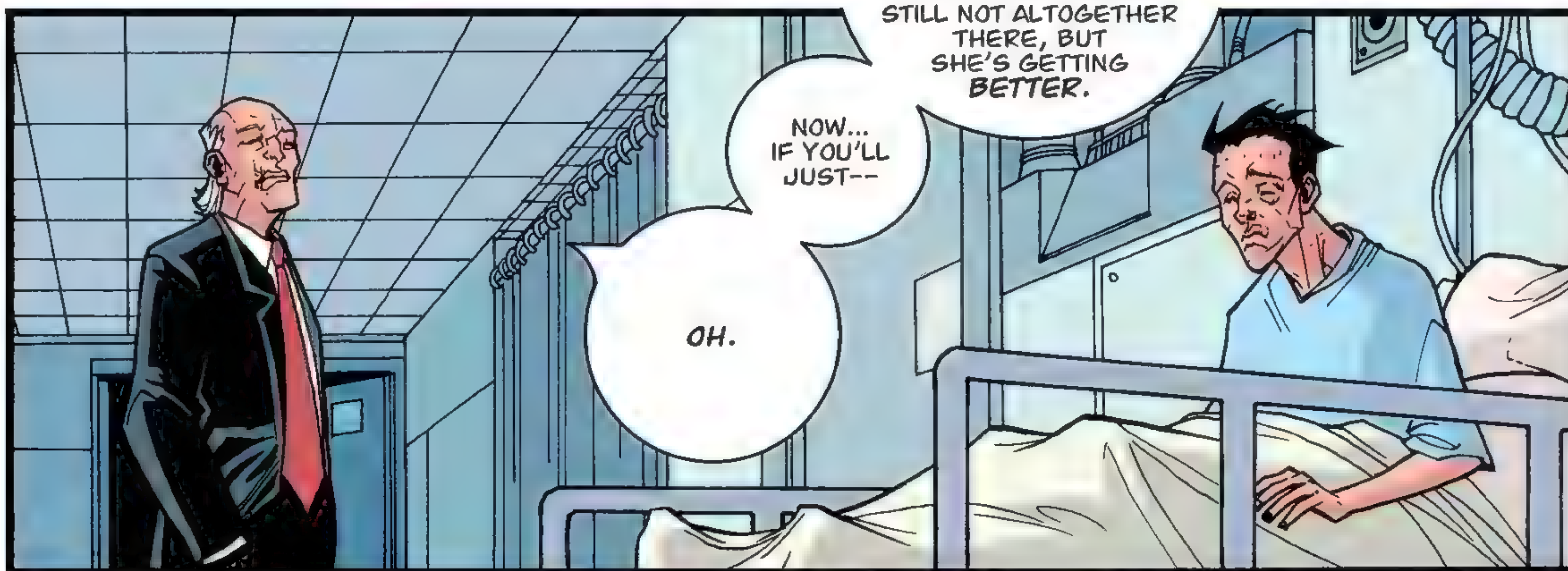


MY JOB IS TO KEEP THE WORLD **SAFE**... NO MATTER WHAT THE COST. YOUR FATHER WAS MY TOP OPERATIVE.

I WAS THE MAN ON THE OTHER END OF HIS **BEEPER**, AND WHEN HE WAS IN COSTUME, HIS **EARPIECE**. I HAVE A TEAM OF WORLD-WATCHERS WHO MONITOR OUR ENTIRE PLANET AROUND THE CLOCK. WHEN PROBLEMS AROSE YOUR FATHER WAS SENT IN TO DEAL WITH THEM.

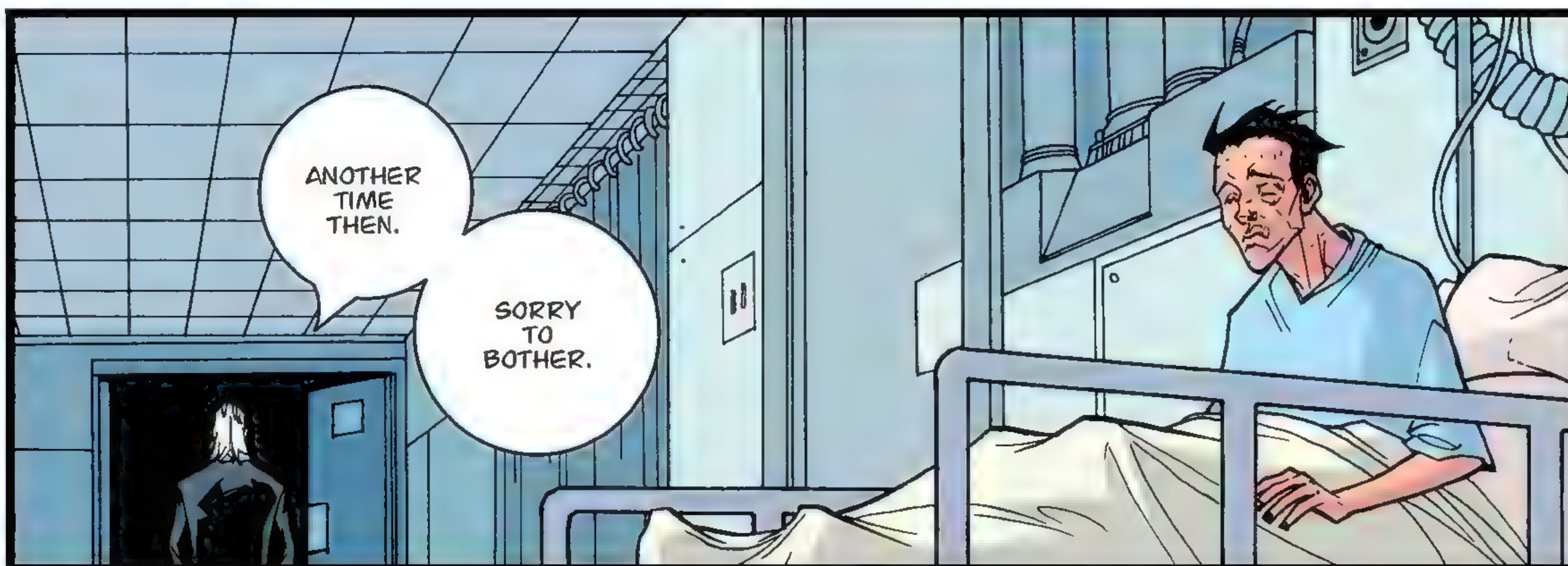
I HAD NO **IDEA** WHAT HIS **REAL** MOTIVES WERE, AND NOT A LOT SLIPS PAST ME. I KNOW YOU'RE GOING THROUGH A LOT RIGHT NOW... BUT I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU SOME QUESTIONS.

IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU'RE AWAKE AND AWARE. YOUR MOTHER WAS NEARLY **CATATONIC** FOR THE FIRST WEEK AFTER THE EVENT... SHE'S STILL NOT ALTOGETHER THERE, BUT SHE'S GETTING BETTER.



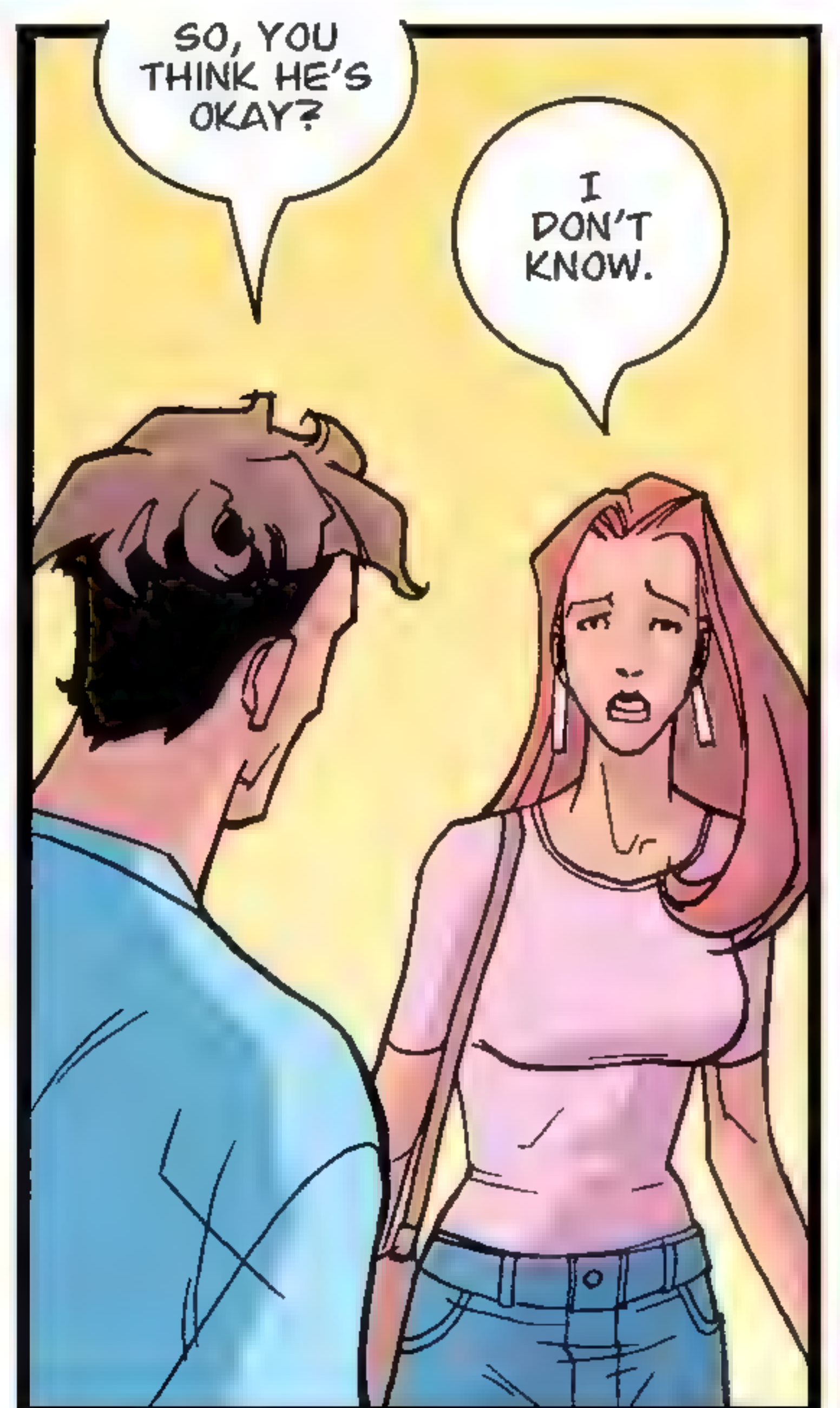
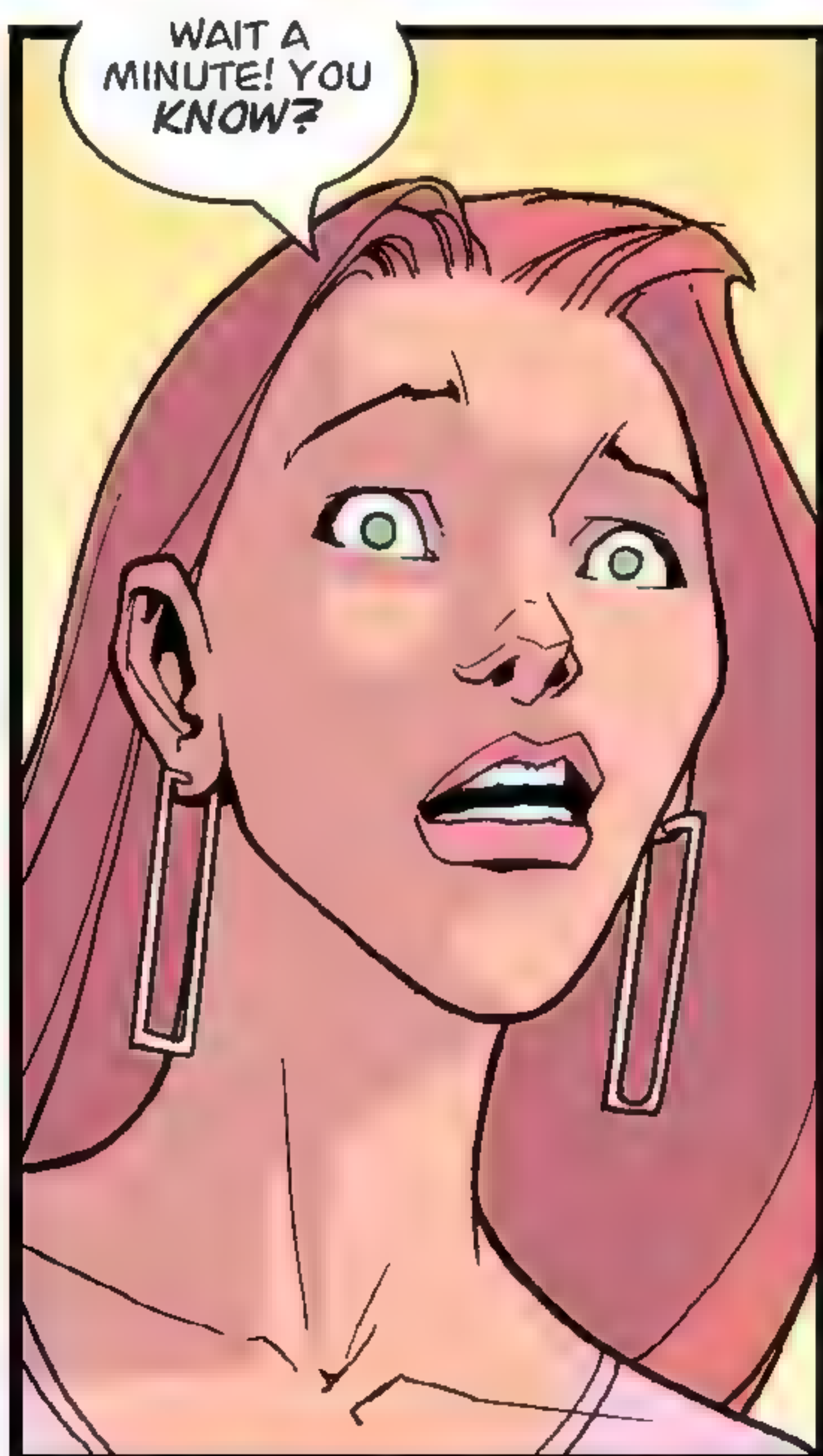
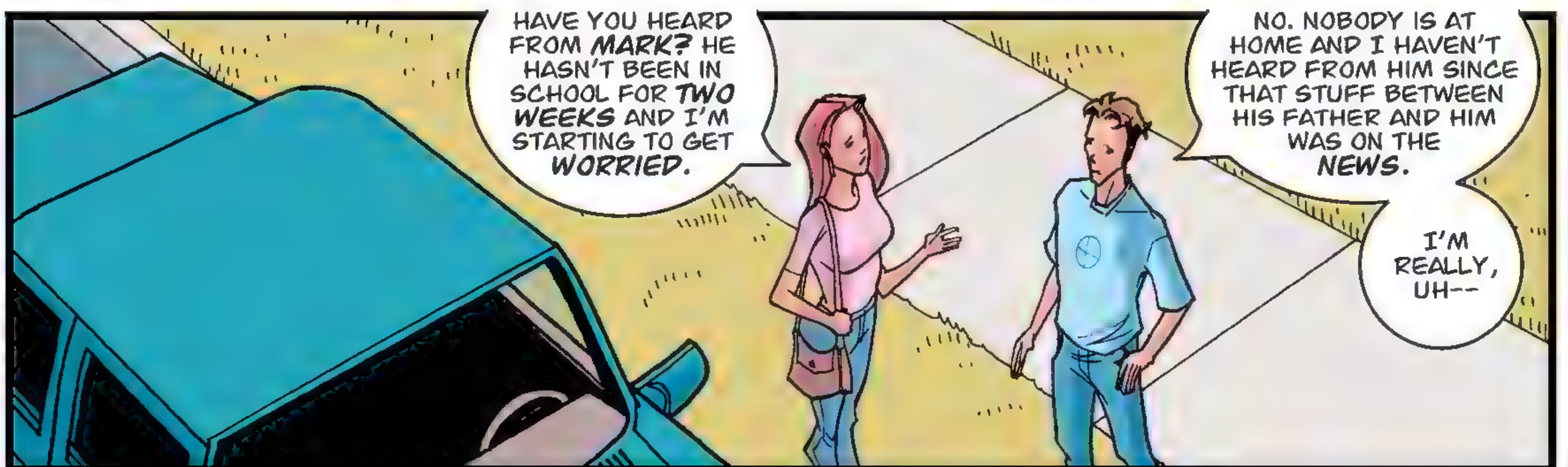
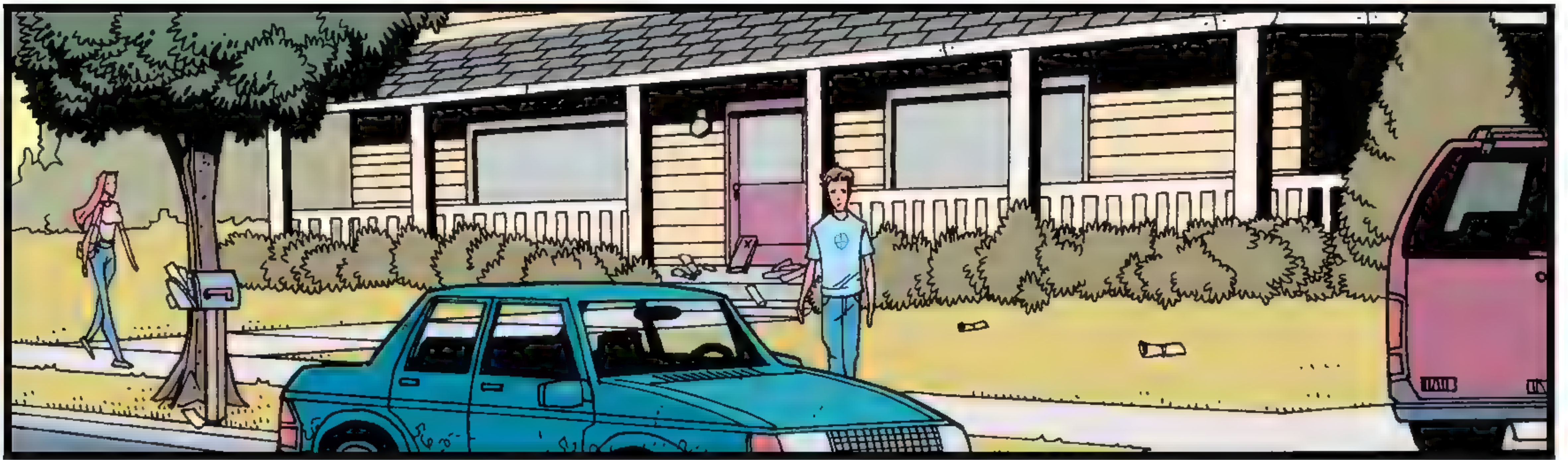
NOW... IF YOU'LL JUST--

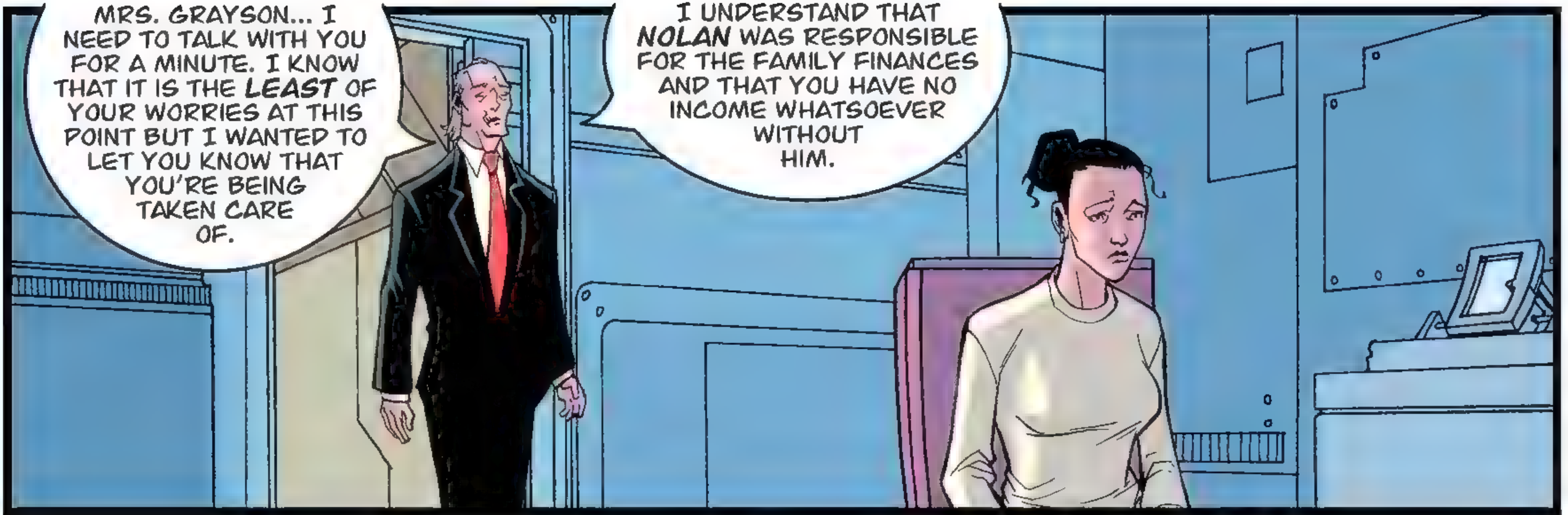
OH.



ANOTHER TIME THEN.

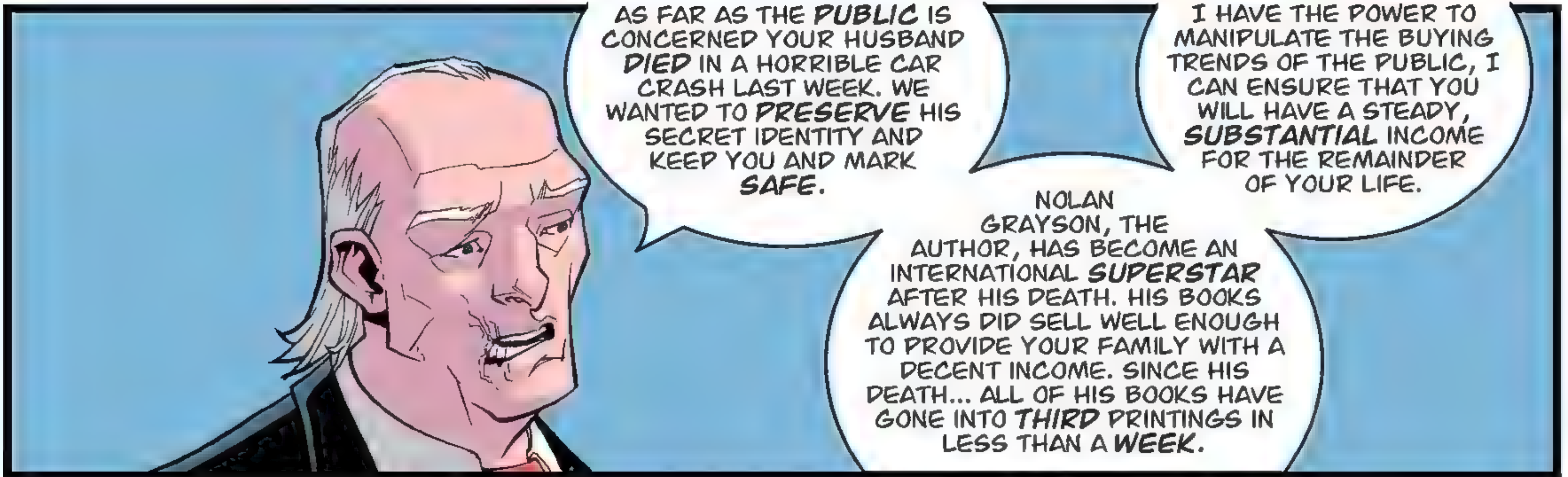
SORRY TO BOTHER.





MRS. GRAYSON... I NEED TO TALK WITH YOU FOR A MINUTE. I KNOW THAT IT IS THE **LEAST** OF YOUR WORRIES AT THIS POINT BUT I WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW THAT YOU'RE BEING TAKEN CARE OF.

I UNDERSTAND THAT **NOLAN** WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FAMILY FINANCES AND THAT YOU HAVE NO INCOME WHATSOEVER WITHOUT HIM.



AS FAR AS THE **PUBLIC** IS CONCERNED YOUR HUSBAND **DIED** IN A HORRIBLE CAR CRASH LAST WEEK. WE WANTED TO **PRESERVE** HIS SECRET IDENTITY AND KEEP YOU AND MARK **SAFE**.

I HAVE THE POWER TO MANIPULATE THE BUYING TRENDS OF THE PUBLIC, I CAN ENSURE THAT YOU WILL HAVE A STEADY, **SUBSTANTIAL** INCOME FOR THE REMAINDER OF YOUR LIFE.

NOLAN GRAYSON, THE AUTHOR, HAS BECOME AN INTERNATIONAL **SUPERSTAR** AFTER HIS DEATH. HIS BOOKS ALWAYS DID SELL WELL ENOUGH TO PROVIDE YOUR FAMILY WITH A DECENT INCOME. SINCE HIS DEATH... ALL OF HIS BOOKS HAVE GONE INTO **THIRD** PRINTINGS IN LESS THAN A **WEEK**.



A **PROXY** HAS ATTENDED A FAUX FUNERAL, AND BEEN INTERVIEWED BY THE PRESS. DO NOT BE ALARMED IF YOU SEE YOURSELF ON THE NEWS. OUR **HOLOGRAPHICS** DIVISION IS SECOND TO **NONE**.

THIS HAS BEEN DONE TO ENSURE THAT WHEN YOU ARE **READY**... YOU AND YOUR SON CAN RETURN TO YOUR **HOME** AND RESUME YOUR DAILY LIVES... WITH AS LITTLE **ADDITIONAL** PROBLEMS TO DEAL WITH AS POSSIBLE.

I KNOW THIS IS ALL A LITTLE **OVERWHELMING** AND I APOLOGIZE FOR ALL THAT'S GONE ON... I JUST HOPE THAT I CAN **HELP** YOU IN SOME SMALL WAY--

WHY?



WHY ARE YOU **DOING** ALL THIS?

BECAUSE I FEEL **RESPONSIBLE** FOR YOUR HUSBAND'S ACTIONS. HE WAS **DOING** ALL THIS RIGHT UNDER MY **NOSE**... AND I **NEVER** SAW IT.

I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO **LIVE** WITH MYSELF IF I DIDN'T DO **EVERYTHING** IN MY POWER TO MAKE THINGS AS RIGHT AS THEY CAN BE.

AND MY **POWER** IS VAST.



OH, GOOD...
YOU'RE HERE.
I DIDN'T KNOW
IF YOU WOULD
BE.

WE HAVE
BEEN USING THIS
BASE AS A TEMPORARY
HEADQUARTERS UNTIL
THE GOVERNMENT CAN
SECURE US A MORE
SUITABLE
FACILITY.

THE
FORMER
GUARDIANS OF
THE GLOBE
HEADQUARTERS IS
STILL OWNED JOINTLY
BY **WAR WOMAN'S**
CORPORATION AND
DARKWING'S
ESTATE.

THIS
FACILITY
IS STILL
SUFFICIENT
FOR OUR
NEEDS.

ROBOT, I REALLY NEED
YOUR **HELP**. INVINCIBLE
HAS BEEN MISSING SINCE
THAT FIGHT WITH OMNI-MAN
WAS TELEVISED AND I
DON'T KNOW WHERE
HE COULD
BE.

HE
COULD BE
DEAD! OR LYING
SOMEWHERE
NEAR
DEAD.

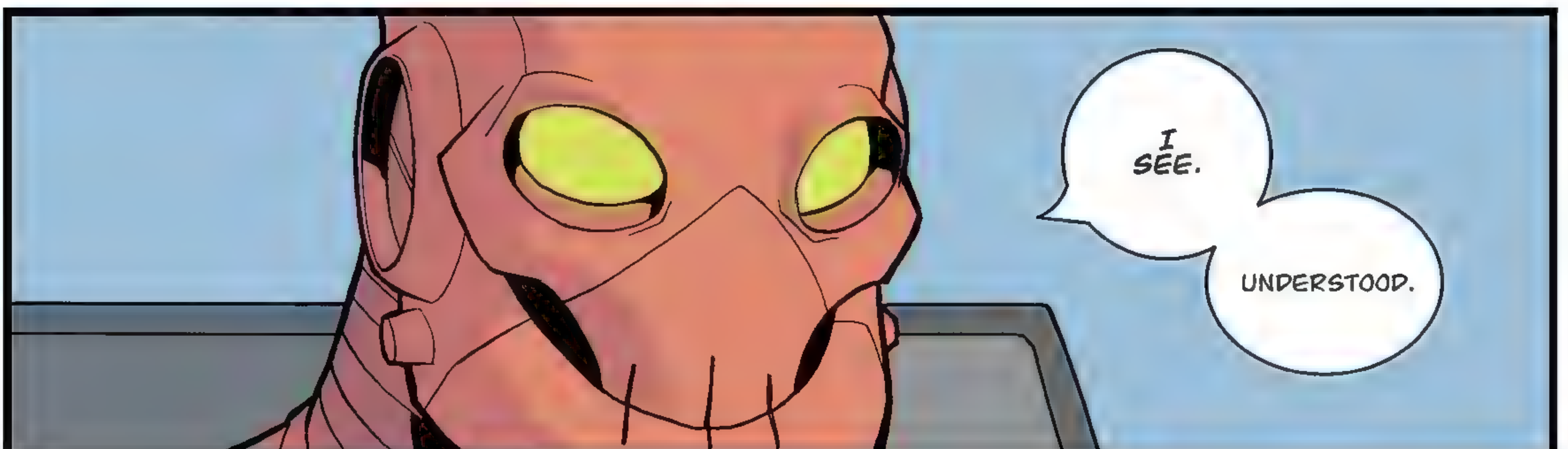
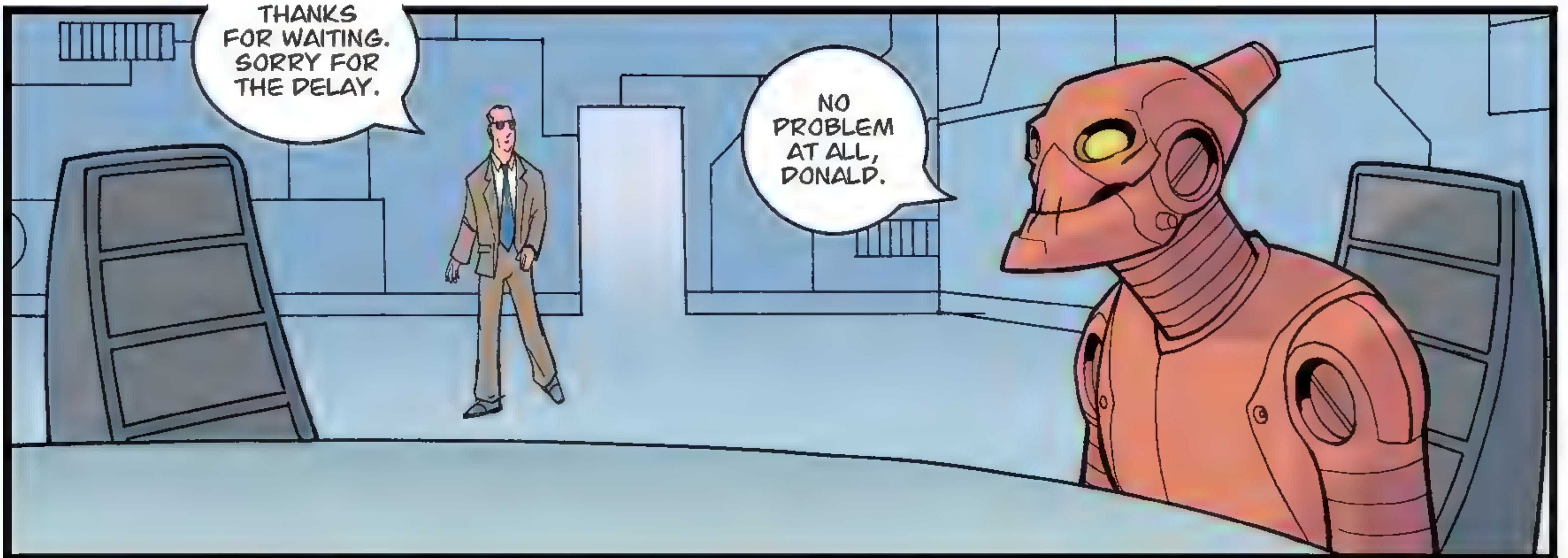
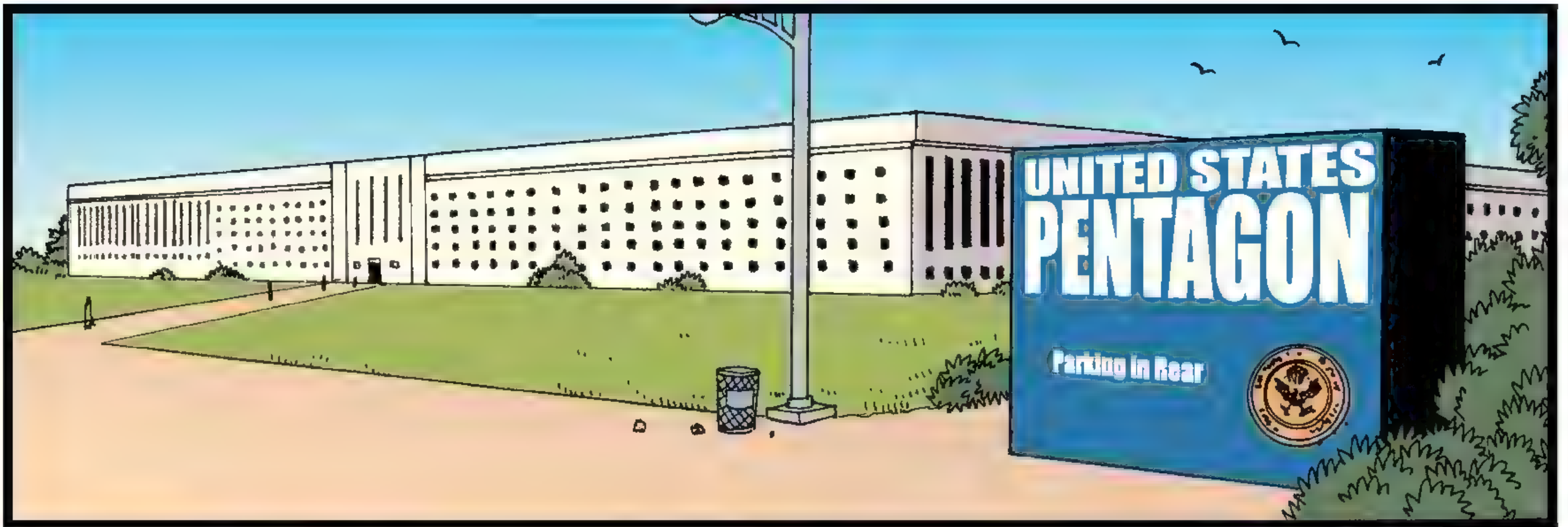
DO YOU
THINK YOU COULD
CALL IN A **FAVOR**
FROM SOMEONE IN
THE GOVERNMENT
AND TRY AND FIND
HIM? YOU COULD
USE **SPY**
SATELLITES OR
SOMETHING.

I WAS
NOT AWARE
OF INVINCIBLE'S
DISAPPEARANCE.
I WILL DO MY
BEST TO LOCATE
HIM. YOU HAVE
MY WORD.

THANKS, ROBOT.
PLEASE LET ME
KNOW AS SOON
AS YOU FIND
SOMETHING
OUT.

EVE,
I--

WHAT
GAVE YOU THE
IMPRESSION
THAT WE WERE
SPEAKING
AGAIN?





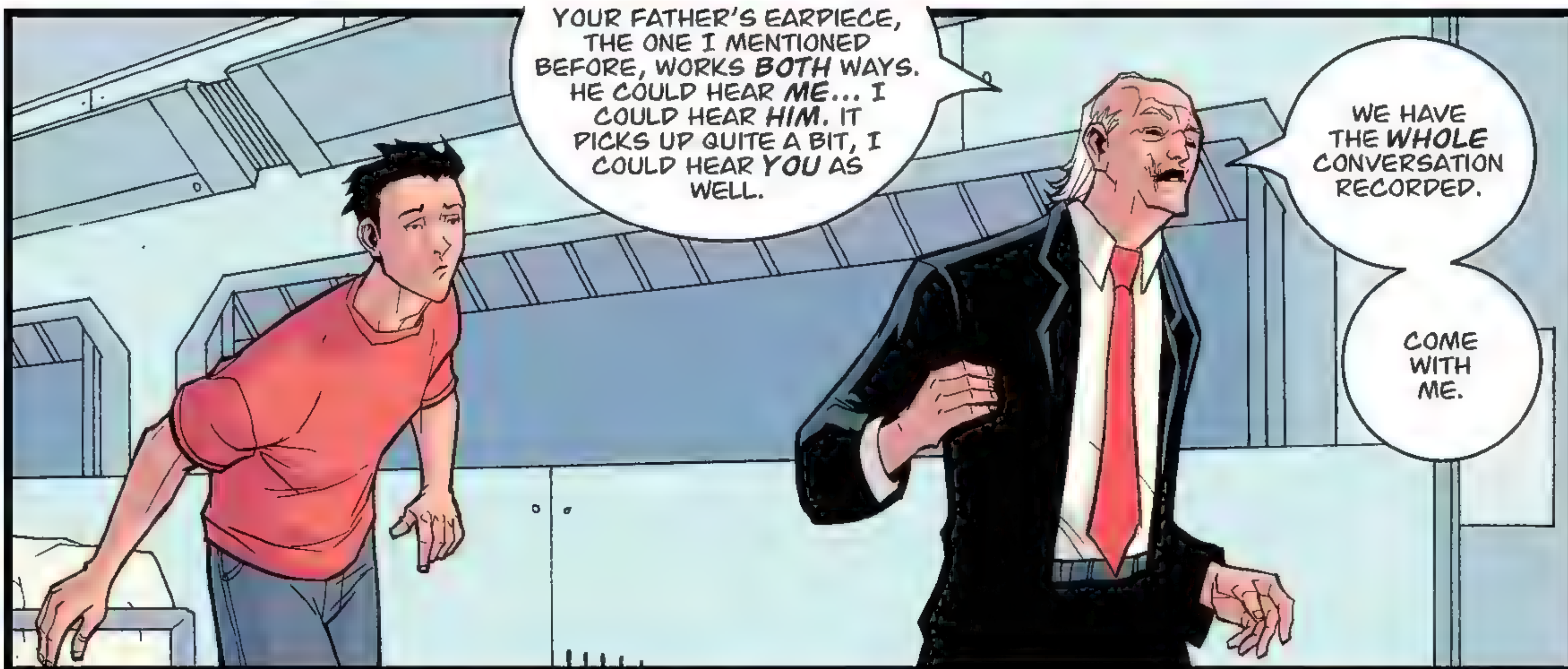
SO IT WAS ALL OVER THE NEWS?

YEAH... TO SAY THE **LEAST**. IT'S PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE THAT YOU WERE THE SON OF OMNI-MAN. NOW THE PUBLIC SEES YOU AND OMNI-MAN IN A KNOCK-DOWN, DRAG-OUT BRAWL THAT RESULTED IN **THOUSANDS** OF LOST LIVES, AND OVER **TWICE** AS MANY INJURIES.

NOBODY KNOWS **WHY**, THOUGH. NOBODY KNOWS YOU WERE **PROTECTING** THIS PLANET FROM YOUR FATHER. NOBODY KNOWS THAT YOU WERE **RISKING** YOUR **LIFE** FOR THE GOOD OF US ALL.



HOW DO YOU KNOW?



YOUR FATHER'S EARPIECE, THE ONE I MENTIONED BEFORE, WORKS **BOTH** WAYS. HE COULD HEAR **ME**... I COULD HEAR **HIM**. IT PICKS UP QUITE A BIT, I COULD HEAR **YOU** AS WELL.

WE HAVE THE **WHOLE** CONVERSATION RECORDED.

COME WITH ME.



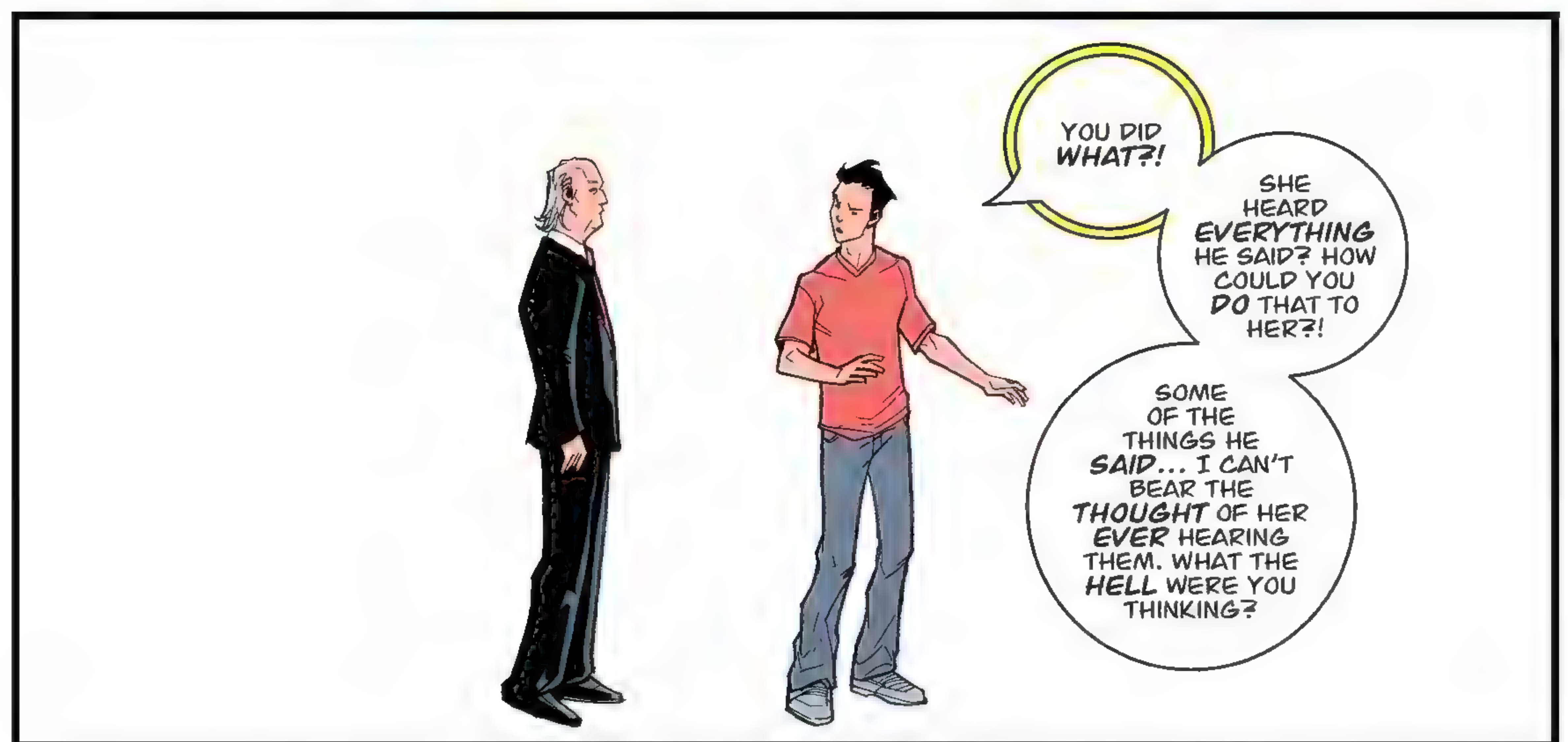
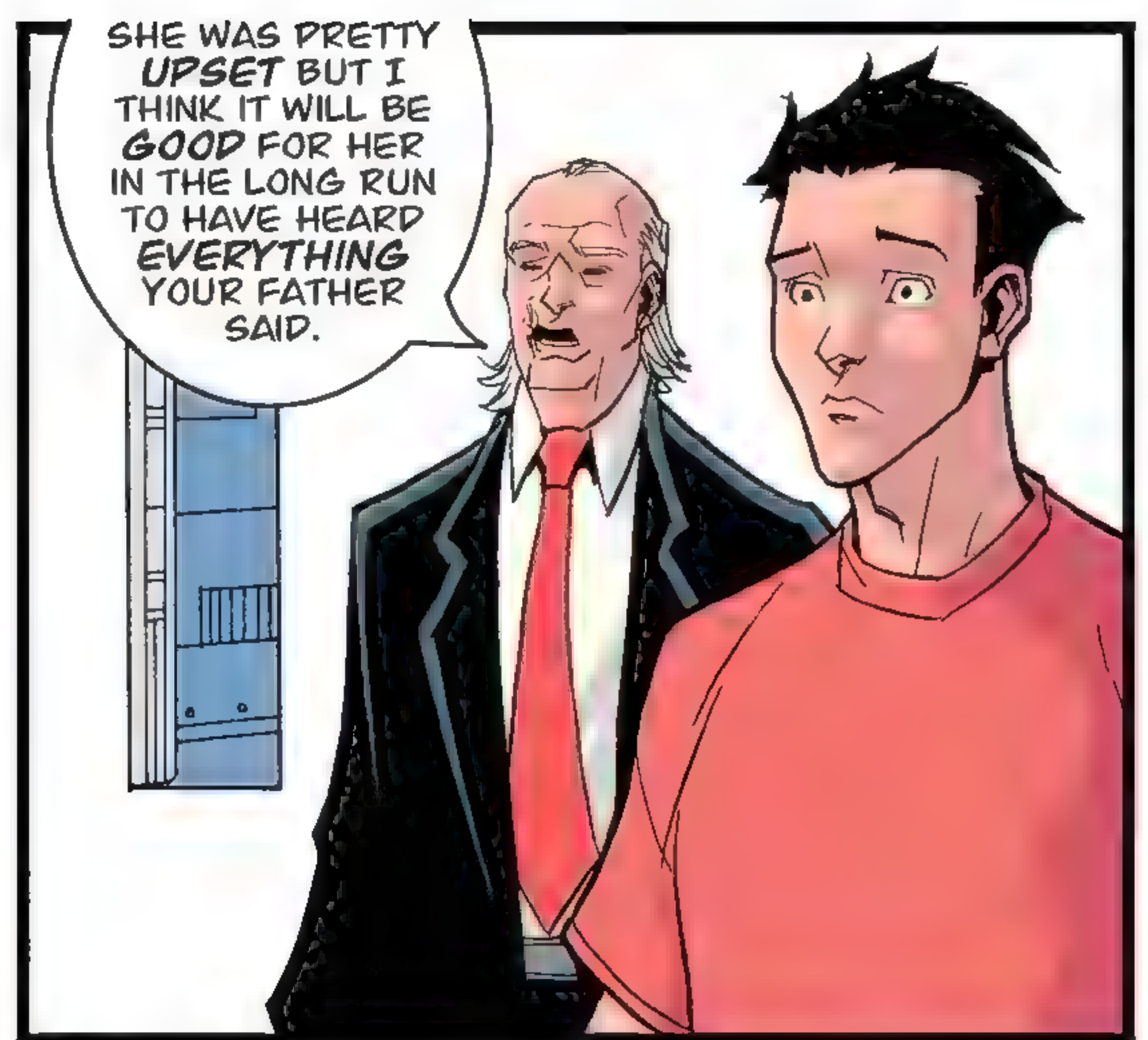
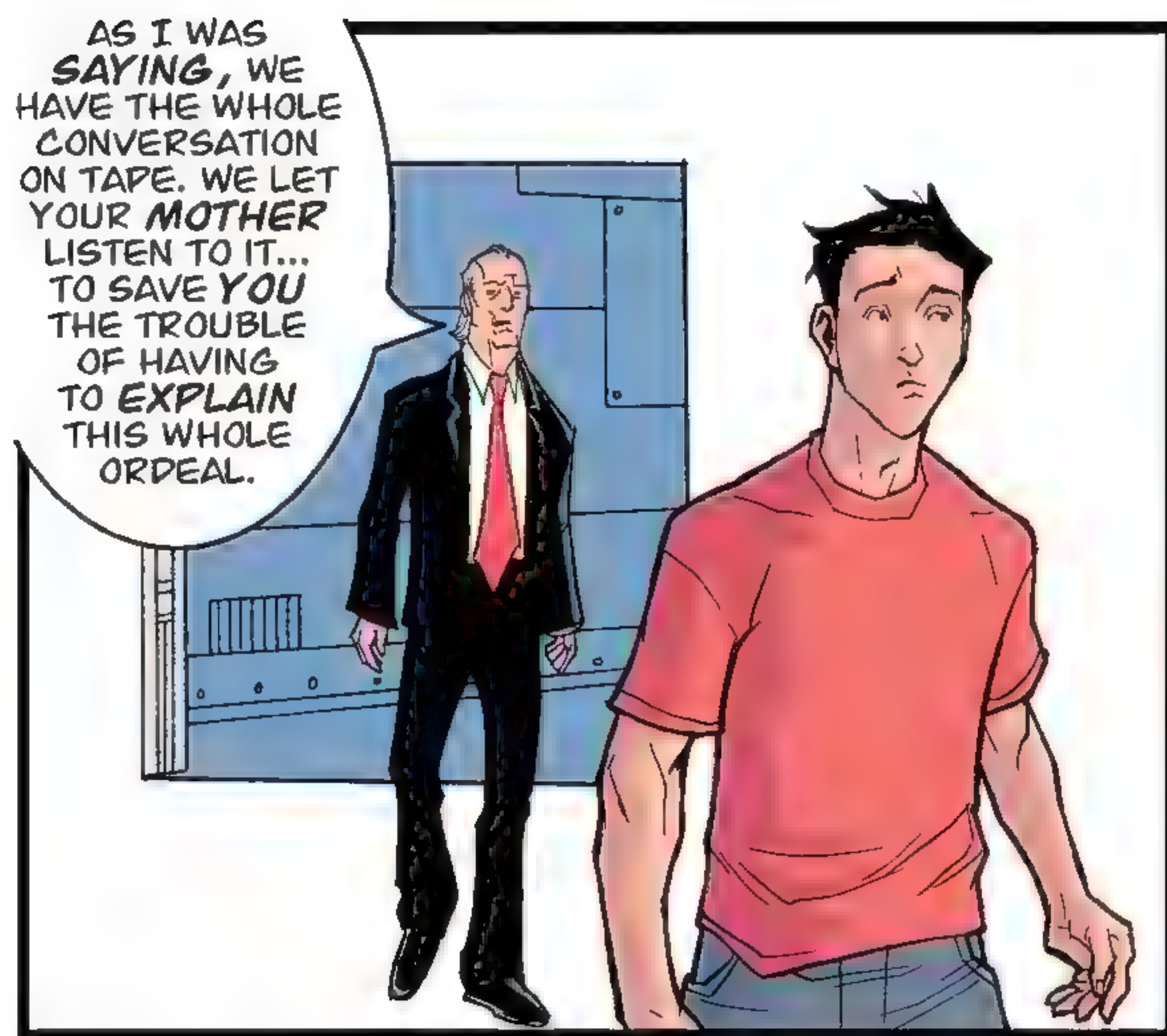
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU UP AND AROUND. HOW DO YOU **FEEL**?

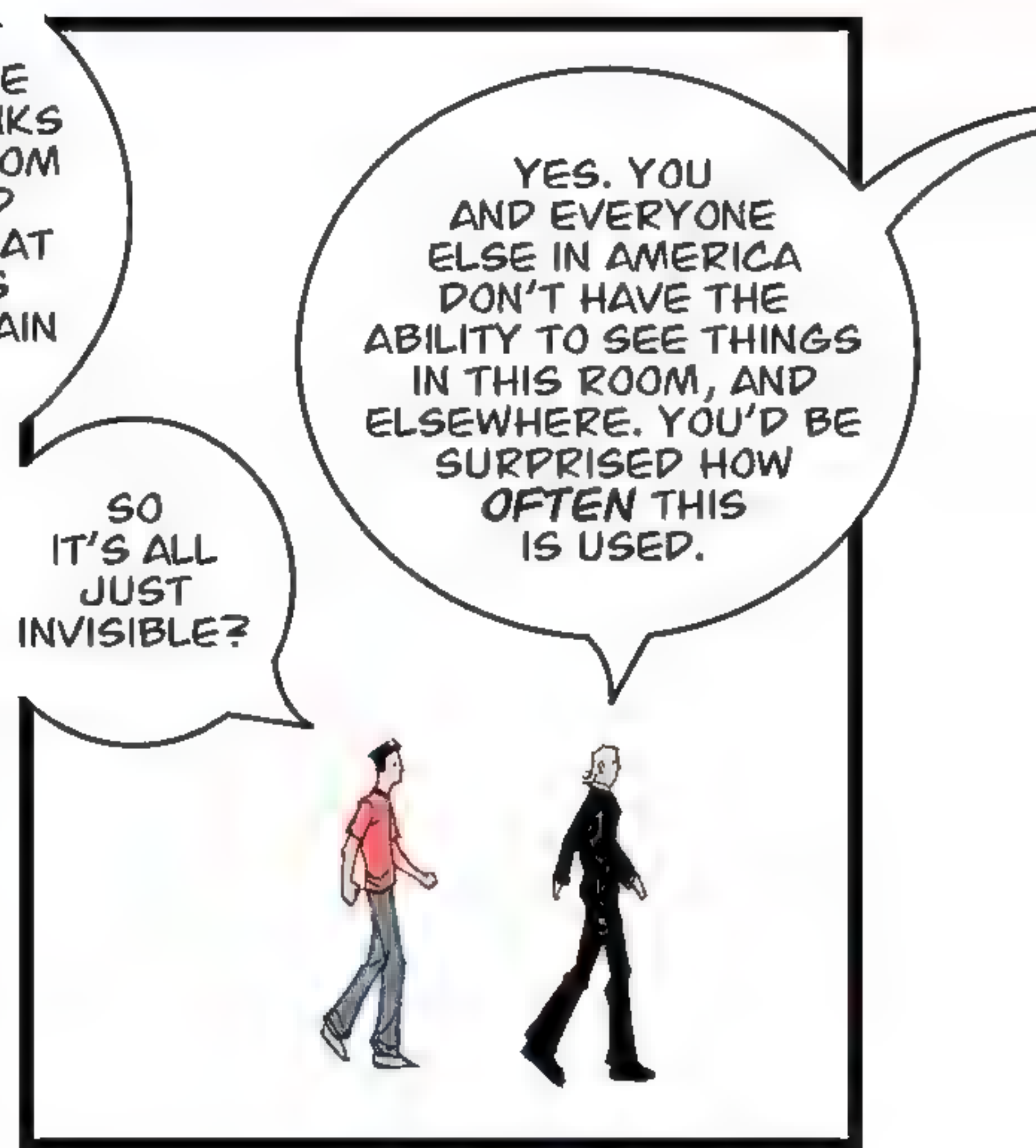
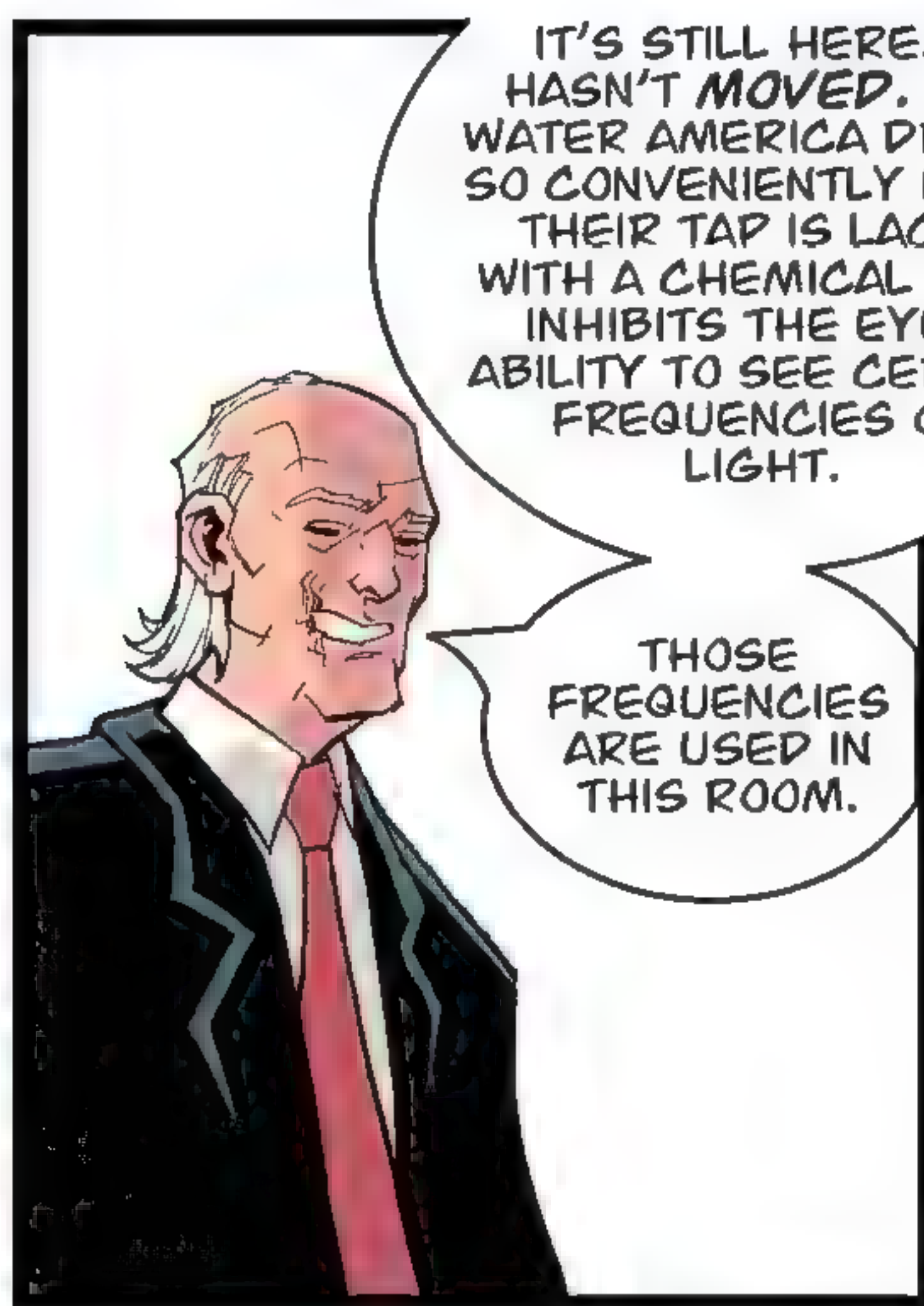
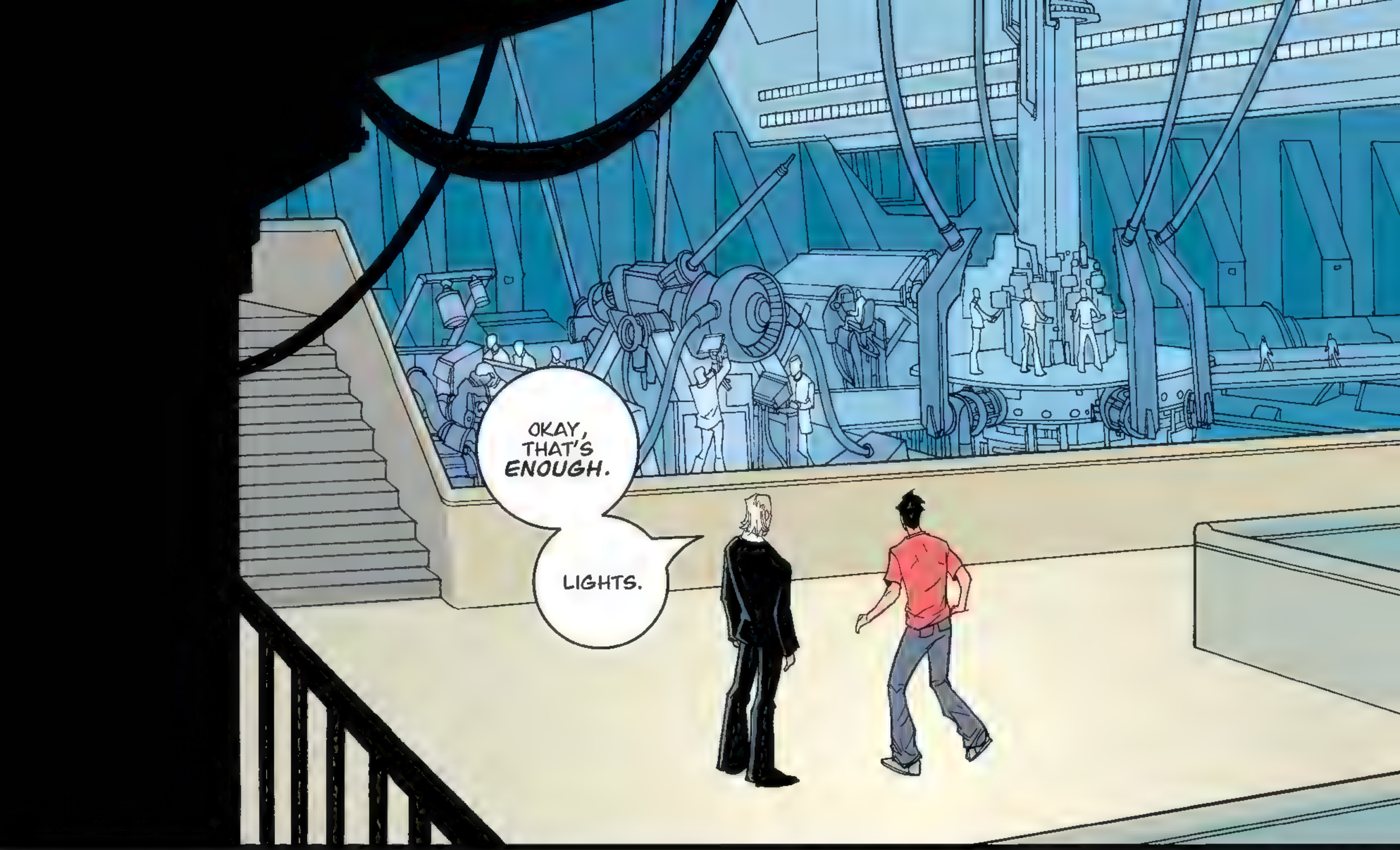
FINE. I **GUESS**.

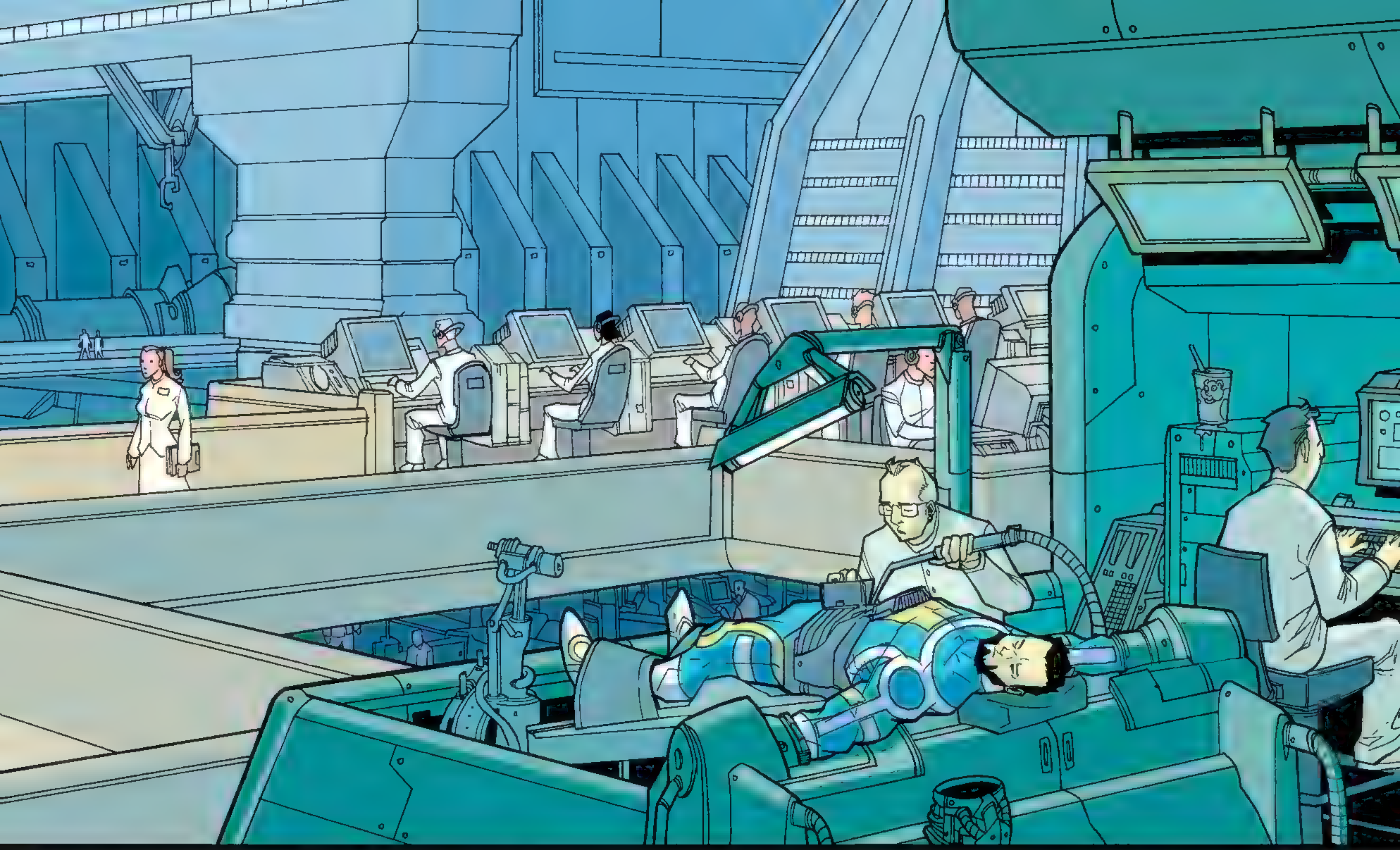


GOOD.

THROUGH **HERE**.







I TURNED THE LIGHTS OFF FOR A **SECOND** JUST SO YOU COULD SEE WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT. I HOPE YOU DIDN'T SEE **TOO MUCH**... IF YOU DID... I'LL HAVE TO **KILL YOU**.

HAH
HAH! VERY FUNNY.

AN
OLDIE BUT
A GOODIE.

SO IF IT'S THE **LIGHT** IN THE ROOM THAT'S MAKING ME UNABLE TO **SEE ANYTHING**, HOW COME I CAN **SEE MYSELF**... AND YOU?

THAT'S...
COMPLICATED.

WE DIDN'T WANT YOU TO BE **TOO ALARMED** WHEN YOU CAME IN... IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT YOU AT LEAST SEE **SOMETHING**.

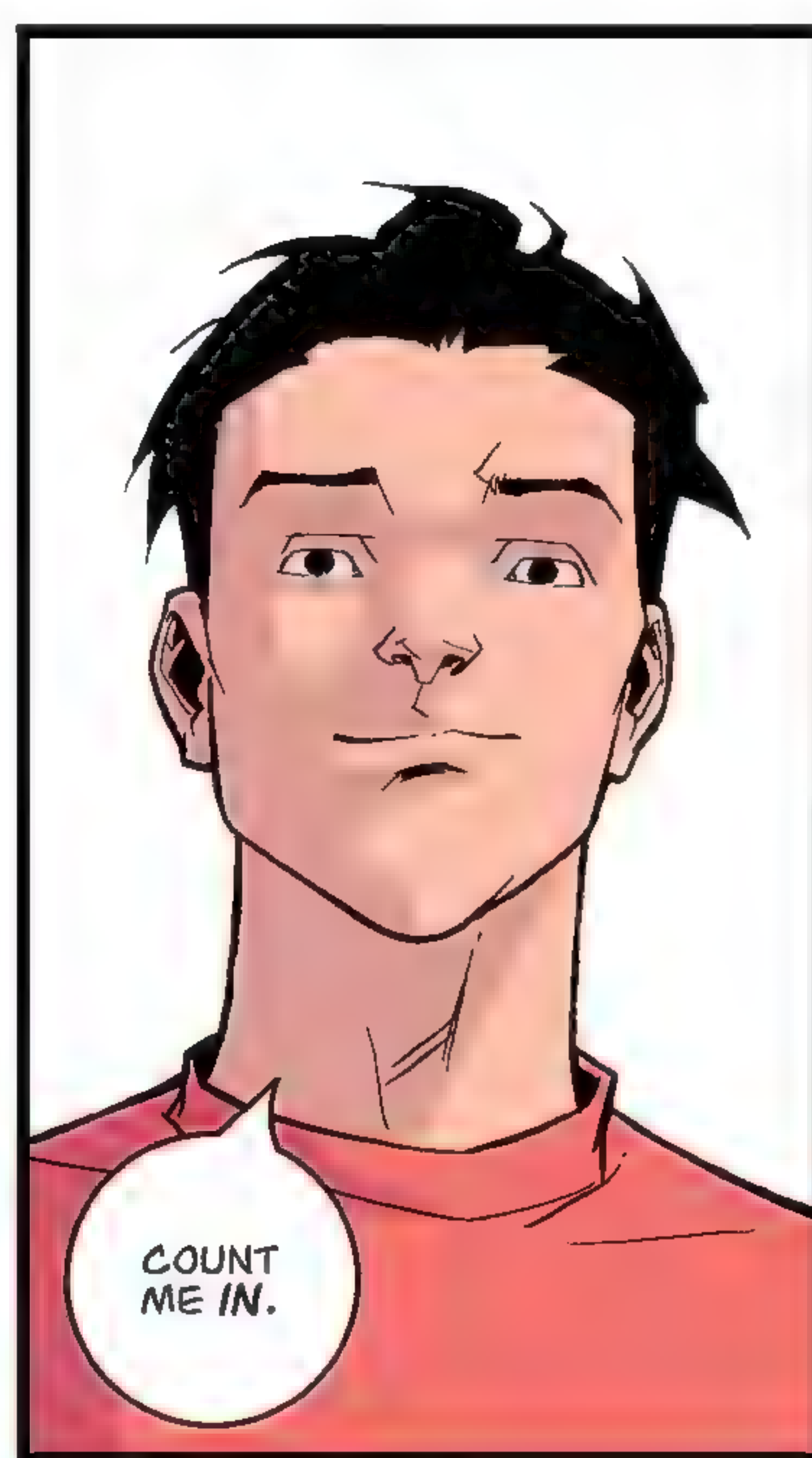
EXPLAINING THAT WOULD BE A WASTE OF TIME... A **LOT OF TIME**.

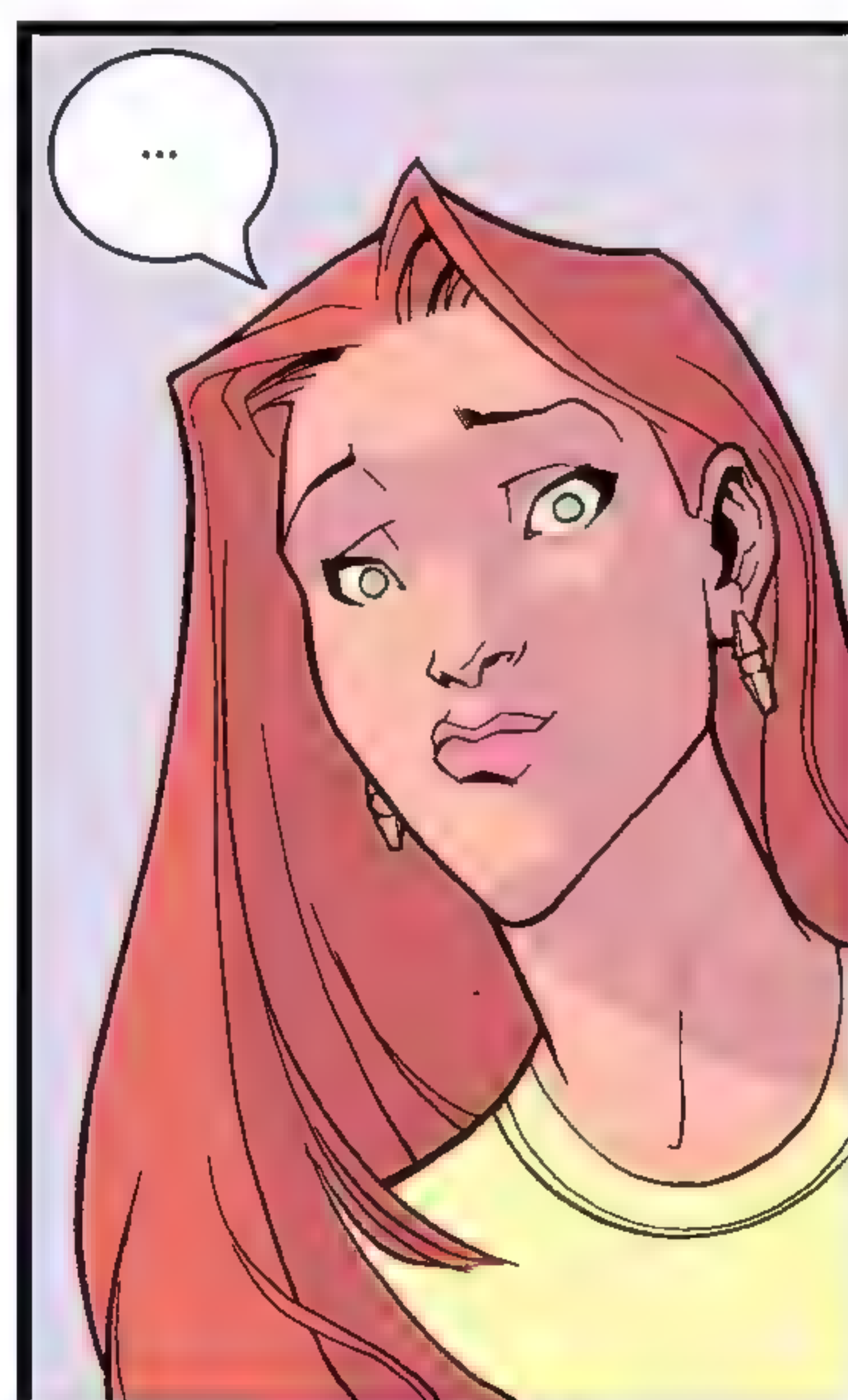
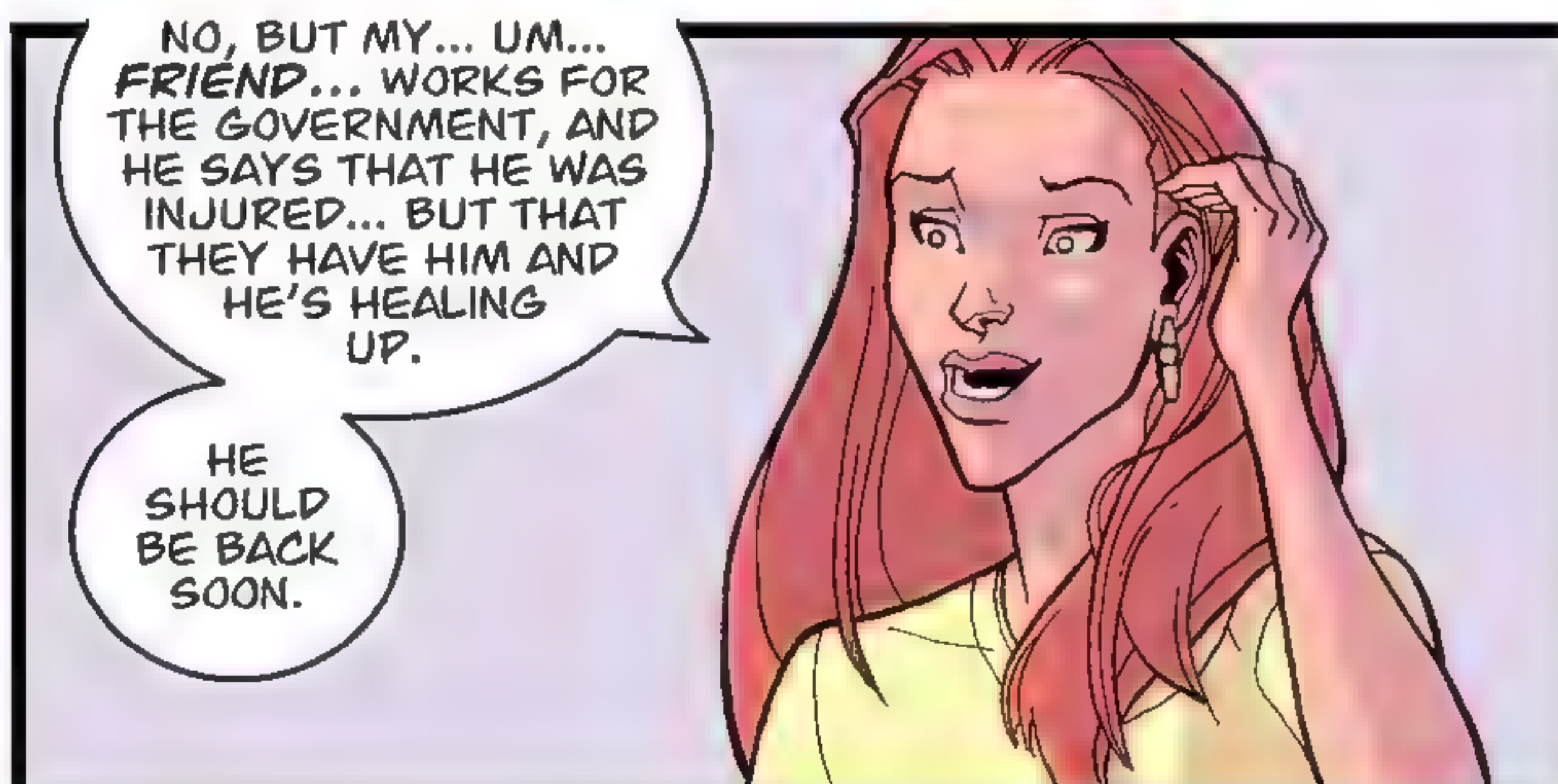
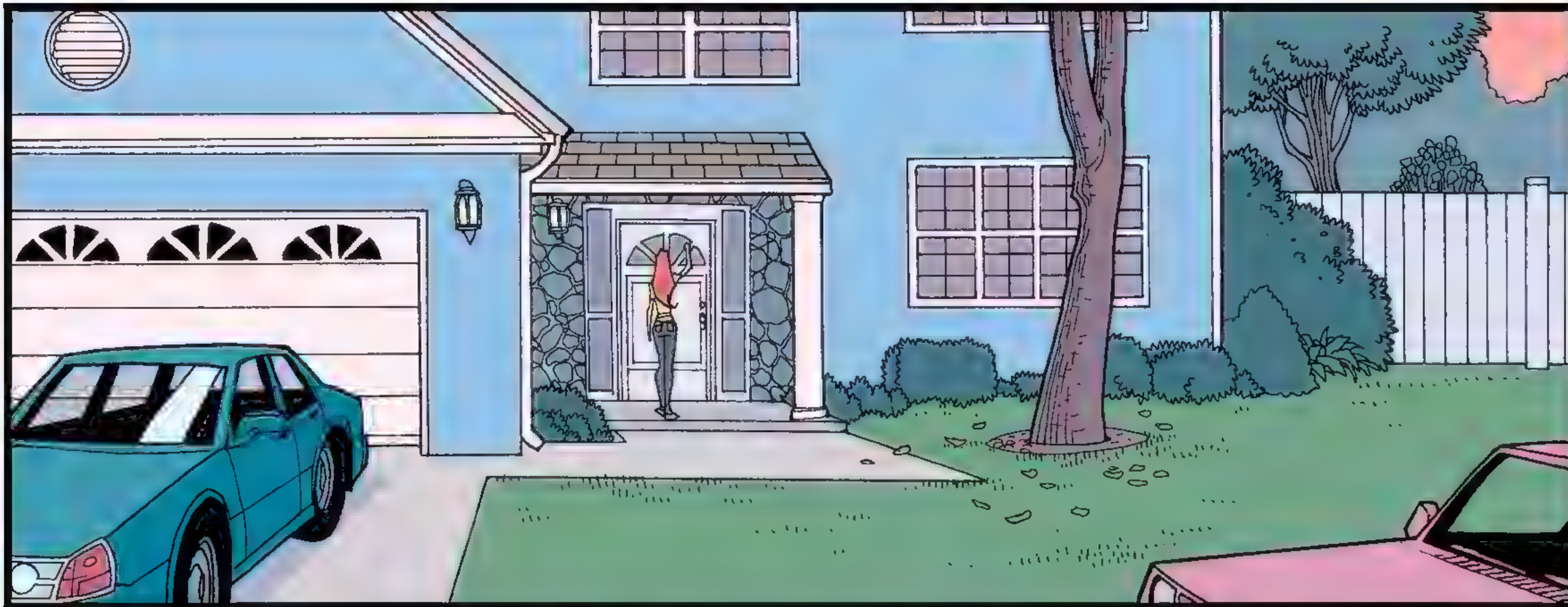
WE HAVE **PROOF** THAT THERE ARE OTHER PLANETS CAPABLE OF SUPPORTING LIFE. KNOWING HOW **LONG** HE CAN HOLD HIS BREATH AND HOW **FAST** HE CAN FLY... IT IS NOT **UNREASONABLE** TO ASSUME YOUR FATHER COULD MAKE IT TO ONE OF THESE PLANETS.

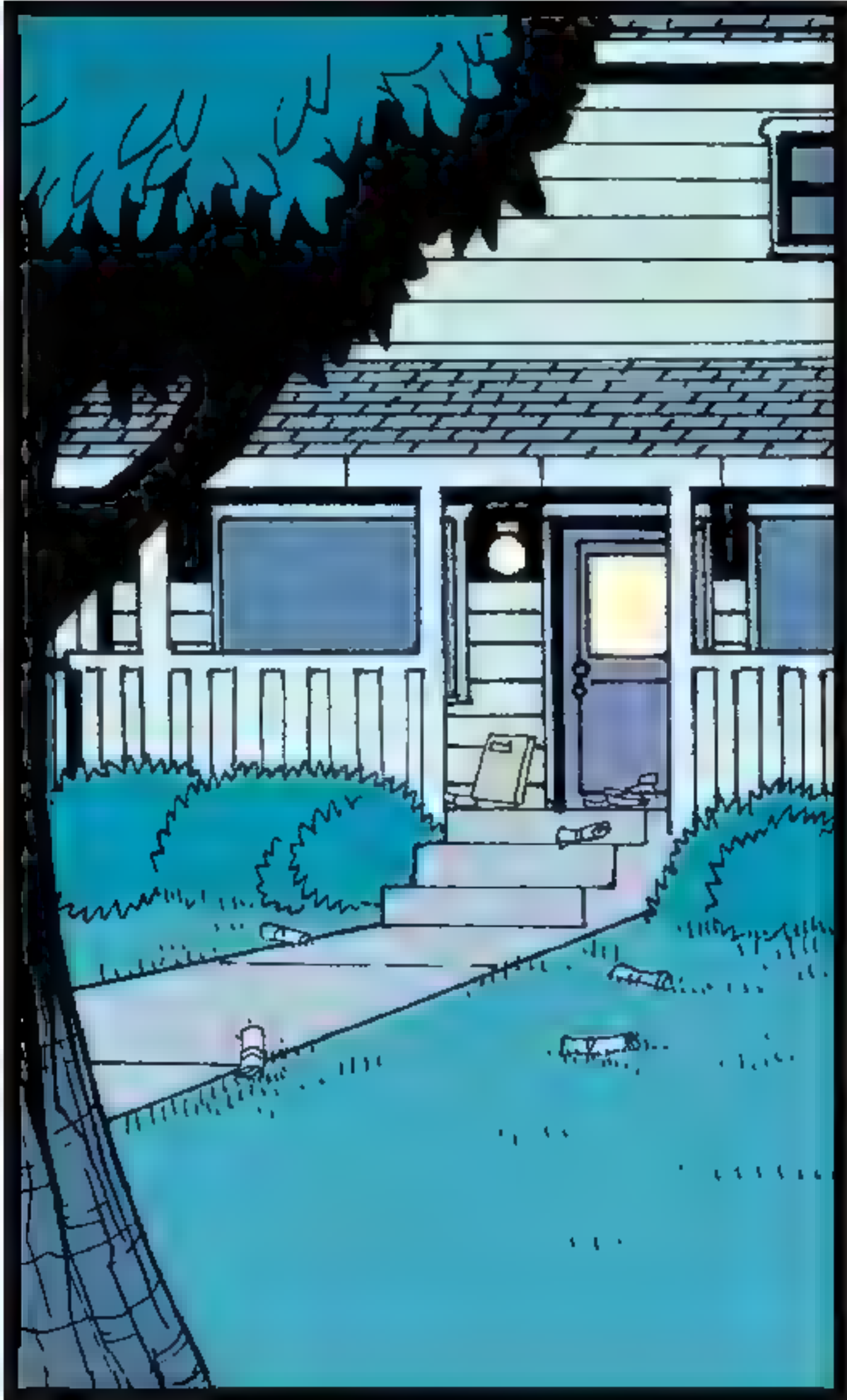
HE WAS **NOT COMMITTING SUICIDE** BY FLYING INTO SPACE--THAT WAS ONE OF OUR **TECHNICIANS' THEORIES**--AT LEAST... WE'RE PRETTY SURE HE WASN'T.

WHAT I'M GETTING AT IS HE'S **GONE**. YOUR FATHER WAS VERY VALUABLE TO US... ESPECIALLY AFTER THE **GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE** WERE DEAD. HE SAVED A LOT OF LIVES AND THIS ENTIRE PLANET MORE TIMES THAN I CAN REMEMBER.

WE NEED A REPLACEMENT.



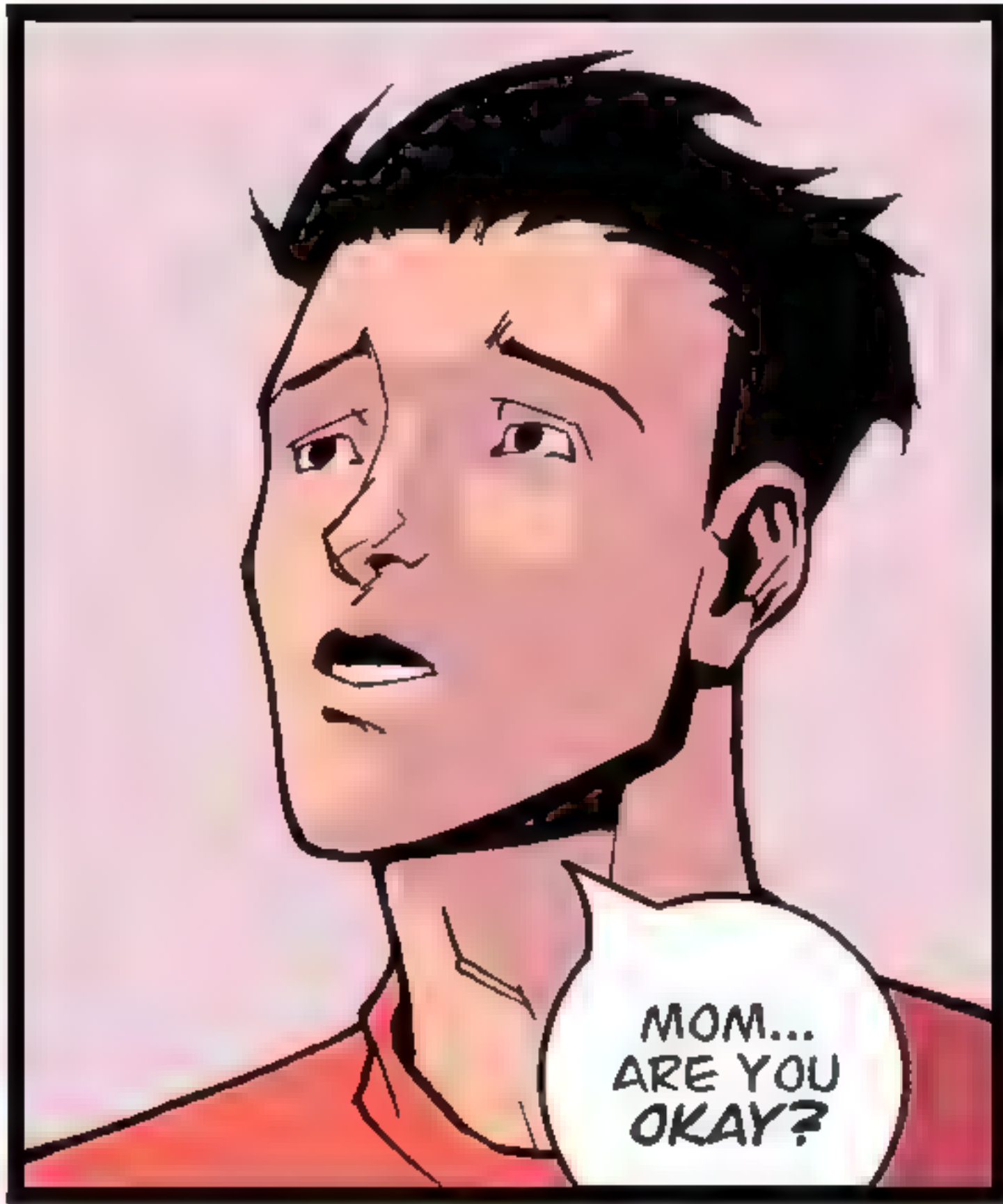




SO...



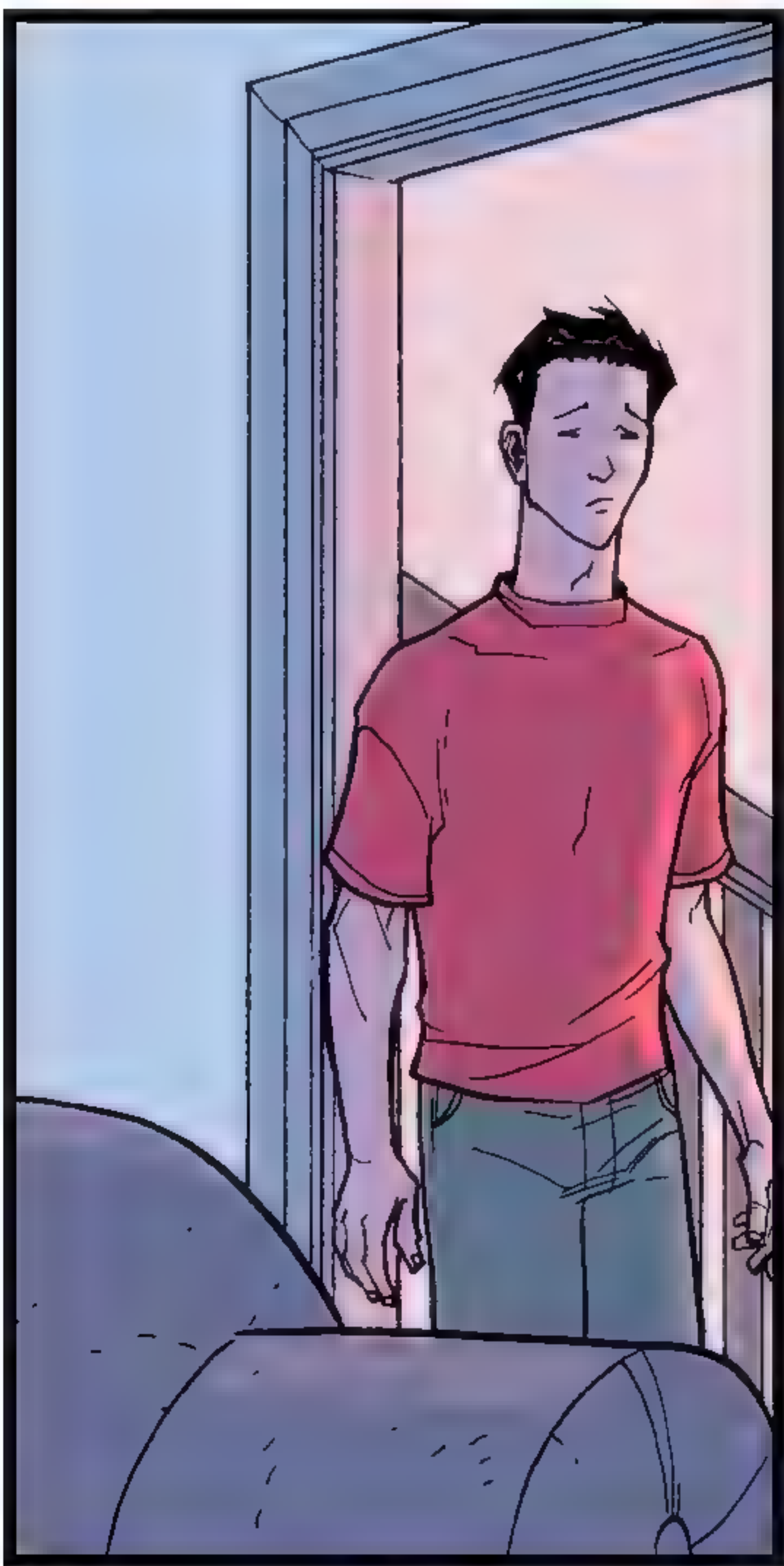
I'M GOING TO BED.

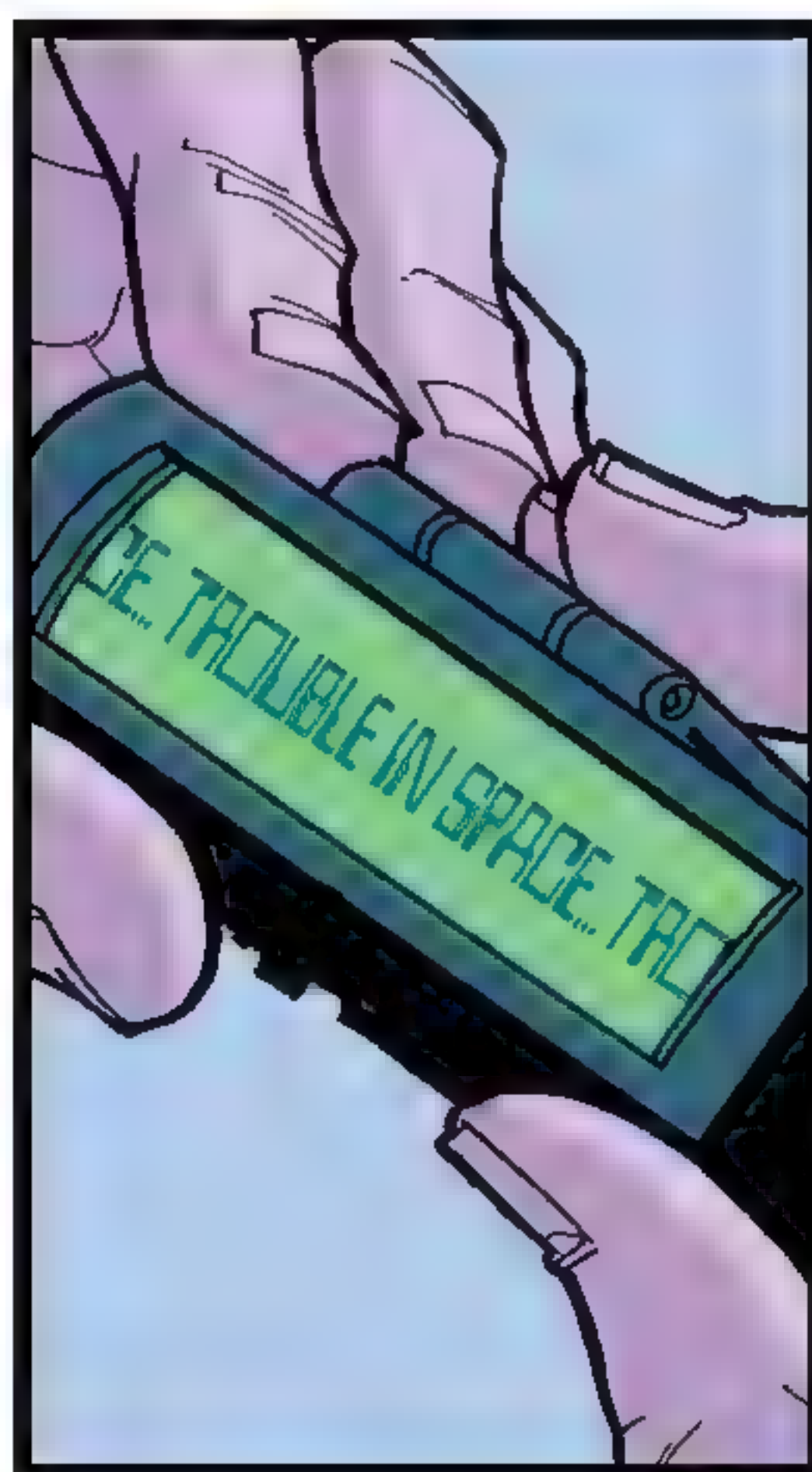


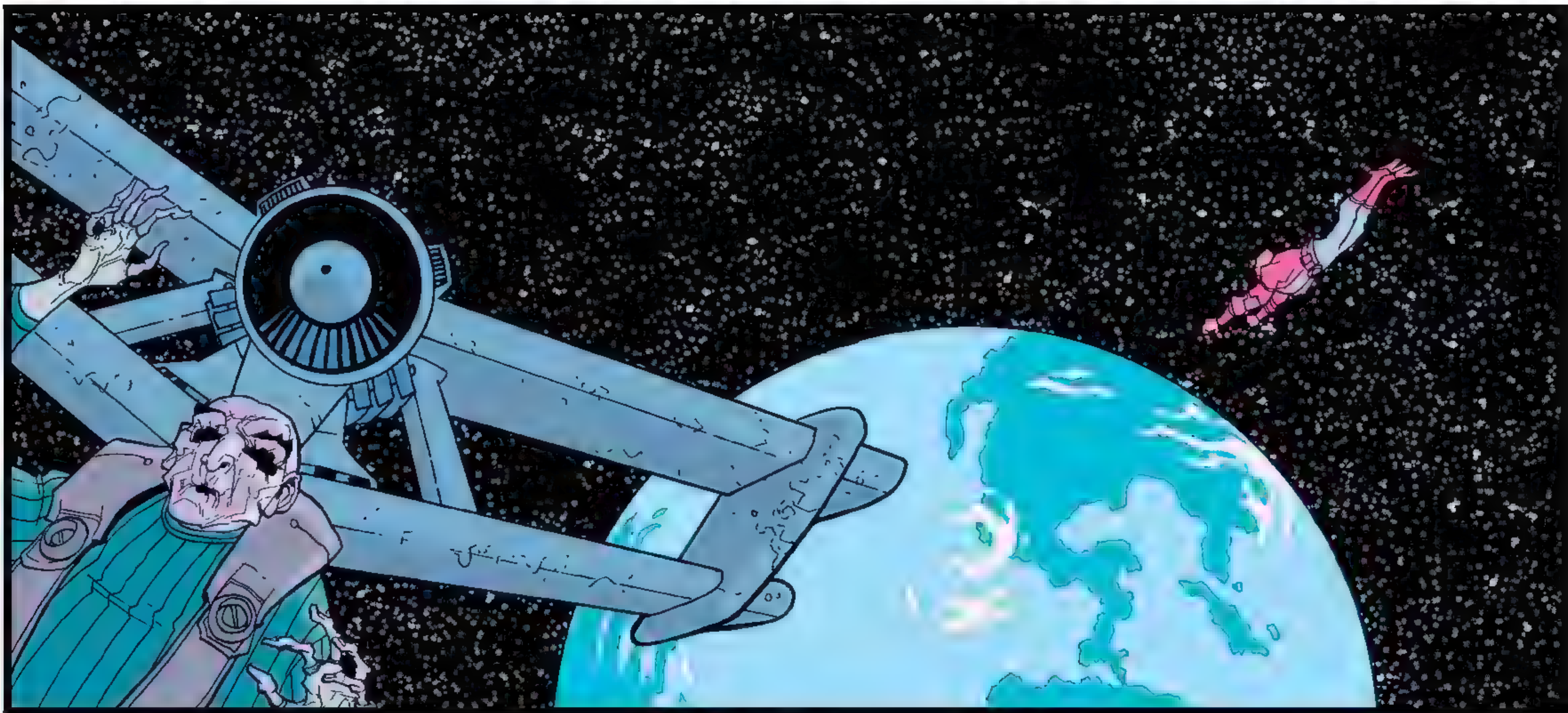
MOM... ARE YOU OKAY?



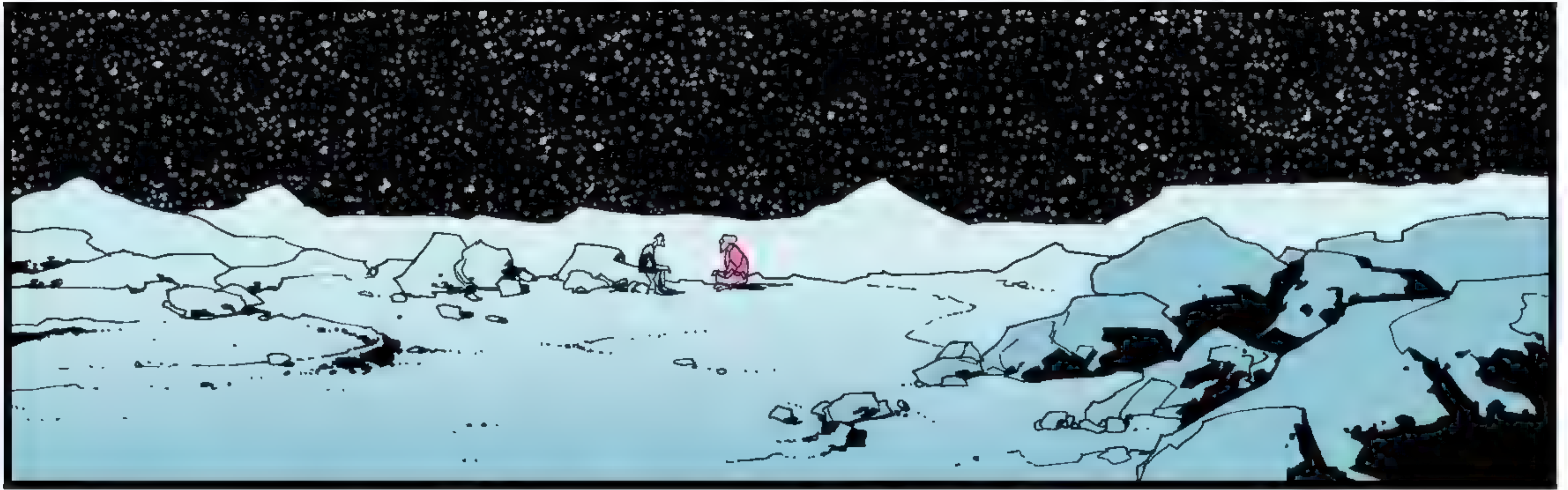
NO. NOT EVEN CLOSE.









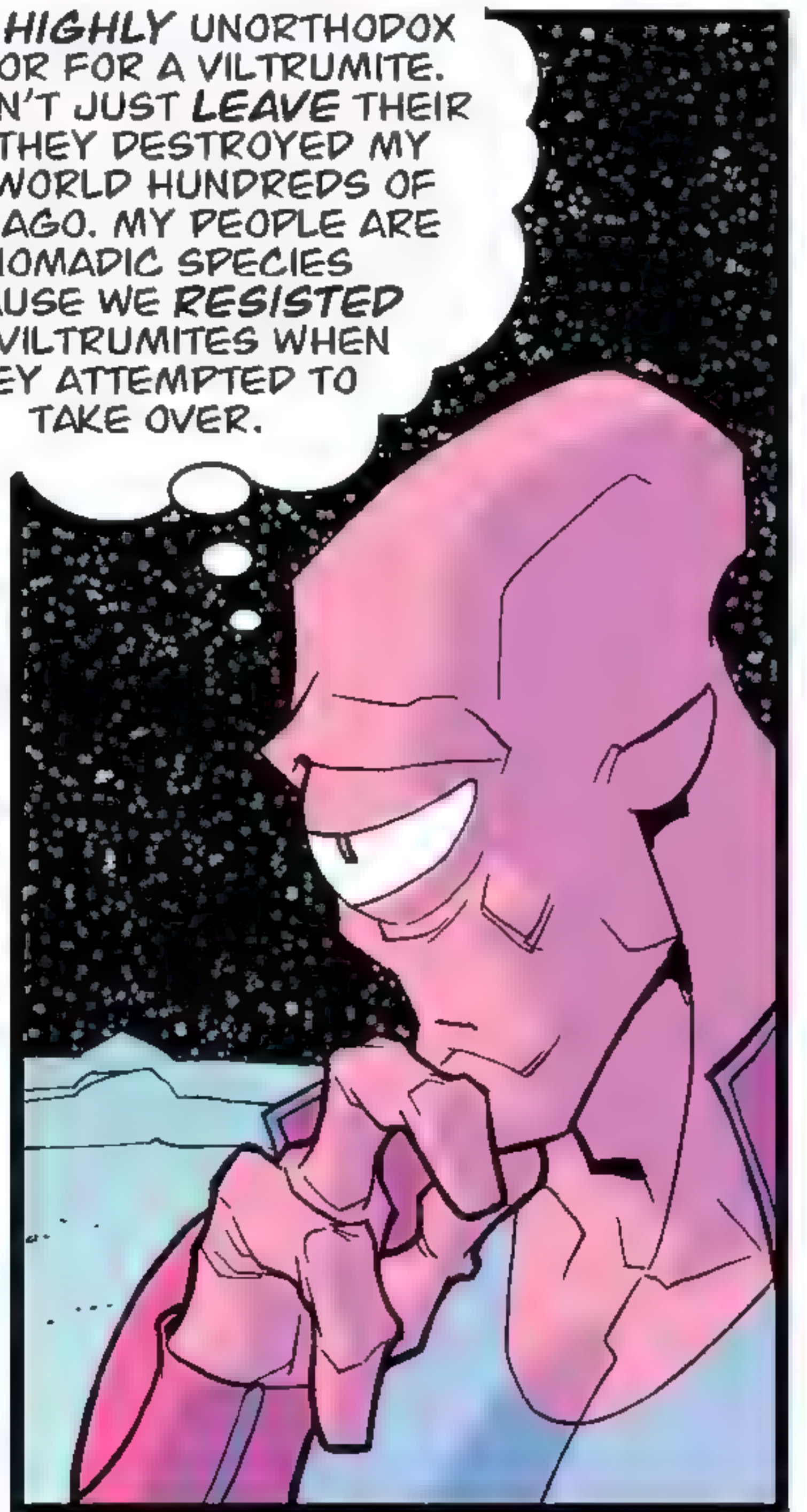


SO...
YOU'RE A
VILTRUMITE?

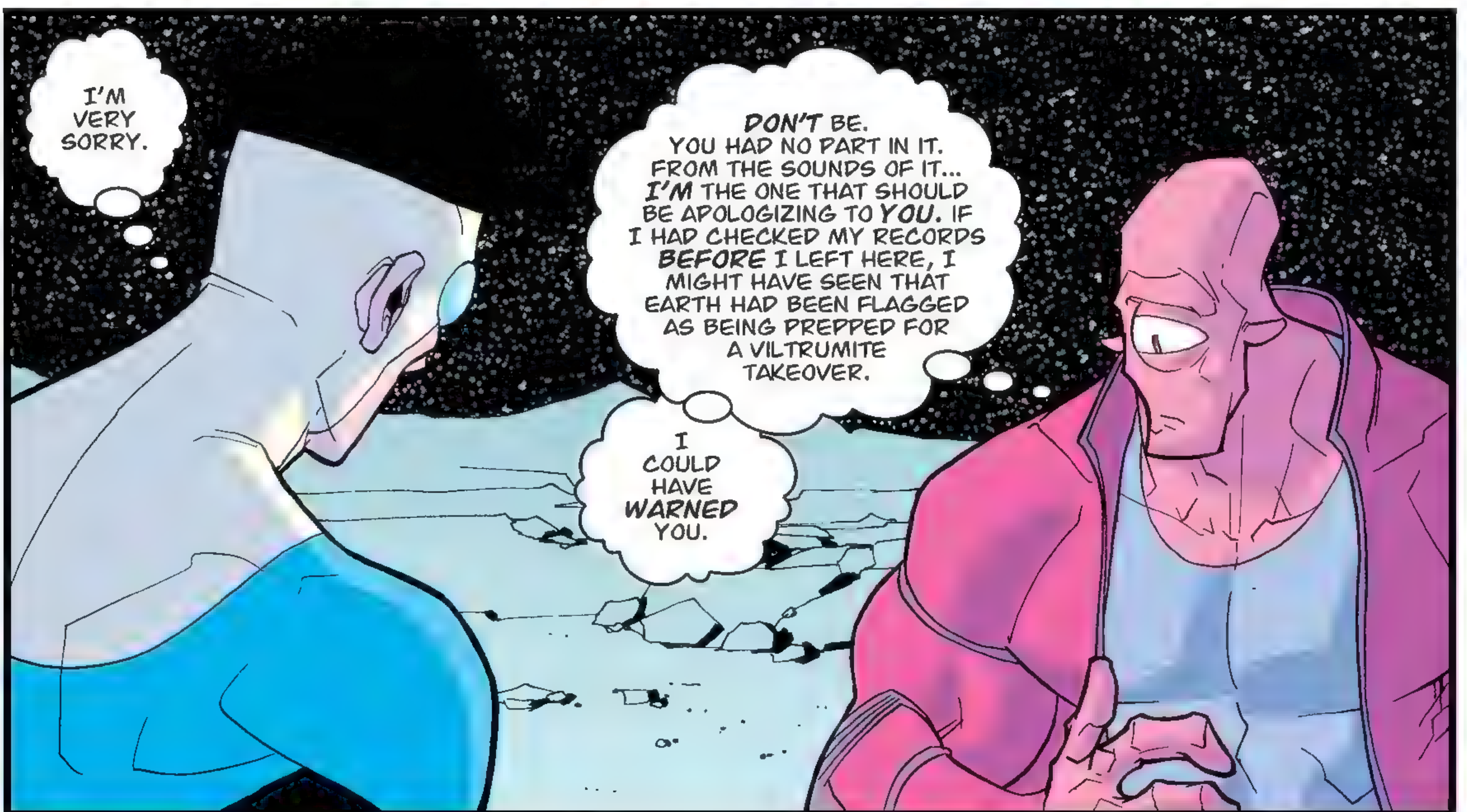
BUT
YOU DON'T
WORK FOR
THEM... AND
YOUR DAD
LEFT. HE
JUST
LEFT.



YEAH. I'VE
NEVER EVEN
BEEN TO VILTRUM.
I DON'T REALLY
KNOW MUCH ABOUT
THEM. BUT YEAH...
AS FAR AS WE CAN
TELL MY DAD IS
JUST GONE.



THAT IS **HIGHLY** UNORTHODOX
BEHAVIOR FOR A VILTRUMITE.
THEY DON'T JUST **LEAVE** THEIR
POST. THEY DESTROYED MY
HOME WORLD HUNDREDS OF
YEARS AGO. MY PEOPLE ARE
A NOMADIC SPECIES
BECAUSE WE **RESISTED**
THE VILTRUMITES WHEN
THEY ATTEMPTED TO
TAKE OVER.



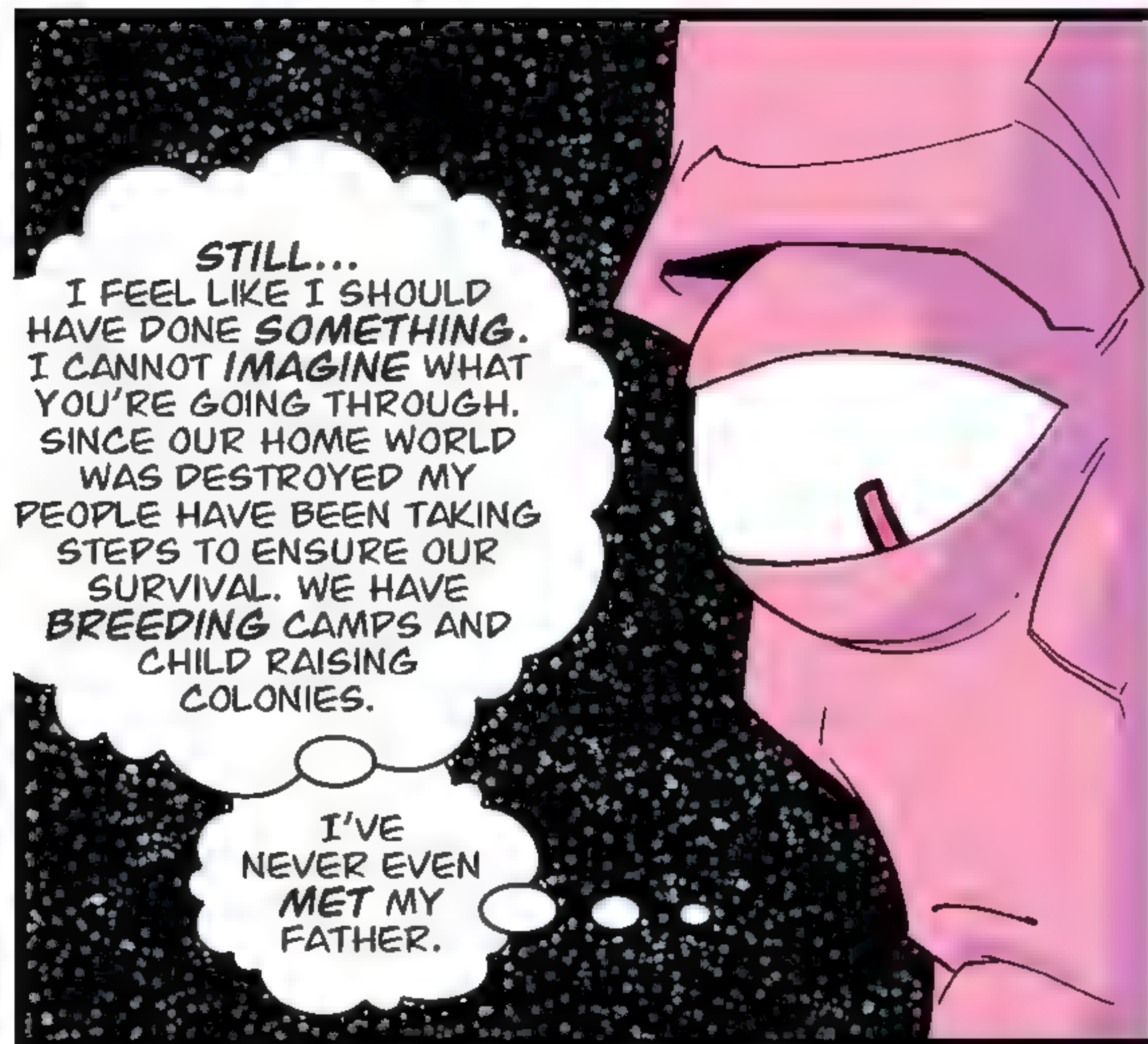
I'M
VERY
SORRY.

DON'T BE.
YOU HAD NO PART IN IT.
FROM THE SOUNDS OF IT...
I'M THE ONE THAT SHOULD
BE APOLOGIZING TO YOU. IF
I HAD CHECKED MY RECORDS
BEFORE I LEFT HERE, I
MIGHT HAVE SEEN THAT
EARTH HAD BEEN FLAGGED
AS BEING PREPPED FOR
A VILTRUMITE
TAKEOVER.

I
COULD
HAVE
WARNED
YOU.



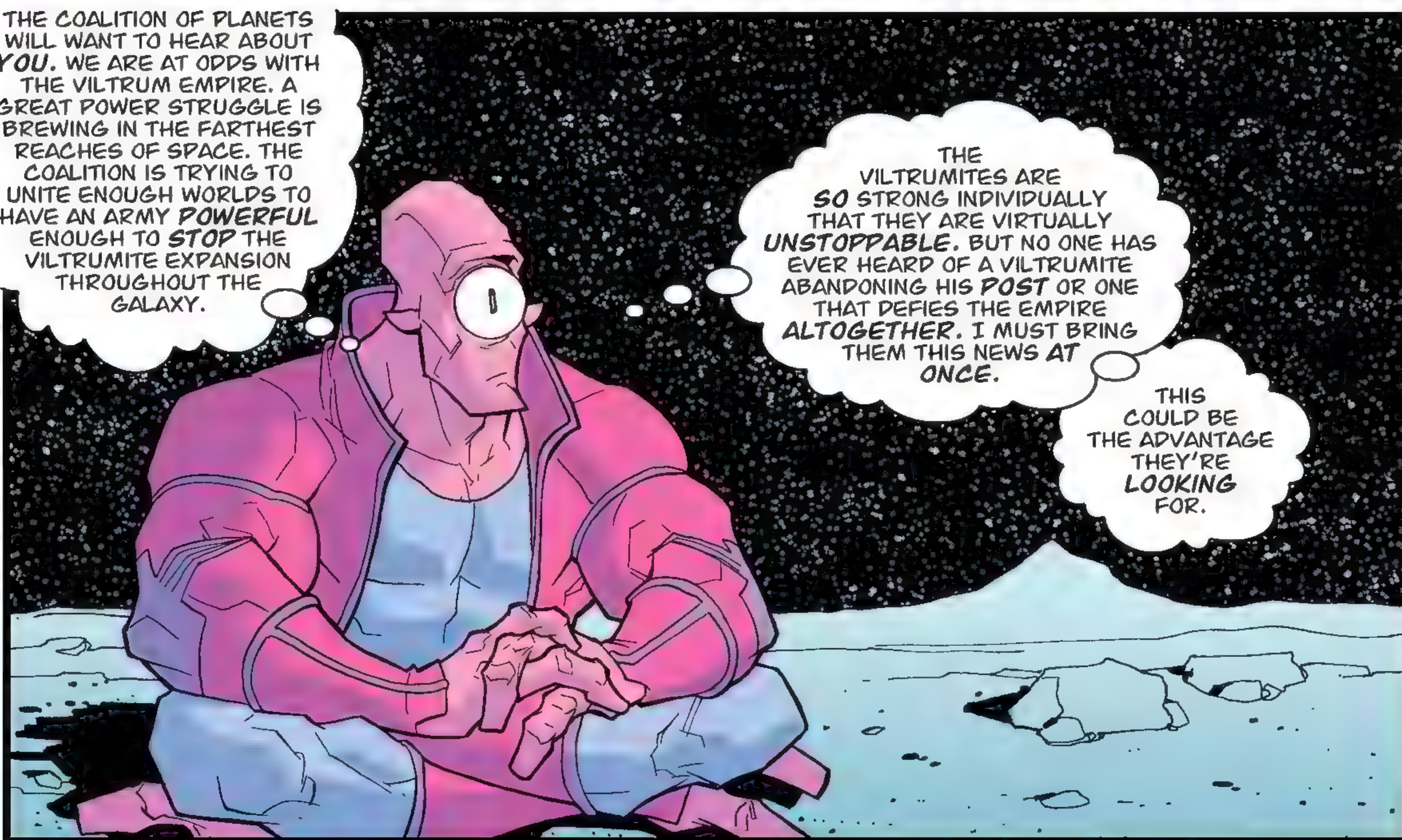
I WOULD HAVE JUST GONE TO MY DAD AND ASKED HIM ABOUT IT. WHO KNOWS HOW THINGS WOULD HAVE PLAYED OUT HAD THAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED?



STILL... I FEEL LIKE I SHOULD HAVE DONE **SOMETHING**. I CANNOT **IMAGINE** WHAT YOU'RE GOING THROUGH. SINCE OUR HOME WORLD WAS DESTROYED MY PEOPLE HAVE BEEN TAKING STEPS TO ENSURE OUR SURVIVAL. WE HAVE **BREEDING CAMPS** AND **CHILD RAISING COLONIES**.

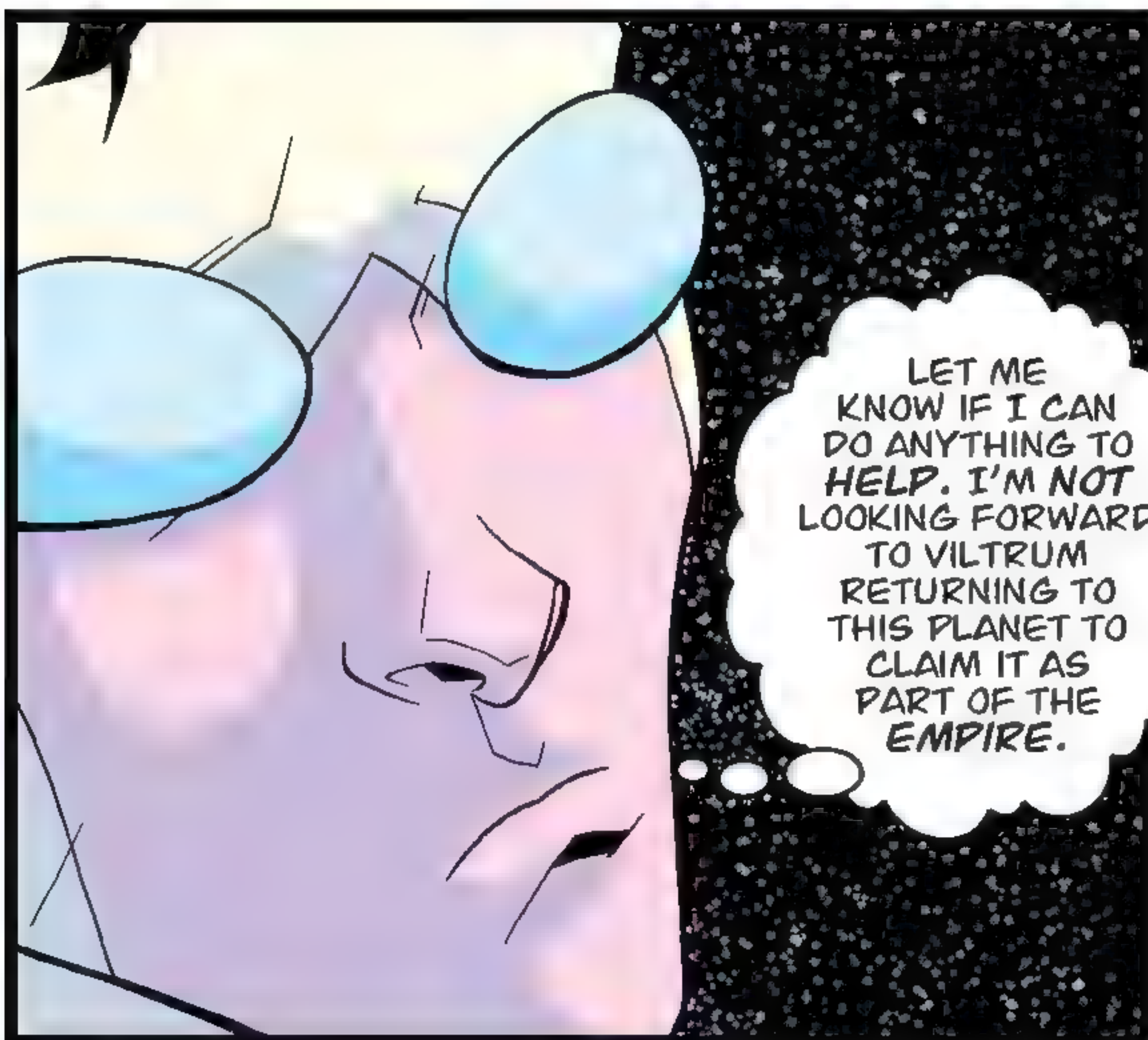
I'VE NEVER EVEN MET MY FATHER.

THE COALITION OF PLANETS WILL WANT TO HEAR ABOUT **YOU**. WE ARE AT ODDS WITH THE VILTRUM EMPIRE. A GREAT POWER STRUGGLE IS BREWING IN THE FARTHEST REACHES OF SPACE. THE COALITION IS TRYING TO UNITE ENOUGH WORLDS TO HAVE AN ARMY **POWERFUL** ENOUGH TO **STOP** THE VILTRUMITE EXPANSION THROUGHOUT THE GALAXY.



THE VILTRUMITES ARE SO STRONG INDIVIDUALLY THAT THEY ARE VIRTUALLY **UNSTOPPABLE**. BUT NO ONE HAS EVER HEARD OF A VILTRUMITE ABANDONING HIS **POST** OR ONE THAT **DEFIES** THE EMPIRE **ALTOGETHER**. I MUST BRING THEM THIS NEWS AT **ONCE**.

THIS COULD BE THE ADVANTAGE THEY'RE **LOOKING** FOR.



LET ME KNOW IF I CAN DO ANYTHING TO **HELP**. I'M NOT LOOKING FORWARD TO VILTRUM RETURNING TO THIS PLANET TO CLAIM IT AS PART OF THE **EMPIRE**.



WILL DO. I'LL CERTAINLY LET YOU **KNOW** AS SOON AS I HEAR SOMETHING FROM THE COALITION.

IN THE MEANTIME... WHAT ABOUT **YOU**? WITH YOUR FATHER GONE AND ALL THAT'S HAPPENED... WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO **DO**?



FINISH
HIGH
SCHOOL, I
GUESS.



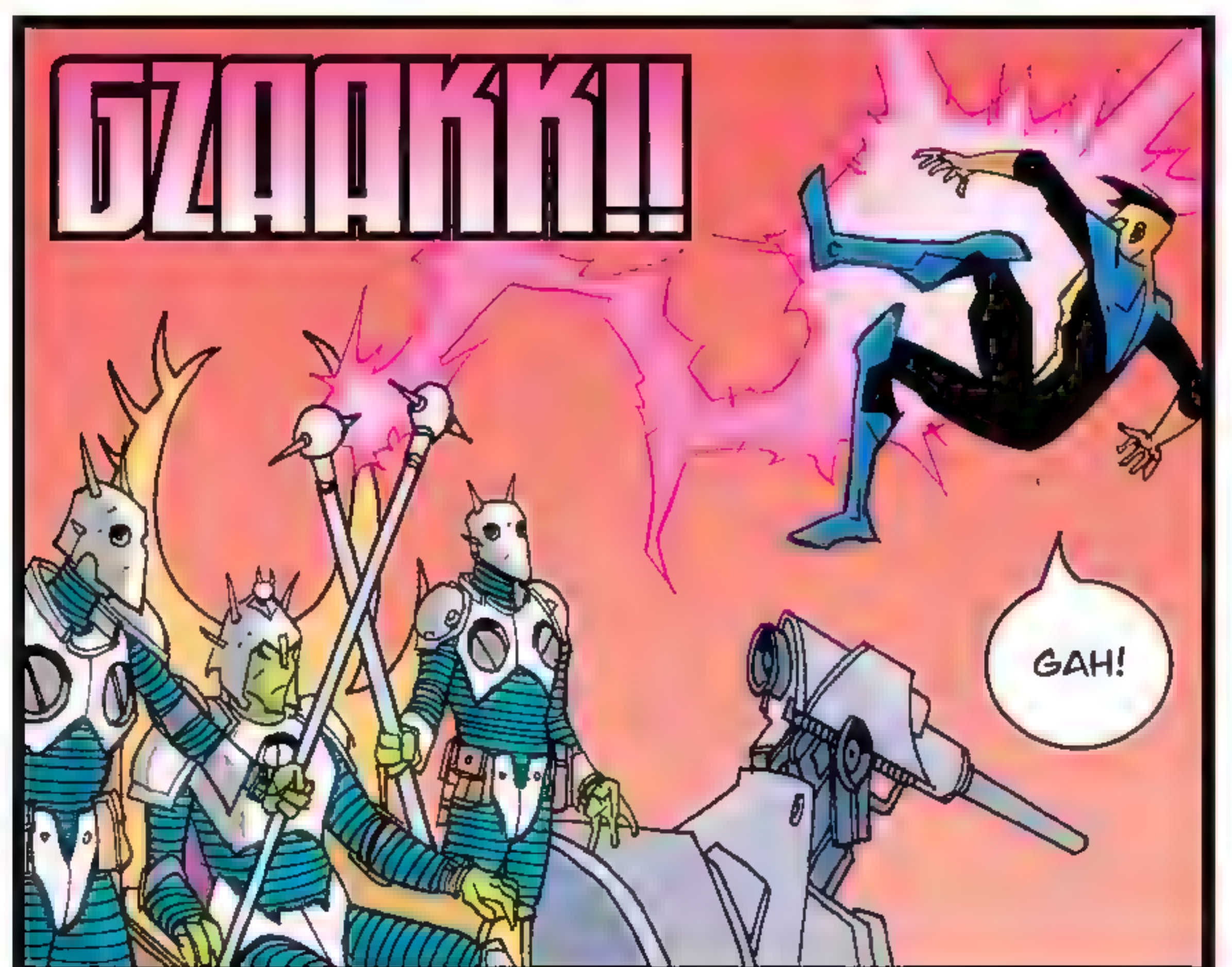
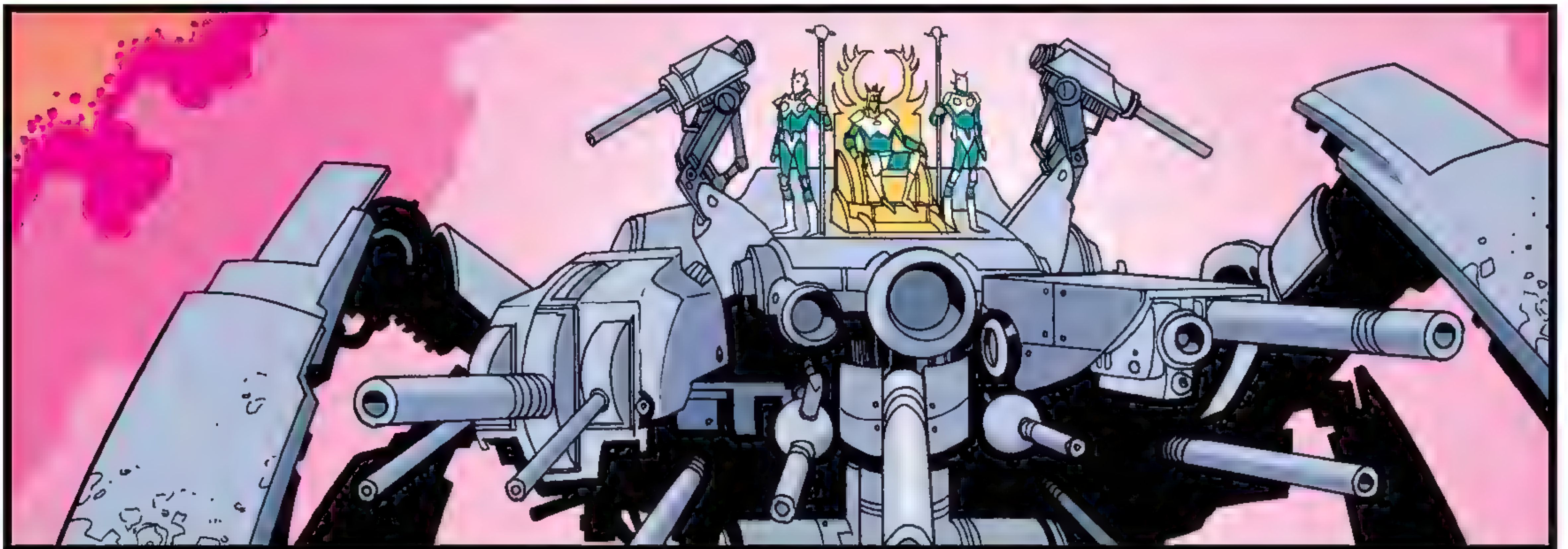
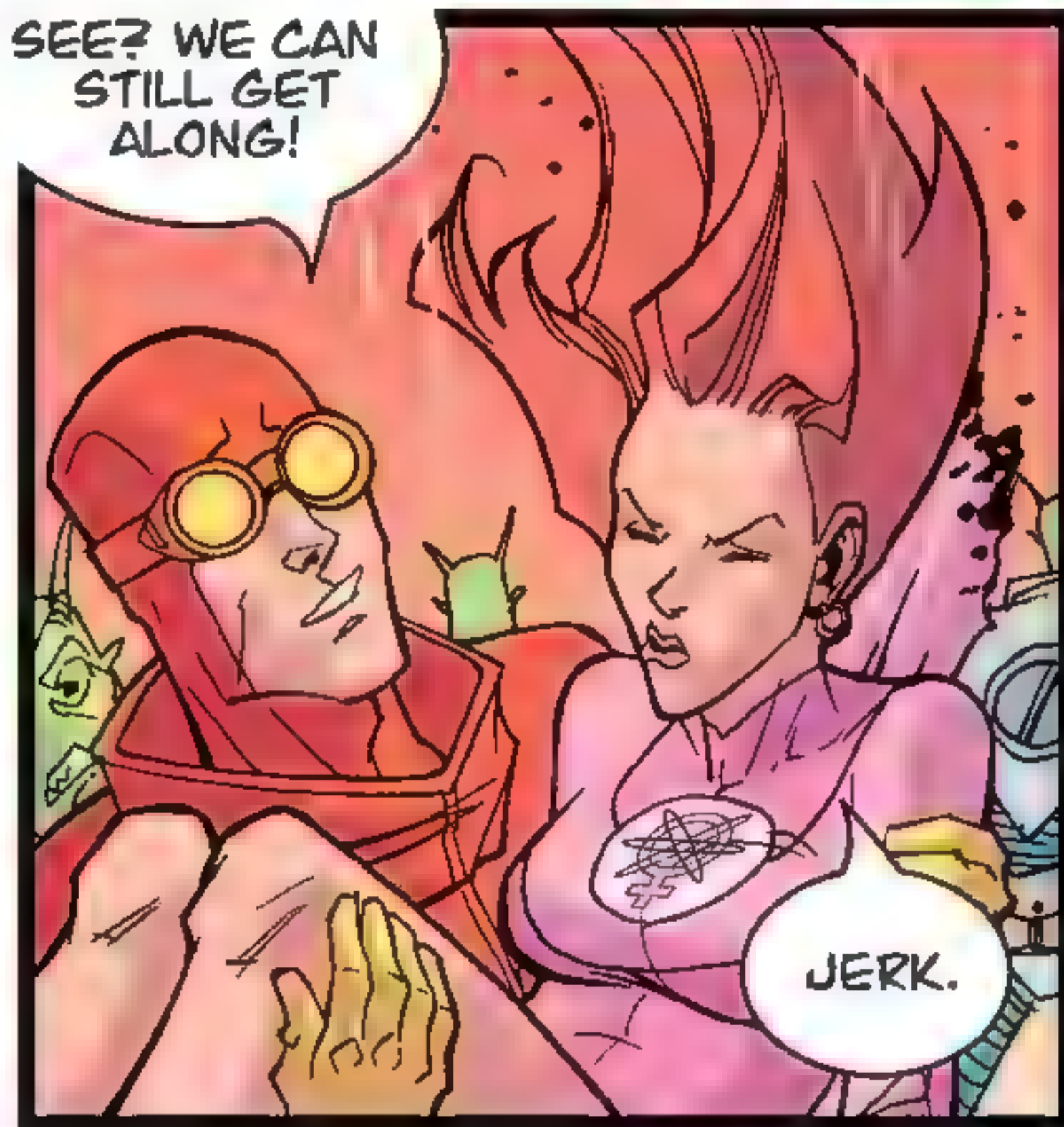
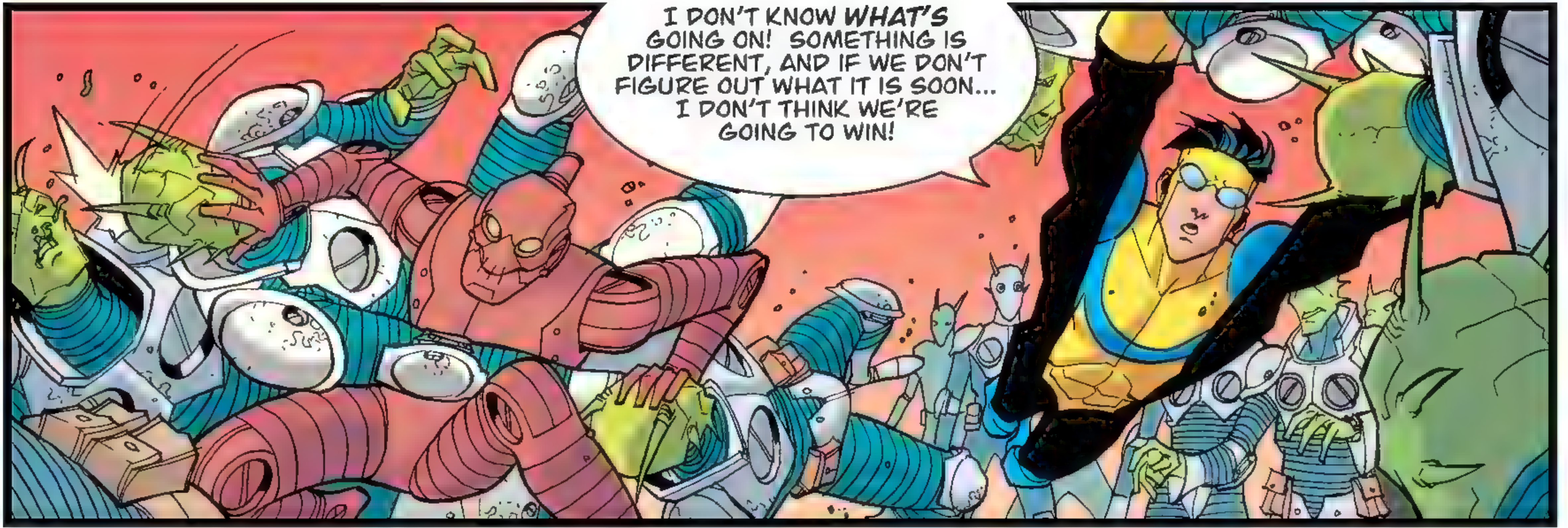
ISSUE FOURTEEN





INVINCIBLE!
YOU SAID WHEN
YOU FOUGHT THESE
THINGS BEFORE THEY
DIDN'T LAST MORE
THAN AN *HOUR* UNTIL
THEIR RAPID AGING
CAUSED THEM TO
RETREAT!

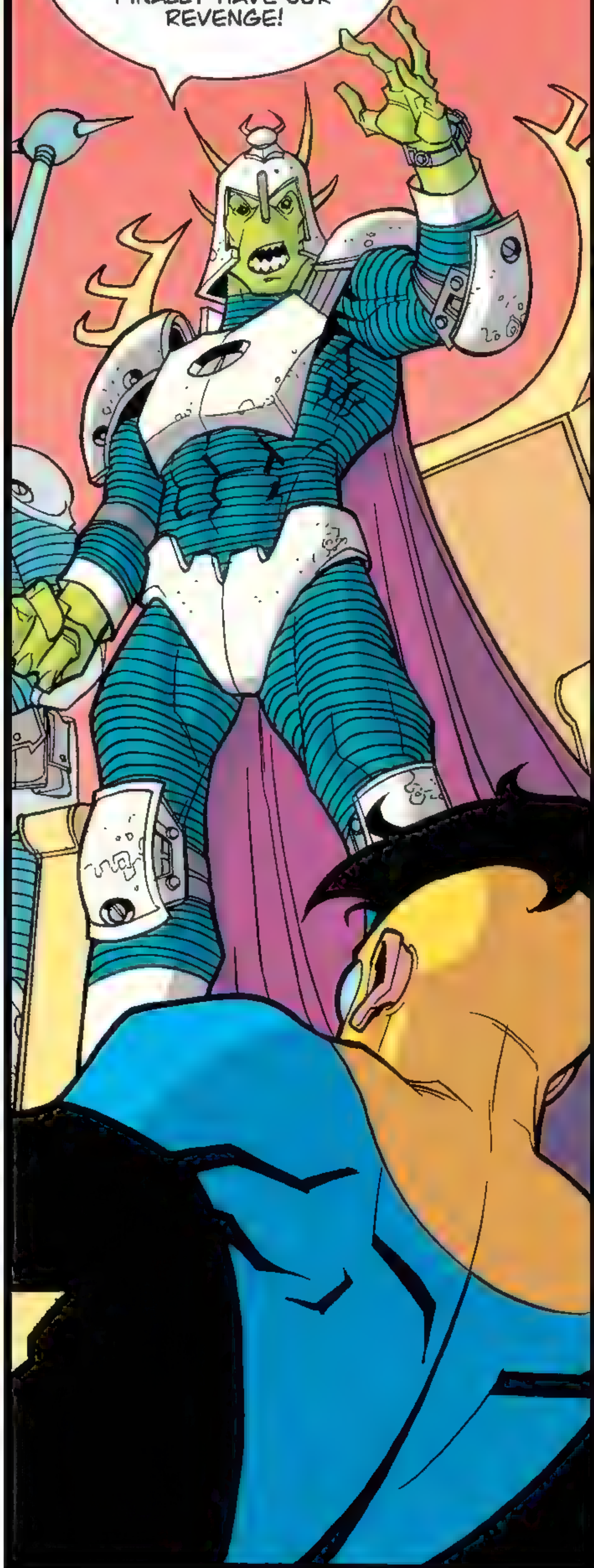
WE HAVE
BEEN AT THIS
NEARLY *TWO HOURS*
AND THEIR NUMBERS
ONLY *INCREASE!* I
FEAR WE CANNOT
HOLD OUT MUCH
LONGER!



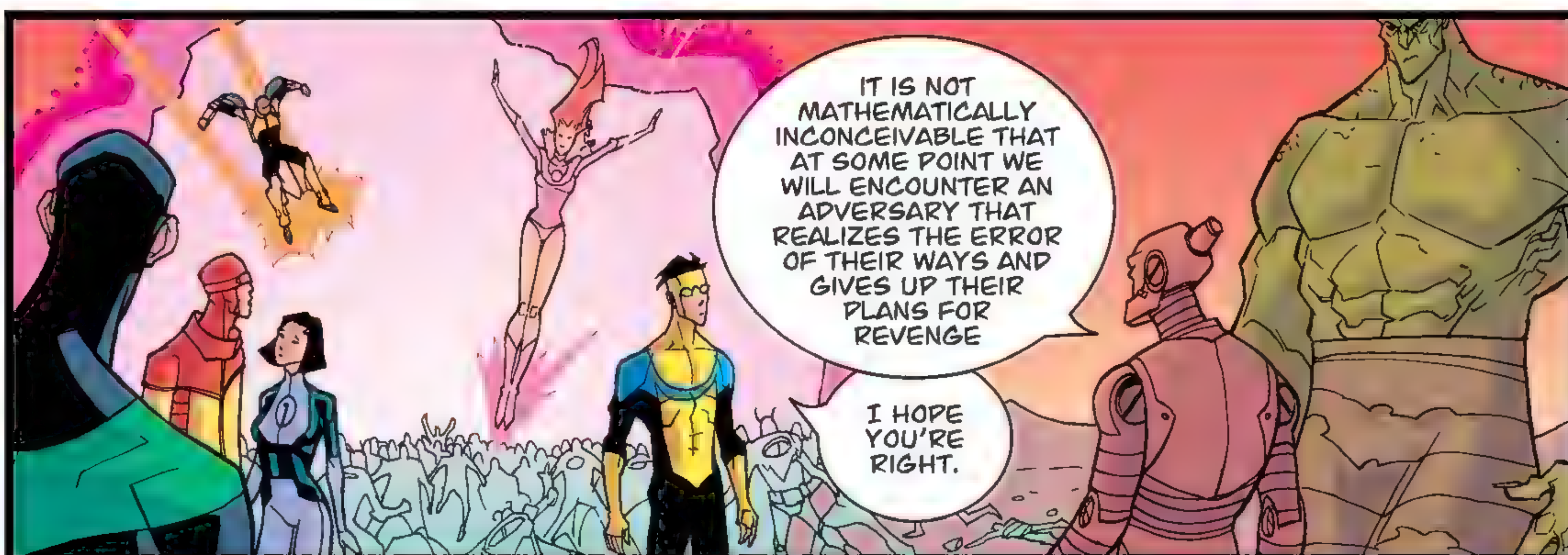
YOU ARE THE SON, HALF OF THE DUO KNOWN AS THE SCOURGE OF THE FLAXAN EMPIRE! THE FATHER WAS CAPTURED BY US MANY AGES AGO. THE DESTRUCTION HE CAUSED TO OUR HOME WORLD HAS TAKEN US CENTURIES TO REPAIR.

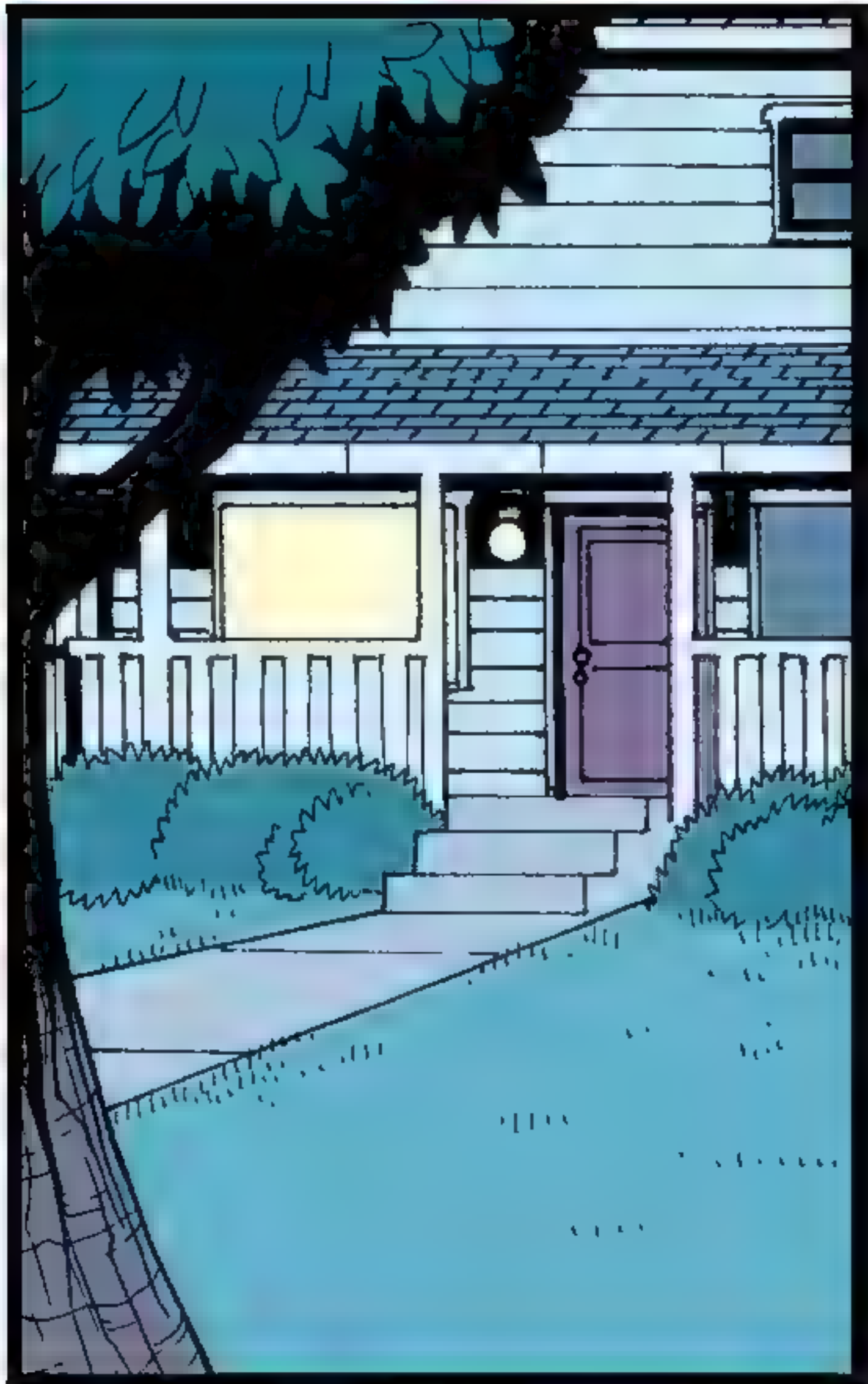
CENTURIES WE SPENT PLOTTING--SCHEMING--PREPARING. WE USED RECORDINGS OF HIS DIALOGUE TO LEARN YOUR LANGUAGE... WE USED MATERIAL FROM HIS CLOTHING TO STUDY THE PROPERTIES OF THIS DIMENSION.

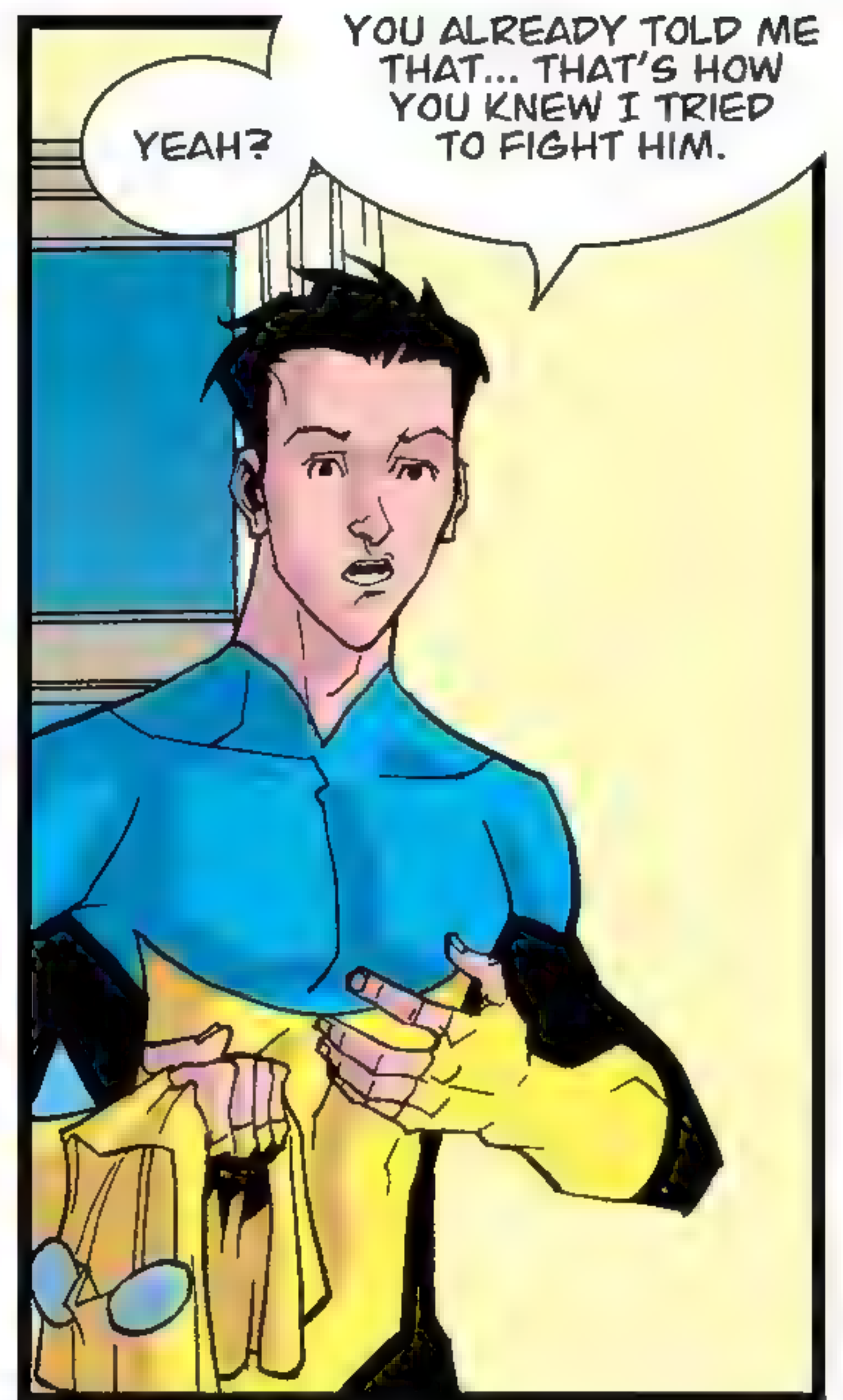
OVER TIME--WE LEARNED TO COUNTERACT THE SIDE EFFECTS OF BEING IN YOUR DIMENSION. AND NOW, WITH OUR CHRONO-BANDS... WE'LL FINALLY HAVE OUR REVENGE!













BUT--THE THINGS HE SAID... THE THINGS HE TALKED ABOUT... THAT WOULD MEAN--

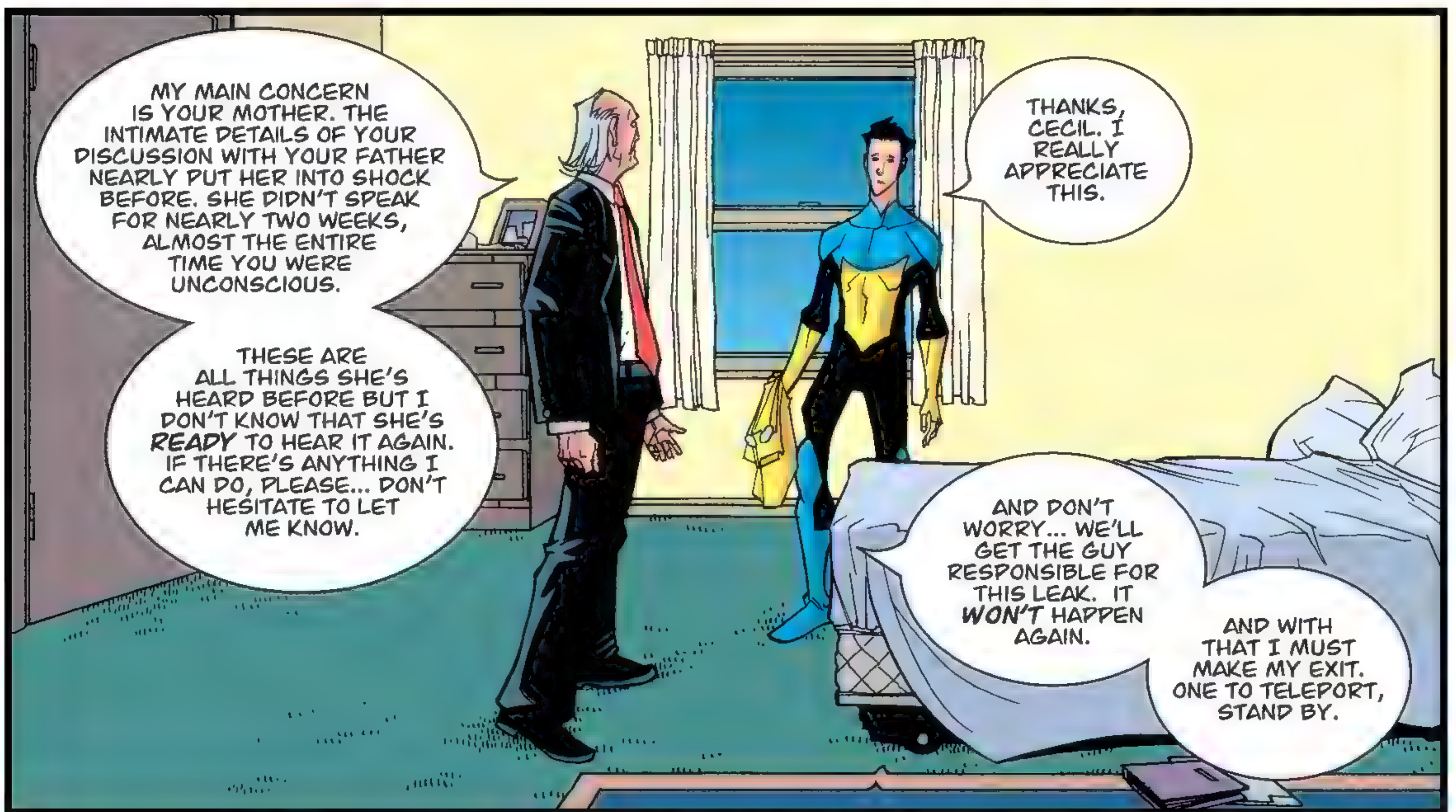


YOUR IDENTITY IS NOT COMPROMISED. HE NEVER REFERRED TO YOU AS ANYTHING OTHER THAN "SON" OR "MARK." IT WAS ALREADY PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE THAT YOU WERE HIS SON. HE DIDN'T REFER TO YOUR MOTHER BY NAME AT ANY TIME. HE MADE NO REFERENCE TO HIS NAME, HIS JOB, ANY LOCATIONS... NOTHING WAS SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED.



NEITHER YOU NOR YOUR FATHER HAVE EVER BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH ANY SPECIFIC AREA OF THE COUNTRY. YOU HAVE NO METROPOLIS. ASIDE FROM YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITH YOUR PHYSICS TEACHER, THERE'S NOTHING TO TIE YOU WITH THIS REGION. FOR THE MOST PART, YOU'VE BOTH BEEN ACTIVE IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD. IT'S ONLY SPECULATED THAT YOU ARE AMERICAN.

SO YOU COULD BE ANY NUMBER OF THOUSANDS OF "MARKS" ON THIS EARTH.



MY MAIN CONCERN IS YOUR MOTHER. THE INTIMATE DETAILS OF YOUR DISCUSSION WITH YOUR FATHER NEARLY PUT HER INTO SHOCK BEFORE. SHE DIDN'T SPEAK FOR NEARLY TWO WEEKS, ALMOST THE ENTIRE TIME YOU WERE UNCONSCIOUS.

THESE ARE ALL THINGS SHE'S HEARD BEFORE BUT I DON'T KNOW THAT SHE'S READY TO HEAR IT AGAIN. IF THERE'S ANYTHING I CAN DO, PLEASE... DON'T HESITATE TO LET ME KNOW.

THANKS, CECIL. I REALLY APPRECIATE THIS.

AND DON'T WORRY... WE'LL GET THE GUY RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS LEAK. IT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN.

AND WITH THAT I MUST MAKE MY EXIT. ONE TO TELEPORT, STAND BY.



TELEPORT? WE CAN DO THAT?!



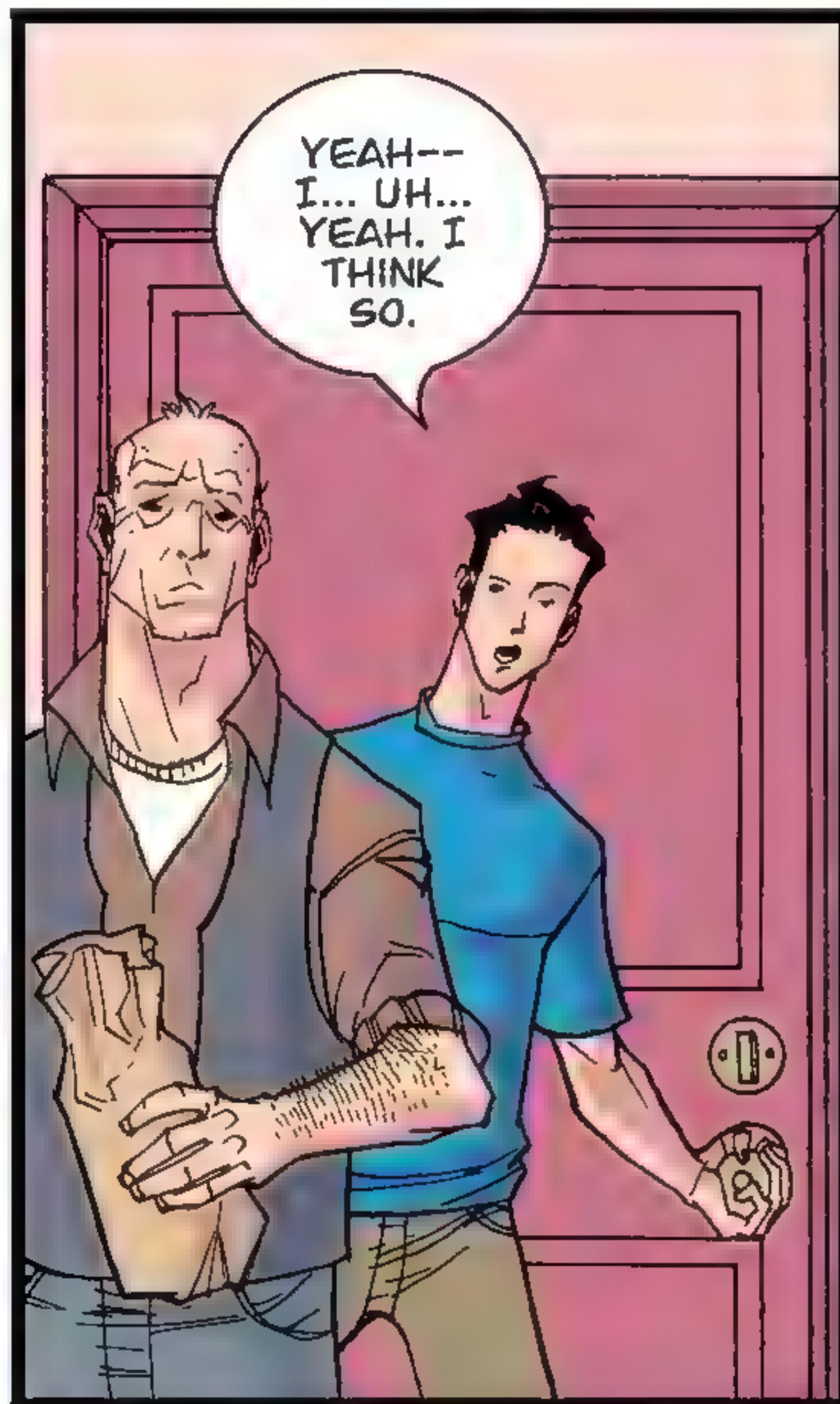
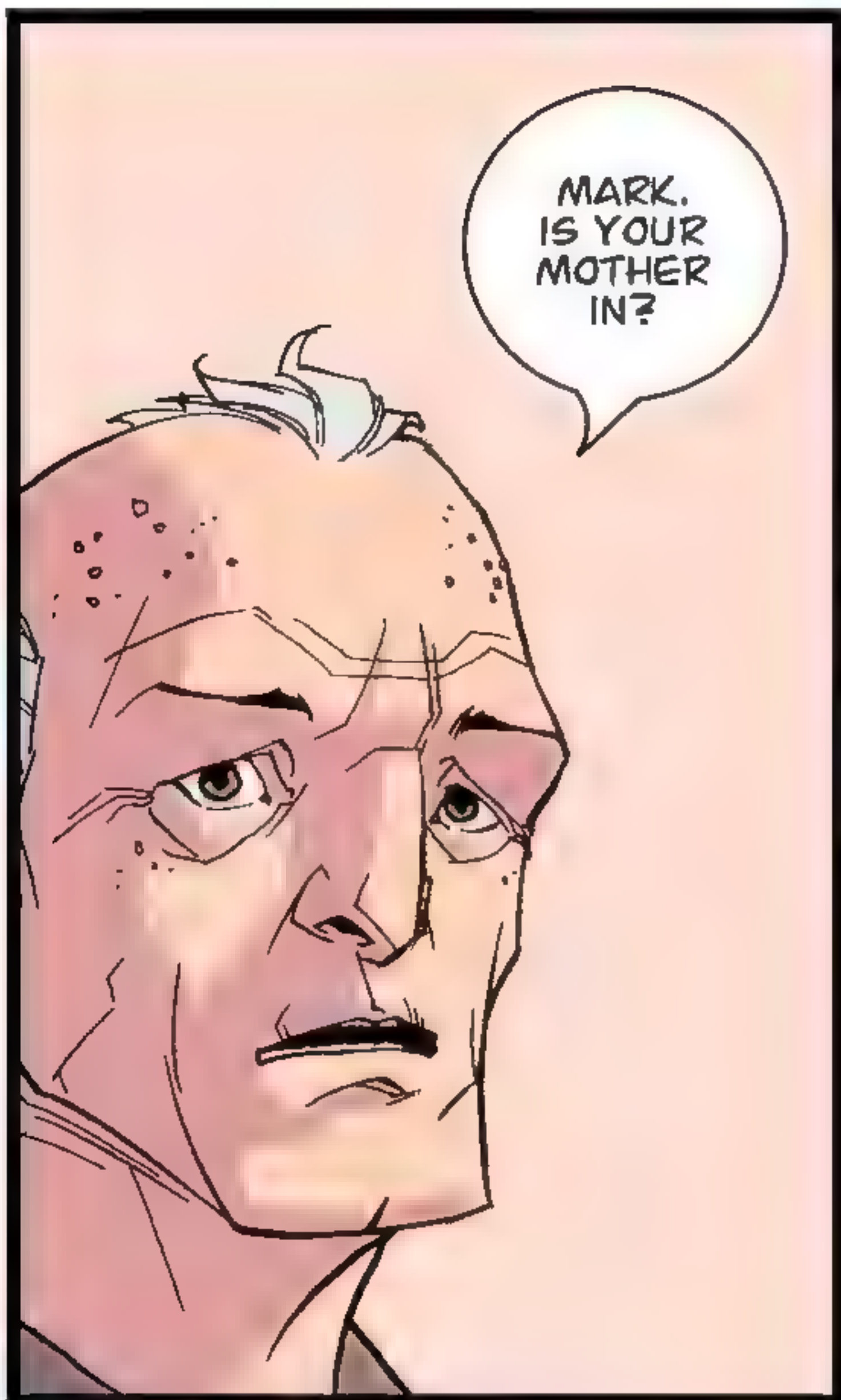
WE JUST GOT IT. IT COSTS TAXPAYERS FIVE MILLION DOLLARS EVERY TIME WE USE IT BUT I JUST HAD TO TRY IT.

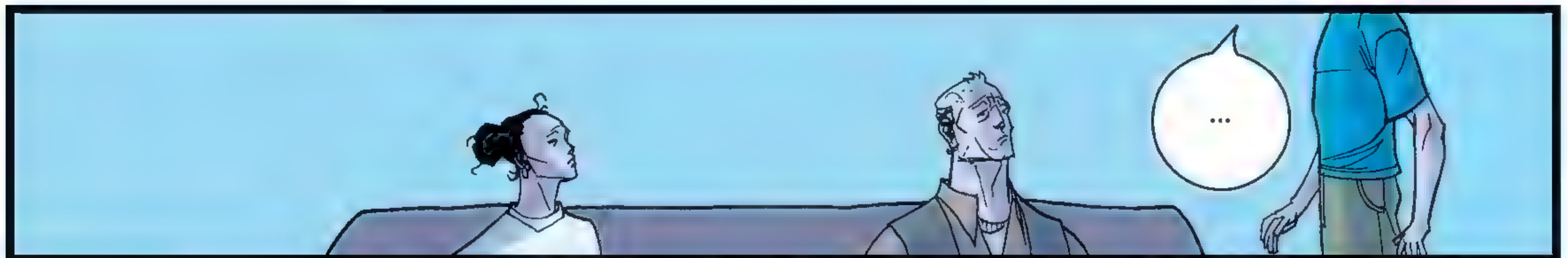
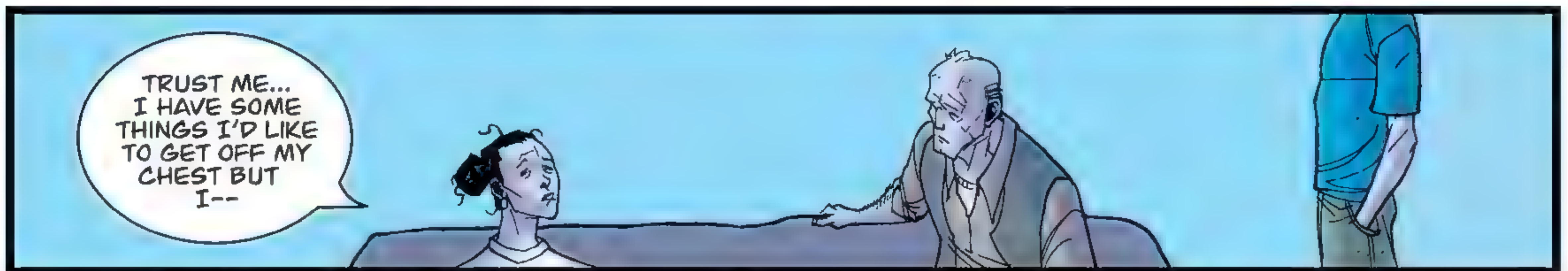
WE'RE READY FOR YOU.

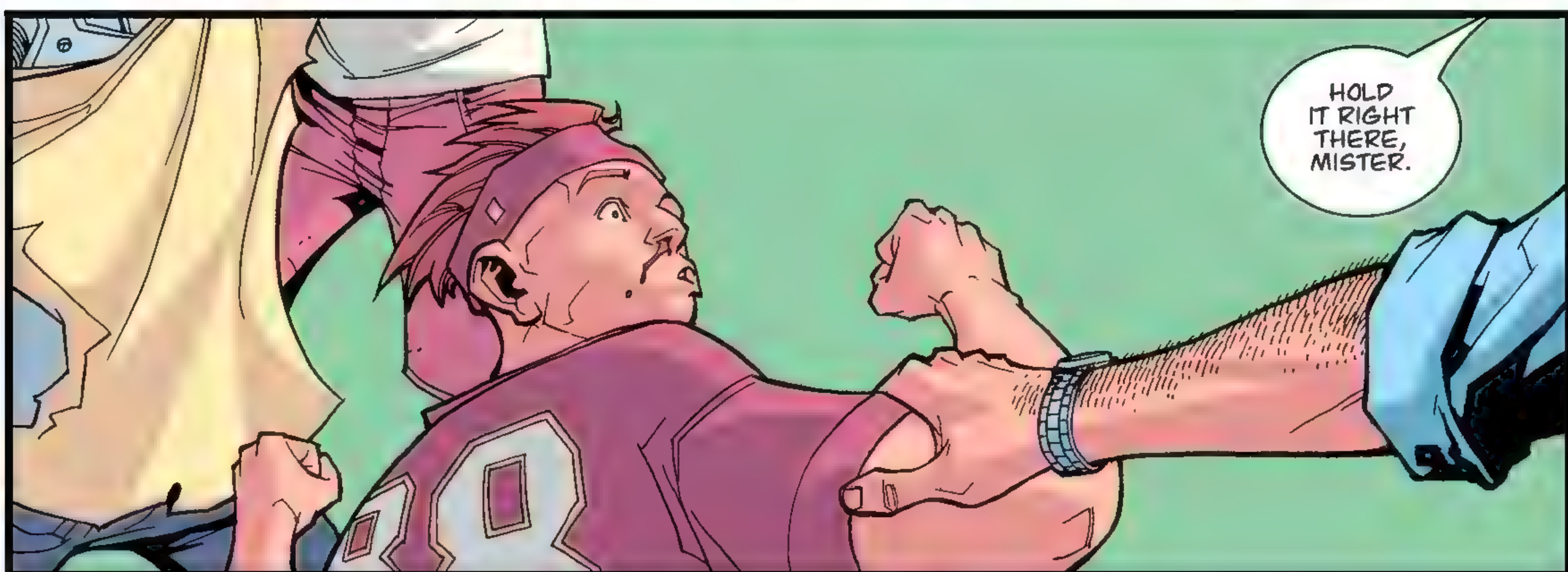


ENGAGE.

WOW.









OKAY FELLAS... THIS FIGHT IS OVER. LET'S TAKE IT TO THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE. I MEAN IT... THIS STOPS HERE, NOW. YOU'RE ALL IN ENOUGH TROUBLE AS IT IS.

MISTER KEENE!



THEY STARTED IT.



I DON'T CARE WHO STARTED IT, DEREK. THIS ISN'T THE WAY YOU REACT TO INSTIGATION. YOU'RE ALL IN TROUBLE... I WANT YOU ALL IN MY OFFICE NOW.



MARK, I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE BACK ALREADY. IF YOU COULD COME TO MY OFFICE IN A FEW MINUTES... I SHOULD BE DONE WITH THESE BOYS SHORTLY.

I'D LIKE TO TALK TO YOU.

OKAY.



MARK! MAN... YOU'RE BACK. IT'S SO GOOD TO SEE YOU.



I'M SORRY TO HEAR ABOUT YOUR DAD...

YEAH... I'M REALLY SORRY, TOO.

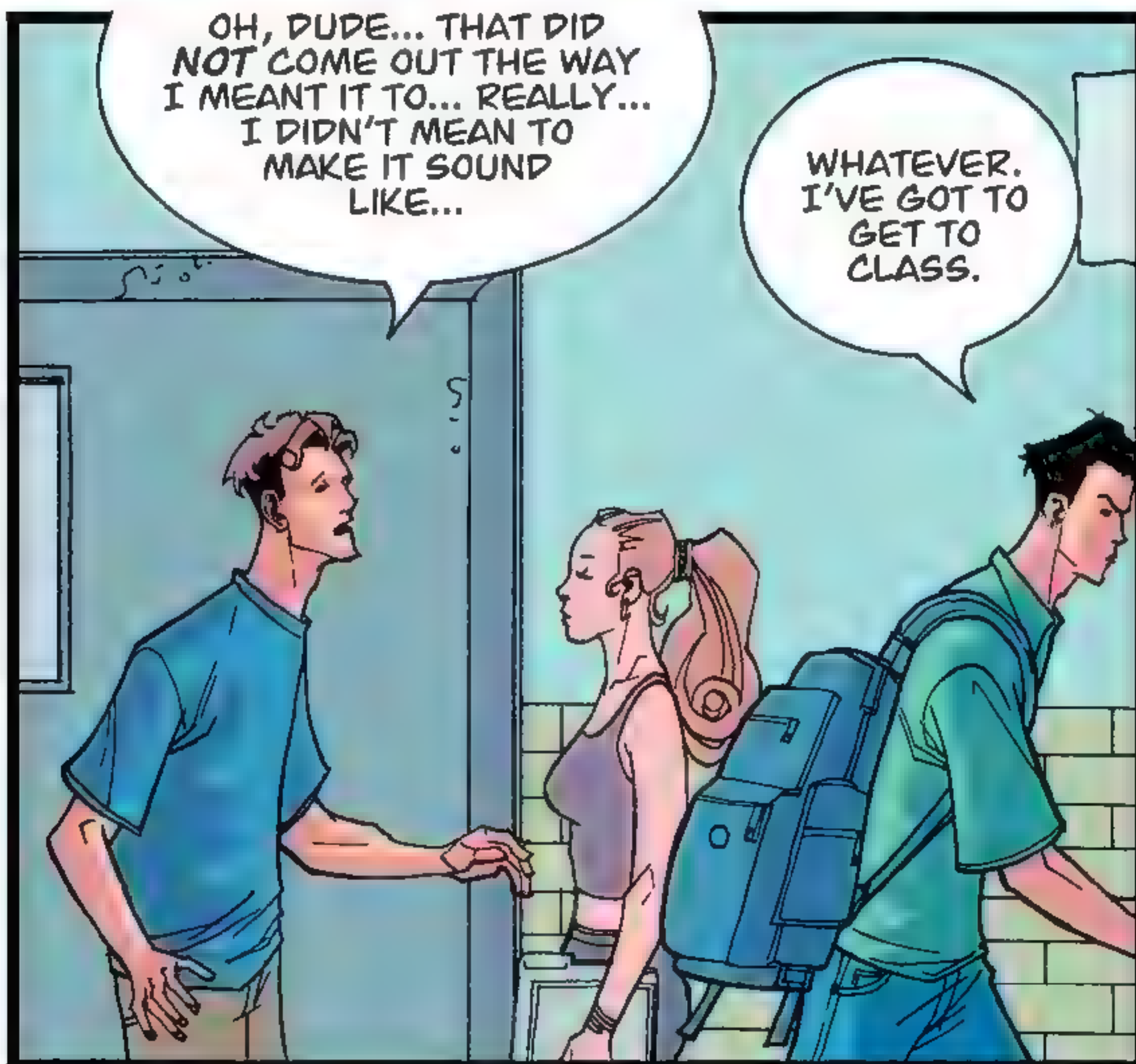
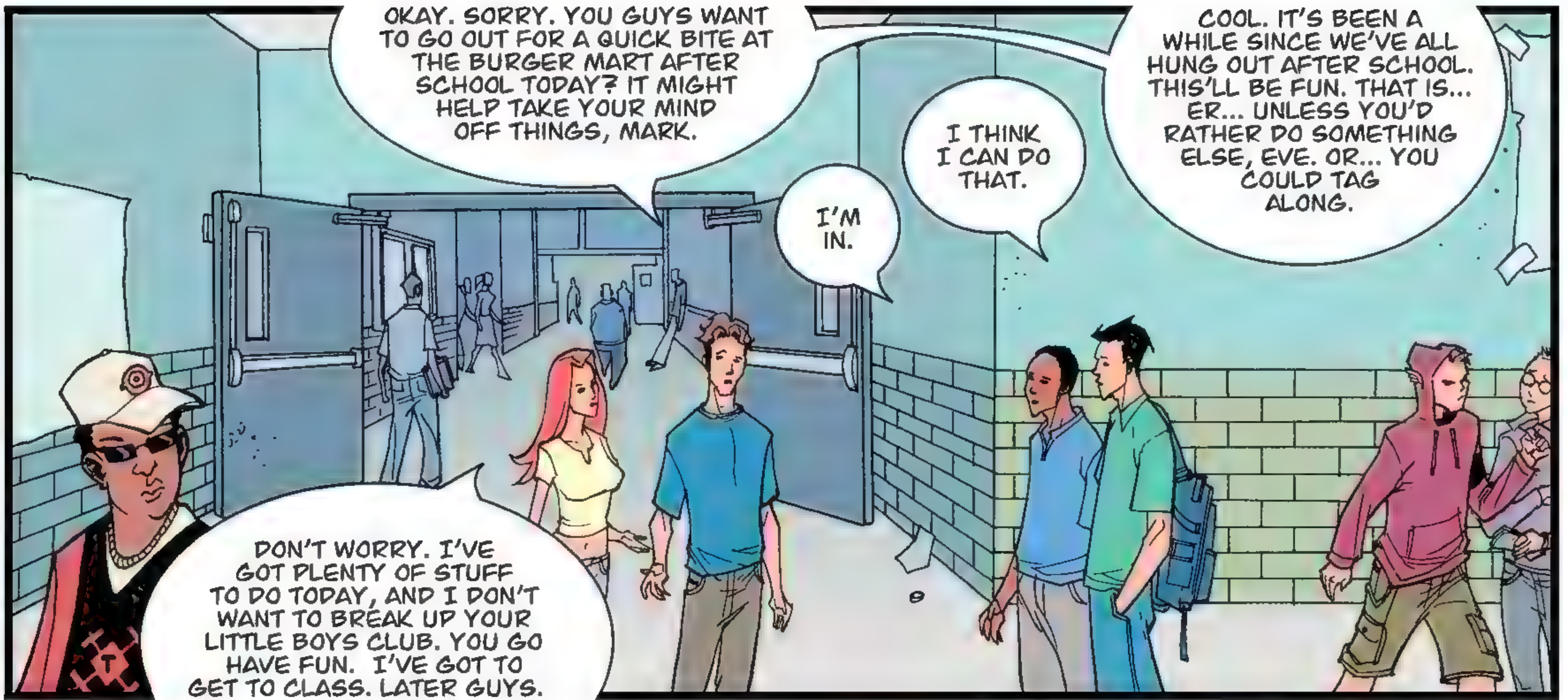


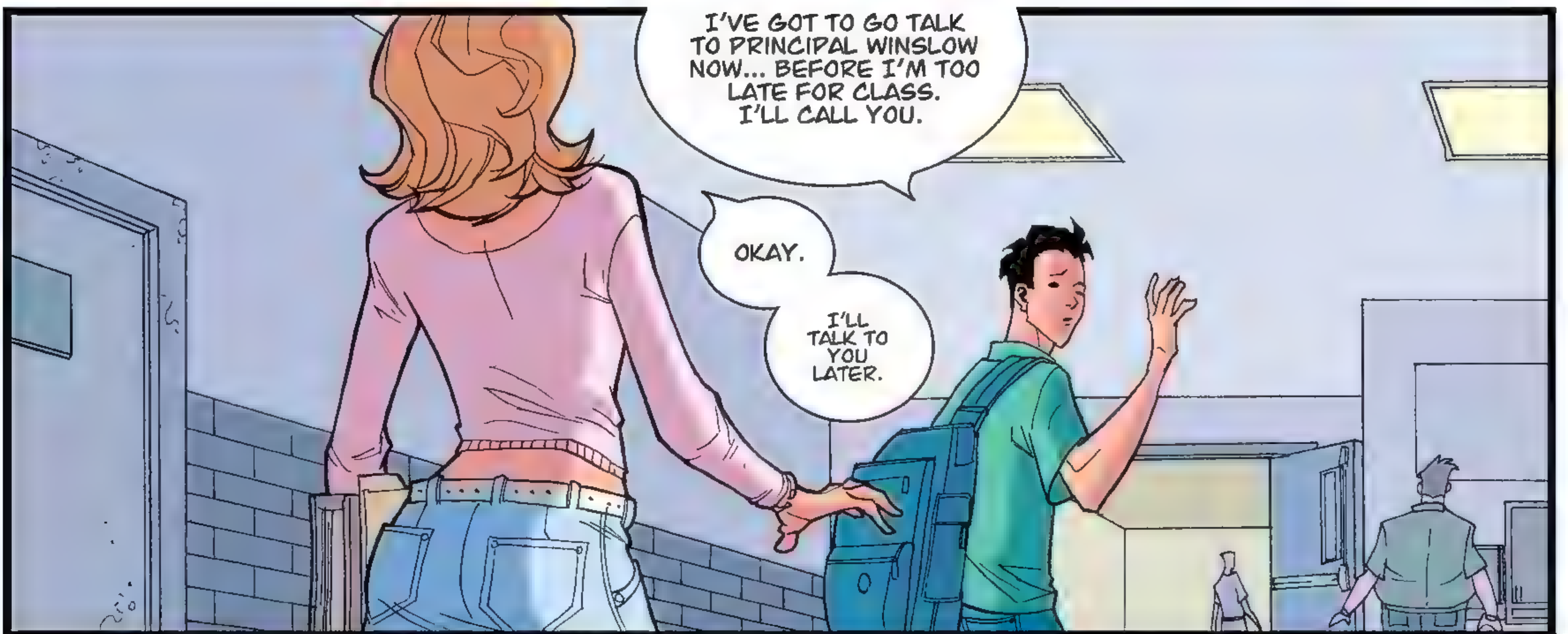
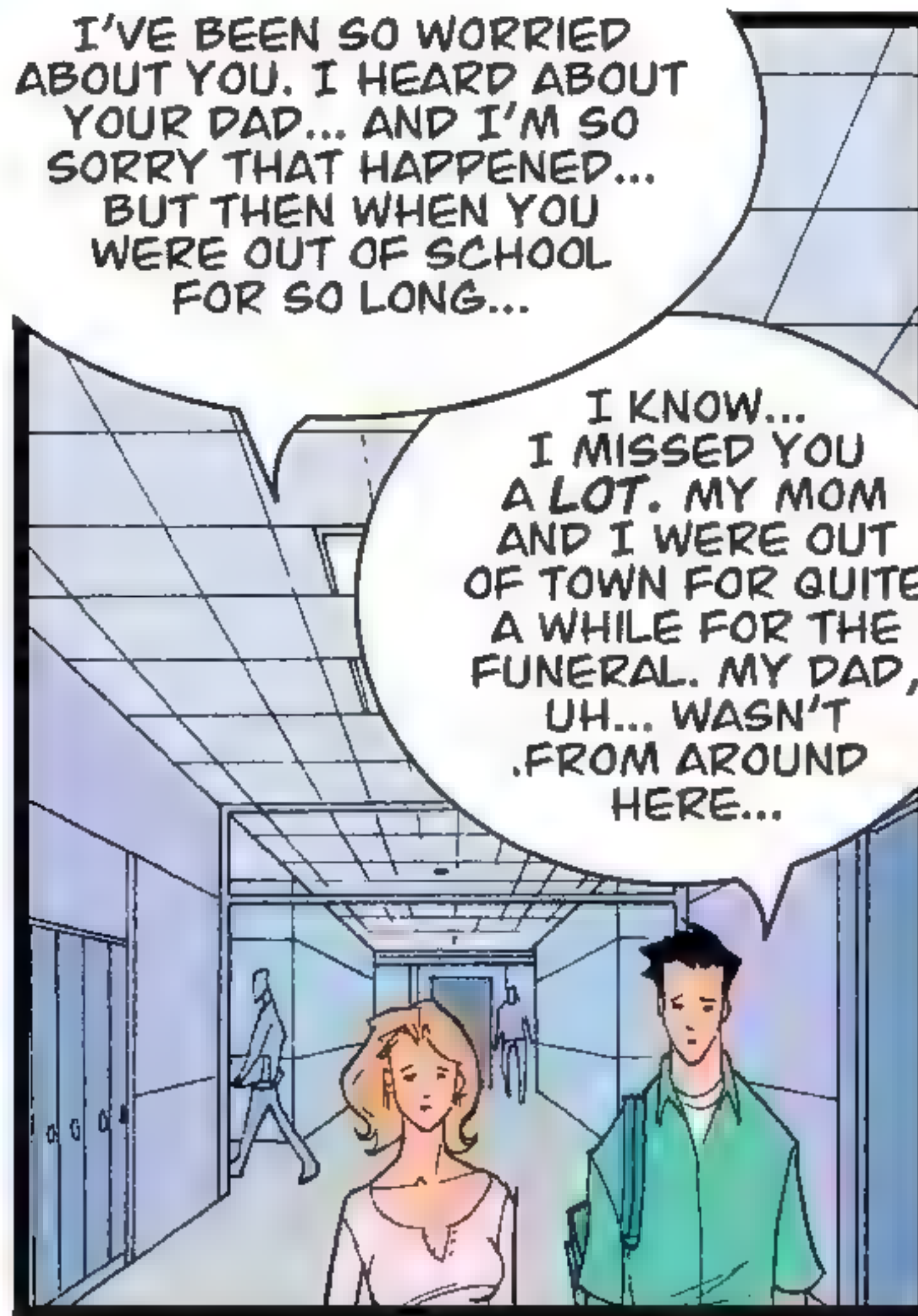
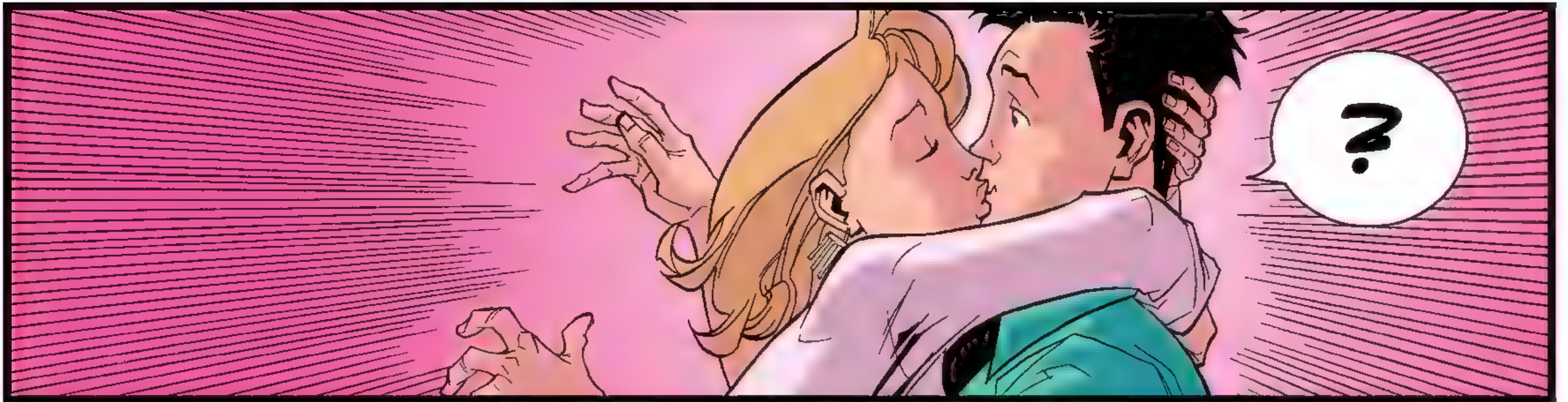
ME TOO.



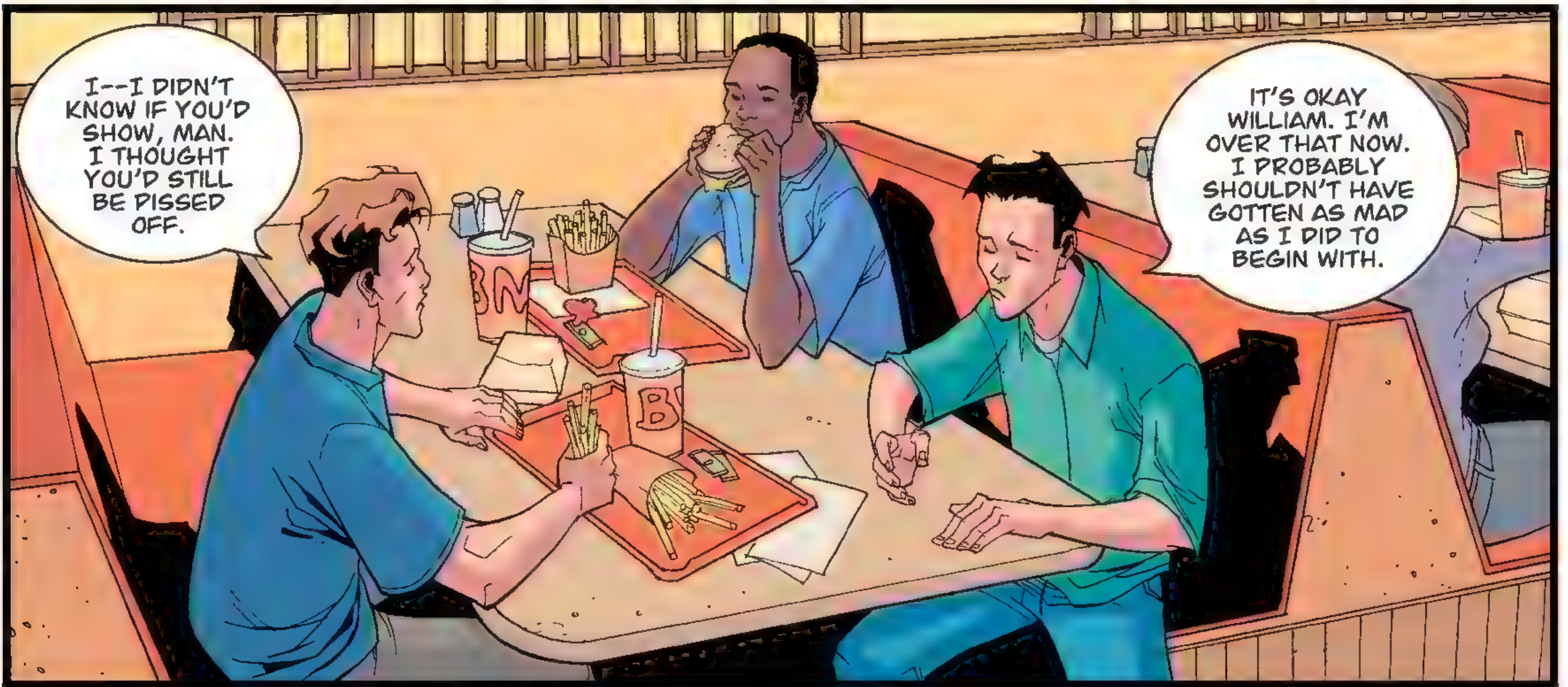
SO AM I...

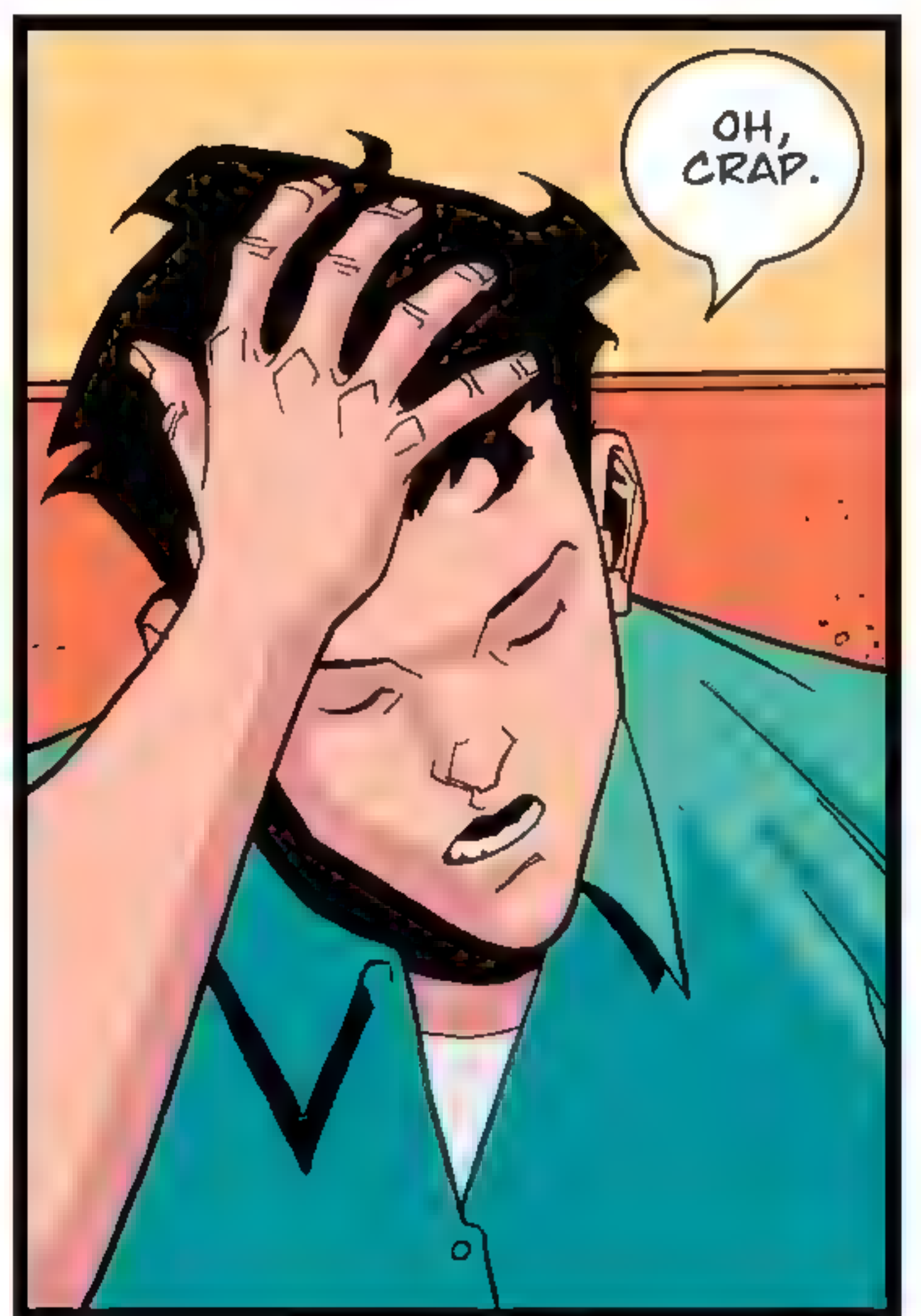
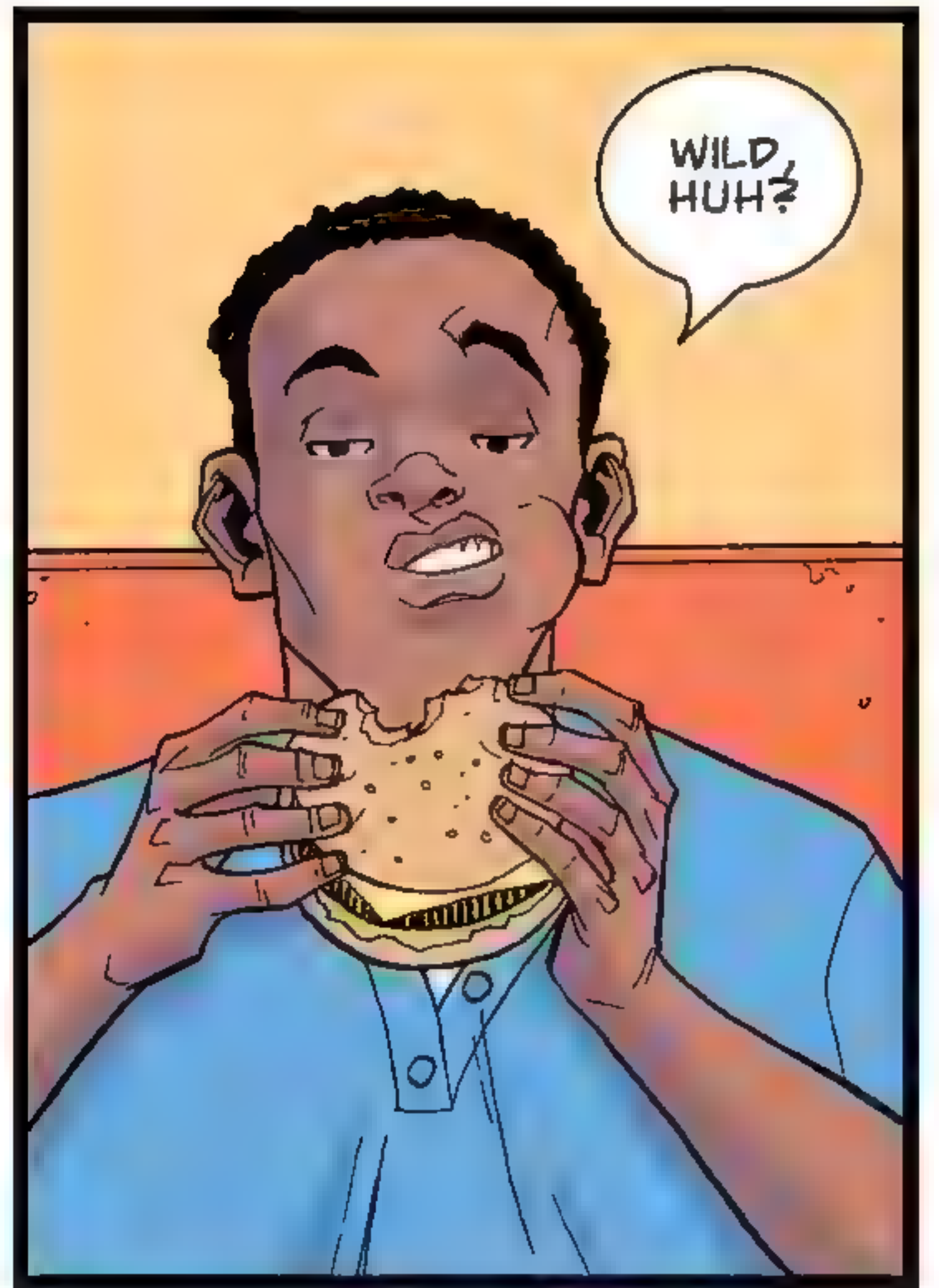
CAN WE, UH... DROP THIS FOR NOW?



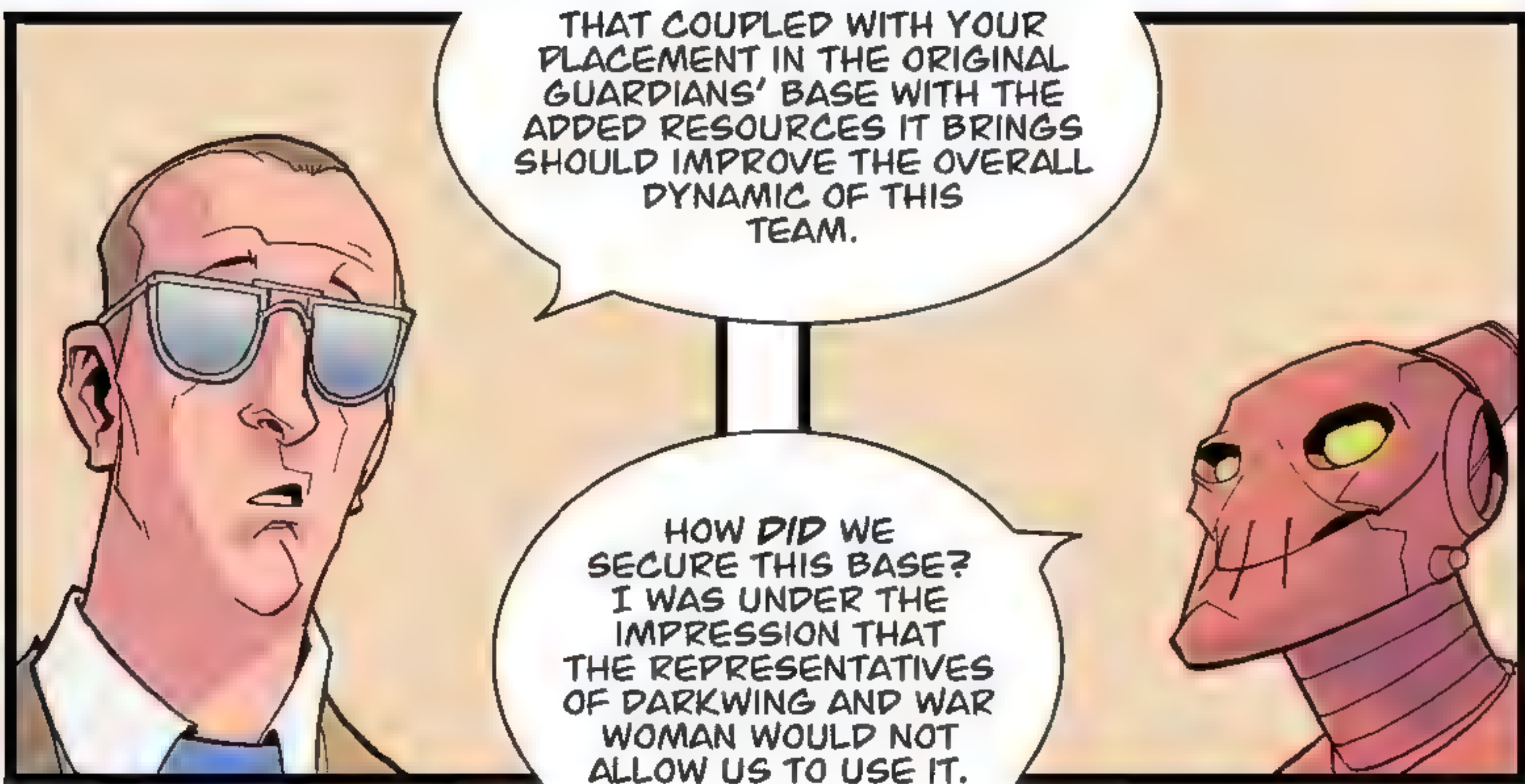
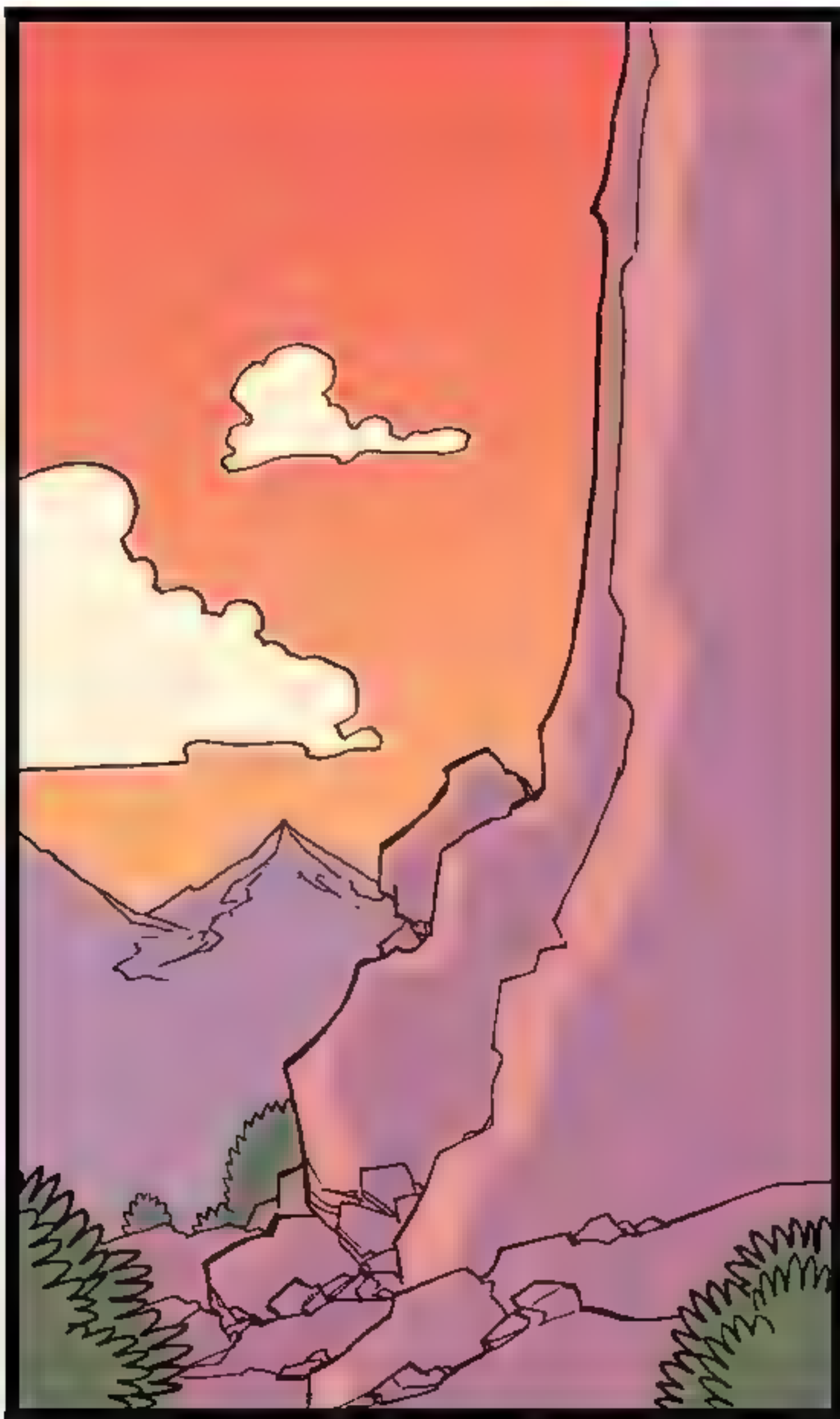


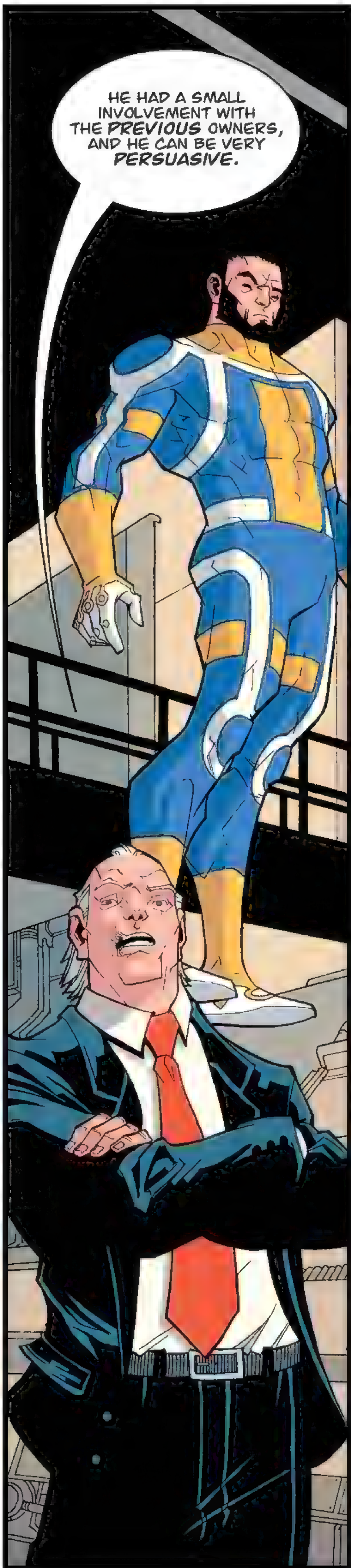




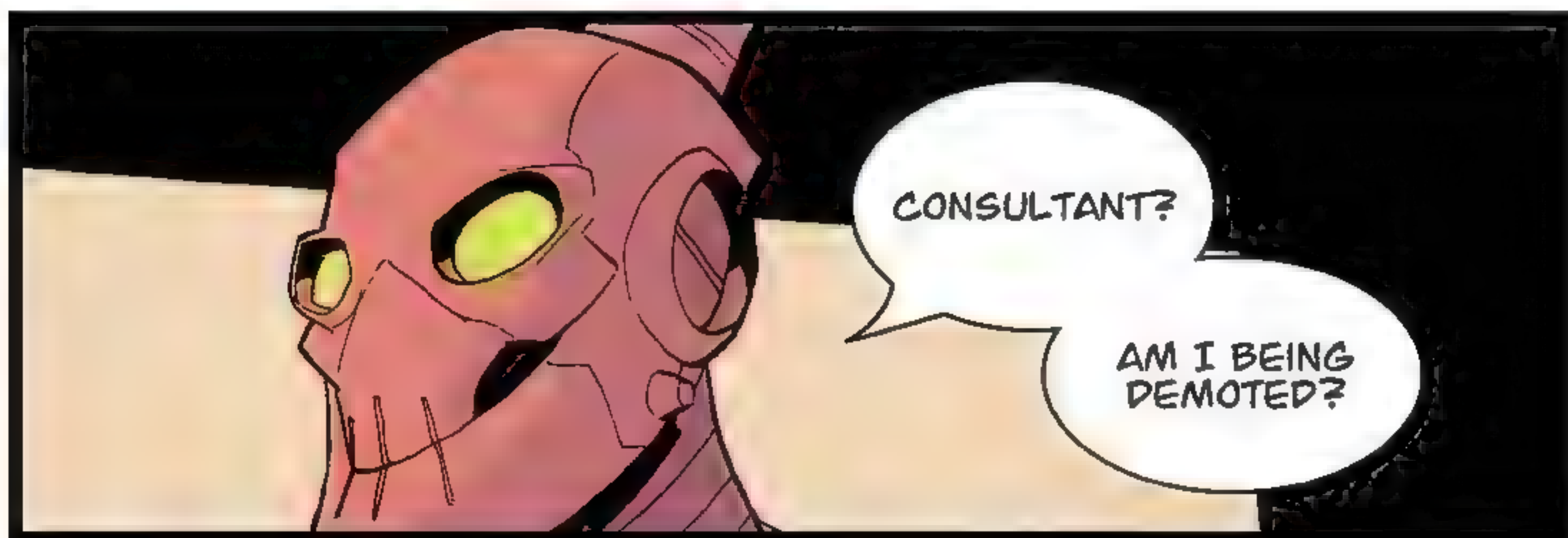






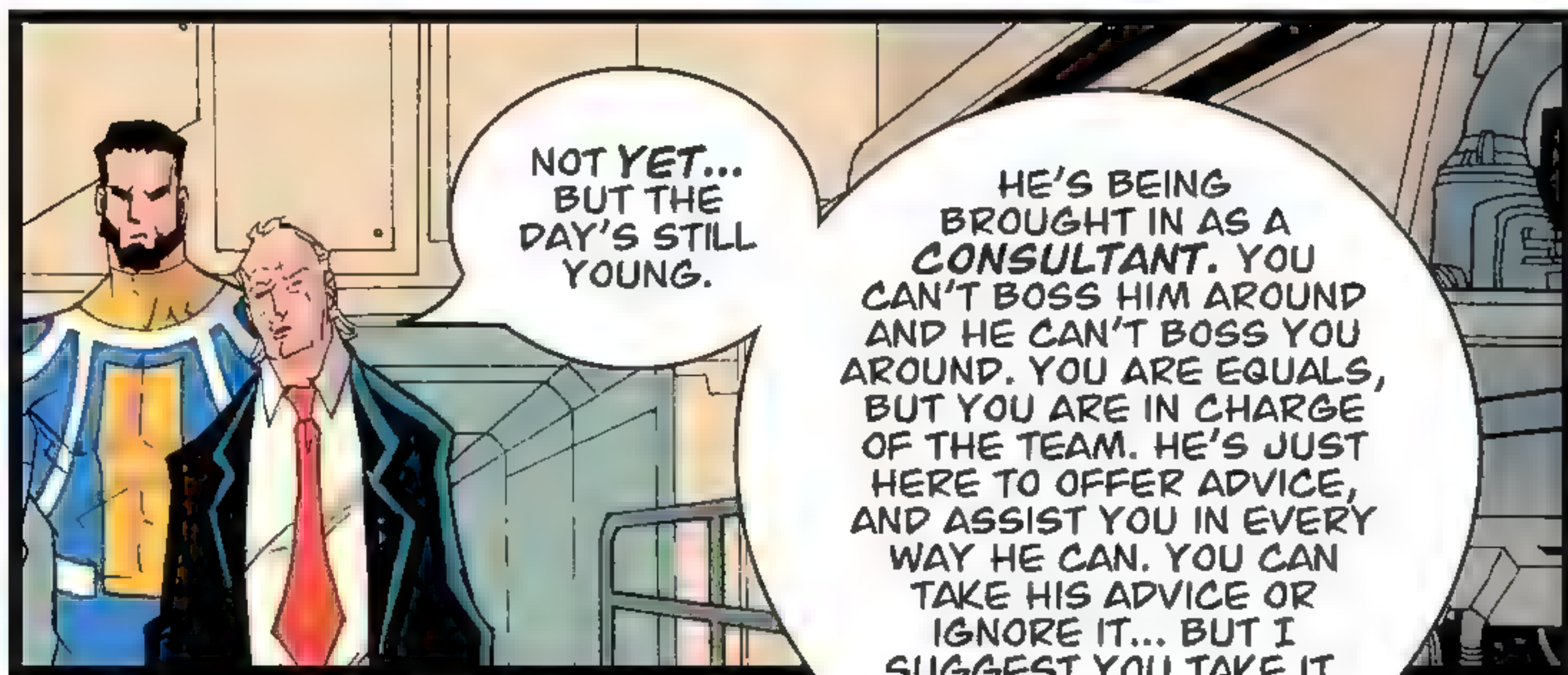


HE HAD A SMALL INVOLVEMENT WITH THE **PREVIOUS OWNERS**, AND HE CAN BE VERY **PERSUASIVE**.



CONSULTANT?

AM I BEING DEMOTED?



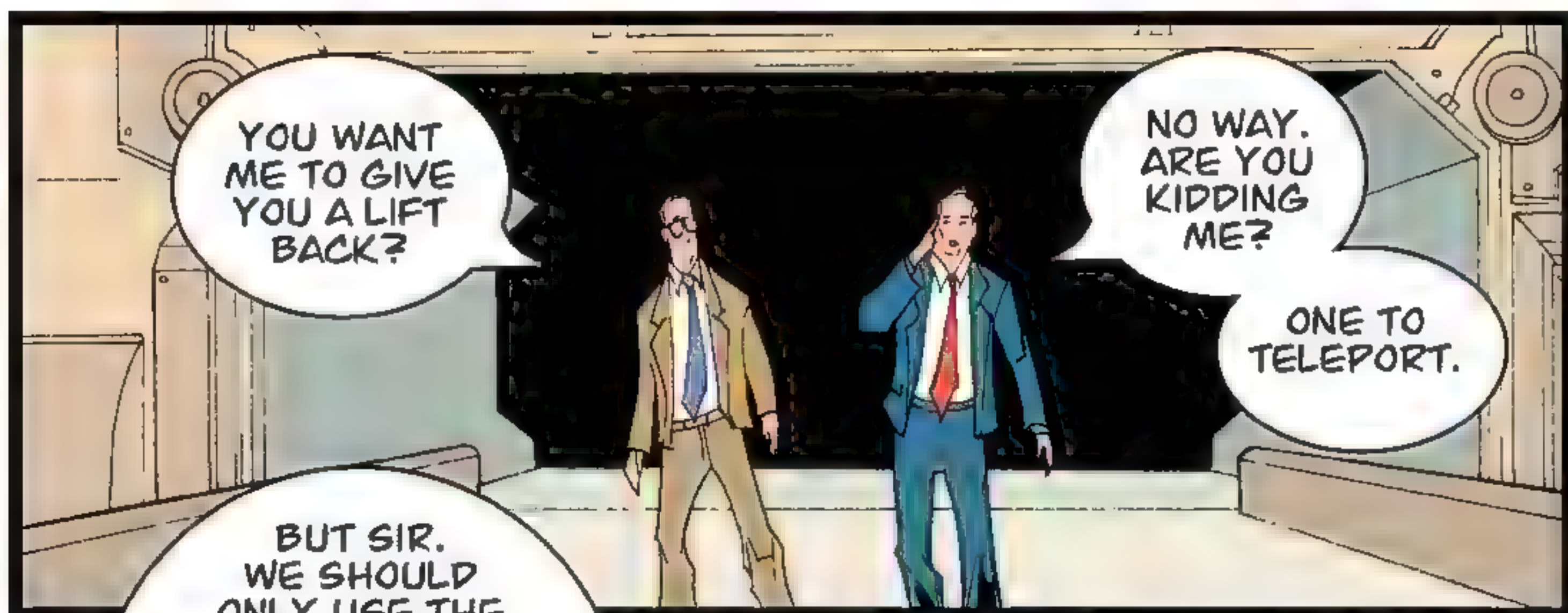
NOT YET... BUT THE DAY'S STILL YOUNG.

HE'S BEING BROUGHT IN AS A **CONSULTANT**. YOU CAN'T BOSS HIM AROUND AND HE CAN'T BOSS YOU AROUND. YOU ARE EQUALS, BUT YOU ARE IN CHARGE OF THE TEAM. HE'S JUST HERE TO OFFER ADVICE, AND ASSIST YOU IN EVERY WAY HE CAN. YOU CAN TAKE HIS ADVICE OR IGNORE IT... BUT I SUGGEST YOU TAKE IT.



I'LL LEAVE YOU GIRLS TO GET ACQUAINTED.

C'MON, DONALD.



YOU WANT ME TO GIVE YOU A LIFT BACK?

NO WAY. ARE YOU KIDDING ME?

ONE TO TELEPORT.

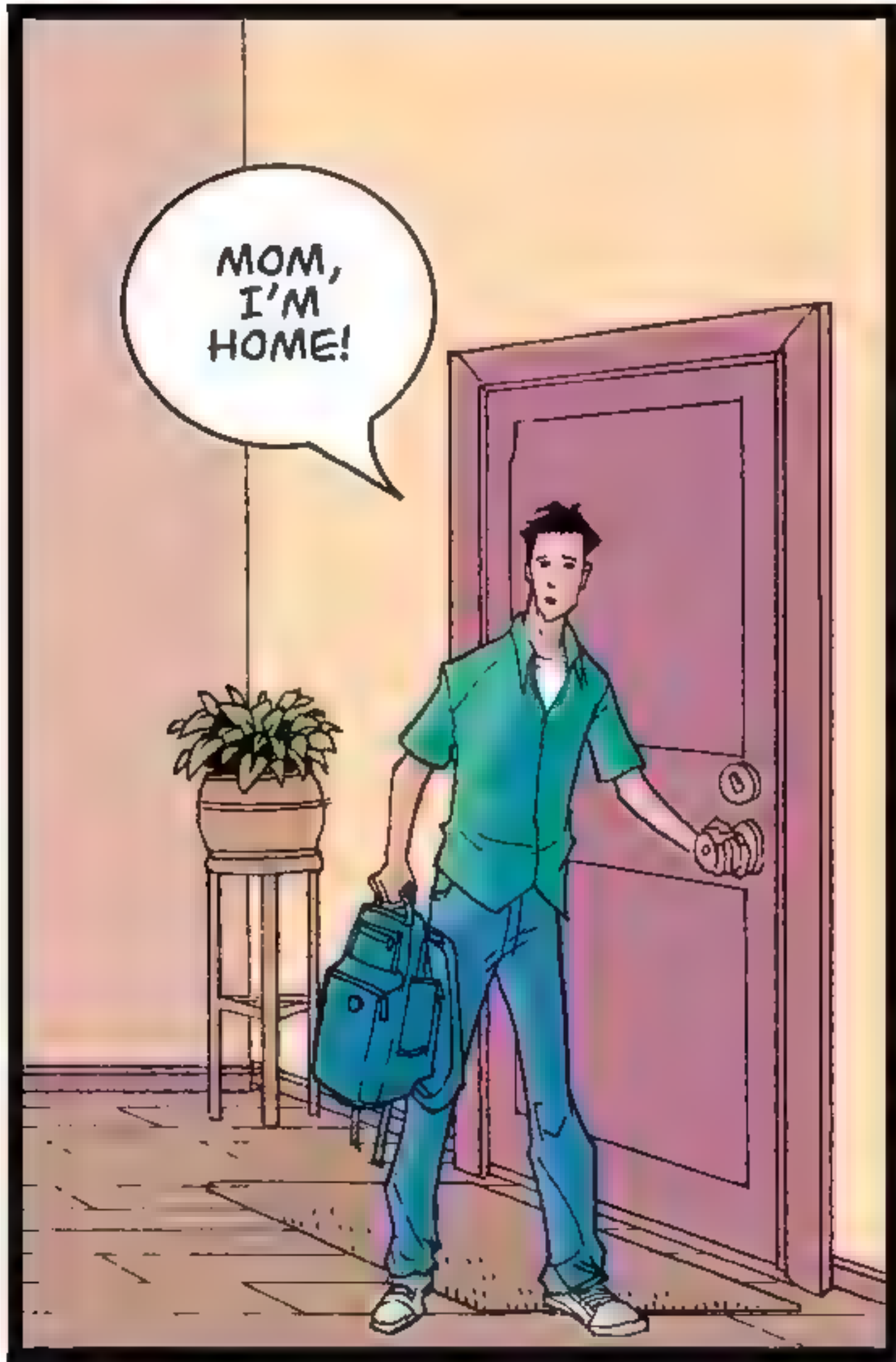
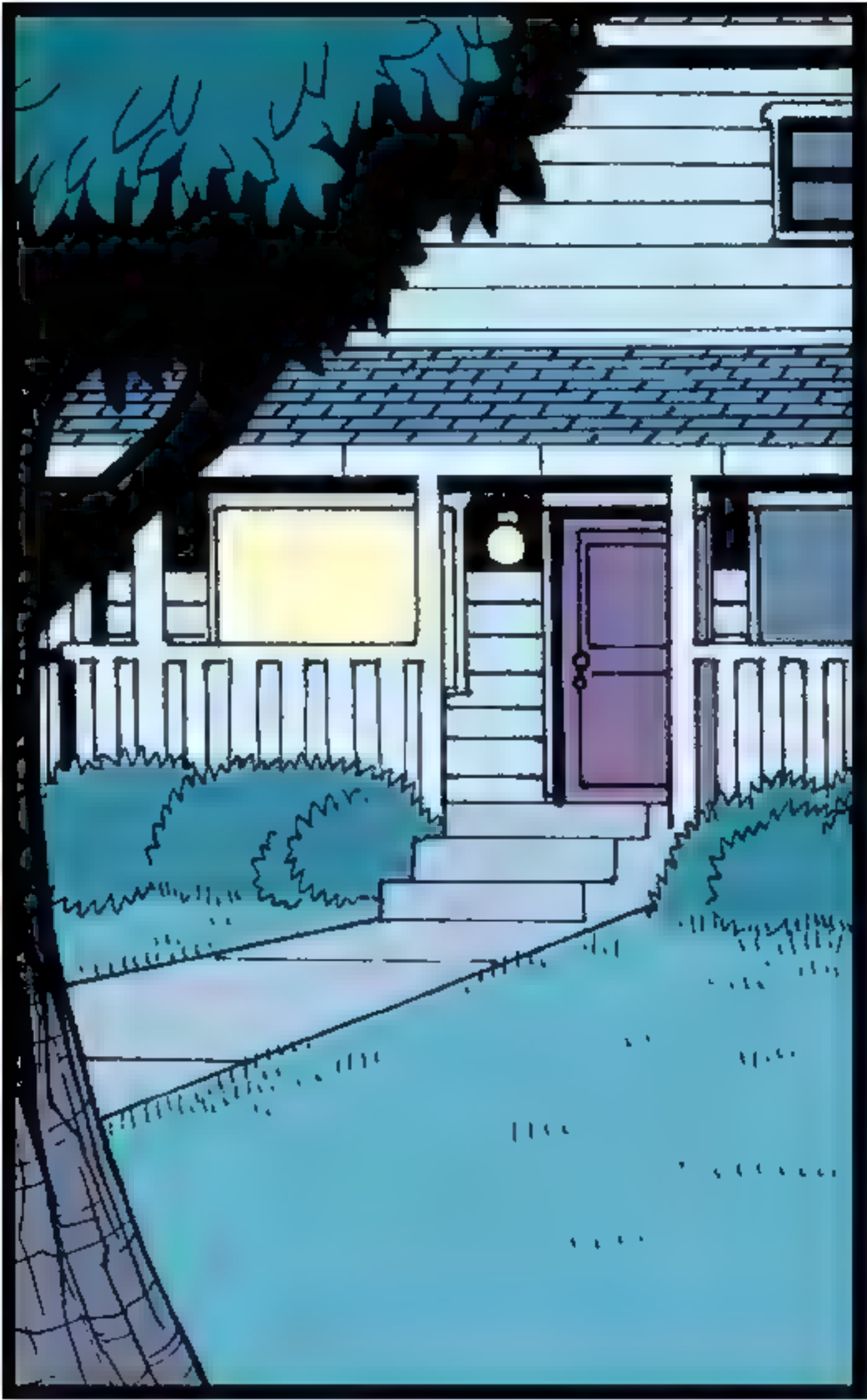
BUT SIR. WE SHOULD ONLY USE THE TELEPORTER IN CASES OF **EXTREME EMERGENCY**. YOU REALIZE THE COST DON'T YOU? YOU'VE ALREADY USED IT **SIX TIMES** THIS WEEK.



I KNOW, DONALD. I KNOW.



I THINK I'M ADDICTED.

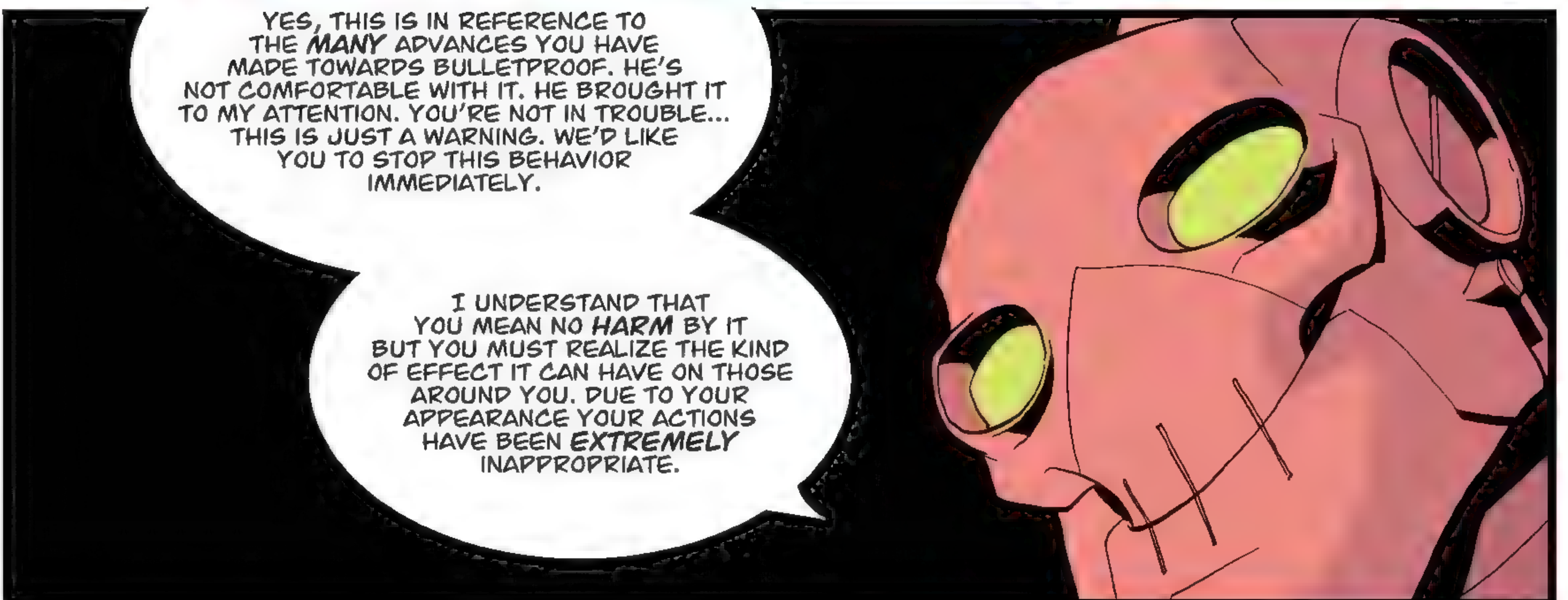


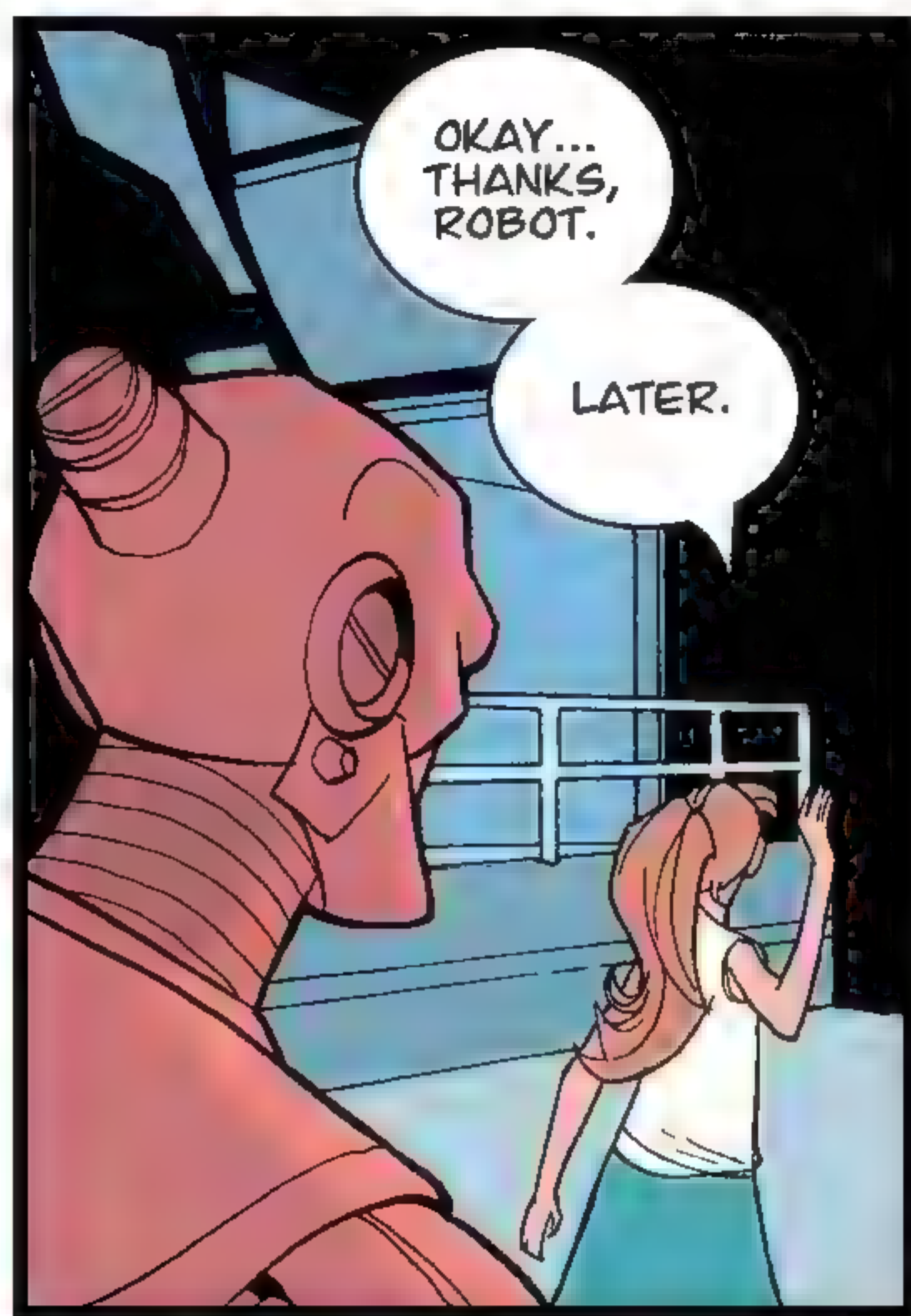
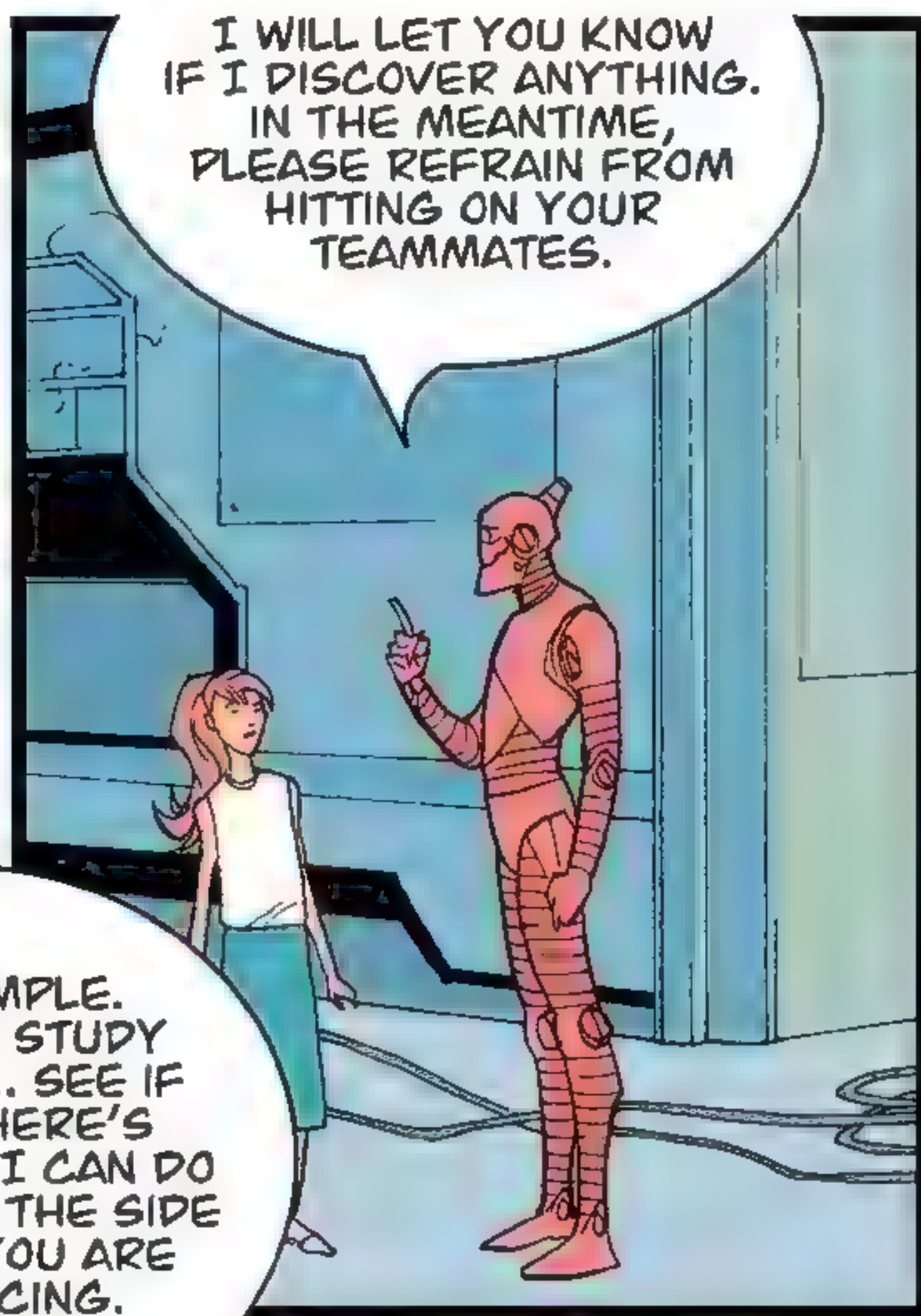
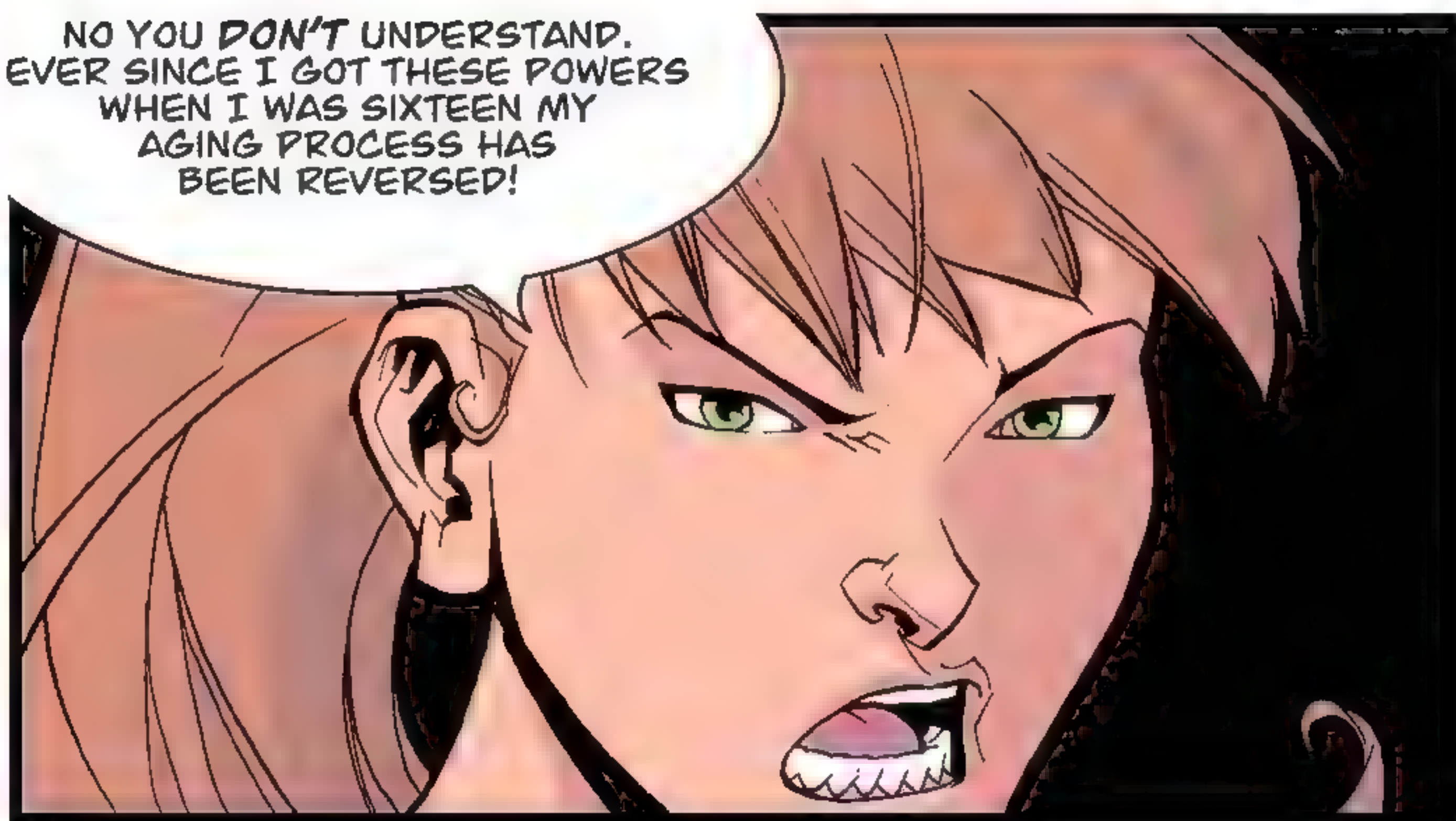
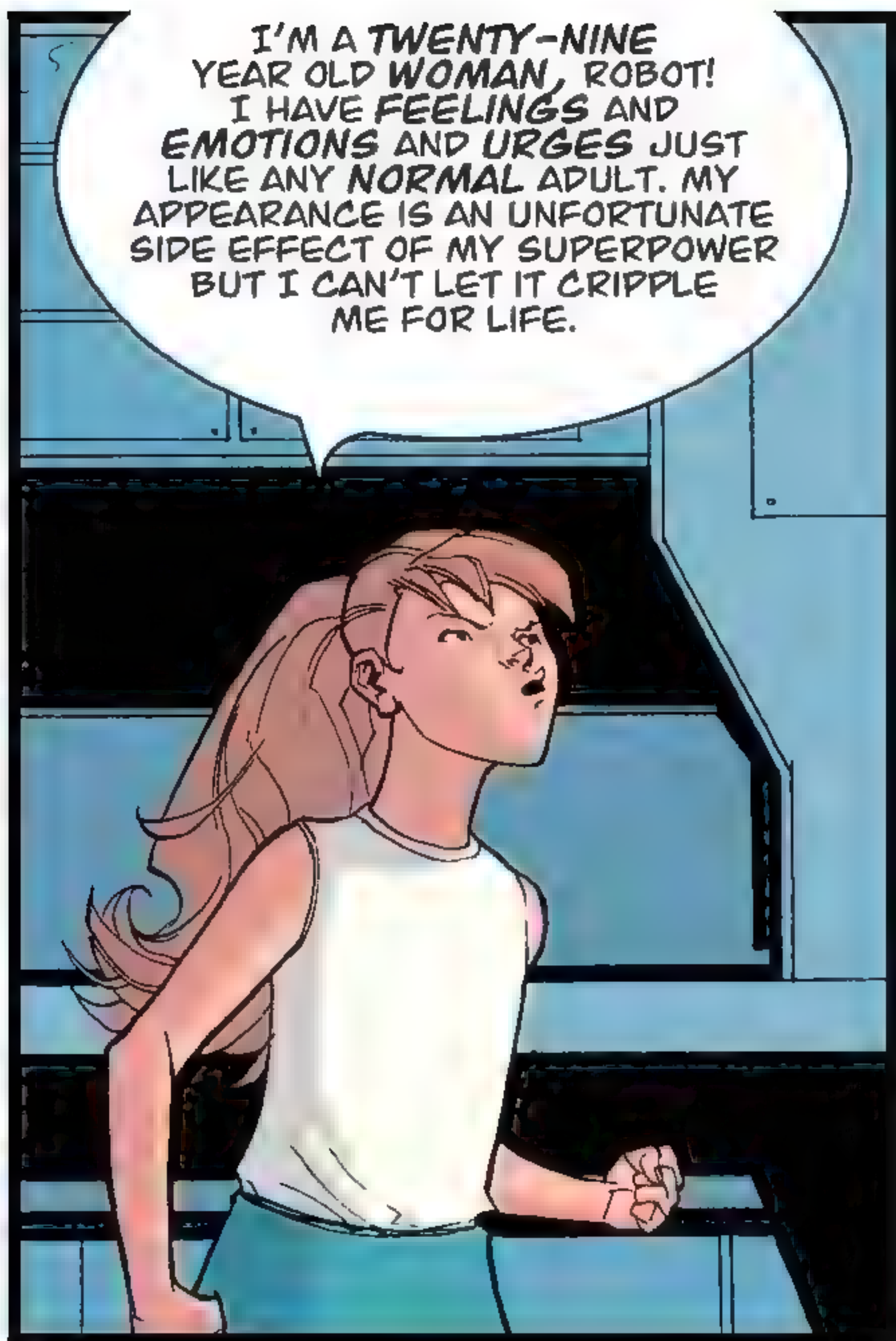


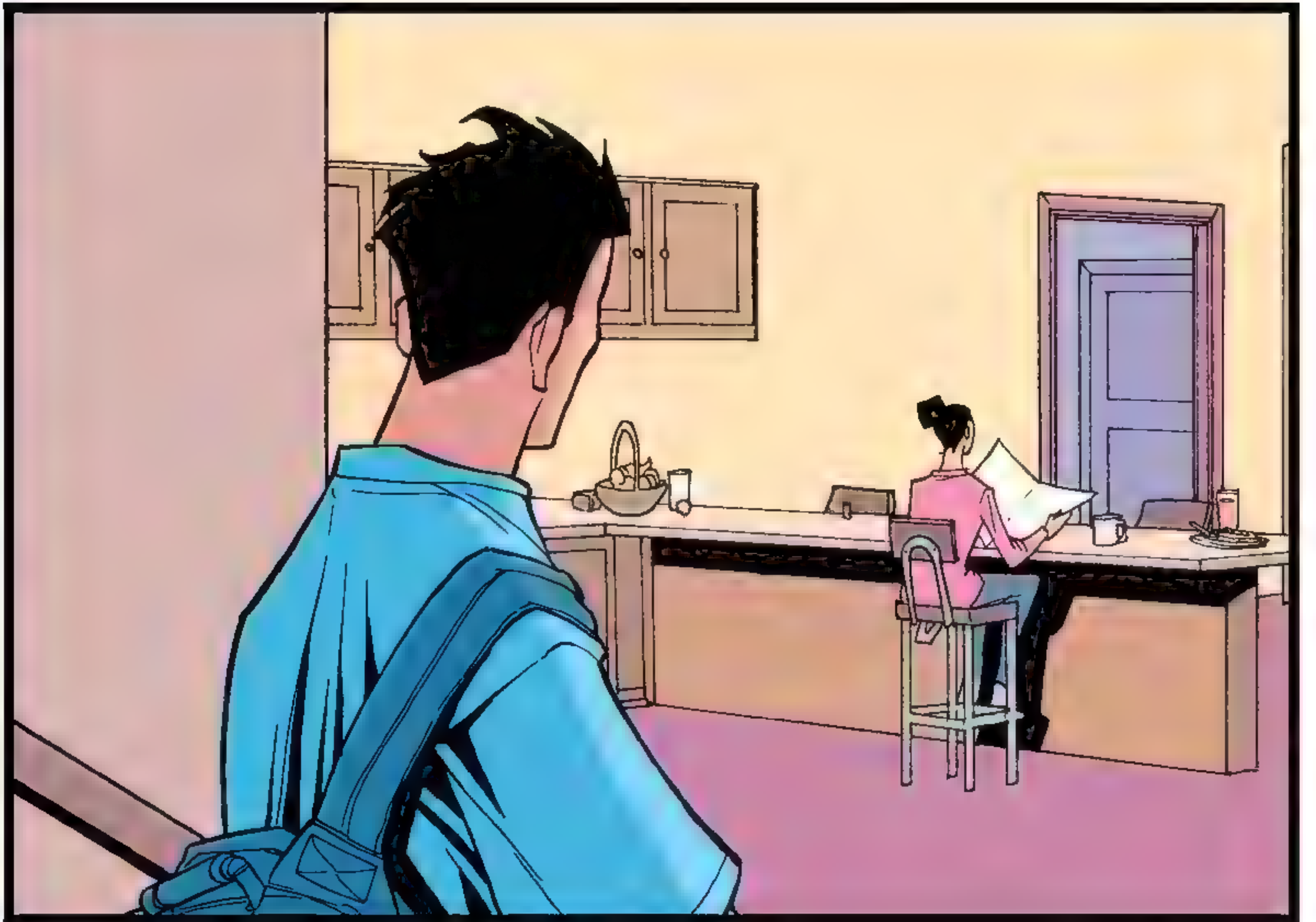
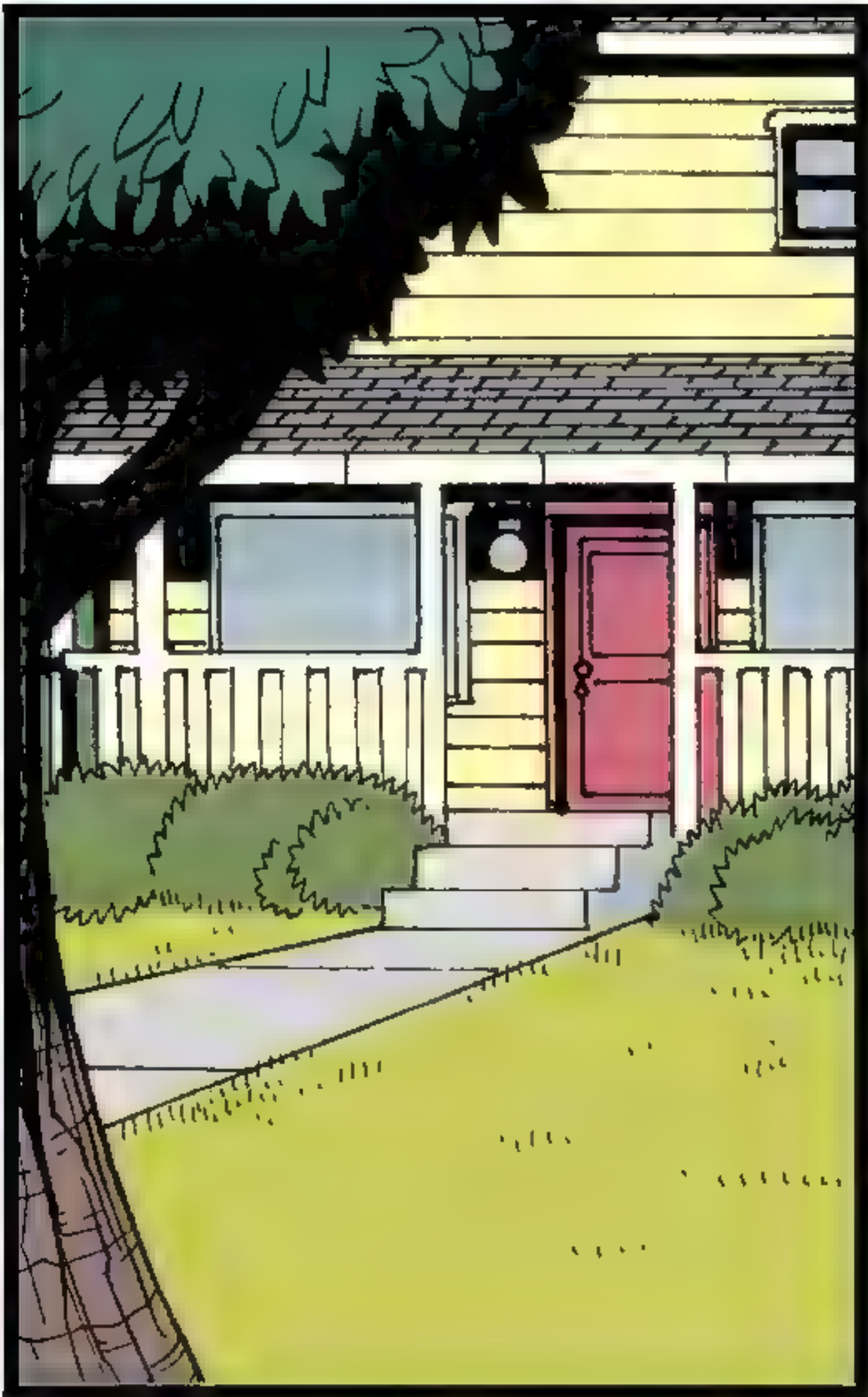


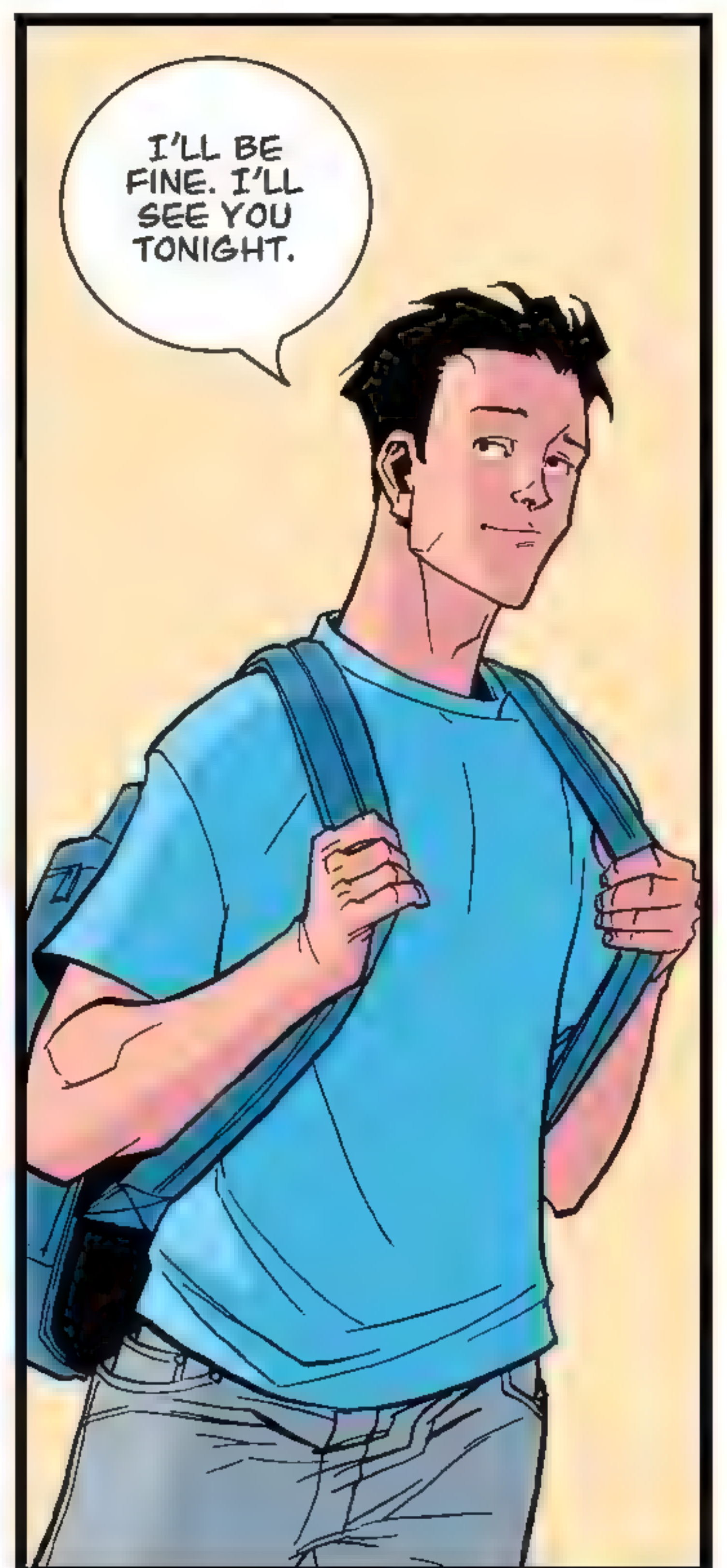
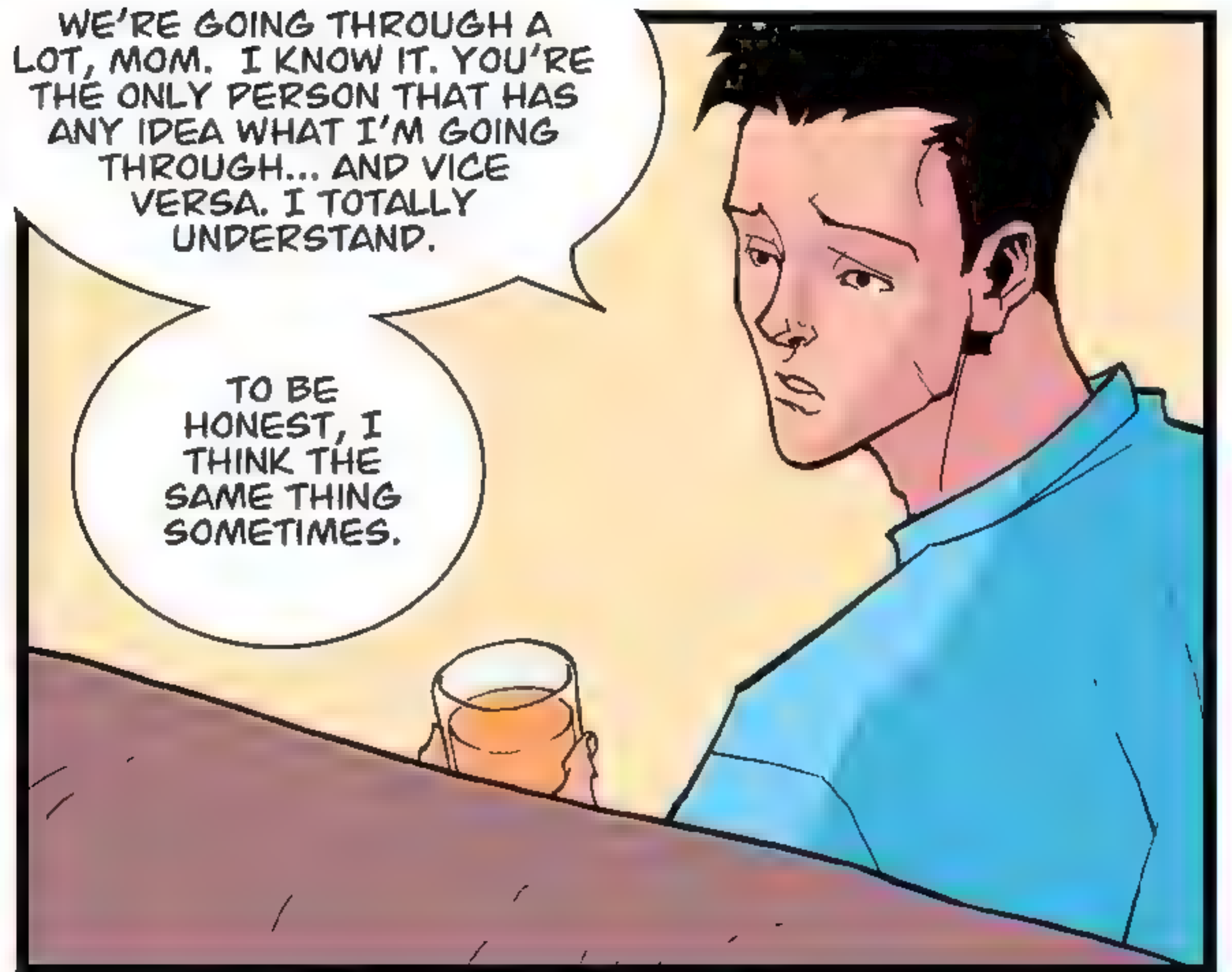
ISSUE FIFTEEN

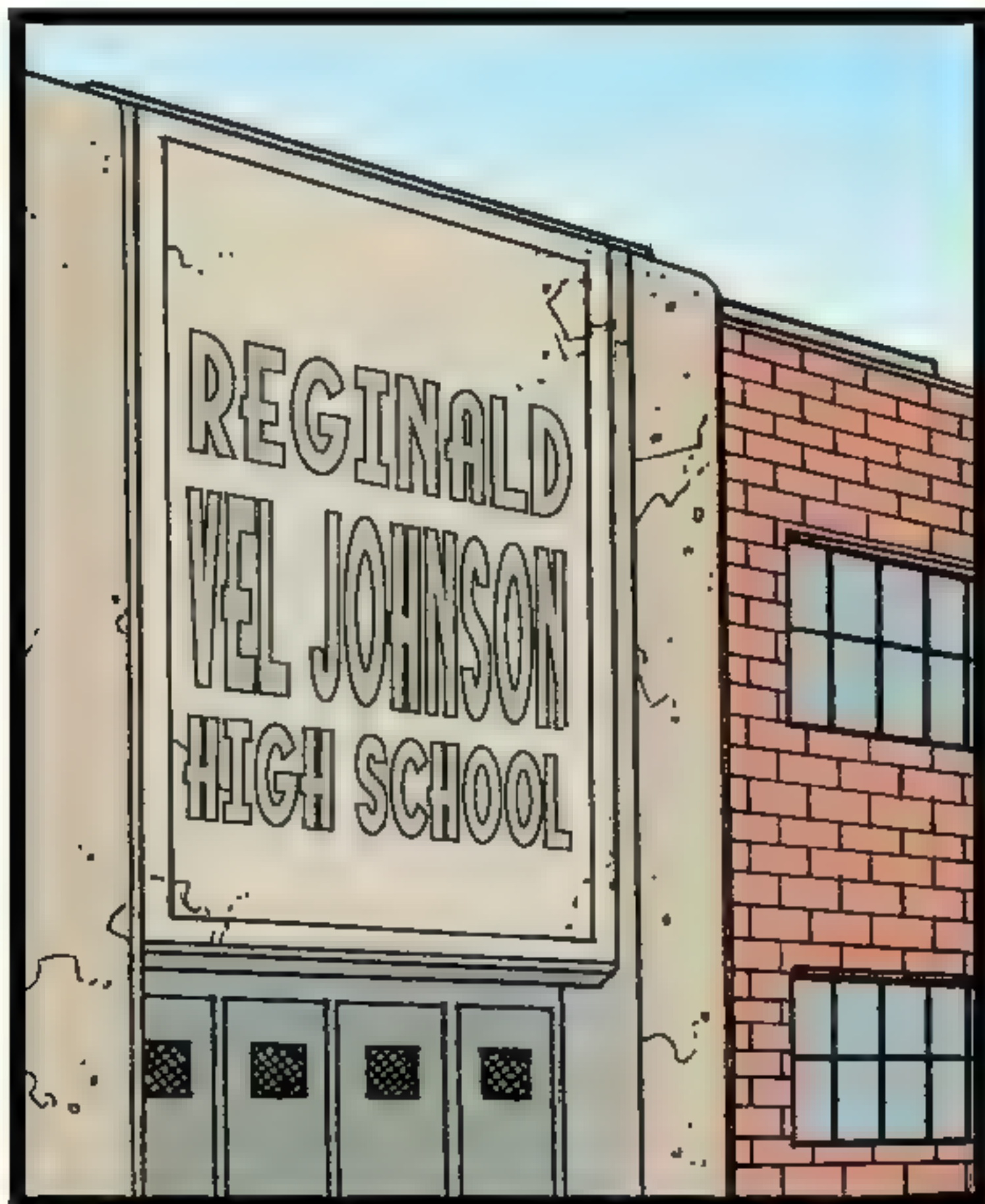


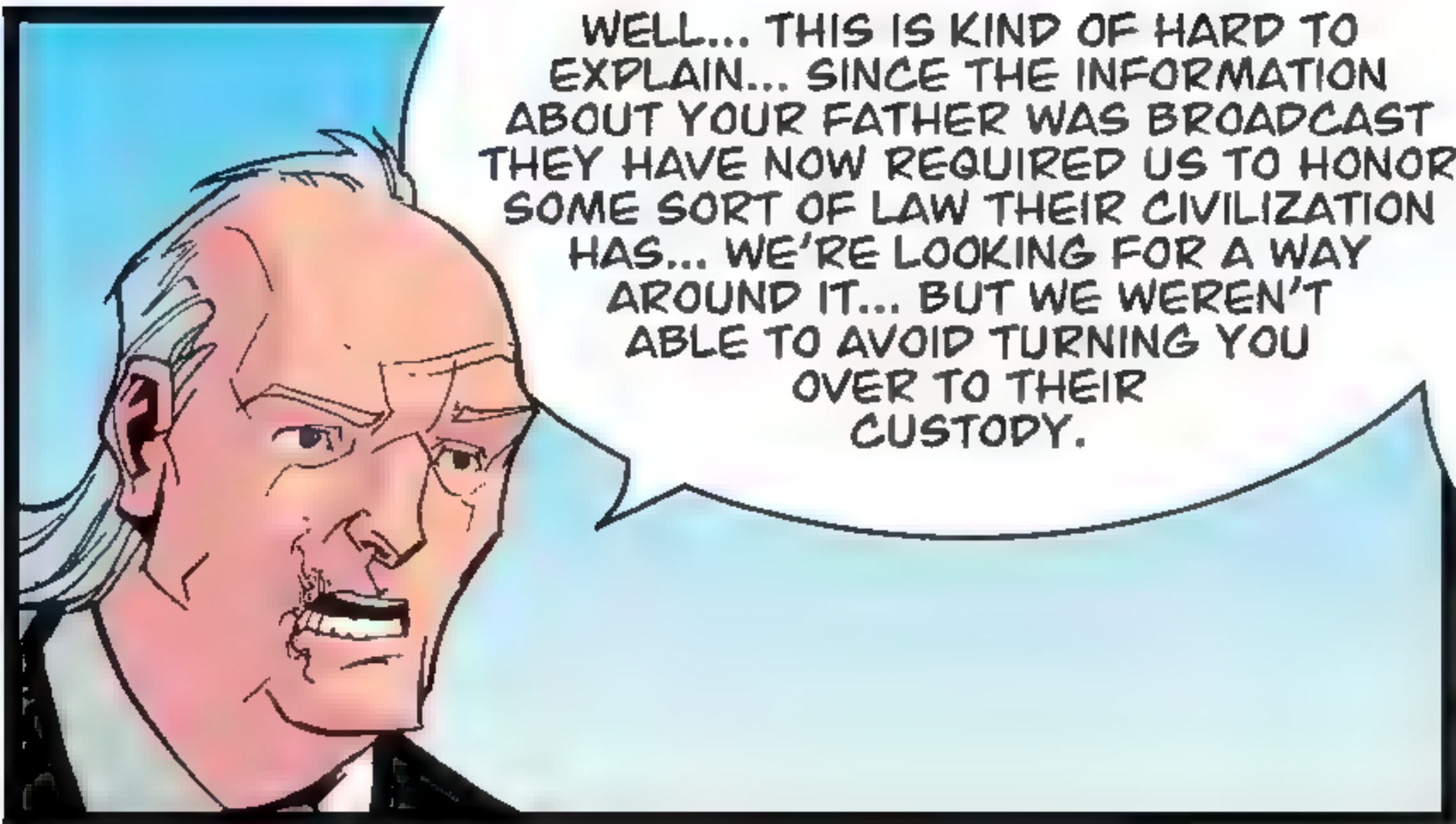
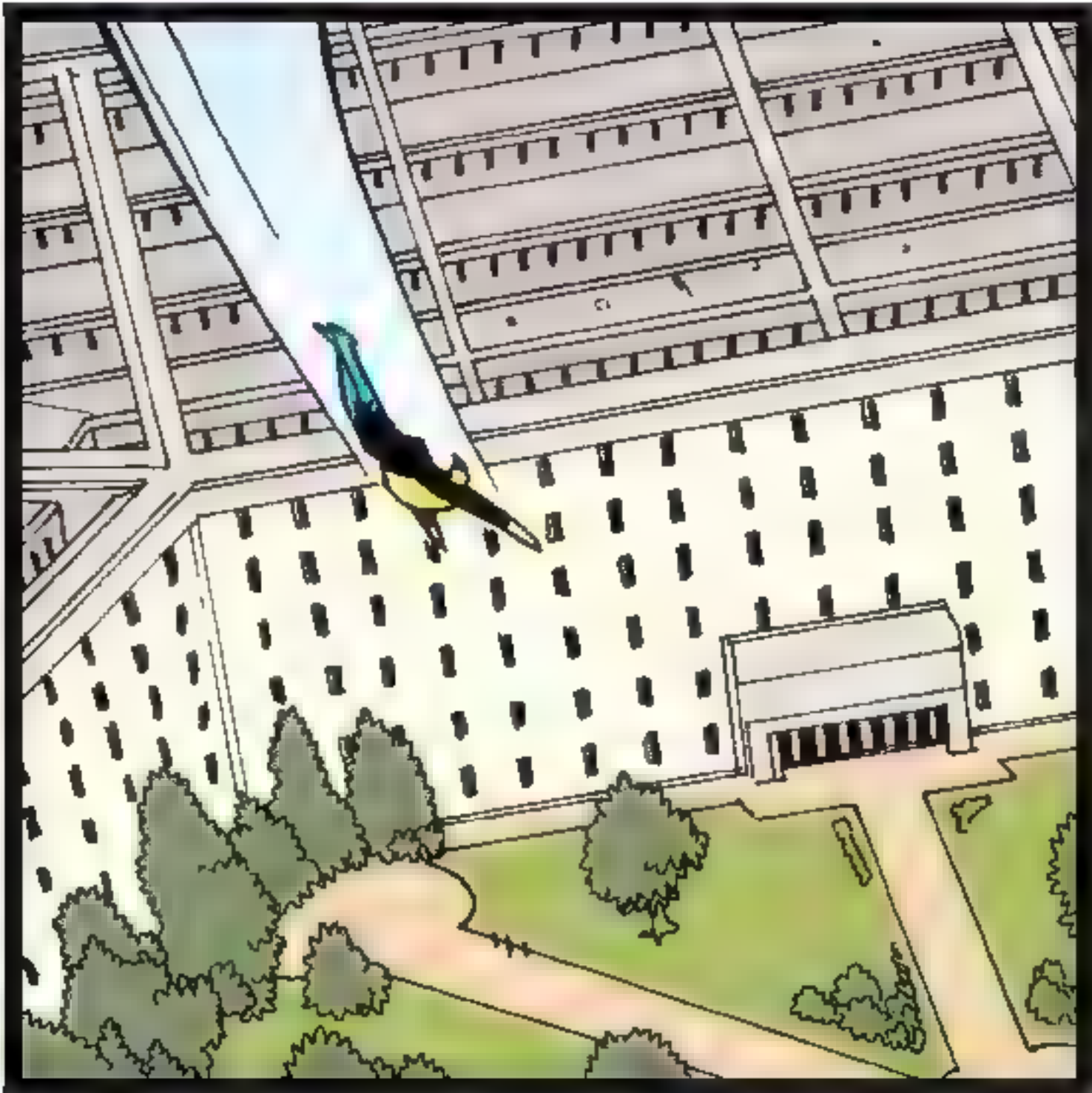
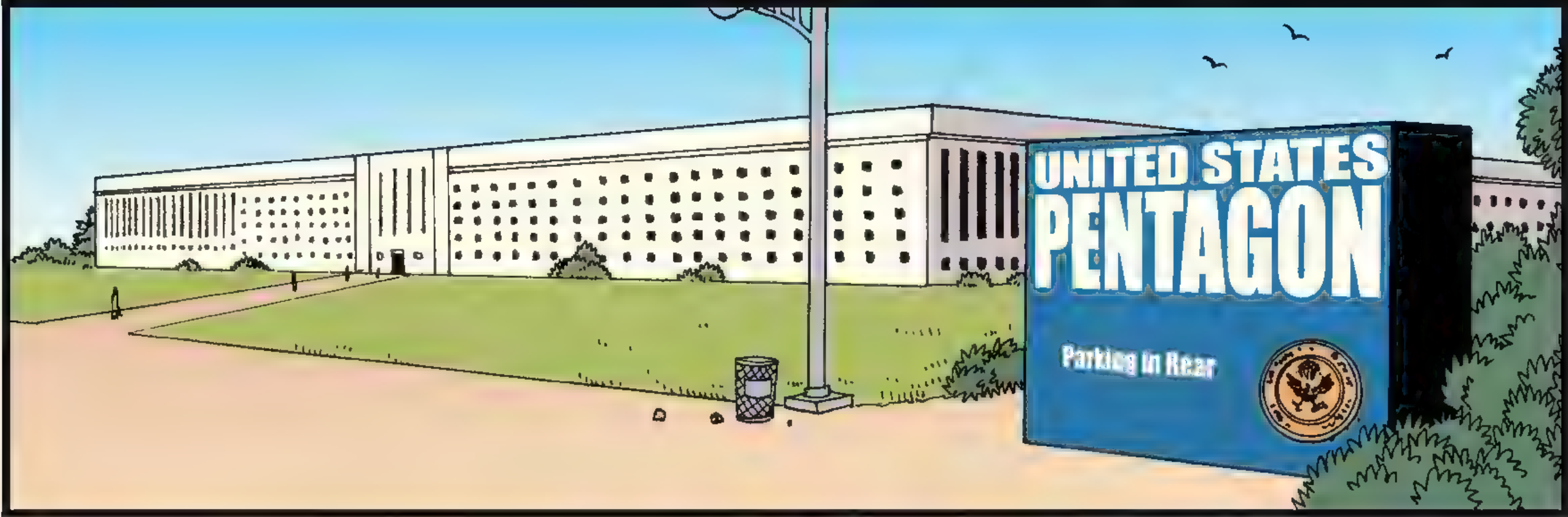


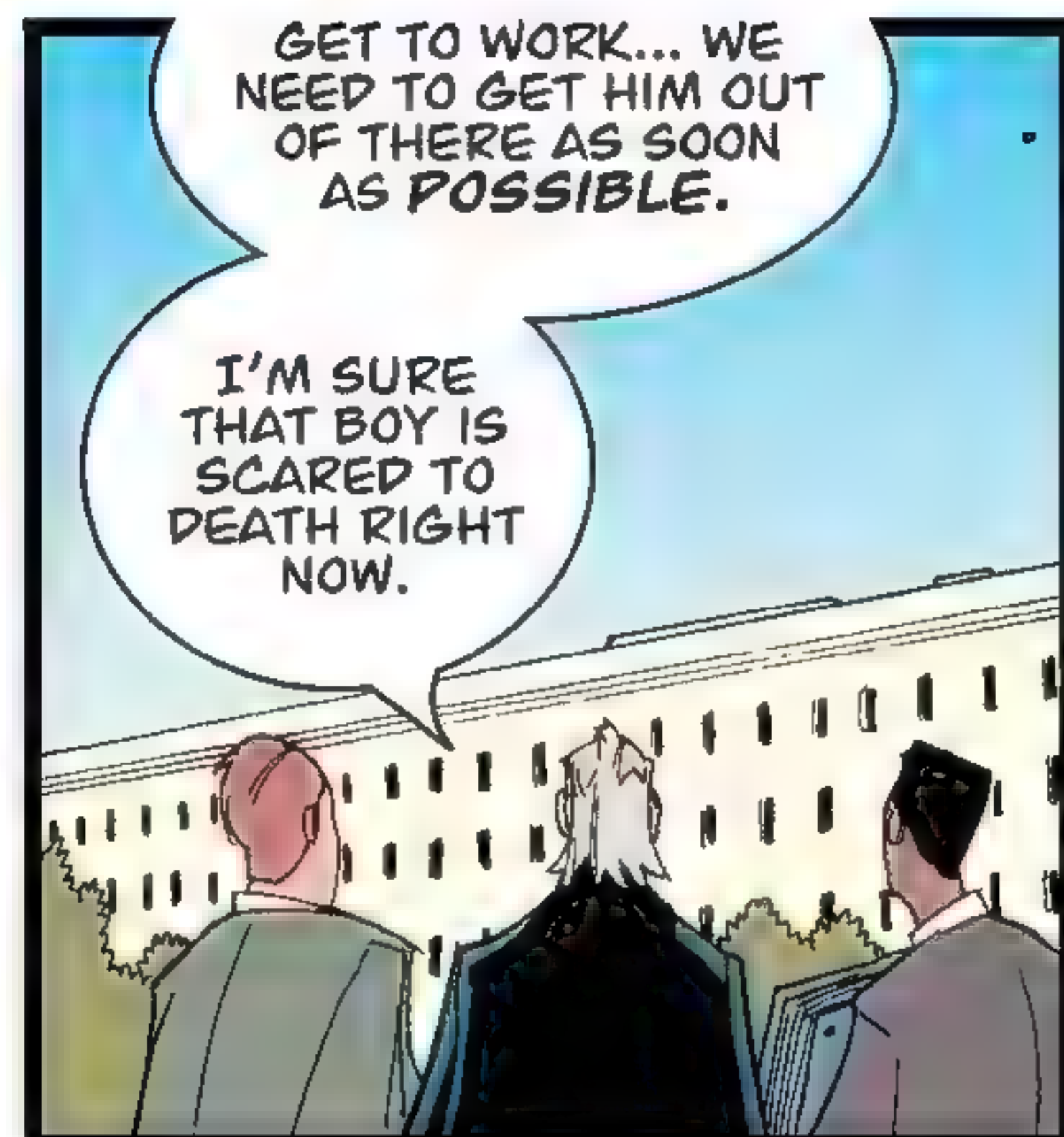
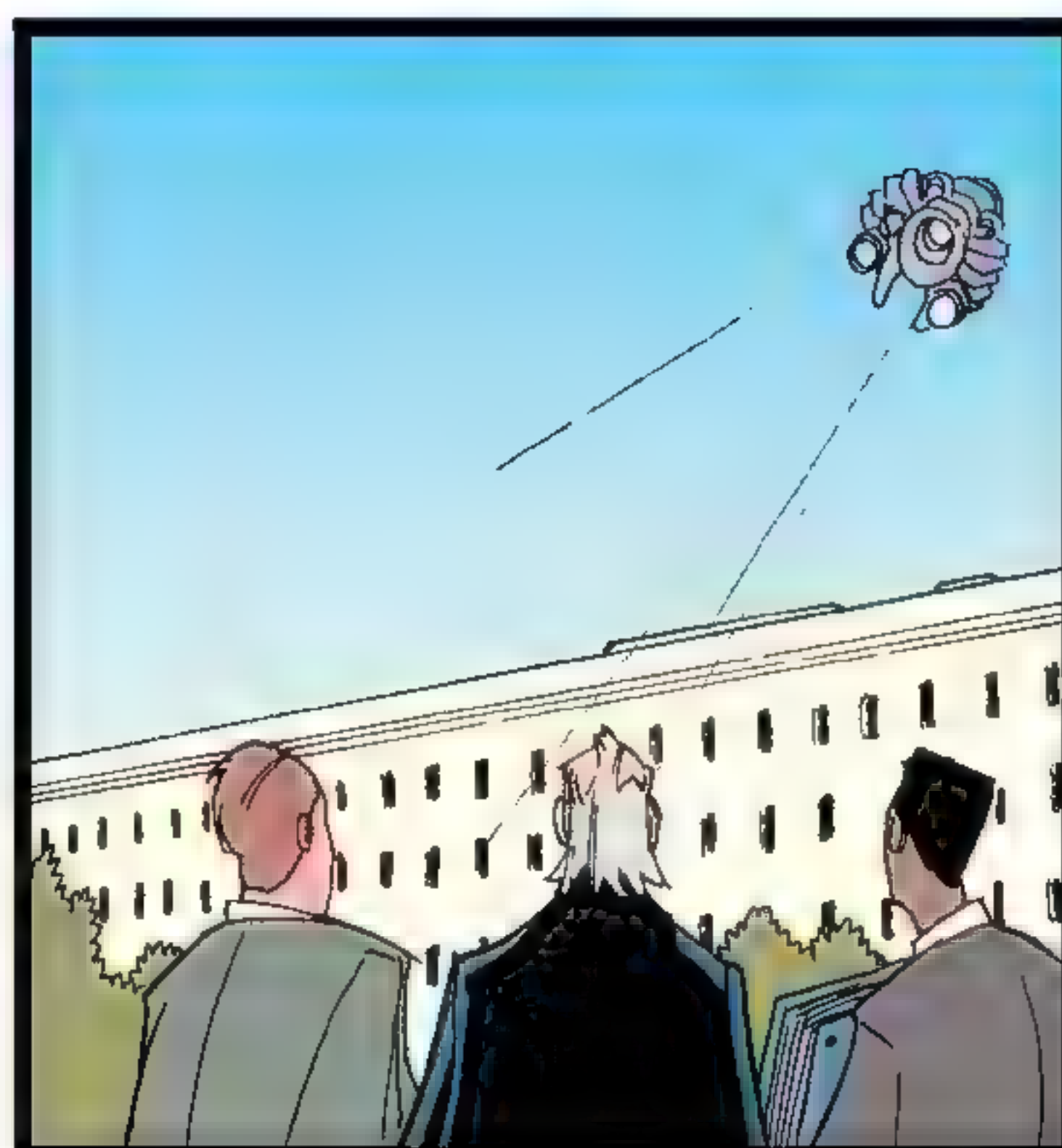
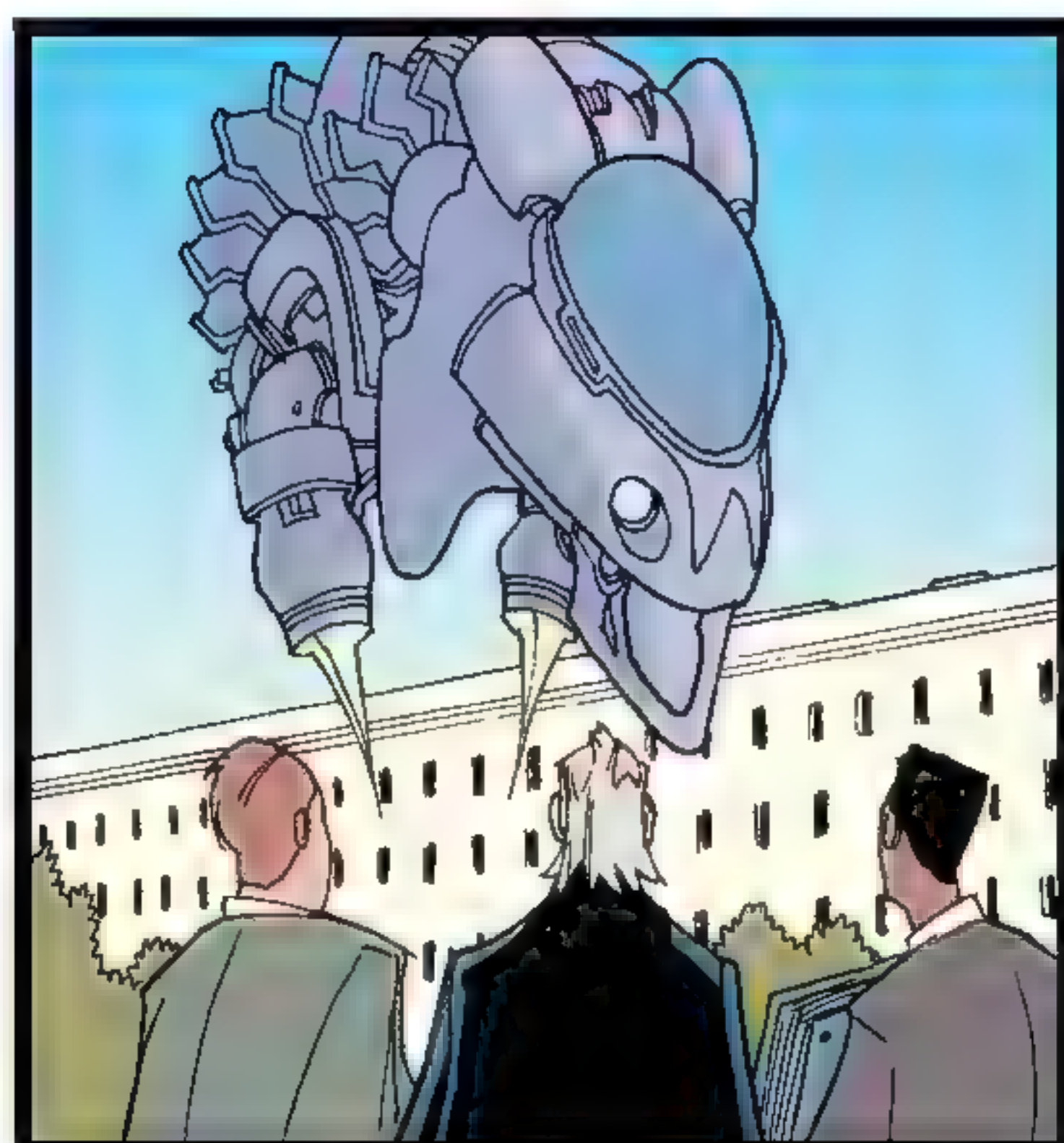
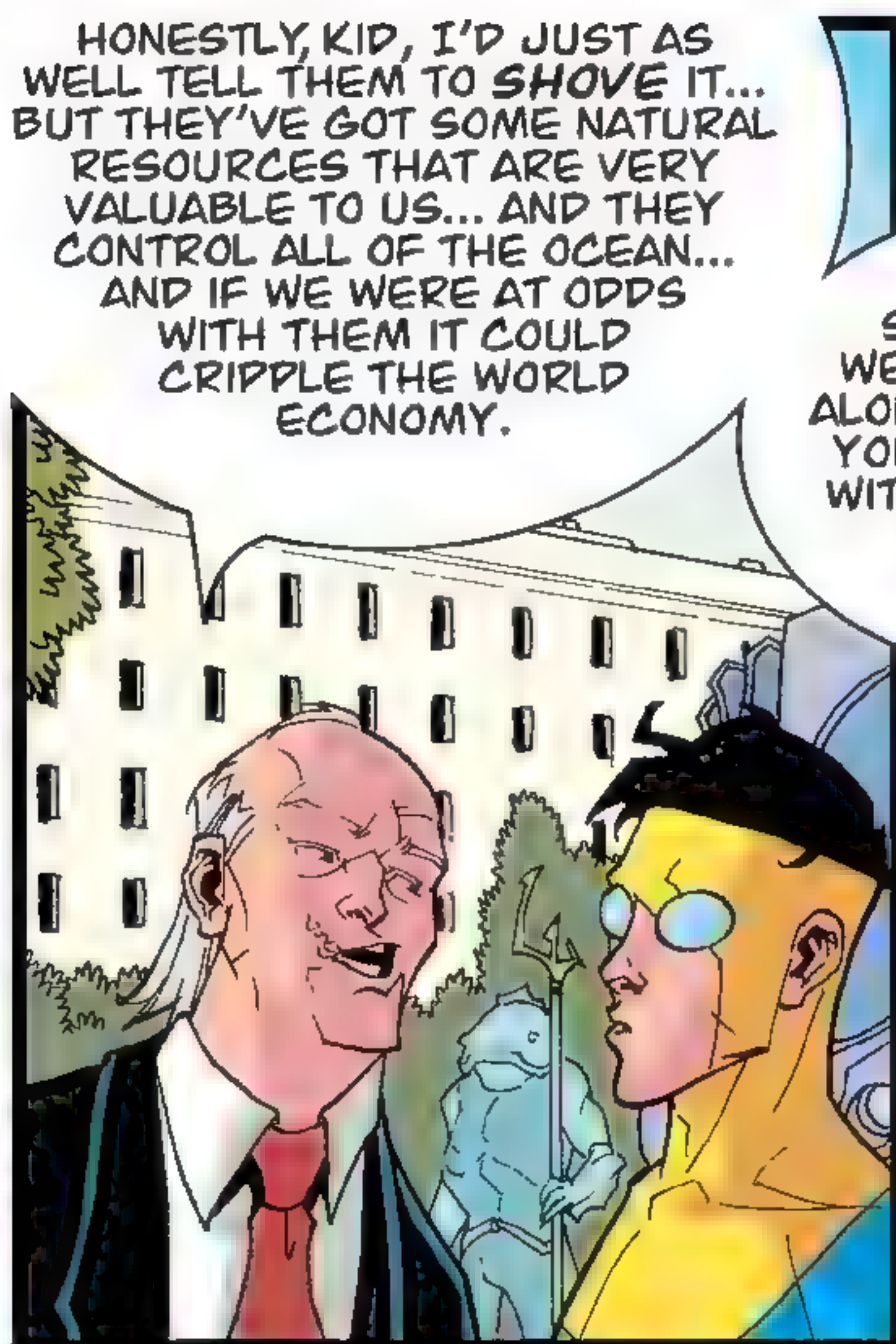








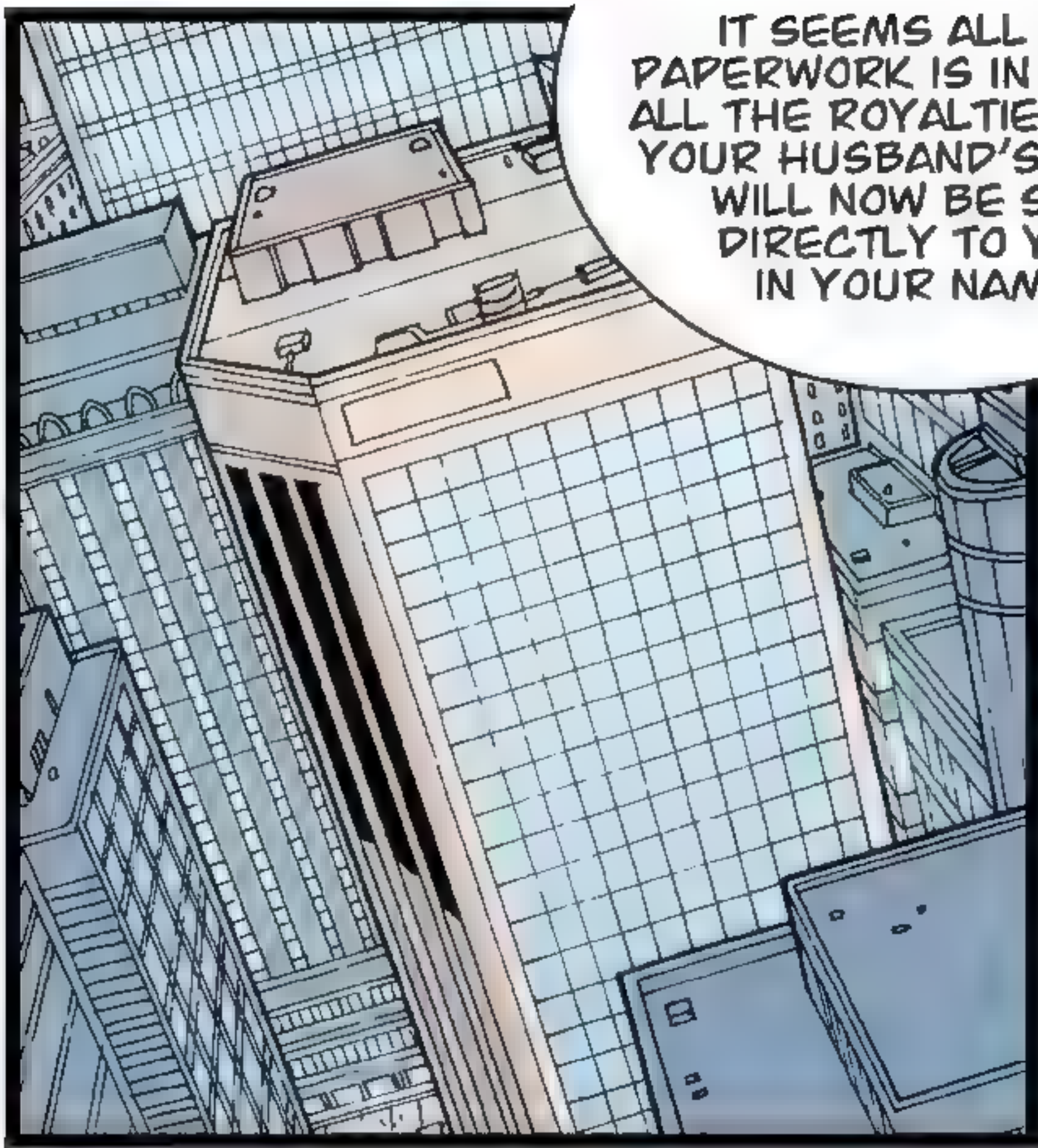






WOW.

THIS
IS SO
COOL.



IT SEEMS ALL THE PAPERWORK IS IN ORDER. ALL THE ROYALTIES FROM YOUR HUSBAND'S BOOKS WILL NOW BE SENT DIRECTLY TO YOU, IN YOUR NAME.



YOU SHOULD HAVE A SUBSTANTIAL CHECK COMING YOUR WAY SOON. ALL HIS BOOKS HAVE BEEN SELLING LIKE CRAZY SINCE HE PASSED ON.

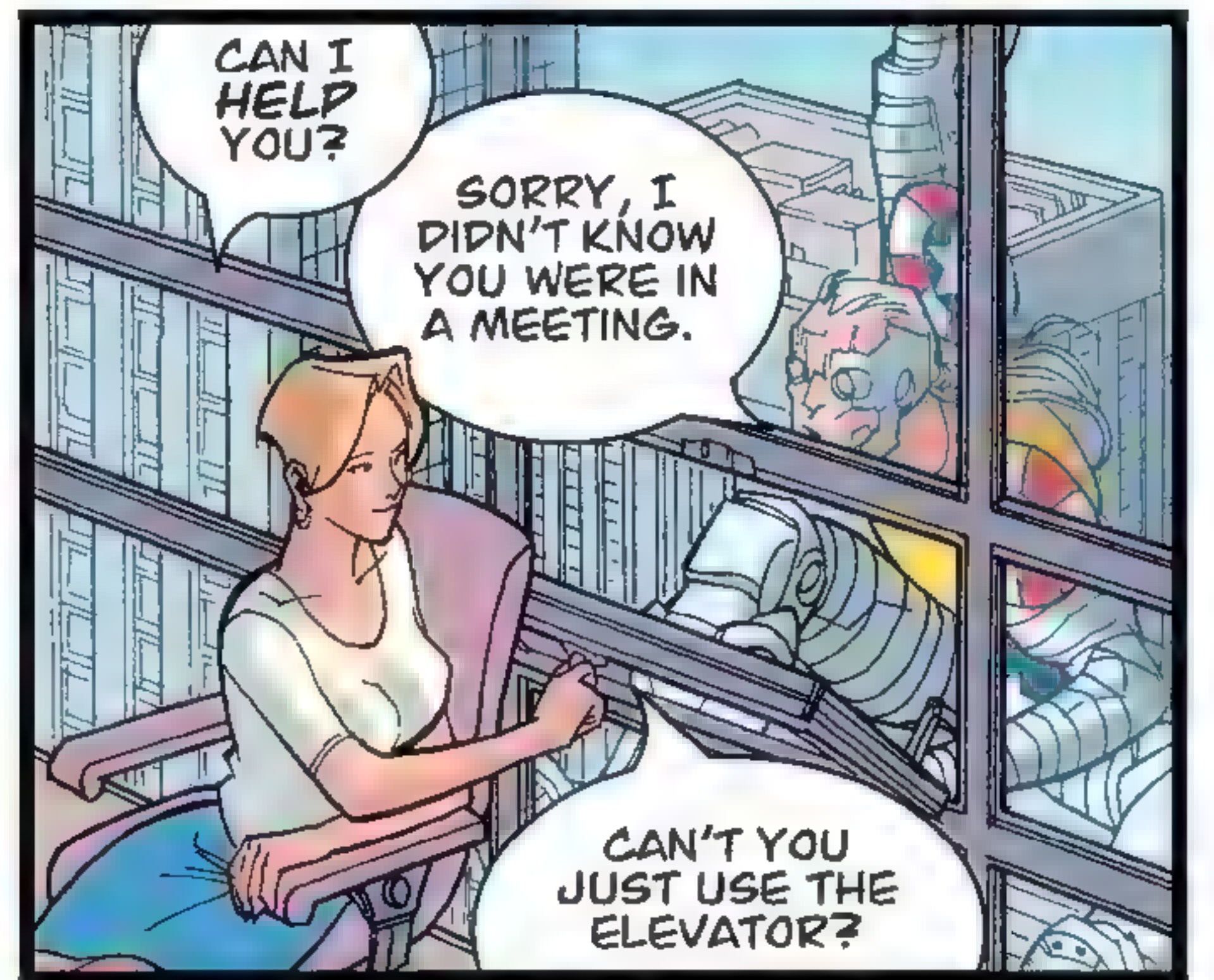
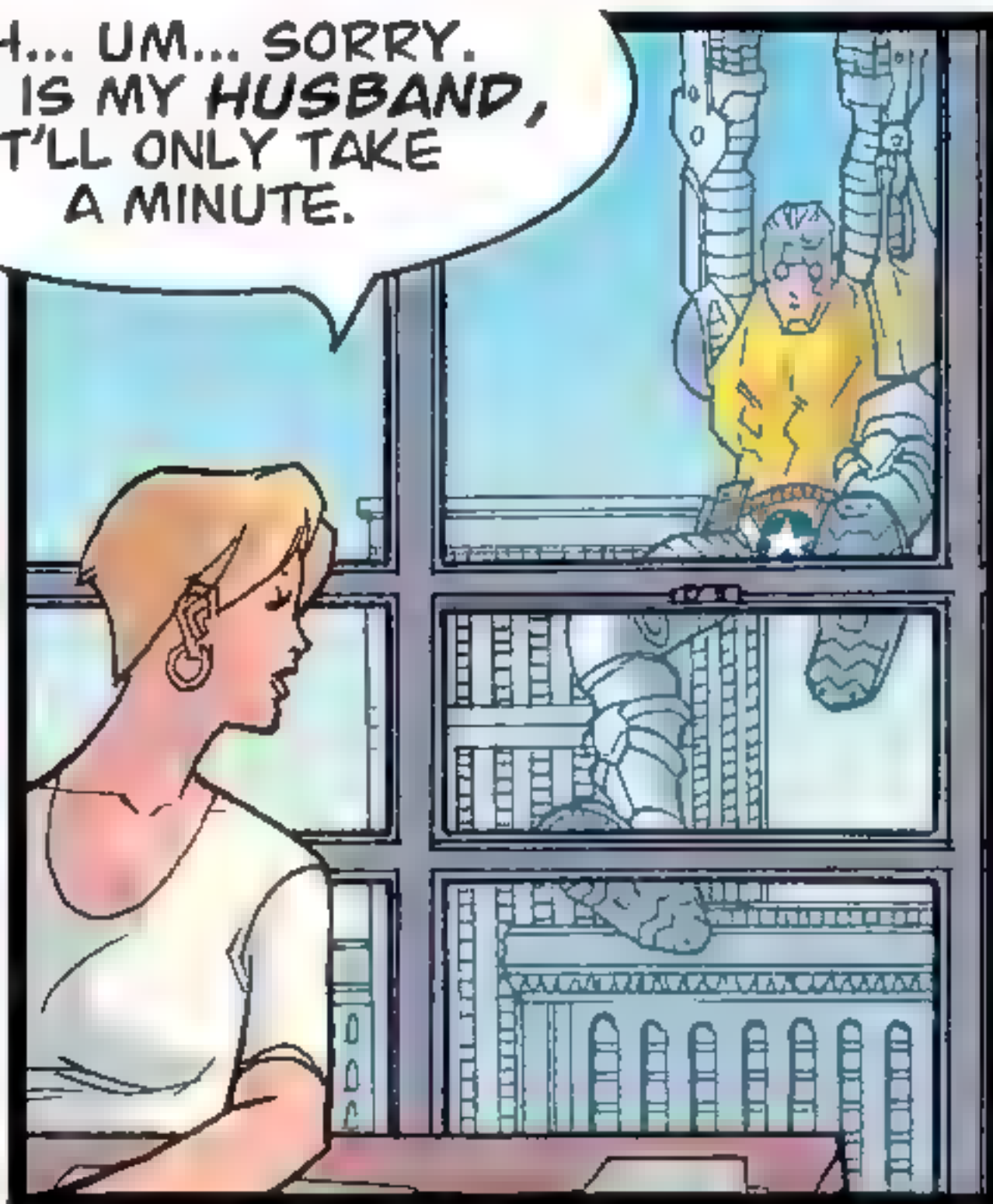
I'M, UH-- TERRIBLY SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS.

THANK YOU. I'M JUST GLAD THIS IS ALL TAKEN CARE OF. I--



UM... THERE'S A ROBOT--

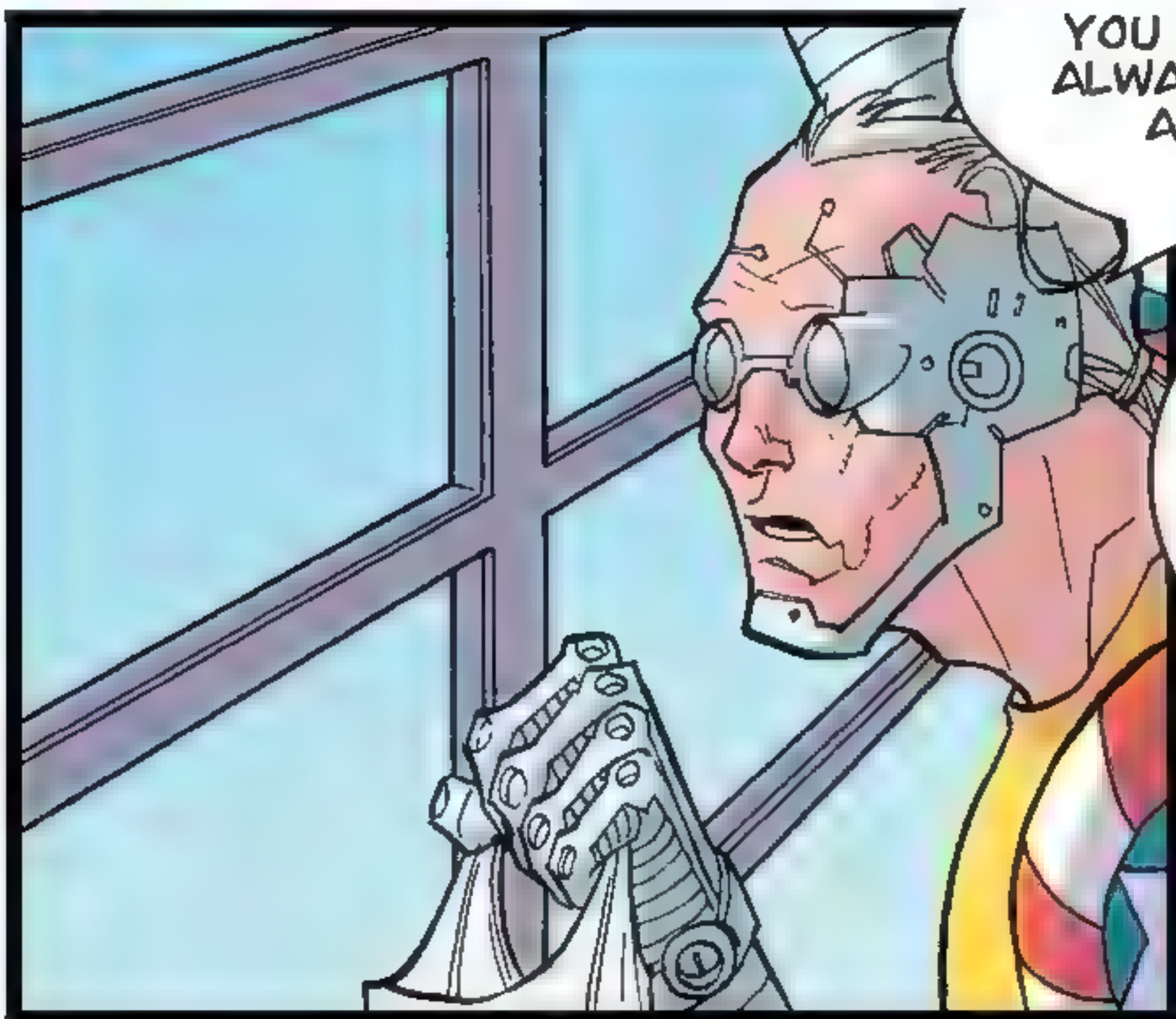
OH... UM... SORRY. THIS IS MY HUSBAND, IT'LL ONLY TAKE A MINUTE.



CAN I HELP YOU?

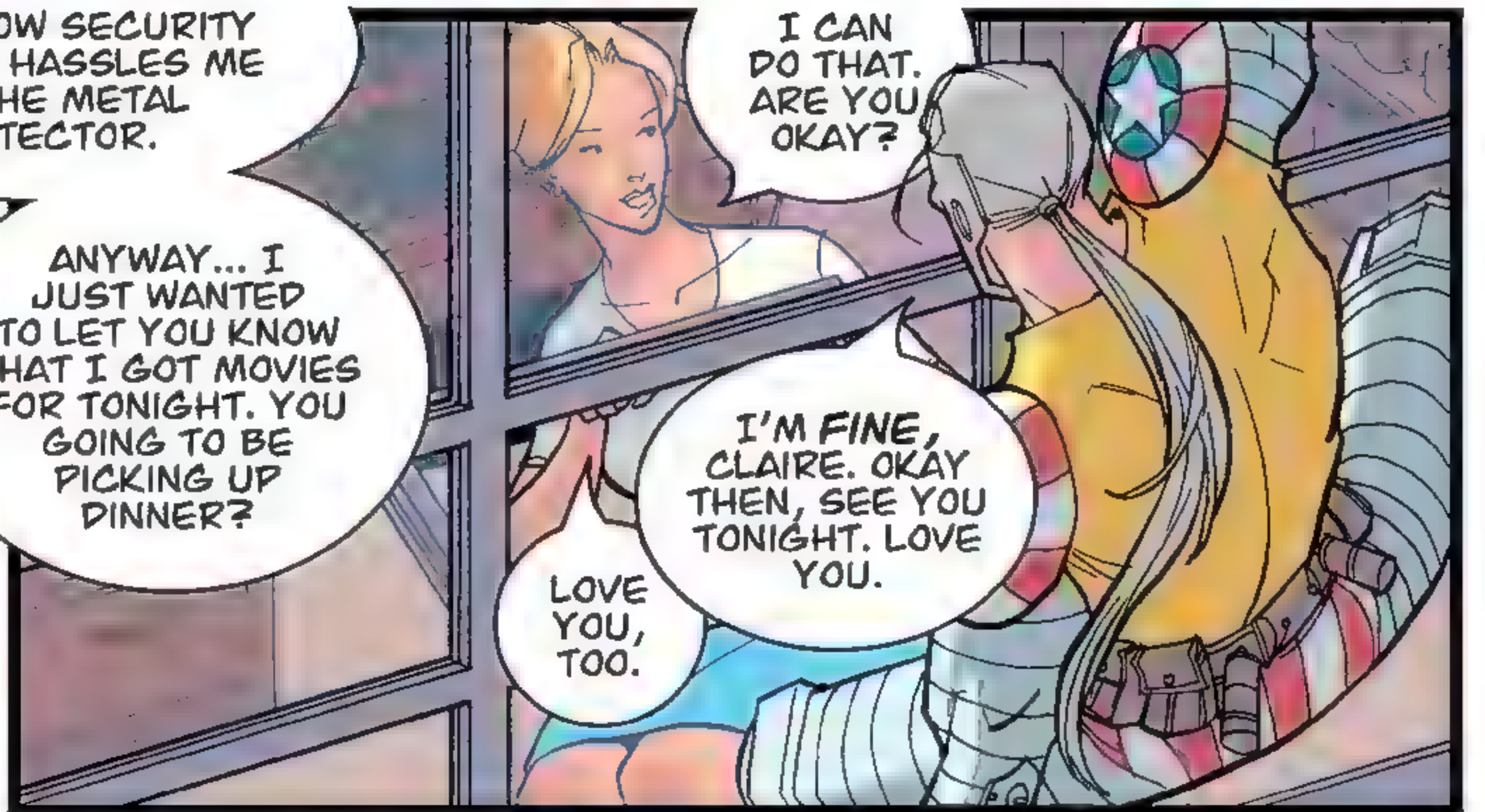
SORRY, I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE IN A MEETING.

CAN'T YOU JUST USE THE ELEVATOR?



YOU KNOW SECURITY ALWAYS HASSLES ME AT THE METAL DETECTOR.

ANYWAY... I JUST WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW THAT I GOT MOVIES FOR TONIGHT. YOU GOING TO BE PICKING UP DINNER?



I CAN DO THAT. ARE YOU OKAY?

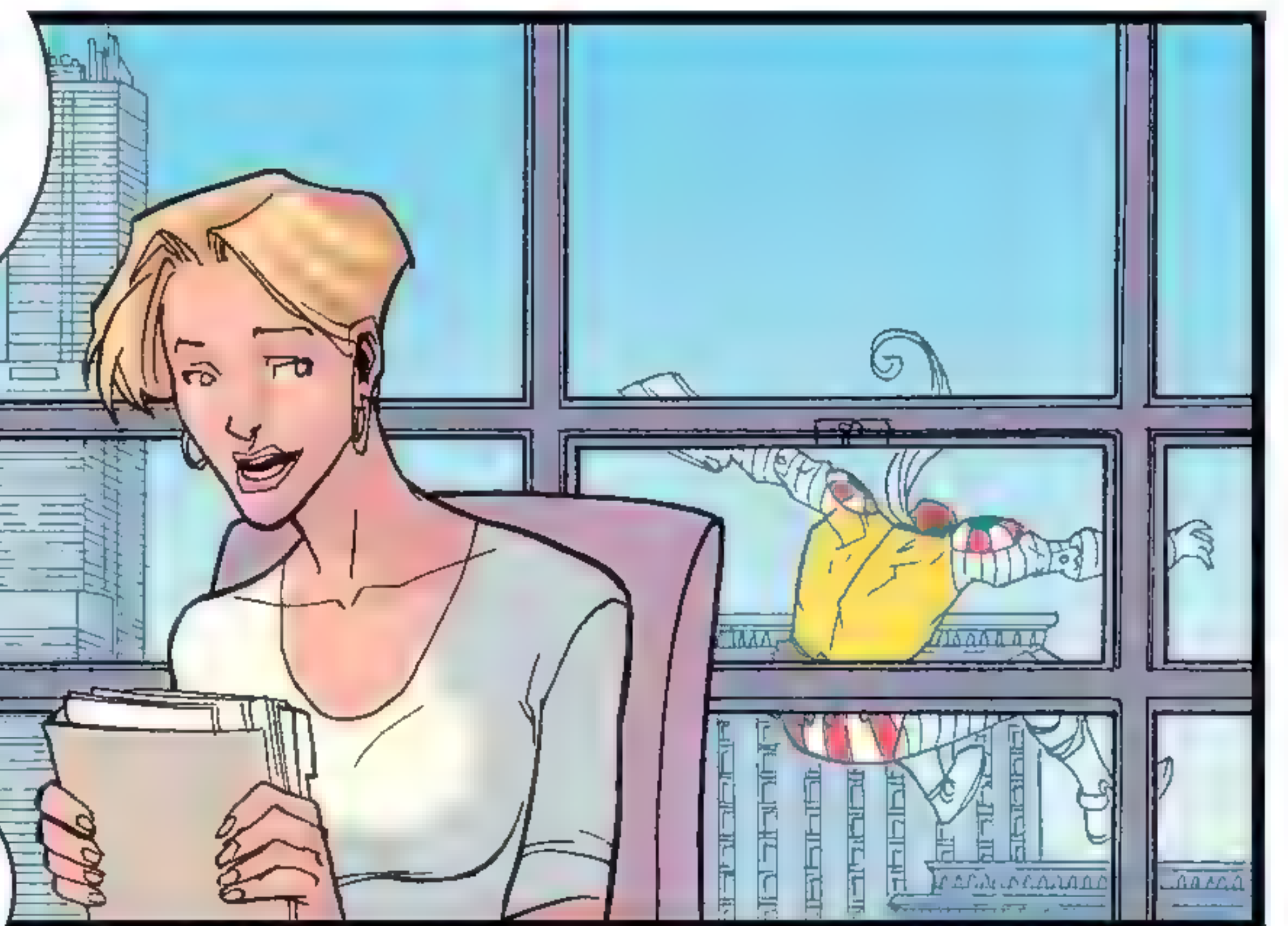
LOVE YOU, TOO.

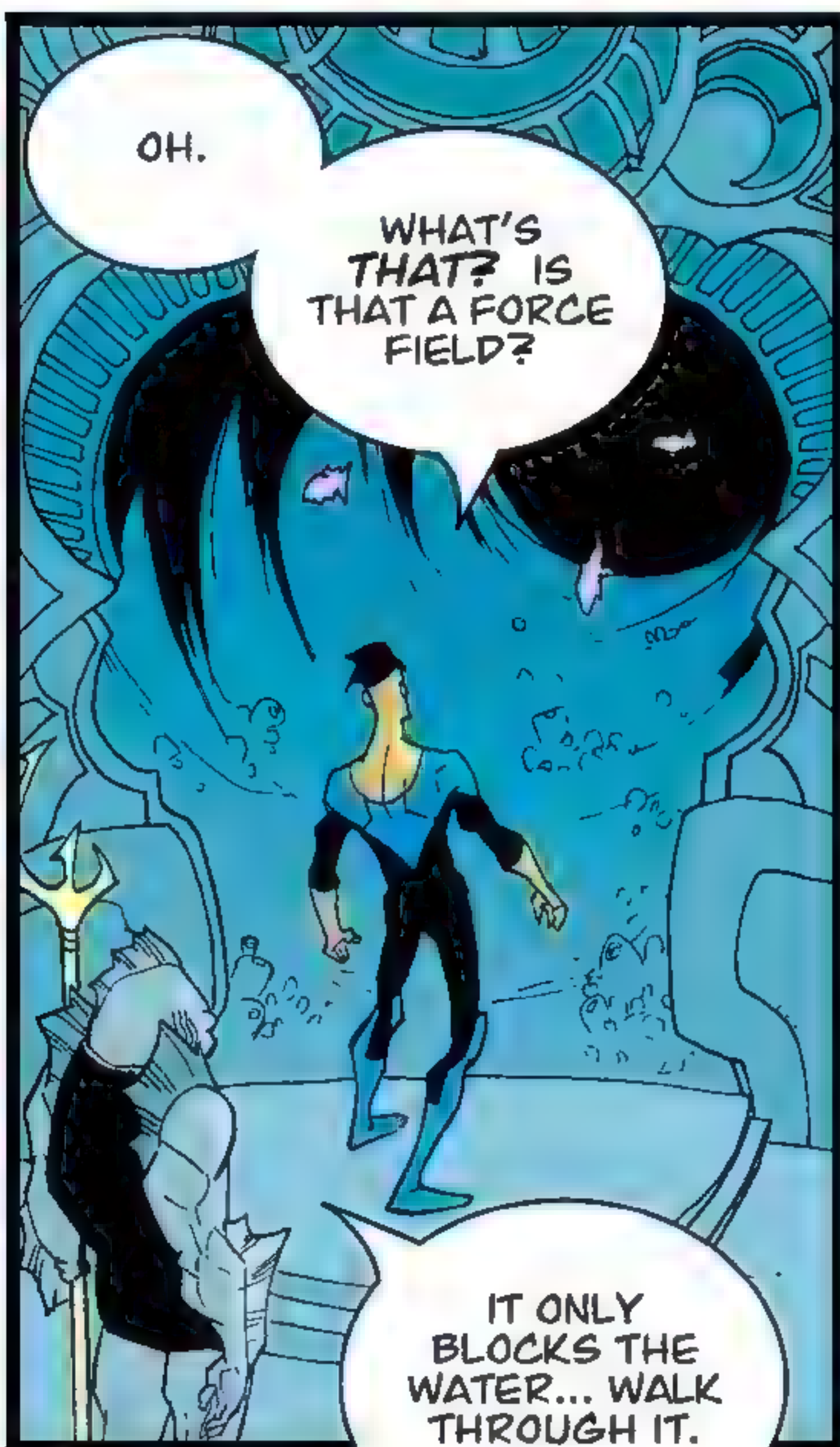
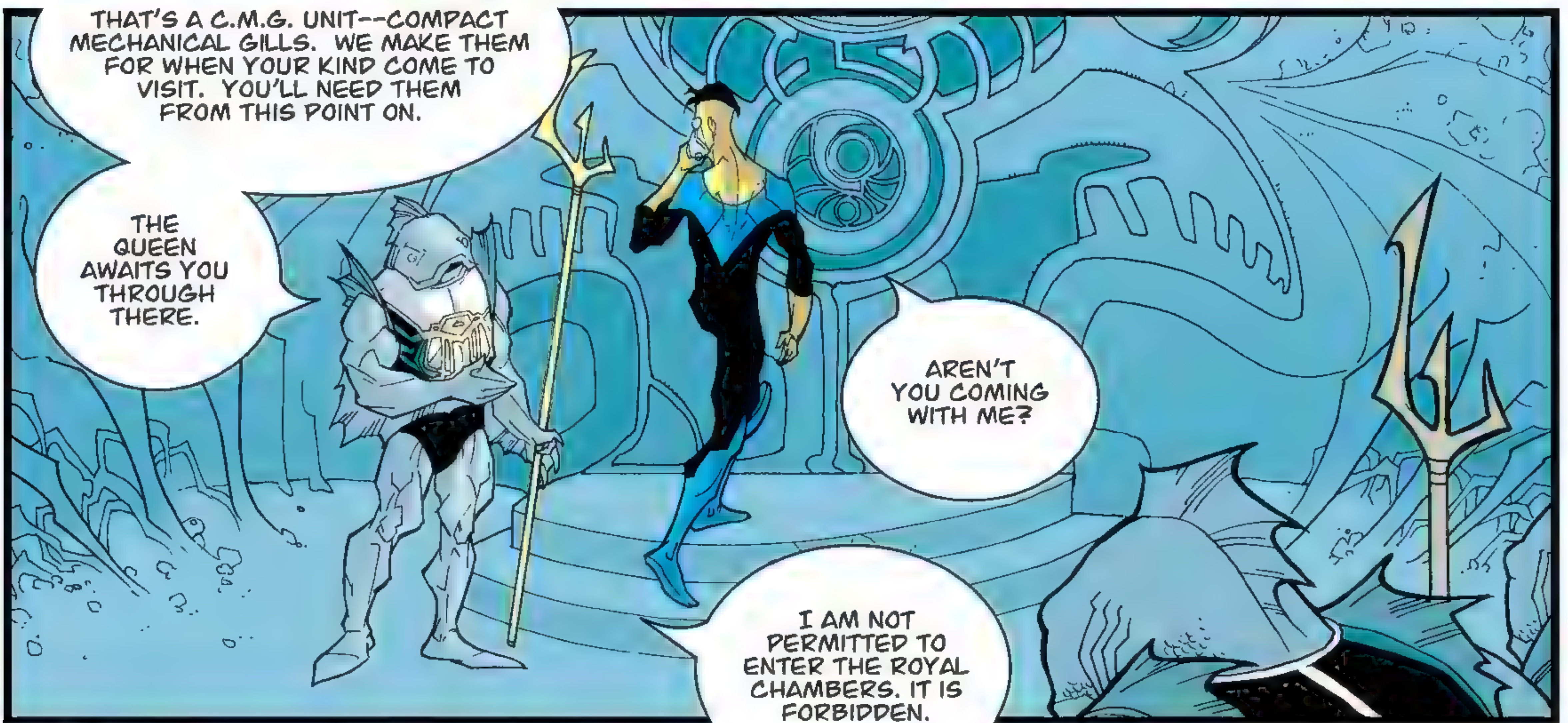
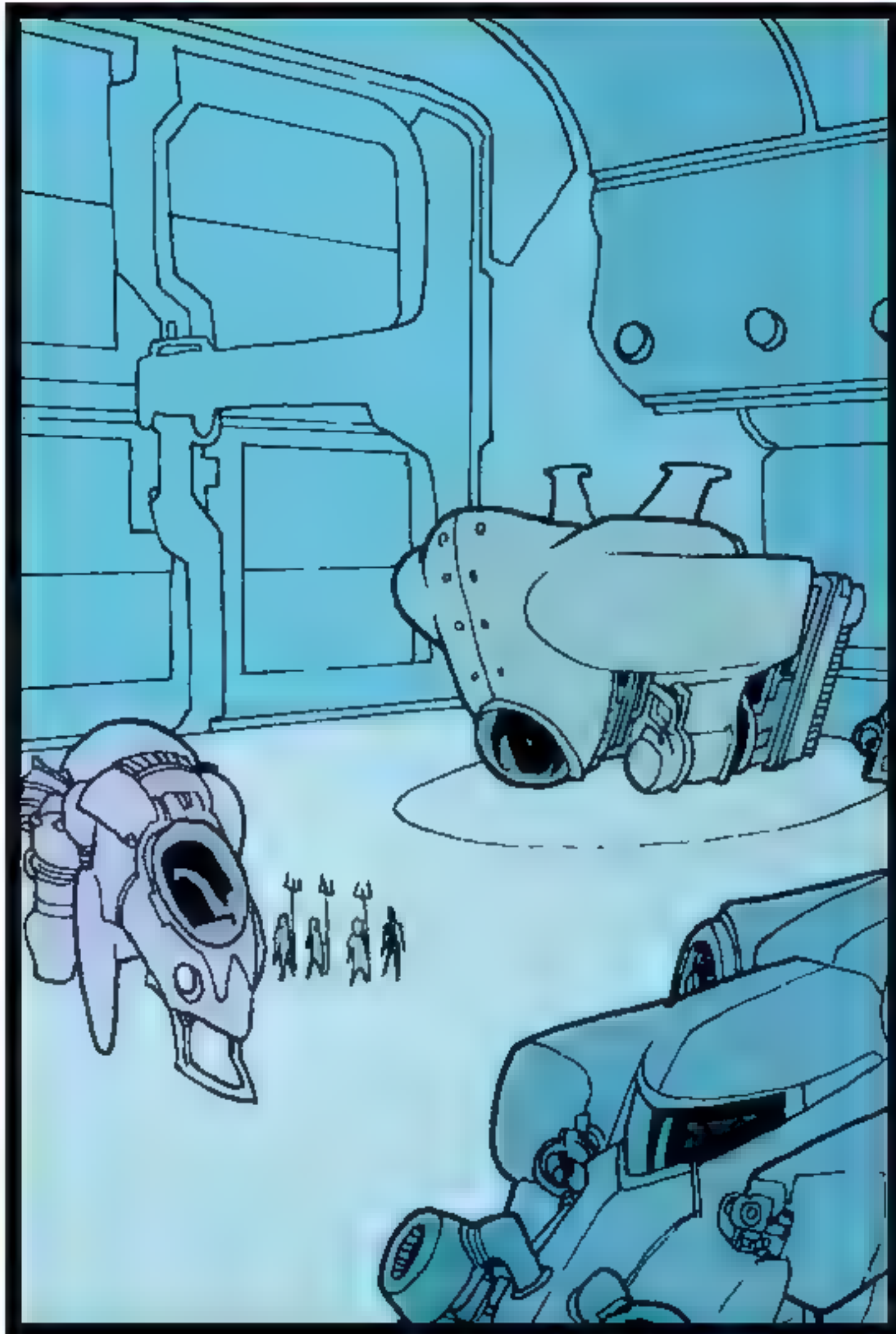
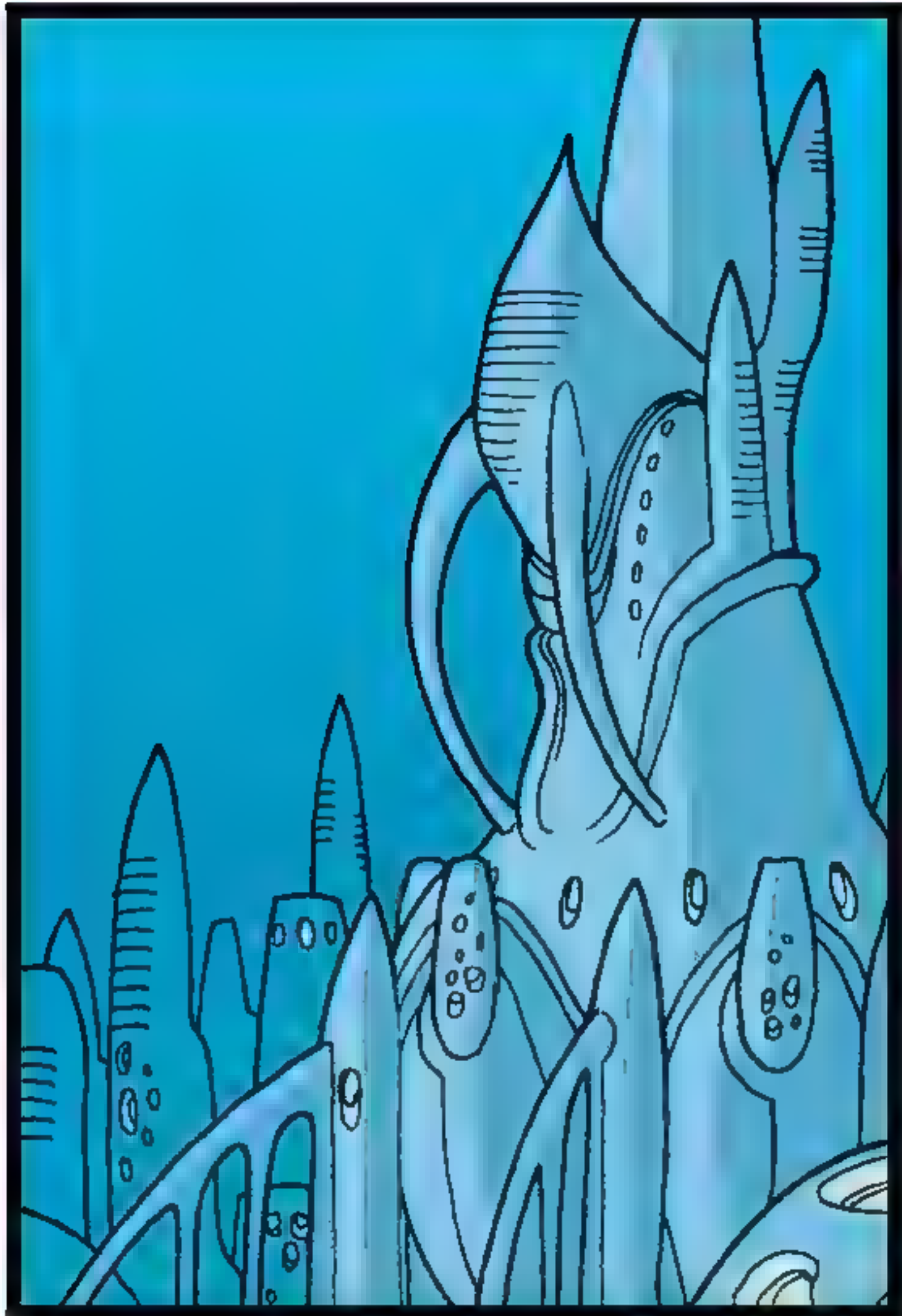
I'M FINE, CLAIRE. OKAY THEN, SEE YOU TONIGHT. LOVE YOU.

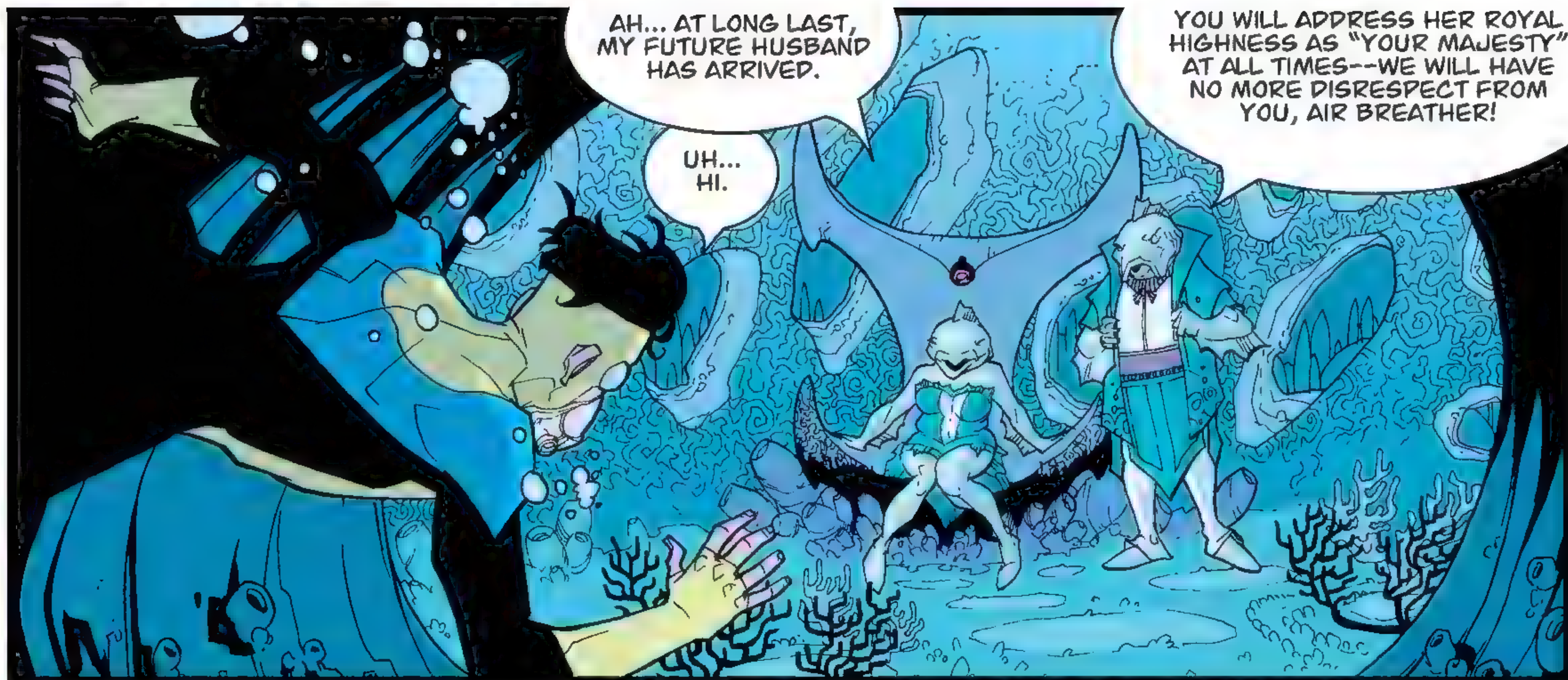


YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE WHAT A PAIN IN THE ASS IT IS TO BE MARRIED TO A SUPERHERO.

OH, I DON'T KNOW...



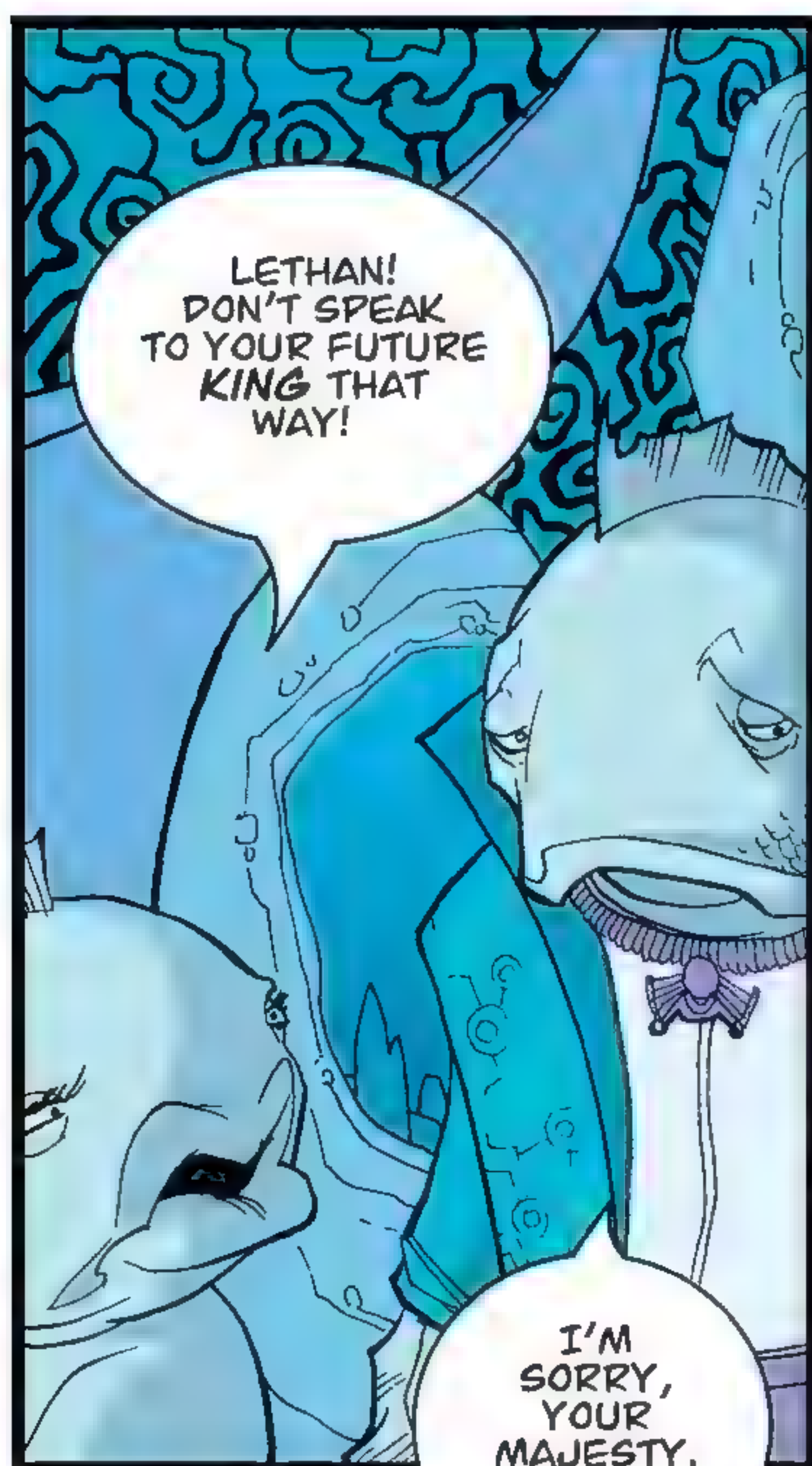




AH... AT LONG LAST,
MY FUTURE HUSBAND
HAS ARRIVED.

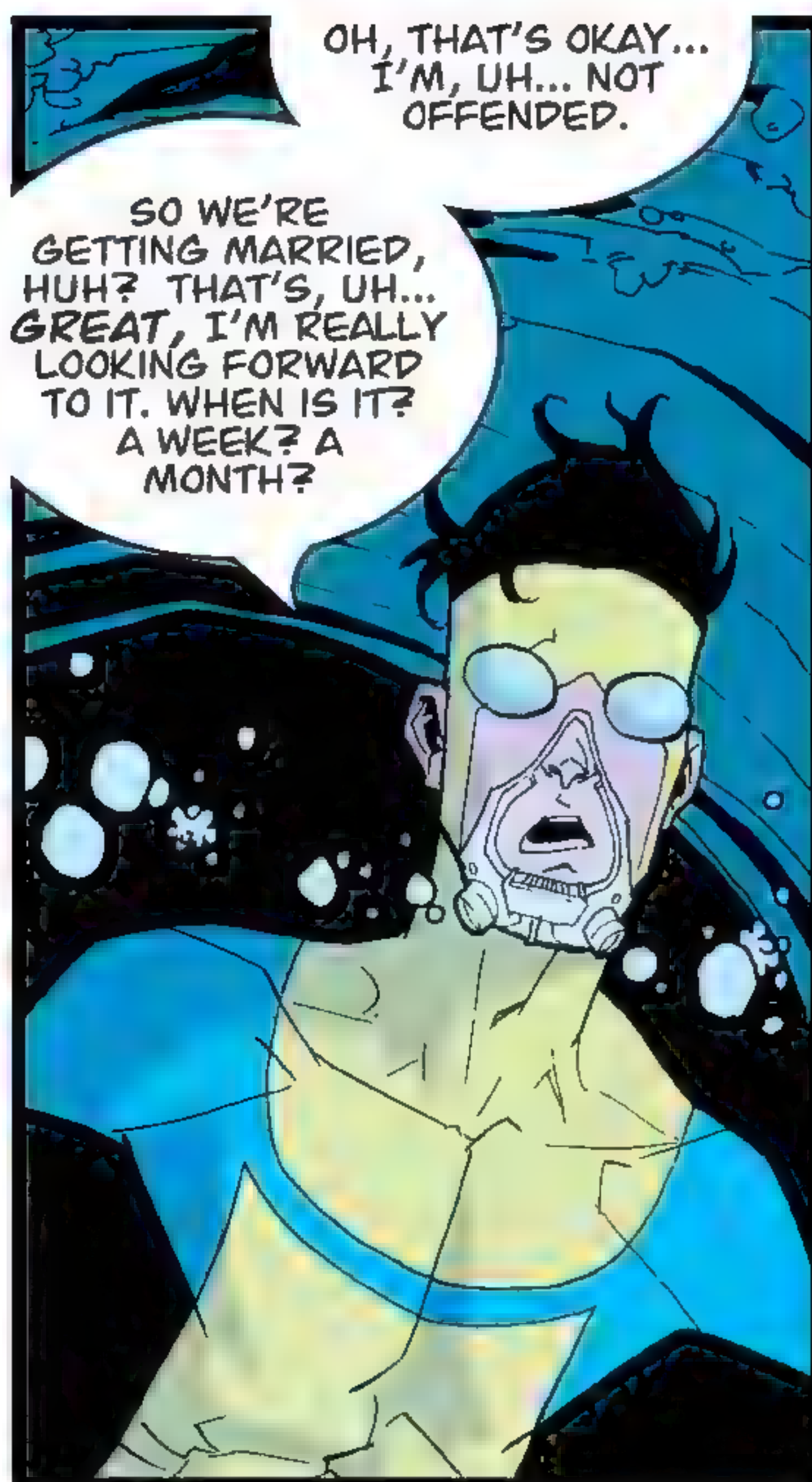
UH...
HI.

YOU WILL ADDRESS HER ROYAL
HIGHNESS AS "YOUR MAJESTY"
AT ALL TIMES--WE WILL HAVE
NO MORE DISRESPECT FROM
YOU, AIR BREATHER!



LETHAN!
DON'T SPEAK
TO YOUR FUTURE
KING THAT
WAY!

I'M
SORRY,
YOUR
MAJESTY.

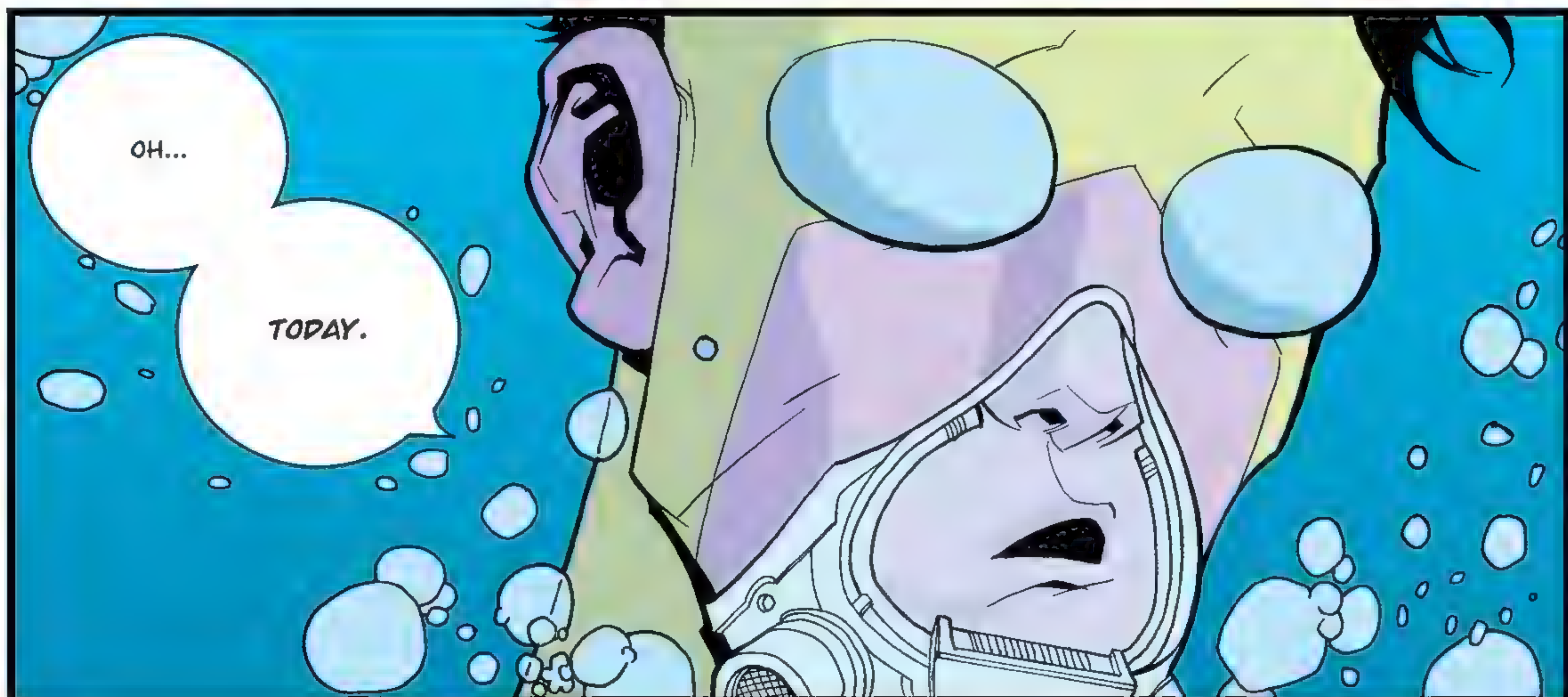


OH, THAT'S OKAY...
I'M, UH... NOT
OFFENDED.

SO WE'RE
GETTING MARRIED,
HUH? THAT'S, UH...
GREAT, I'M REALLY
LOOKING FORWARD
TO IT. WHEN IS IT?
A WEEK? A
MONTH?

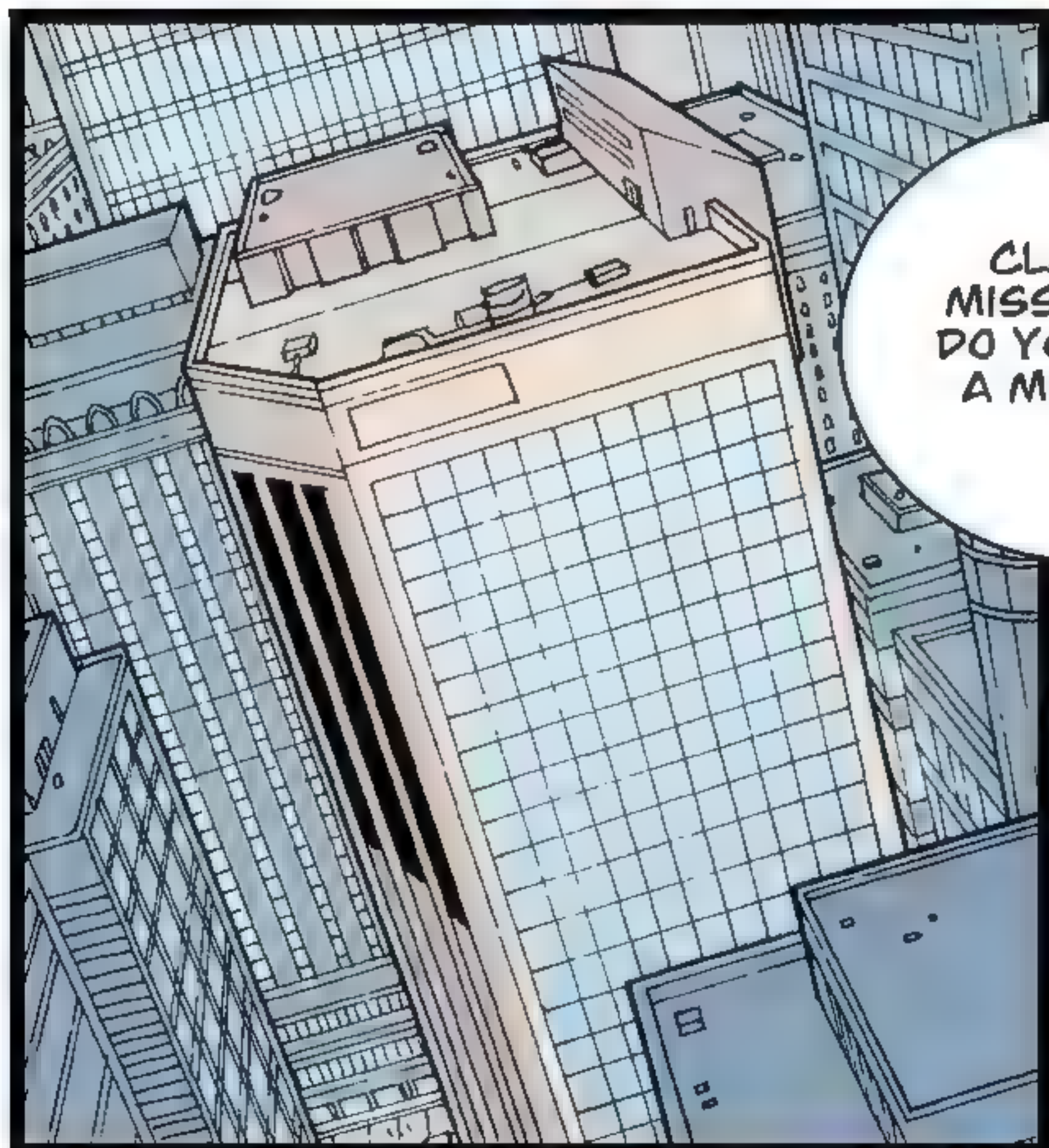


OH, NO....
THE CEREMONY
IS TODAY.



OH...

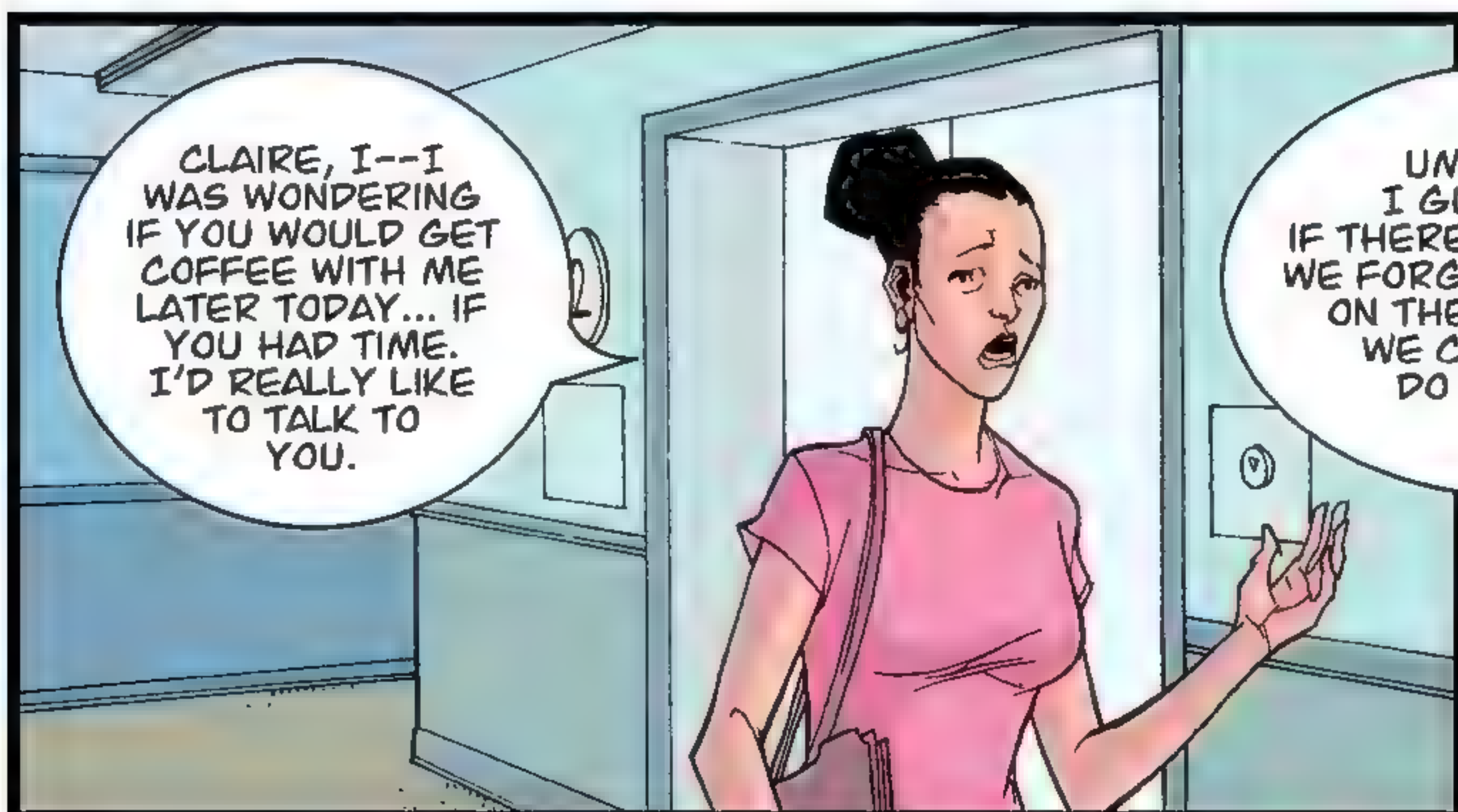
TODAY.



CLAIRE?
MISS BONO?
DO YOU HAVE
A MINUTE?

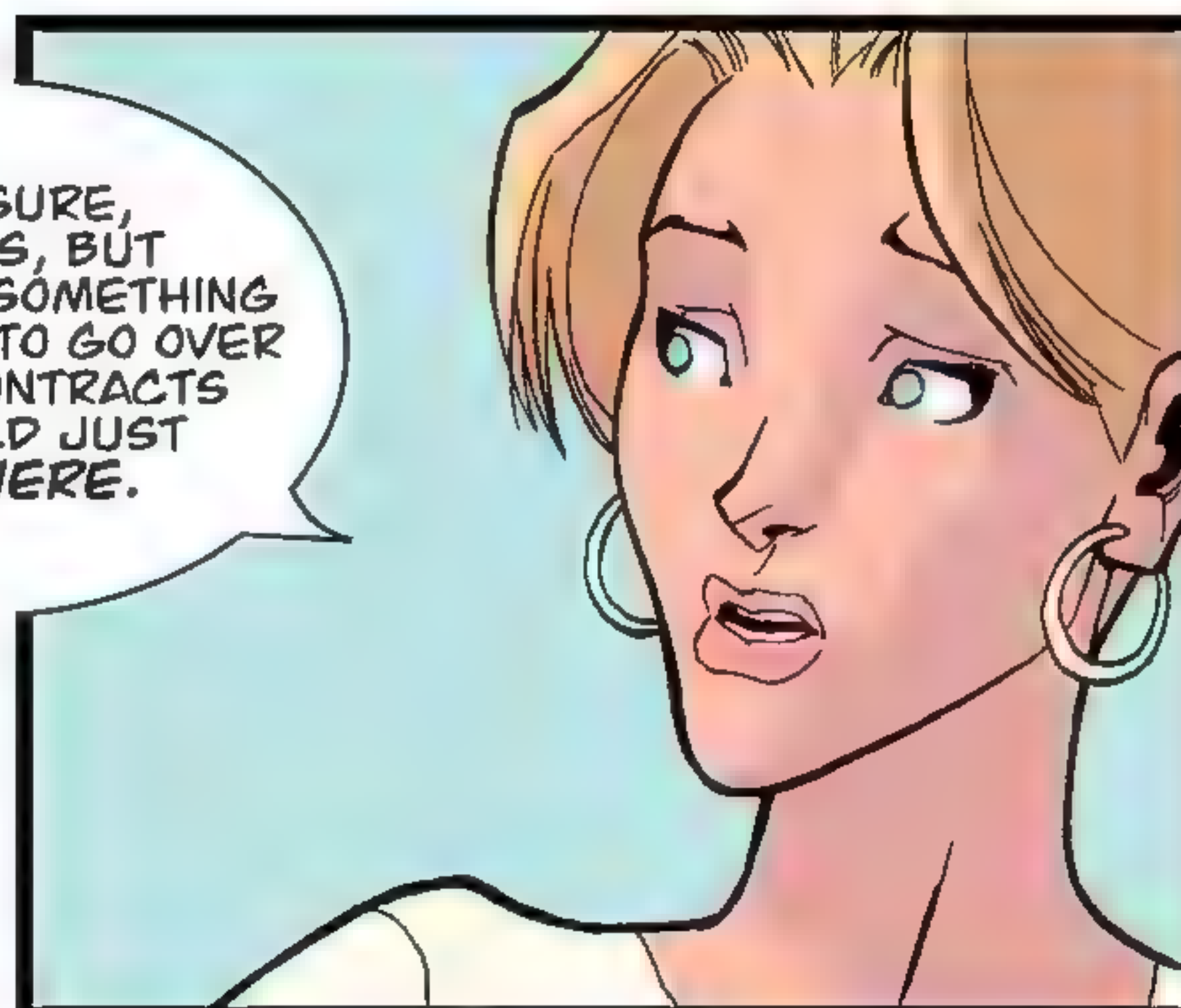


OH, HI
MISS GRAYSON.
DID YOU FORGET
SOMETHING
AT THE
OFFICE?



CLAIRE, I--I
WAS WONDERING
IF YOU WOULD GET
COFFEE WITH ME
LATER TODAY... IF
YOU HAD TIME.
I'D REALLY LIKE
TO TALK TO
YOU.

UM... SURE,
I GUESS, BUT
IF THERE'S SOMETHING
WE FORGOT TO GO OVER
ON THE CONTRACTS
WE COULD JUST
DO IT HERE.



NO--IT'S ABOUT MY HUSBAND,
I--HE... I JUST WANTED TO...
I DON'T HAVE ANYONE
ELSE TO TALK TO
AND I--

NO, IT'S NOT. I UNDERSTAND...
I LOST MY FATHER A FEW YEARS
AGO. I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE
GOING THROUGH.

I'LL MEET YOU AT THE COFFEE
SHOP ON THE FIRST FLOOR. I'VE
GOT A MEETING, BUT I'LL BE
DOWN IN ABOUT AN
HOUR.



NO...
NEVER MIND...
THIS IS
STUPID.



OKAY.

THANKS.

I'LL SEE
YOU IN AN
HOUR.



SO... THE
MAN WEARS
THE DRESS?

ONLY
FOR THE
BATTLE.

BATTLE?
THERE'S A BATTLE
AS PART OF THE WEDDING
CEREMONY--AND I
WEAR A DRESS FOR IT?
WHAT DO I WEAR
AFTER THAT?

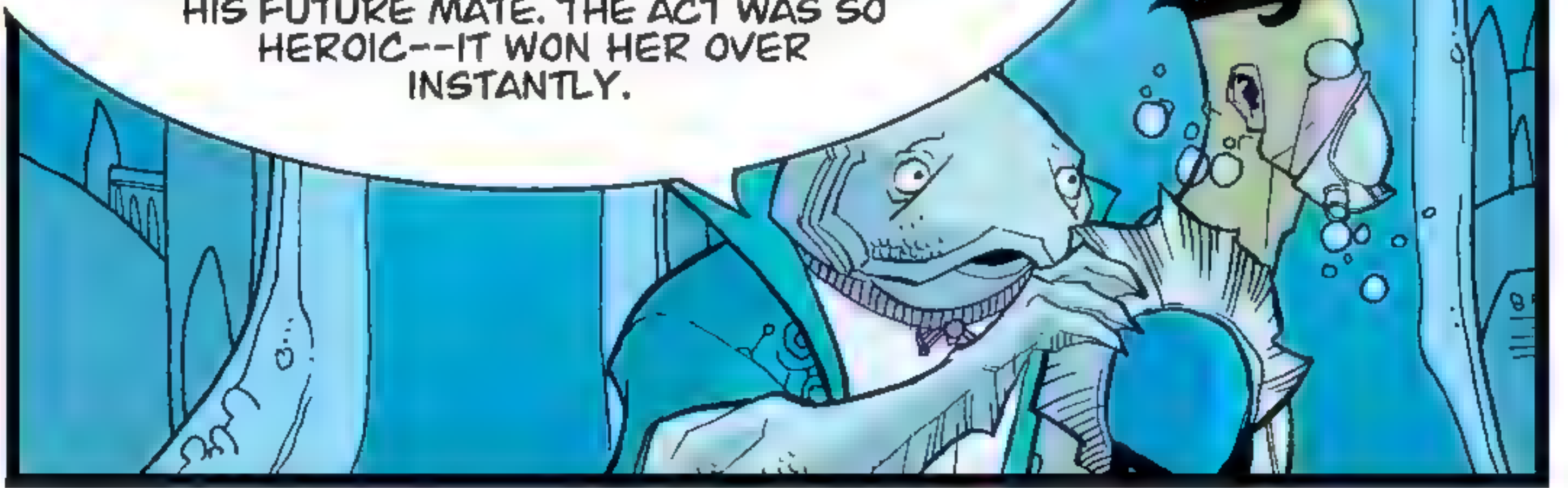
OH... NOTHING.
AFTER THE BATTLE IS
WHEN YOU **COPULATE**
TO SYMBOLICALLY
UNITE YOUR TWO
LIVES INTO **ONE**.

UM...
COPULATE?
YOU MEAN... WE,
UH--HAVE TO **DO**
IT RIGHT AFTER
THE CEREMONY?

NO--IT'S
PART OF THE
CEREMONY.

THE
CEREMONY
OPENS WITH A
PROCLAMATION OF
INTENT. WHERE YOU
WILL CONFESS YOUR
DESIRE TO BECOME
AQUARIA'S MATE. THEN
THAT LEADS INTO THE
HEROIC CONQUEST.
IT'S AN ANCIENT RITUAL
DATING BACK TO THE
BEGINNING OF OUR
CIVILIZATION.

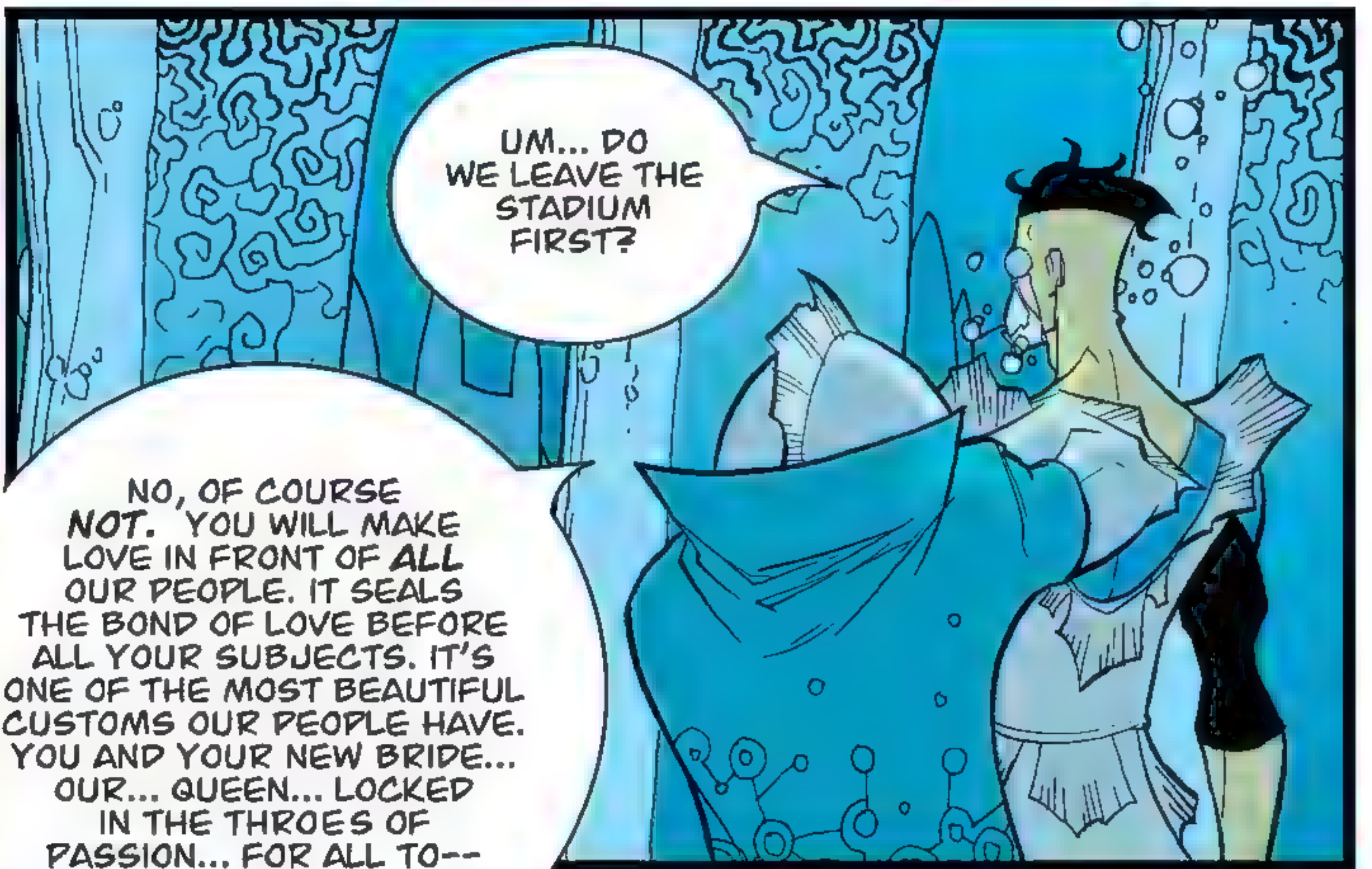
OUR GREAT LEADER, AQUARUS THE FIRST--WAS
COURTING HIS MATE TO BE. SHE WAS A SPIRITED
WOMAN--MUCH LIKE OUR AQUARIA--AND WAS HARD
TO PLEASE. ONE DAY WHILE THEY WERE ON THEIR
WALK THEY WERE ATTACKED BY A DEPTH DWELLER.
WITH NO CONSIDERATION FOR HIS OWN LIFE,
AQUARUS LEAPT TO DEFEND THE LIFE OF
HIS FUTURE MATE. THE ACT WAS SO
HEROIC--IT WON HER OVER
INSTANTLY.



IT'S THE BASIS OF ALL ROMANCE
IN OUR CIVILIZATION. THE GROOM
MUST DEFEND THE BRIDE FROM
A DEPTH DWELLER. ALL THIS IS
DONE IN OUR ARENA...IN FRONT
OF THE ENTIRE POPULATION
OF THE CITY.

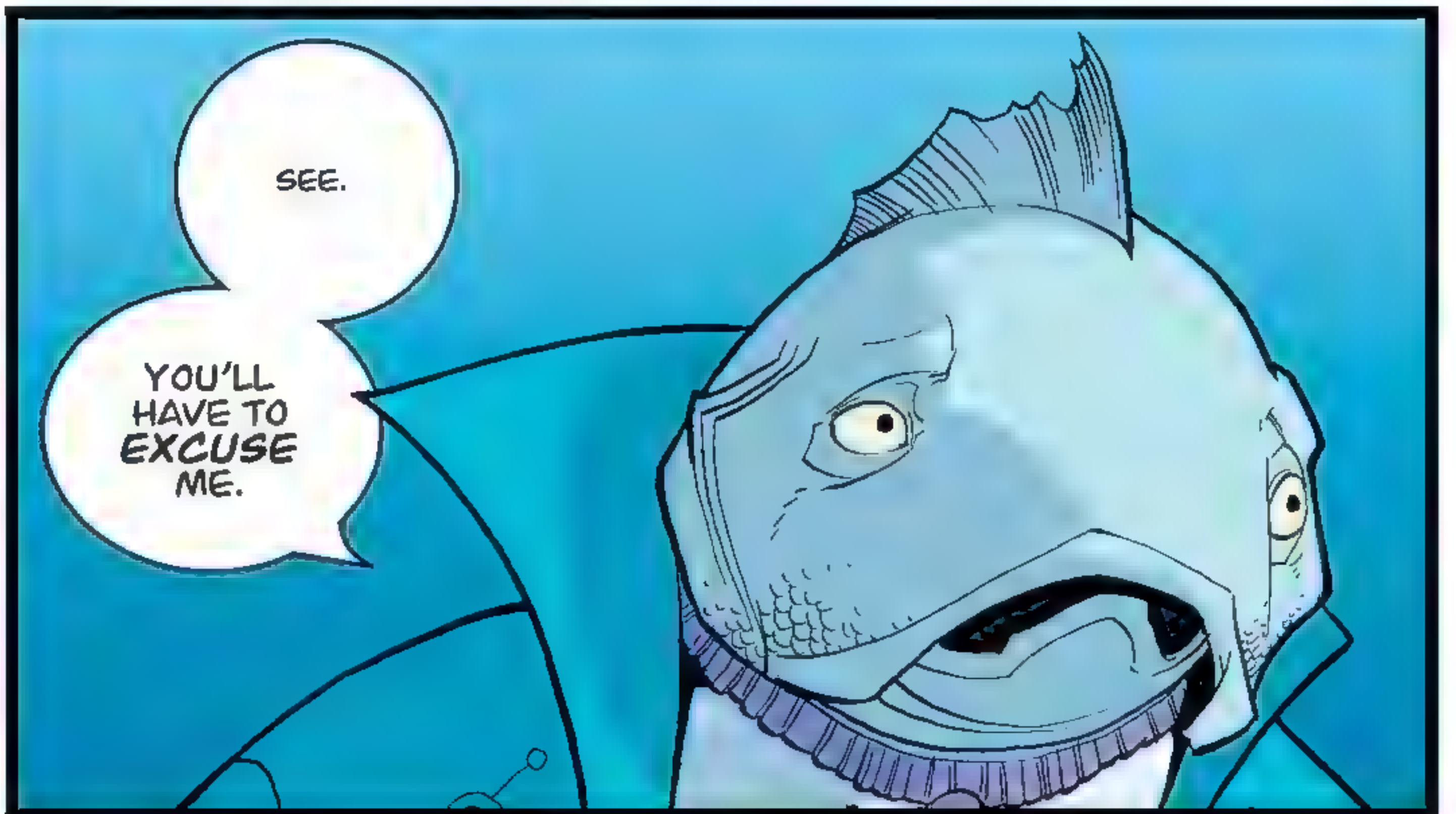


ONCE THE
CREATURE IS DEFEATED---
YOU WILL MAKE LOVE TO
AQUARIA TO COMPLETE THE
CEREMONY AND FINALIZE
THE MARRIAGE.



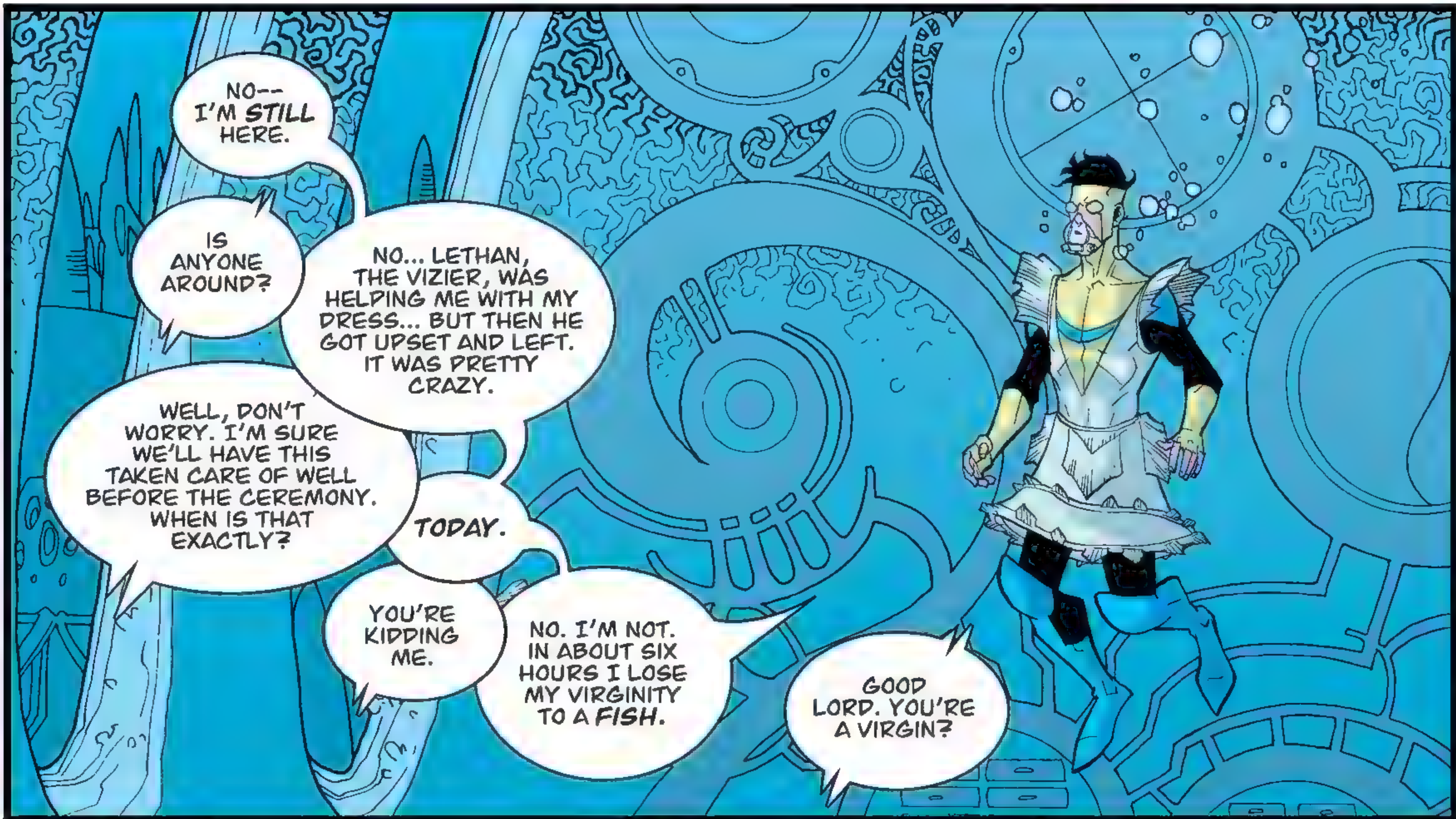
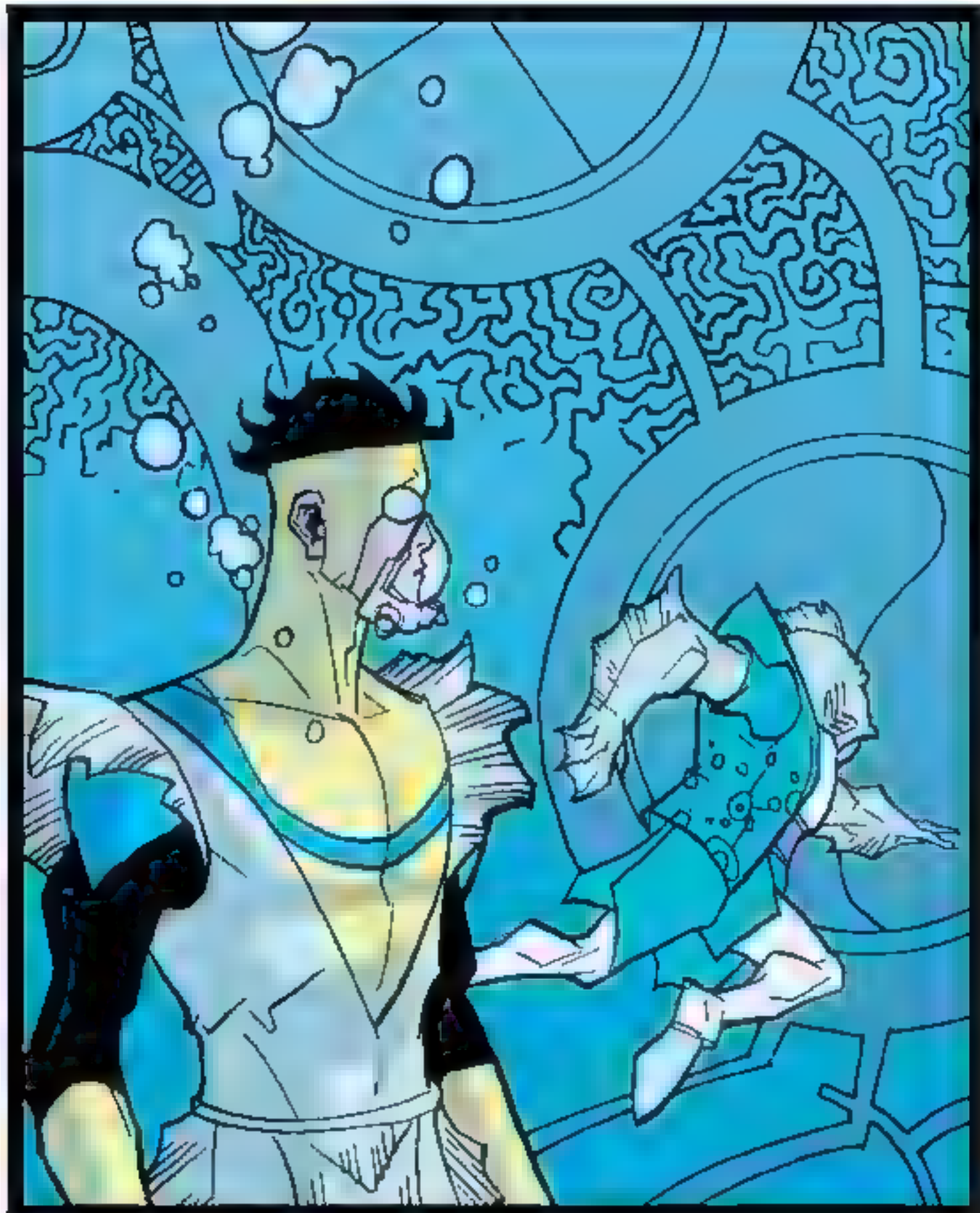
UM... DO
WE LEAVE THE
STADIUM
FIRST?

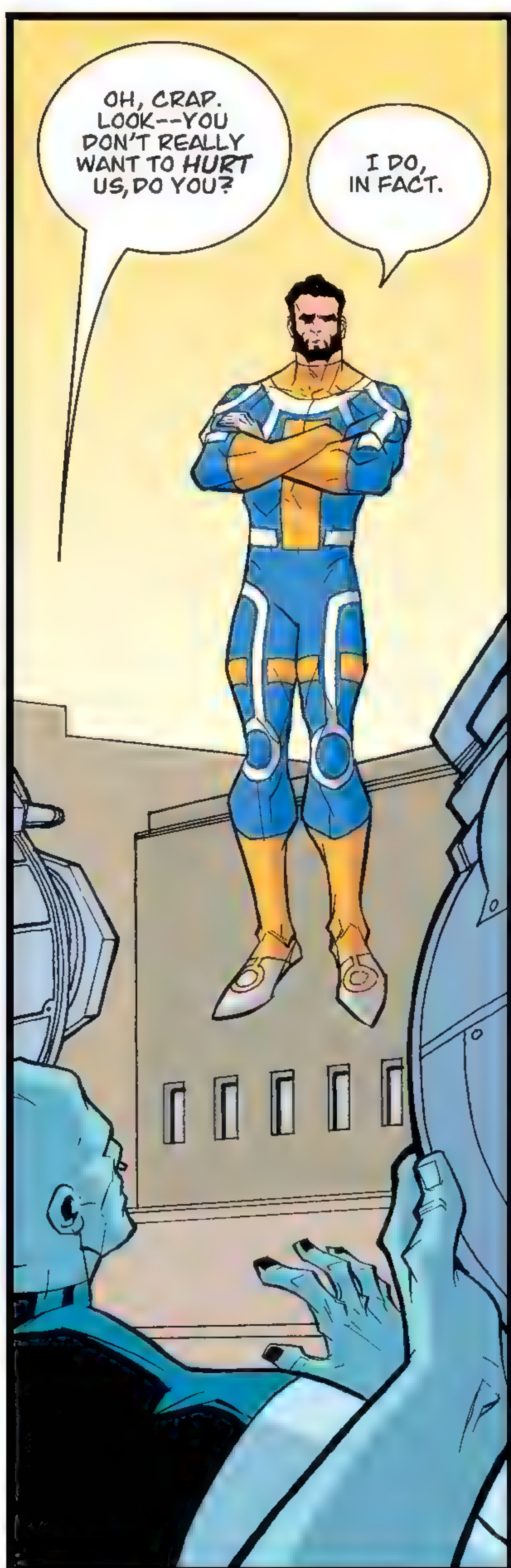
NO, OF COURSE
NOT. YOU WILL MAKE
LOVE IN FRONT OF **ALL**
OUR PEOPLE. IT SEALS
THE BOND OF LOVE BEFORE
ALL YOUR SUBJECTS. IT'S
ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL
CUSTOMS OUR PEOPLE HAVE.
YOU AND YOUR NEW BRIDE...
OUR... QUEEN... LOCKED
IN THE THROES OF
PASSION... FOR ALL TO--

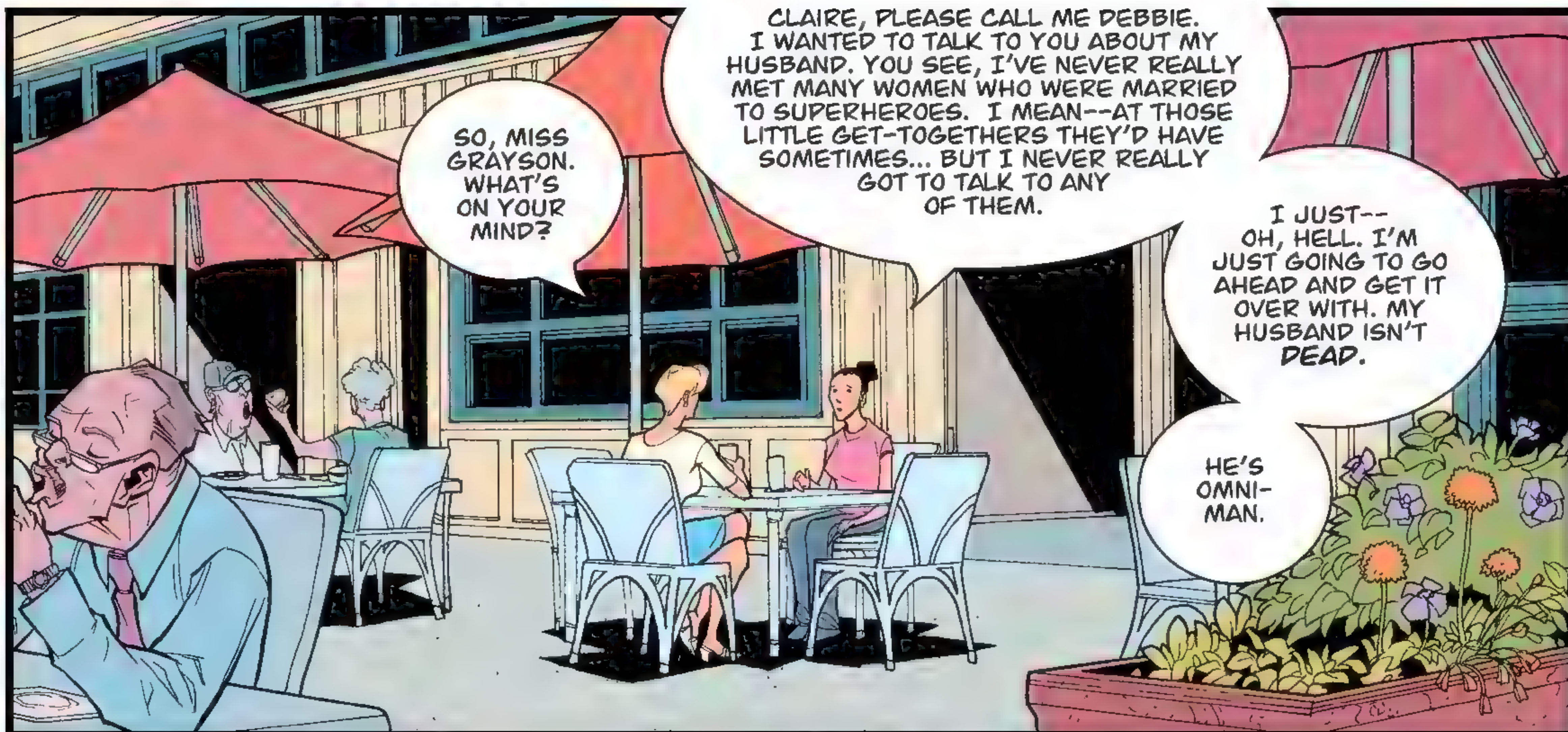


SEE.

YOU'LL
HAVE TO
EXCUSE
ME.





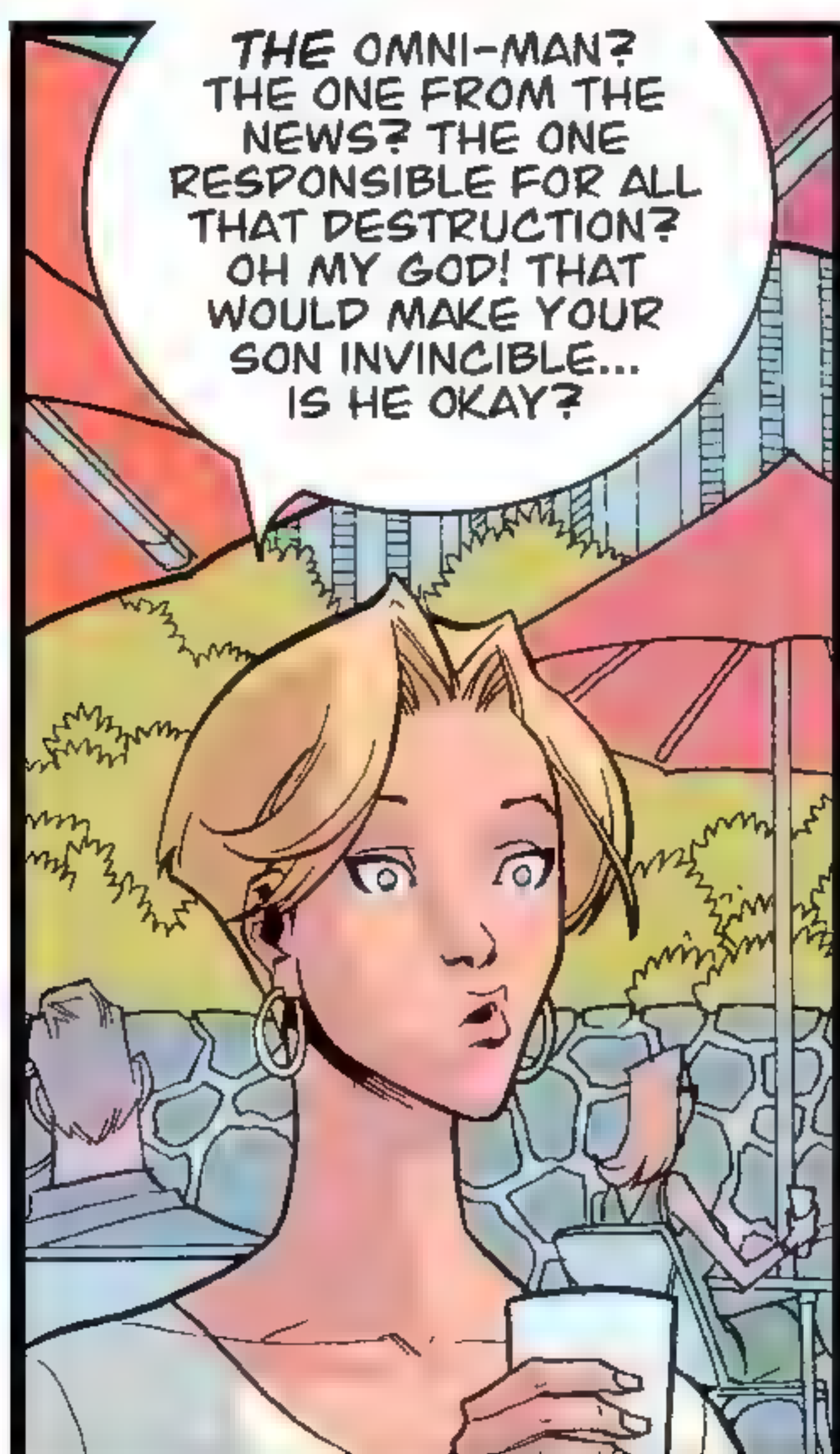


SO, MISS GRAYSON. WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

CLAIRE, PLEASE CALL ME DEBBIE. I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT MY HUSBAND. YOU SEE, I'VE NEVER REALLY MET MANY WOMEN WHO WERE MARRIED TO SUPERHEROES. I MEAN--AT THOSE LITTLE GET-TOGETHERS THEY'D HAVE SOMETIMES... BUT I NEVER REALLY GOT TO TALK TO ANY OF THEM.

I JUST-- OH, HELL. I'M JUST GOING TO GO AHEAD AND GET IT OVER WITH. MY HUSBAND ISN'T DEAD.

HE'S OMNI-MAN.



THE OMNI-MAN? THE ONE FROM THE NEWS? THE ONE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THAT DESTRUCTION? OH MY GOD! THAT WOULD MAKE YOUR SON INVINCIBLE... IS HE OKAY?



YES, PLEASE... KEEP IT DOWN, OKAY? I REALLY DON'T WANT THAT GETTING OUT. I MEAN, I CAN TRUST YOU CAN'T I?

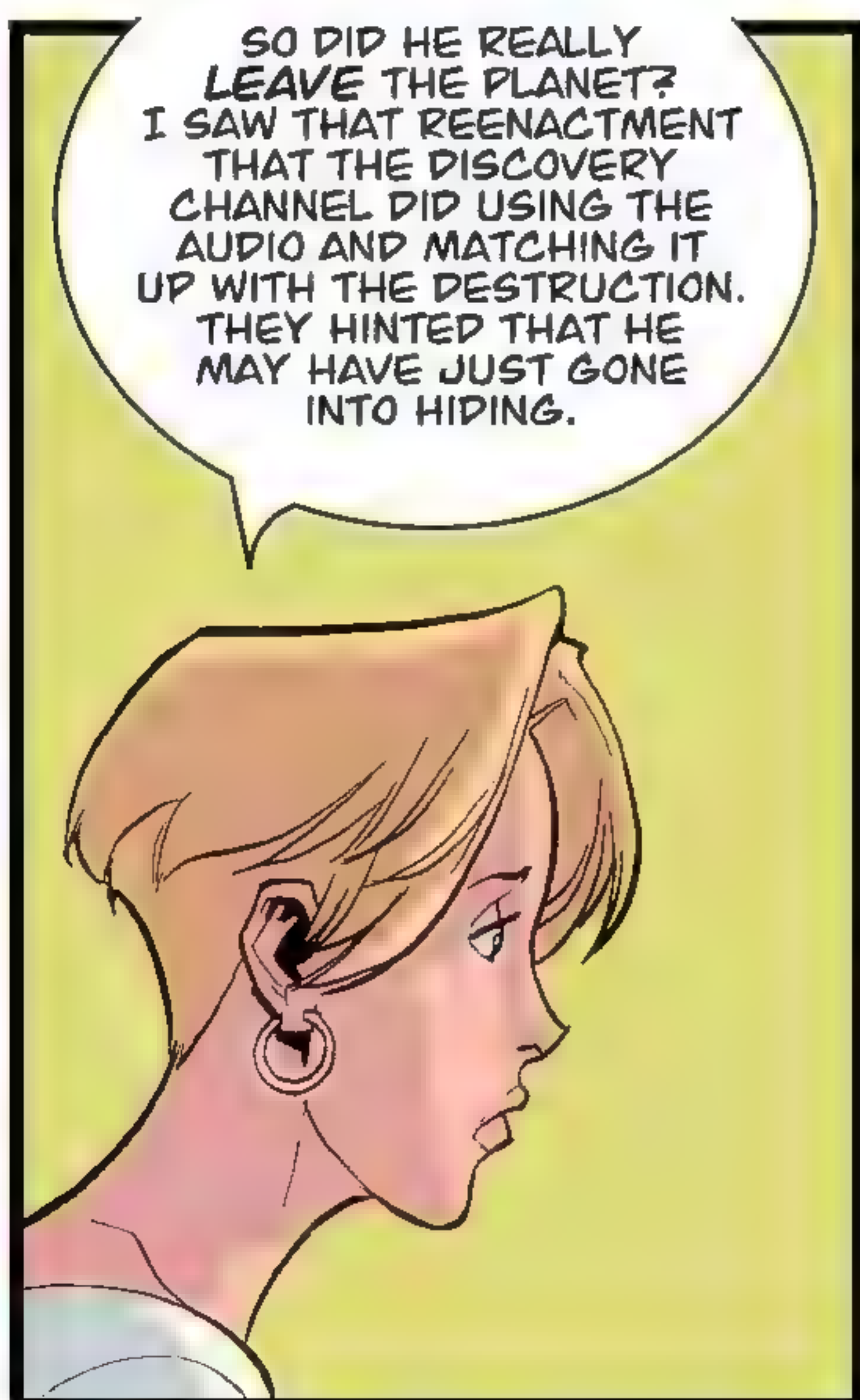
YES, OF COURSE-- ABSOLUTELY.



OF, COURSE... I CAN'T IMAGINE HOW MUCH BETTER HIS BOOKS WOULD BE SELLING IF THE WORLD KNEW...

CLAIRE.

DON'T WORRY. SUPERPATRIOT HIMSELF DOESN'T HAVE A SECRET IDENTITY BUT I UNDERSTAND THE NEED, ESPECIALLY IN YOUR CASE WITH YOUR SON. AND AFTER ALL YOUR HUSBAND HAS DONE.



SO DID HE REALLY LEAVE THE PLANET? I SAW THAT REENACTMENT THAT THE DISCOVERY CHANNEL DID USING THE AUDIO AND MATCHING IT UP WITH THE DESTRUCTION. THEY HINTED THAT HE MAY HAVE JUST GONE INTO HIDING.

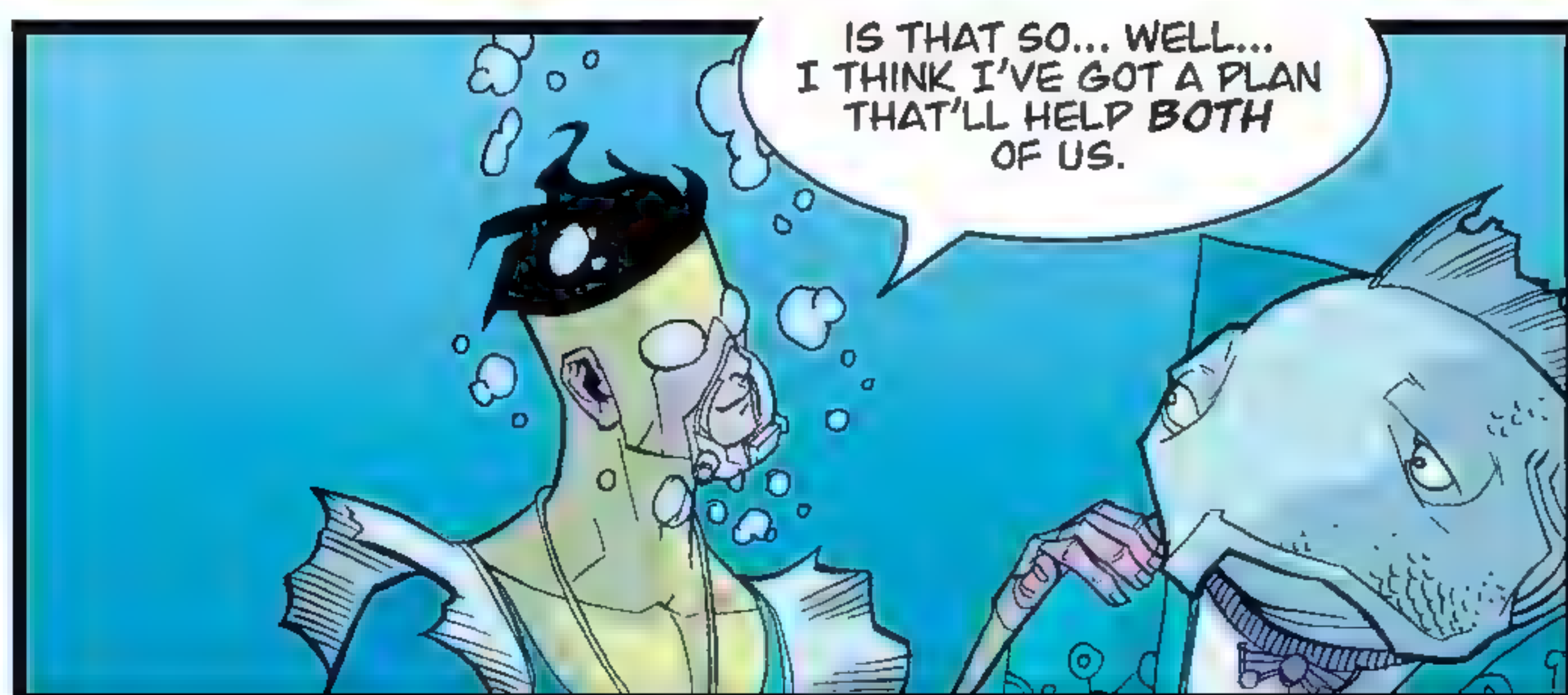
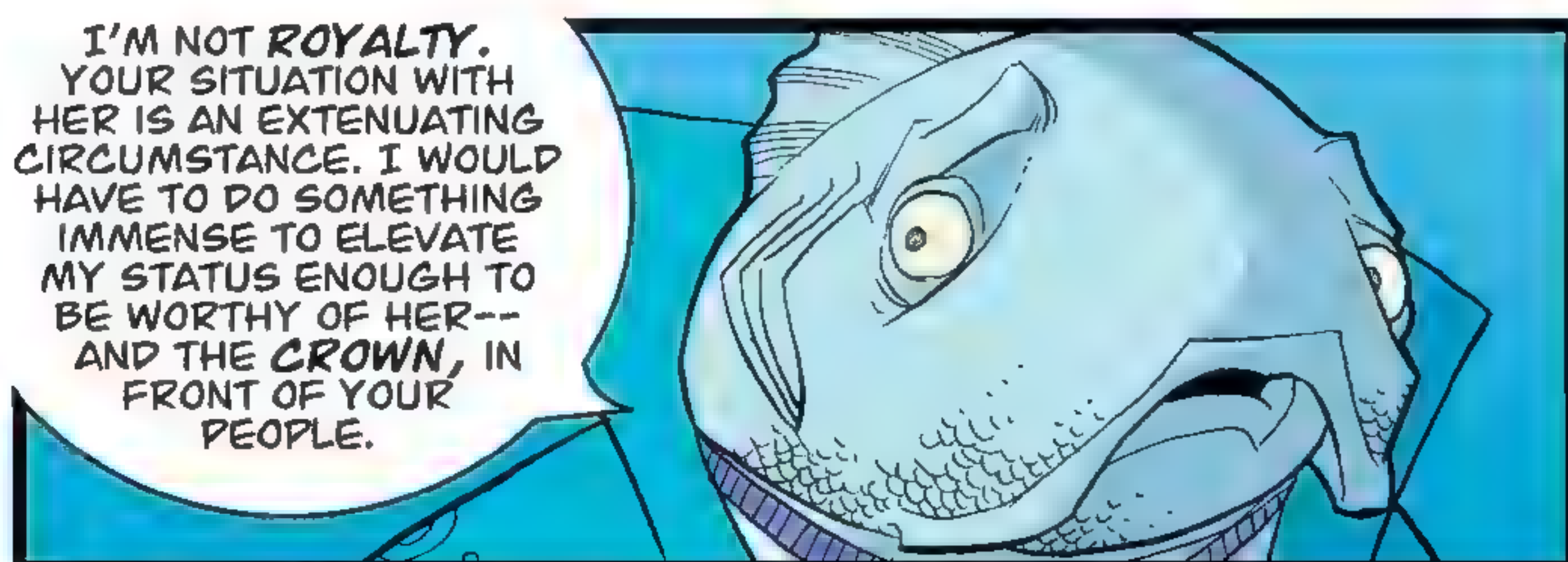
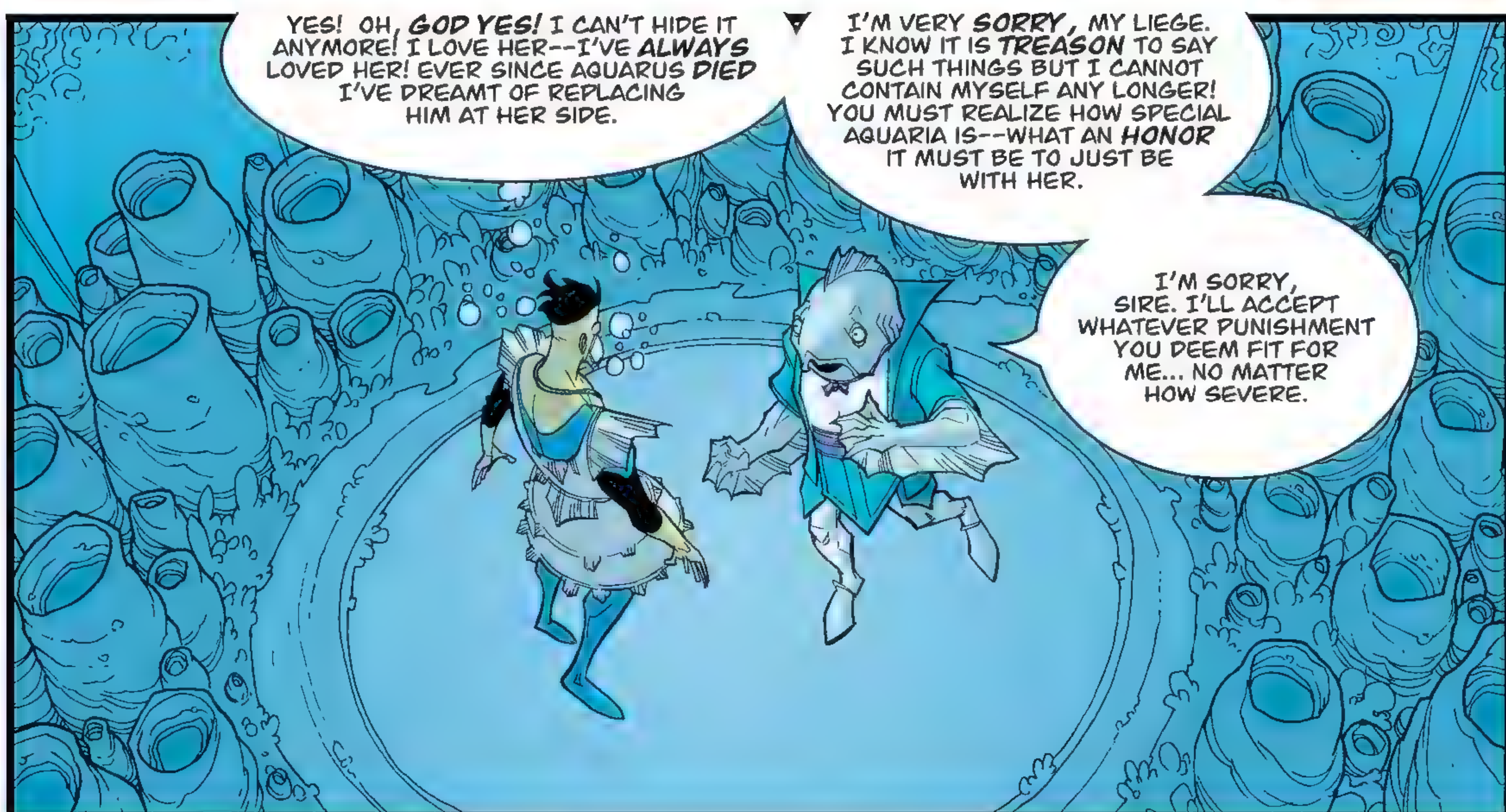


NO. HE'S GONE.

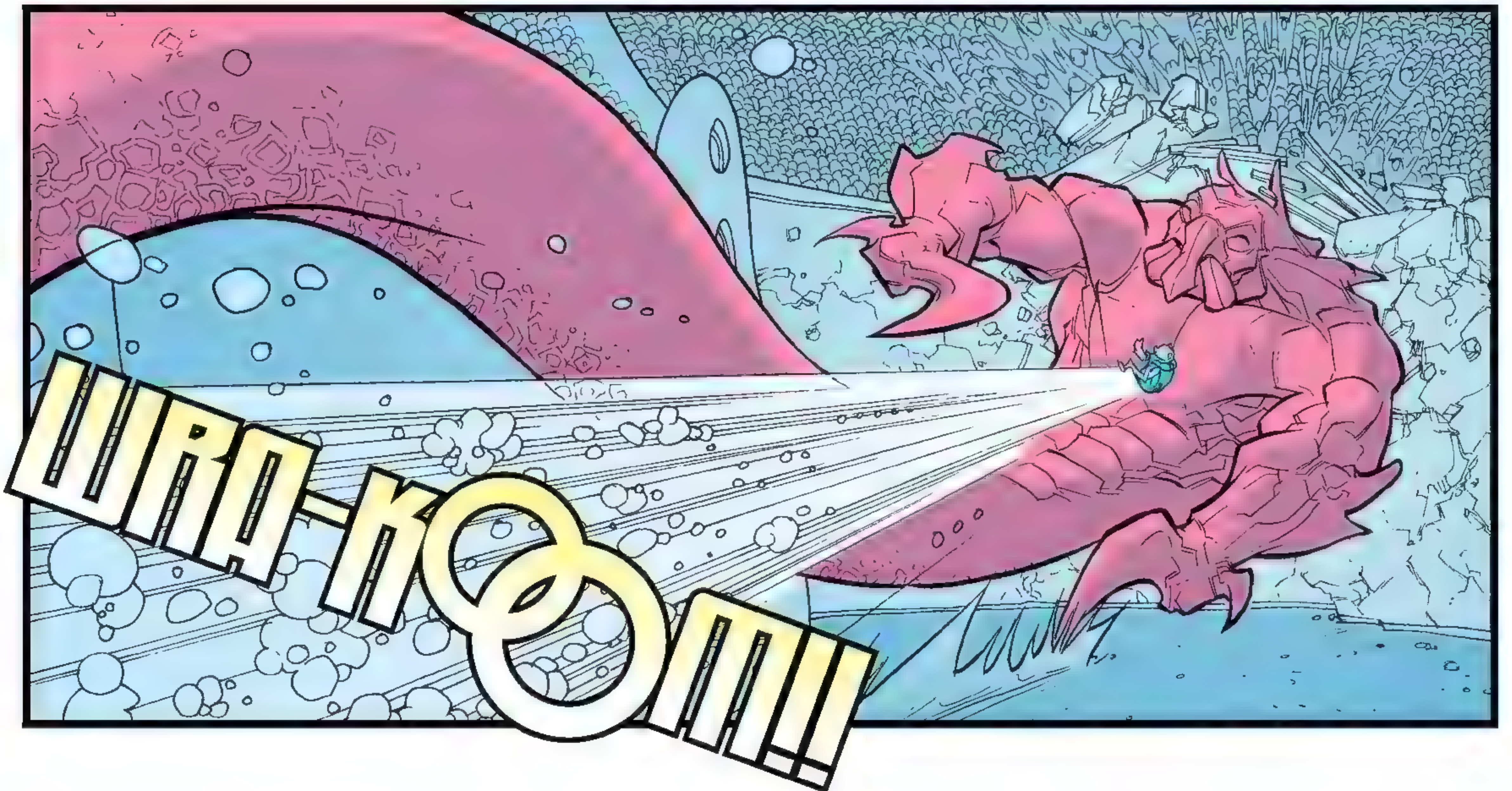
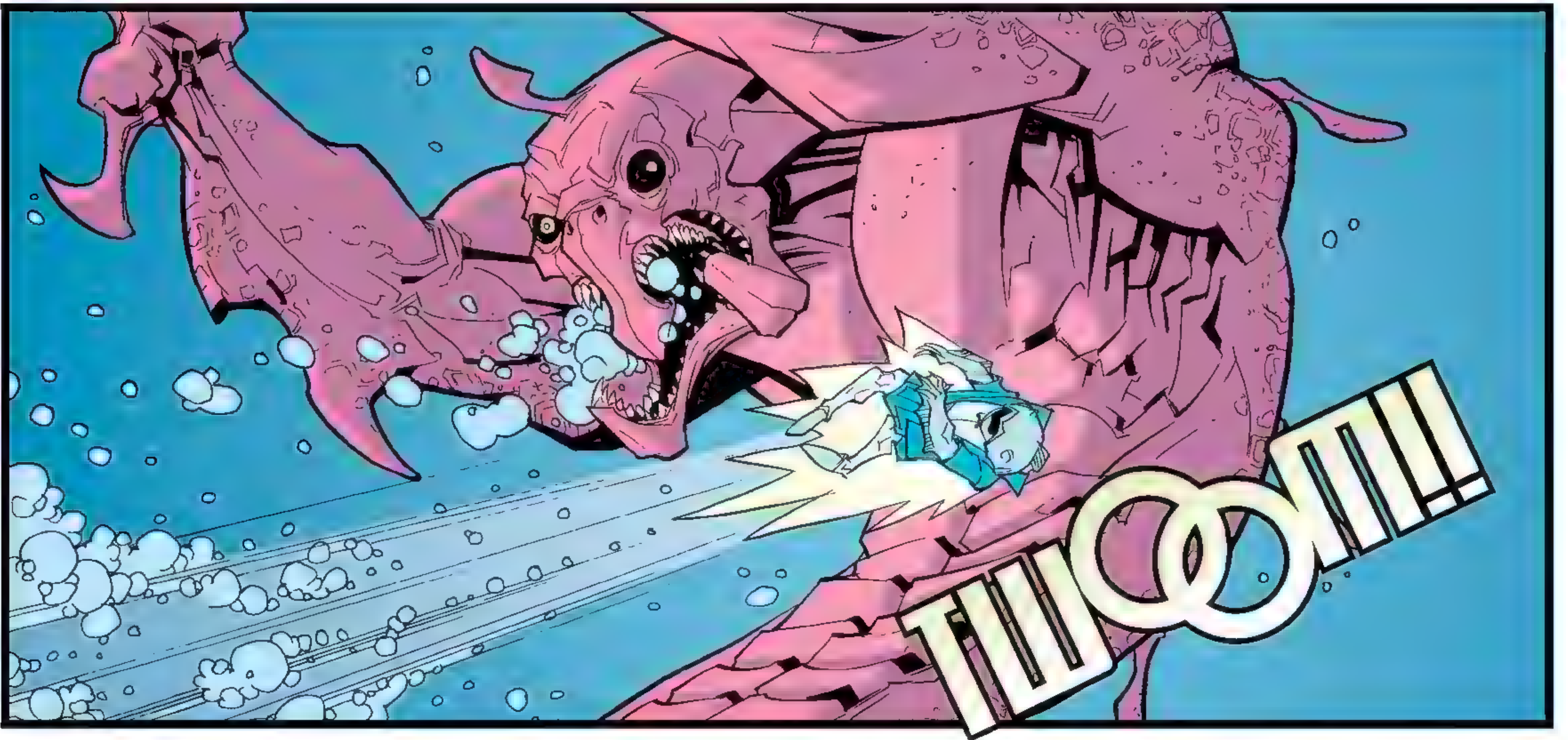


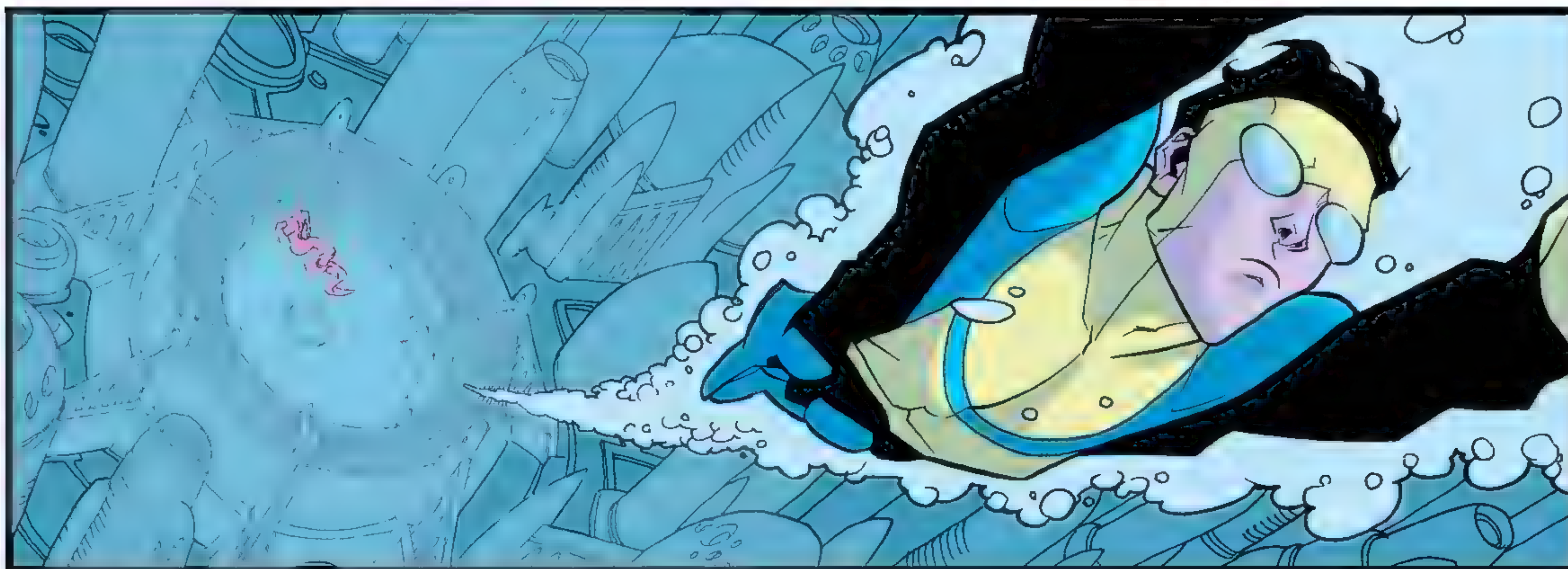
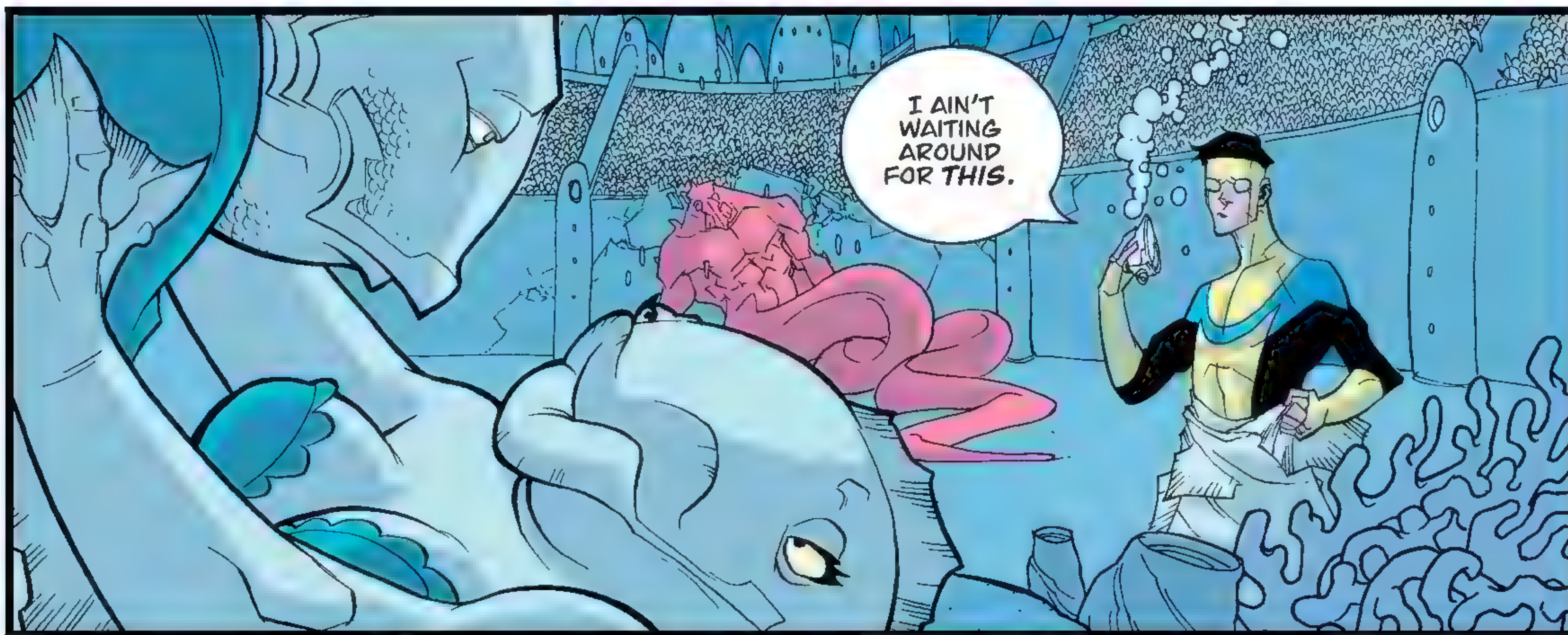
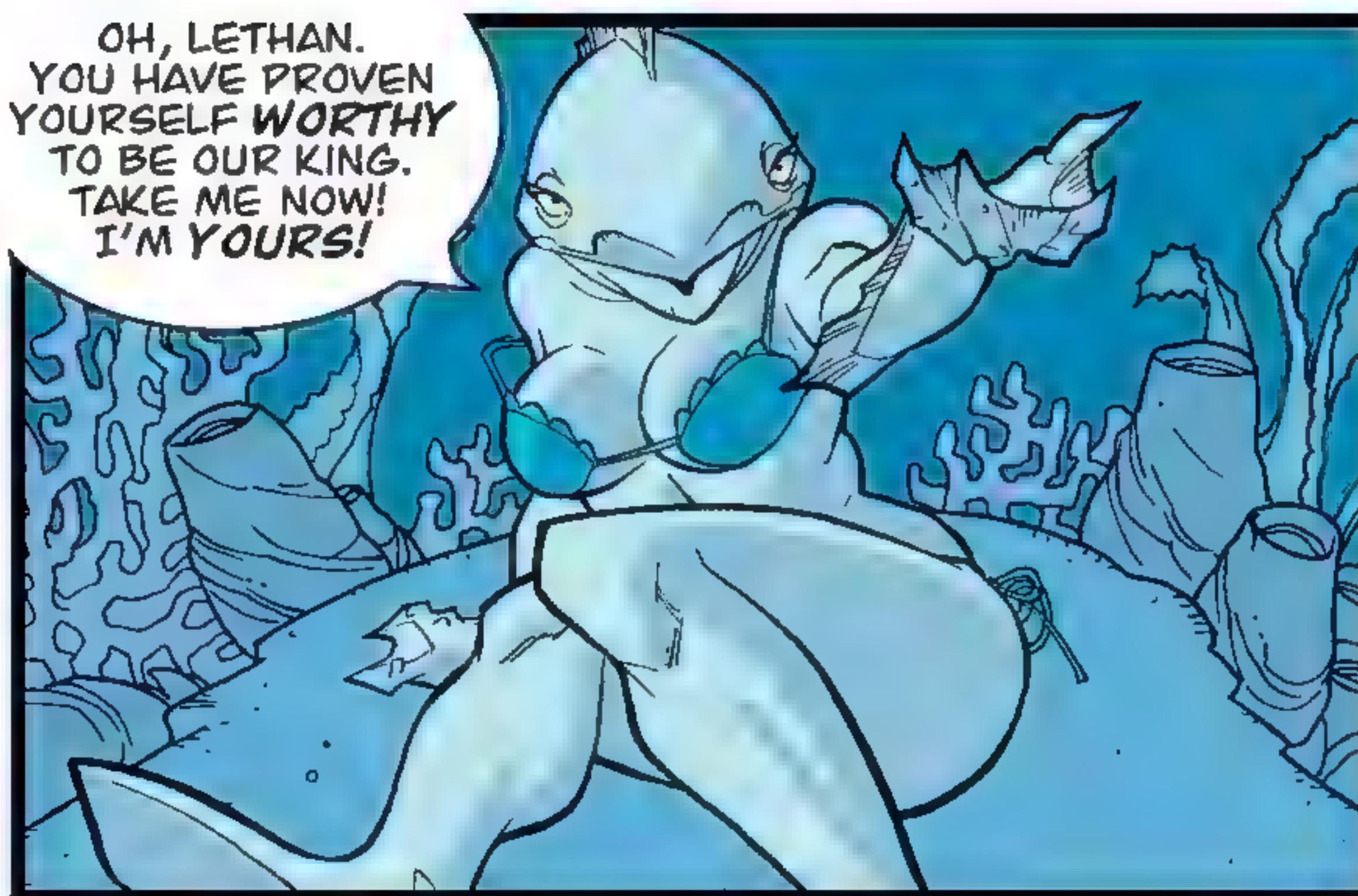
SO YOU'RE HUSBAND ISN'T DEAD, HE'S JUST AN EVIL SON OF A BITCH THAT TRIED TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD, AND THEN LEFT YOU AND YOUR SON AND RAN OFF TO GOD KNOWS WHERE. **SCREW HIM...** HE TURNED OUT TO BE JUST LIKE MOST OF THE OTHER JERKS ON THIS PLANET.

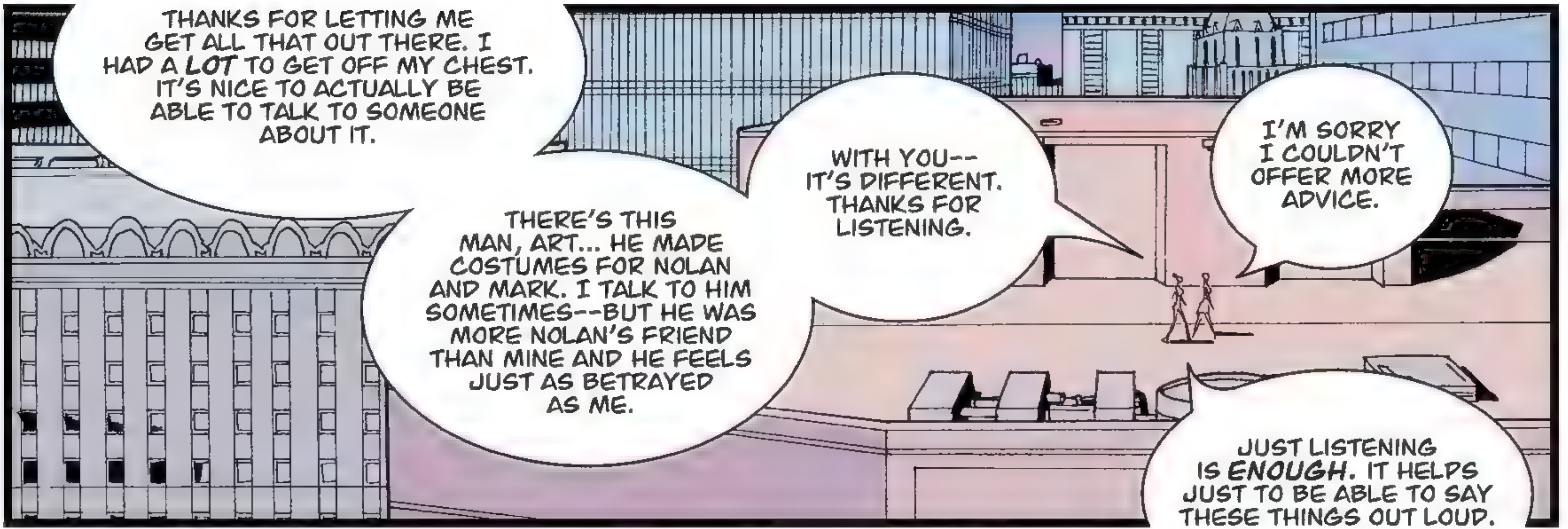
IT'S A LITTLE MORE COMPLICATED THAN THAT.











THANKS FOR LETTING ME GET ALL THAT OUT THERE. I HAD A LOT TO GET OFF MY CHEST. IT'S NICE TO ACTUALLY BE ABLE TO TALK TO SOMEONE ABOUT IT.

THERE'S THIS MAN, ART... HE MADE COSTUMES FOR NOLAN AND MARK. I TALK TO HIM SOMETIMES--BUT HE WAS MORE NOLAN'S FRIEND THAN MINE AND HE FEELS JUST AS BETRAYED AS ME.

WITH YOU-- IT'S DIFFERENT. THANKS FOR LISTENING.

I'M SORRY I COULDN'T OFFER MORE ADVICE.

JUST LISTENING IS ENOUGH. IT HELPS JUST TO BE ABLE TO SAY THESE THINGS OUT LOUD.



WELL, I HOPE YOU'RE PREPARED TO RETURN THE FAVOR. SUPERPATRIOT AND I **JUST** GOT MARRIED, AND I'M SURE I COULD USE SOME ADVICE FROM YOU FROM TIME TO TIME.

YOU'VE GOT MY NUMBER.



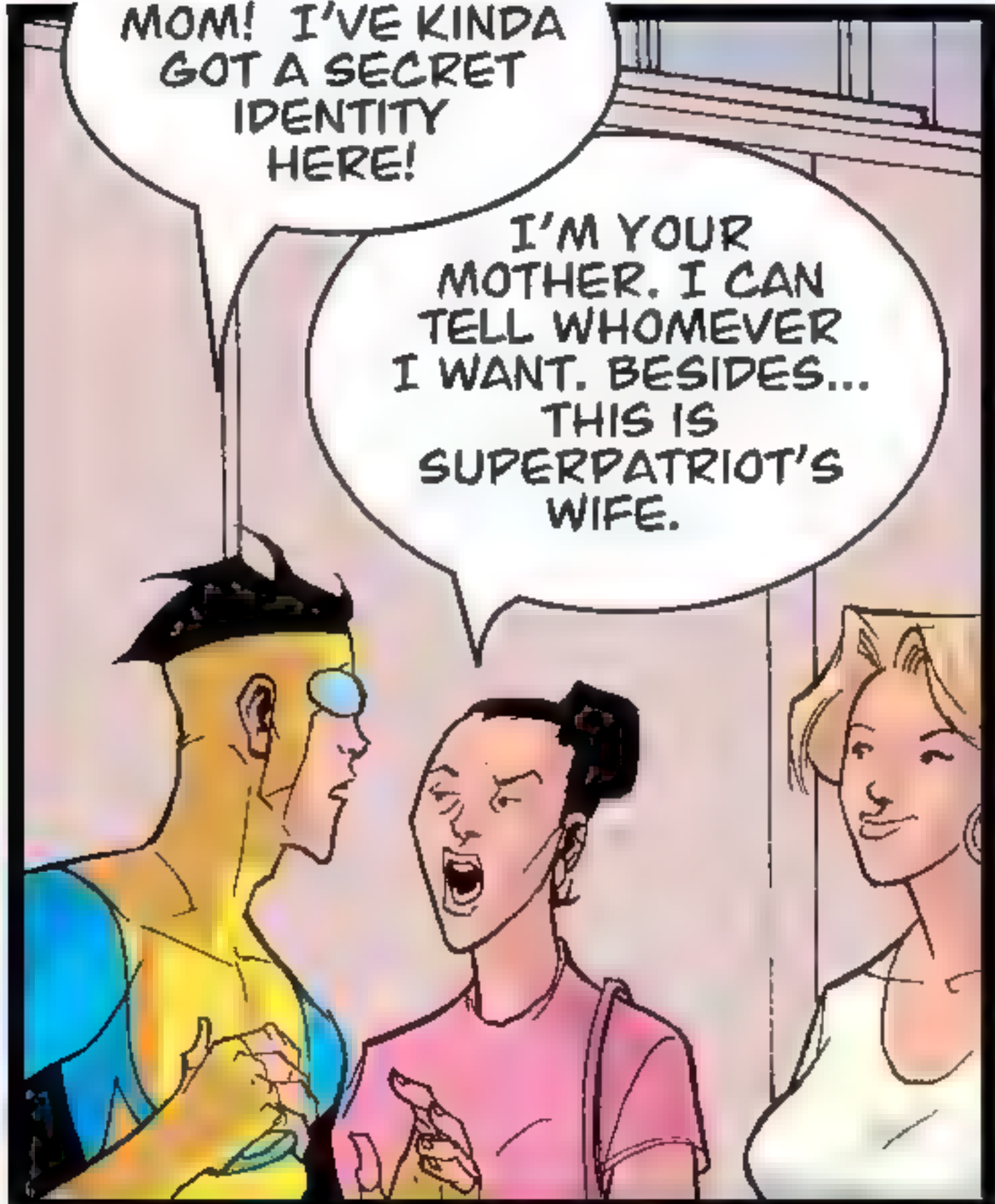
I'M SORRY YOU MISSED YOUR FLIGHT.

OH, IT'S NOT A BIG DEAL. I LEFT A MESSAGE FOR MY SON. HE'LL BE HERE AS SOON AS HE GETS IT.



AND HERE HE IS.

MARK, THIS IS MY NEW FRIEND, CLAIRE.



MOM! I'VE KINDA GOT A SECRET IDENTITY HERE!

I'M YOUR MOTHER. I CAN TELL WHOMEVER I WANT. BESIDES... THIS IS SUPERPATRIOT'S WIFE.



YOU KNOW SUPERPATRIOT?!

WELL ENOUGH TO BE MARRIED TO HIM. WELL ENOUGH TO BE BUYING TAKE-OUT CHINESE FOOD FOR HIM ON MY WAY HOME.

THAT IS SO COOL.



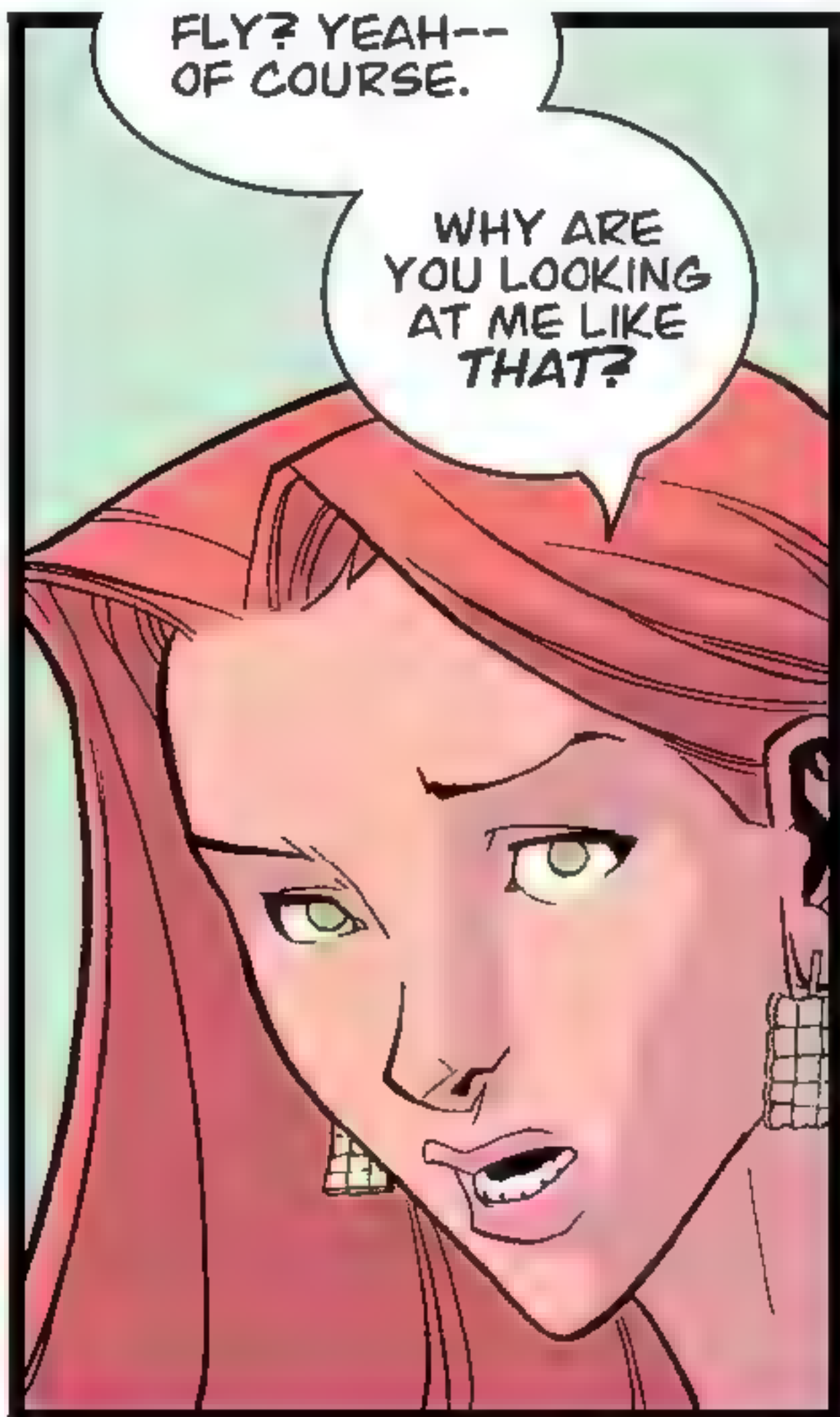
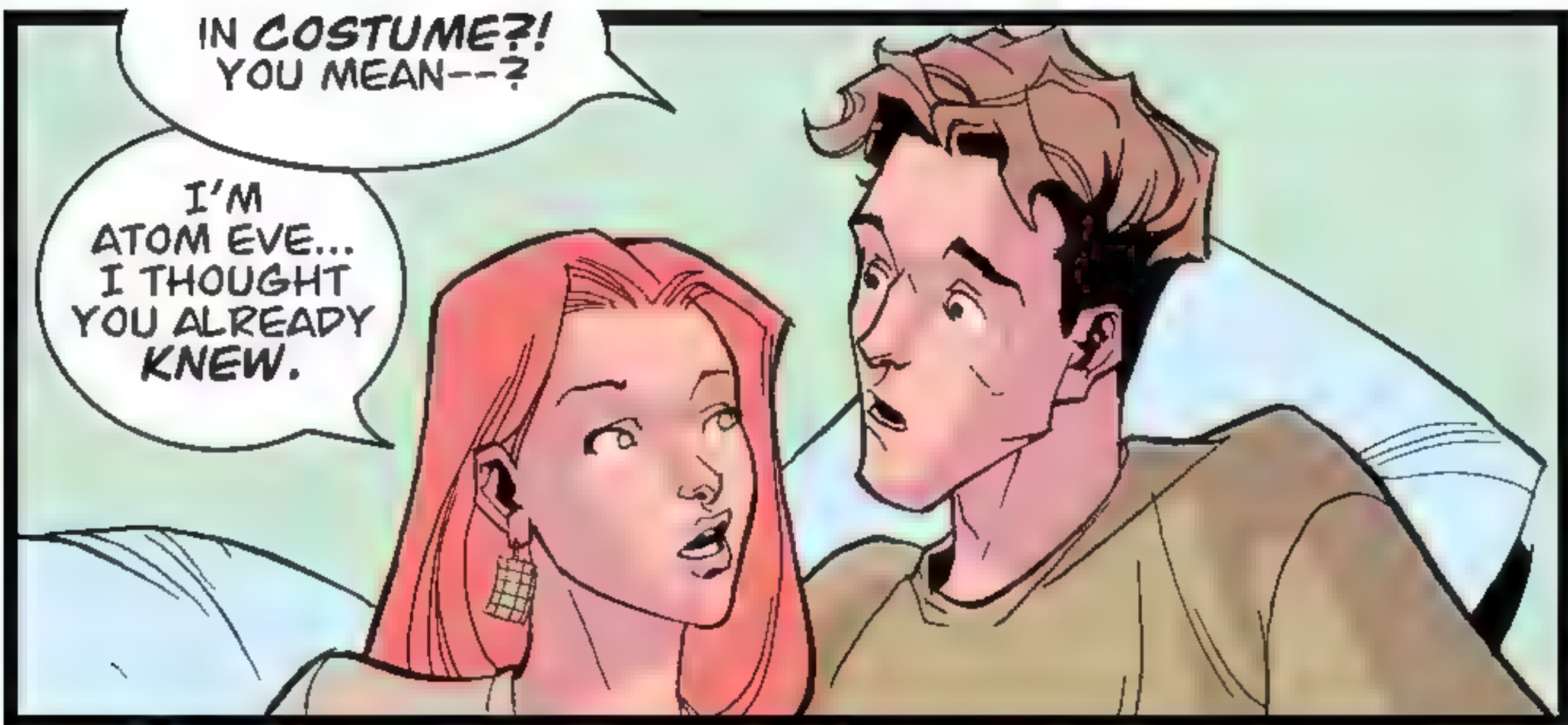
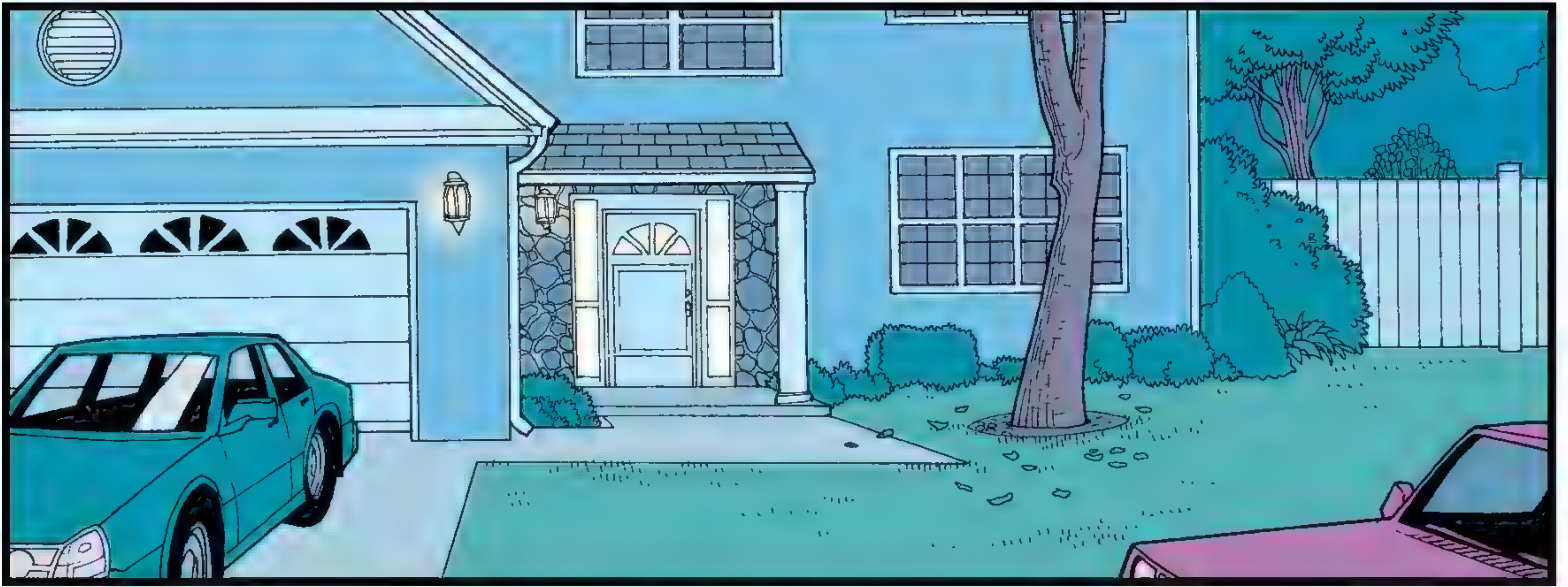
WELL, SON. WE BETTER GET GOING. YOU'VE GOT SCHOOL TOMORROW.

TALK TO YOU SOON, CLAIRE.

GOODBYE.



CAN I STILL ORDER THAT PIZZA?



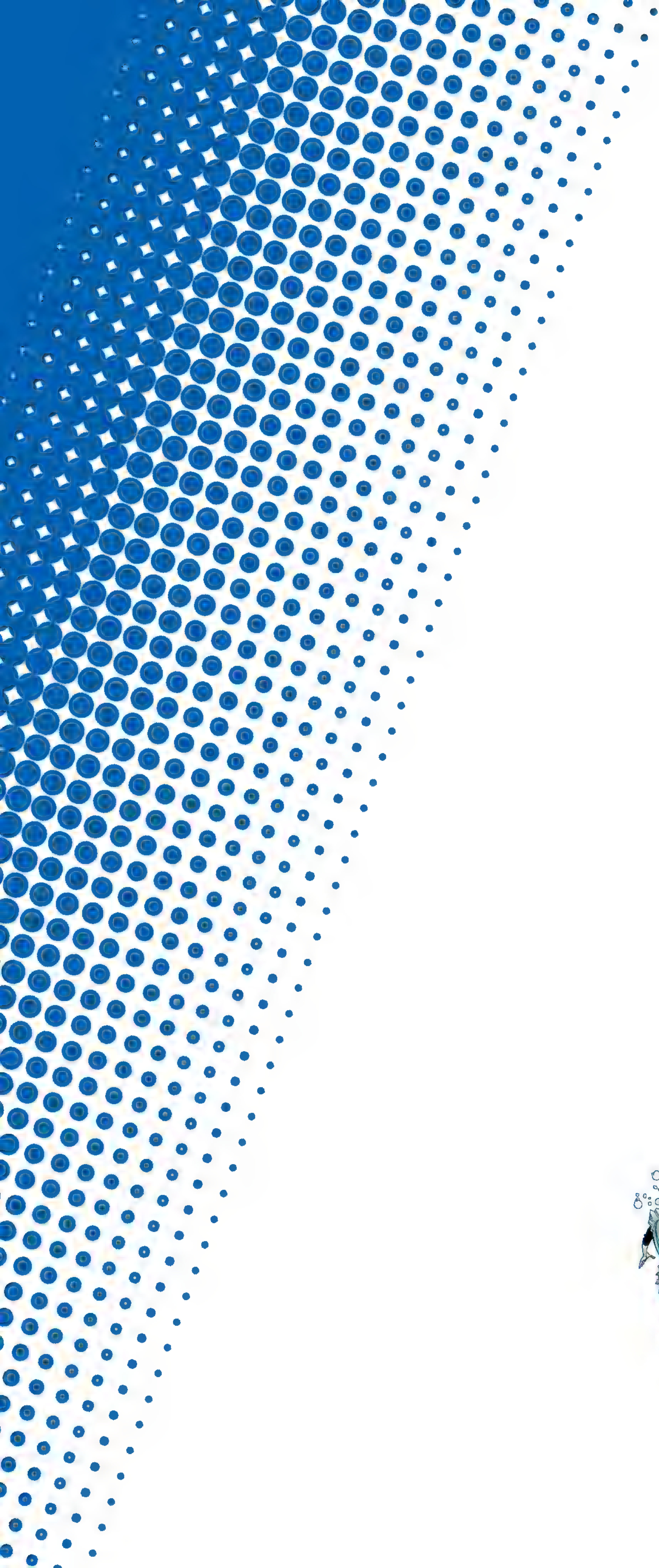
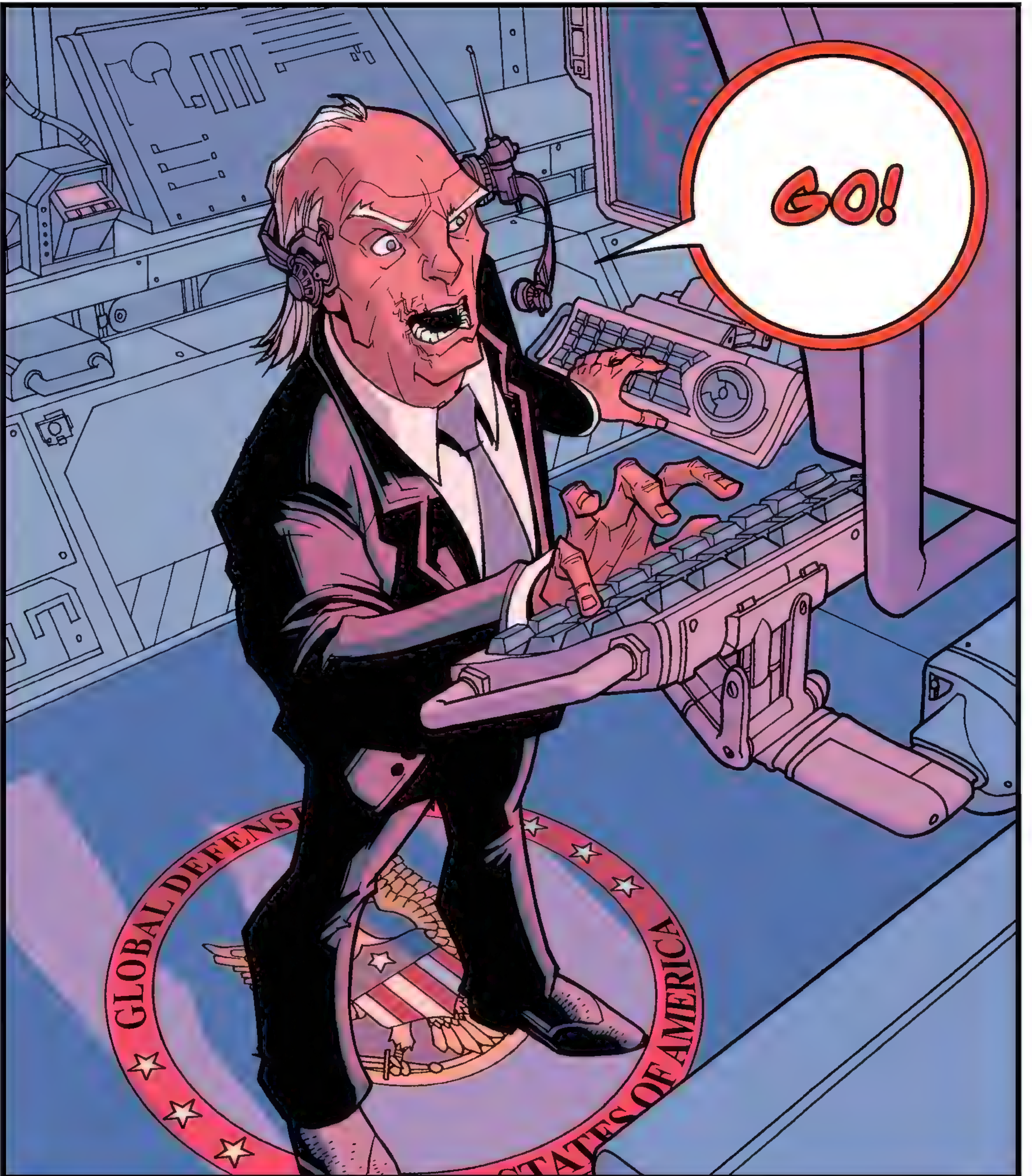
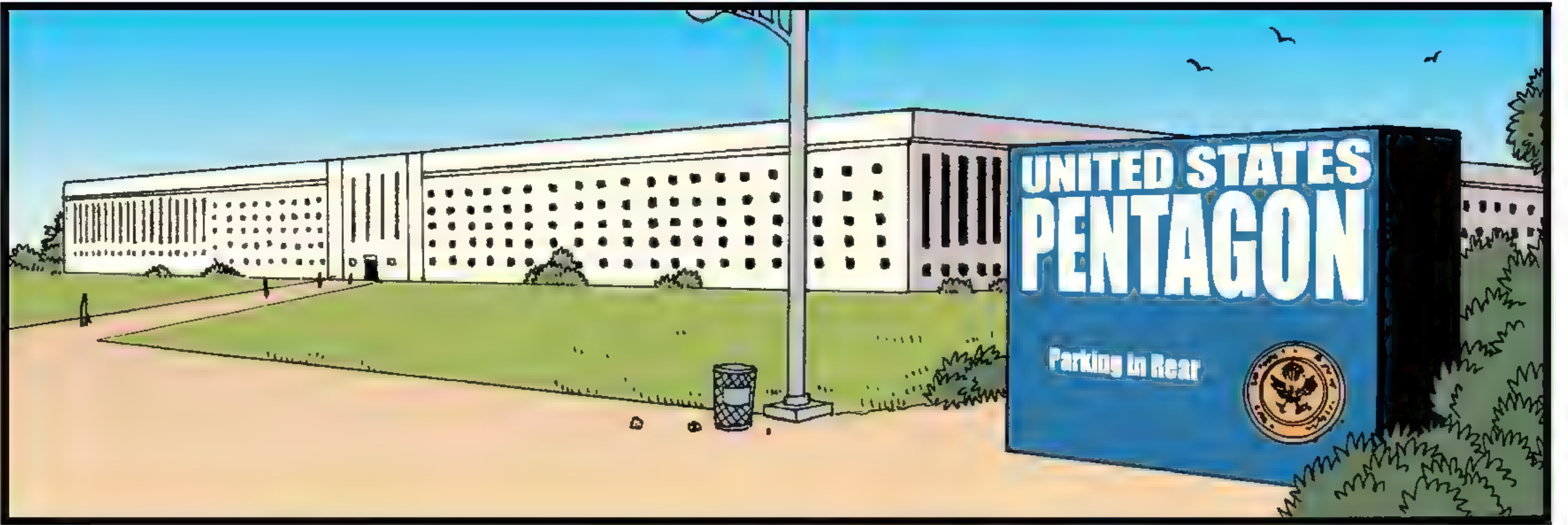
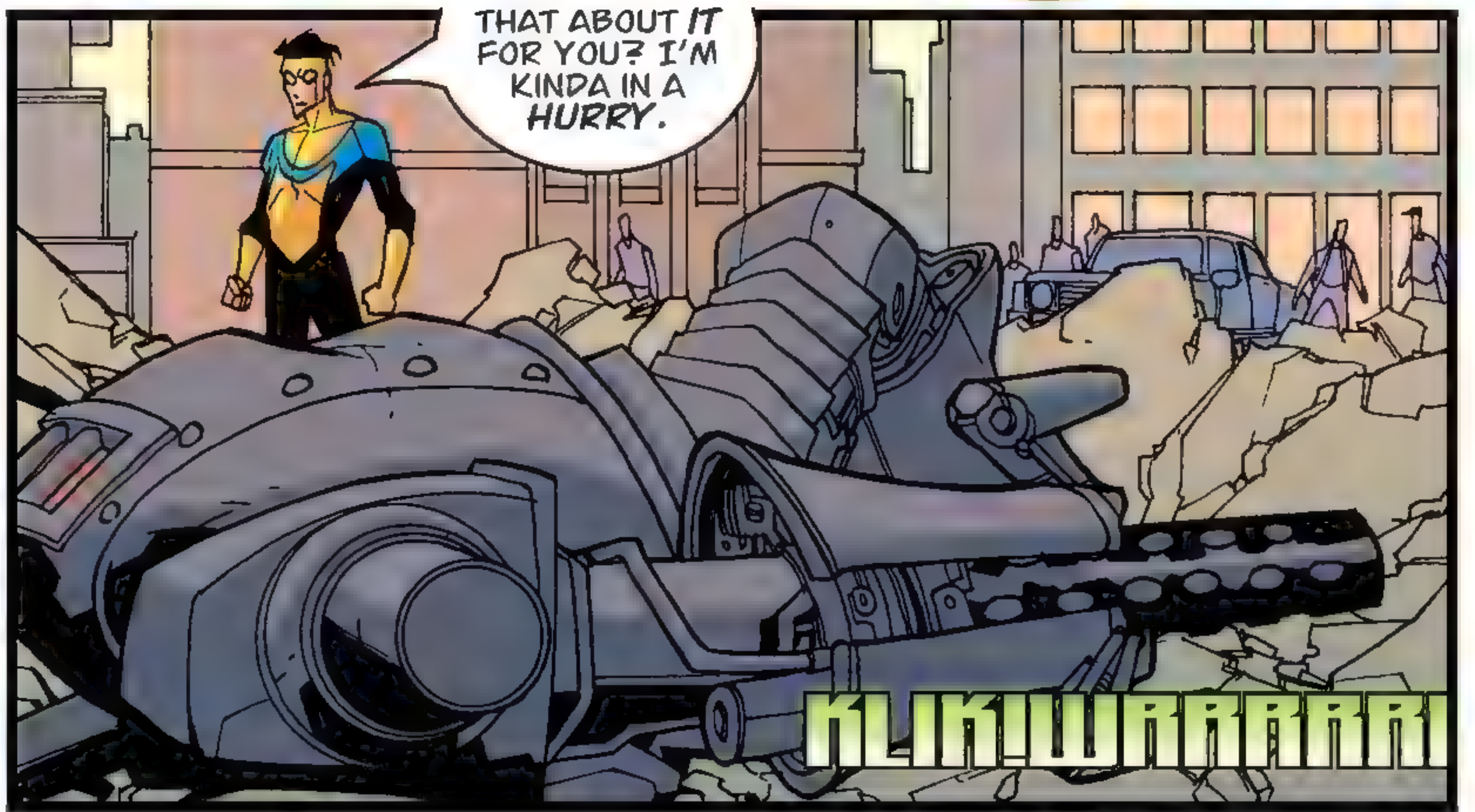
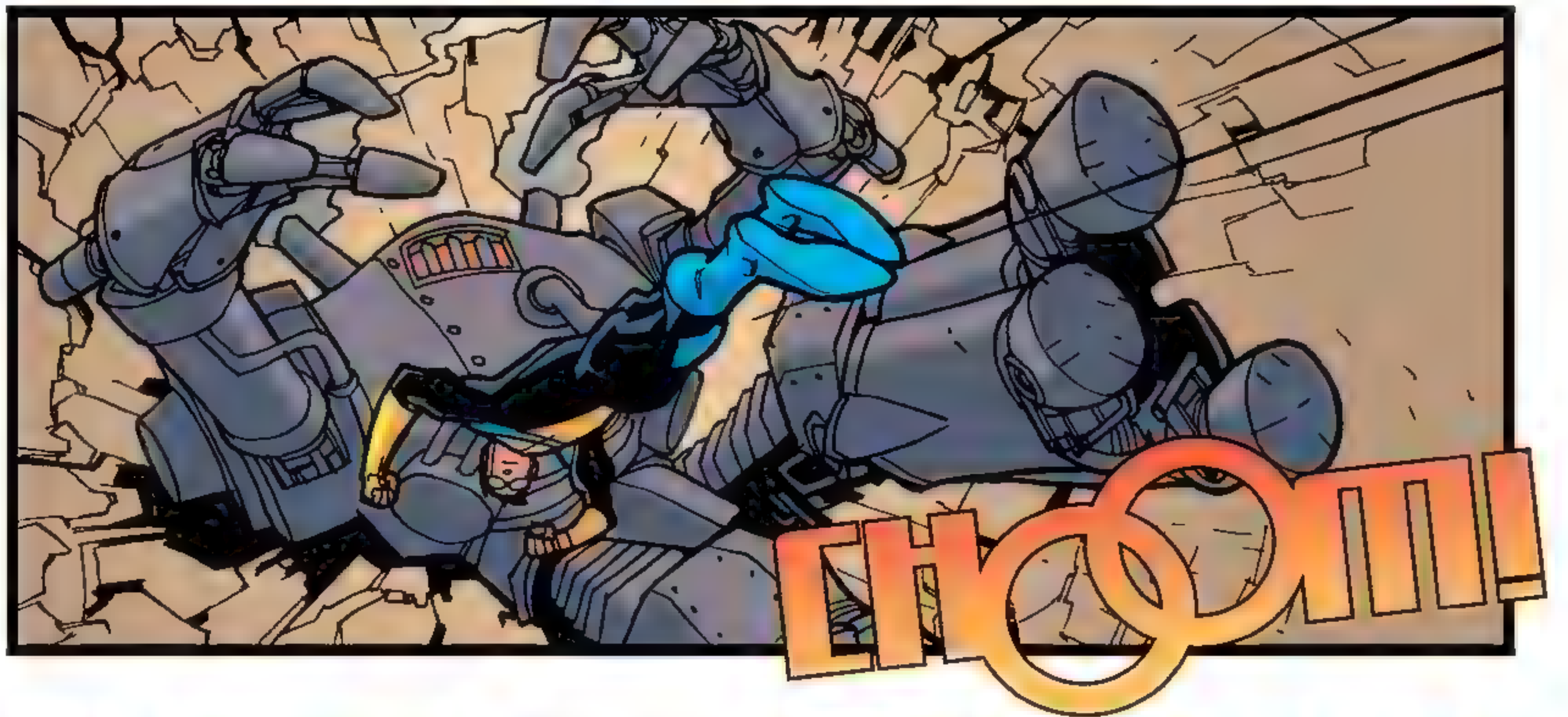
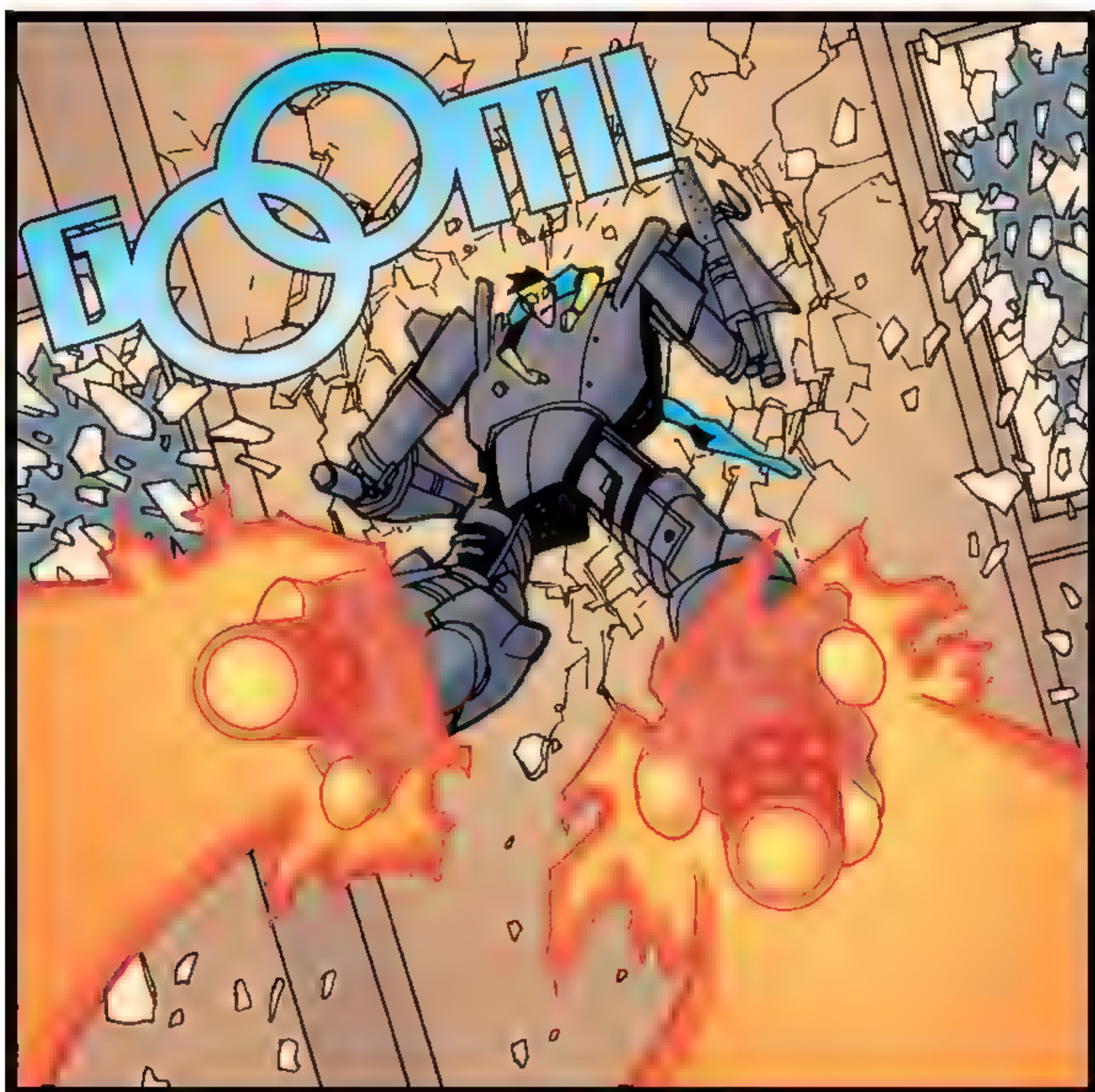
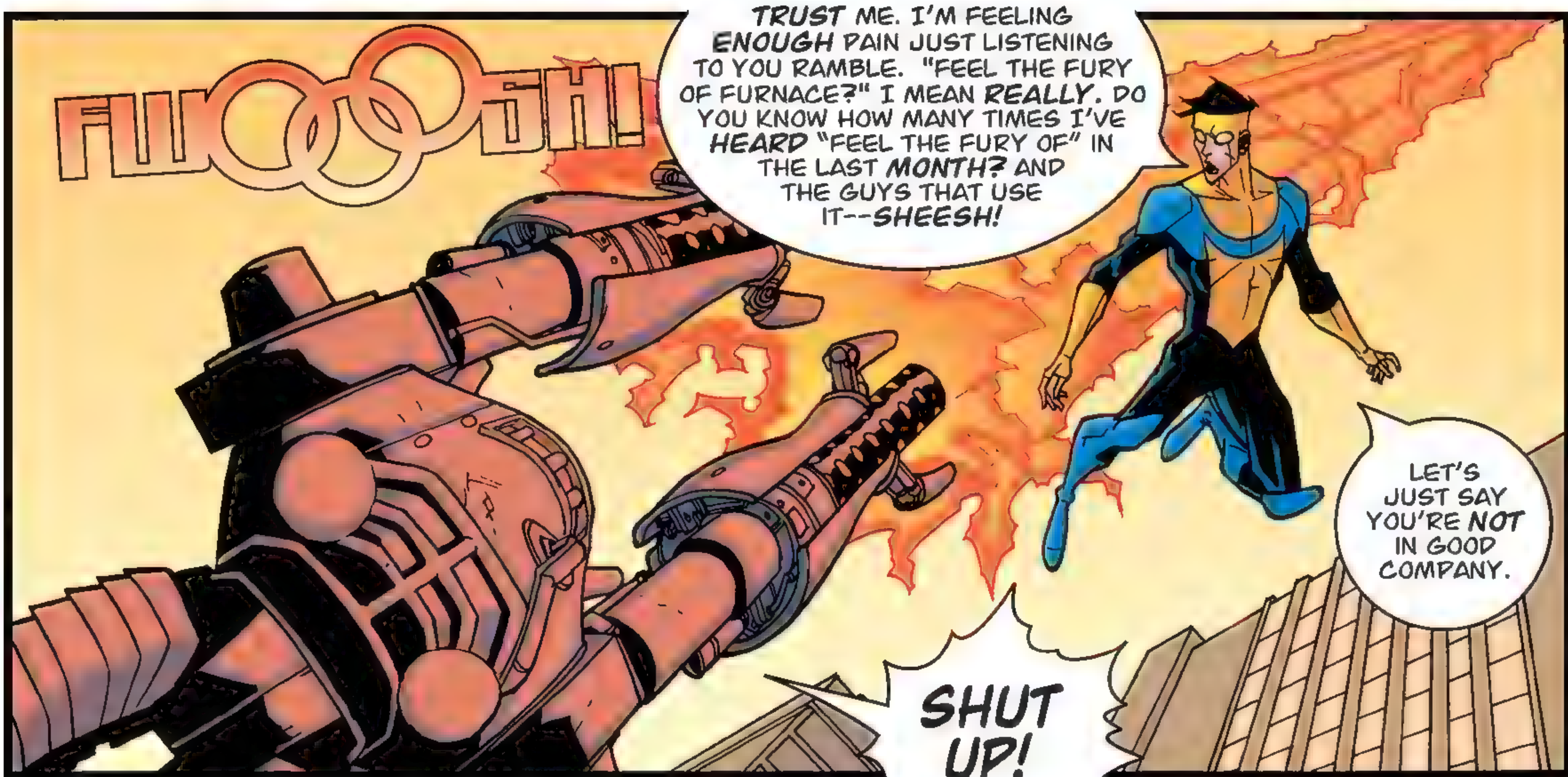
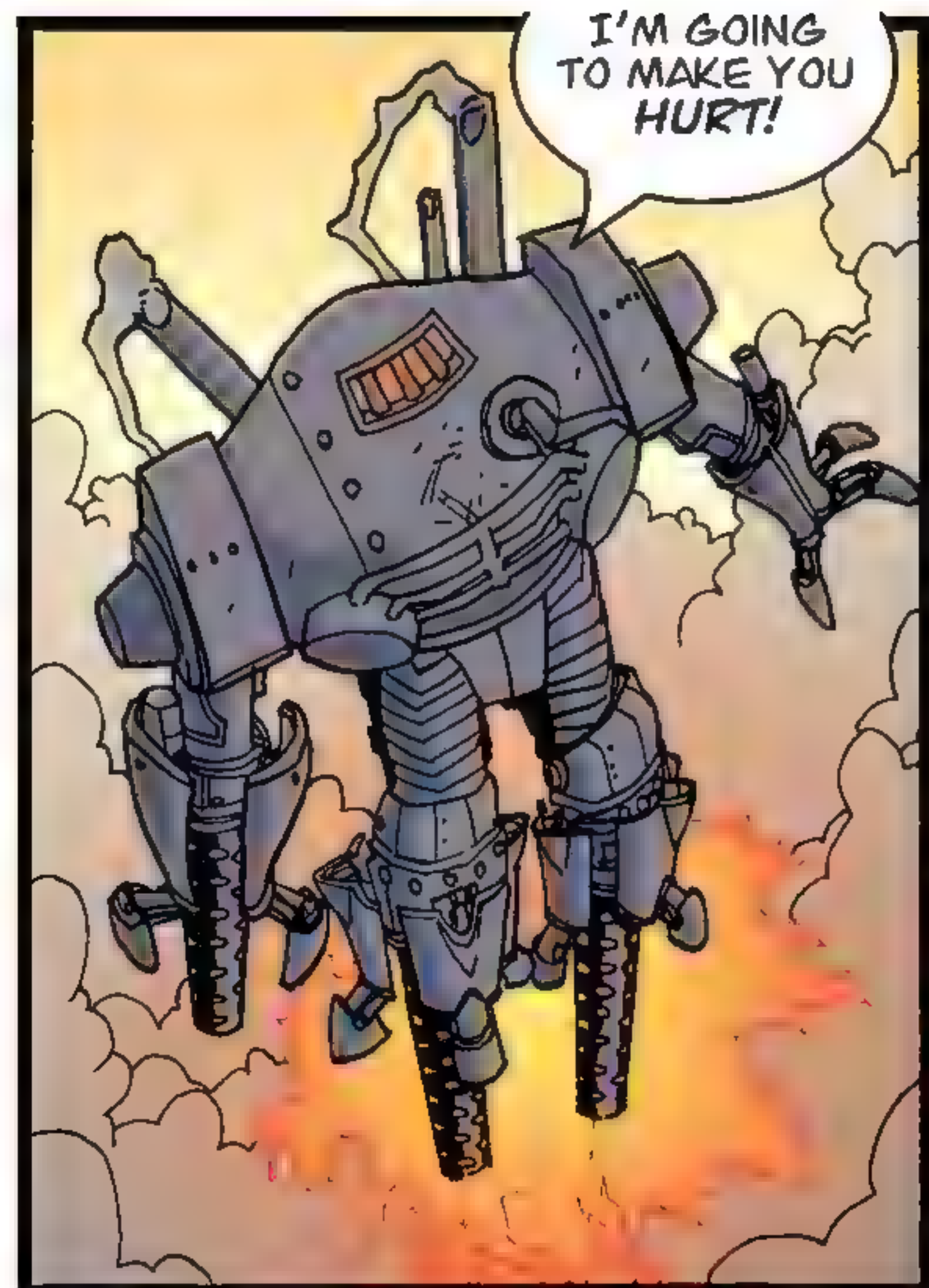
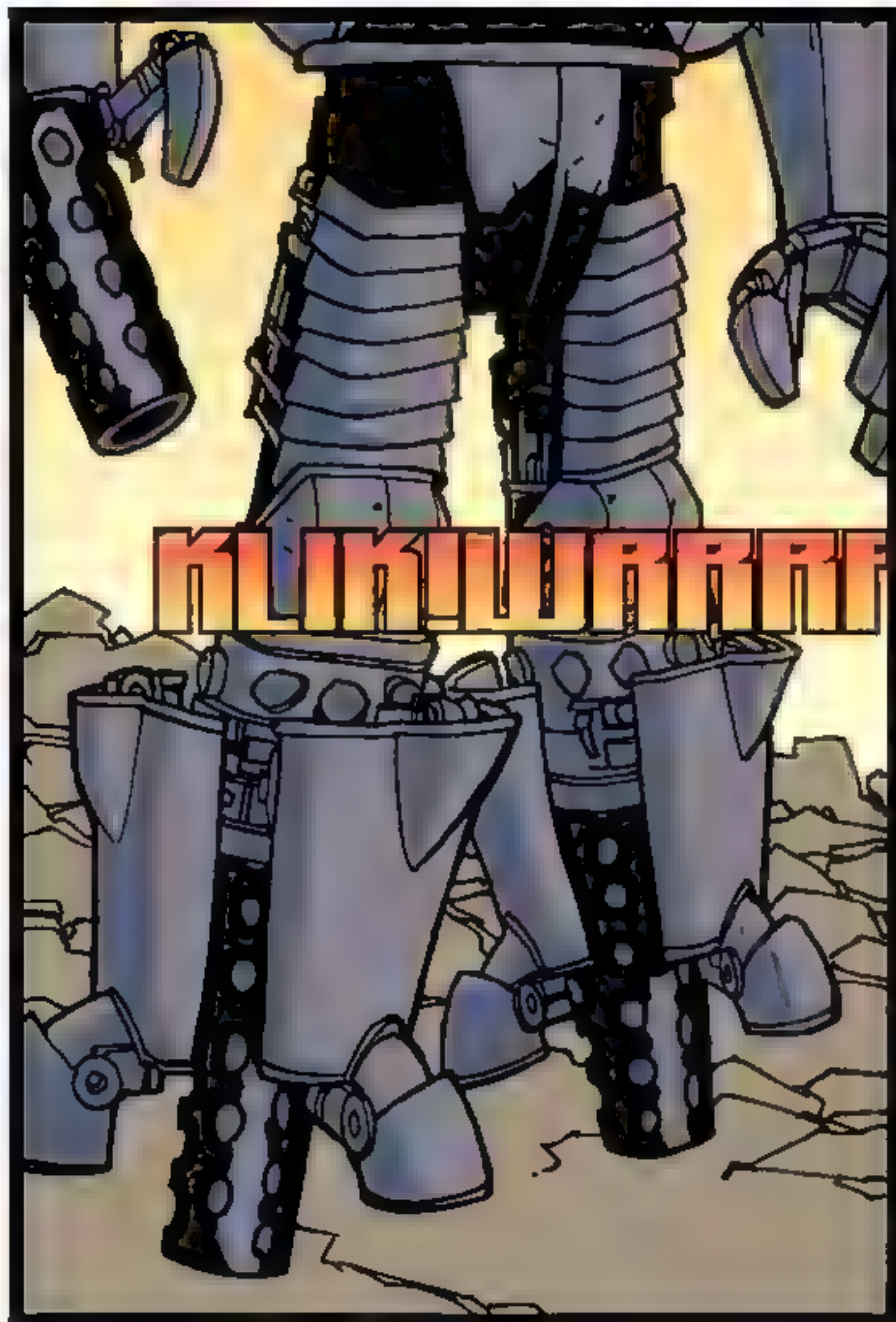


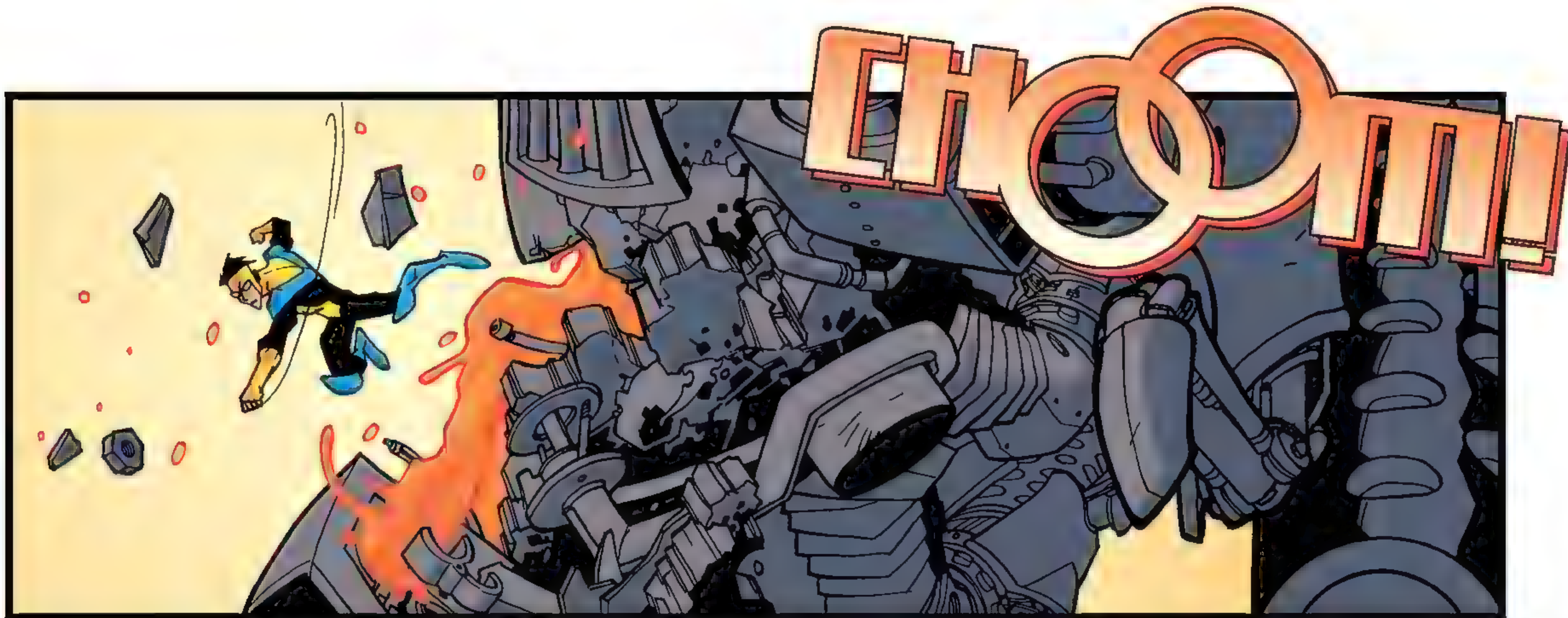
IMAGE COMICS SUMMER SPECIAL

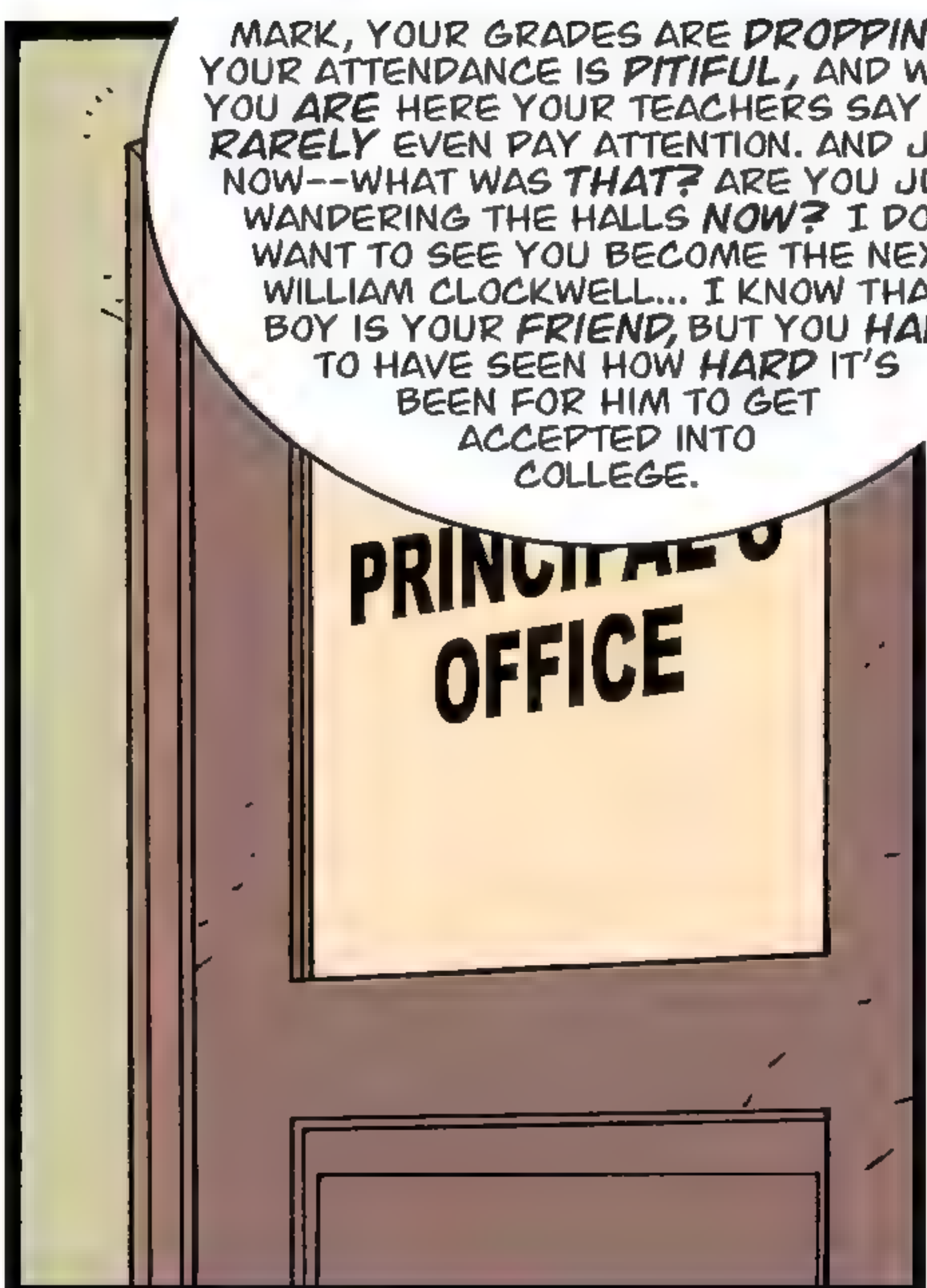
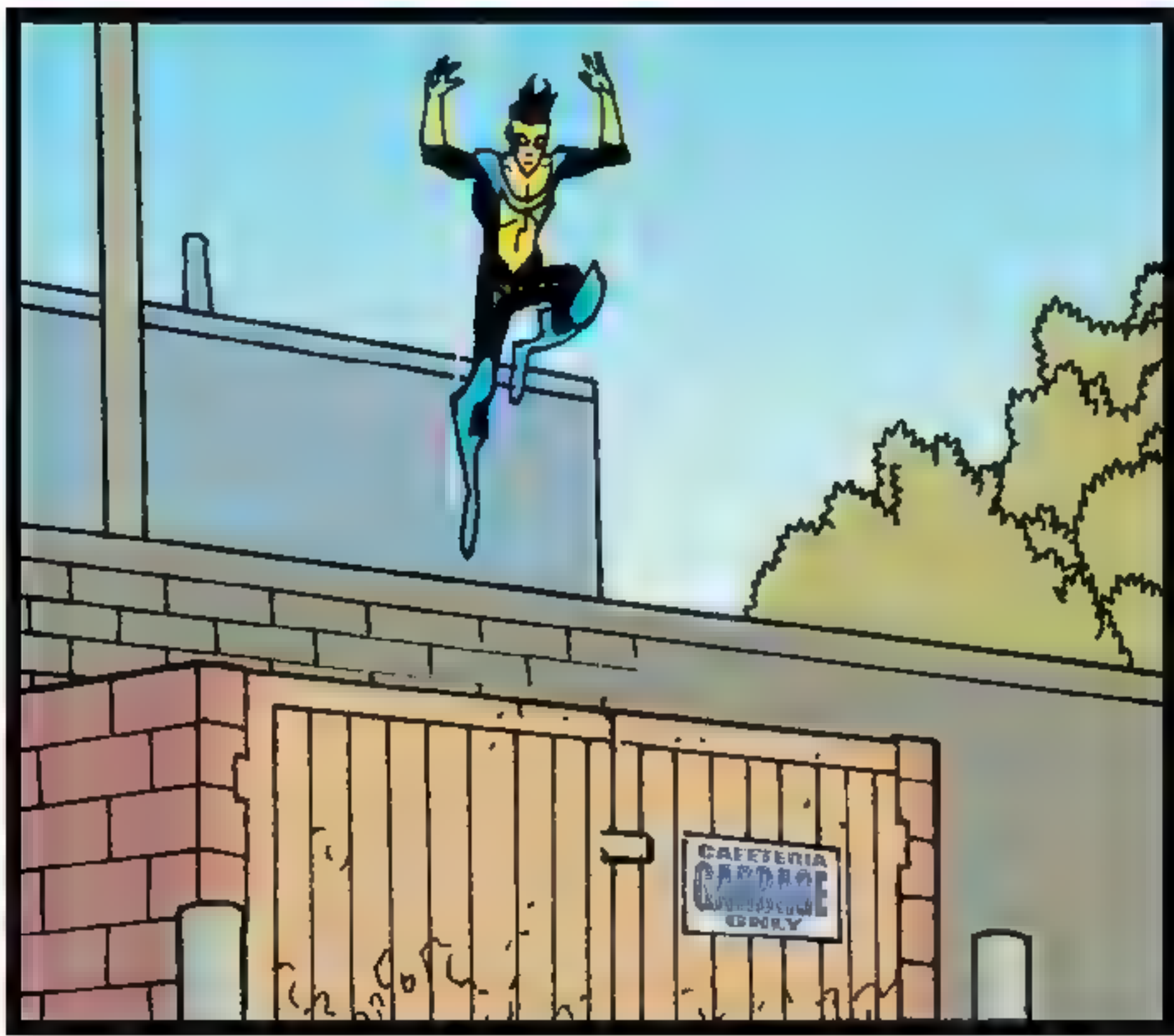


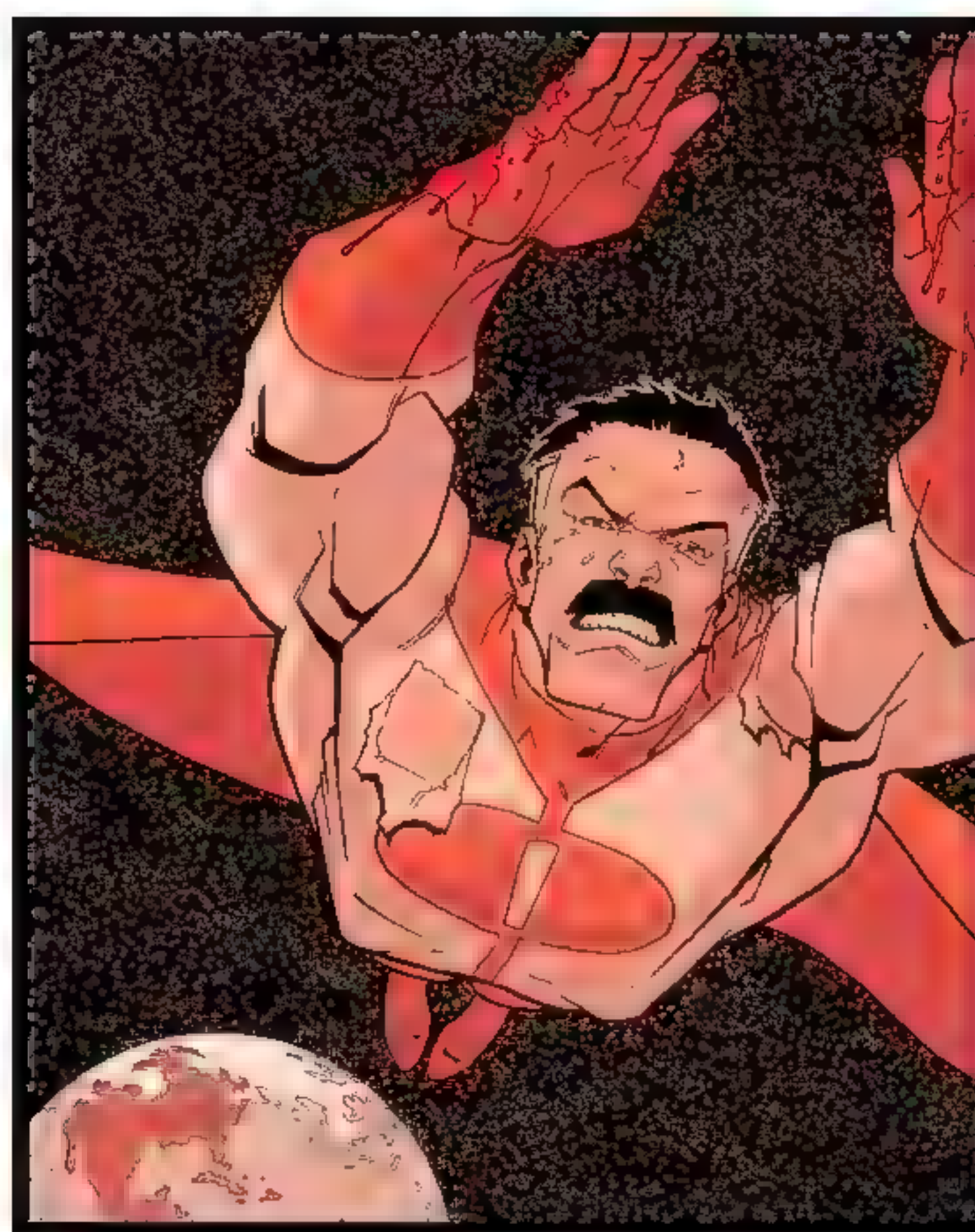
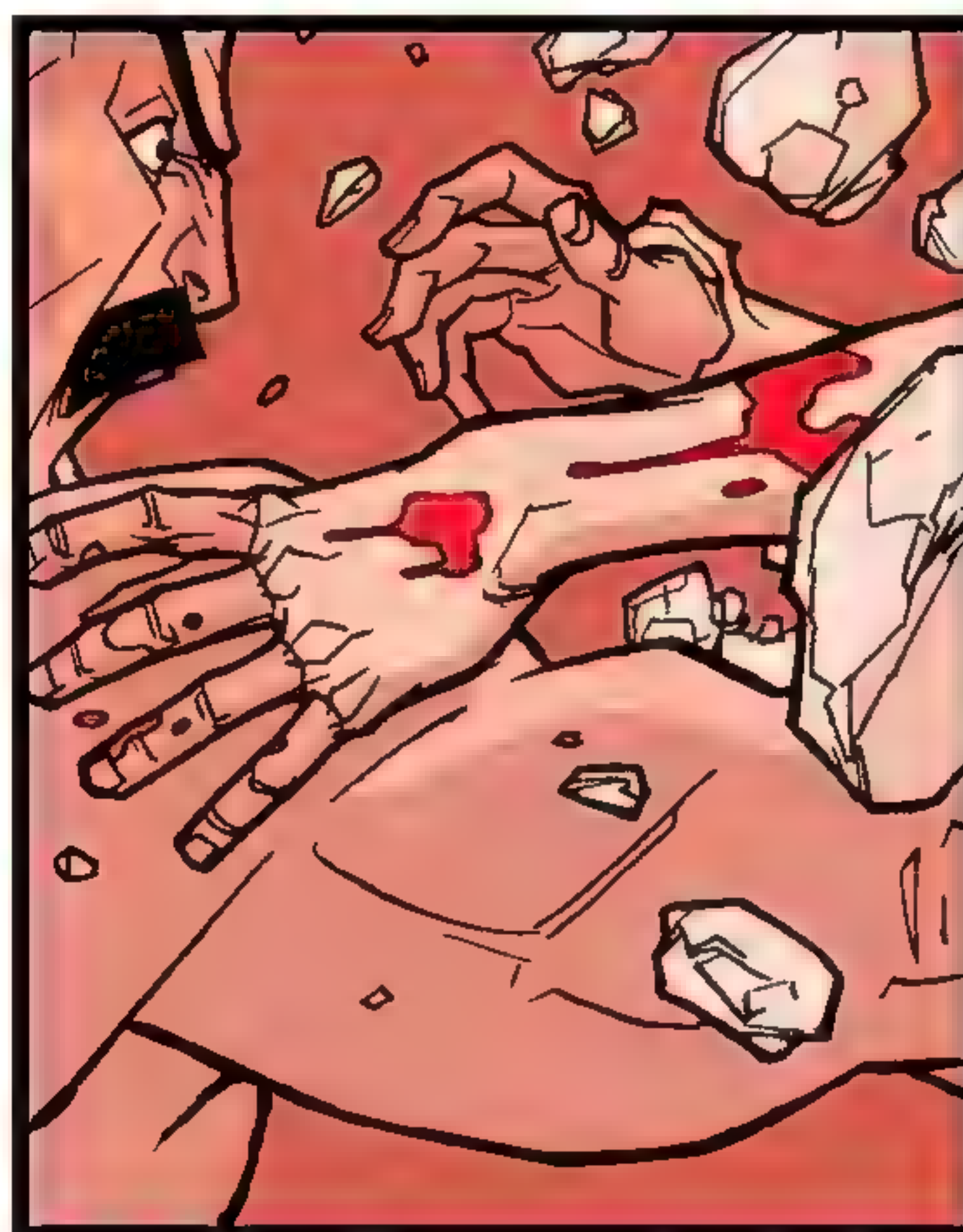


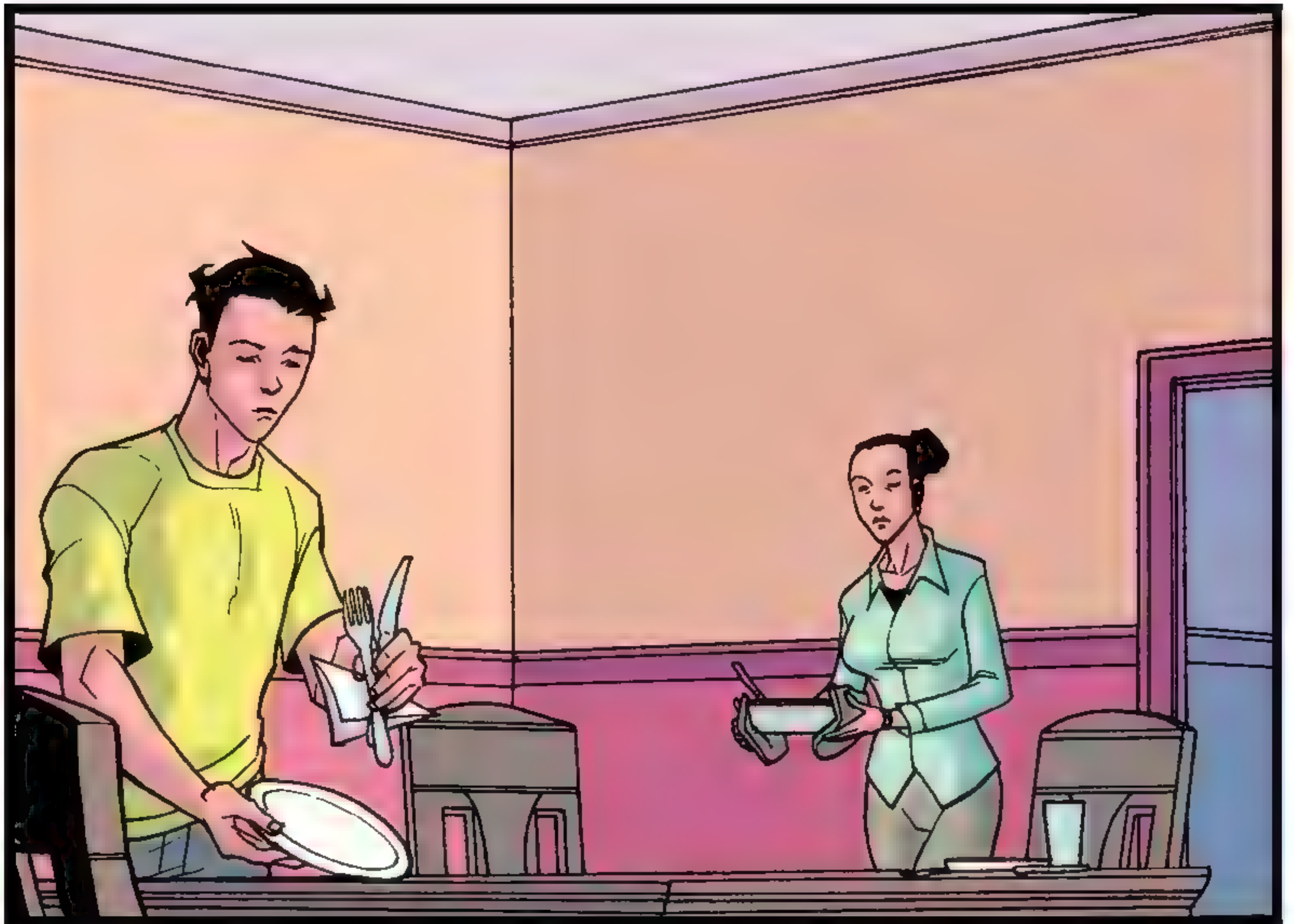
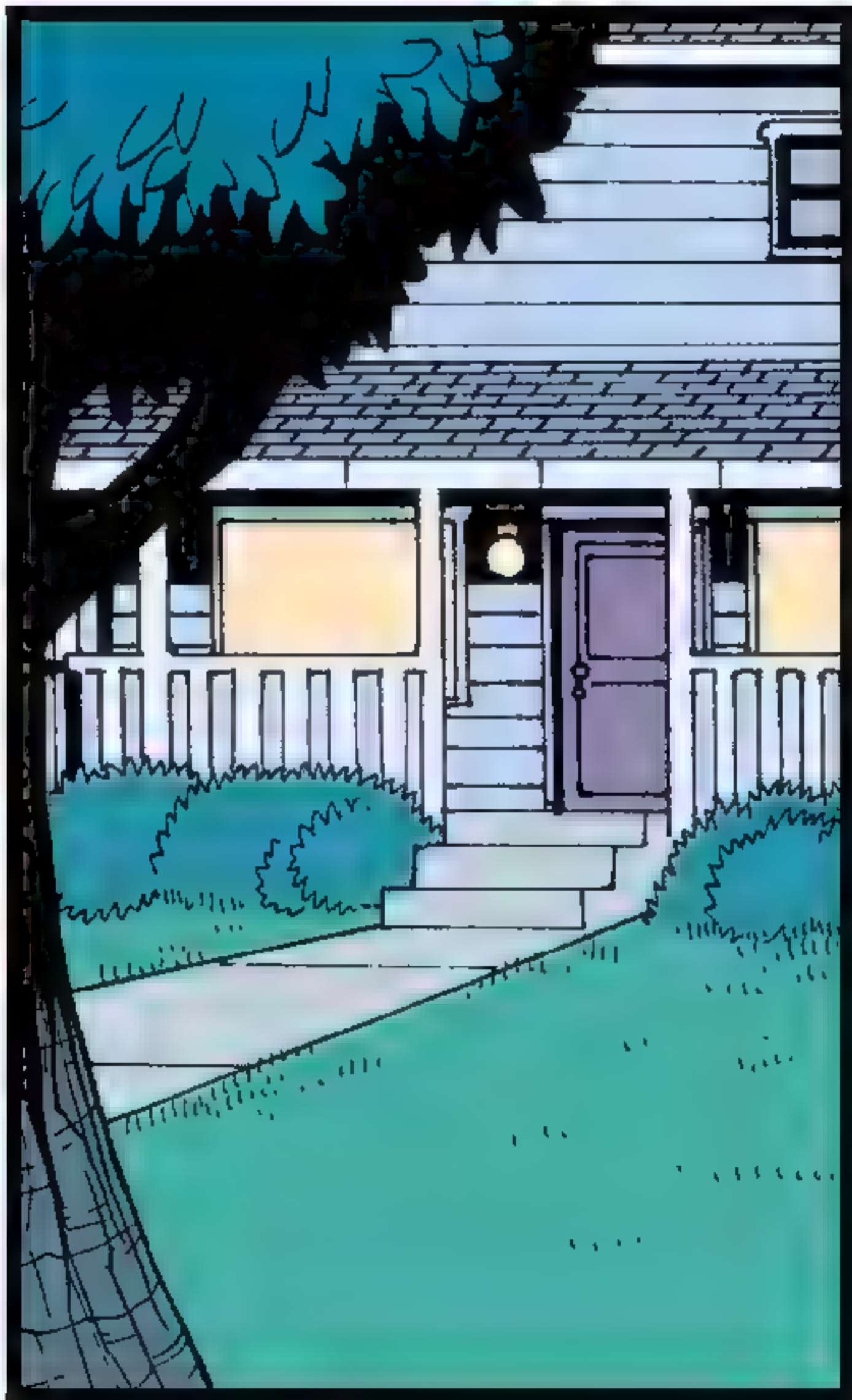












Y'KNOW... SOMETIMES I **FORGET** ABOUT EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED--EVERYTHING HE **DID**, AND FOR A SECOND I THINK HE'S GOING TO WHISK INTO THAT CHAIR AND EVERYTHING'S GOING TO GO BACK TO **NORMAL**--BACK TO THE WAY THINGS WERE.

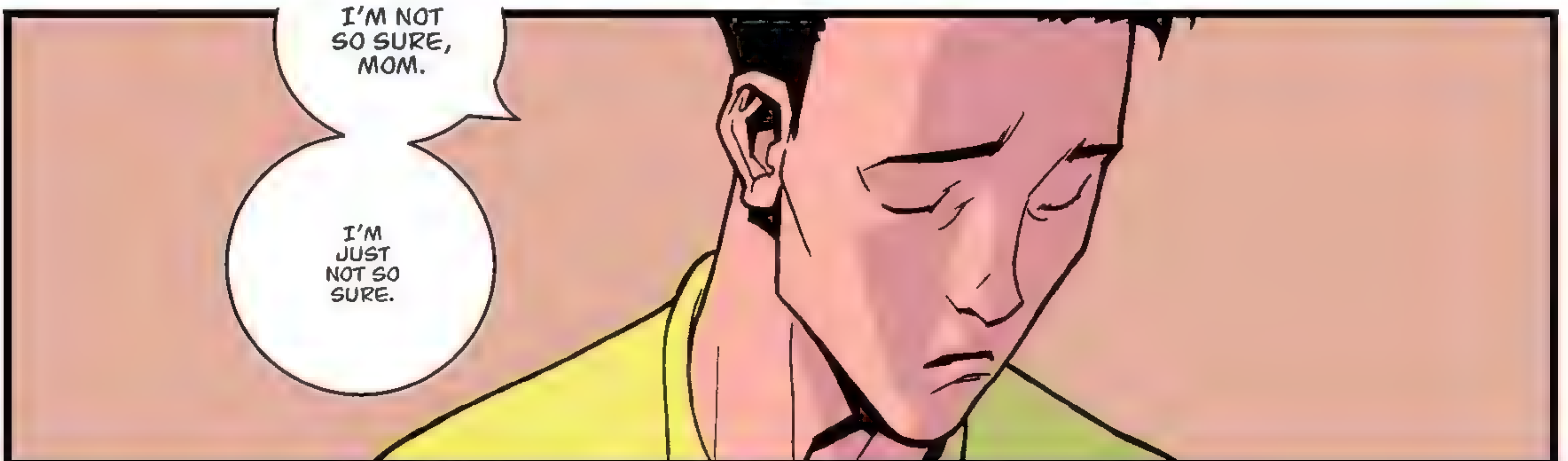


I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU MEAN. WHEN I HAVE THE COSTUME ON AND I'M OUT FIGHTING BAD GUYS I **FORGET** ALL ABOUT **DAD**... I ALMOST FEEL NORMAL FOR A LITTLE WHILE.

JUST A LITTLE WHILE, THOUGH.

MOM, I DON'T THINK I'M EVER GOING TO BE OKAY. NOT AFTER **THIS**.

YOU'LL BE FINE, MARK. WE'LL GET THROUGH THIS. IF I CAN, YOU CAN.



I'M NOT SO SURE, MOM.

I'M JUST NOT SO SURE.



ISSUE SIXTEEN





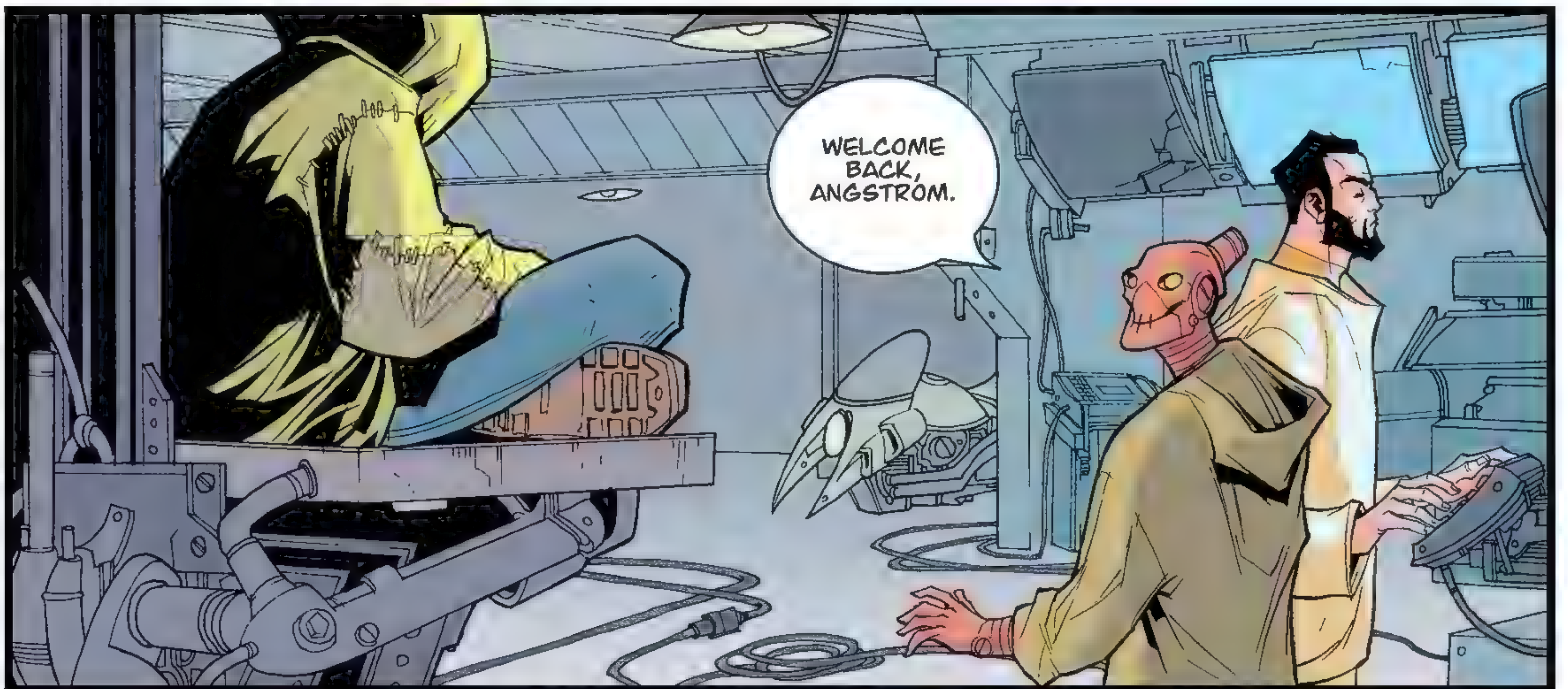
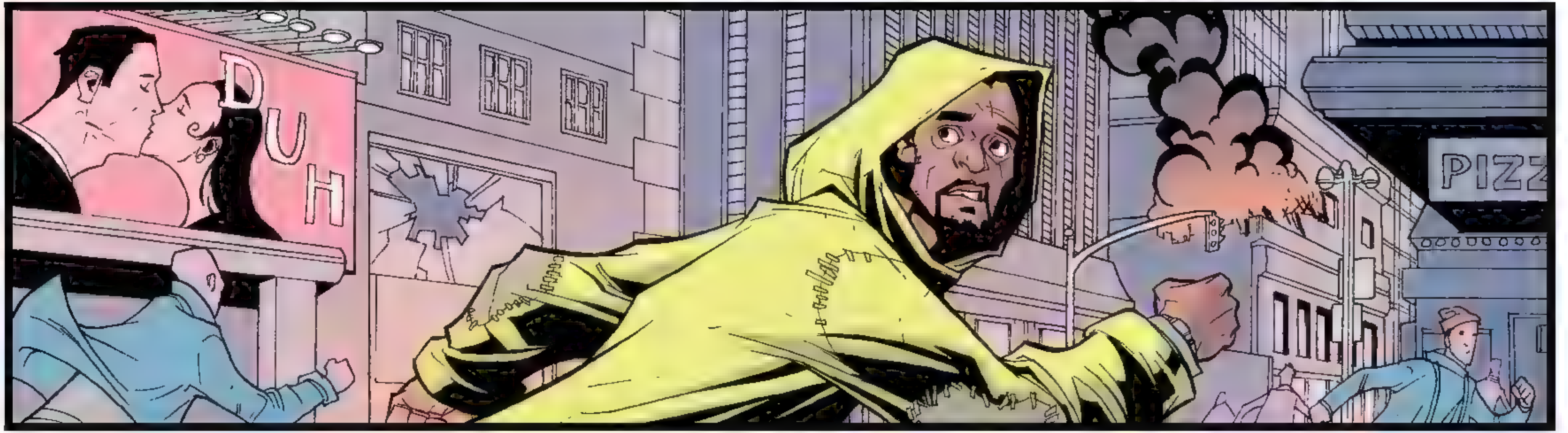
RESIST
AND DIE.

IT IS ONLY
NATURAL FOR
YOU TO FEEL THAT
MY FATHER AND I HAVE
DONE YOU SOME GREAT
WRONG BY ASSUMING
CONTROL OF THIS
PLANET.

THAT IS NOT
THE CASE. IN THE
LONG RUN YOU WILL
COME TO REALIZE THAT
WHAT WE DO HERE WILL
HELP YOUR CIVILIZATION
TO BETTER ITSELF---
WE WILL *IMPROVE*
THIS WORLD.

HOWEVER,
YOUR COOPERATION
IS *ESSENTIAL*. IT IS
IMPORTANT TO US THAT
THE CHANGEOVER
BE AS PAINLESS AS
POSSIBLE.

SO, ANY
PERSON OR
PERSONS WHO
OFFER ANY FORM OF
RESISTANCE WILL BE
TERMINATED
ON *SIGHT*.





WERE YOU FOLLOWED?

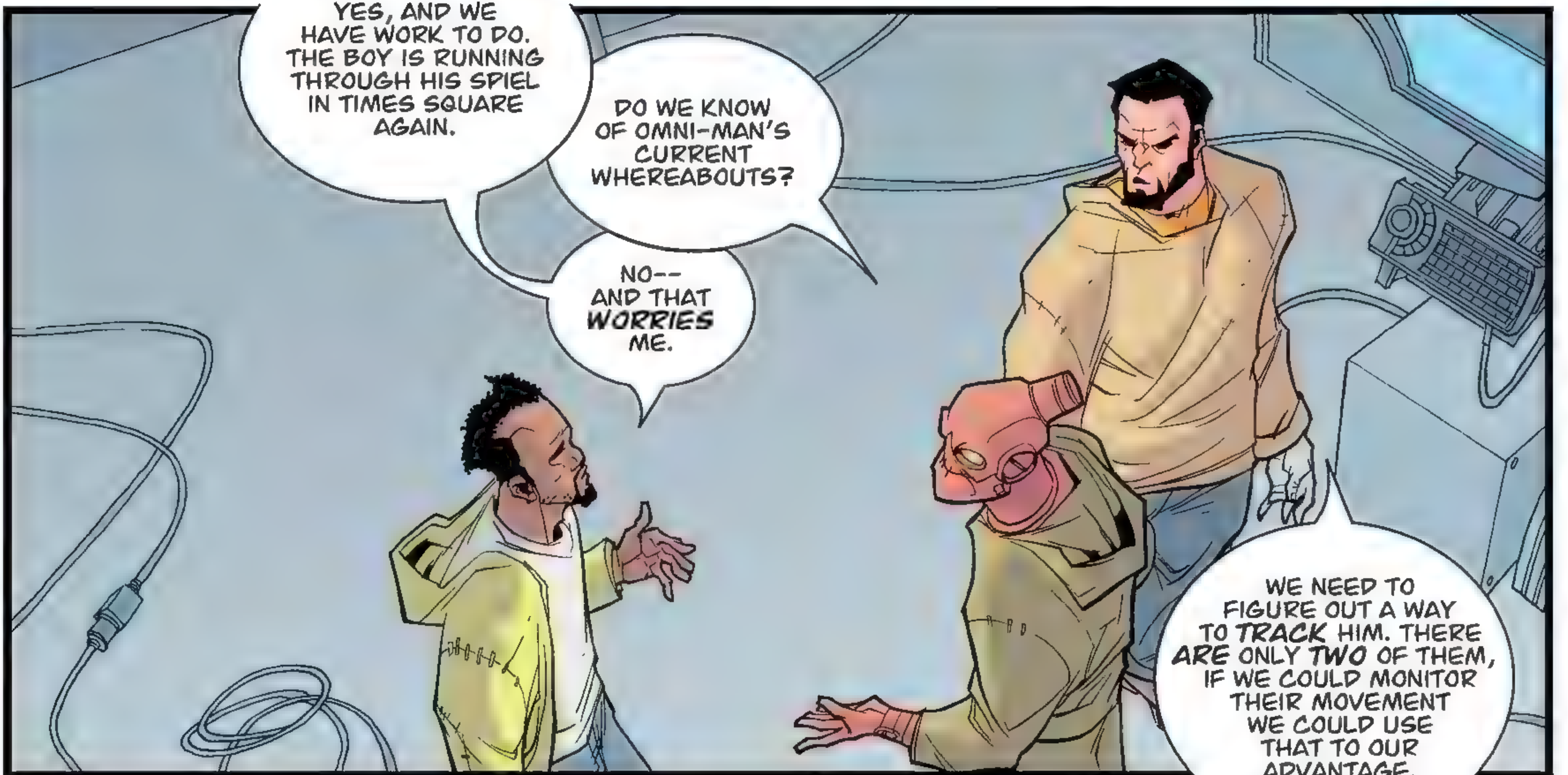


OF COURSE NOT. I UNDERSTAND THE GRAVITY OF OUR SITUATION AND I ASSURE YOU I HAVE TAKEN THE NECESSARY PRECAUTIONS.



ARE YOU CERTAIN?

ANGSTROM POSSESSES INTELLECT NEARLY AS SUBSTANTIAL AS MY OWN. THIS ANIMOSITY BETWEEN YOU TWO IS HIGHLY COUNTERPRODUCTIVE.



YES, AND WE HAVE WORK TO DO. THE BOY IS RUNNING THROUGH HIS SPIEL IN TIMES SQUARE AGAIN.

DO WE KNOW OF OMNI-MAN'S CURRENT WHEREABOUTS?

NO-- AND THAT WORRIES ME.

WE NEED TO FIGURE OUT A WAY TO TRACK HIM. THERE ARE ONLY TWO OF THEM, IF WE COULD MONITOR THEIR MOVEMENT WE COULD USE THAT TO OUR ADVANTAGE.



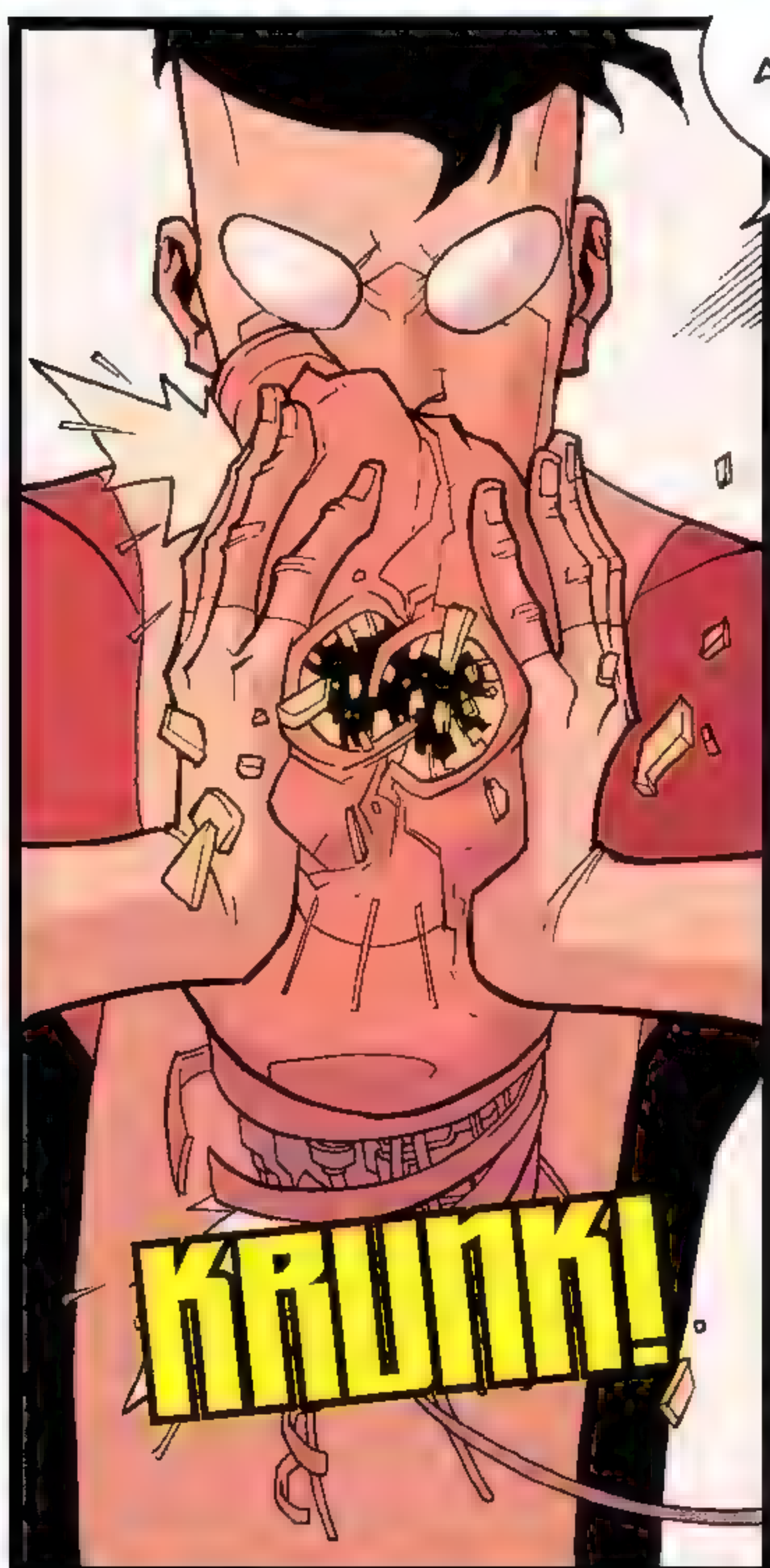
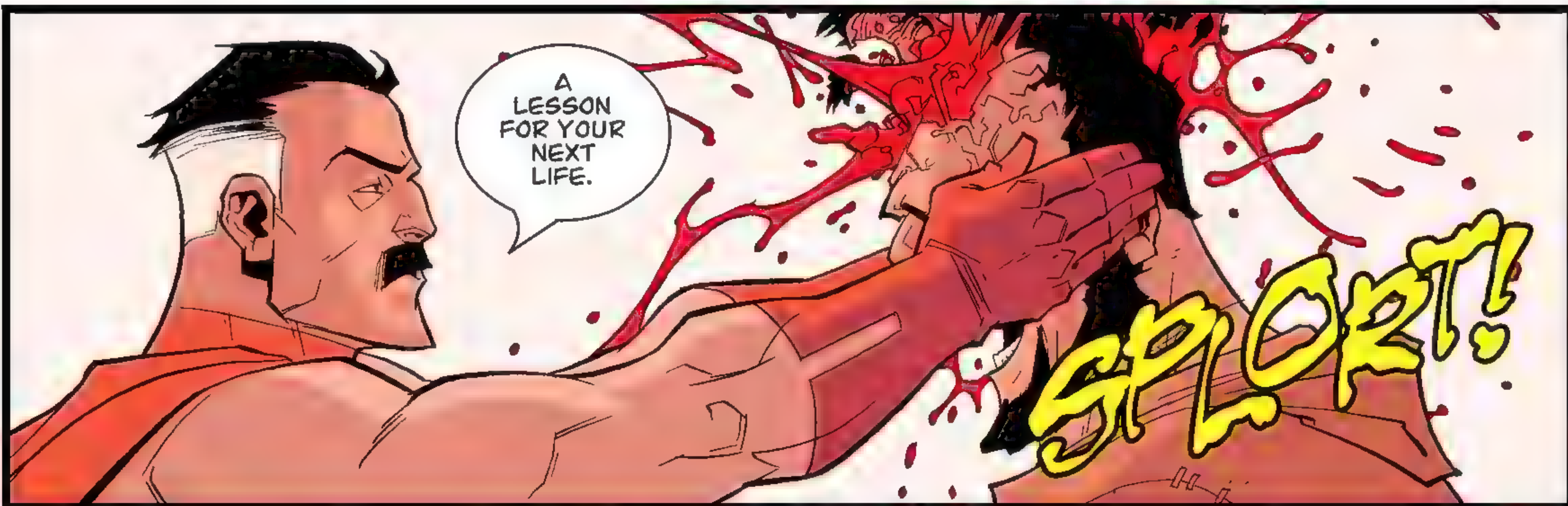
I'M DOING EVERYTHING I CAN. REALLY. IT'S ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO GET MY HANDS ON THE TECHNOLOGY NEEDED.

LOOK AT THIS PLACE. HOW ARE WE GOING TO DO ANYTHING WITH THIS LAUGHABLE ARRAY OF EQUIPMENT?

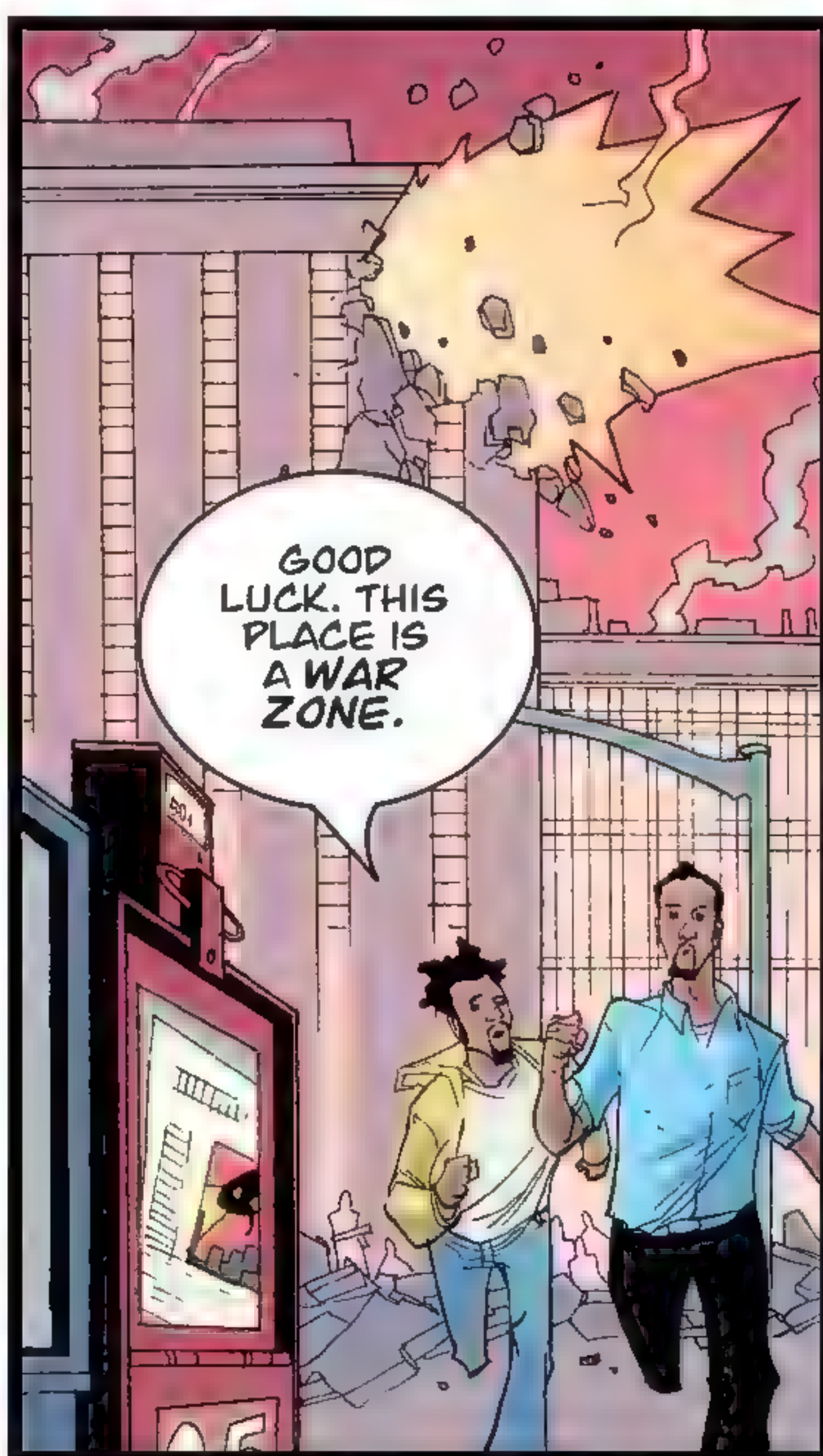
MY HANDS ARE TIED.

YOU'RE PROVING MORE USELESS BY THE DAY. WERE IT NOT FOR ROBOT'S CONTINUED SUPPORT YOU WOULD HAVE NO PLACE HERE.











THIS IS NOT GOING WELL.

YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN!

THEY'RE NOT THAT TOUGH AT ALL, BUT THEY'RE EVERYWHERE. IT SEEMS LIKE FOR EVERY ONE OF THESE THINGS I KNOCK DOWN, THREE MORE TAKE ITS PLACE.

AT THIS RATE... THEY'RE GOING TO BEAT US.

THAT IS NOT AN OPTION.

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU PANSIES, BUT I'VE BEEN AT THIS FOR SIX HOURS AND I HAVEN'T EVEN BROKEN A SWEAT.

WHATEVER IT TAKES. WE'RE BEATING THESE CLOWNS!

PREACH ON, SISTER! I'M NOT READY TO GIVE UP EITHER. THERE'S TOO MUCH AT STAKE!

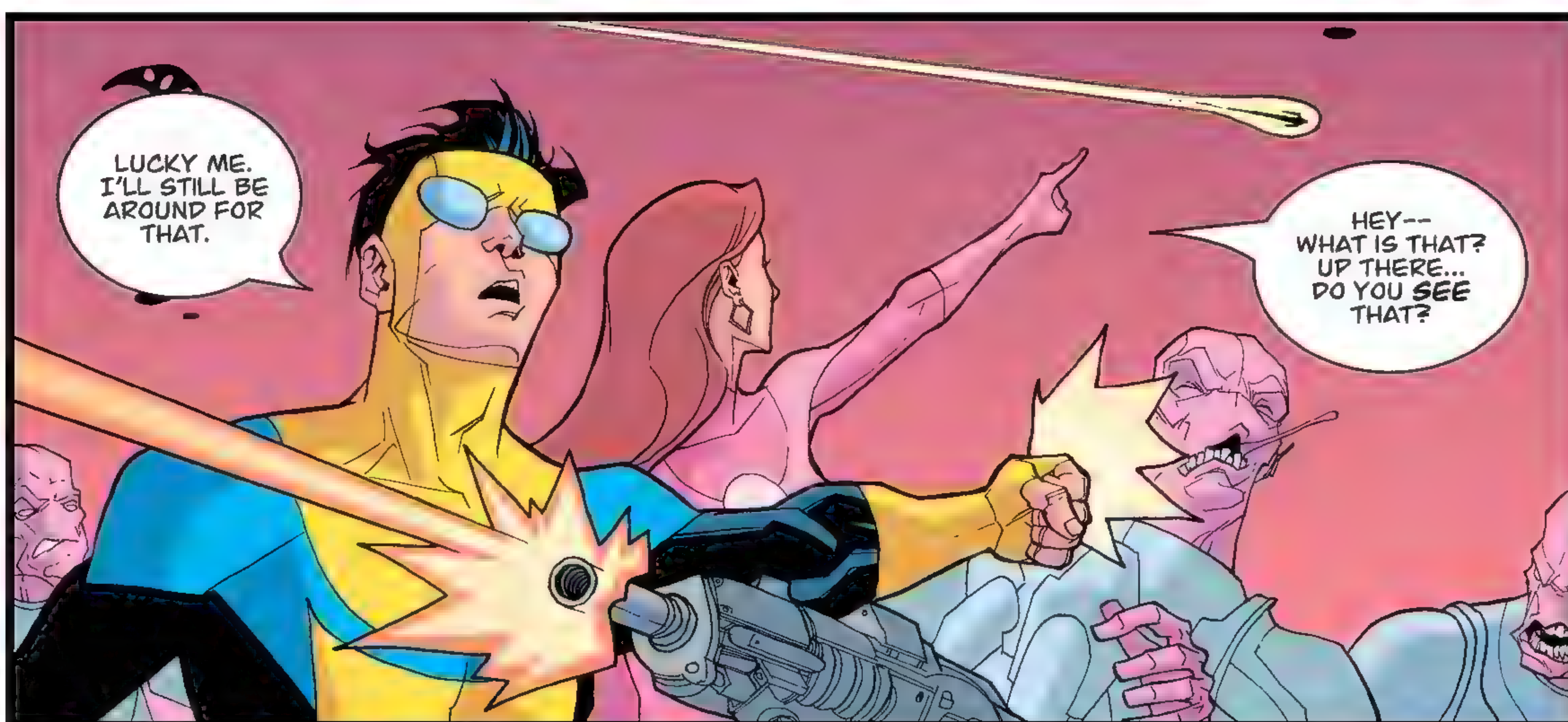
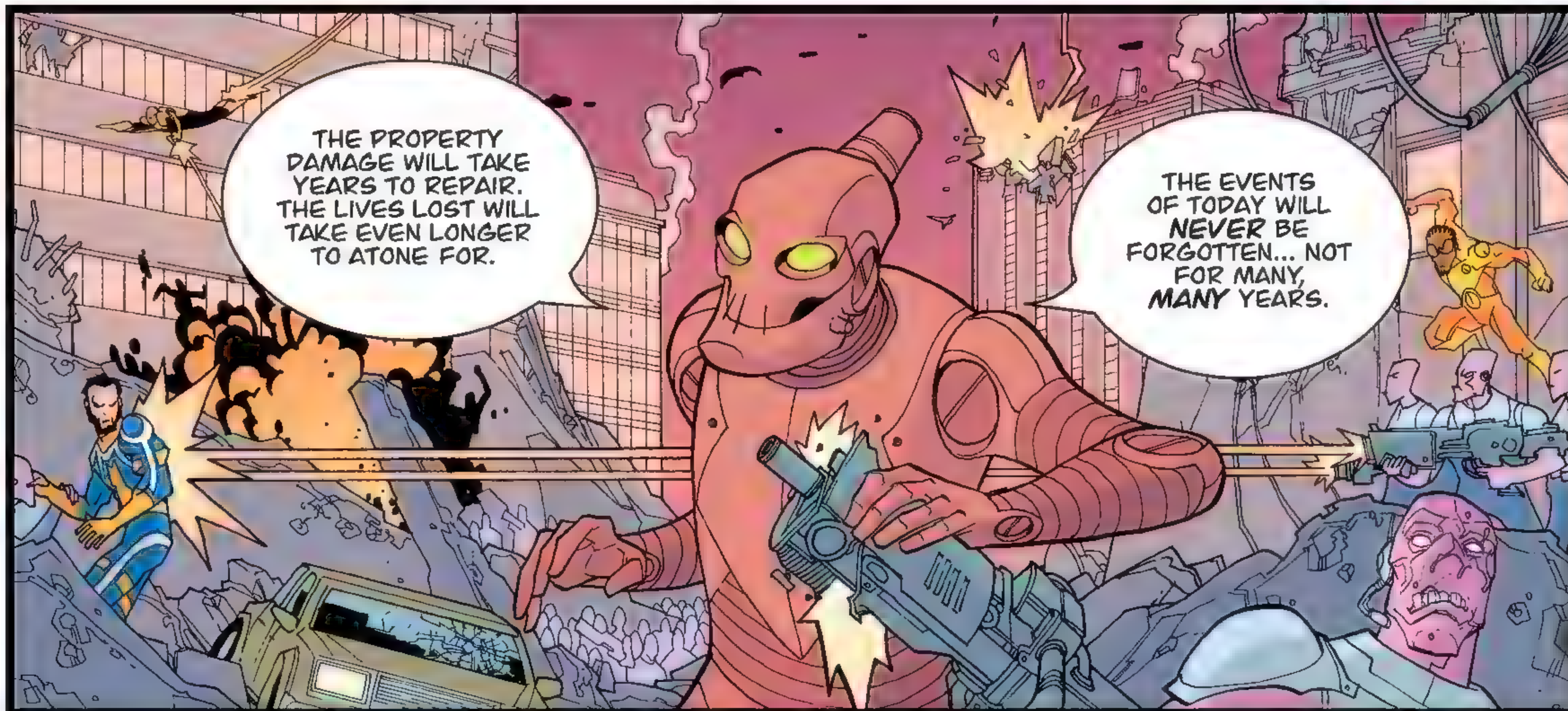
PEOPLE ARE COUNTING ON US!

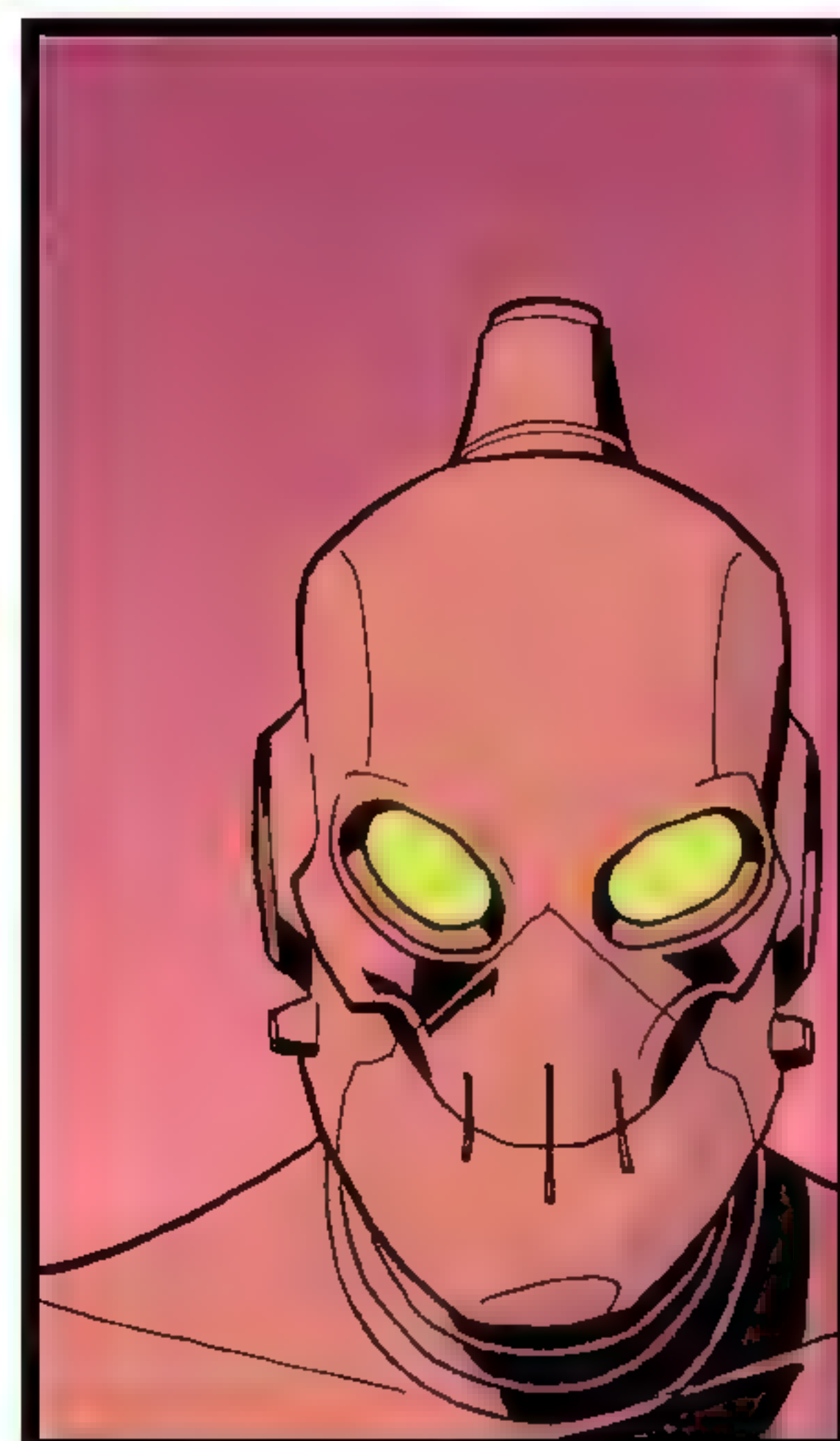
I NEVER SAID ANYTHING ABOUT GIVING UP.

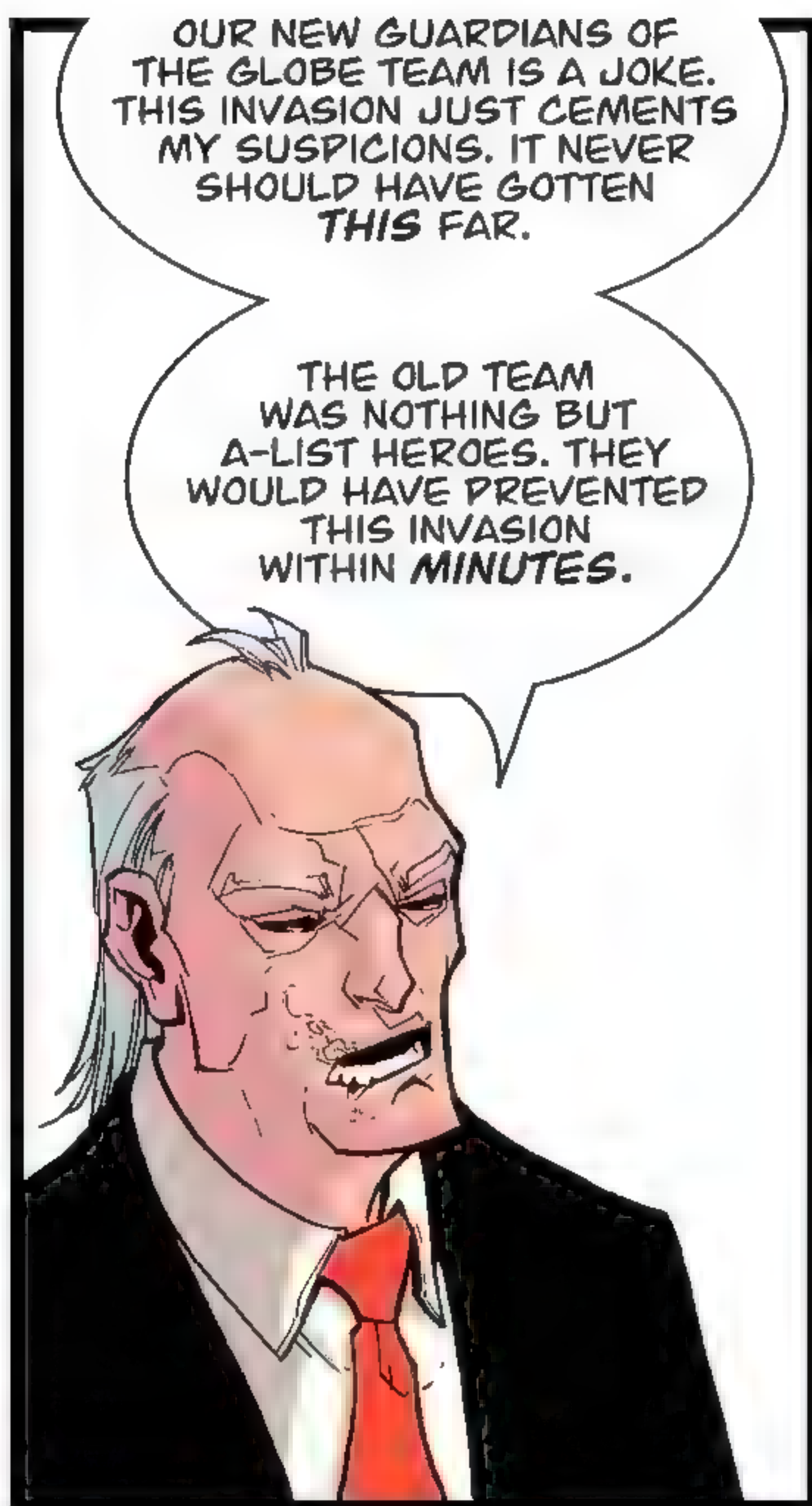
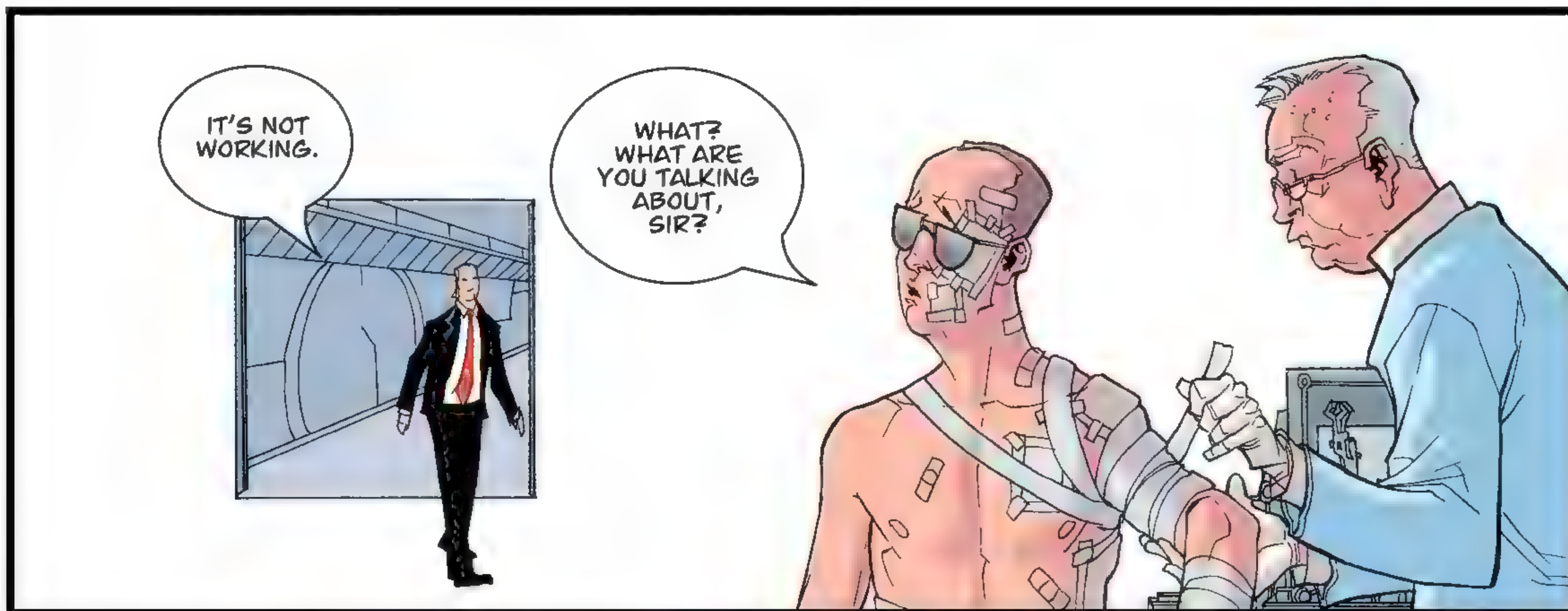
WE'LL BEAT THEM... WE ALWAYS DO. WE HAVE TO.

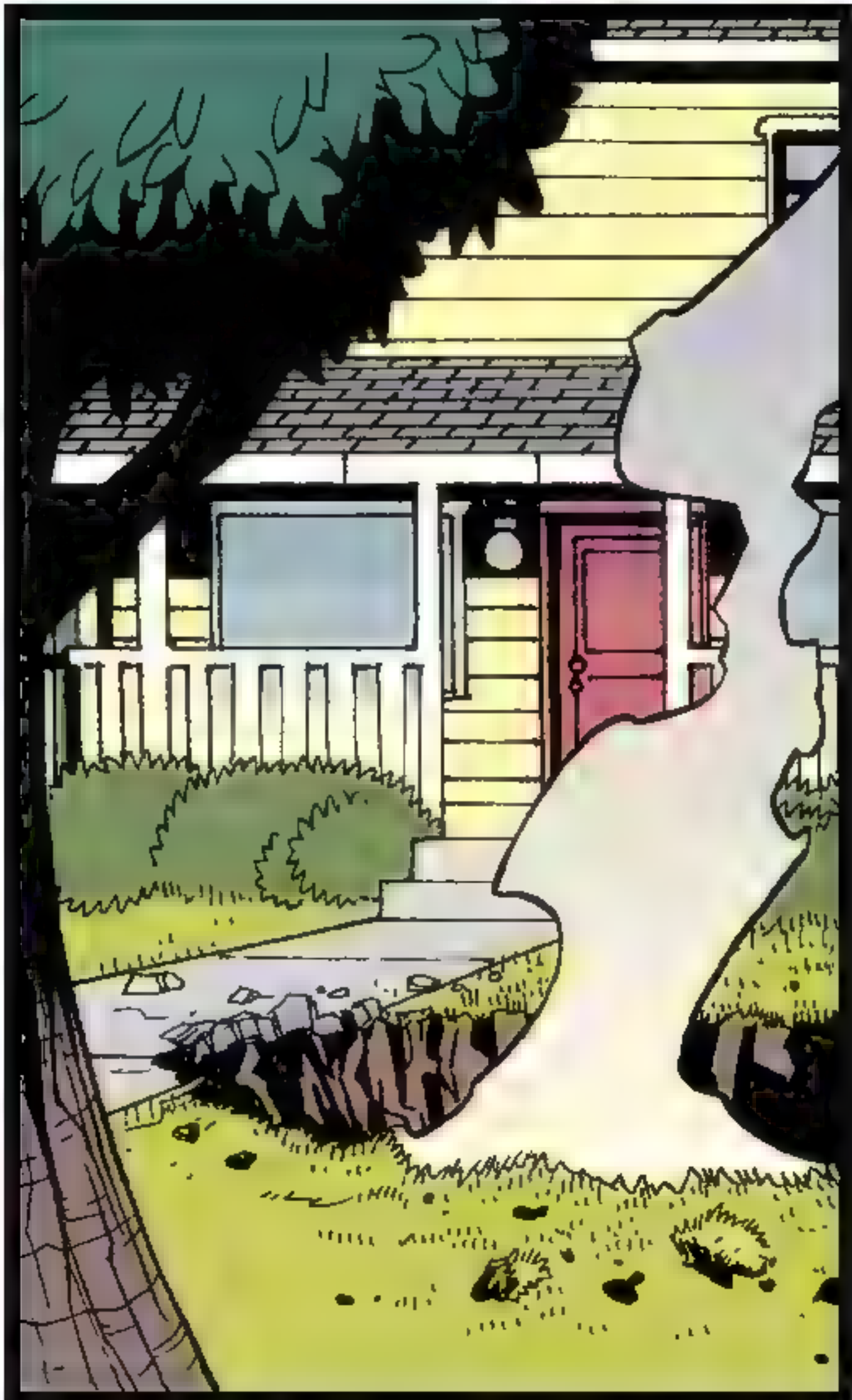
I HAVE DONE THE CALCULATIONS. THE ODDS ARE IN OUR FAVOR TO EVENTUALLY SUCCEED.

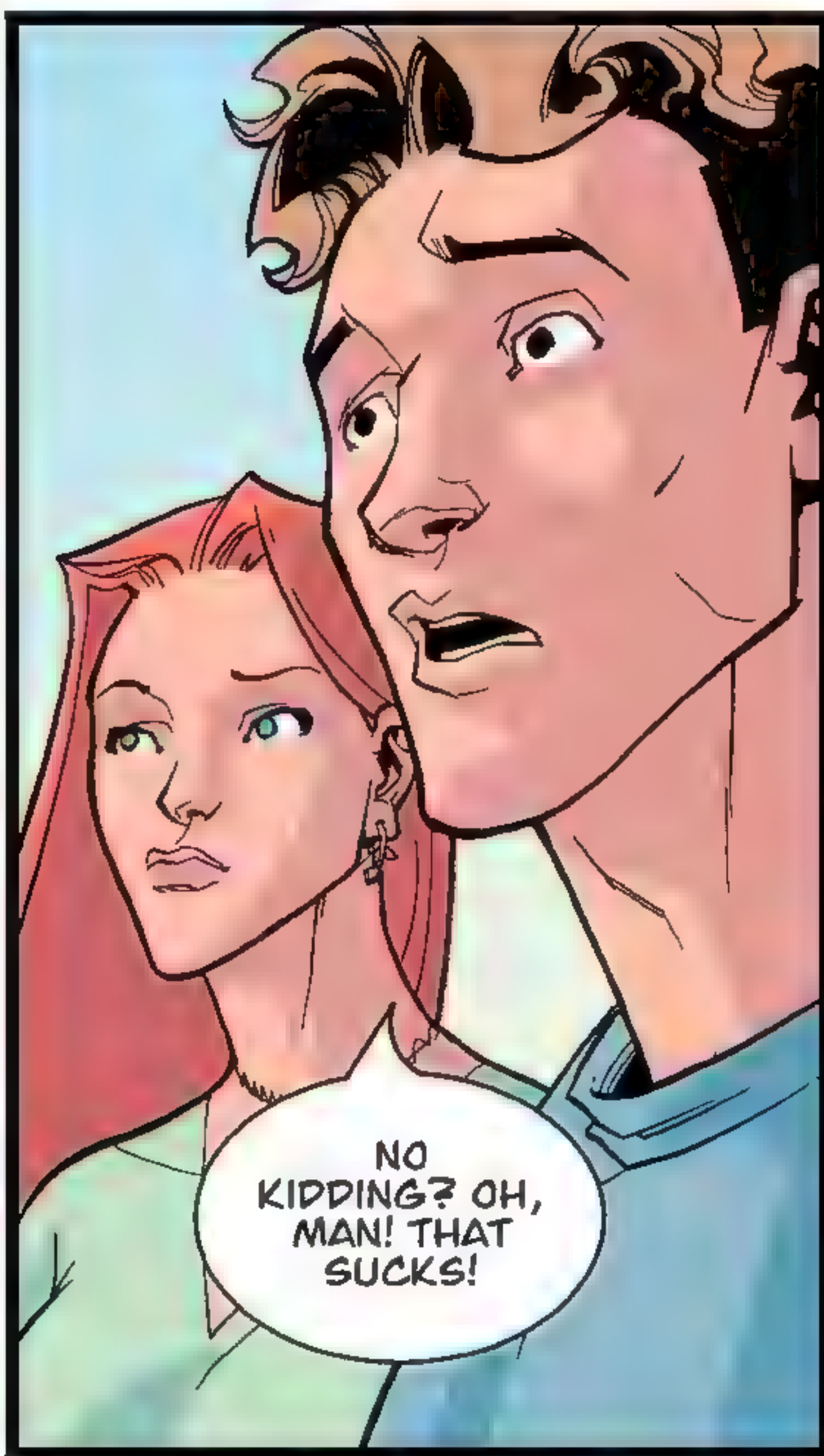
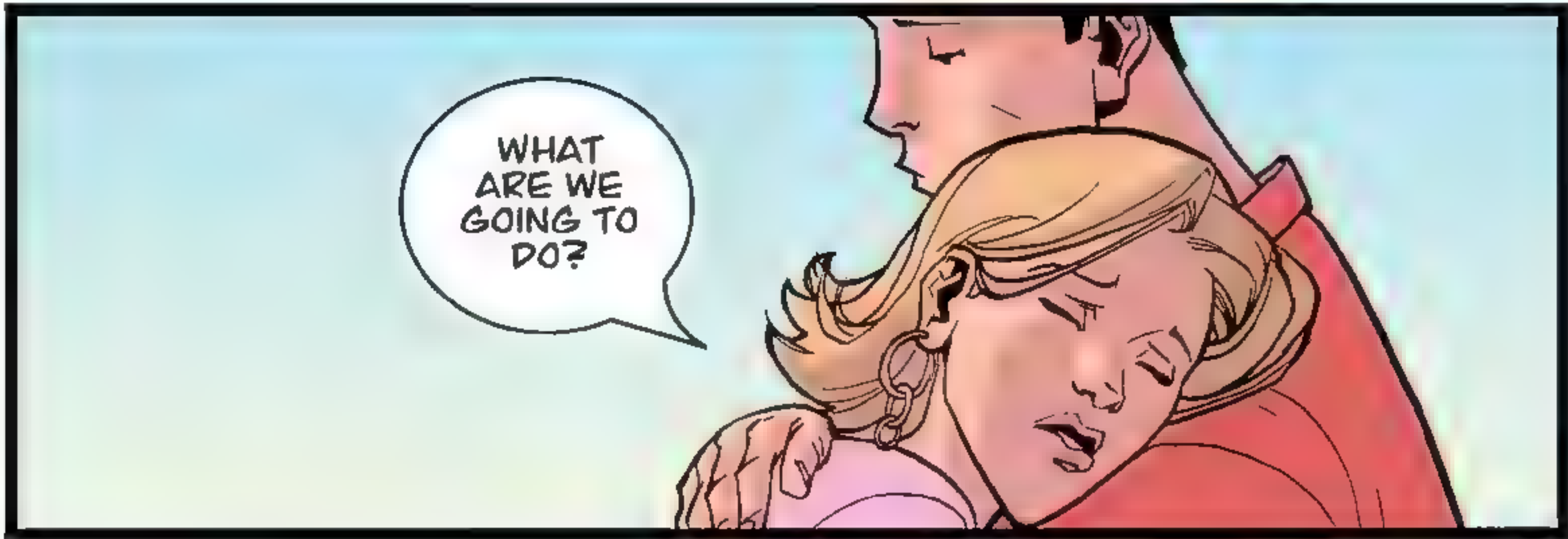
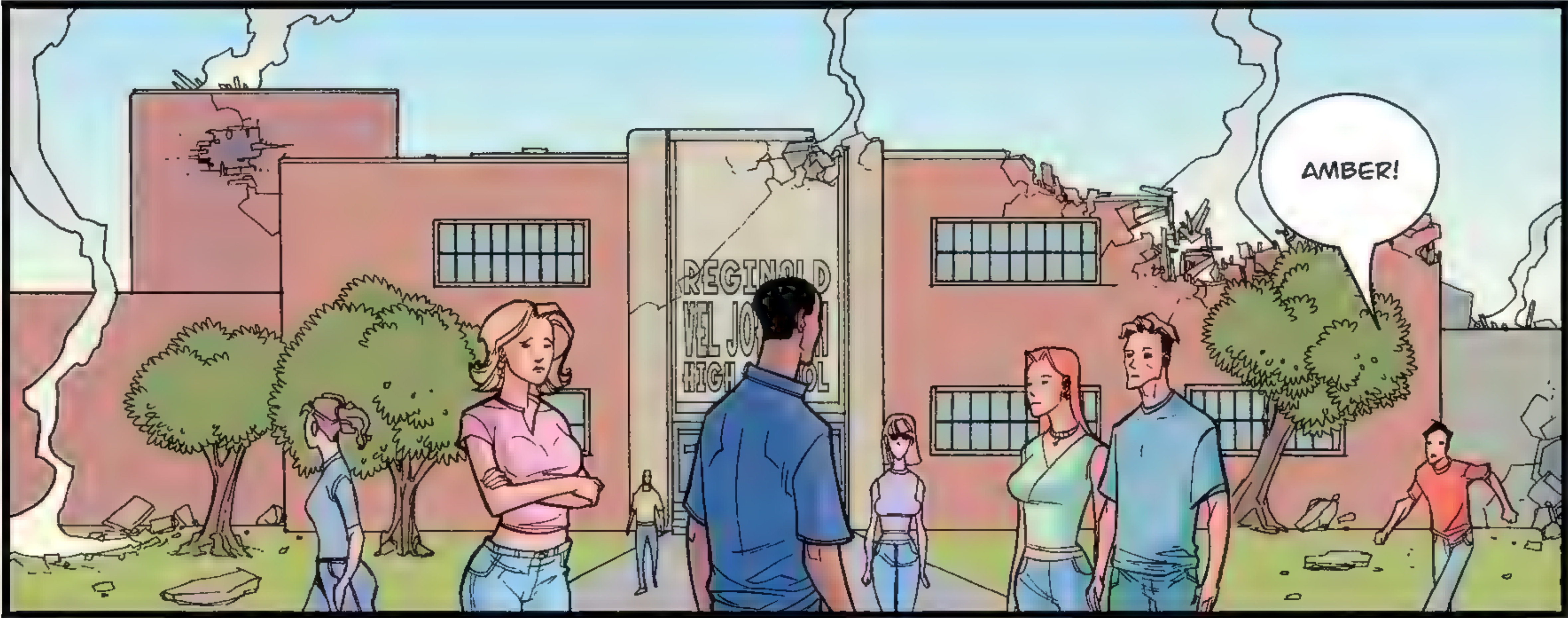
BUT AT WHAT COST...

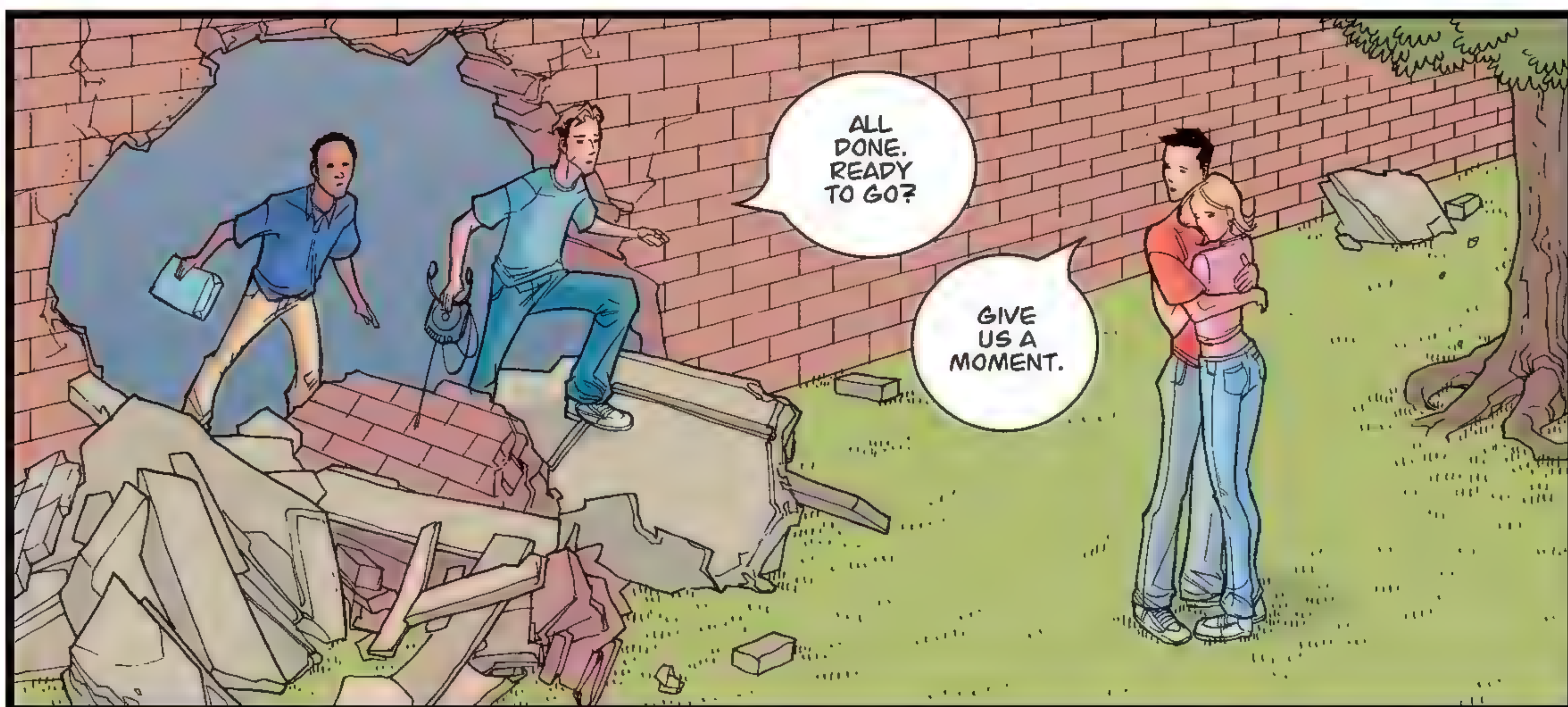
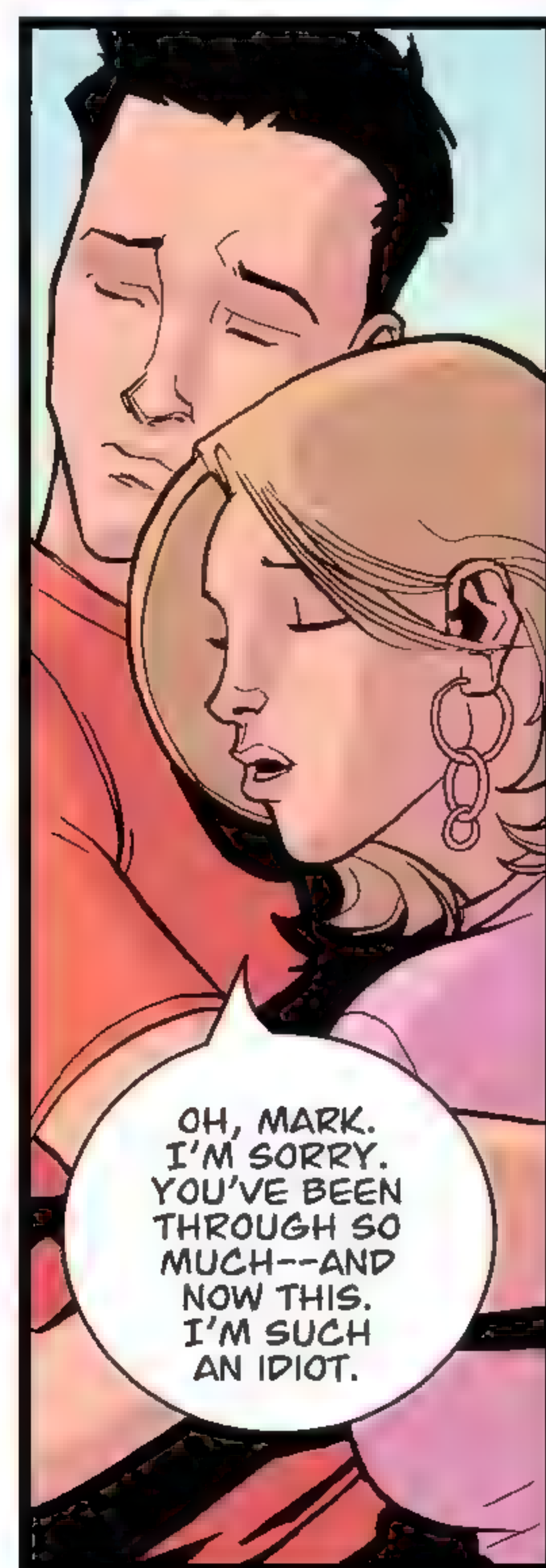
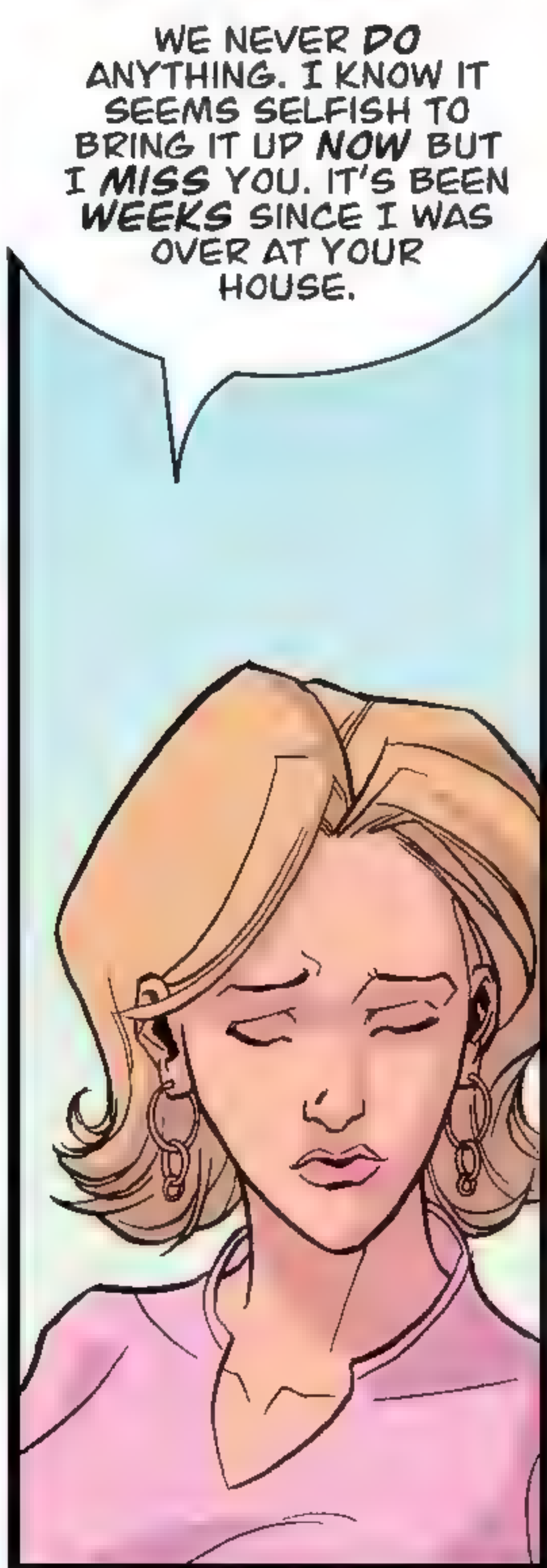
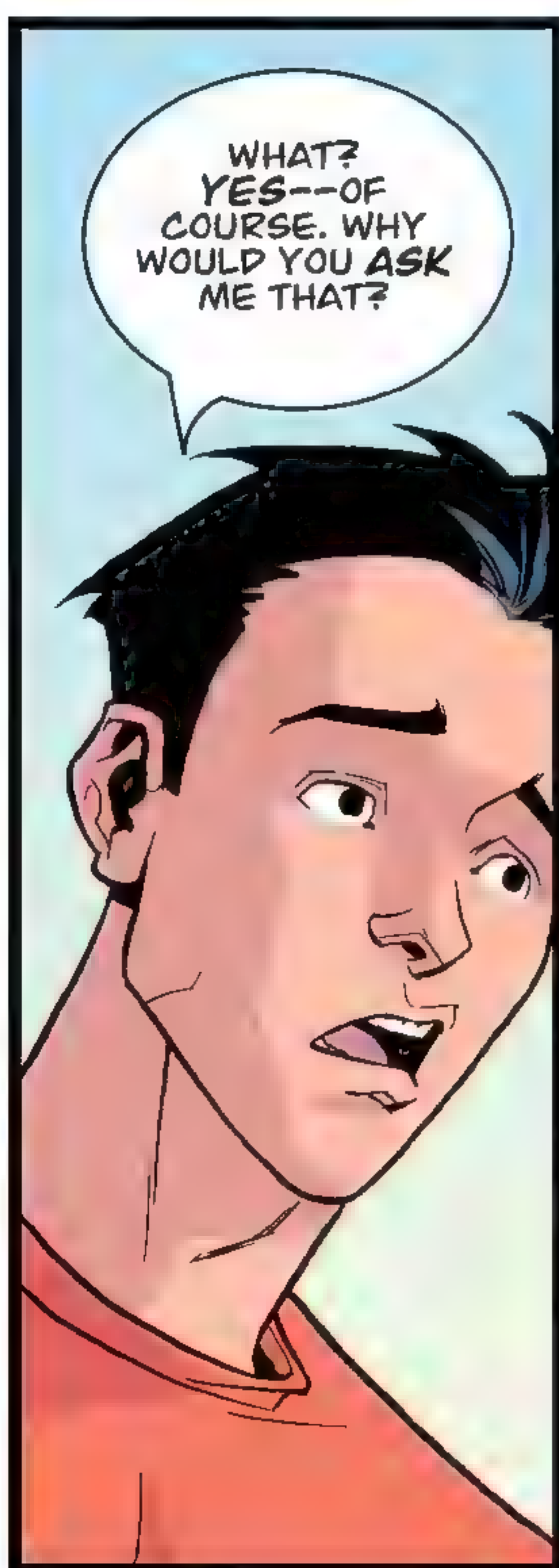


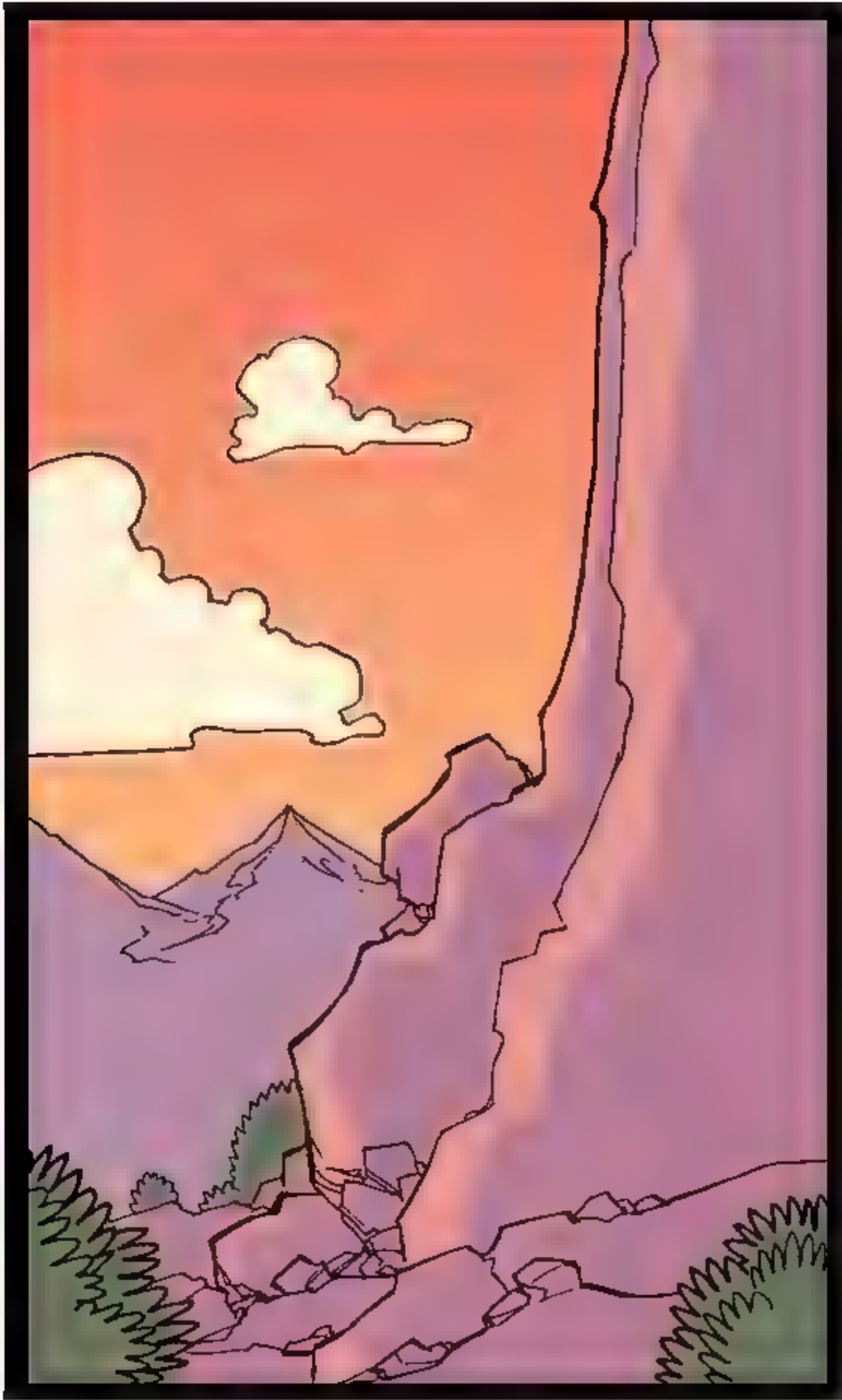




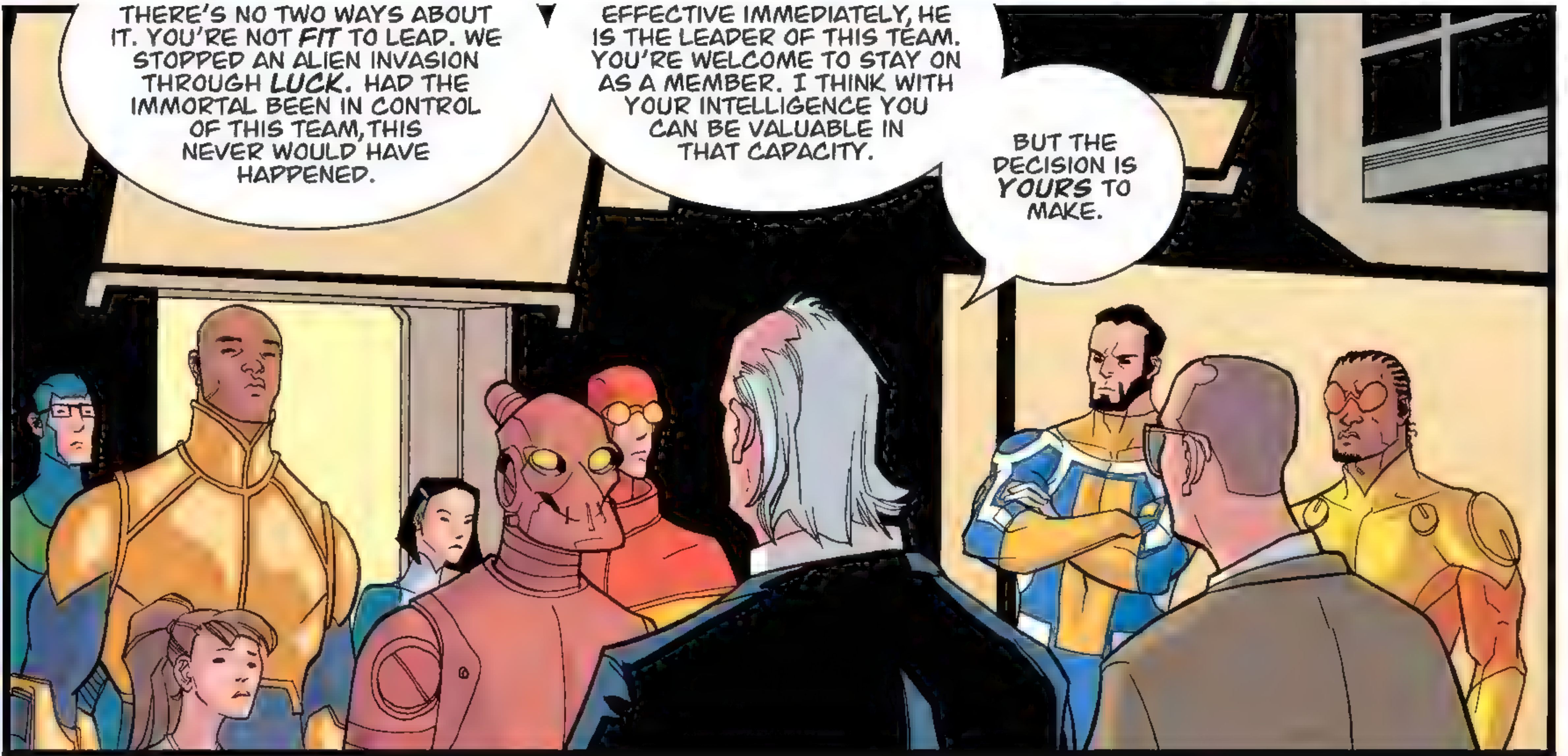








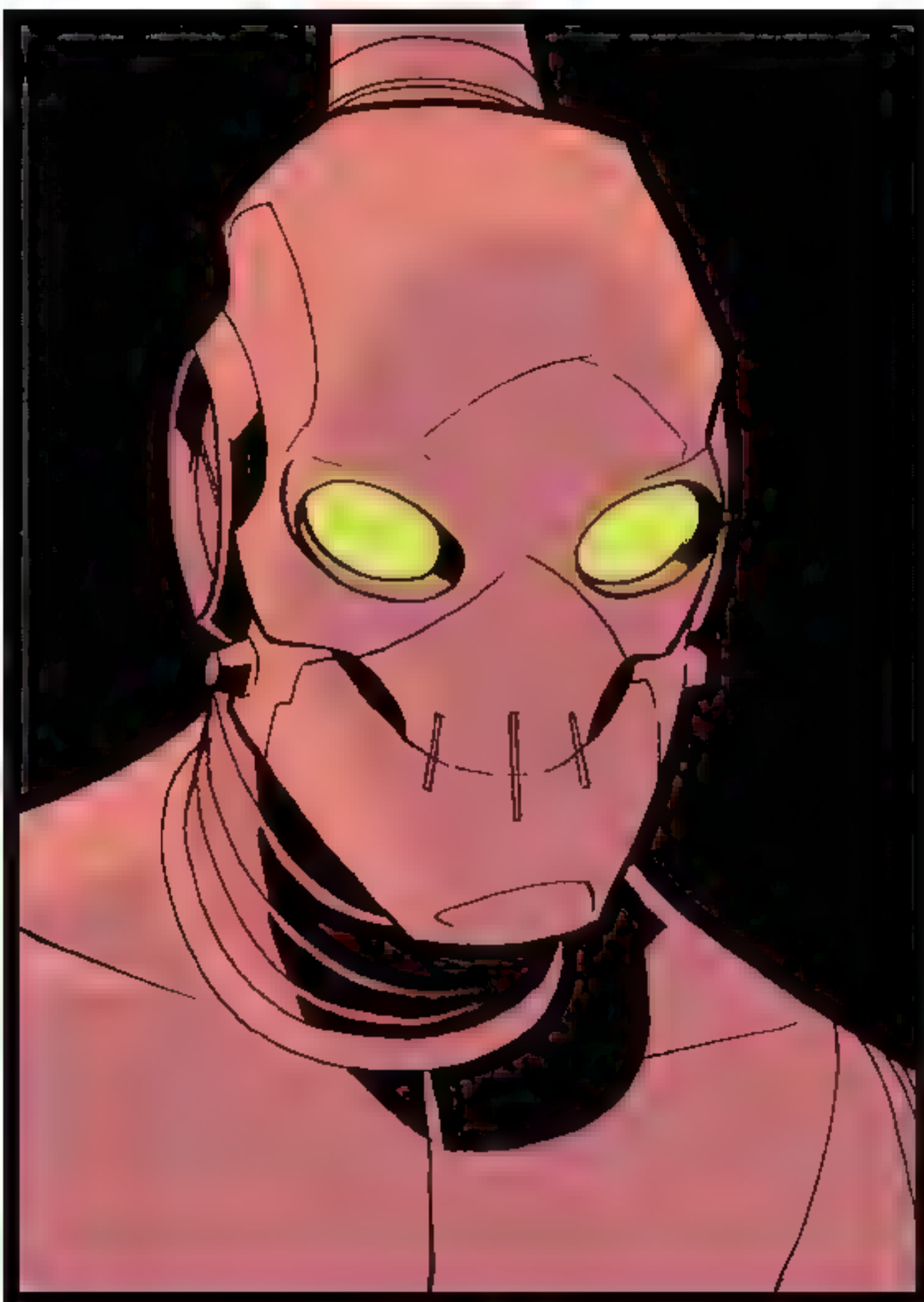
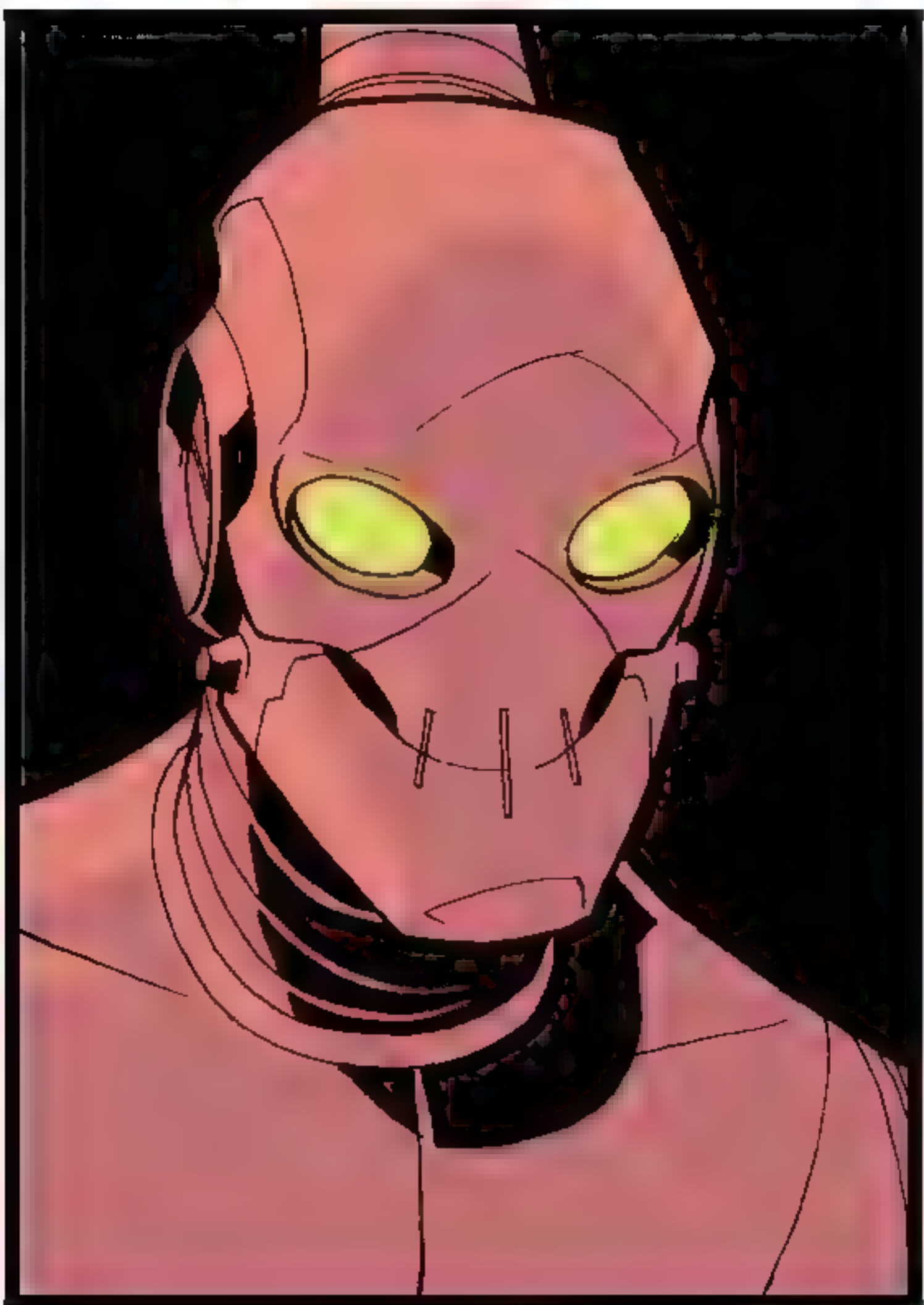
YOU'RE FIRED.



THERE'S NO TWO WAYS ABOUT IT. YOU'RE NOT *FIT* TO LEAD. WE STOPPED AN ALIEN INVASION THROUGH *LUCK*. HAD THE IMMORTAL BEEN IN CONTROL OF THIS TEAM, THIS NEVER WOULD HAVE HAPPENED.

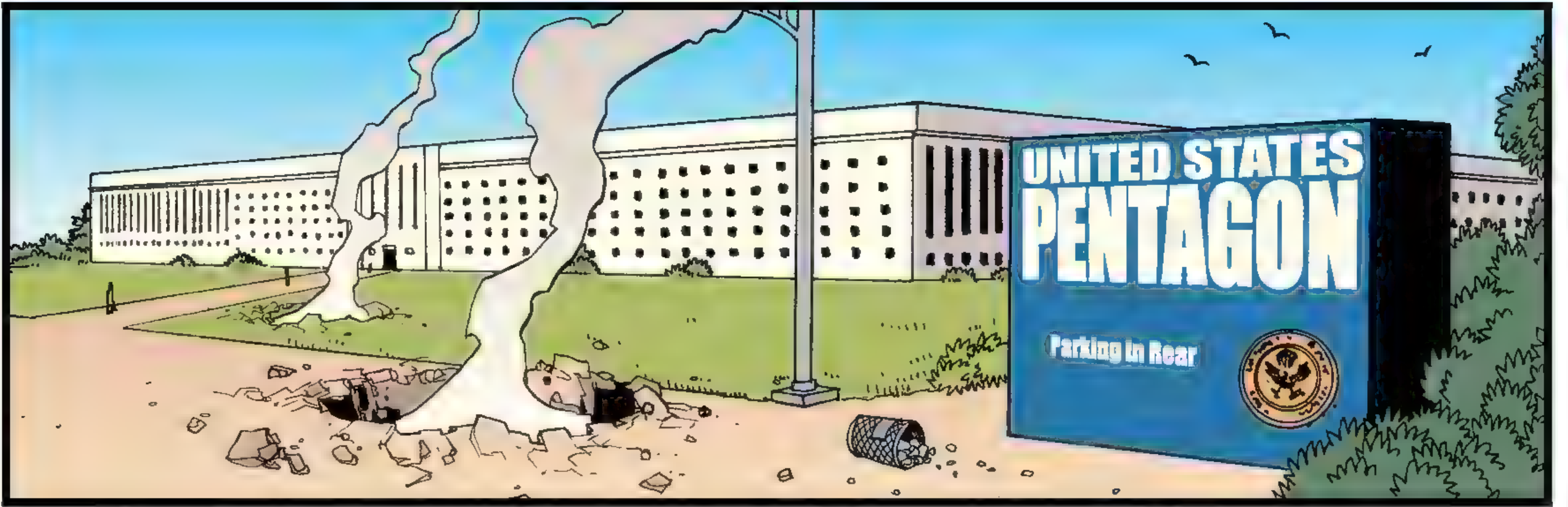
EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY, HE IS THE LEADER OF THIS TEAM. YOU'RE WELCOME TO STAY ON AS A MEMBER. I THINK WITH YOUR INTELLIGENCE YOU CAN BE VALUABLE IN THAT CAPACITY.

BUT THE DECISION IS YOURS TO MAKE.



I'LL STAY.

FOR NOW.





SO, HOW ARE THINGS GOING WITH WILLIAM?

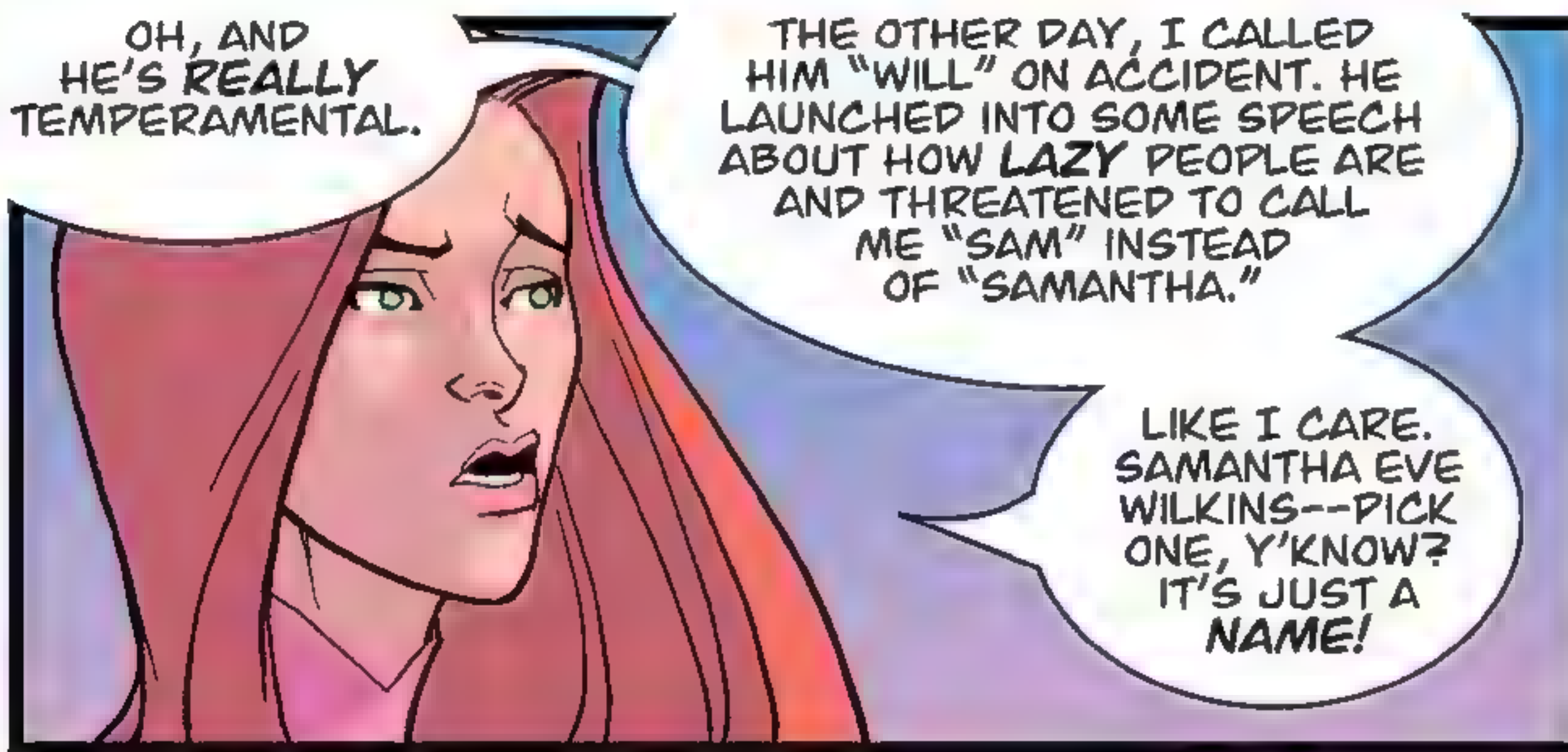


OH, IT'S GREAT, Y'KNOW-- WELL... IT'S KINDA WEIRD. THE THINGS I LIKE ABOUT HIM... ARE ALSO THE THINGS THAT I HATE.

HOW FUN HE IS, HIS CHILDISH BEHAVIOR... IT'S BOTH REALLY CUTE AND ANNOYING AT THE SAME TIME.



I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT--ASIDE FROM THE CUTE PART.



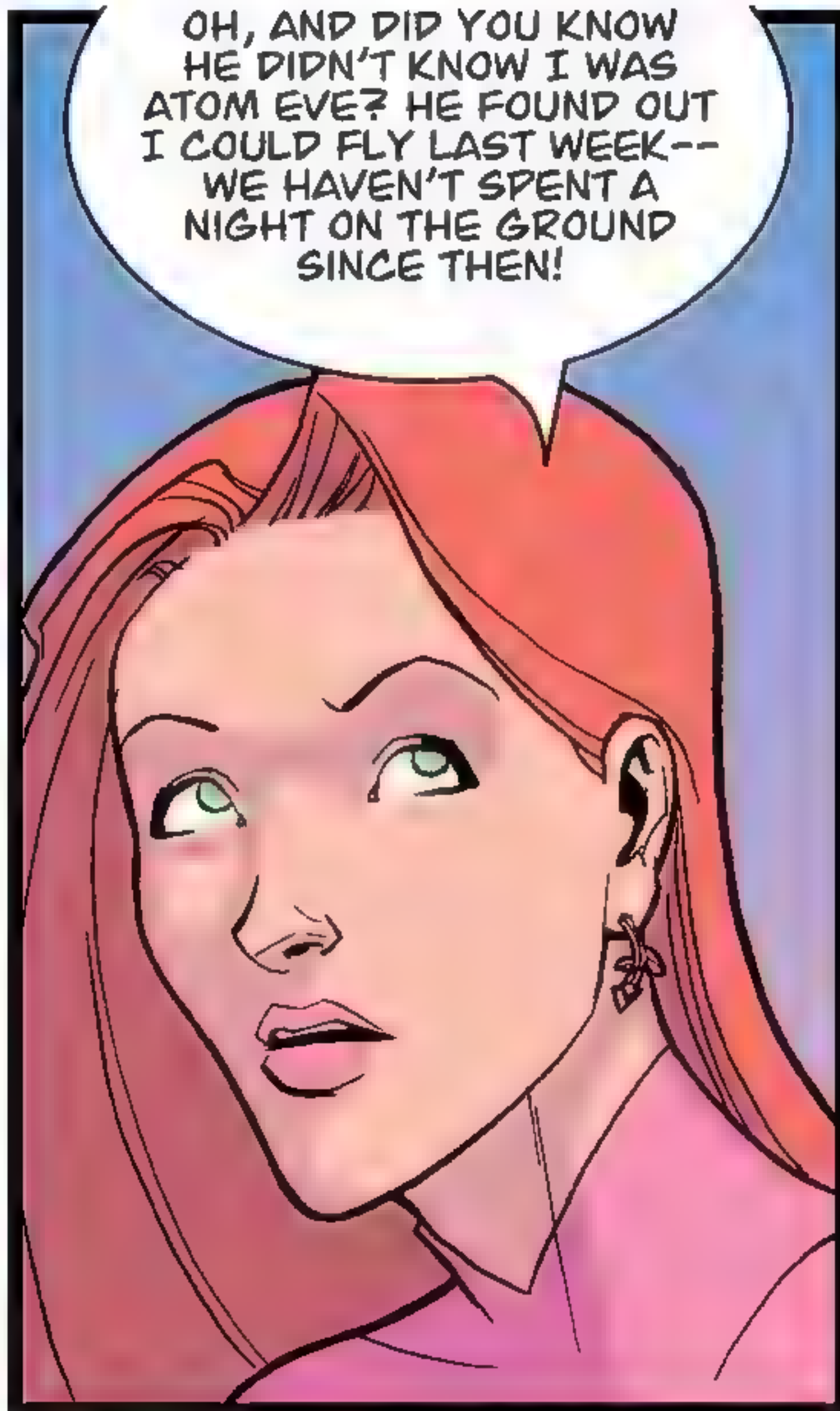
OH, AND HE'S REALLY TEMPERAMENTAL.

THE OTHER DAY, I CALLED HIM "WILL" ON ACCIDENT. HE LAUNCHED INTO SOME SPEECH ABOUT HOW LAZY PEOPLE ARE AND THREATENED TO CALL ME "SAM" INSTEAD OF "SAMANTHA."

LIKE I CARE. SAMANTHA EVE WILKINS--PICK ONE, Y'KNOW? IT'S JUST A NAME!



I'VE HEARD THAT SPEECH A FEW TIMES.

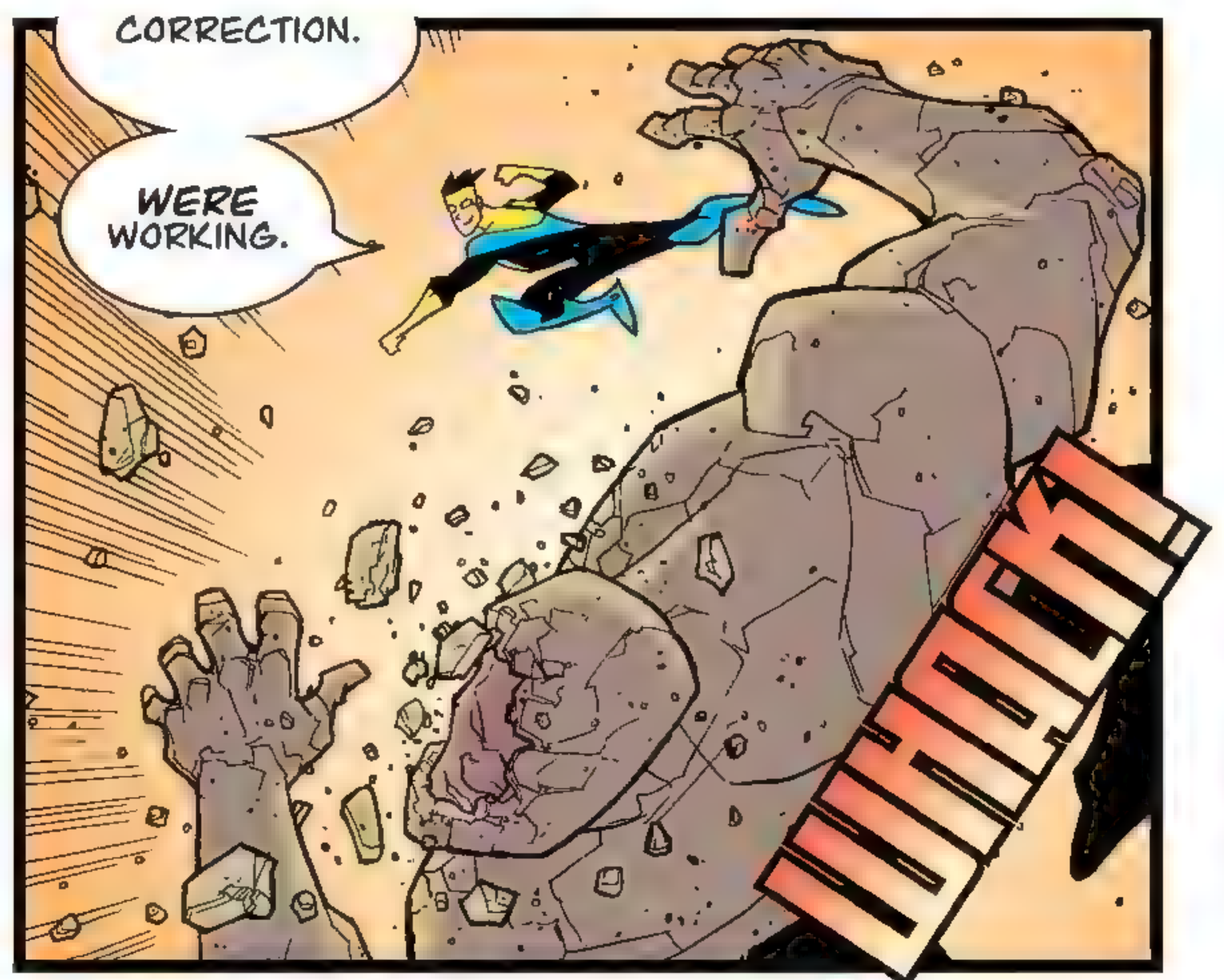
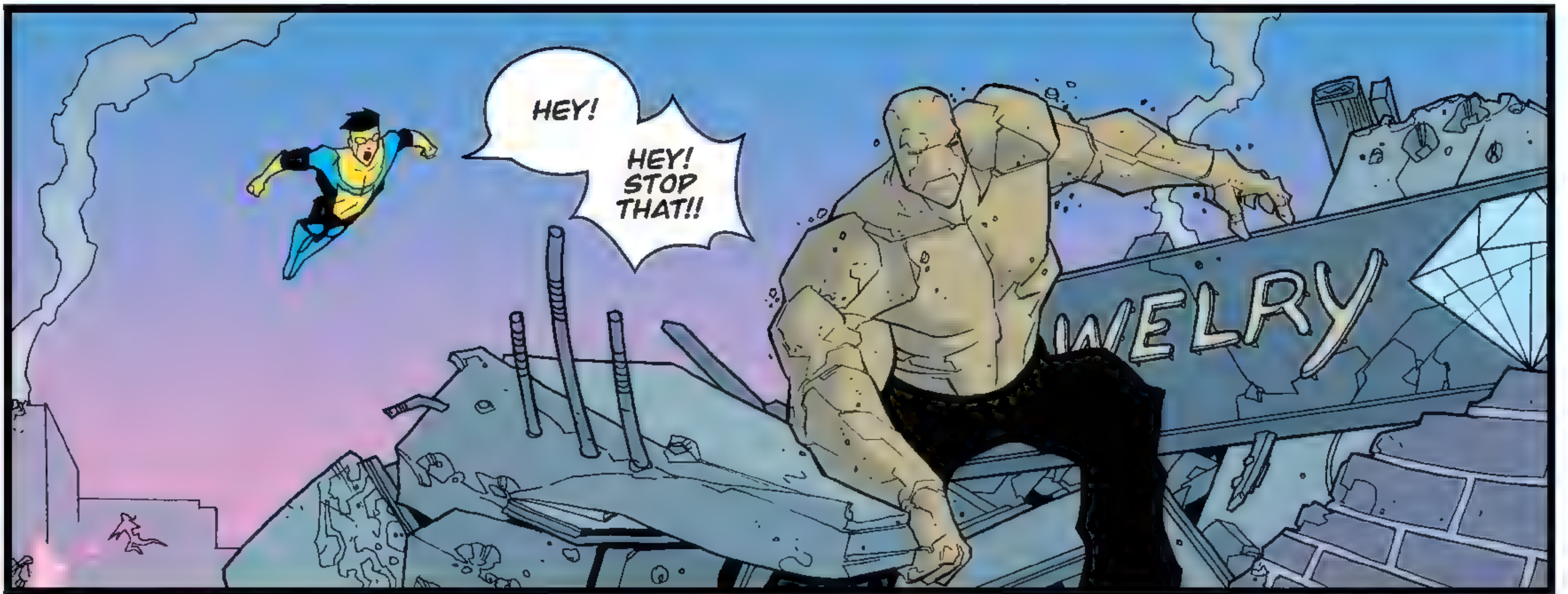


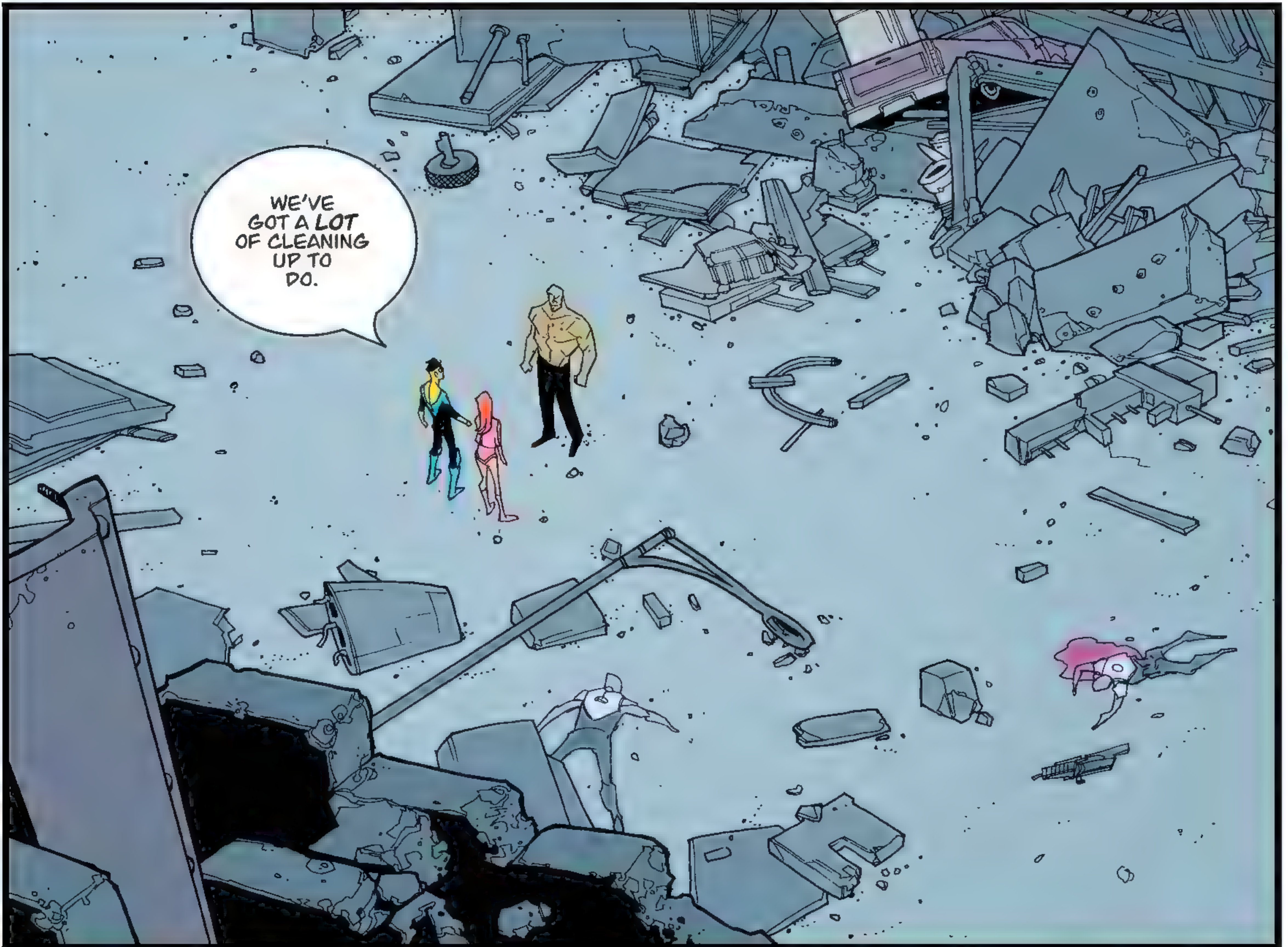
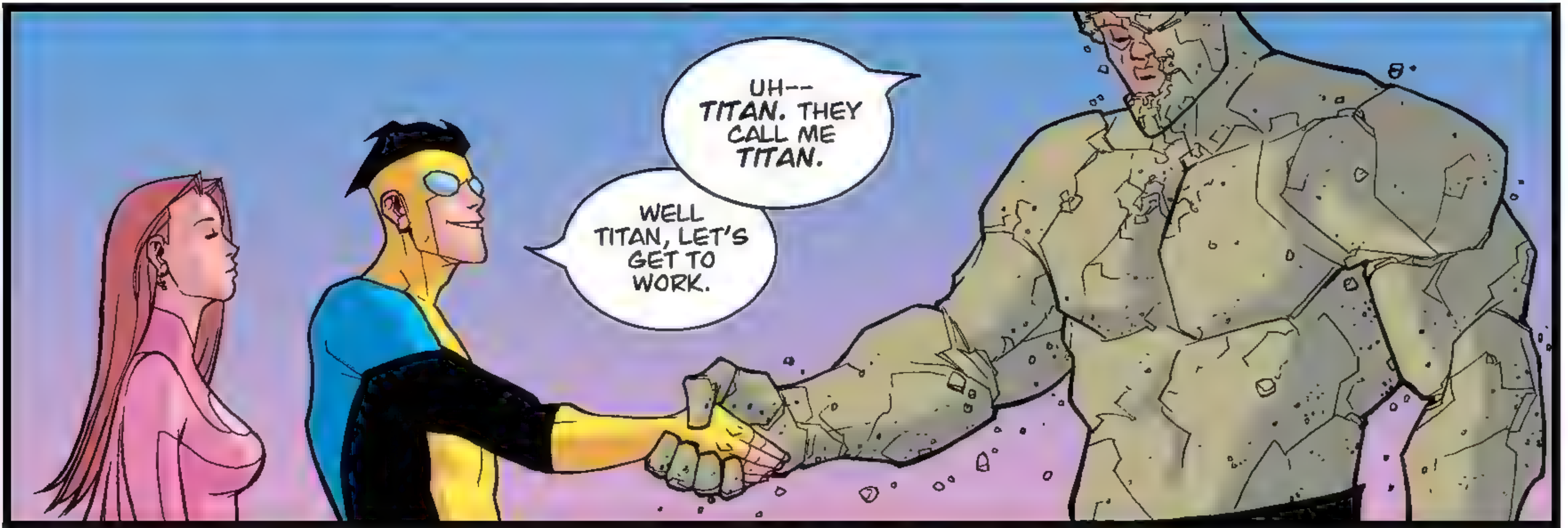
OH, AND DID YOU KNOW HE DIDN'T KNOW I WAS ATOM EVE? HE FOUND OUT I COULD FLY LAST WEEK-- WE HAVEN'T SPENT A NIGHT ON THE GROUND SINCE THEN!

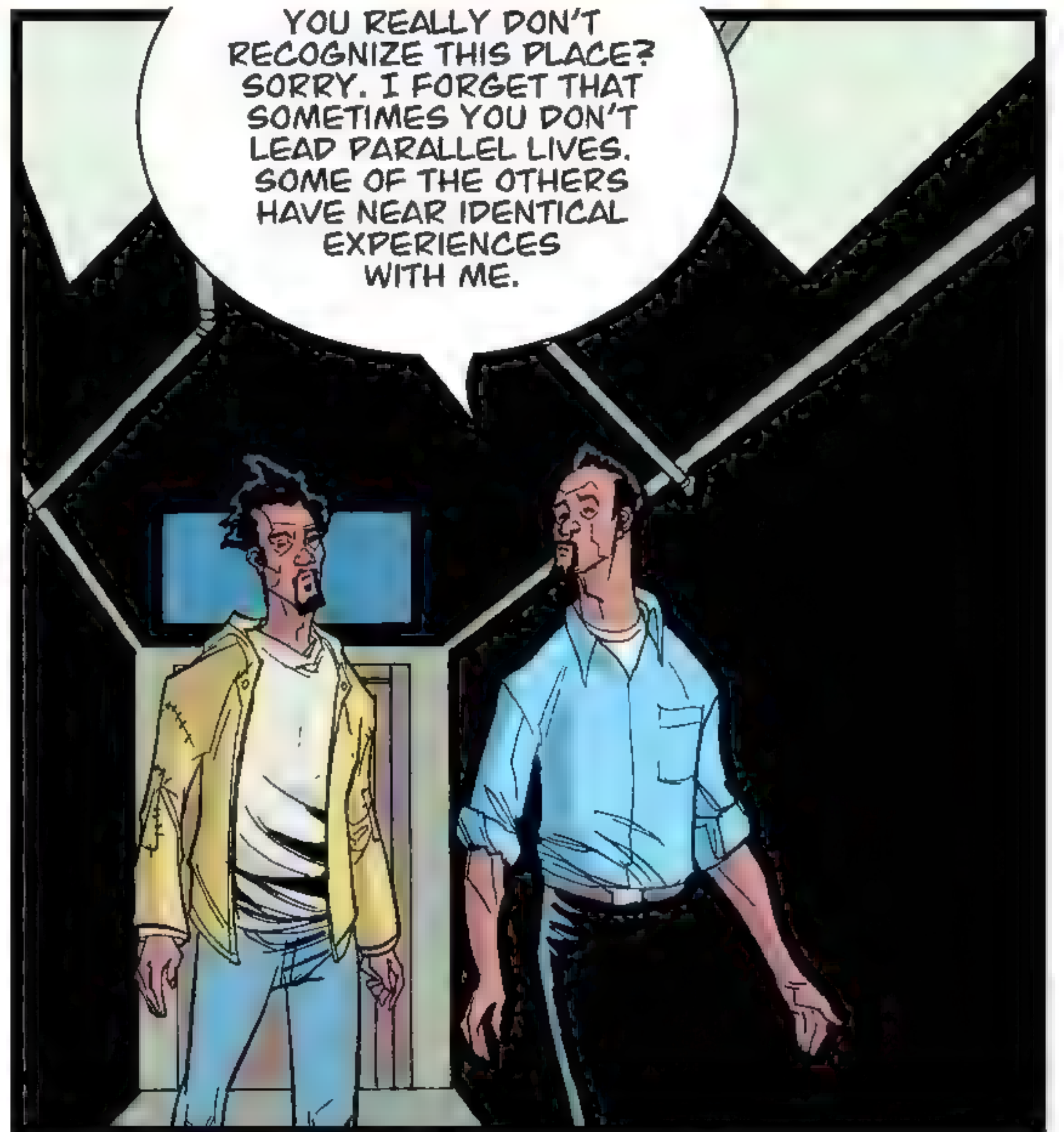


YEAH--I HAD A WEEK LIKE THAT, TOO. I FINALLY JUST TOLD HIM TO--

CRAP.
HOLD ON.

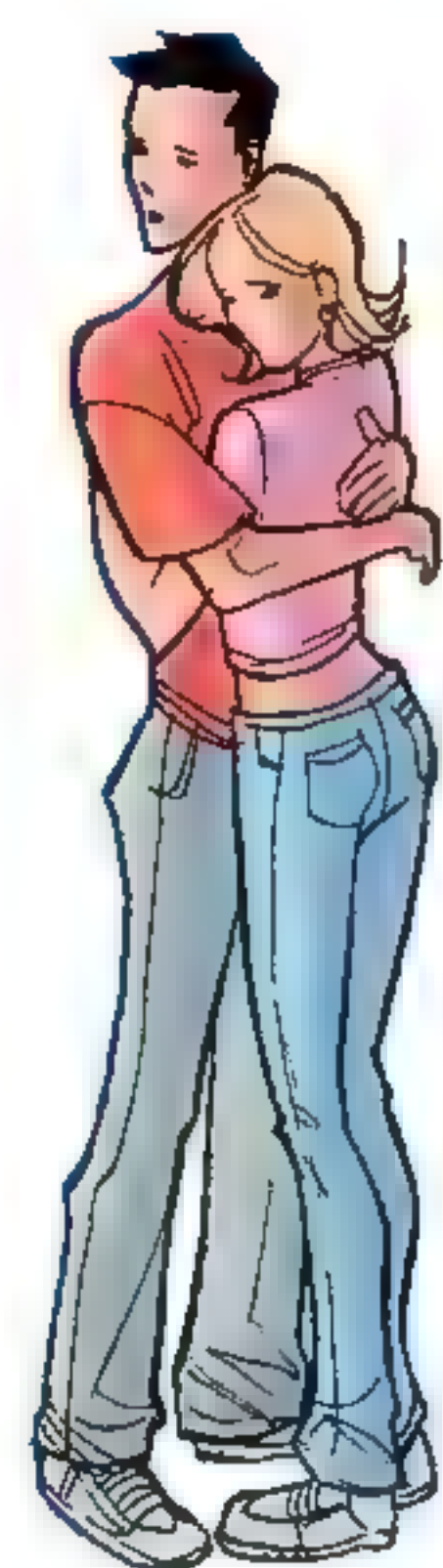
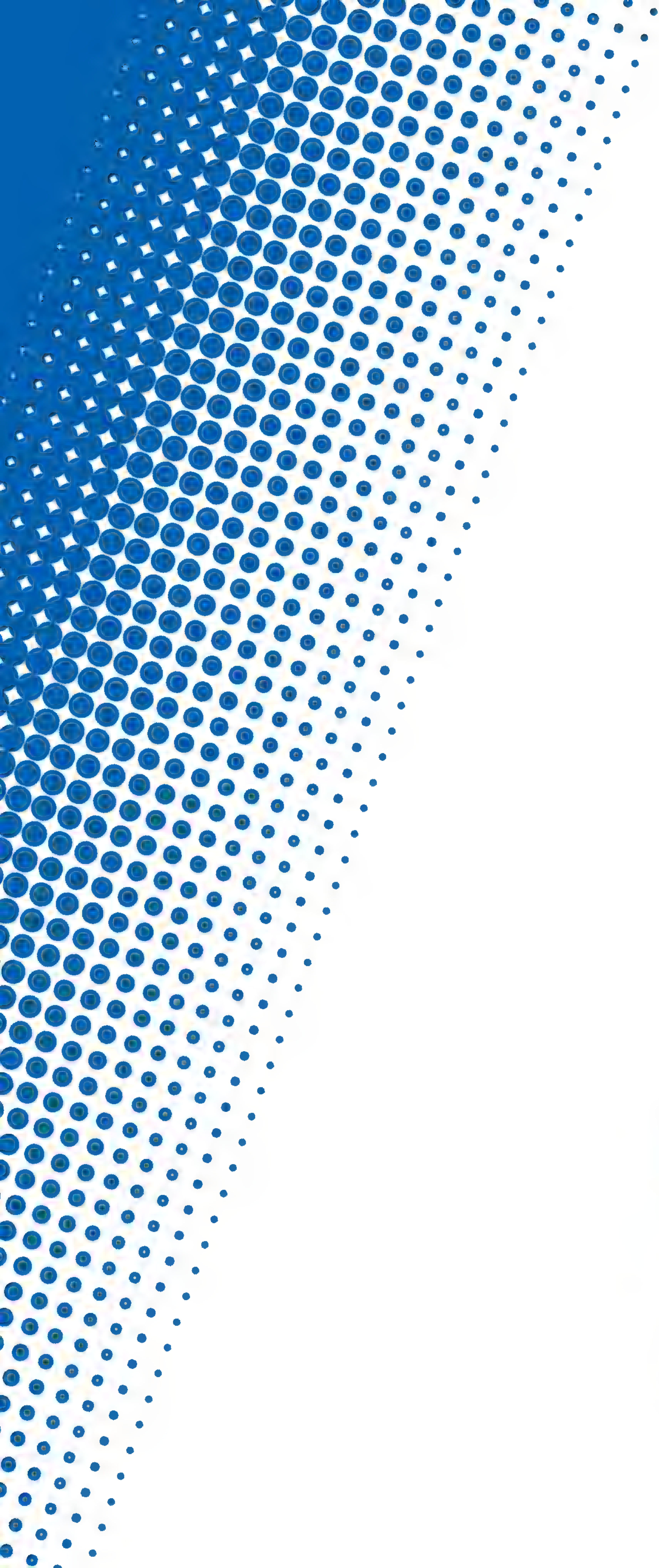








EVERYONE,
SAY HELLO.



ISSUE SEVENTEEN



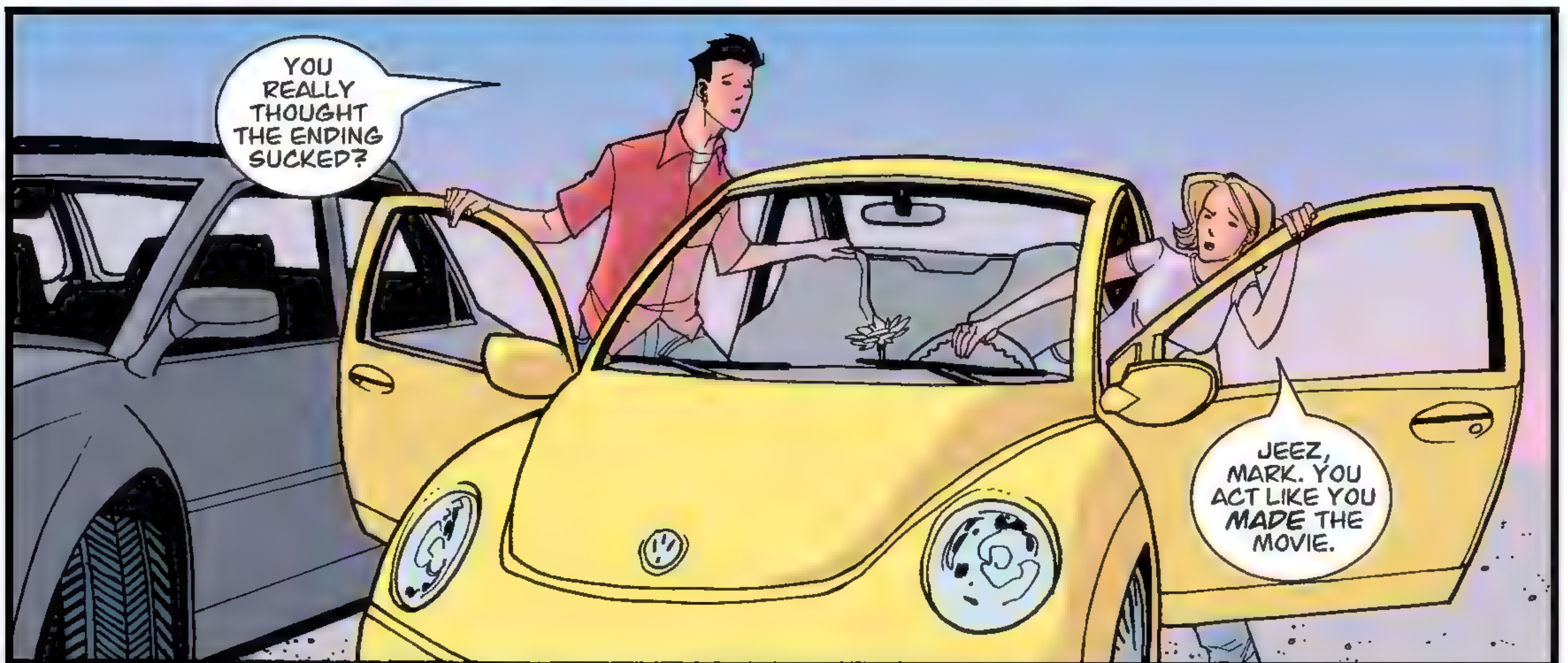
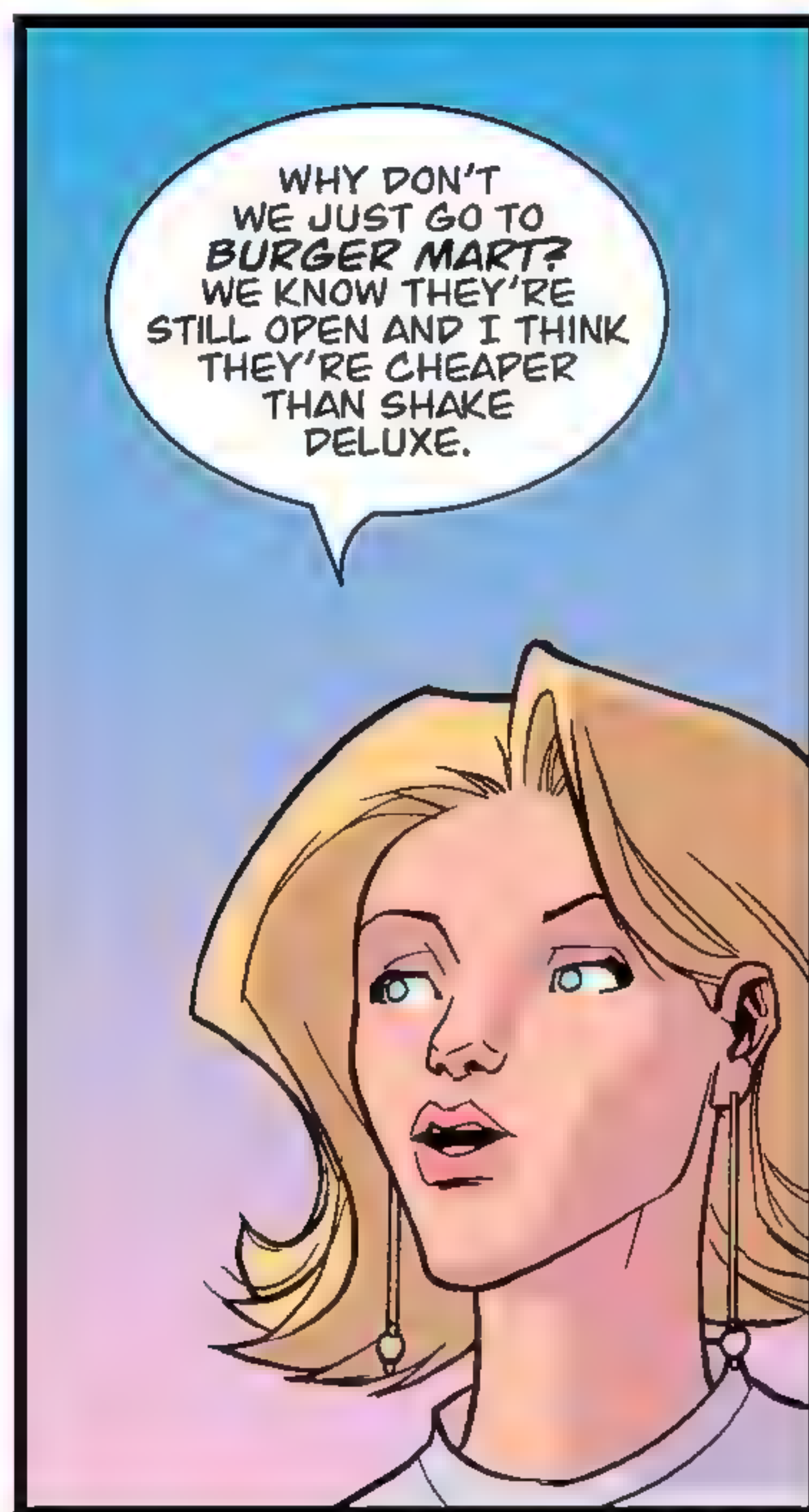
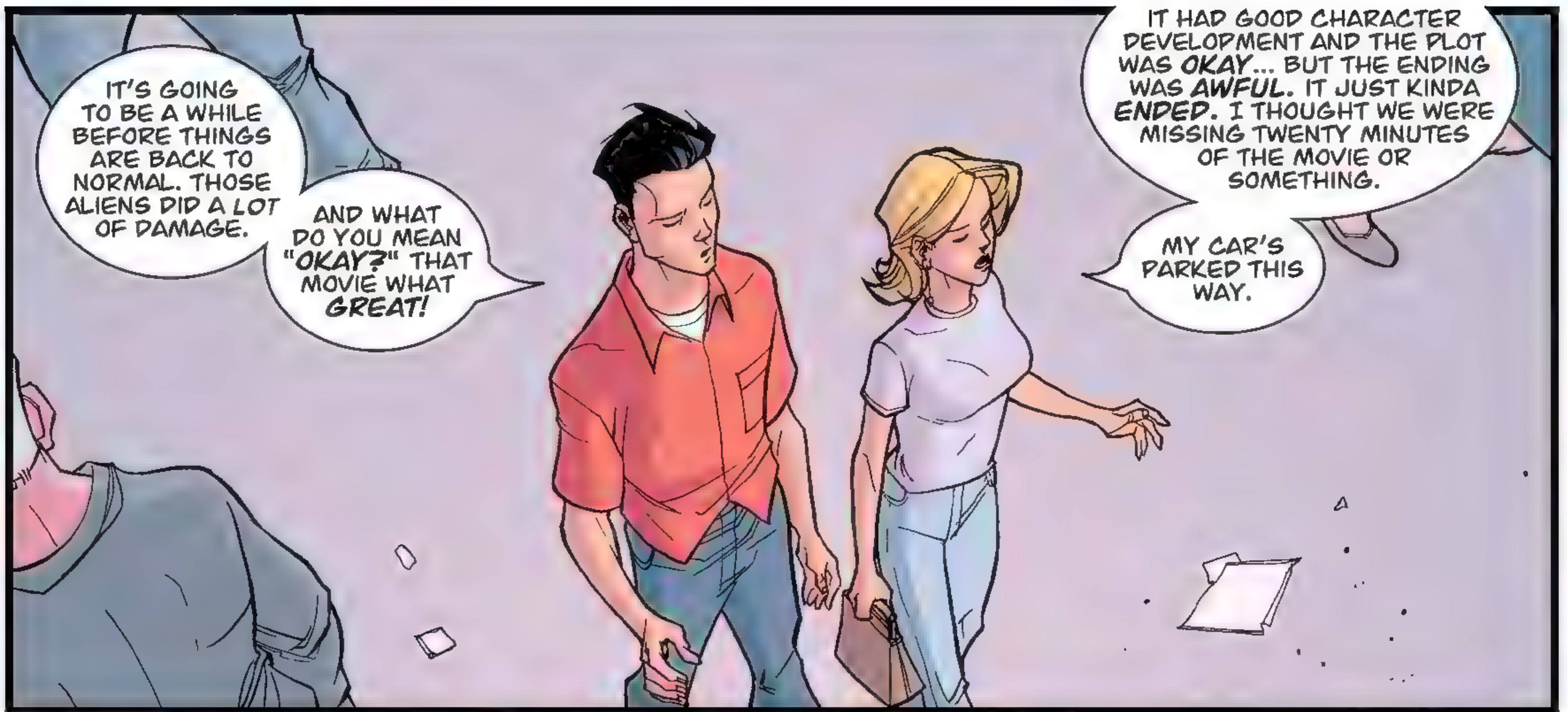


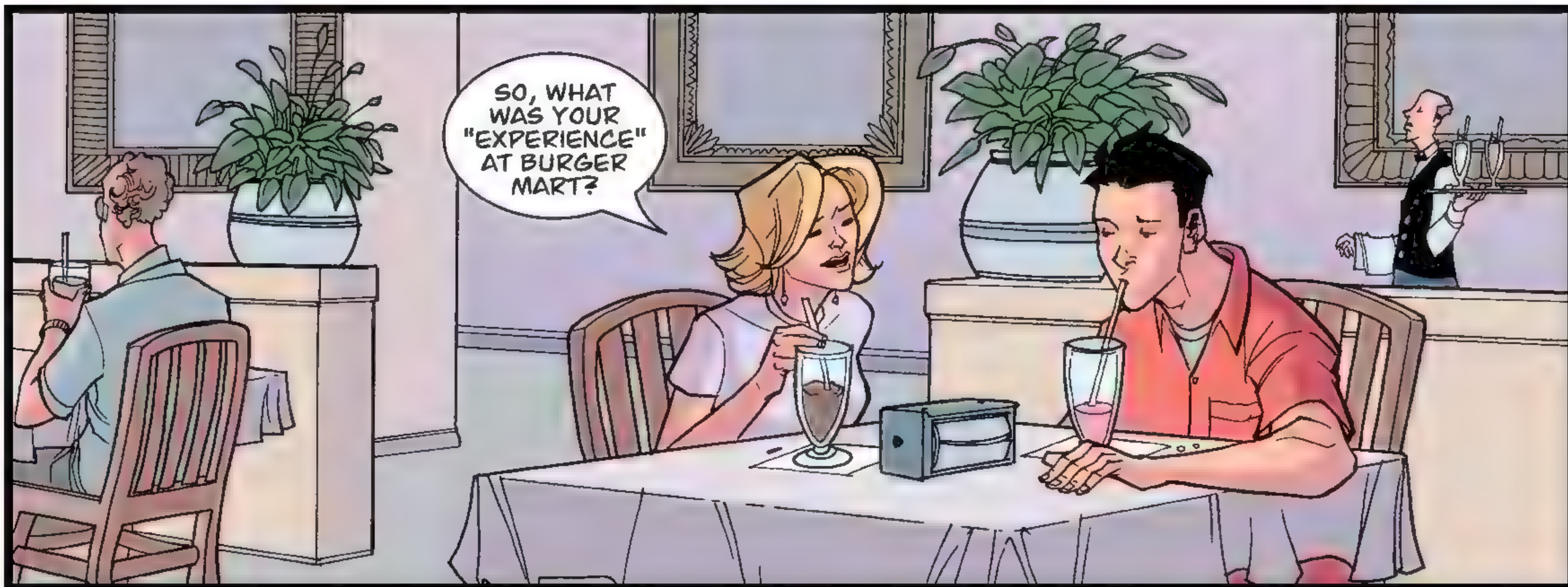
MOVIES

I LIKED IT.

I THOUGHT IT WAS OKAY.

JEEZ, WHEN ARE THEY GOING TO BE DONE WITH ALL THIS CONSTRUCTION? THEY'VE BEEN WORKING AROUND THE CLOCK FOR WEEKS AND IT SEEMS LIKE THEY HAVEN'T EVEN SCRATCHED THE SURFACE!





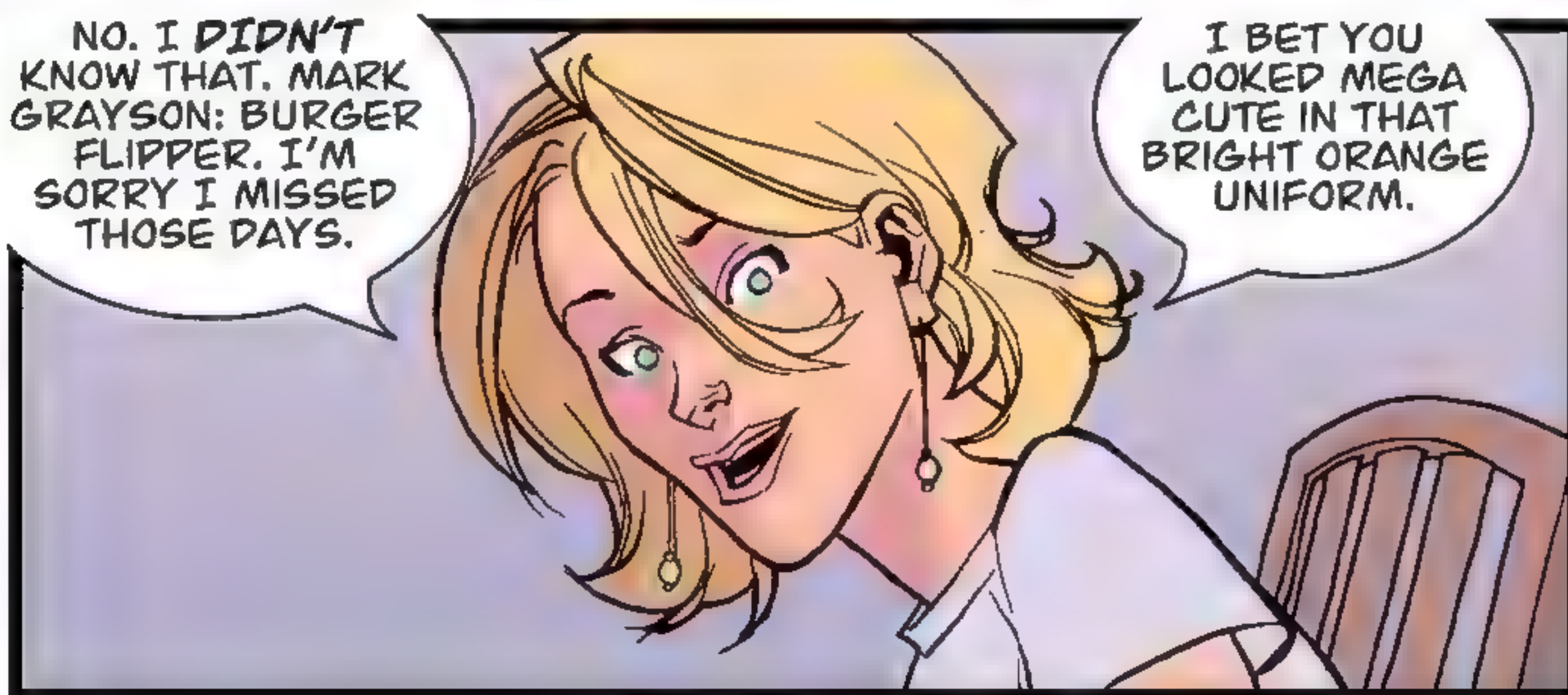
SO, WHAT WAS YOUR "EXPERIENCE" AT BURGER MART?



OH, NOTHING. THE, UH, THE MANAGER IS A HUGE JERK. IT'S JUST UNCOMFORTABLE TO GO IN THERE.

YOU KNOW I **WORKED** THERE FOR FIVE MONTHS...

NO. I **DIDN'T** KNOW THAT. MARK GRAYSON: BURGER FLIPPER. I'M SORRY I MISSED THOSE DAYS.



I BET YOU LOOKED MEGA CUTE IN THAT BRIGHT ORANGE UNIFORM.



THAT'S A SAFE BET.

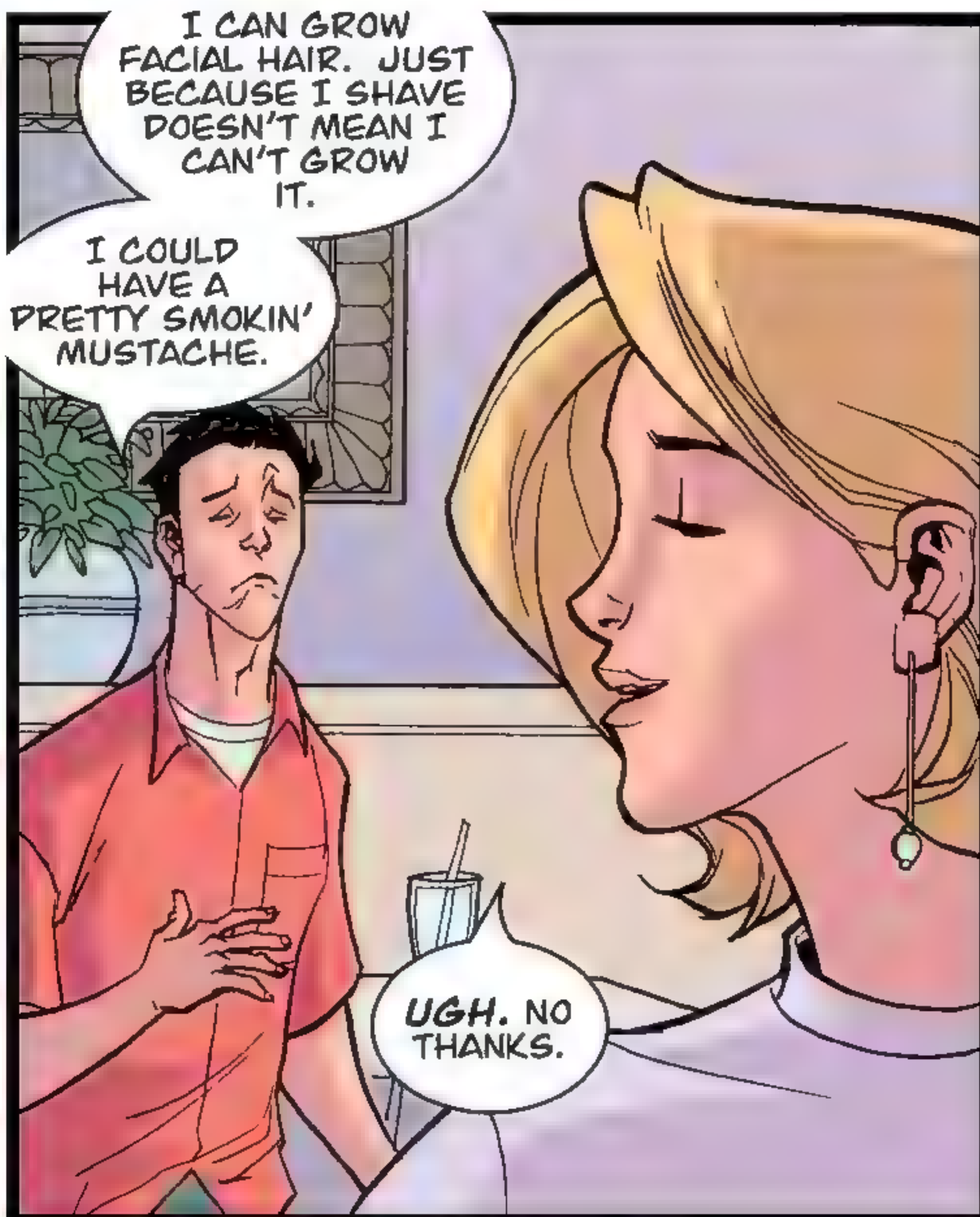
THAT IS, IF BY "CUTE" YOU MEAN "RUGGEDLY HANDSOME."



NO. I MEANT "CUTE." YOU'VE GOT TO BE ABLE TO GROW FACIAL HAIR TO BE "RUGGEDLY HANDSOME."

YOU READY?

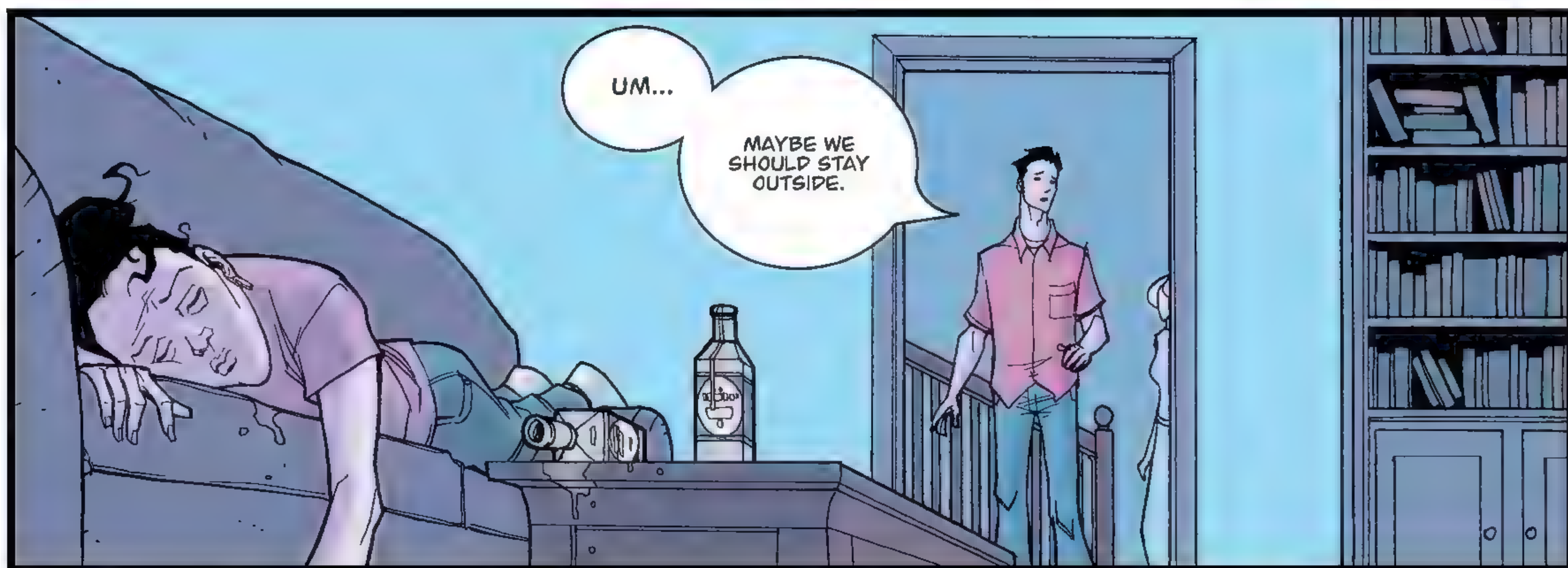
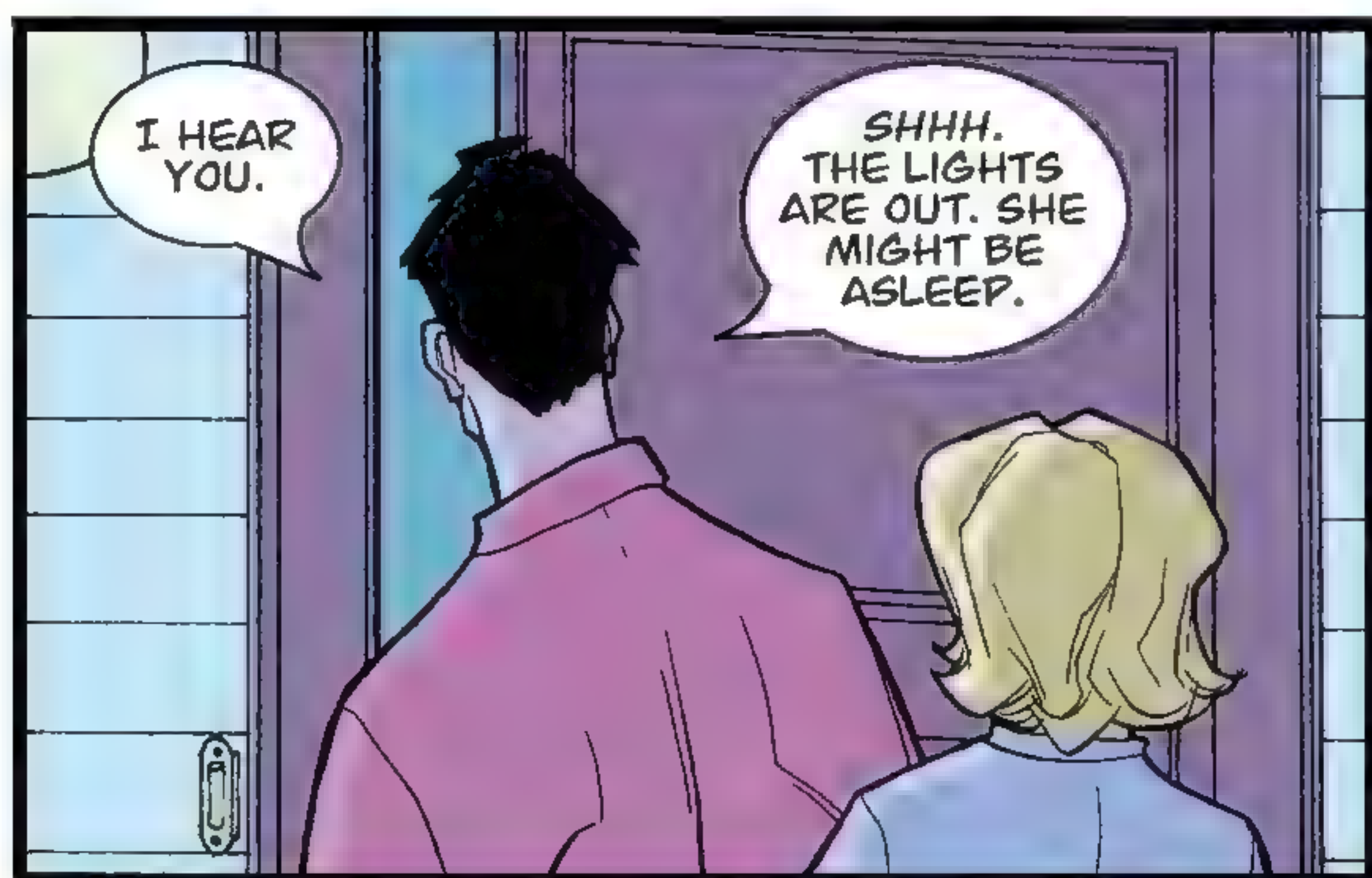
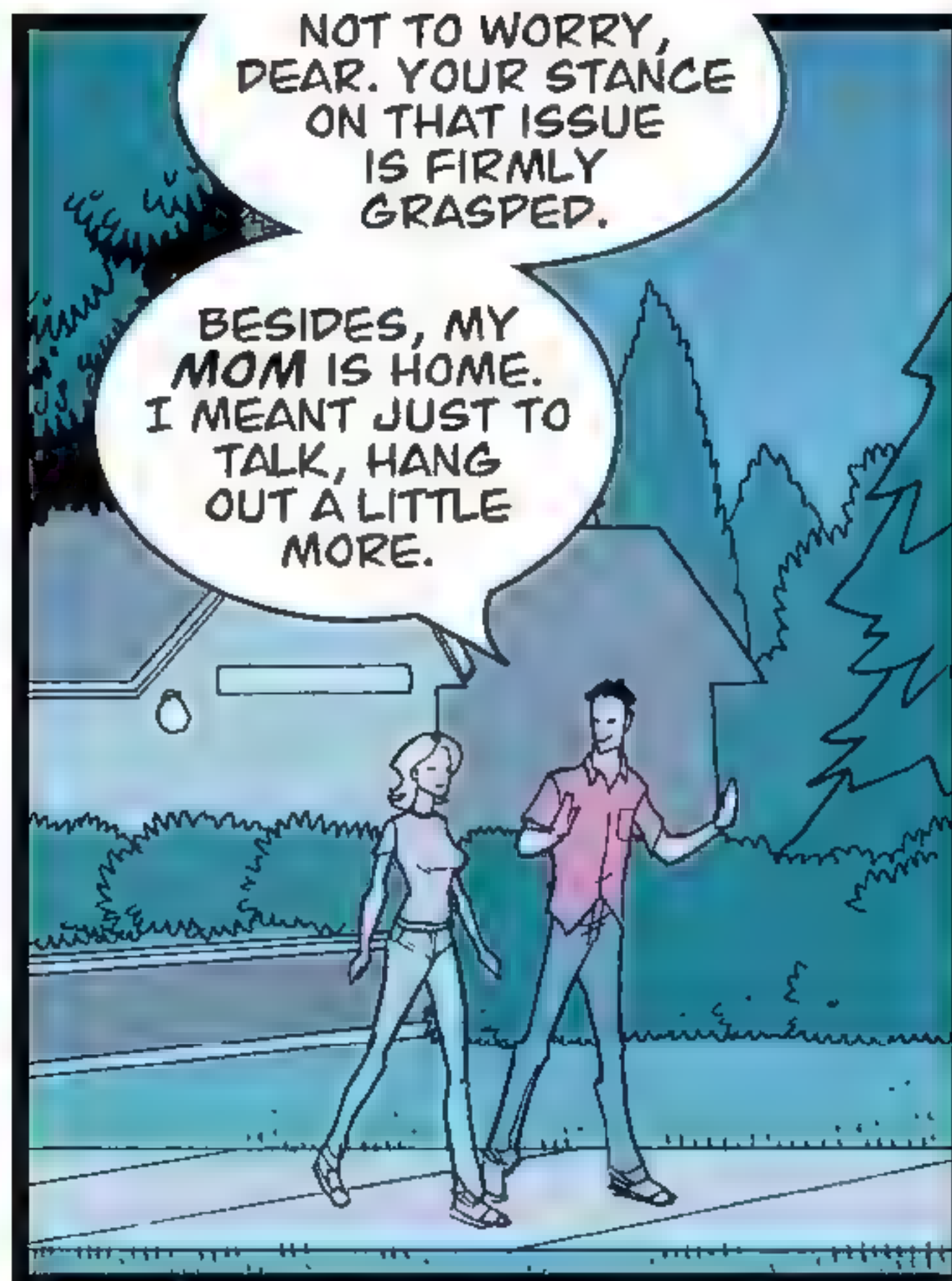
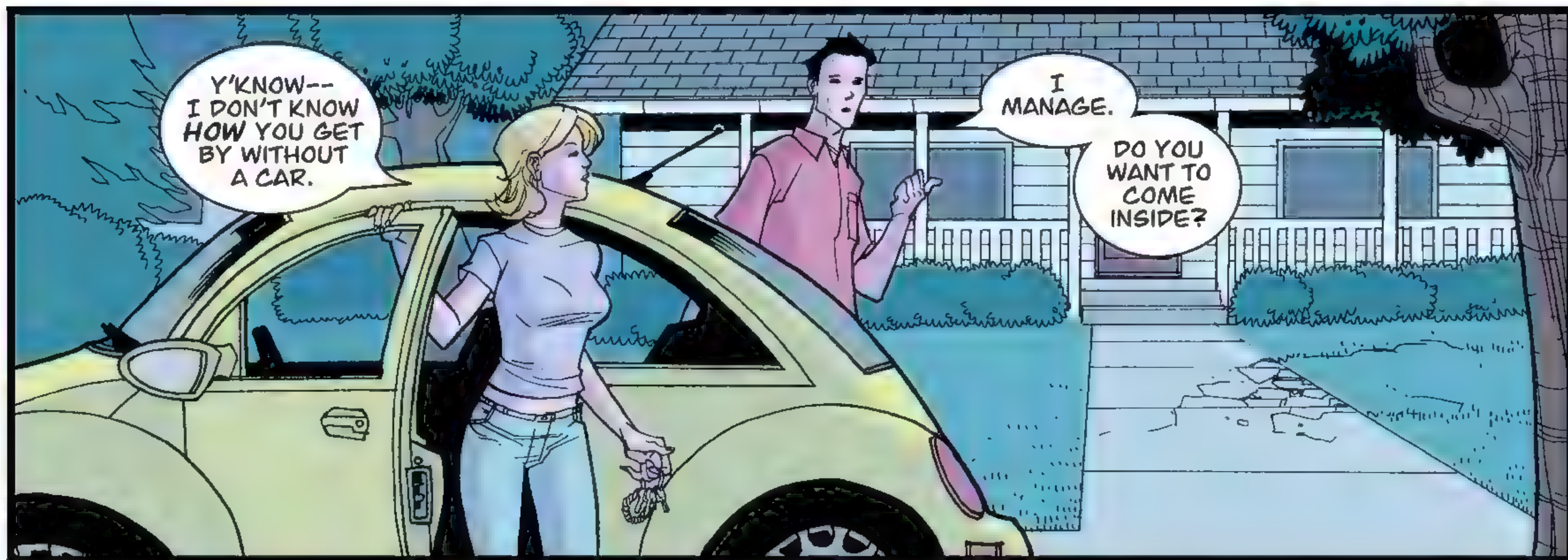
I'M HURT!

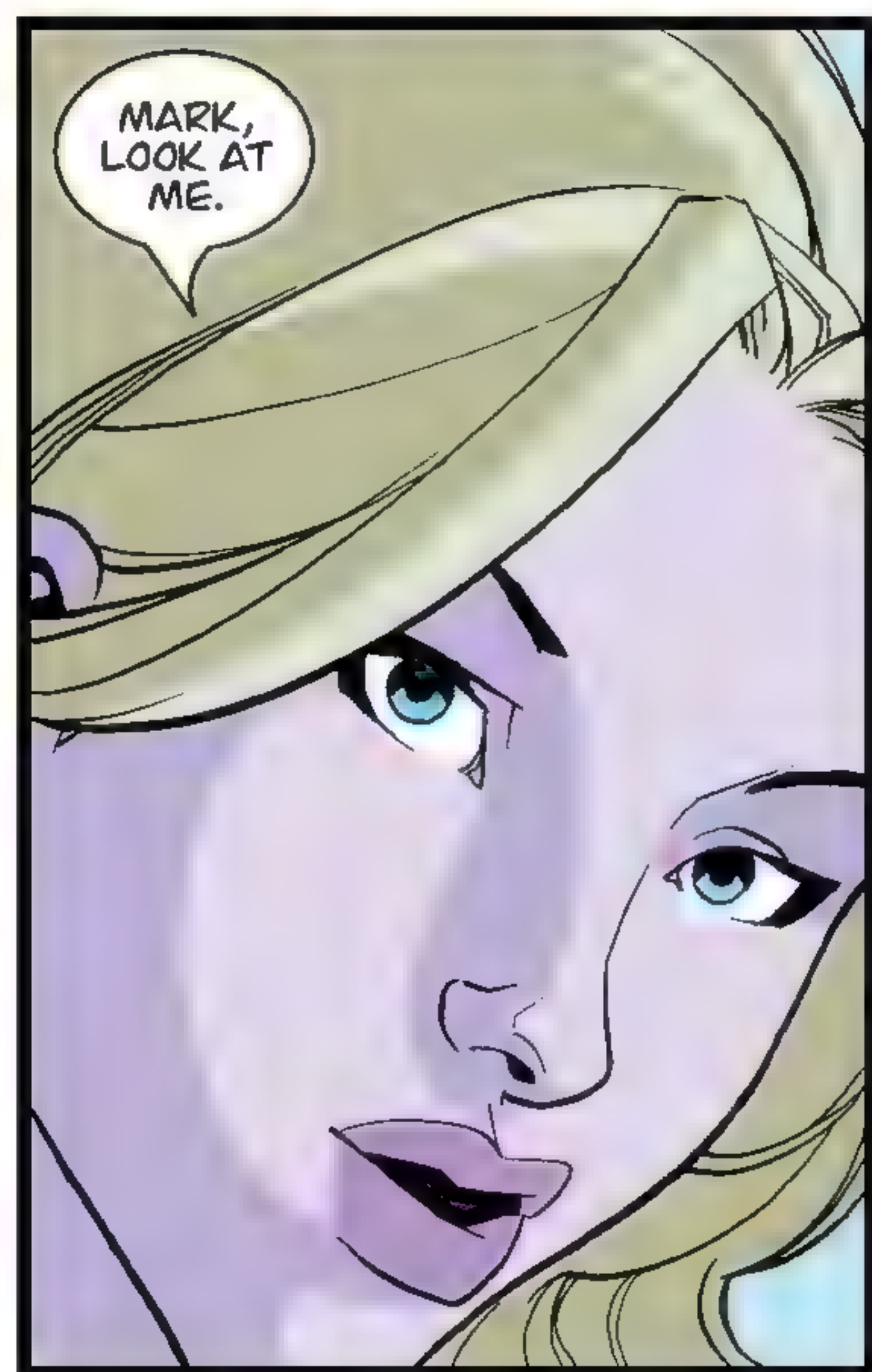
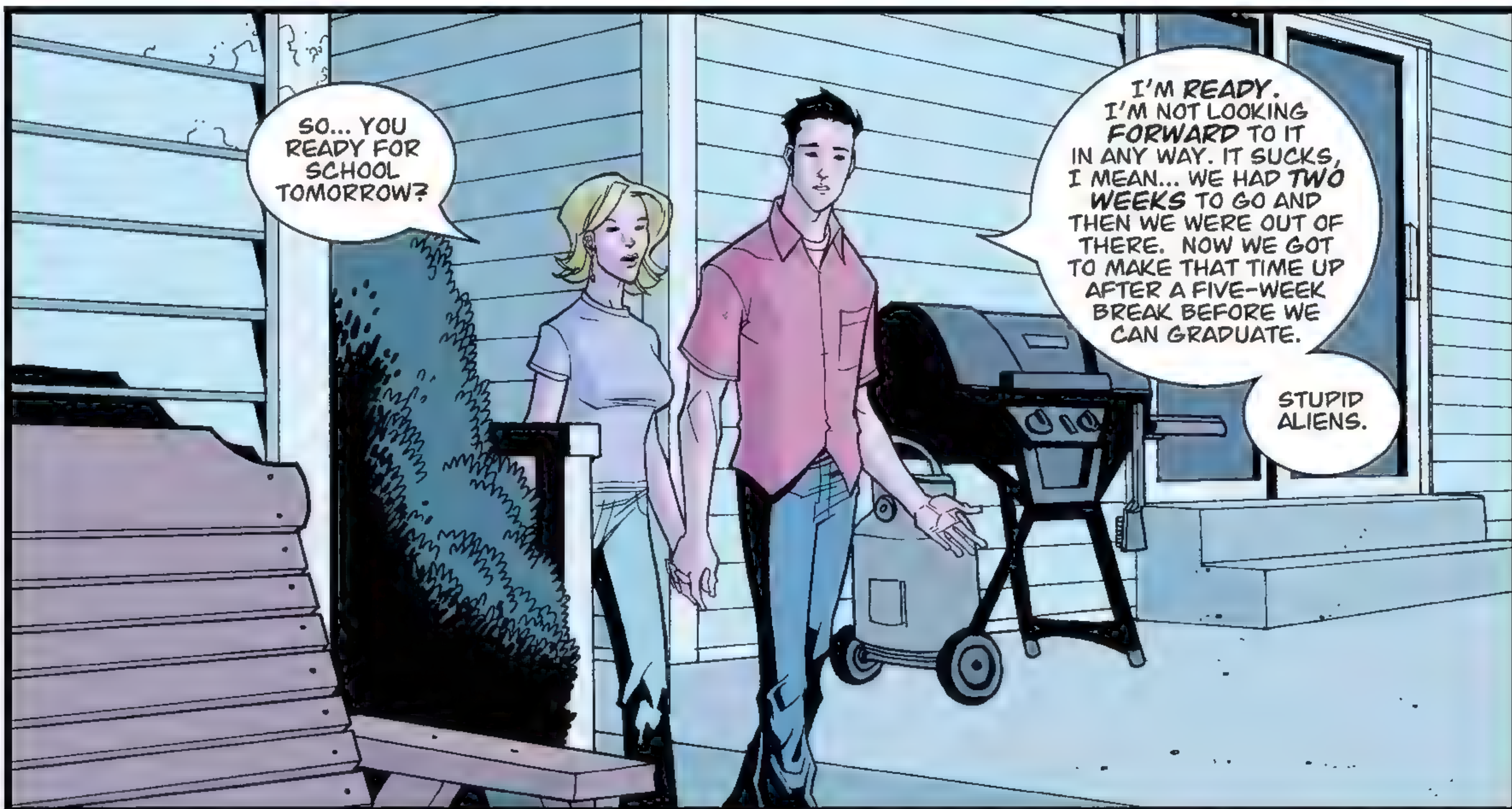


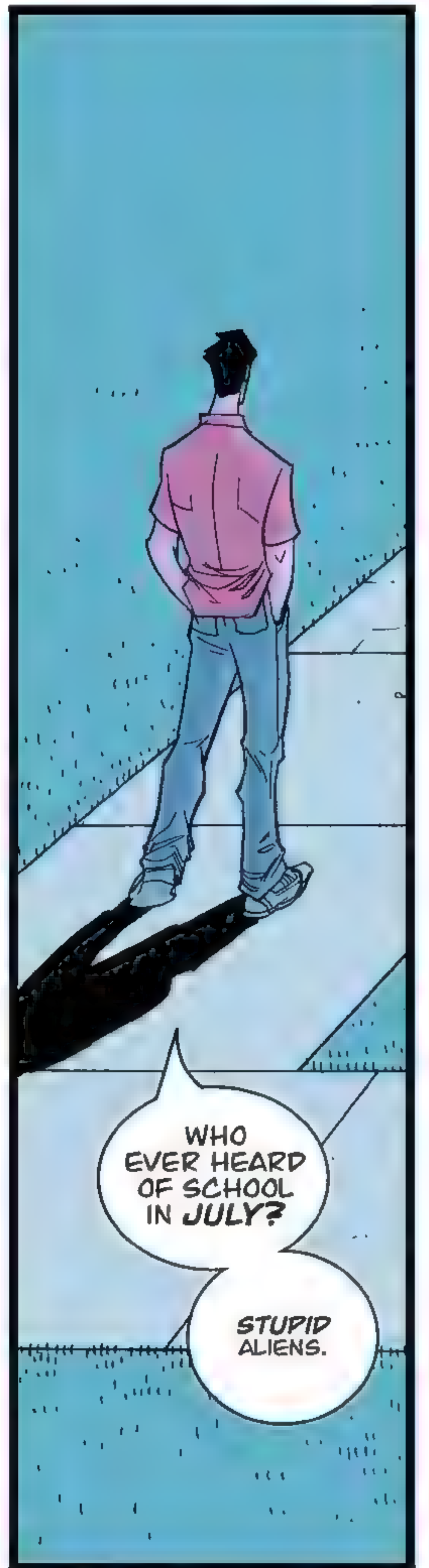
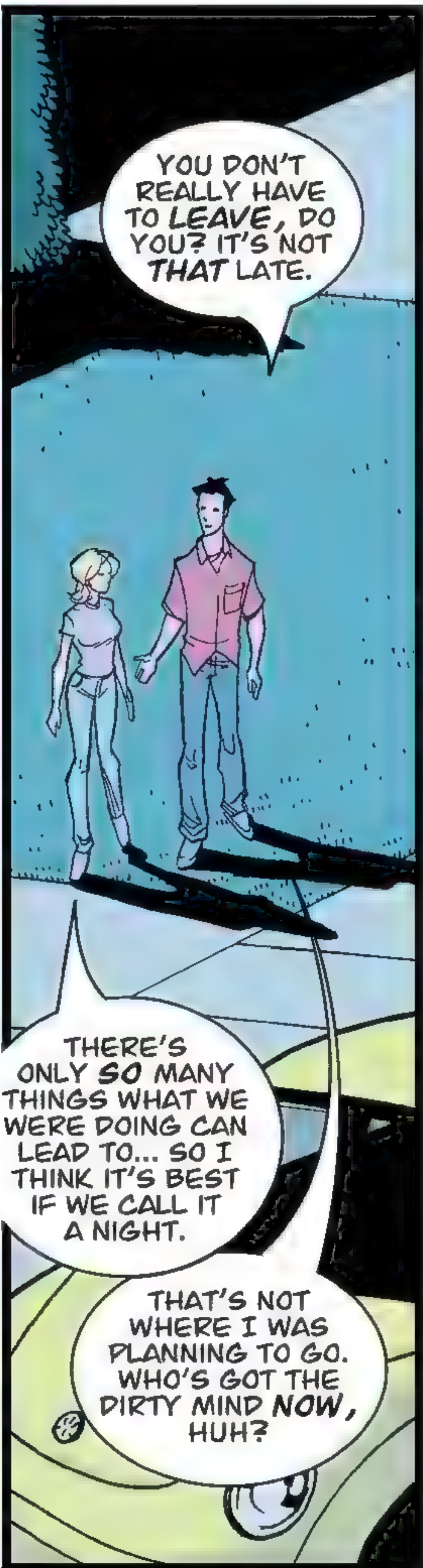
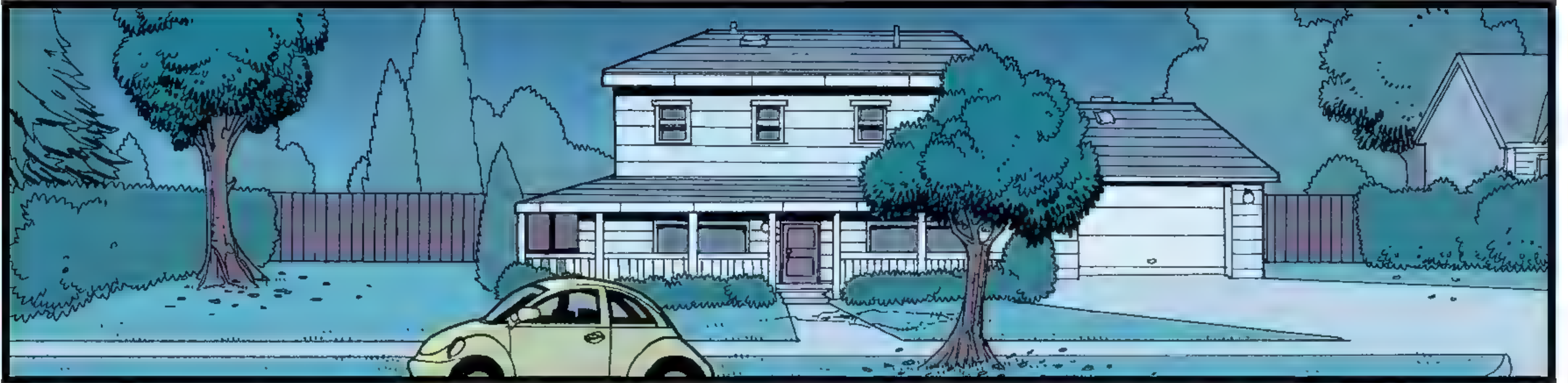
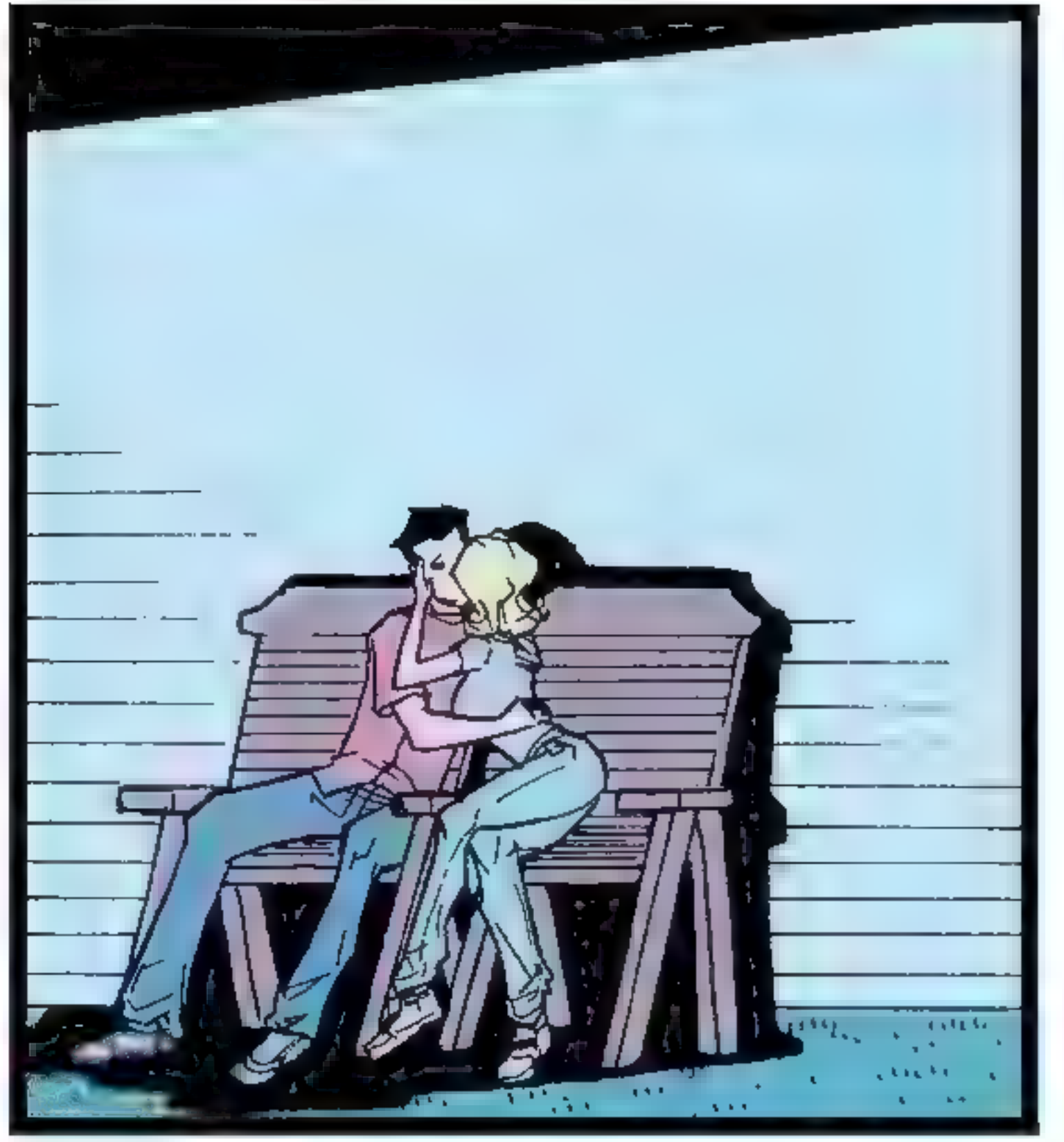
I CAN GROW FACIAL HAIR. JUST BECAUSE I SHAVE DOESN'T MEAN I CAN'T GROW IT.

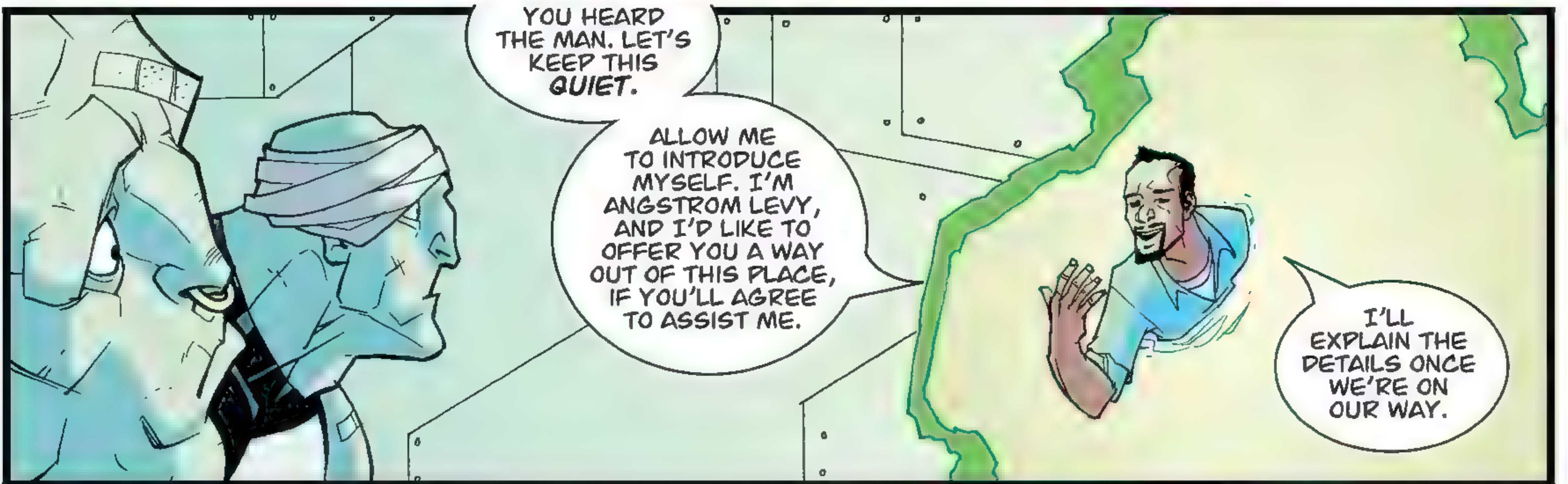
I COULD HAVE A PRETTY SMOKIN' MUSTACHE.

UGH. NO THANKS.





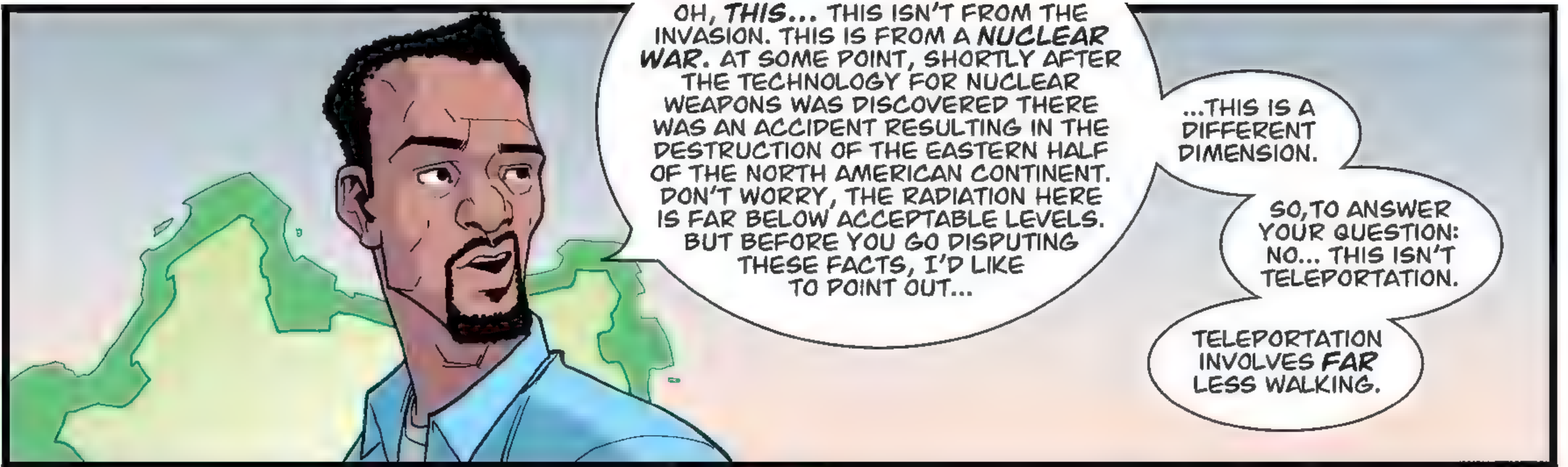






IS THIS
SOME KIND OF
TELEPORTATION?

MY GOD.
WE HEARD OF
THE INVASION WHILE
WE WERE INCARCERATED
BUT WE HAD NO IDEA
THE DAMAGE WAS
THIS SEVERE.



OH, **THIS...** THIS ISN'T FROM THE
INVASION. THIS IS FROM A **NUCLEAR
WAR**. AT SOME POINT, SHORTLY AFTER
THE TECHNOLOGY FOR NUCLEAR
WEAPONS WAS DISCOVERED THERE
WAS AN ACCIDENT RESULTING IN THE
DESTRUCTION OF THE EASTERN HALF
OF THE NORTH AMERICAN CONTINENT.
DON'T WORRY, THE RADIATION HERE
IS FAR BELOW ACCEPTABLE LEVELS.
BUT BEFORE YOU GO DISPUTING
THESE FACTS, I'D LIKE
TO POINT OUT...

...THIS IS A
DIFFERENT
DIMENSION.

SO, TO ANSWER
YOUR QUESTION:
NO... THIS ISN'T
TELEPORTATION.

TELEPORTATION
INVOLVES FAR
LESS WALKING.



FOLLOW
ME.

ONE SET-
BACK TO MY
POWERS IS THAT
I CAN ONLY SHIFT
THROUGH DIMENSIONS.
I REMAIN IN THE
SAME SPACE
WHEN I SHIFT.

ANOTHER SET-
BACK IS THAT I
ONLY POSSESS LIMITED
KNOWLEDGE OF THE
OTHER DIMENSIONS I
CAN TRAVEL TO.
OTHERWISE I COULD
HAVE SHIFTED US TO
A DIMENSION WITH A
TRAIN STATION WHERE
YOUR PRISON WAS IN
OUR DIMENSION.

THAT
PARTICULAR
SETBACK IS THE
ONE I THINK YOU
TWO CAN **HELP**
ME WITH.



WHAT'S
IN IT FOR
US?

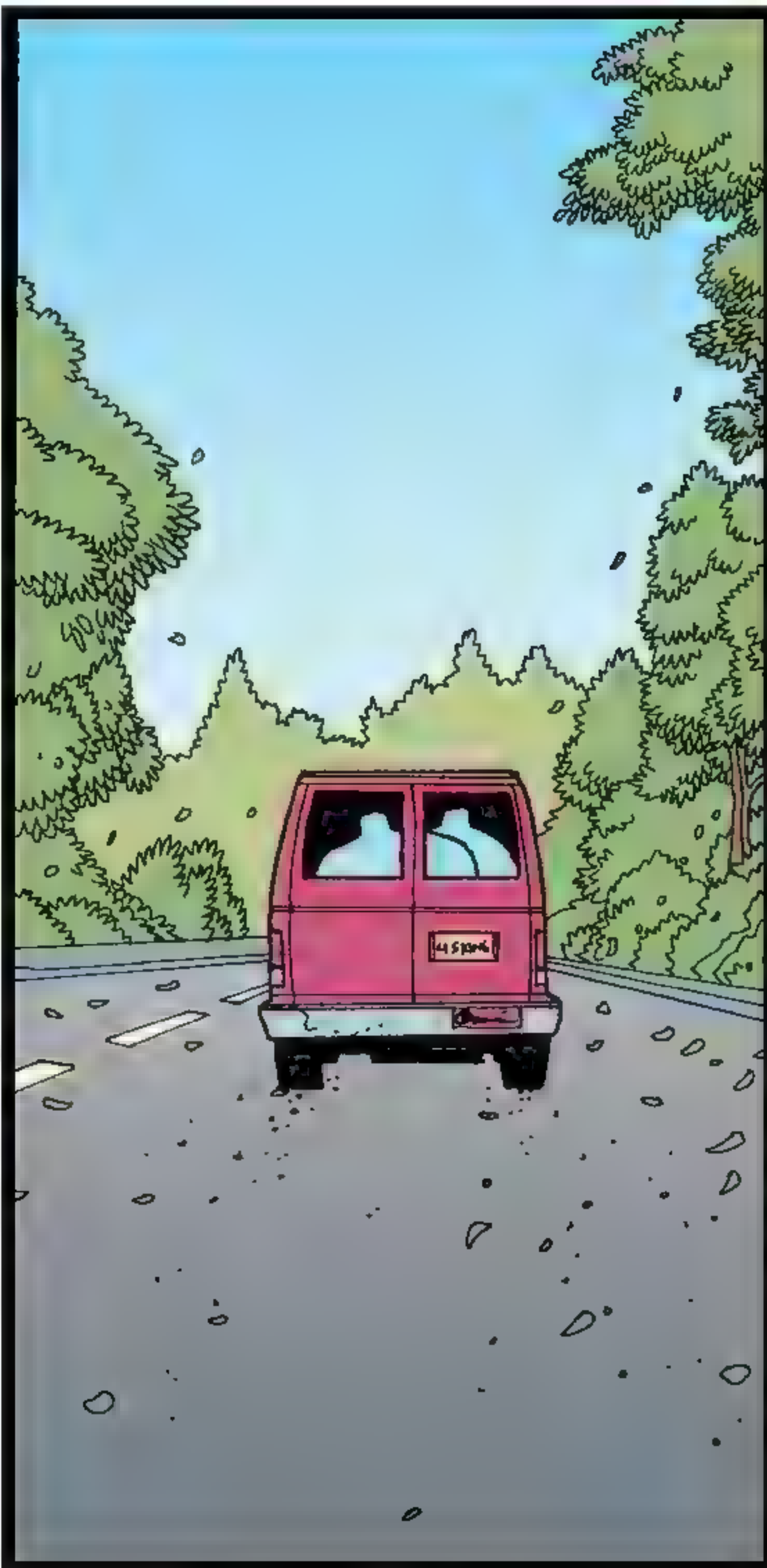
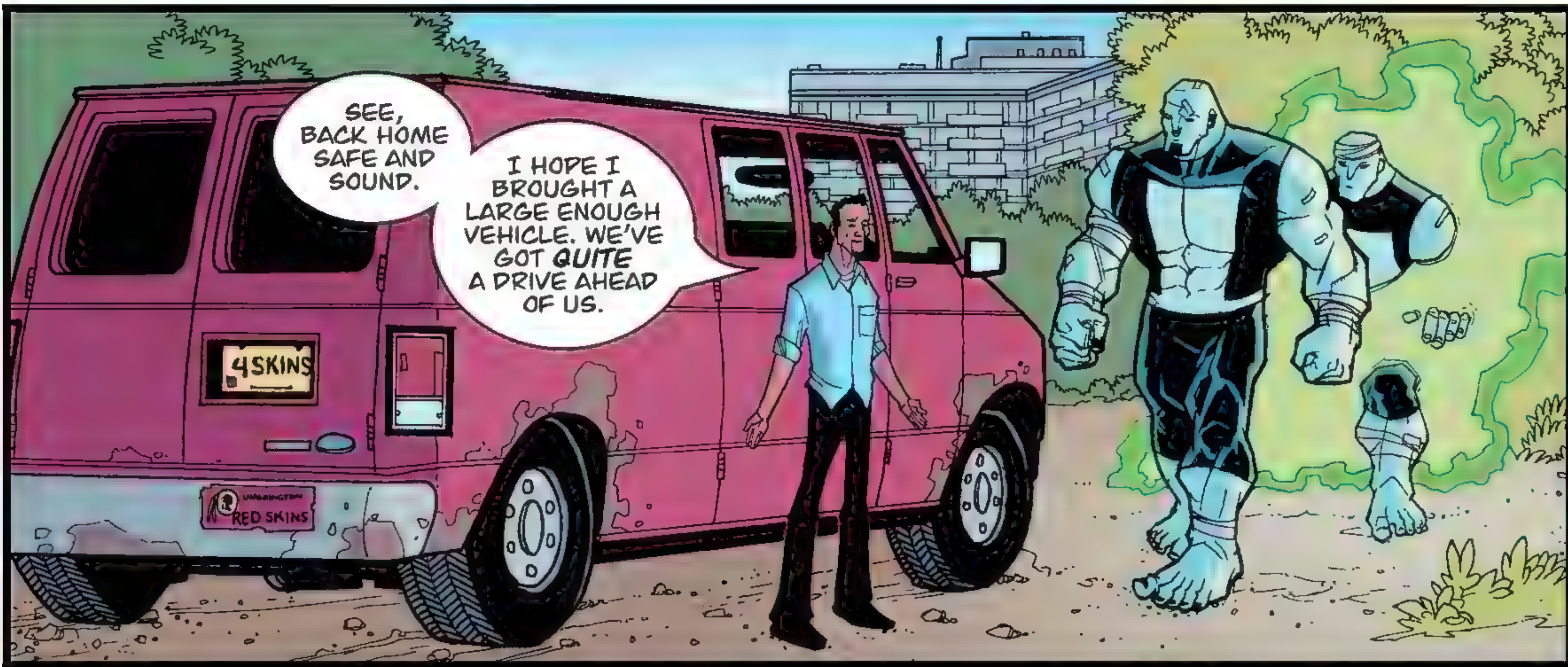
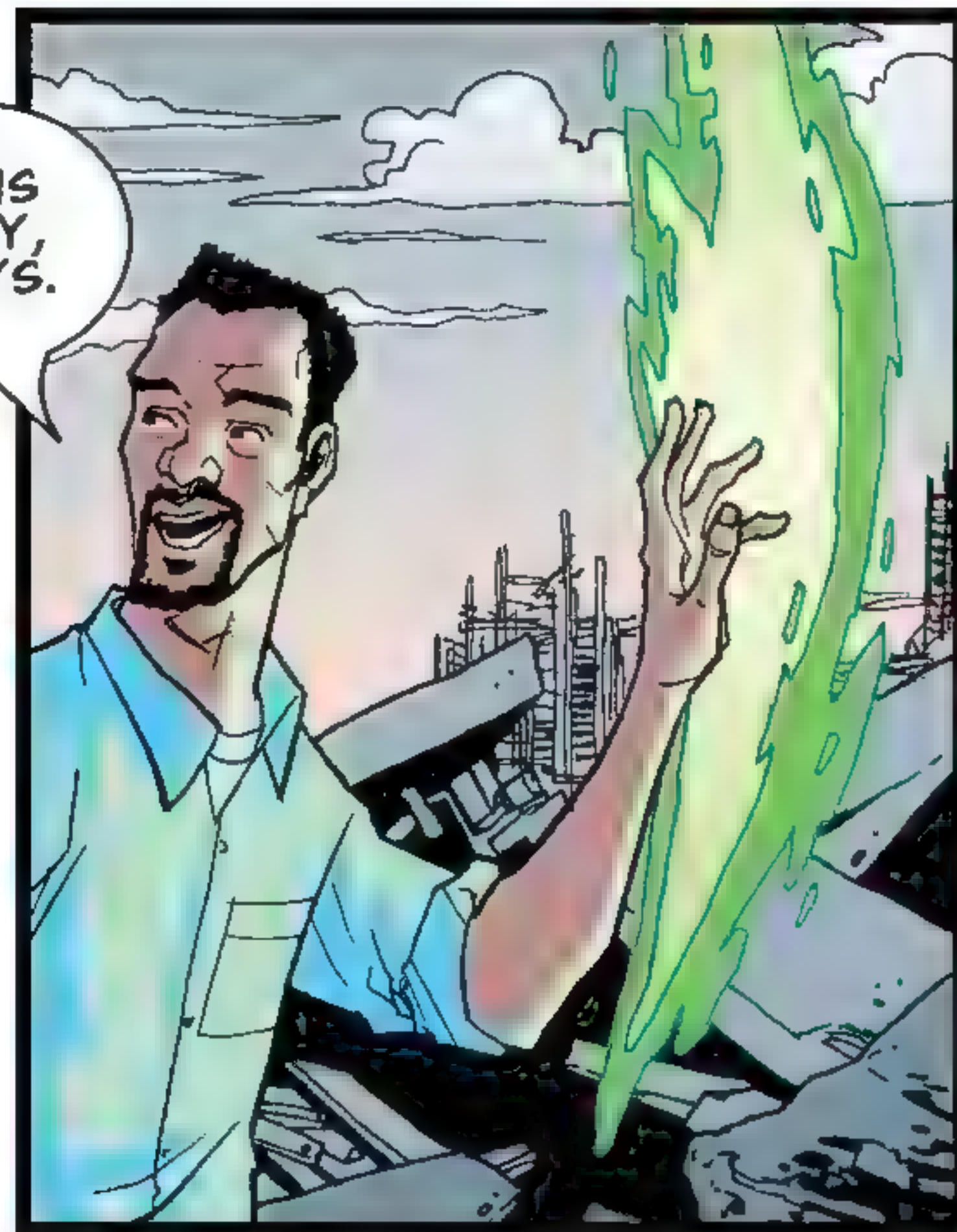


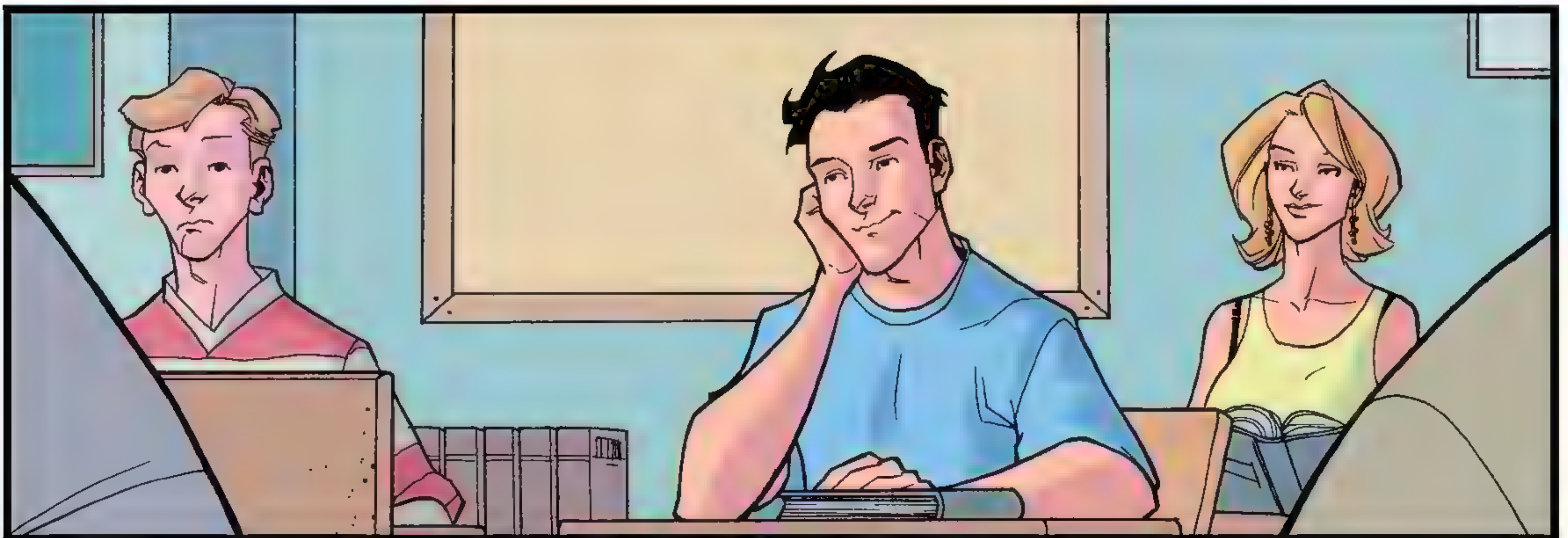
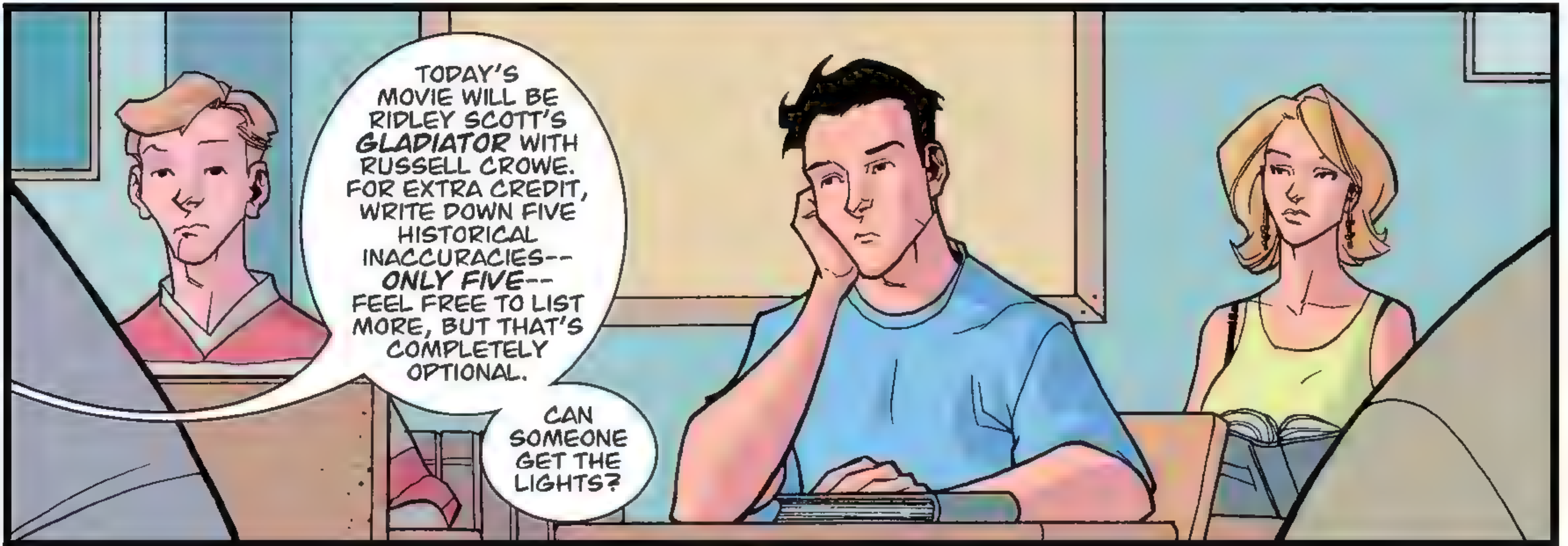
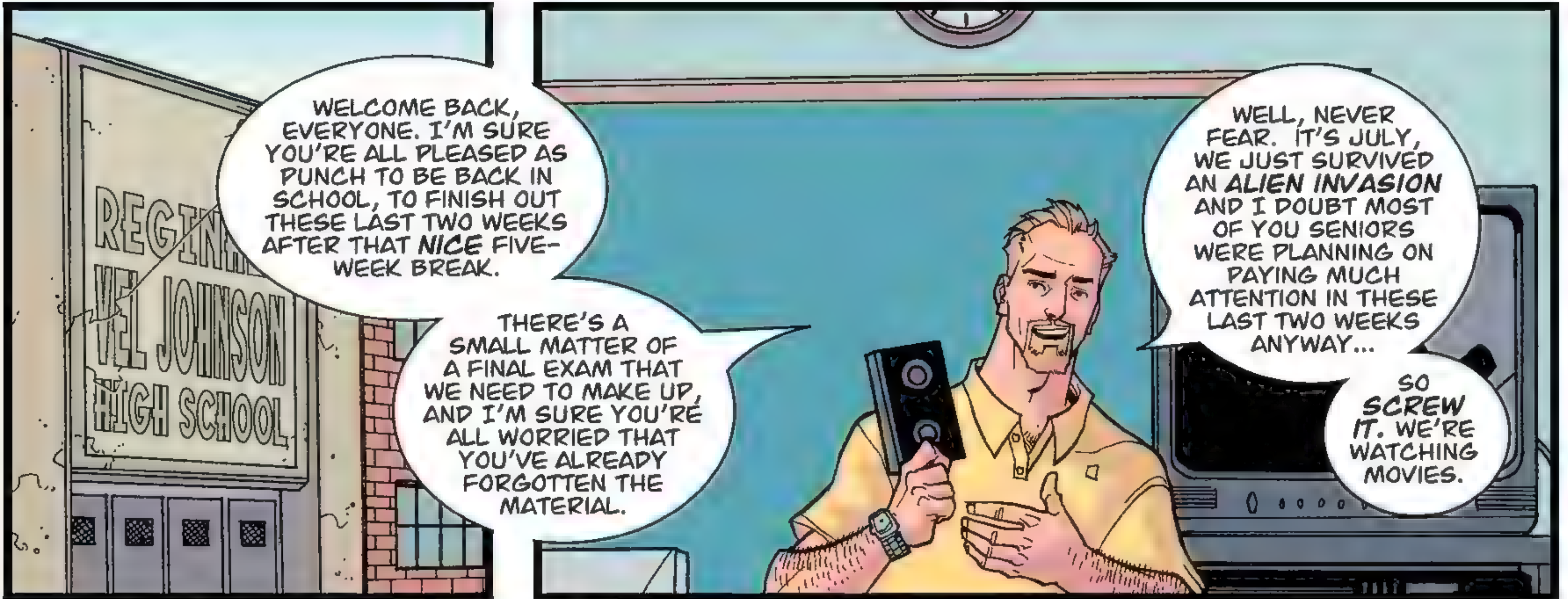
I HAD **ASSUMED**
YOUR FREEDOM WOULD
BE ENOUGH, BUT I CAN
ALWAYS THREATEN TO
LEAVE YOU IN THIS
DIMENSION IF YOU NEED
ADDED INCENTIVE.



POINT
TAKEN.

OUR
SERVICES
ARE
YOURS.







WELL, IF THAT'S HOW ALL THE CLASSES ARE GOING TO BE, THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE HALF BAD.

AGREED. NOT THE MOVIE I WOULD'VE PICKED BUT IT'S MUCH BETTER THAN TAKING NOTES AND GETTING READY FOR A FINAL.



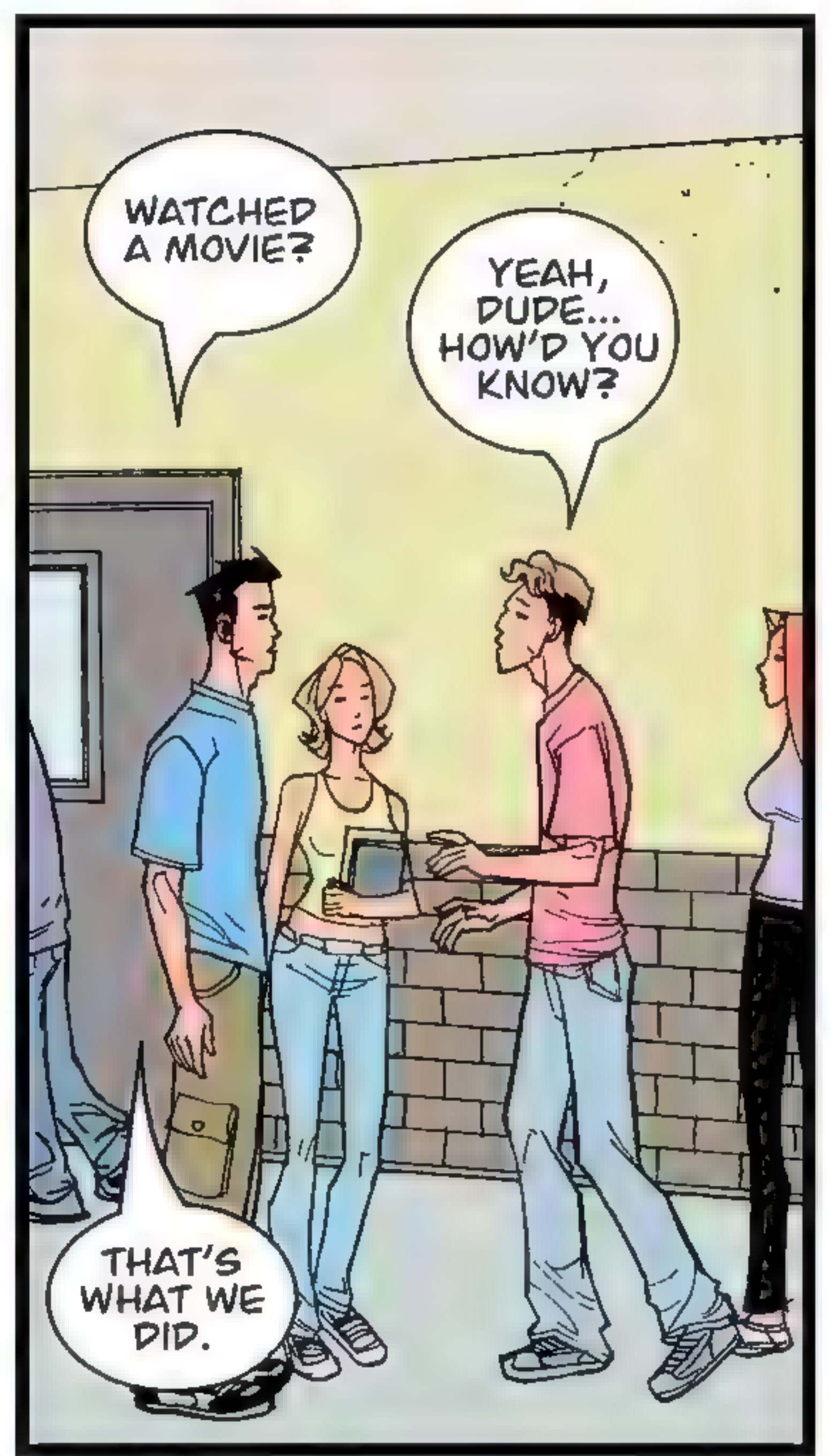
NOT A BAD WAY TO FINISH OUT HIGH SCHOOL.

ESPECIALLY NOW THAT COLLEGE IS ONLY A FEW WEEKS AWAY.



MARK! DUDE, YOU ARE NOT GOING TO BELIEVE WHAT WE JUST DID IN CHEMISTRY.

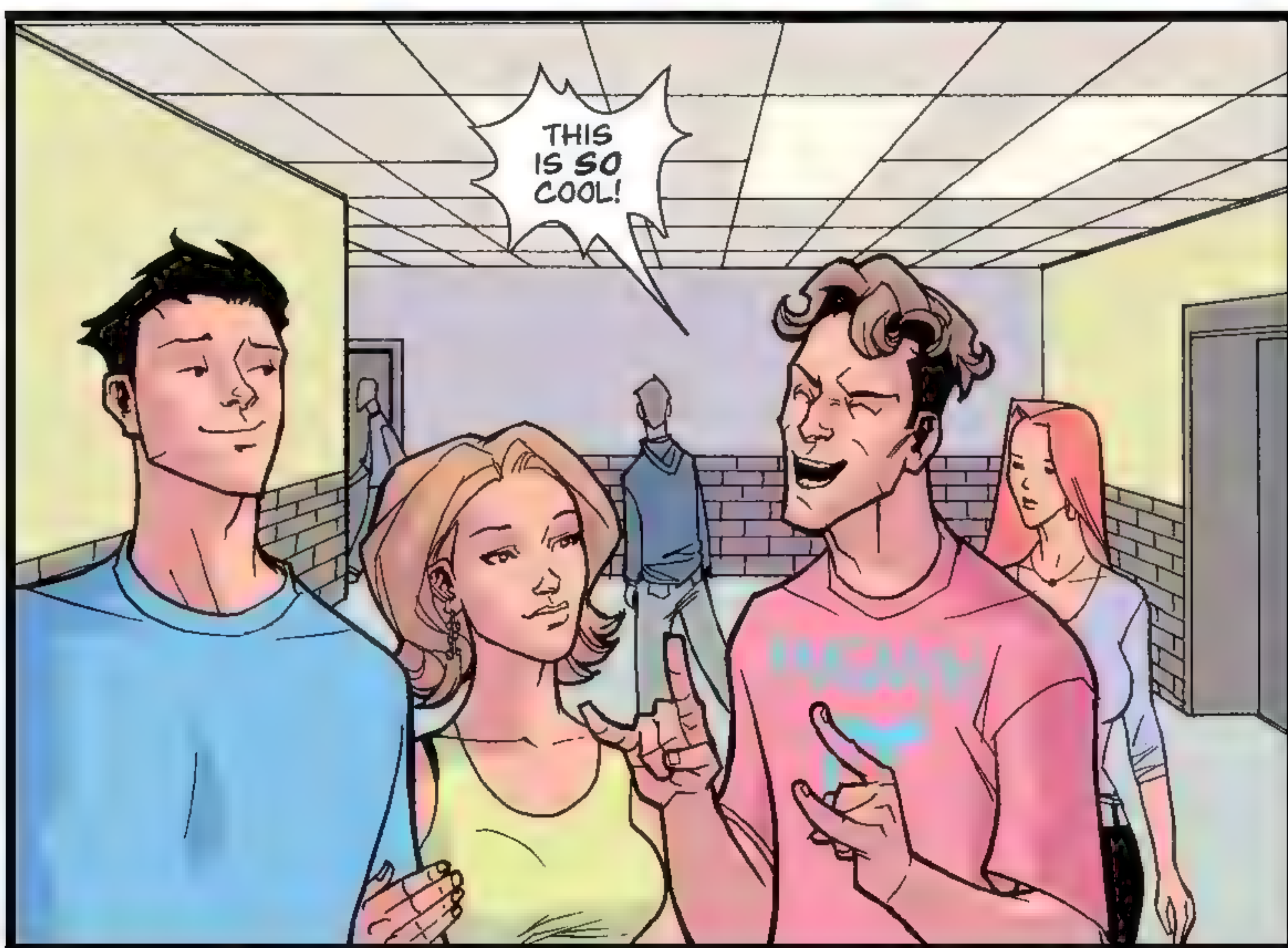
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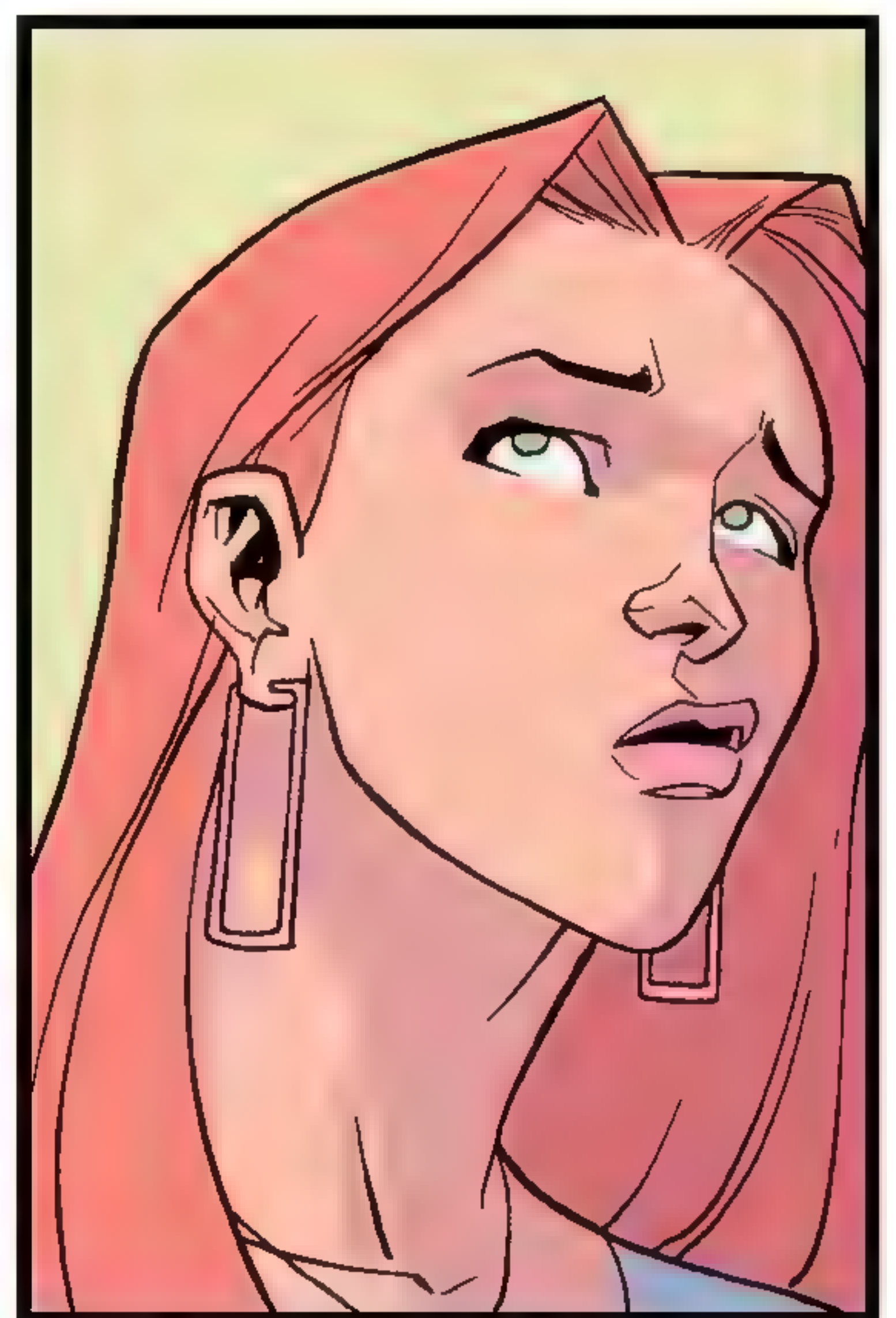
WATCHED A MOVIE?

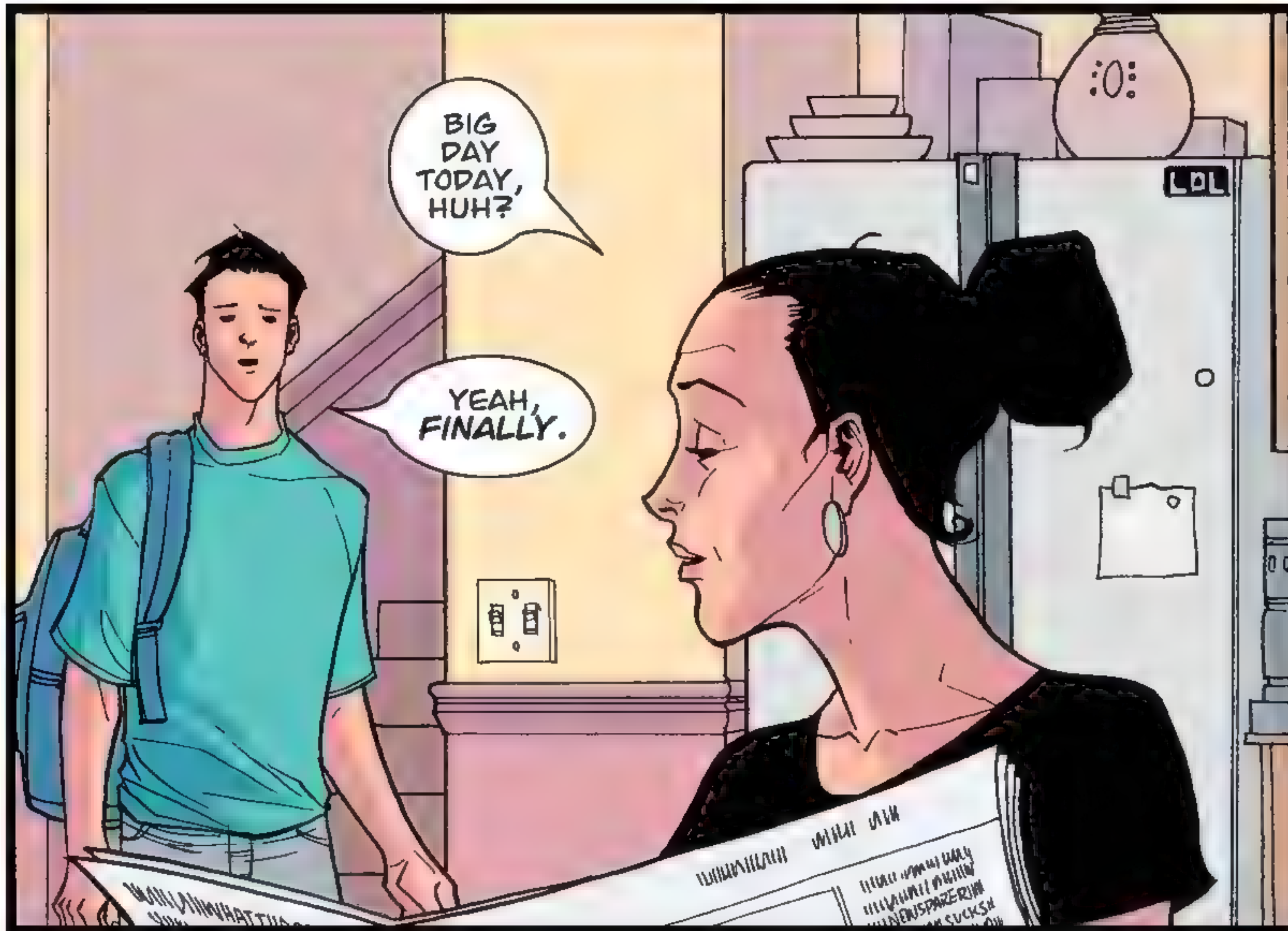
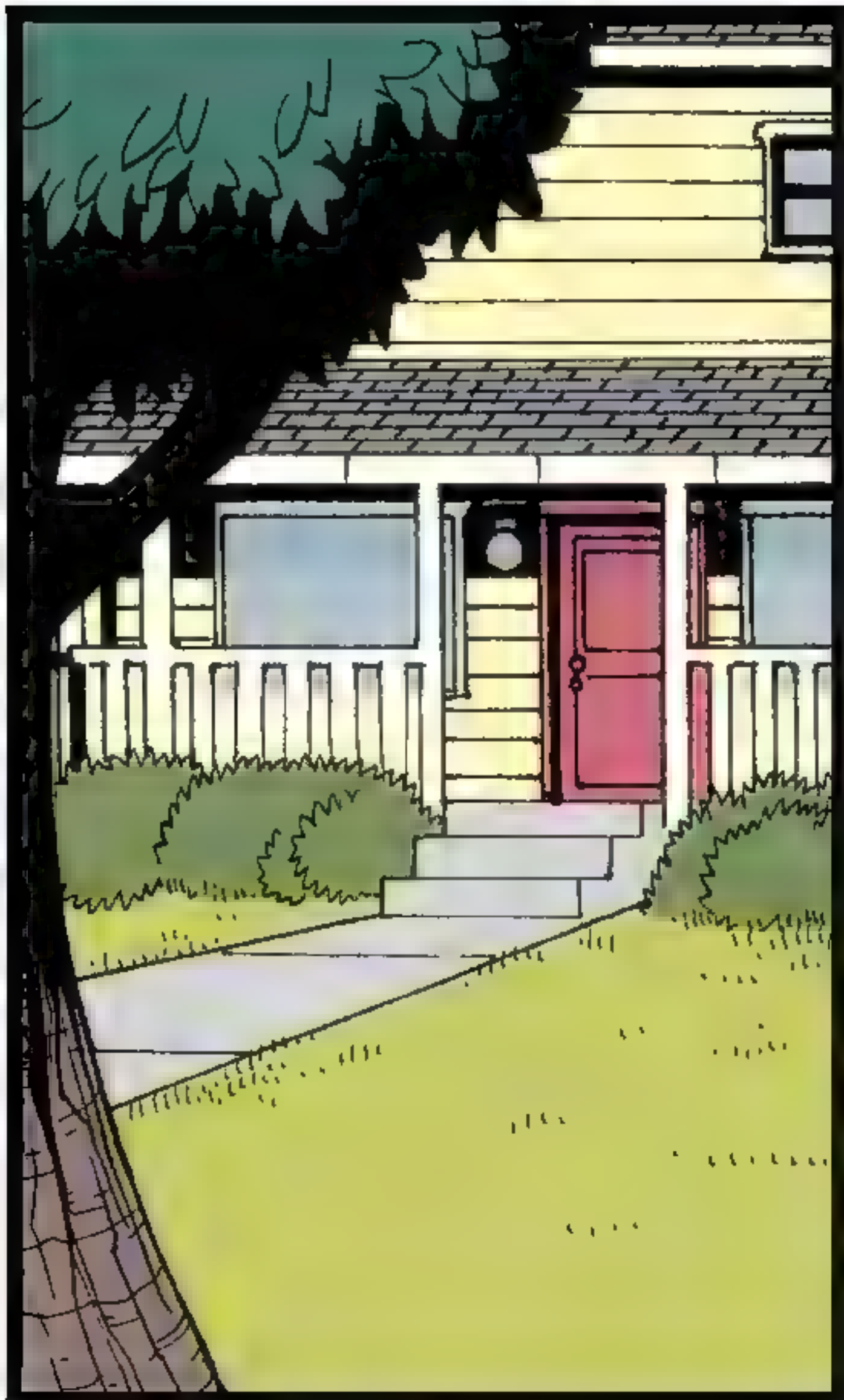
YEAH, DUDE... HOW'D YOU KNOW?

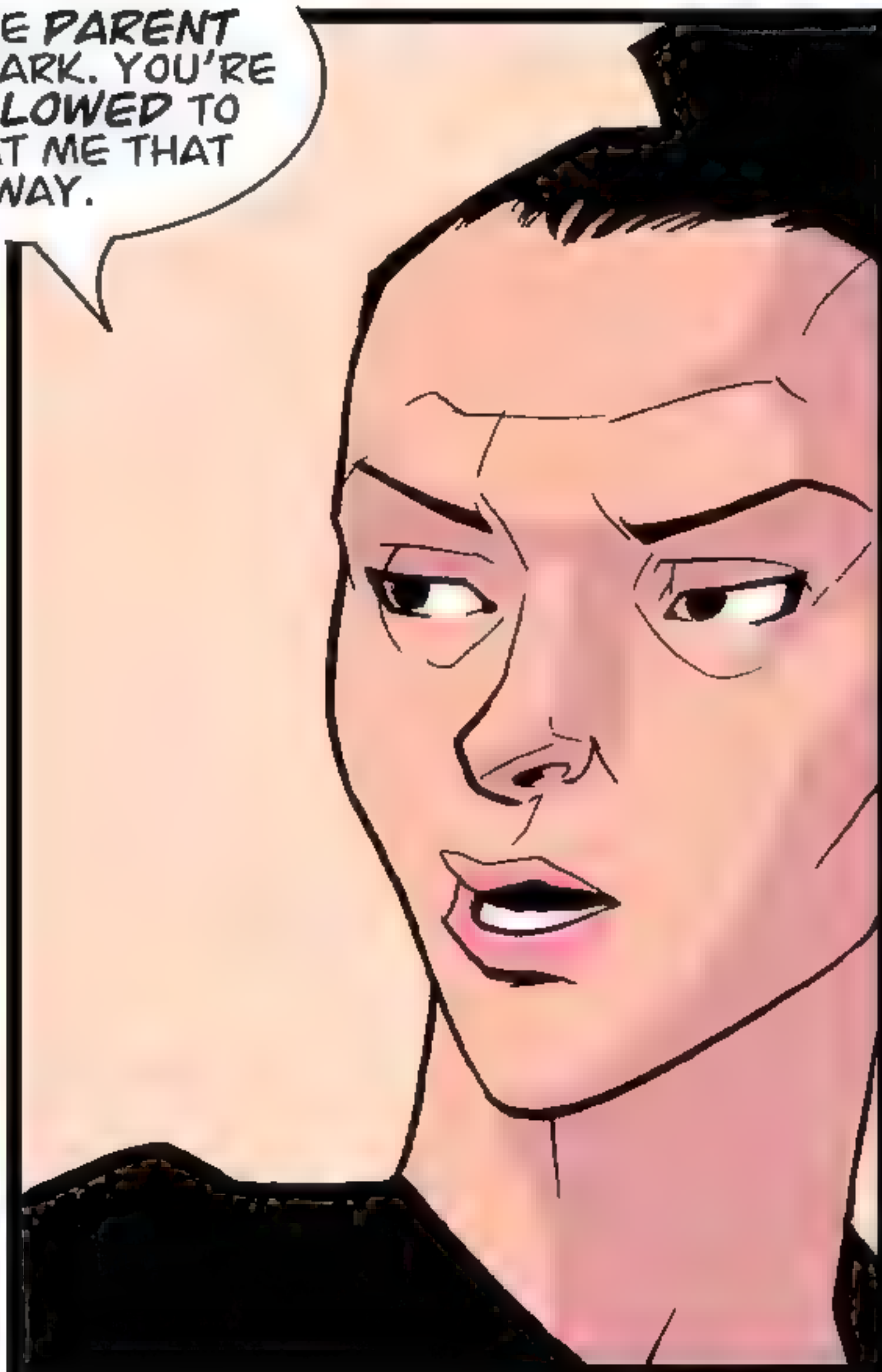
THAT'S WHAT WE DID.

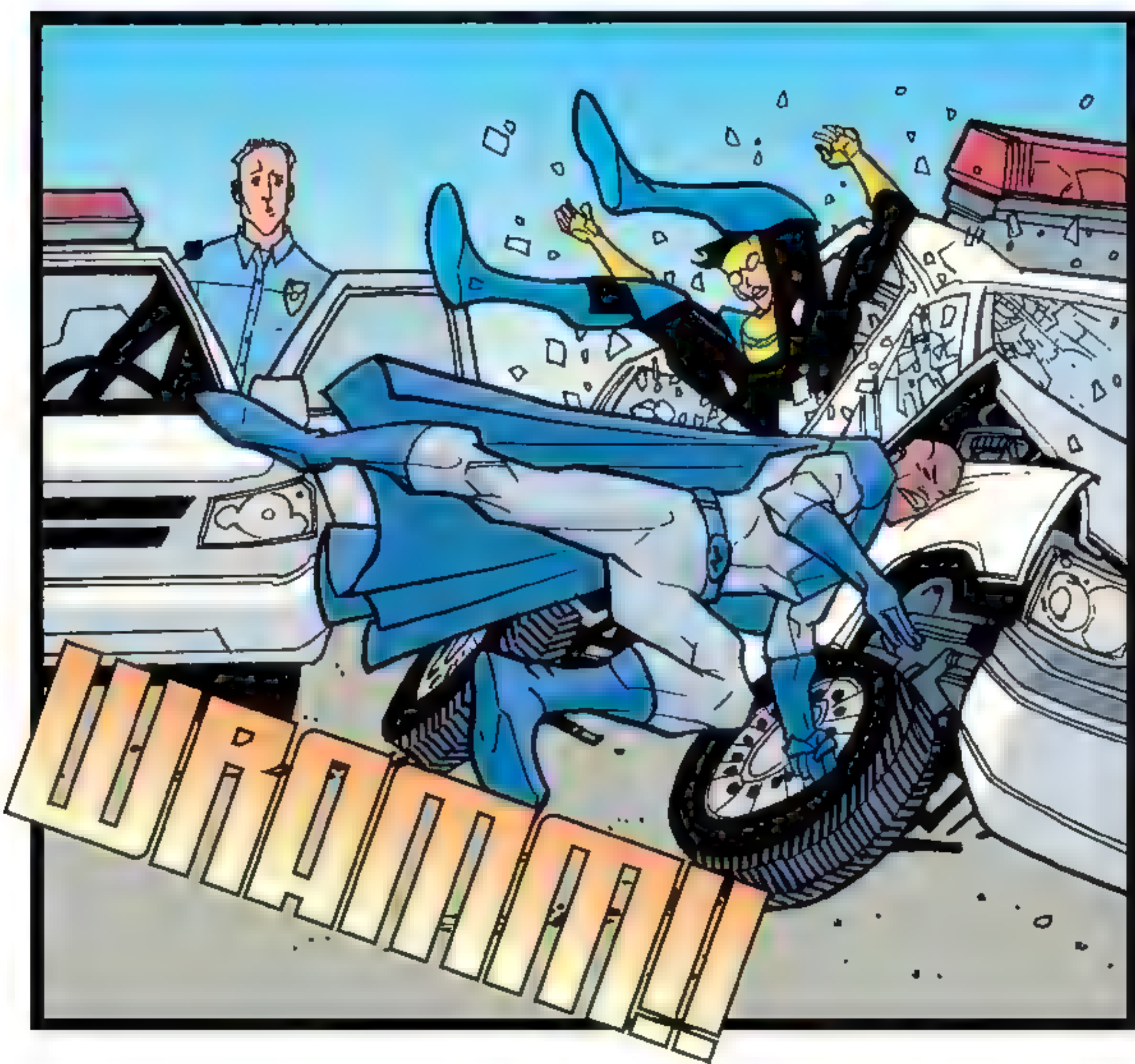
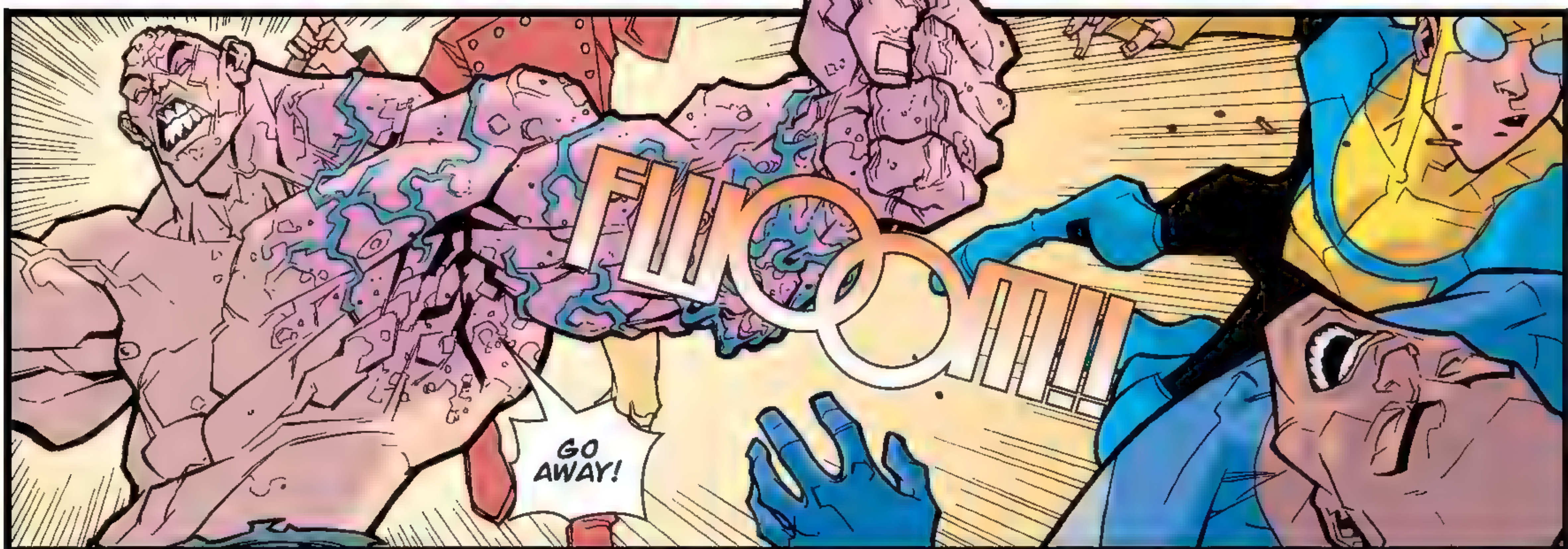
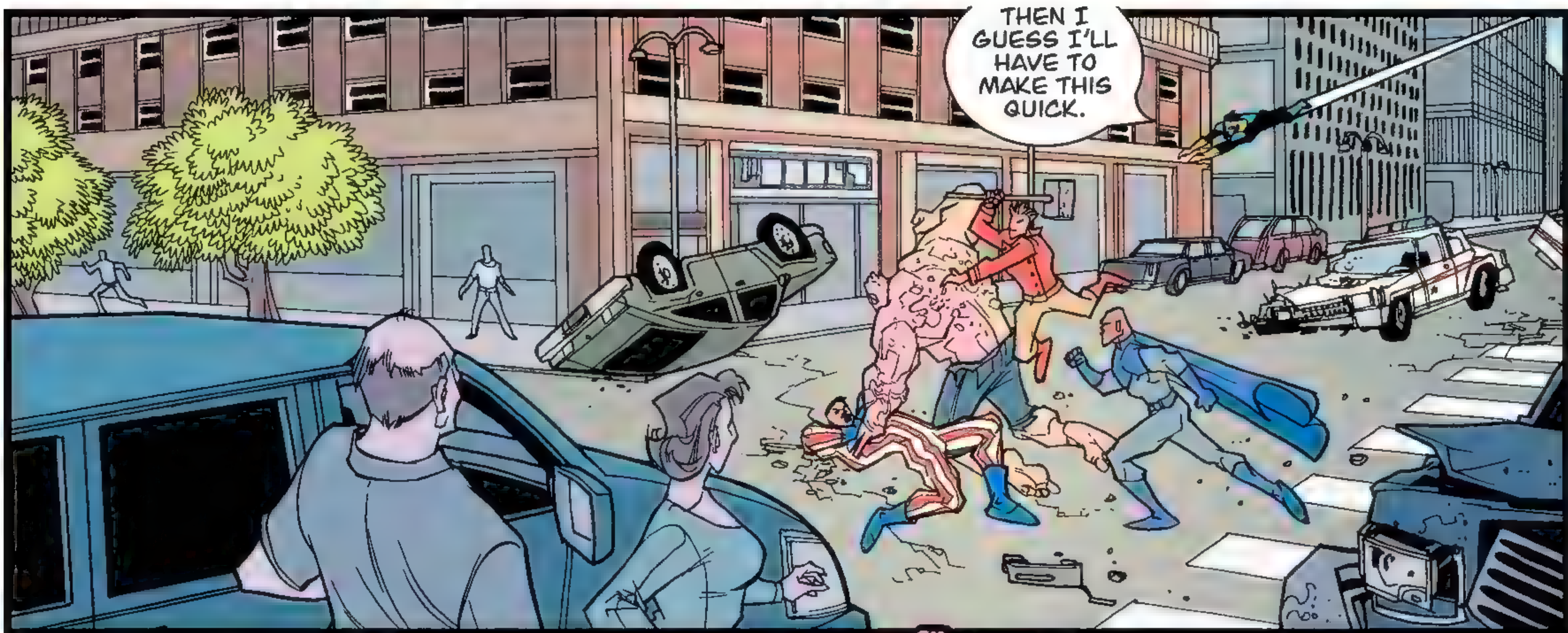
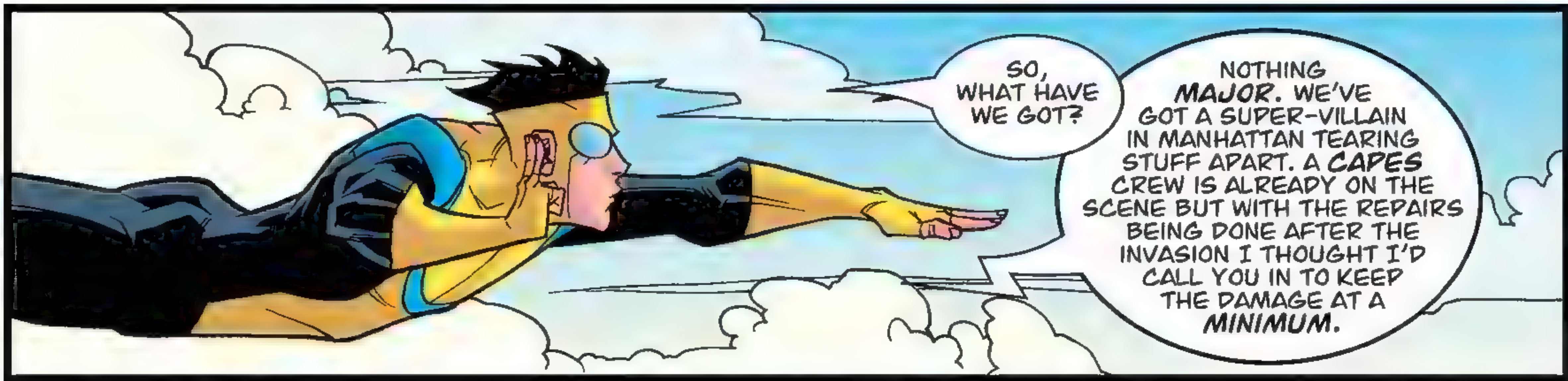


THIS IS SO COOL!









THAT'S THOMAS WINTERS. A LAB ACCIDENT CAUSED HIS WIFE, HOLLY, TO BECOME IMMORTAL. AFTER YEARS OF DEALING WITH IT HE DECIDED TO TRY AND DUPLICATE THE EXPERIMENT SO THAT THEY COULD LIVE TOGETHER FOREVER.

SOMETHING WENT WRONG.

HIS CELLS REGENERATE-- BUT AT SUCH A RAPID LEVEL THAT IT'S AFFECTED HIS THOUGHT PROCESSES AND BEHAVIOR. NOW HE'S SUPER STRONG, INDESTRUCTIBLE, AND HE KILLS ANY MAN THAT SO MUCH AS LOOKS AT HOLLY.

WHY'S HE BEATING ON THAT GUY? DOESN'T HE WORK AT CAPEZ?

YEAH, COMMANDER CAPITALISM HAS BEEN DATING HOLLY FOR ABOUT TWO MONTHS.

OH.

OKAY THEN. WELL, LET'S STOP THIS GUY BEFORE HE KILLS HIM.

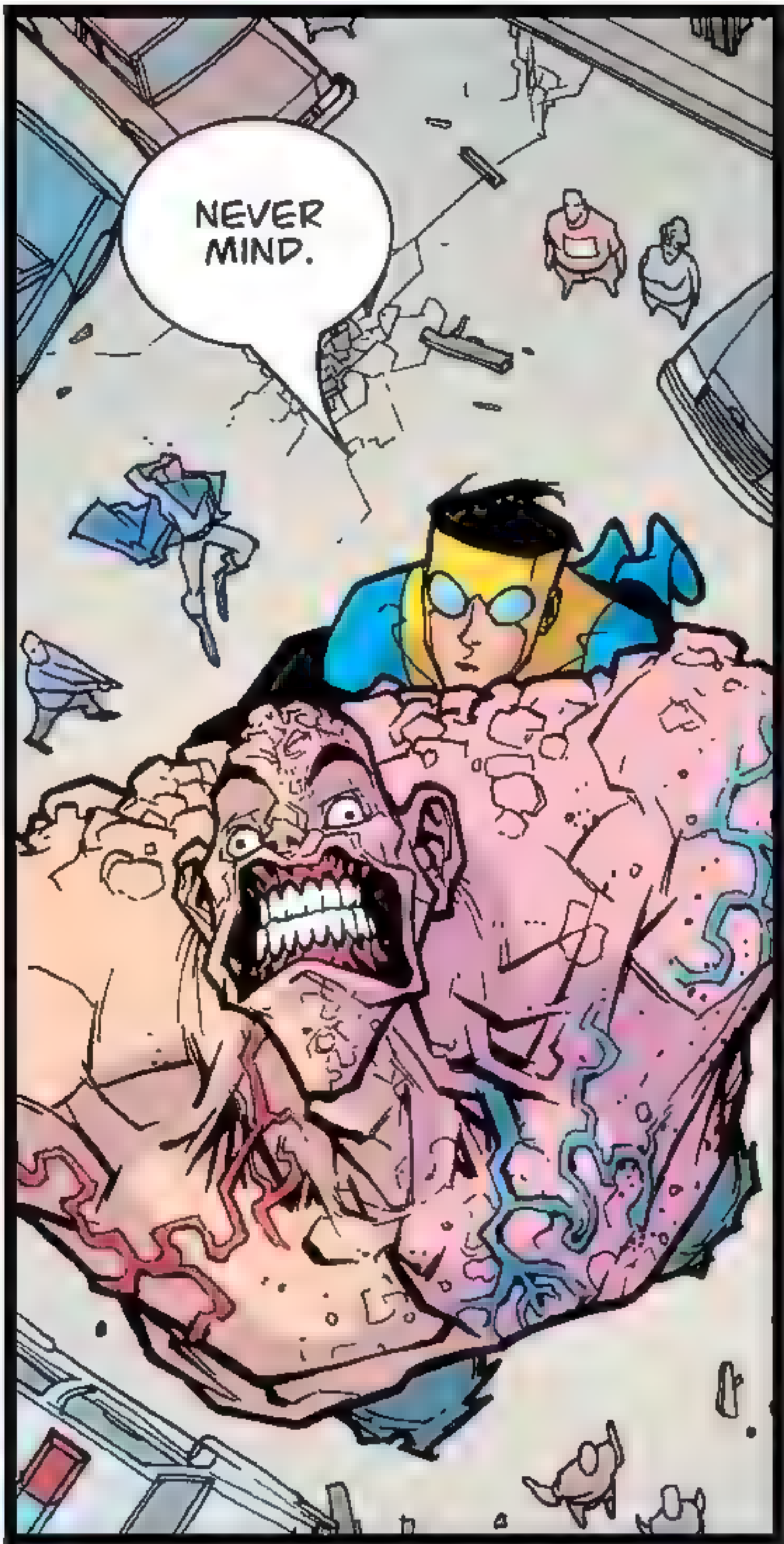
THAT'S THE PLAN.

HOLLY MINE!! MINE!!

ULP!

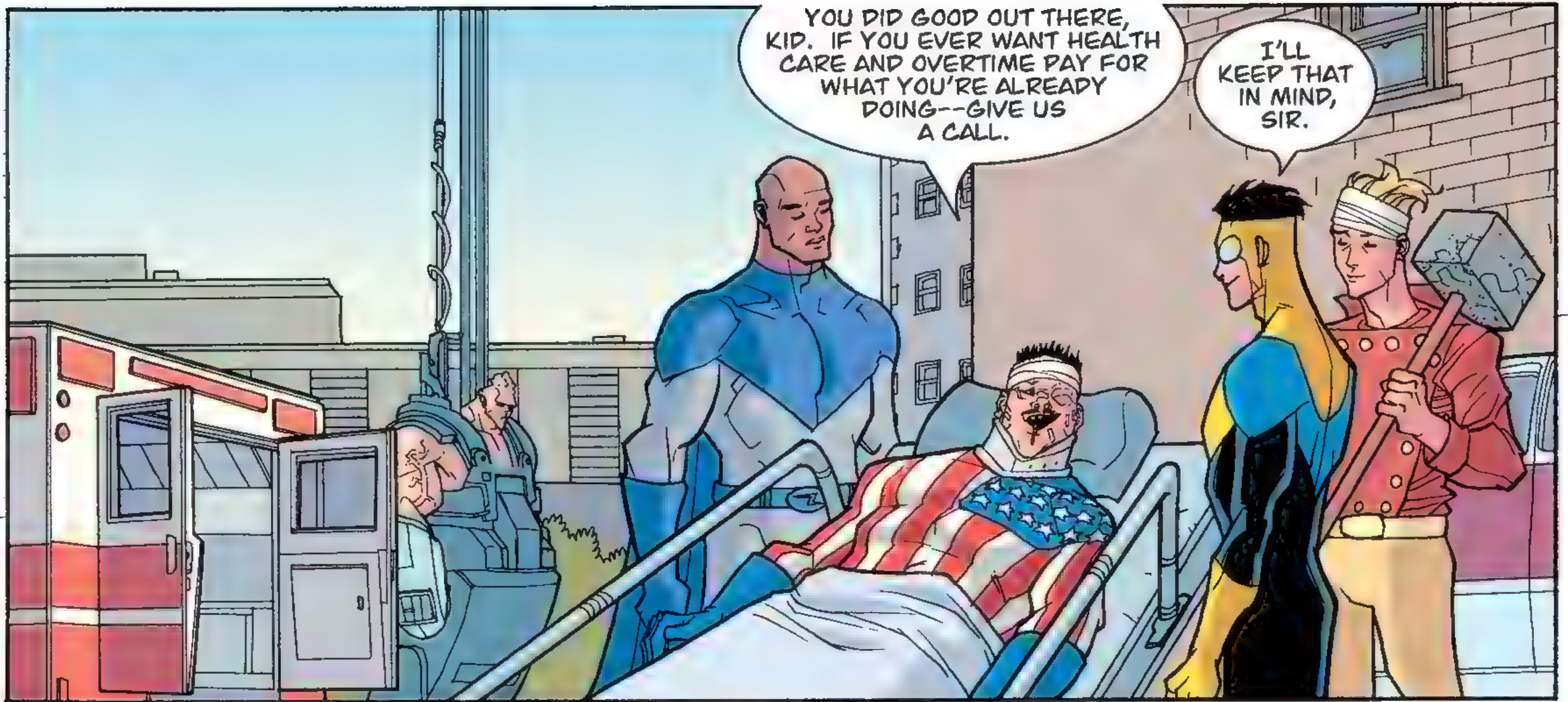
DOES THIS GUY NEED TO BREATHE? HOW LONG DO YOU THINK HE CAN HOLD HIS BREATH?

WHAT? WHY?









YOU DID GOOD OUT THERE, KID. IF YOU EVER WANT HEALTH CARE AND OVERTIME PAY FOR WHAT YOU'RE ALREADY DOING--GIVE US A CALL.

I'LL KEEP THAT IN MIND, SIR.



OH, PHILLIP! BABY! ARE YOU OKAY?!!



IT'S NOT AS BAD AS IT LOOKS, HOLLY. YOUR EX AIN'T SO TOUGH. YOU GO WAIT IN THE AMBULANCE, HONEY. YOU CAN RIDE WITH ME TO THE HOSPITAL.



I LIKE TO WATCH HER COMING, BUT I LOVE TO WATCH HER WALK AWAY. SO FINE, AND ALL MINE.

YEAH-- BUT IS IT WORTH ALL THIS?

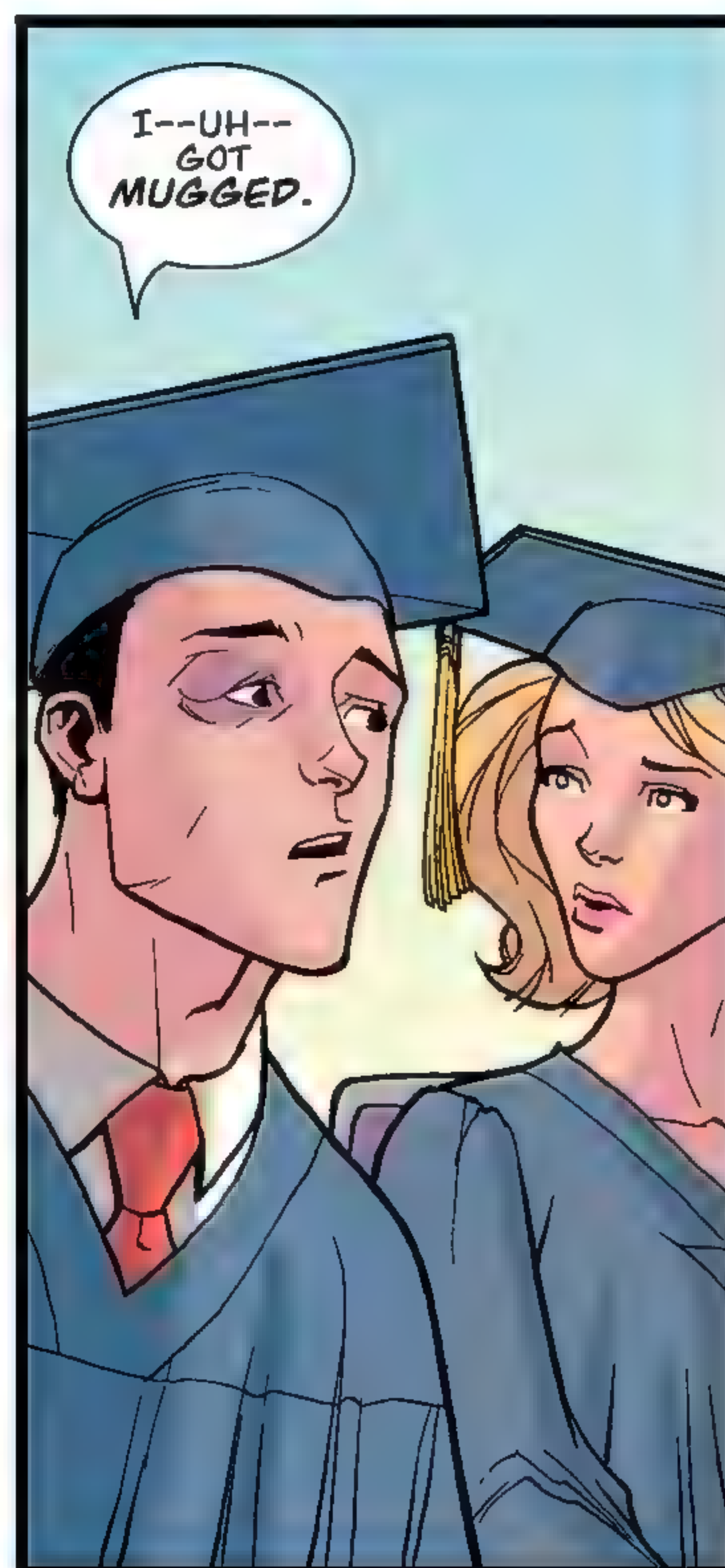
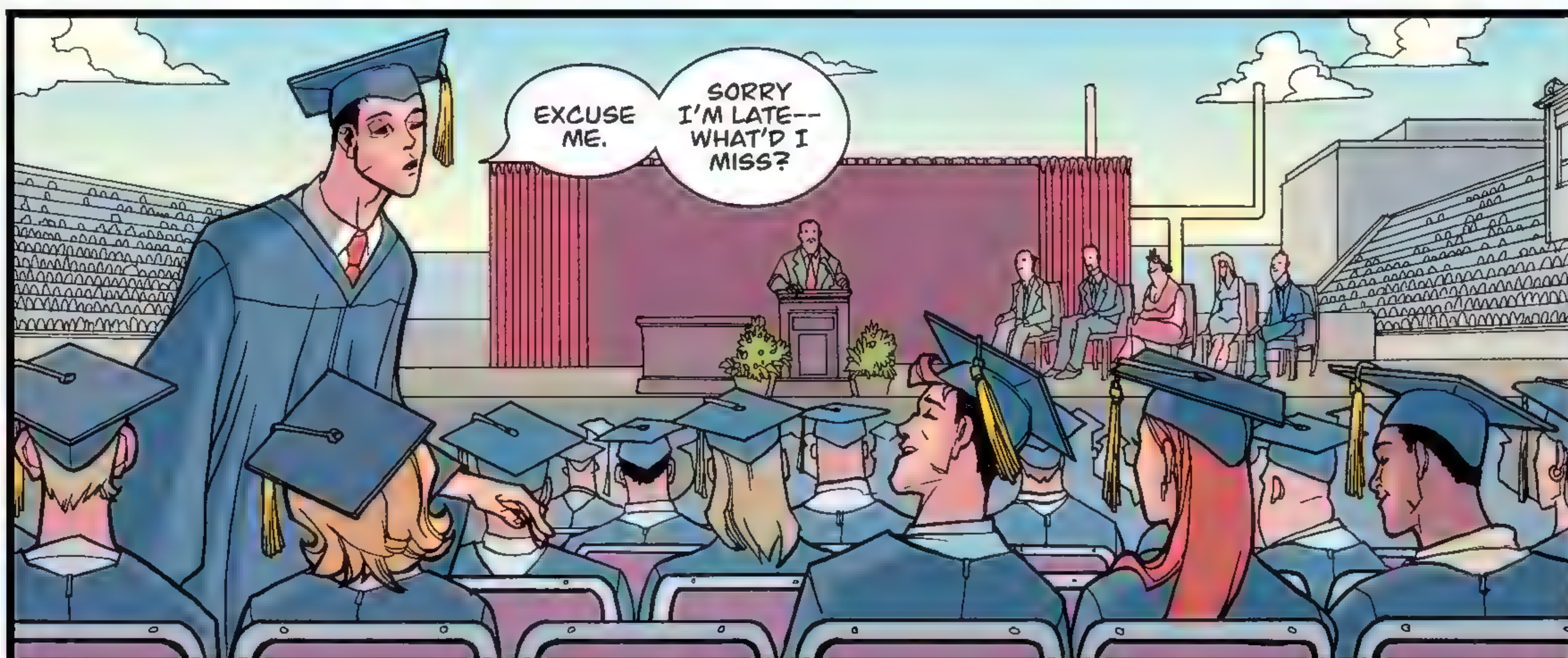
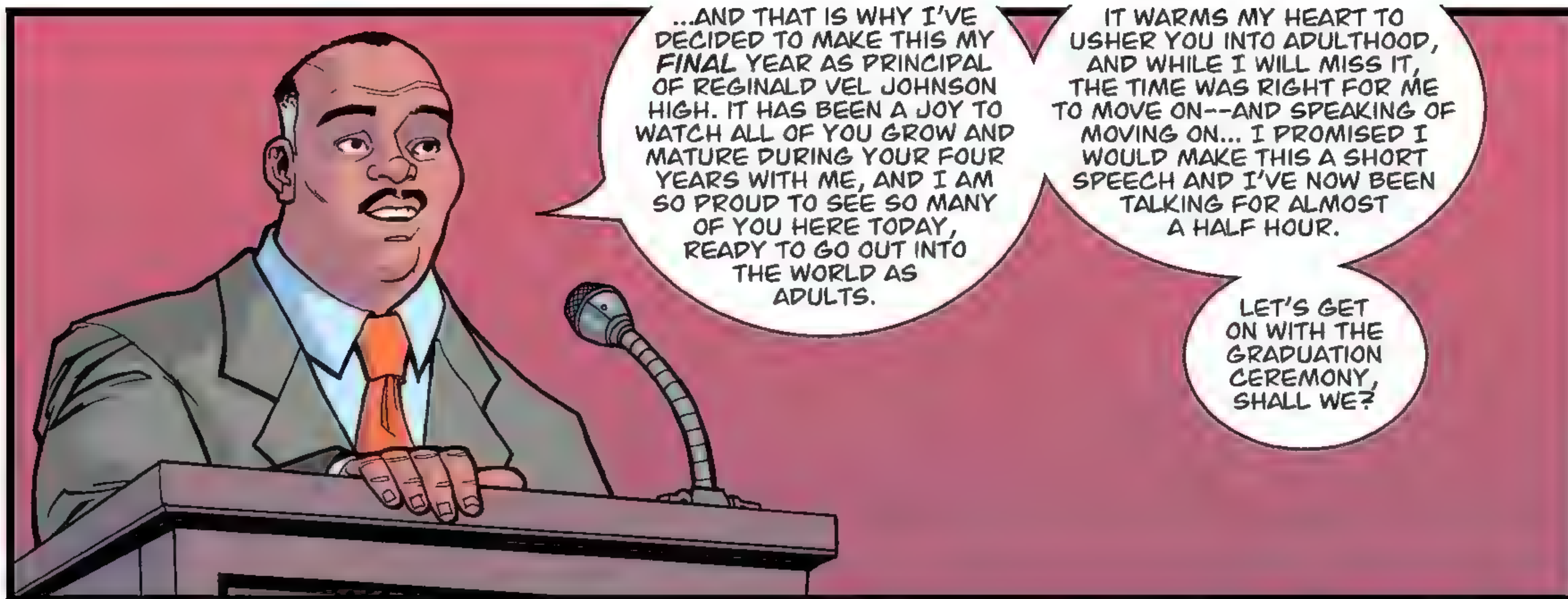


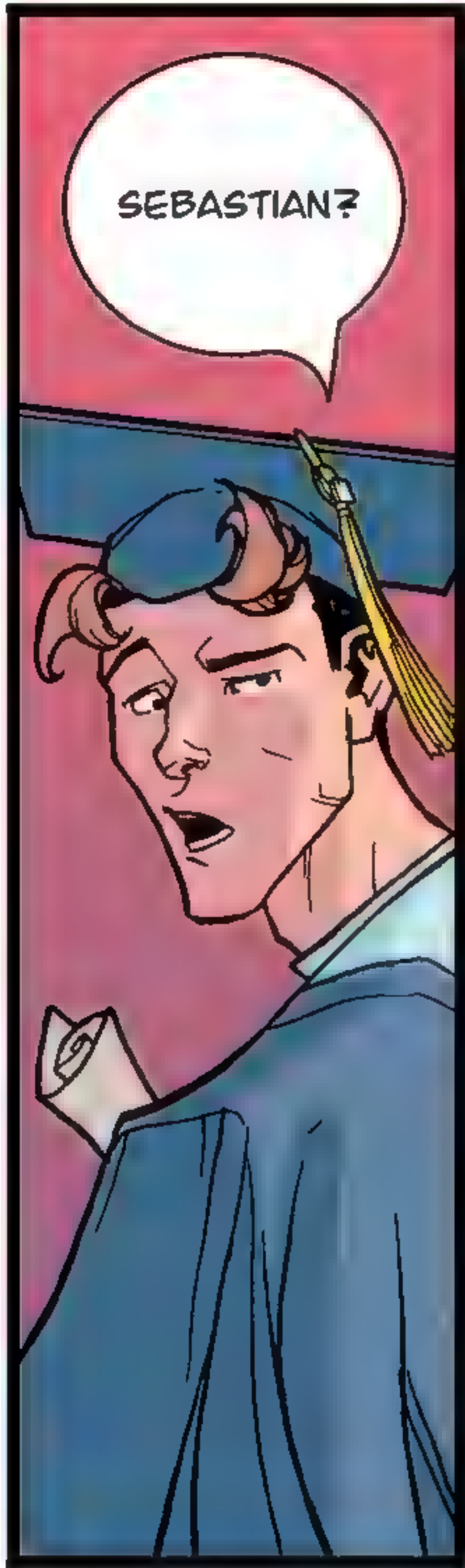
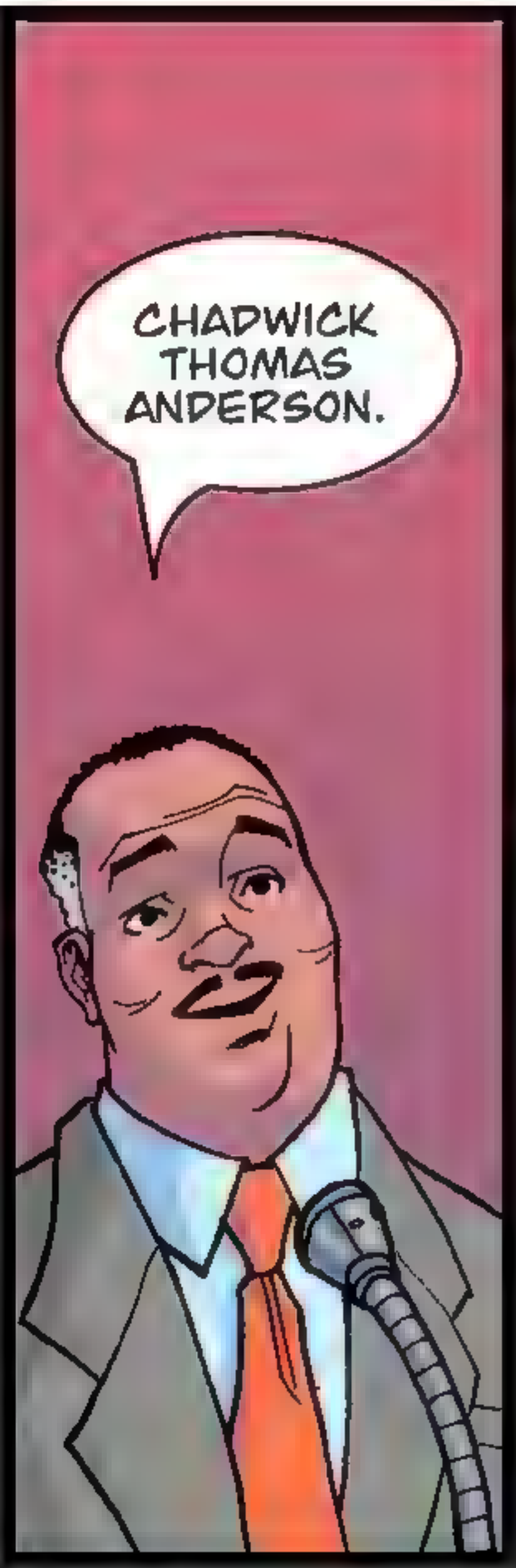
IS IT WORTH IT?

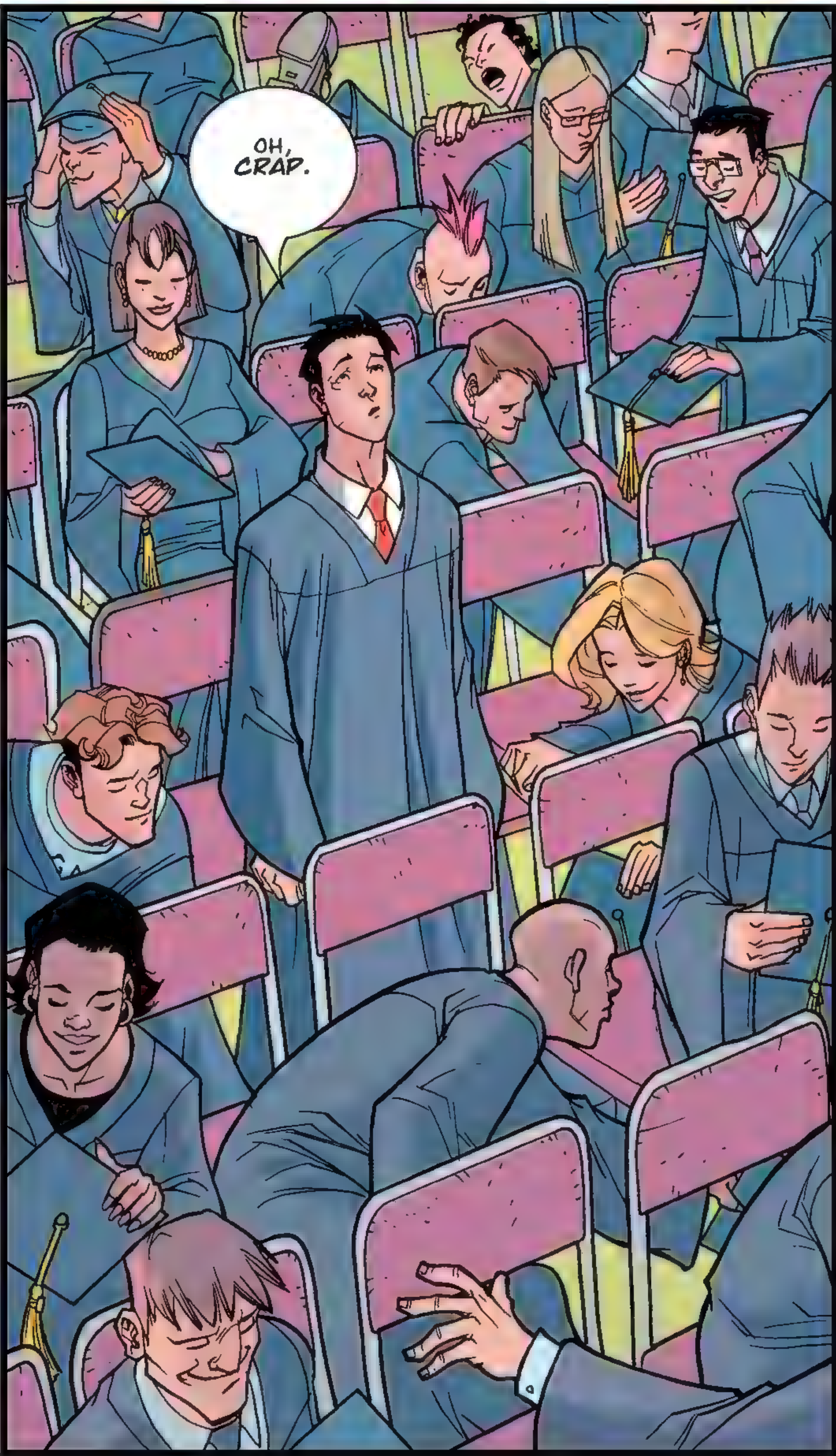
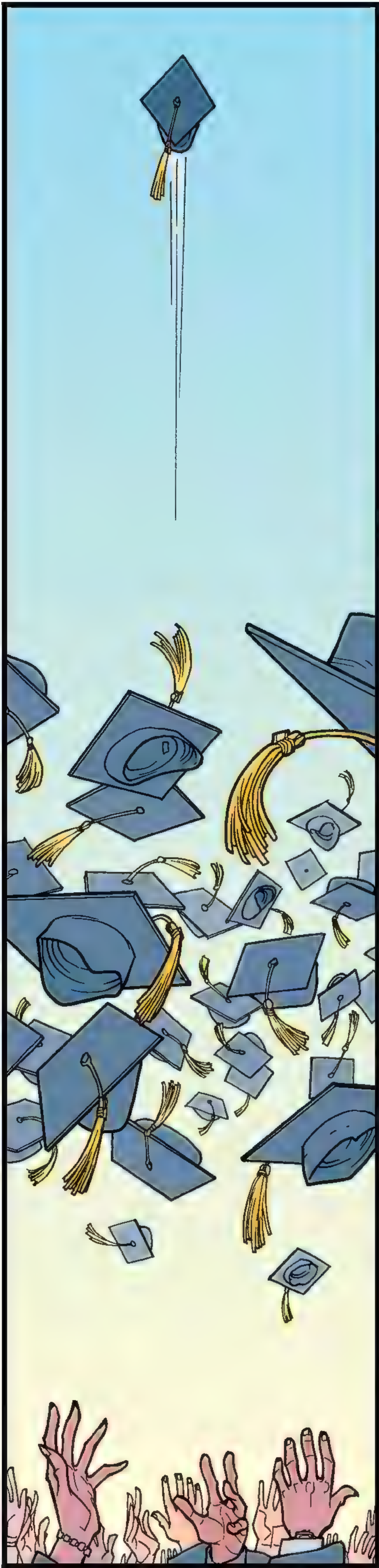
FOR A CHICK THAT SMOKING HOT WHO'S GUARANTEED TO NEVER AGE A DAY?!

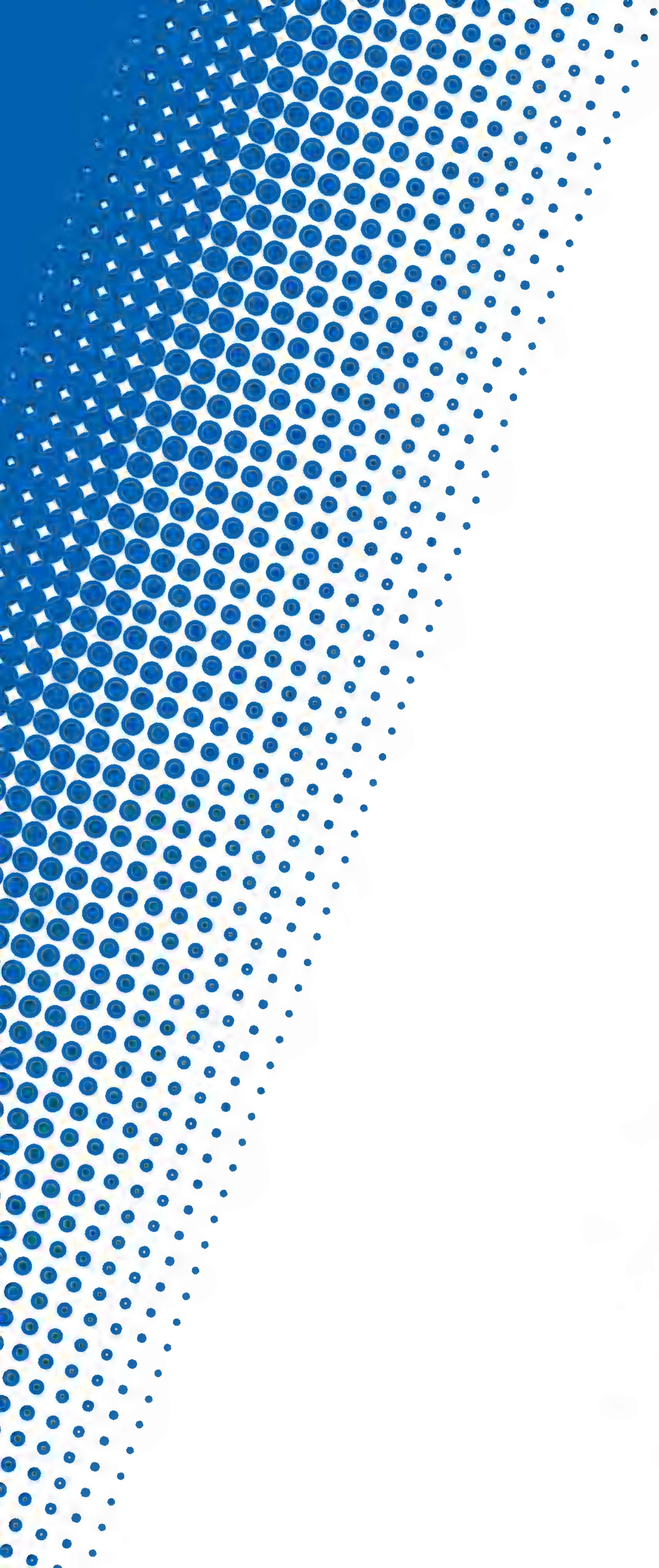
YOU BET!

CRAP! WHAT TIME IS IT?!

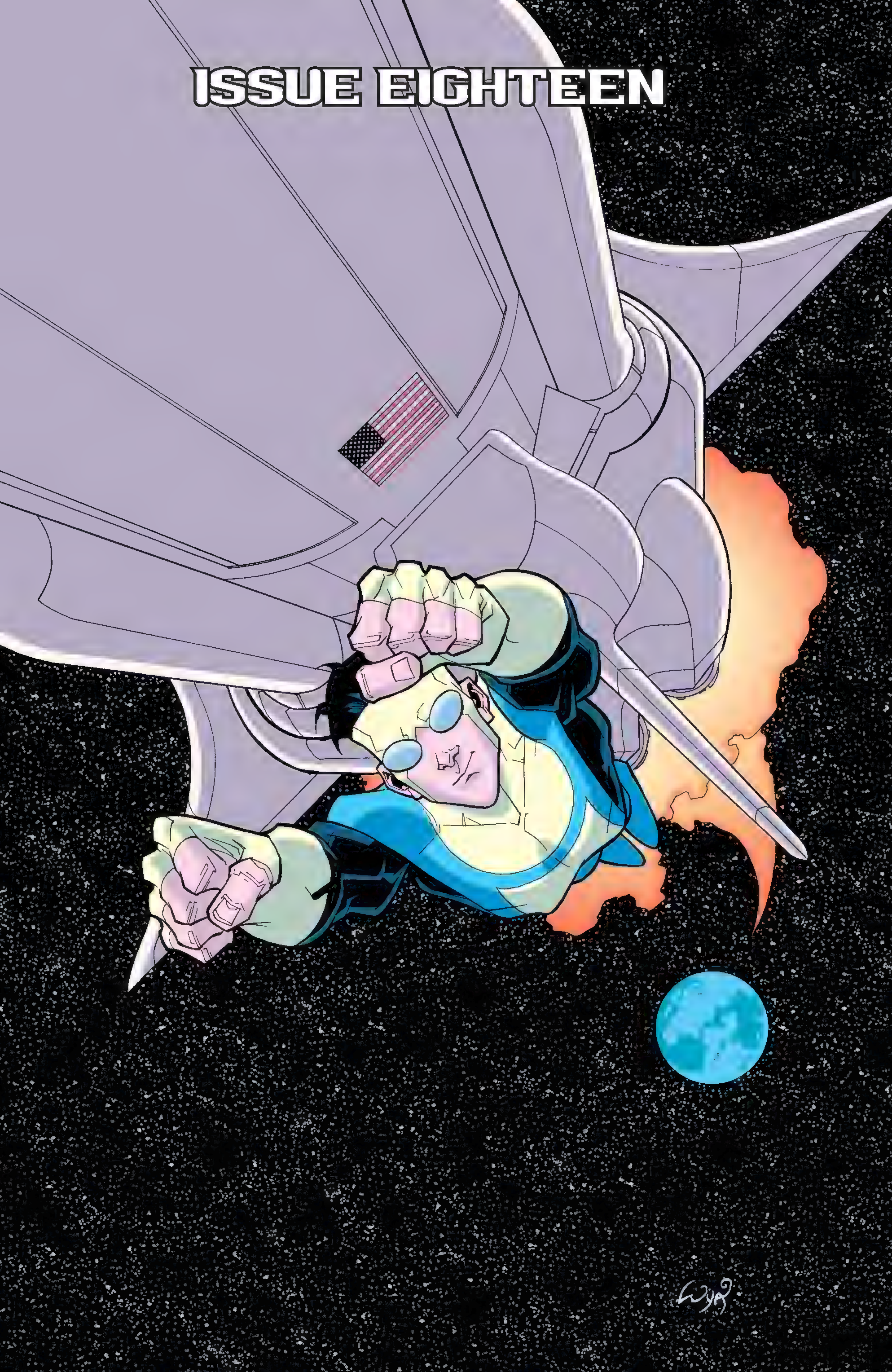








ISSUE EIGHTEEN

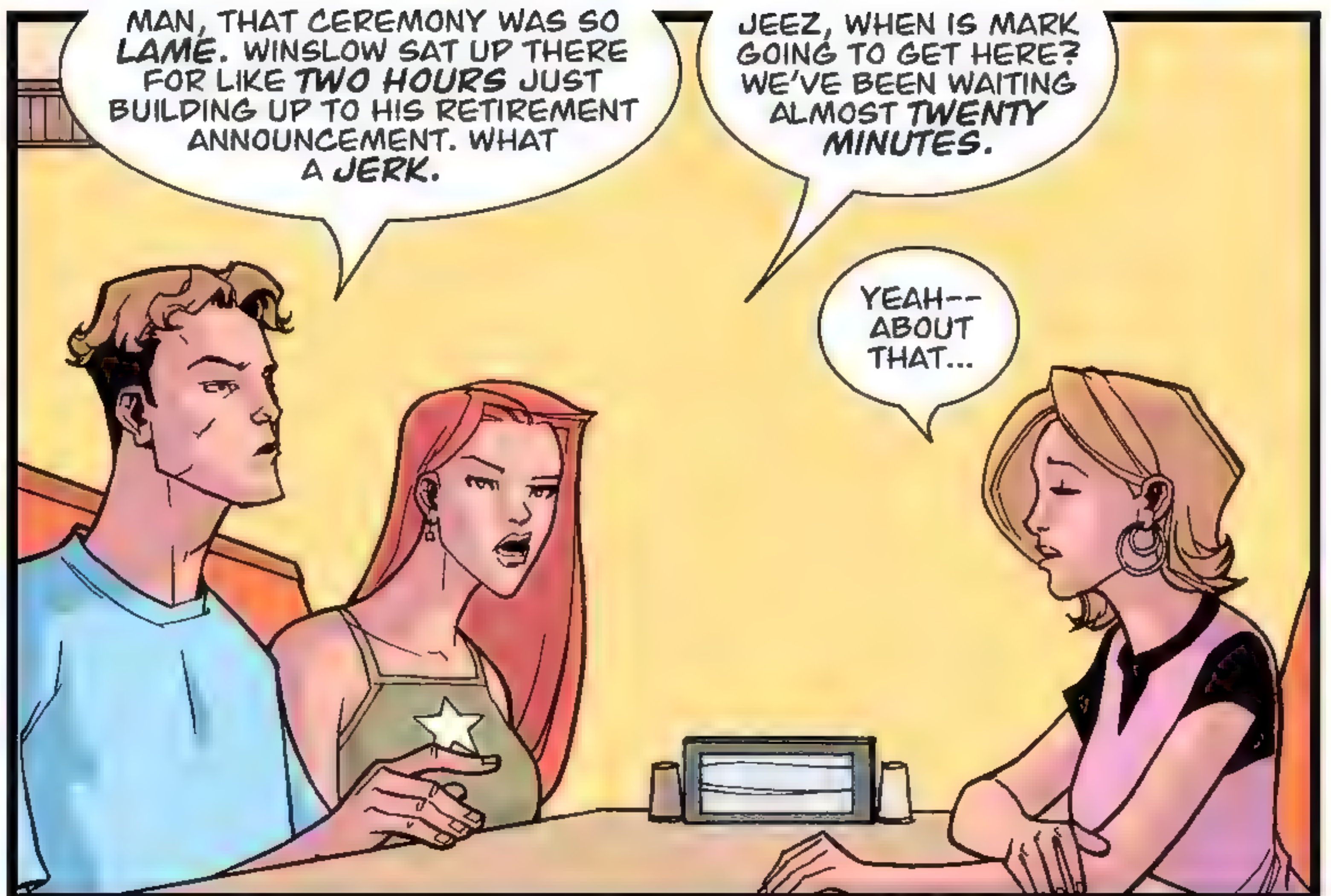


WYAG

DON'T BE
SCARED--I'M
GOOD, I'M NOT TIRED
OR ANYTHING. YOU'VE
GOT SOME TIME, GATHER
UP YOUR THINGS, TOYS,
FAMILY PHOTOS---
WHATEVER.

JUST BE
QUICK ABOUT IT.
I DON'T KNOW
HOW LONG THIS
STUFF WILL HOLD
BEFORE IT STARTS
BREAKING
APART.

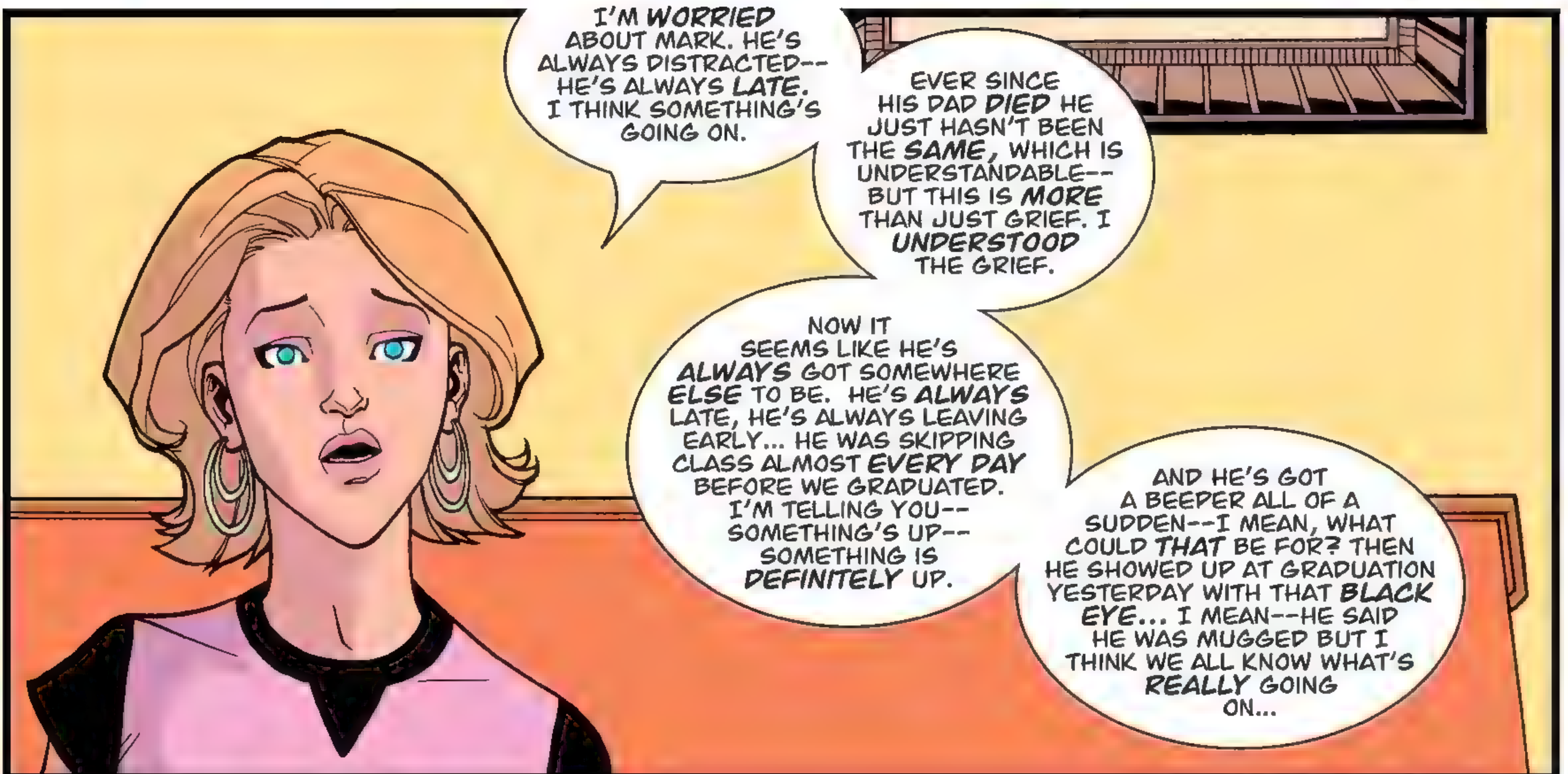




MAN, THAT CEREMONY WAS SO LAME. WINSLOW SAT UP THERE FOR LIKE **TWO HOURS** JUST BUILDING UP TO HIS RETIREMENT ANNOUNCEMENT. WHAT A JERK.

JEEZ, WHEN IS MARK GOING TO GET HERE? WE'VE BEEN WAITING ALMOST **TWENTY MINUTES**.

YEAH-- ABOUT THAT...



I'M WORRIED ABOUT MARK. HE'S ALWAYS DISTRACTED-- HE'S ALWAYS LATE. I THINK SOMETHING'S GOING ON.

EVER SINCE HIS DAD DIED HE JUST HASN'T BEEN THE SAME, WHICH IS UNDERSTANDABLE-- BUT THIS IS MORE THAN JUST GRIEF. I UNDERSTOOD THE GRIEF.

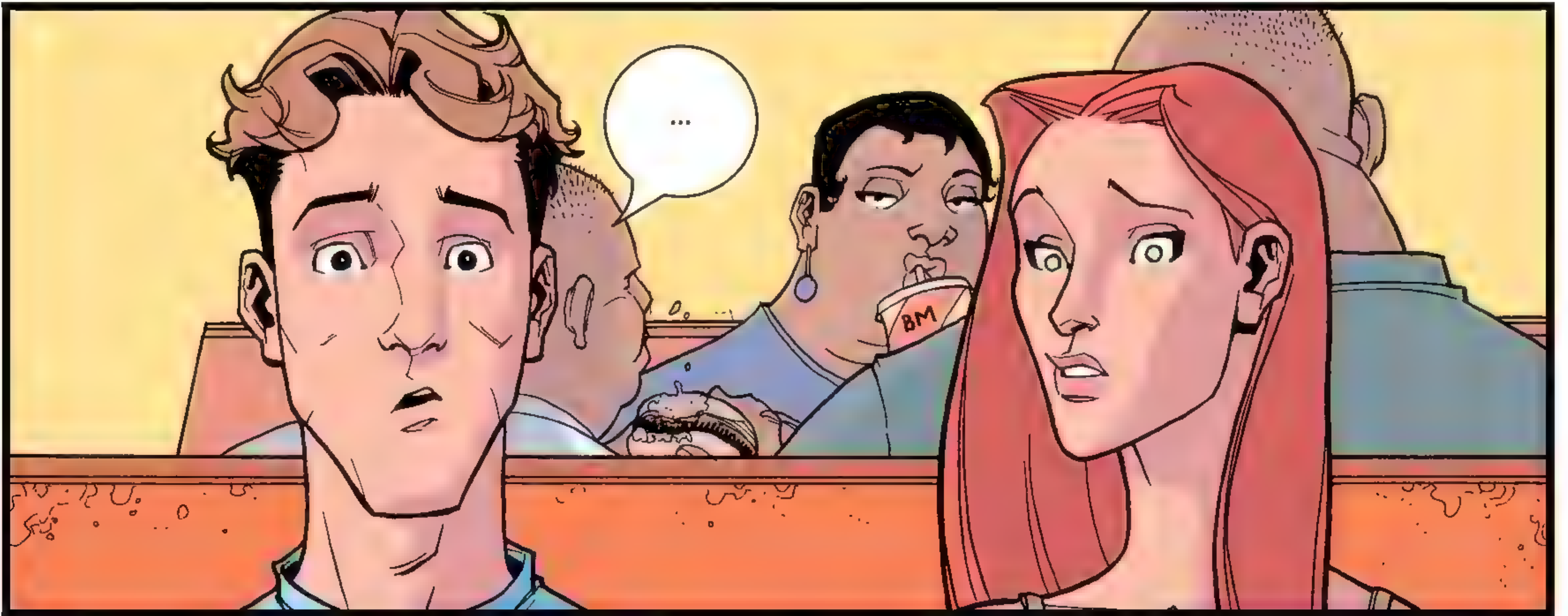
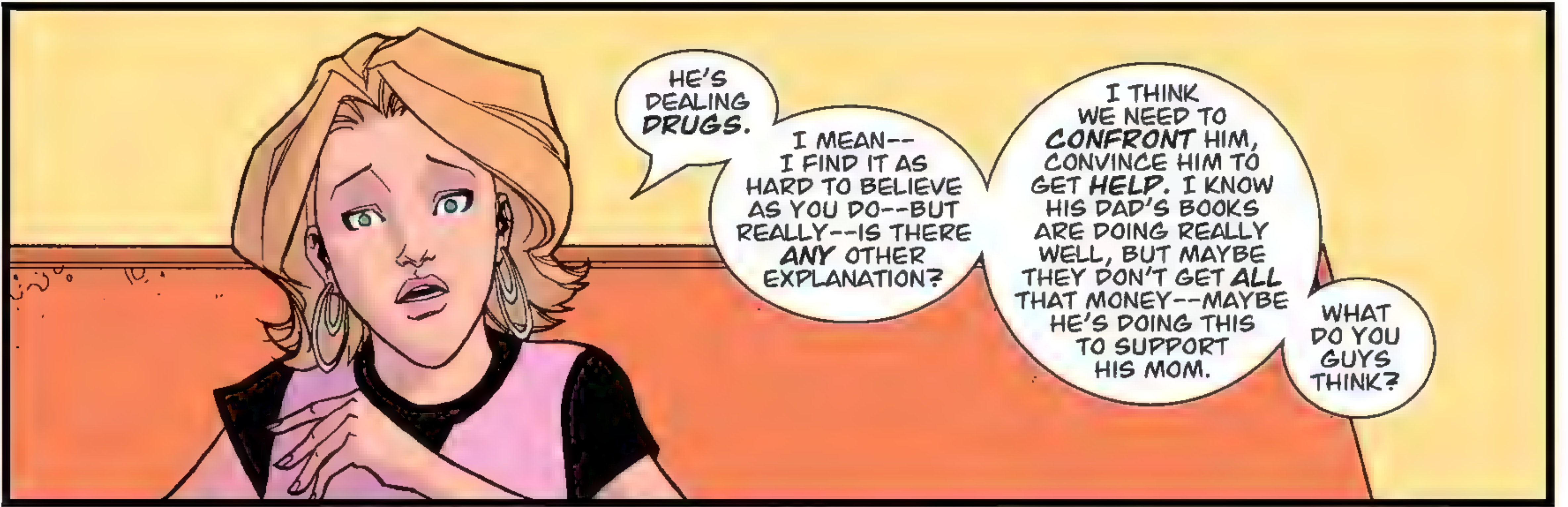
NOW IT SEEMS LIKE HE'S ALWAYS GOT SOMEWHERE ELSE TO BE. HE'S ALWAYS LATE, HE'S ALWAYS LEAVING EARLY... HE WAS SKIPPING CLASS ALMOST EVERY DAY BEFORE WE GRADUATED. I'M TELLING YOU-- SOMETHING'S UP-- SOMETHING IS DEFINITELY UP.

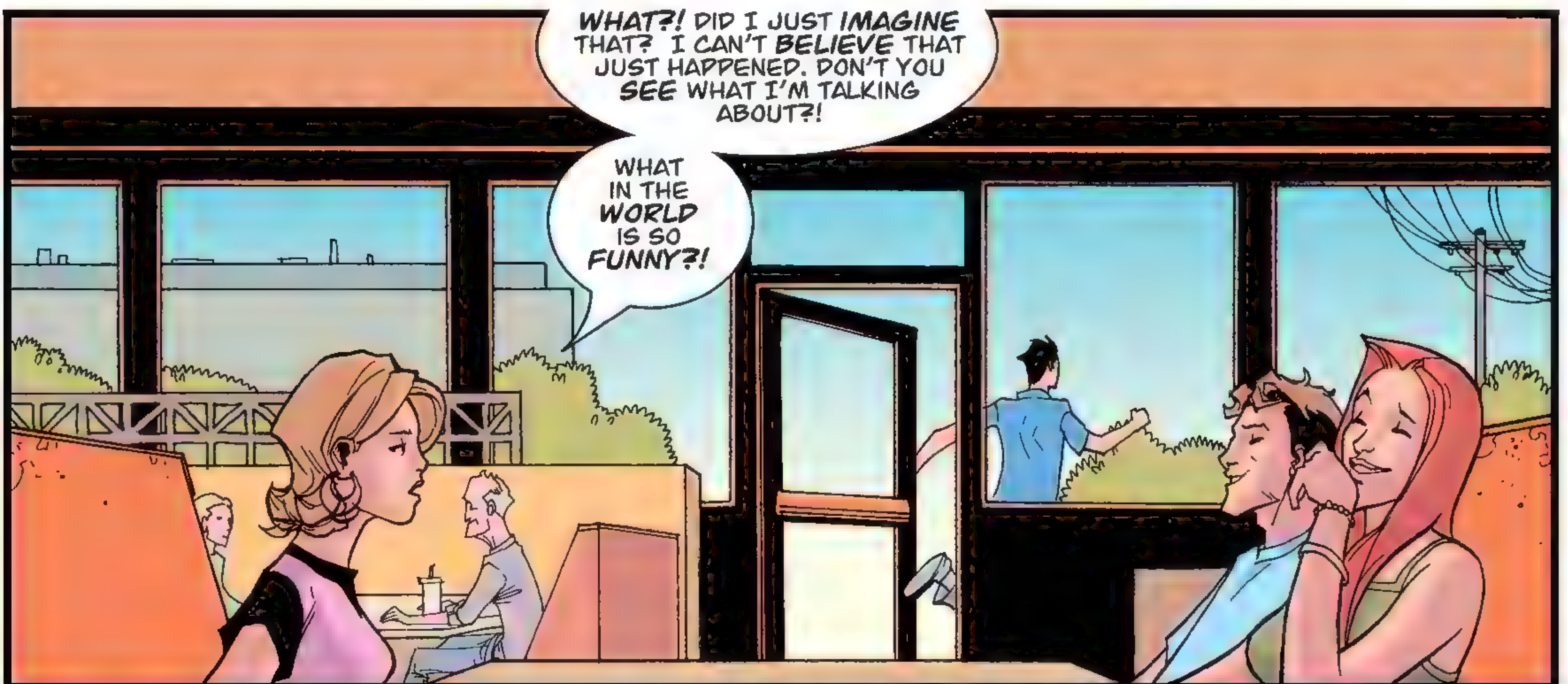
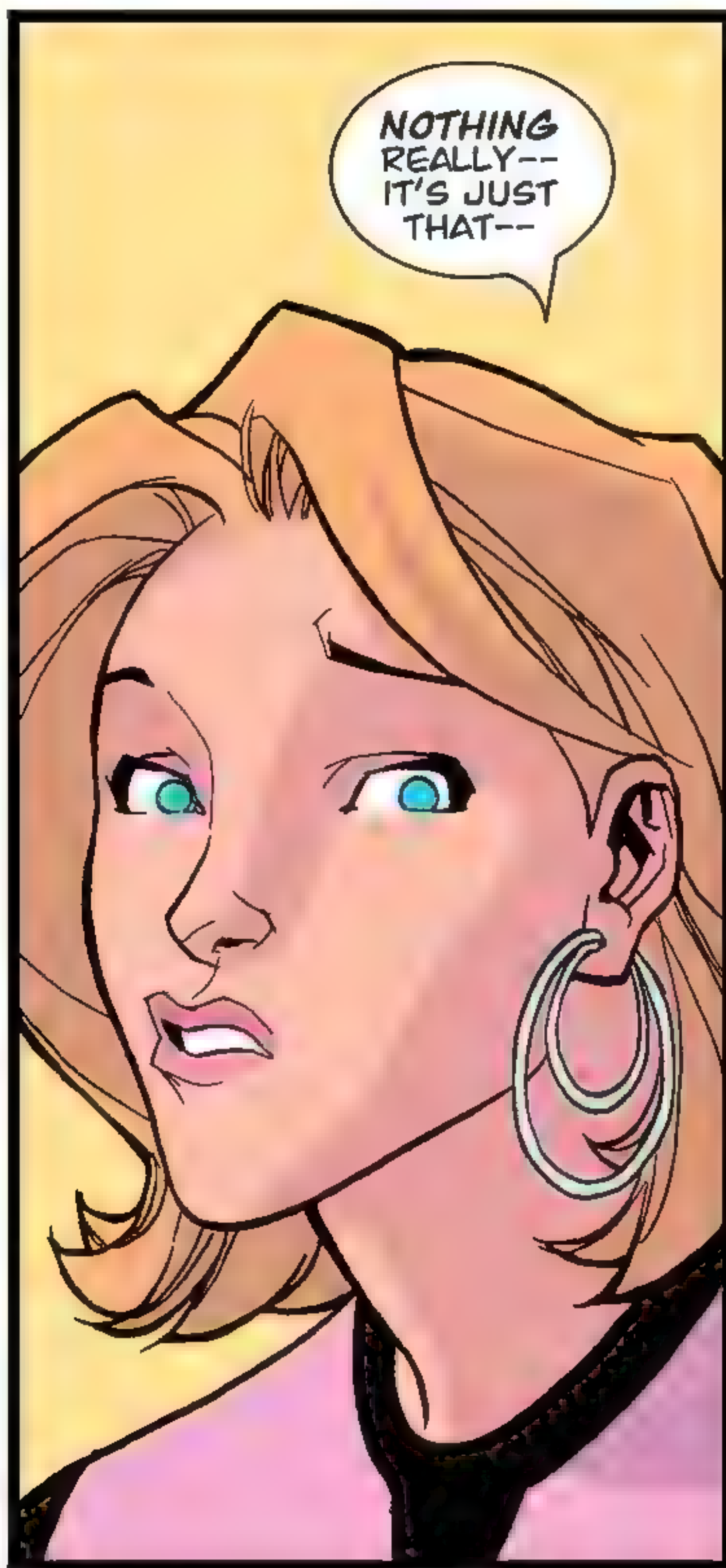
AND HE'S GOT A BEEPER ALL OF A SUDDEN--I MEAN, WHAT COULD THAT BE FOR? THEN HE SHOWED UP AT GRADUATION YESTERDAY WITH THAT **BLACK EYE**... I MEAN--HE SAID HE WAS MUGGED BUT I THINK WE ALL KNOW WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON...

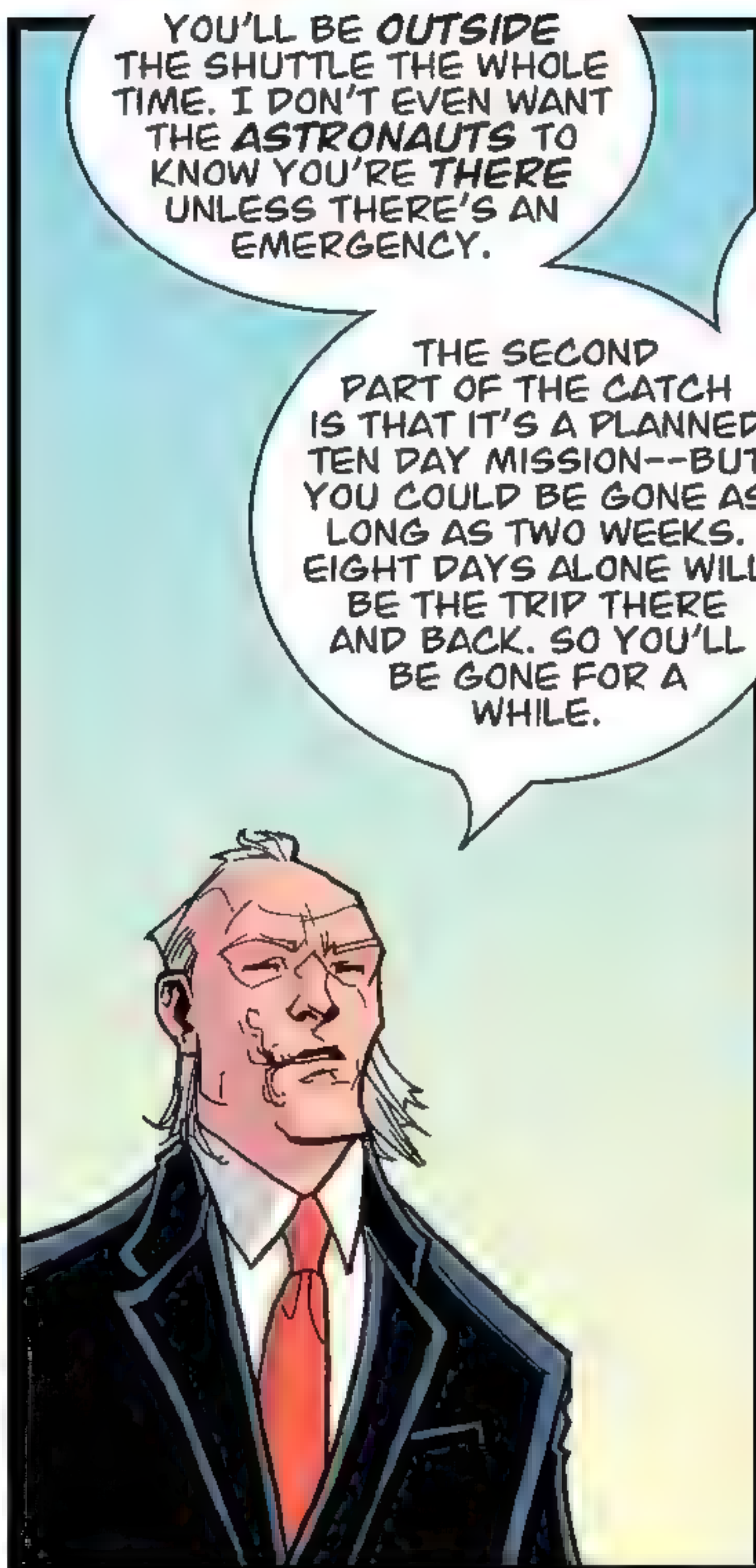
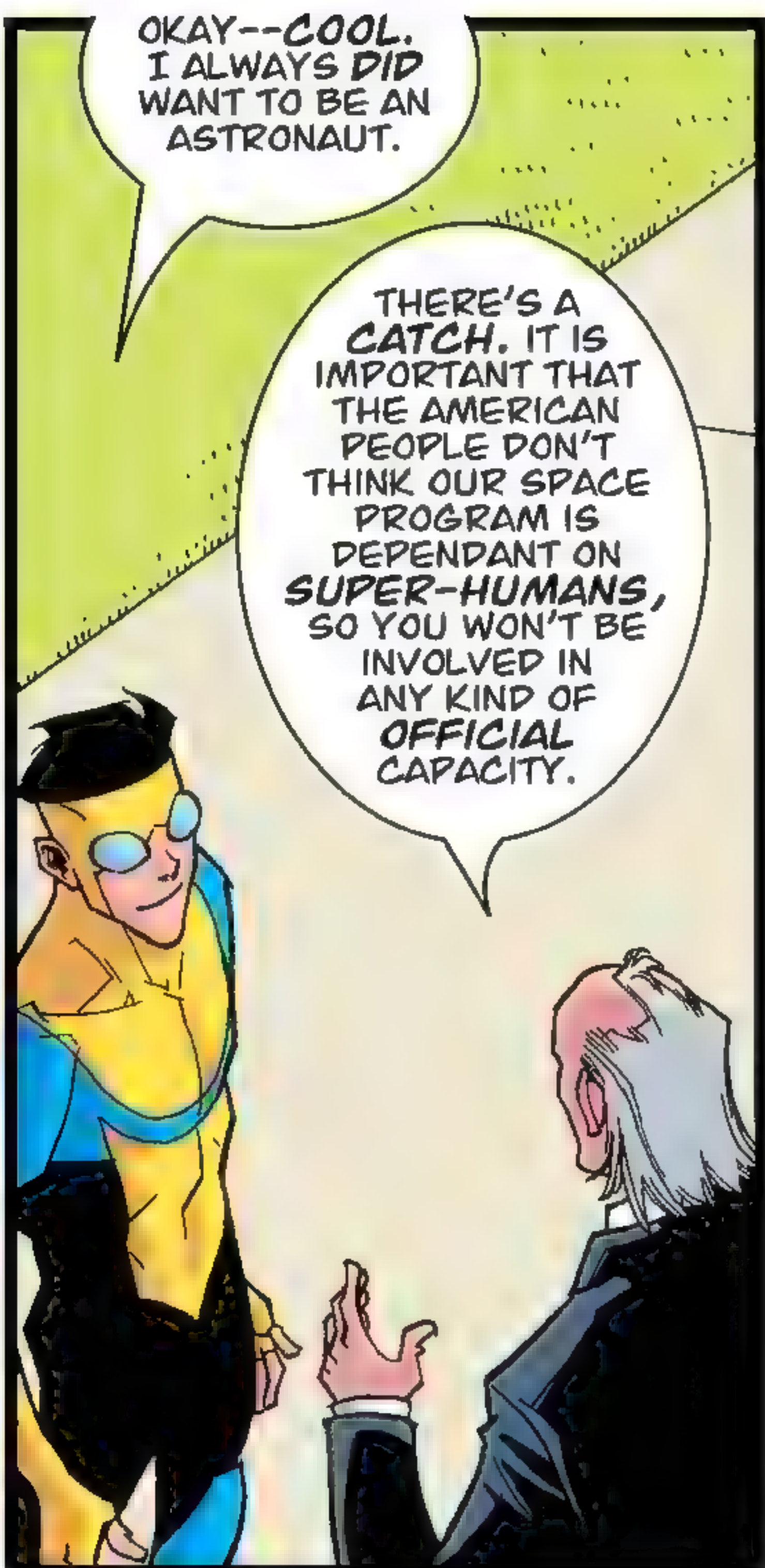
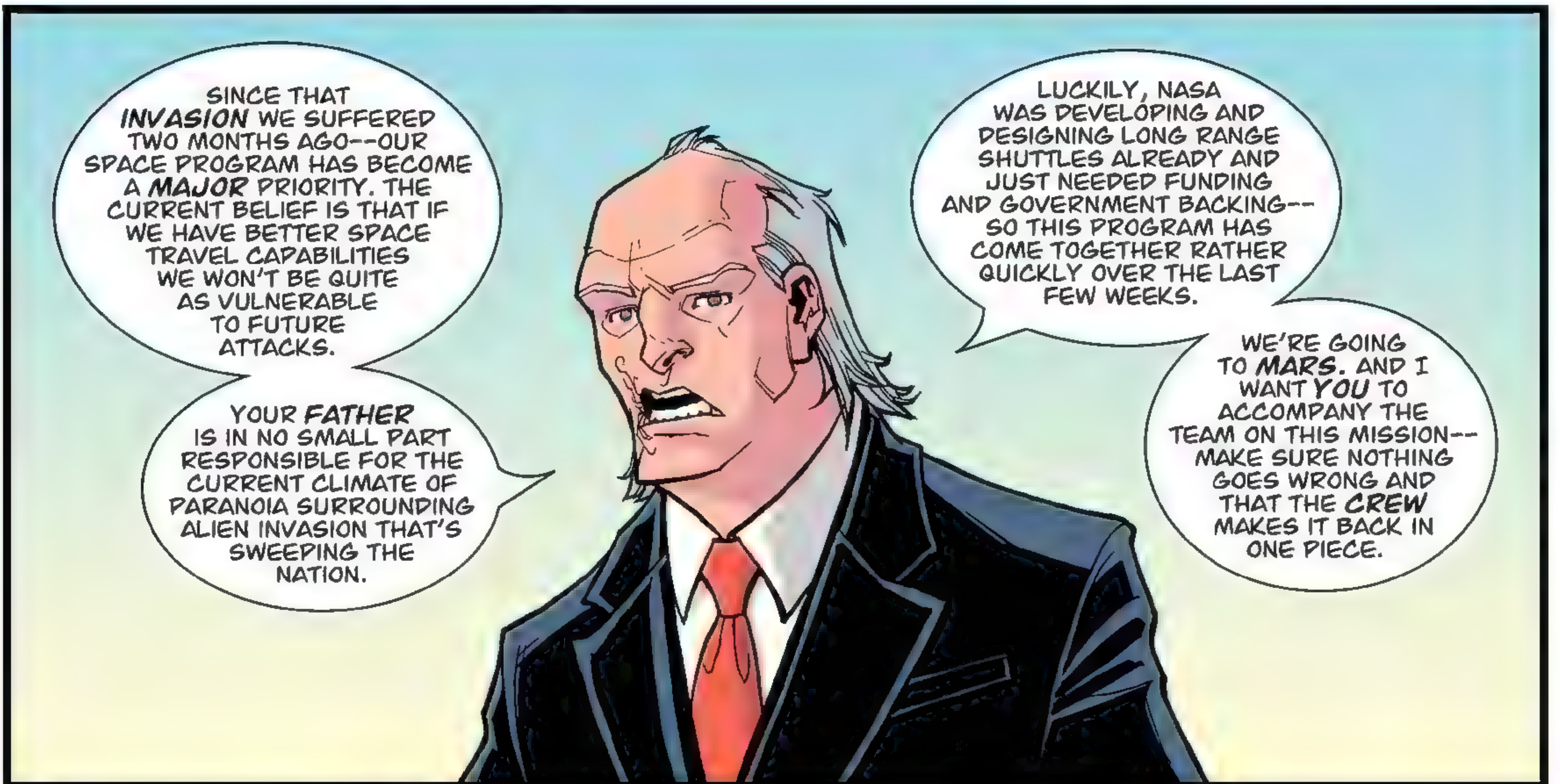
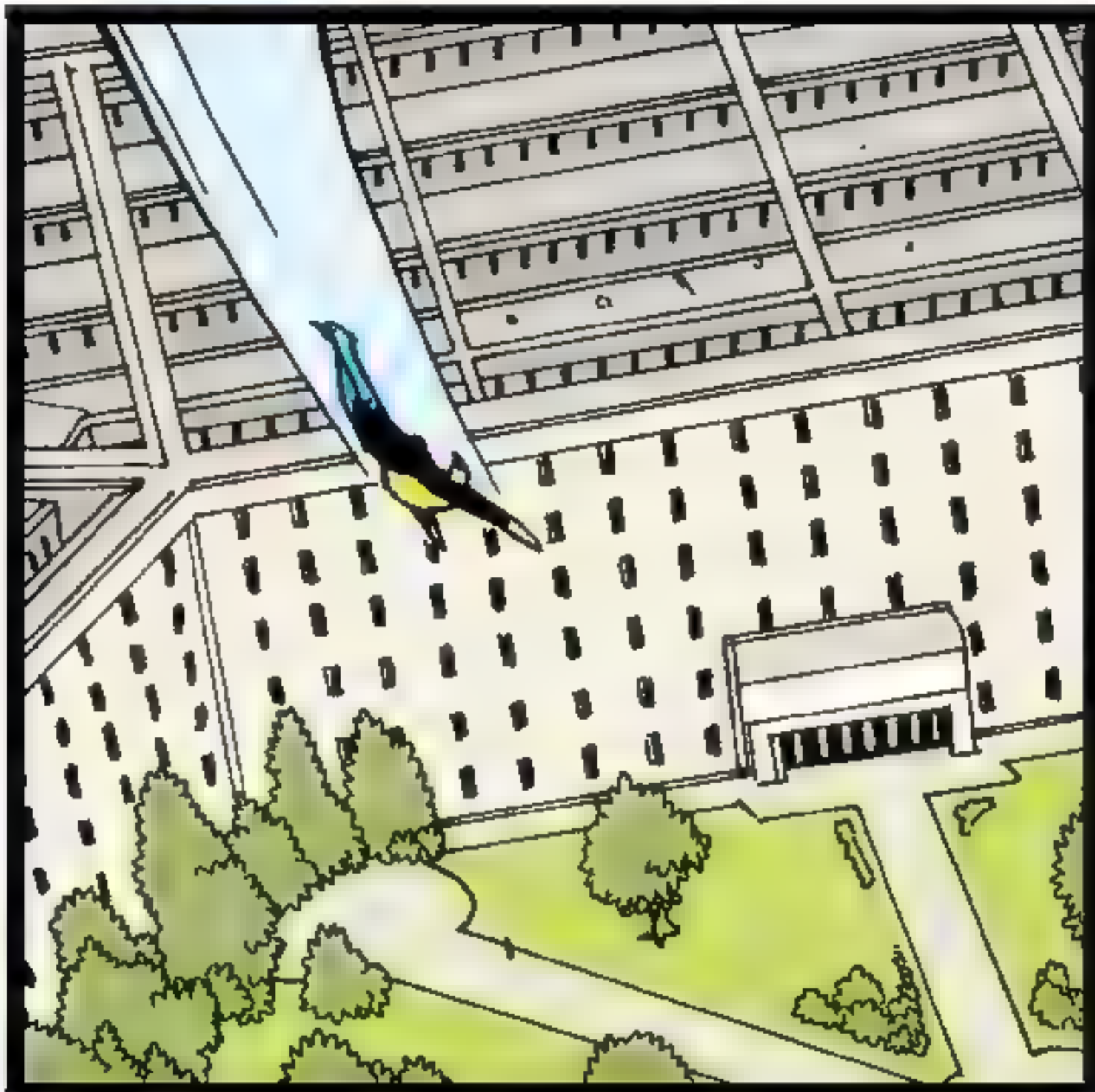


WELL, UH...

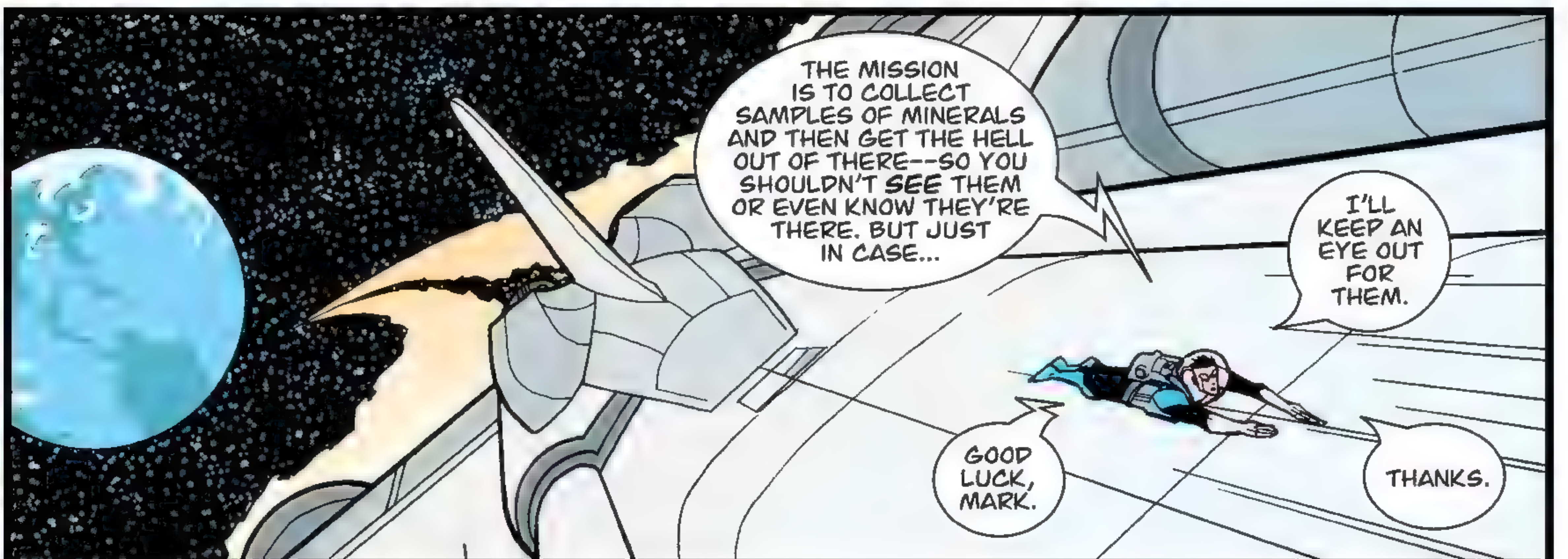
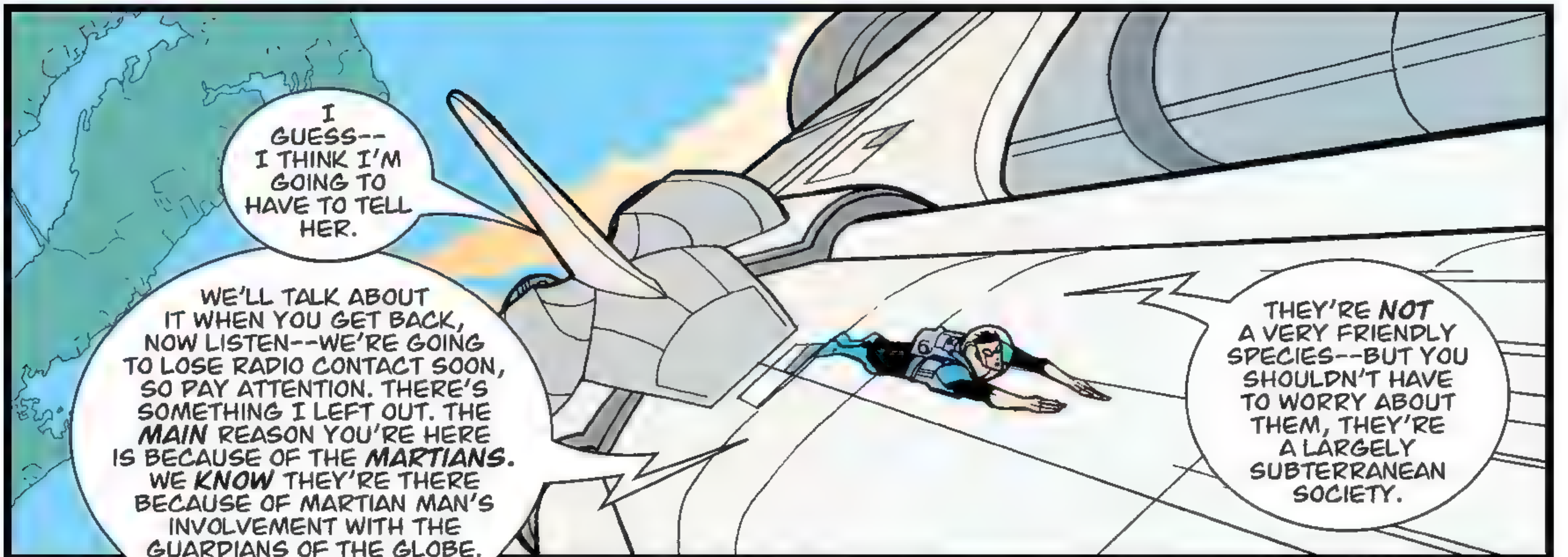
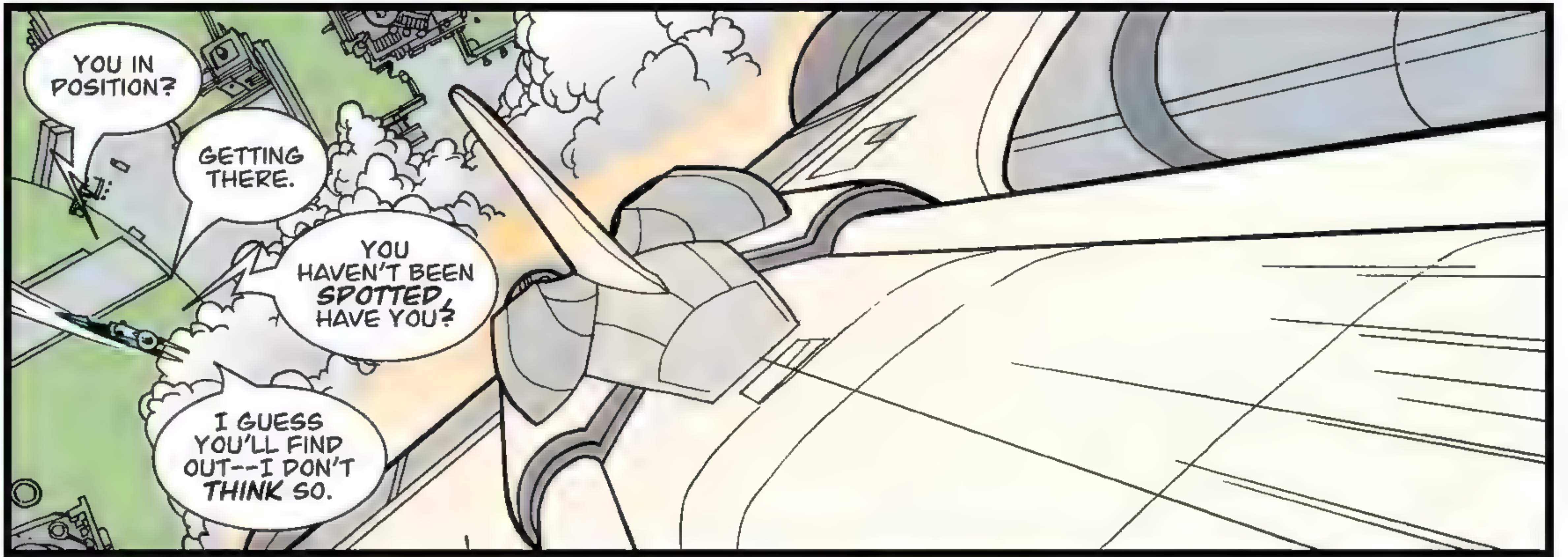
I--

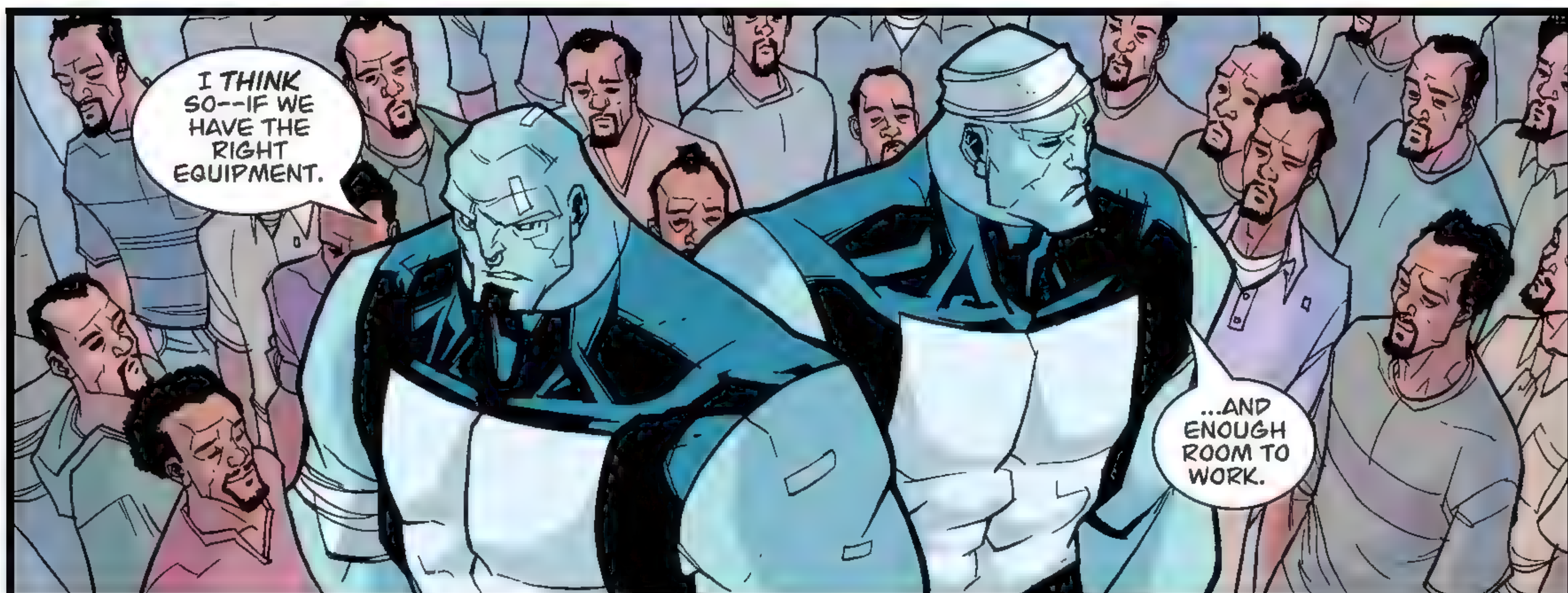
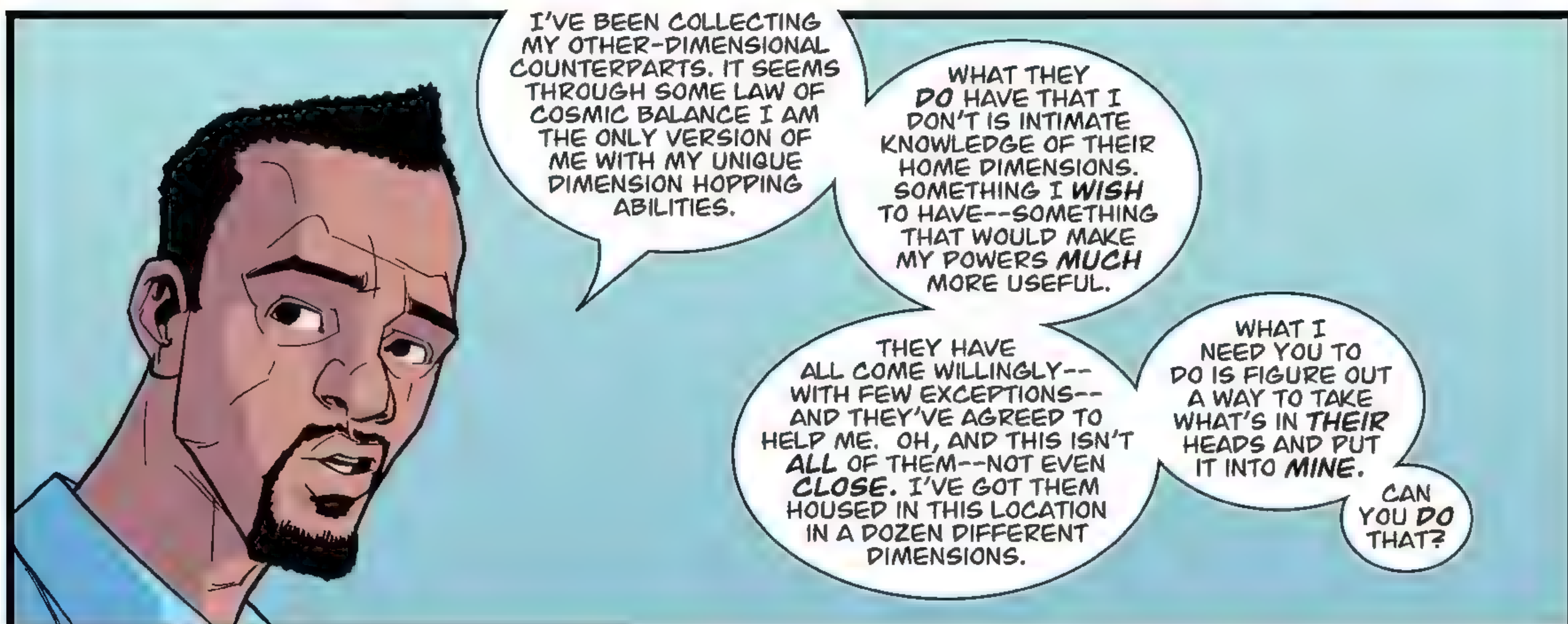
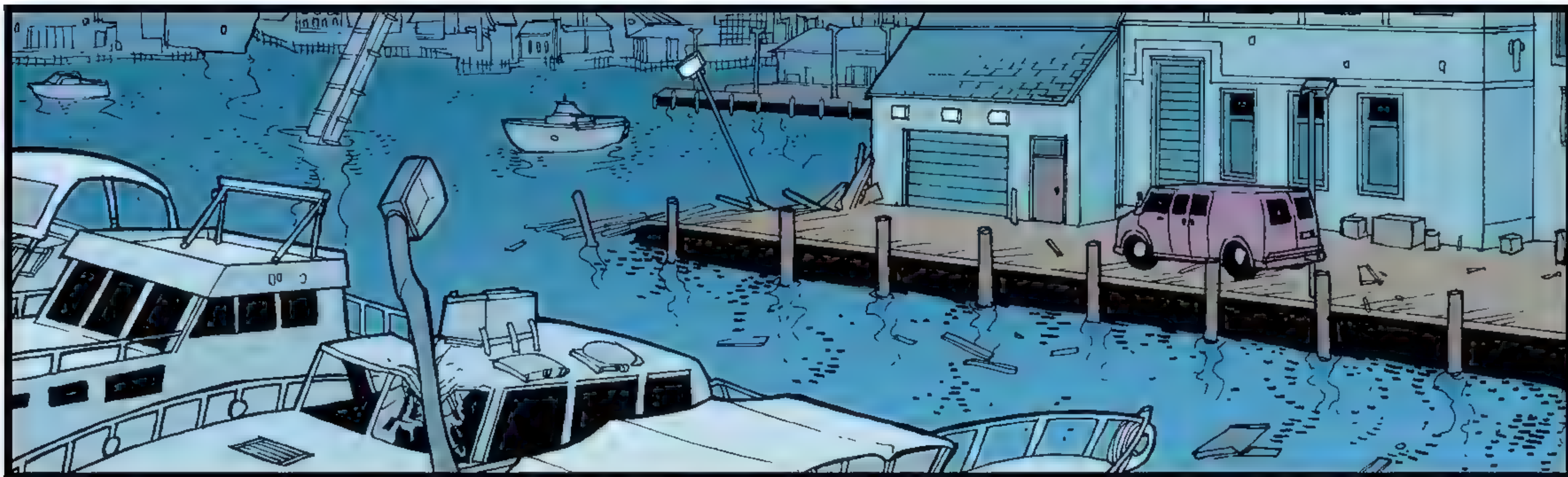


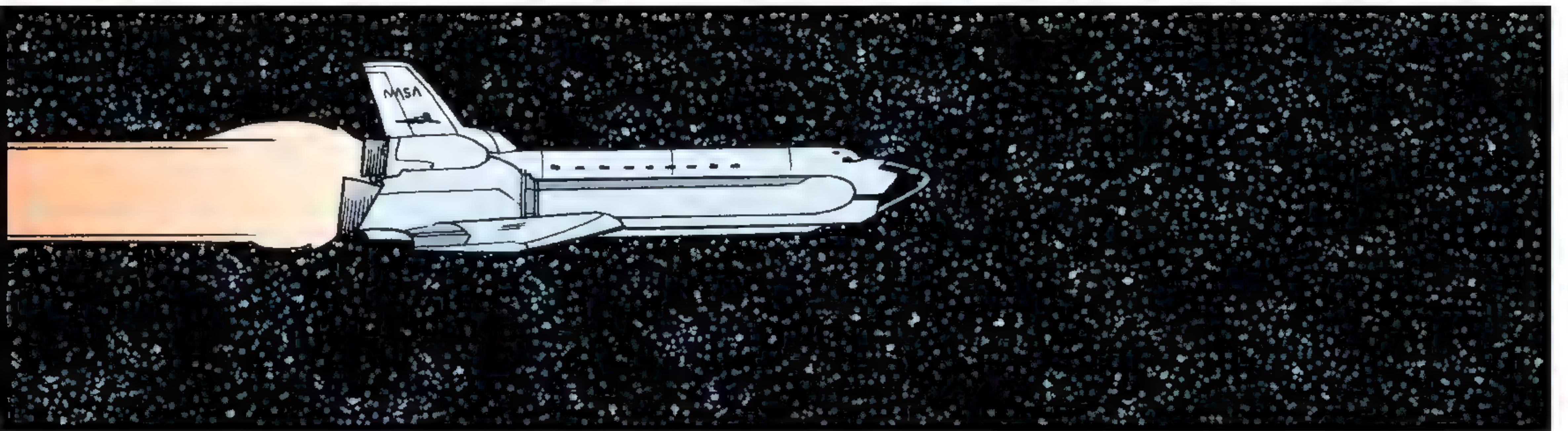
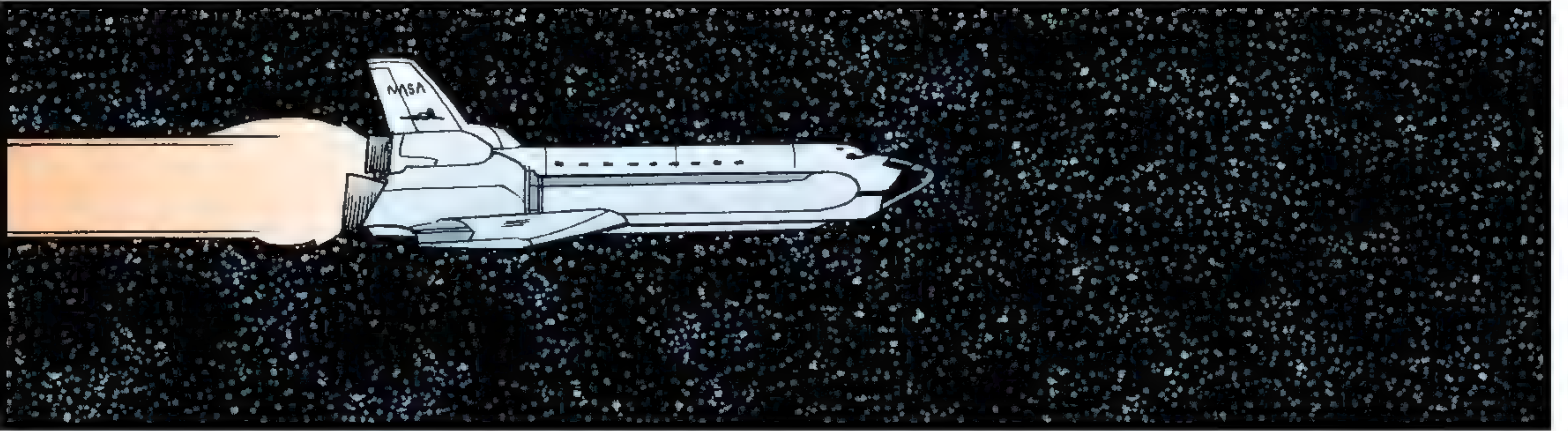


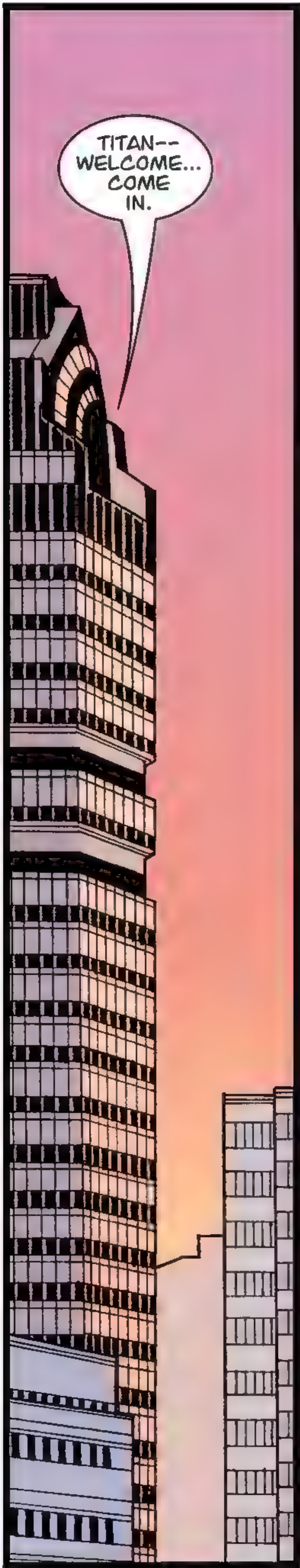












TITAN--
WELCOME...
COME
IN.

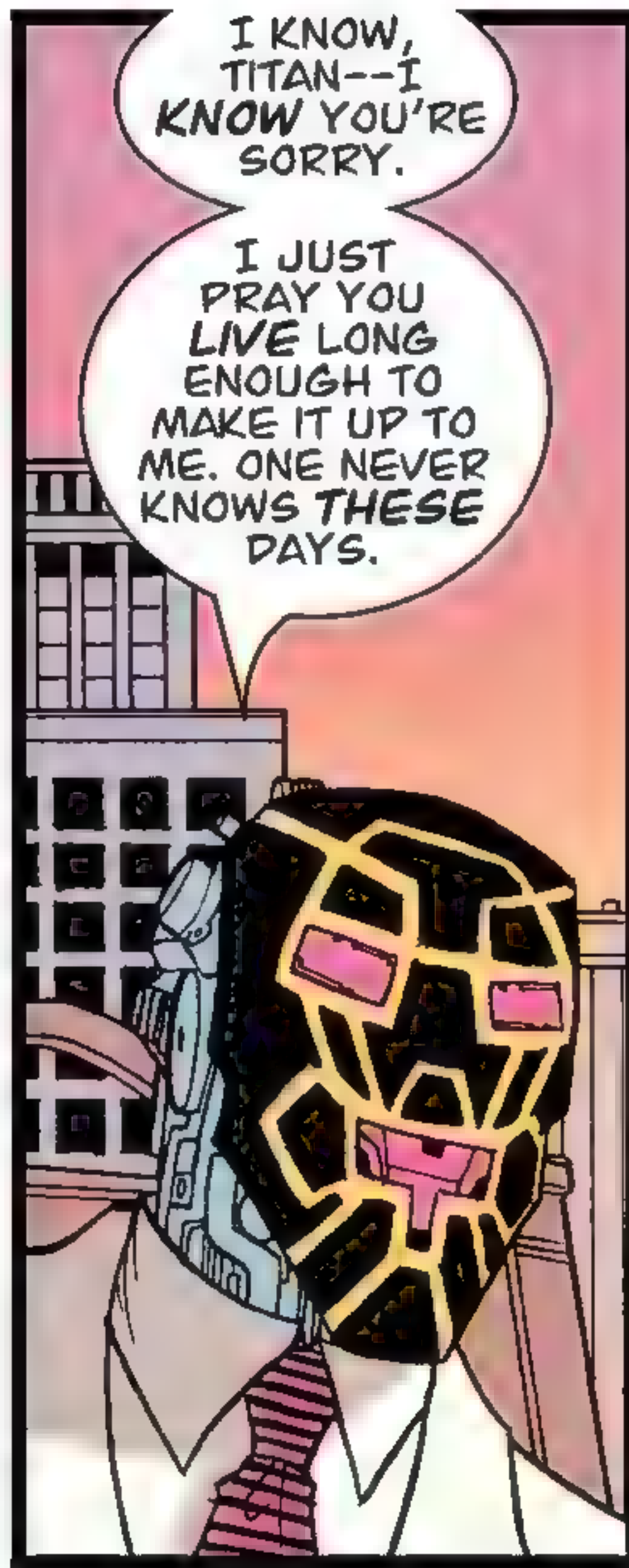


ISOTOPE HERE TELLS ME
YOU HAVEN'T BEEN EARNING
LIKE YOU USED TO... SAYS THERE
ARE EVEN REPORTS OF YOU
WORKING ALONGSIDE SOME
COSTUMED CLOWN NAMED
INVINCIBLE SHORTLY AFTER
THE INVASION... I FIND
THIS TO BE VERY
UNUSUAL.

I AM
NOT
PLEASED.



I'M SORRY,
MACHINE HEAD.
I'LL TURN IT
AROUND--YOU'LL
SEE.

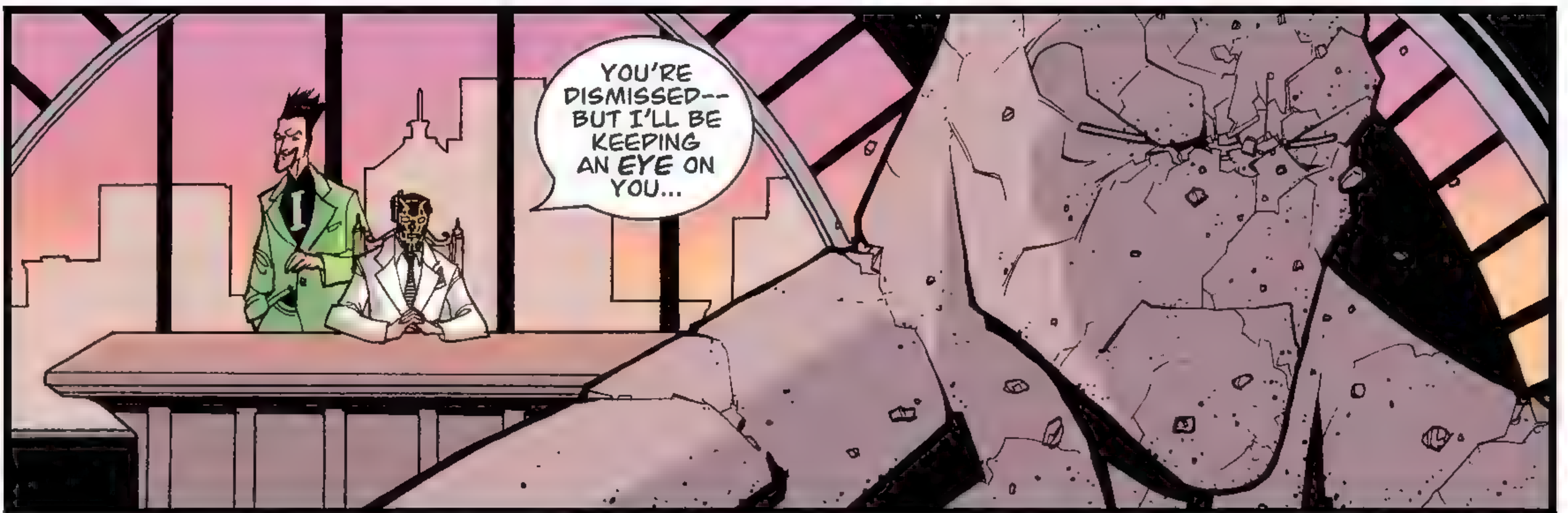


I KNOW,
TITAN--I
KNOW YOU'RE
SORRY.

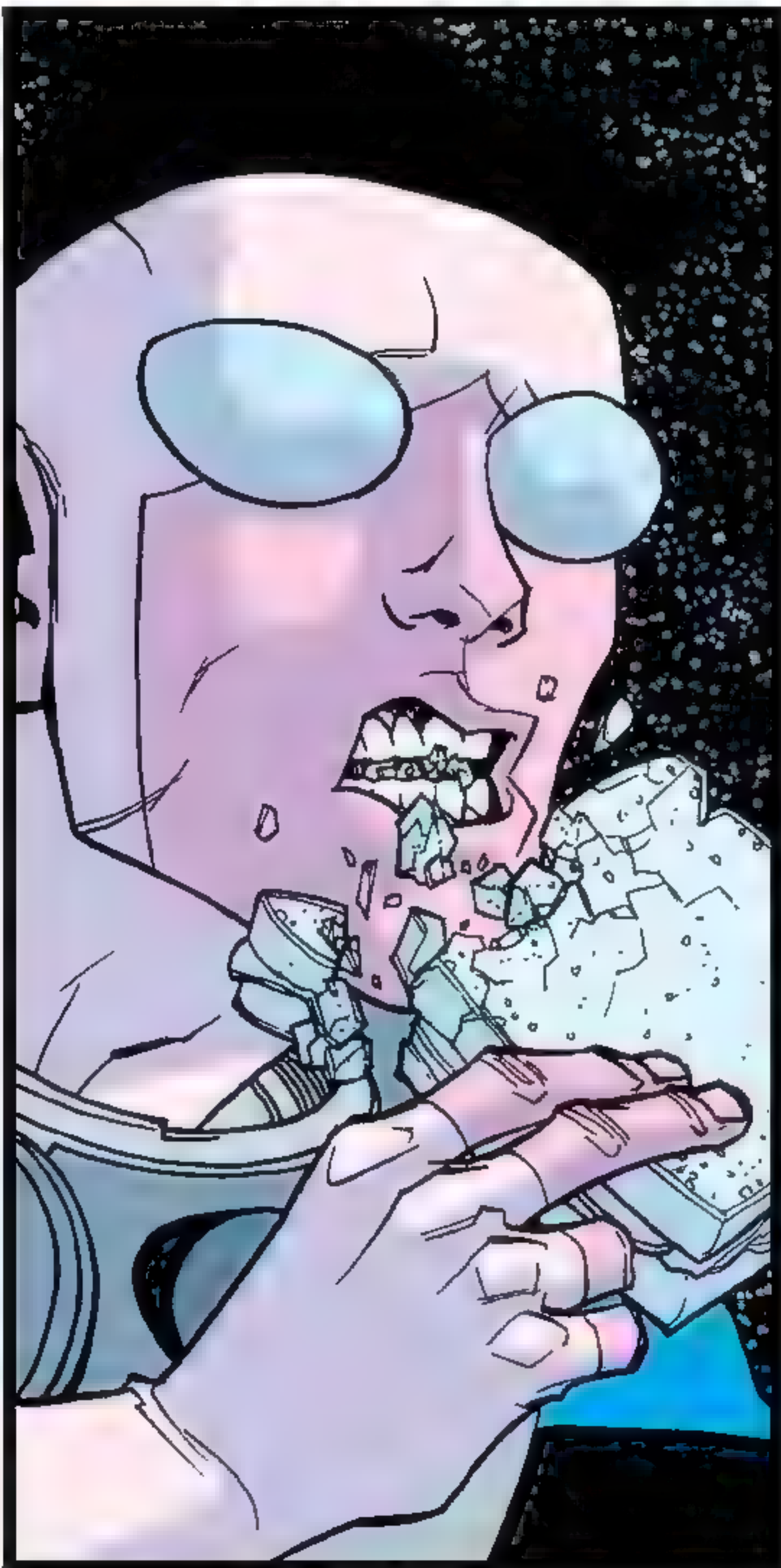
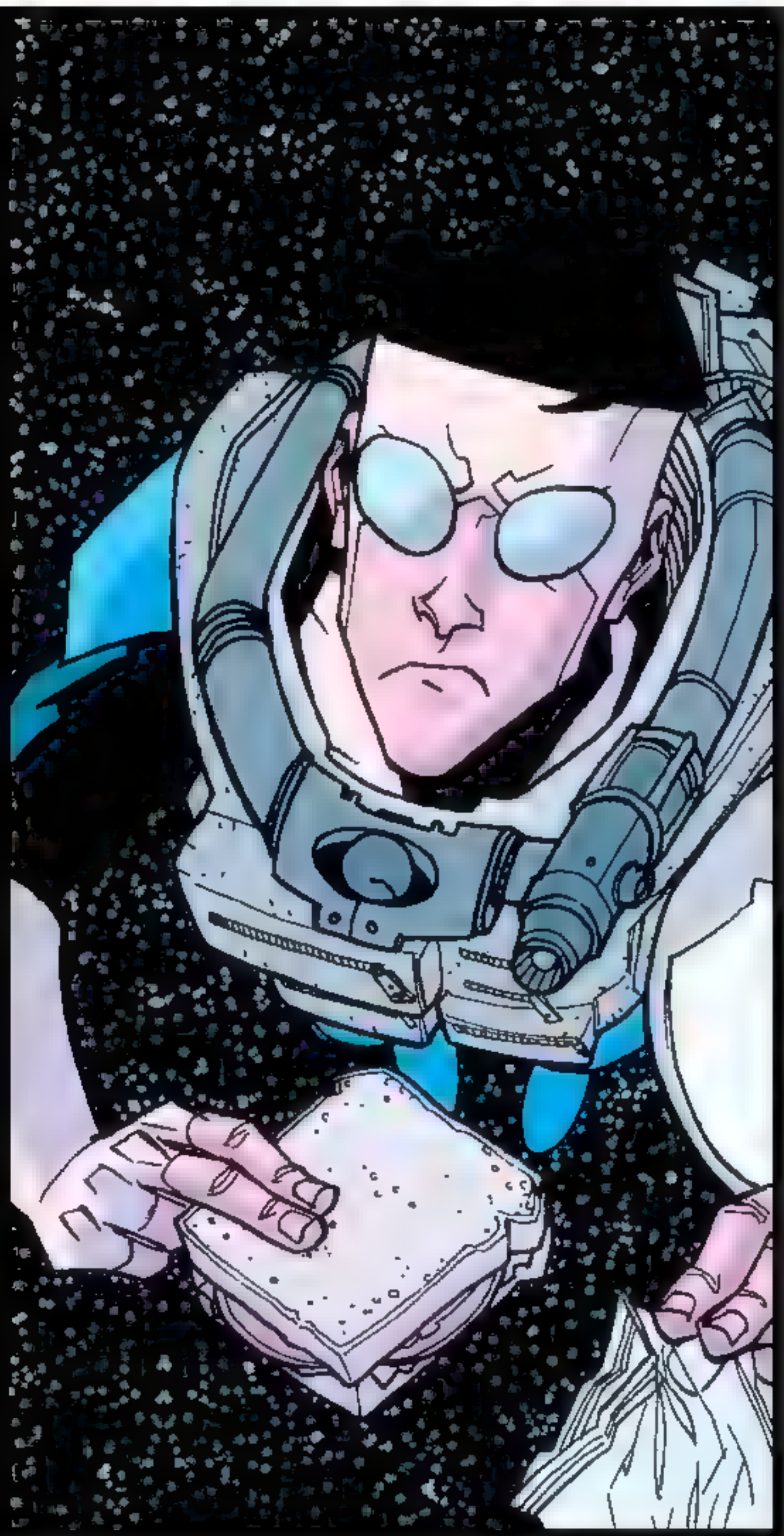
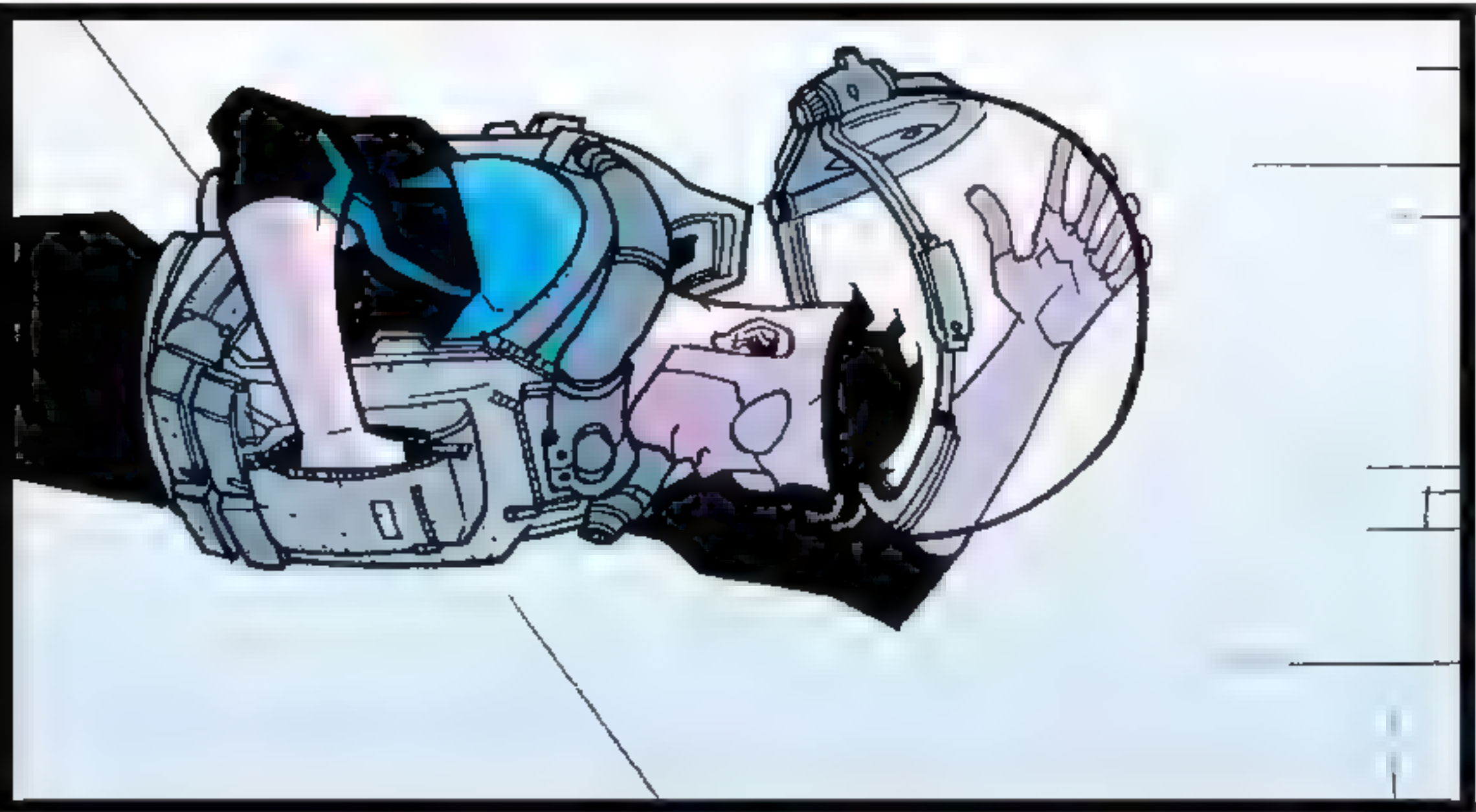
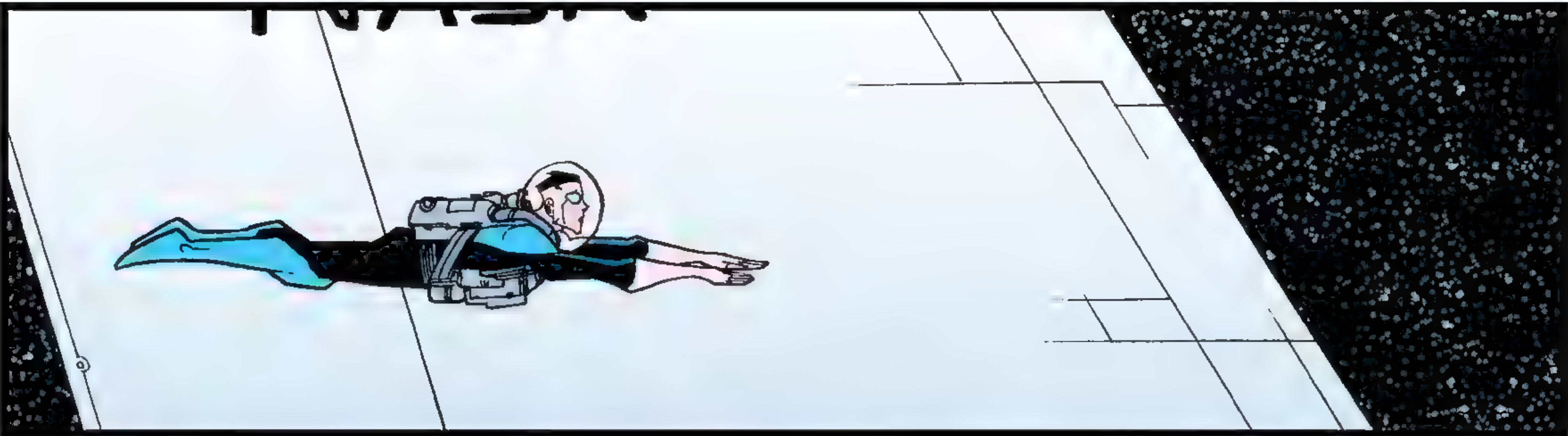
I JUST
PRAY YOU
LIVE LONG
ENOUGH TO
MAKE IT UP TO
ME. ONE NEVER
KNOWS THESE
DAYS.



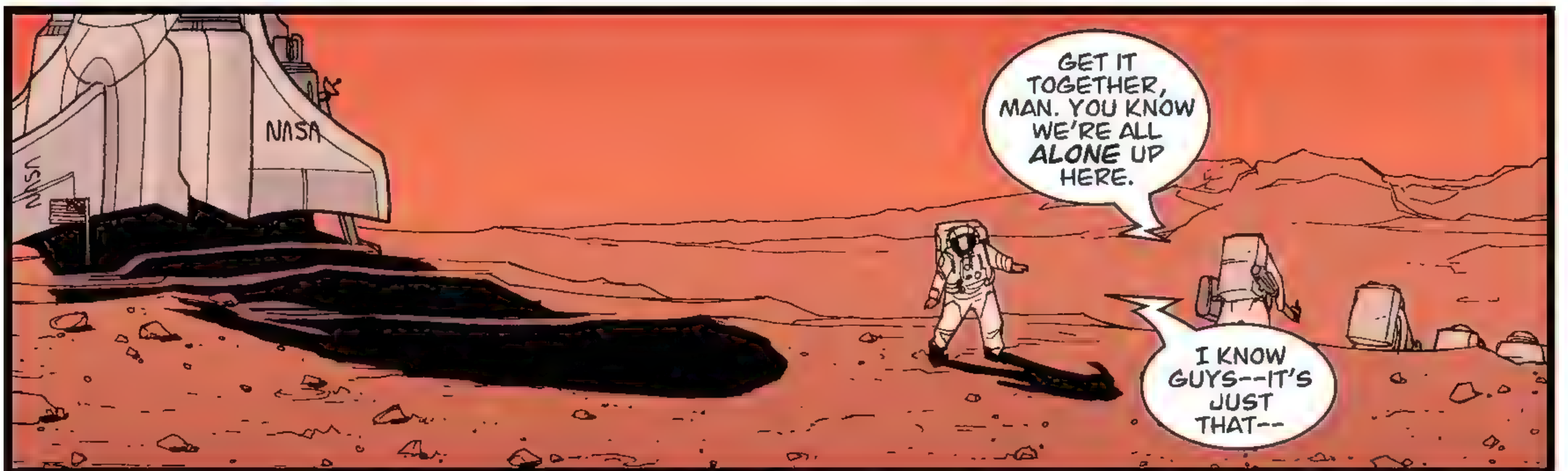
HEH.

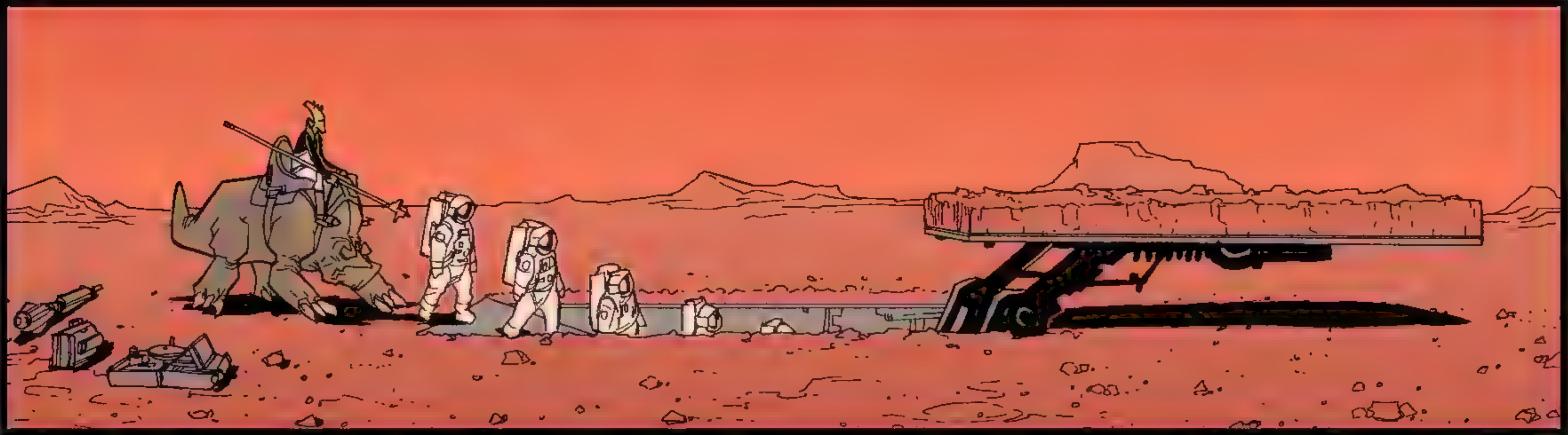
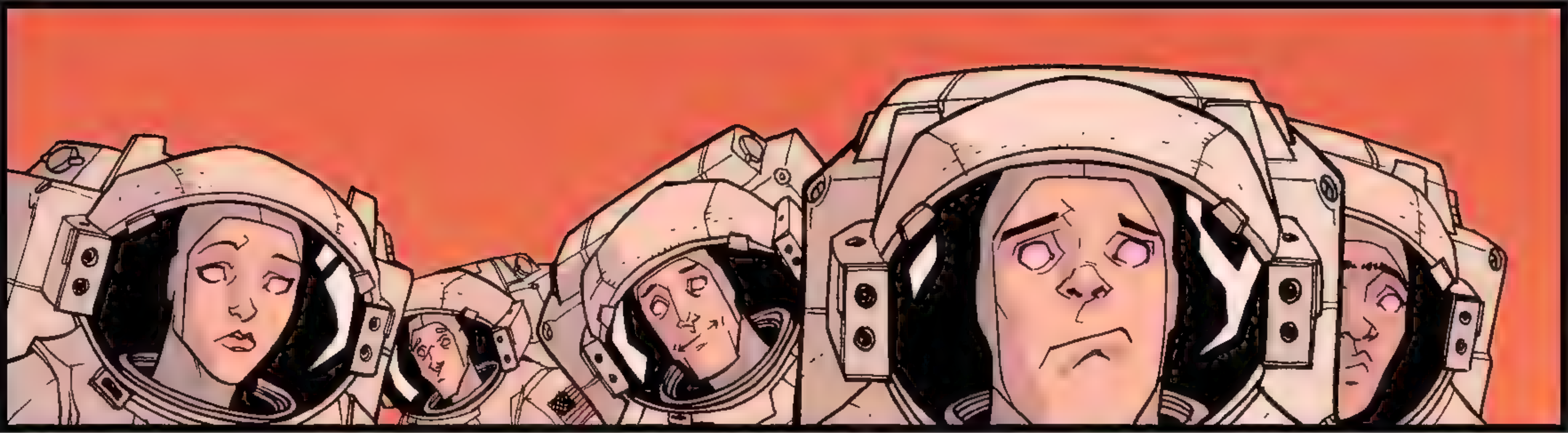


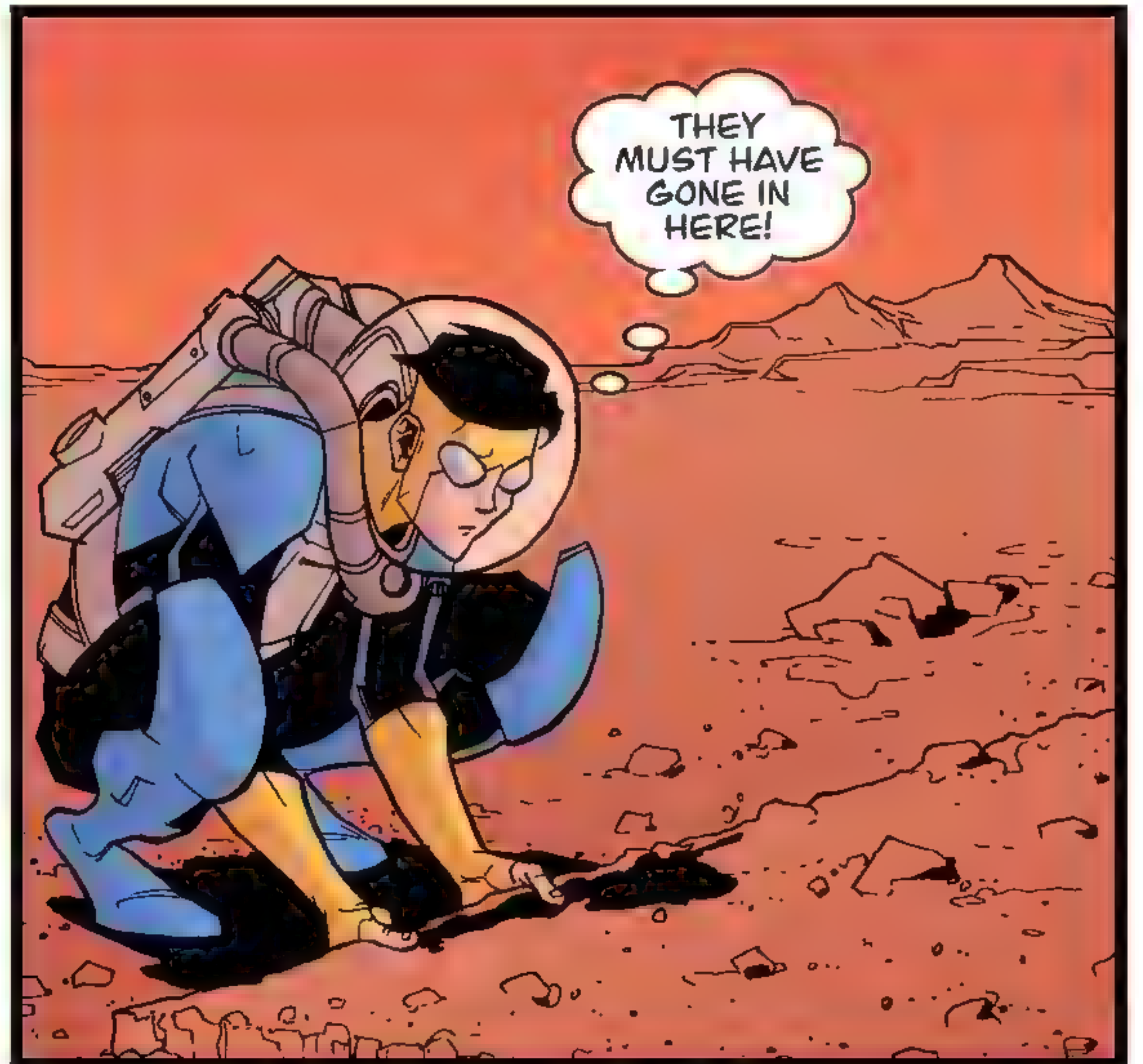
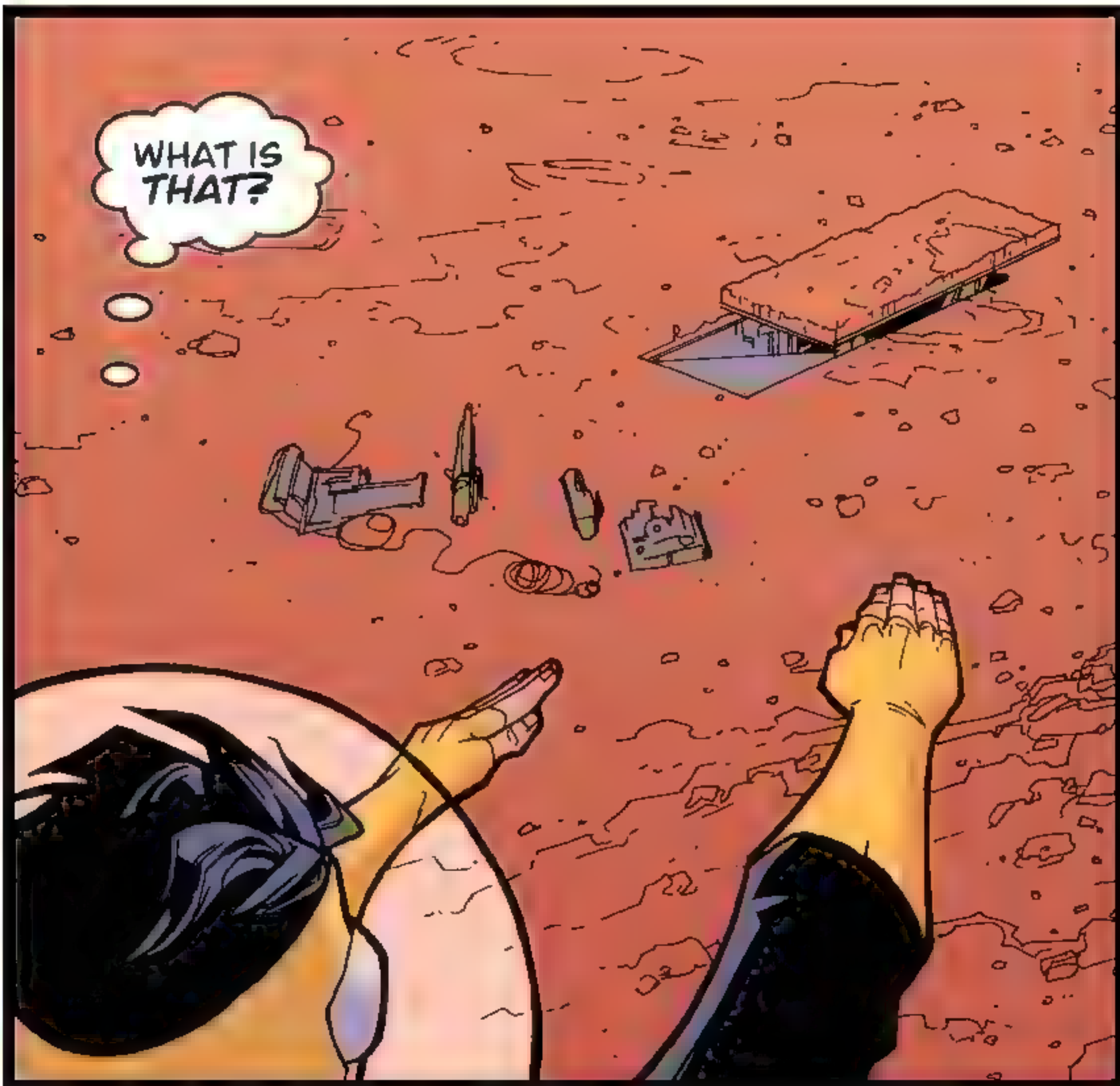
YOU'RE
DISMISSED--
BUT I'LL BE
KEEPING
AN EYE ON
YOU...

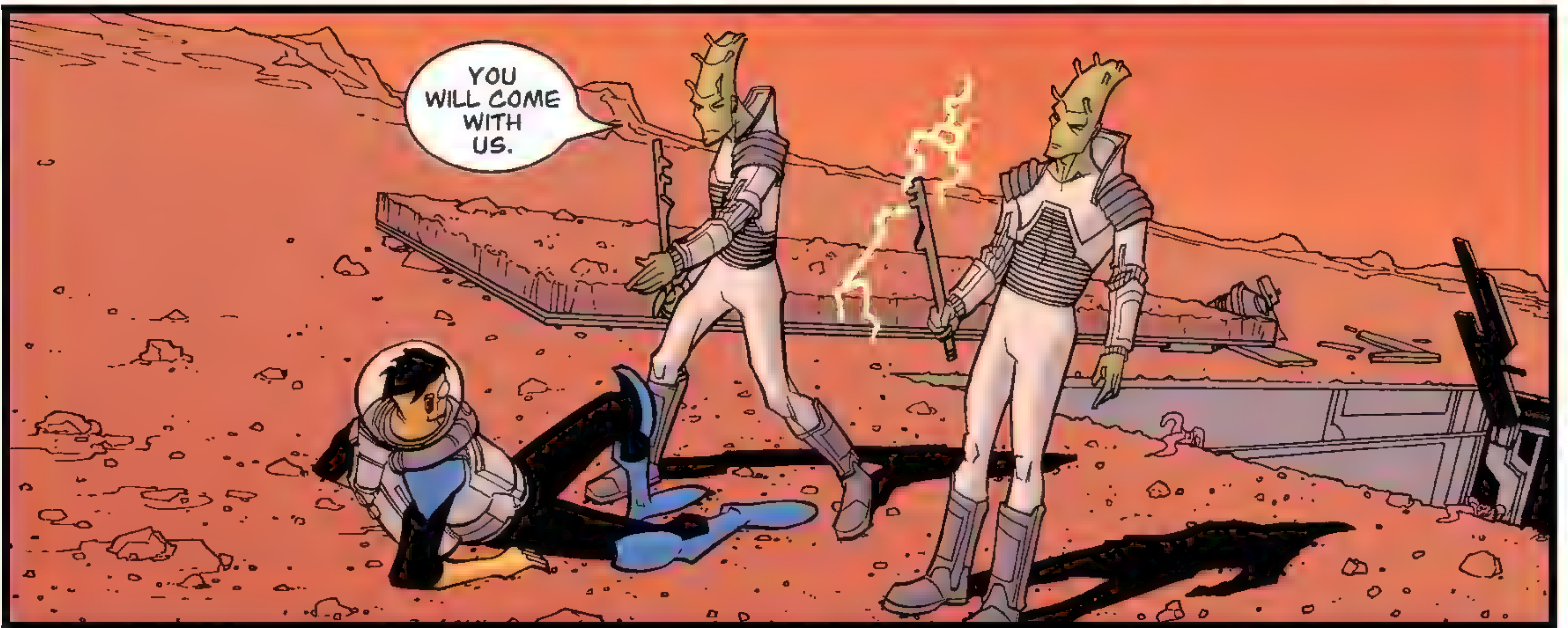
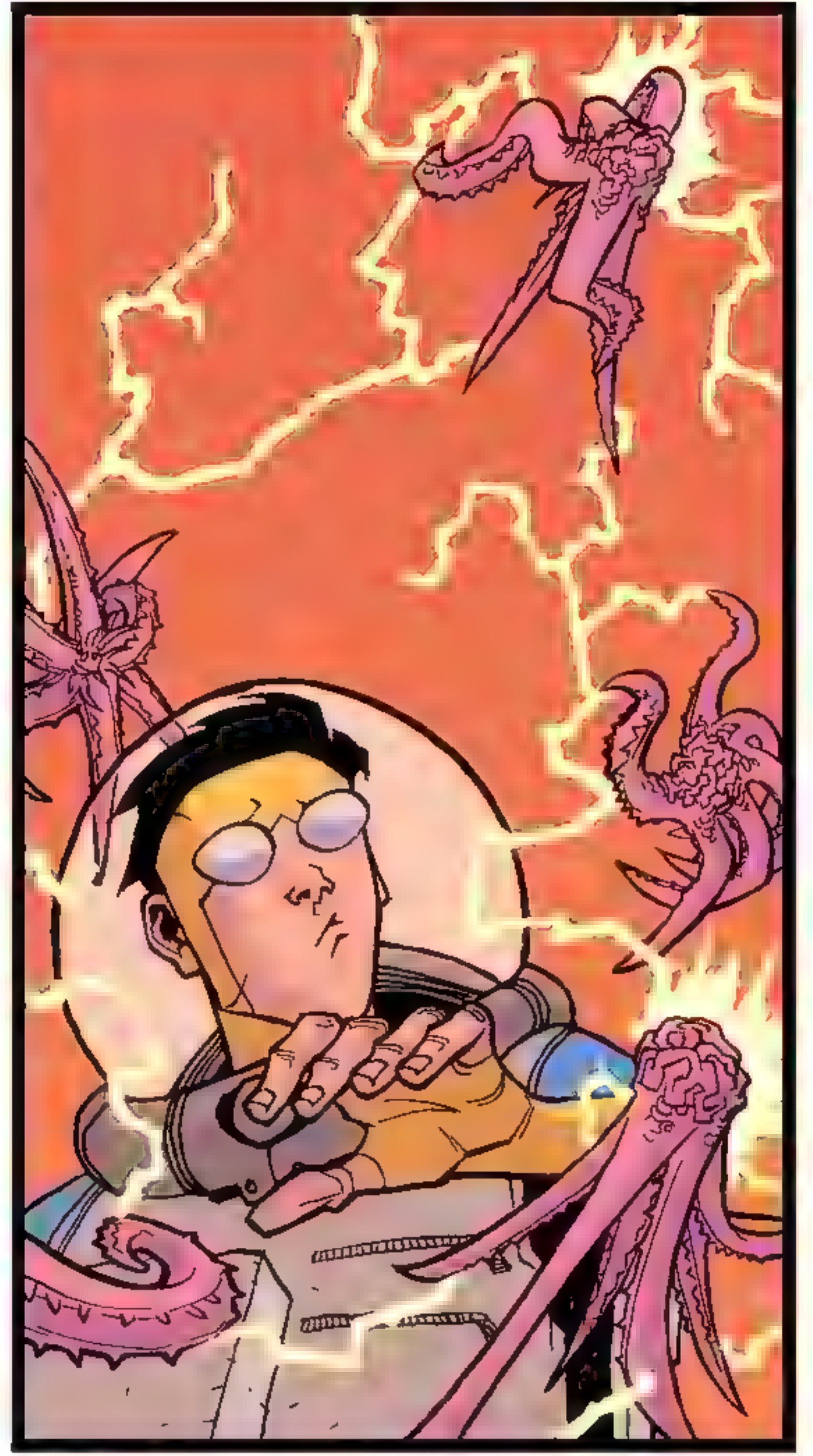
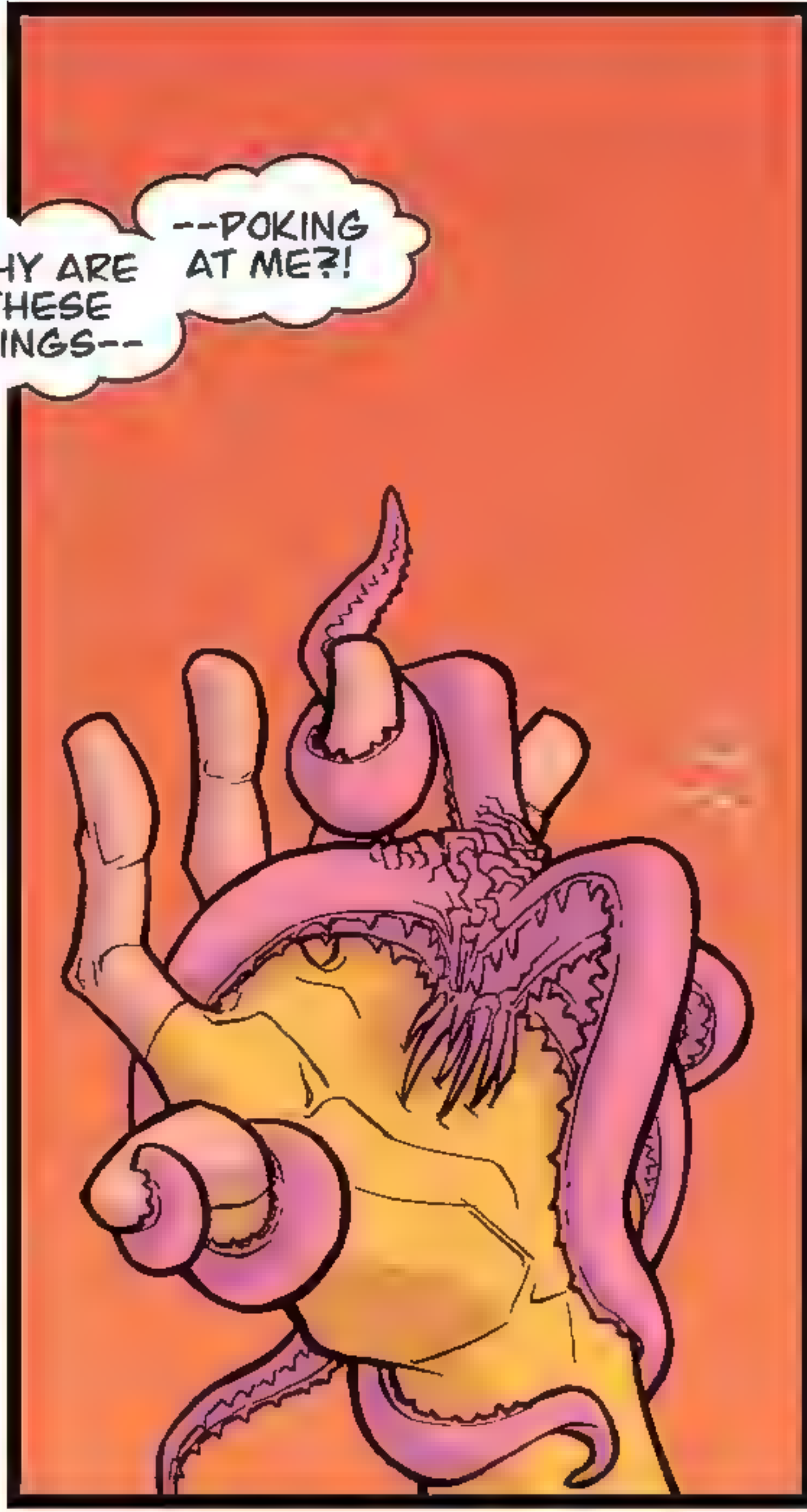
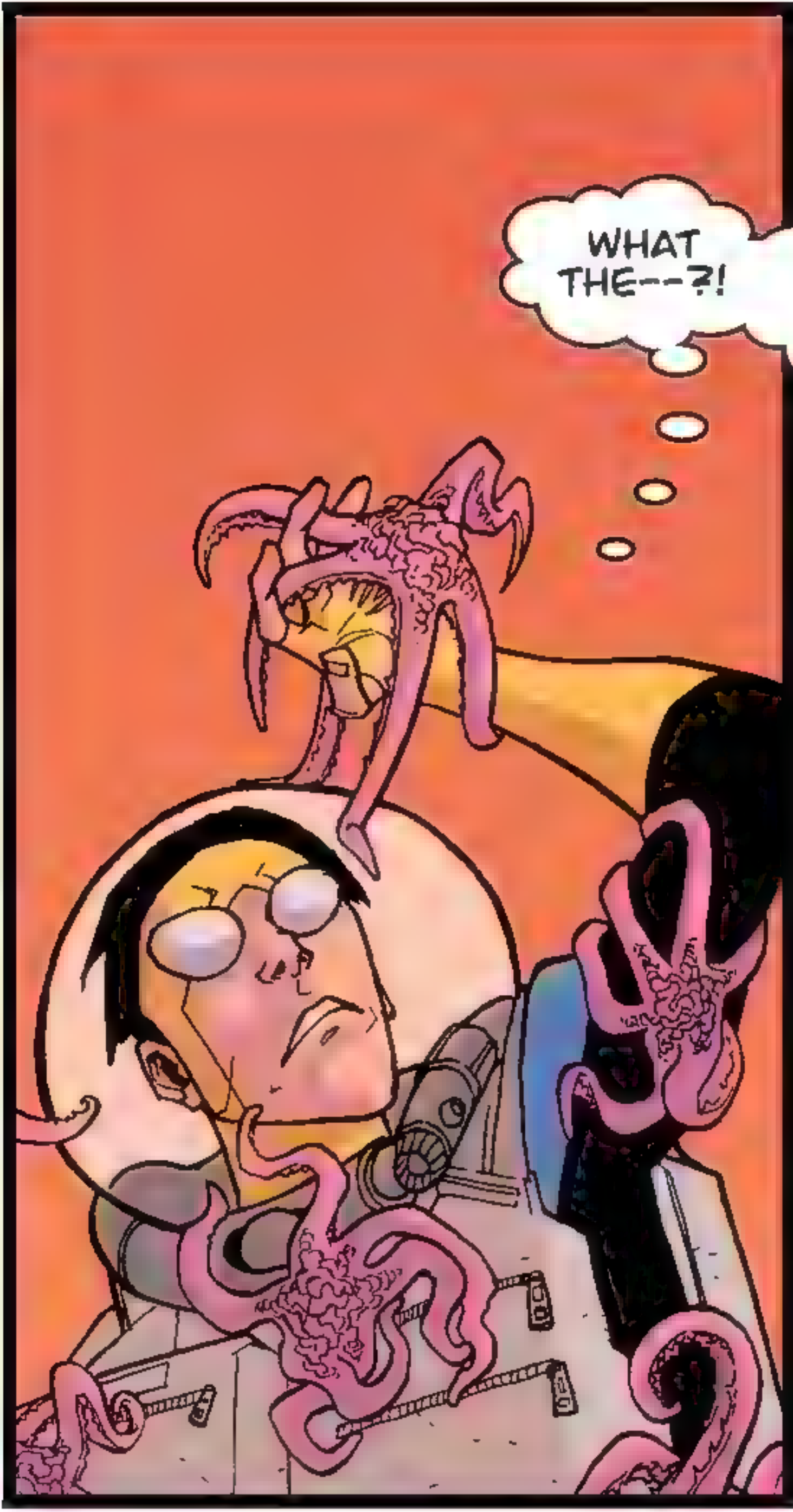


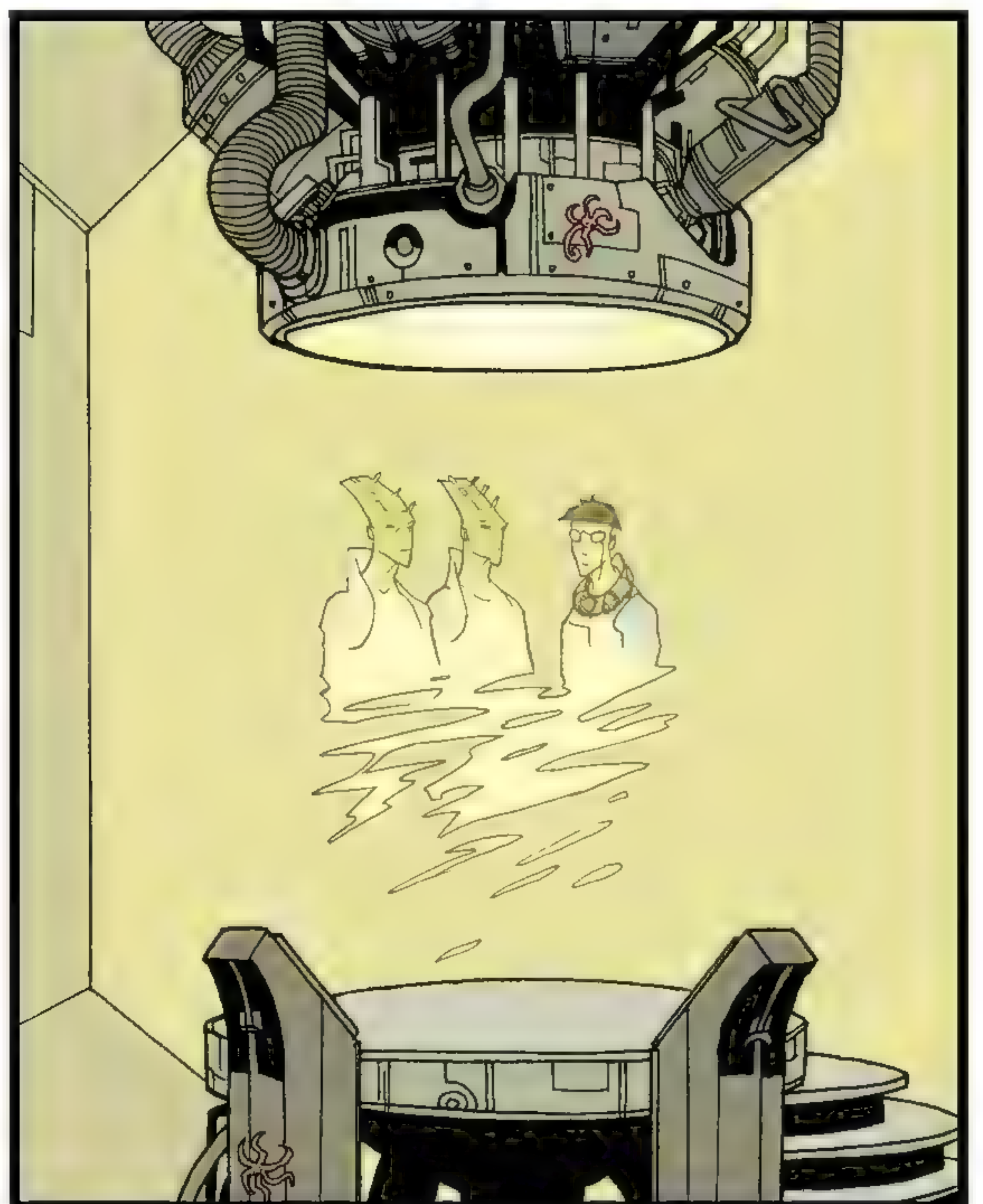
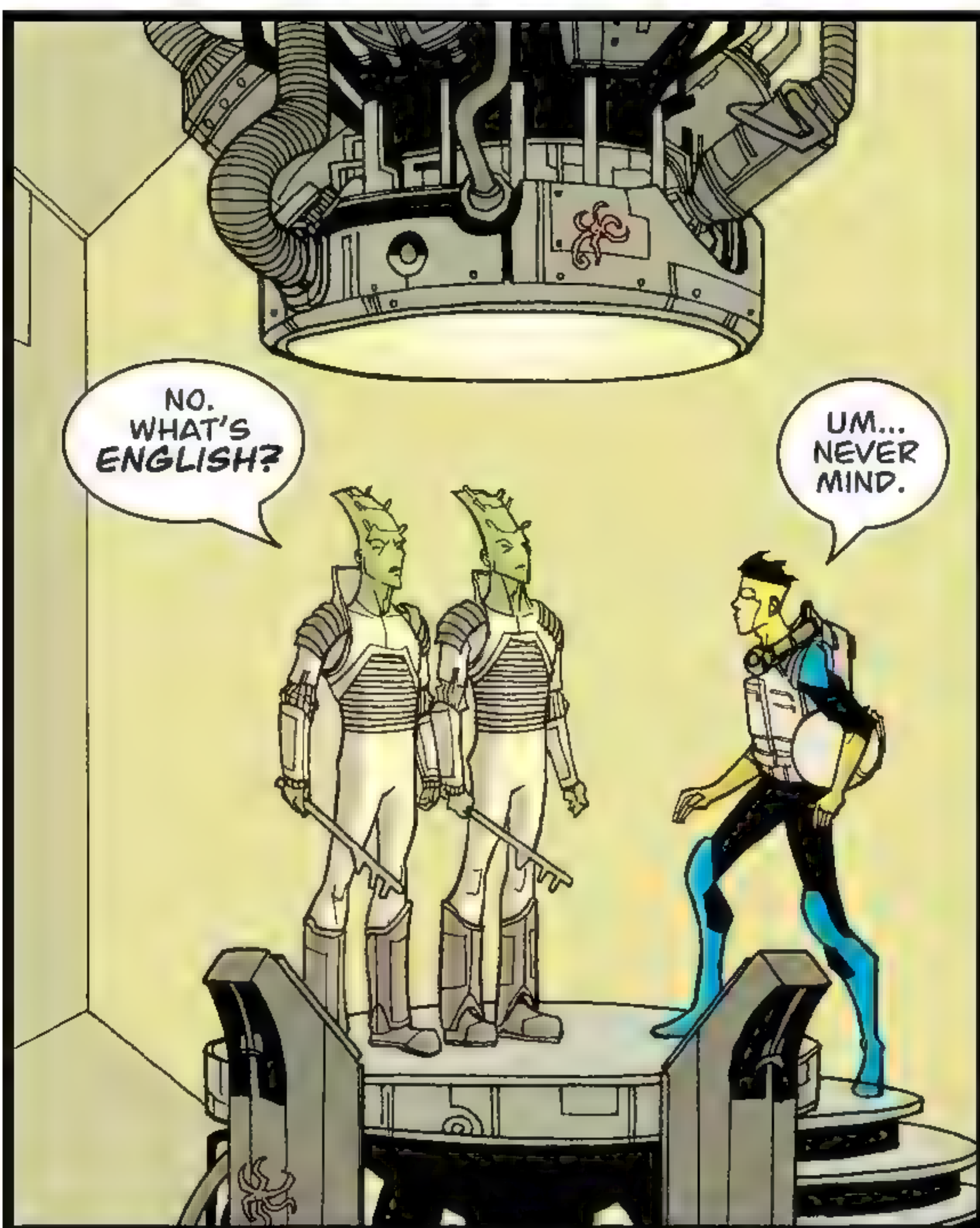
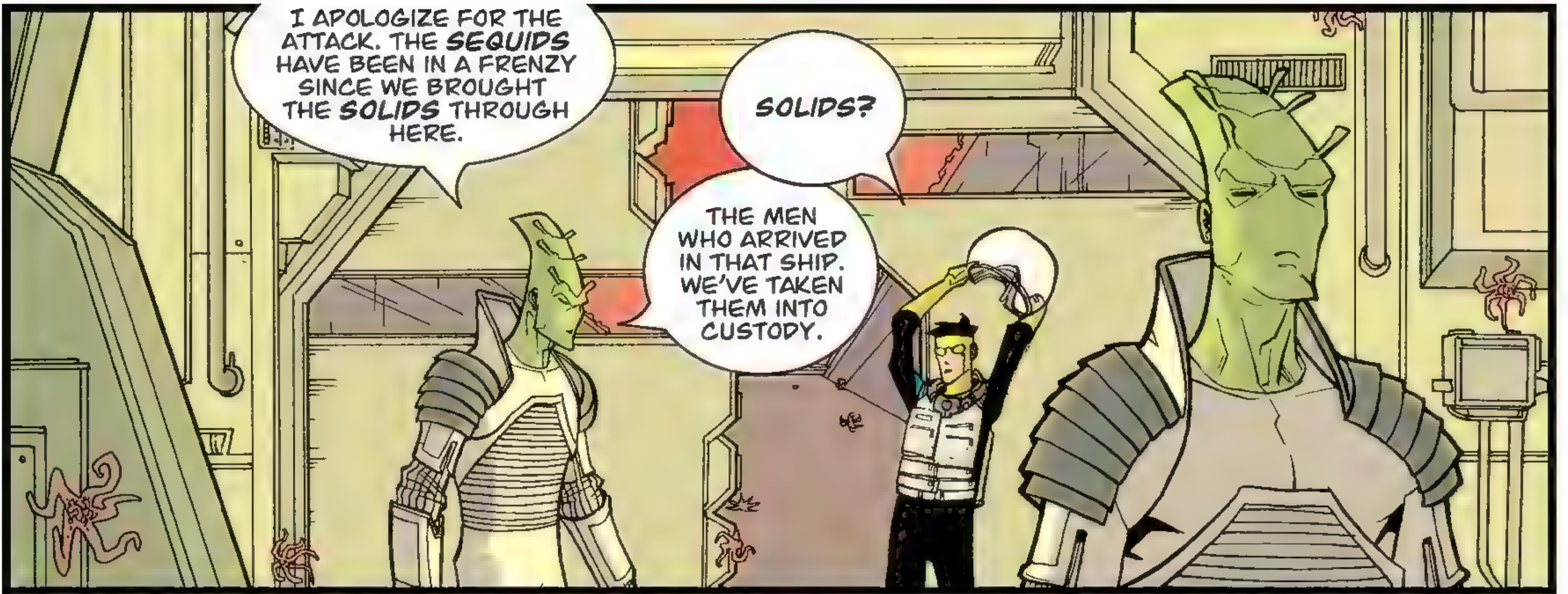


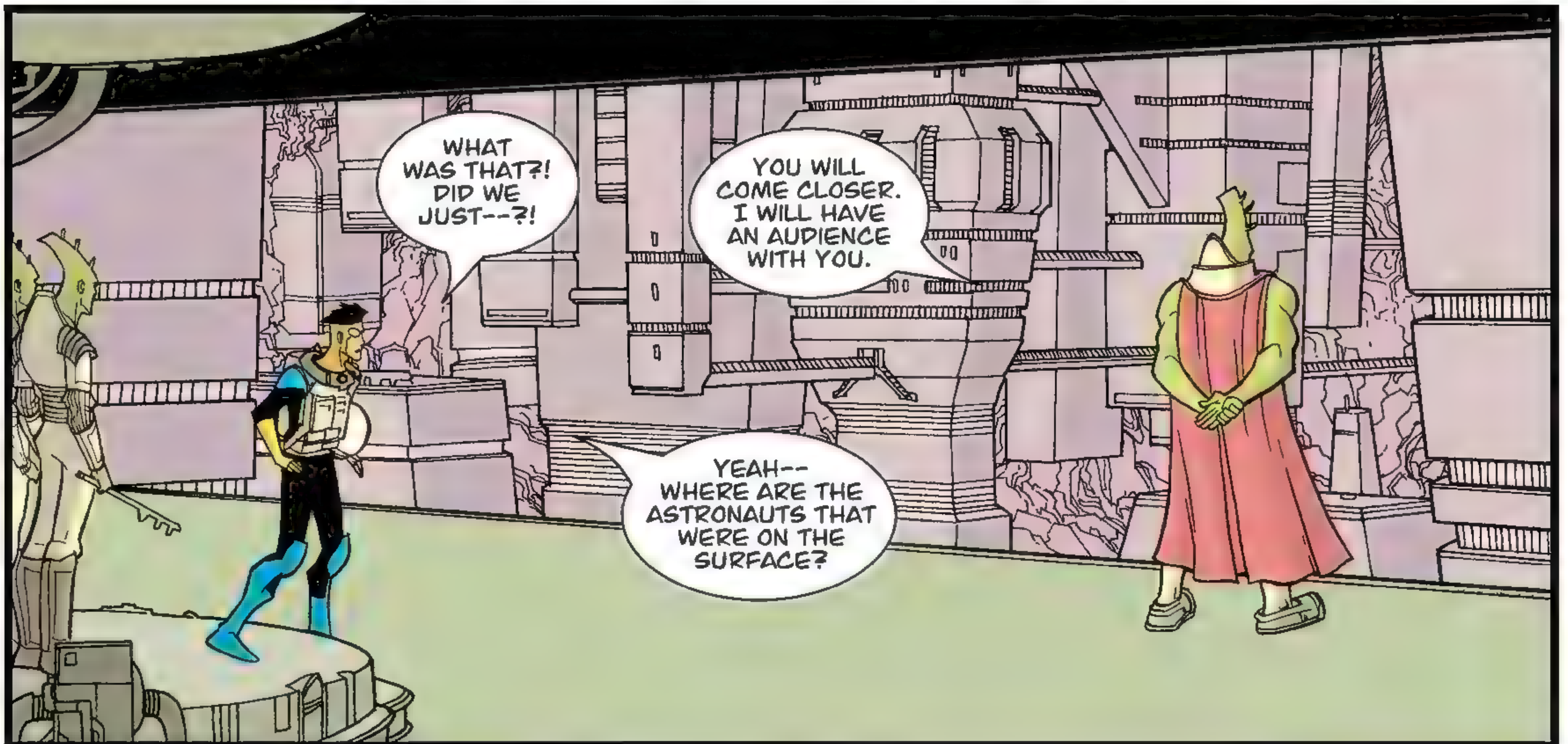








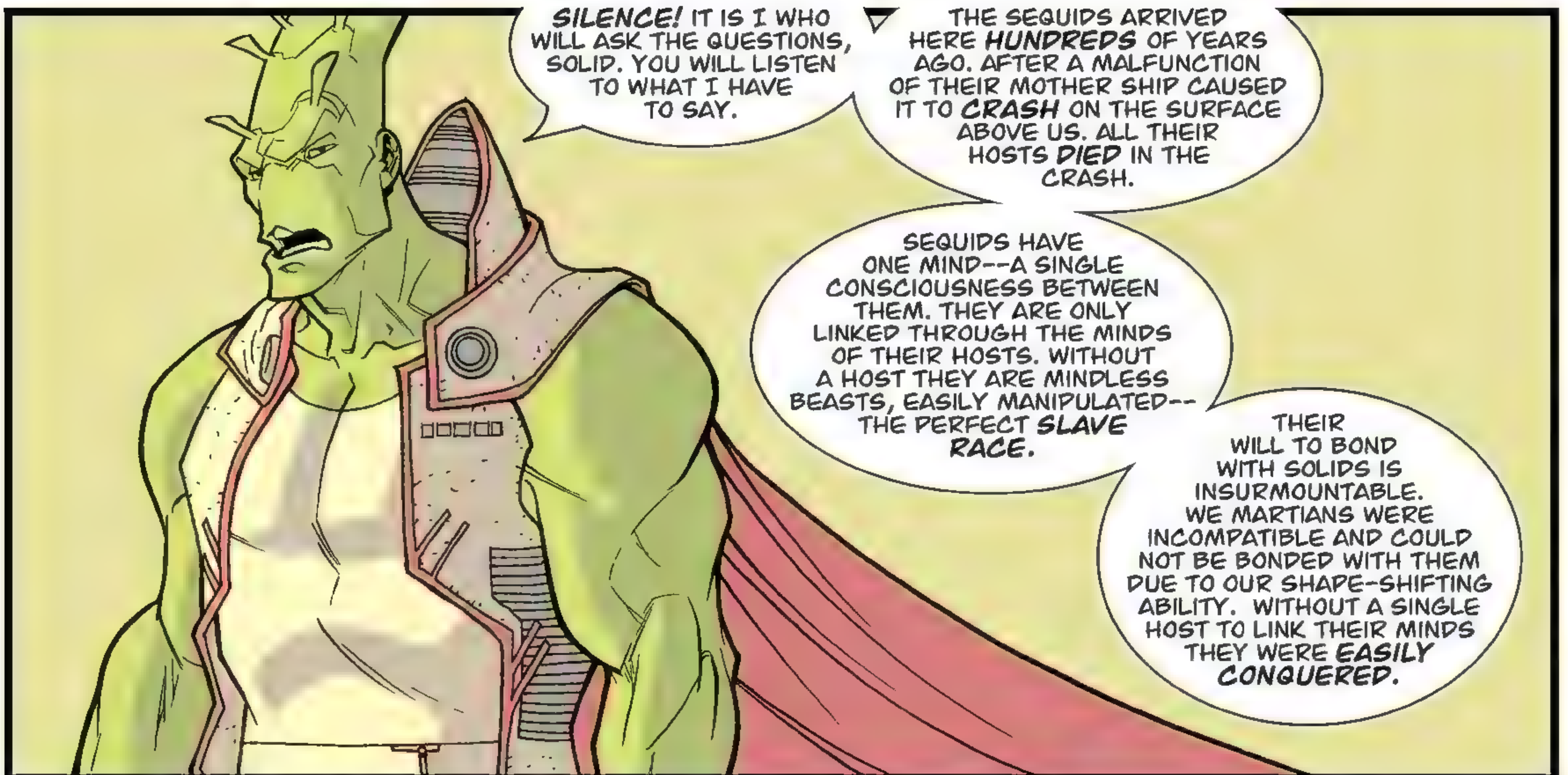




WHAT WAS THAT?! DID WE JUST--?!

YOU WILL COME CLOSER. I WILL HAVE AN AUDIENCE WITH YOU.

YEAH-- WHERE ARE THE ASTRONAUTS THAT WERE ON THE SURFACE?

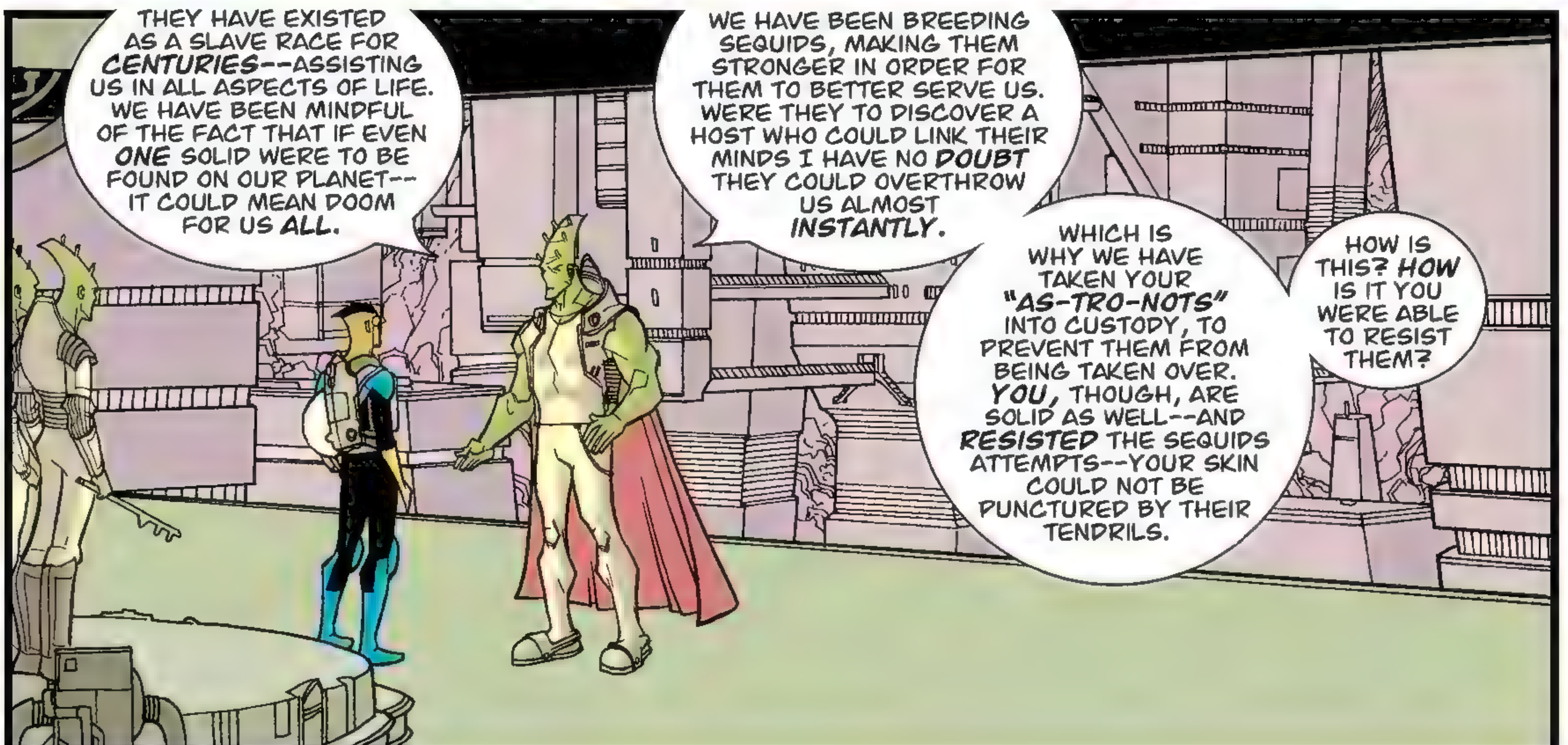


SILENCE! IT IS I WHO WILL ASK THE QUESTIONS, SOLID. YOU WILL LISTEN TO WHAT I HAVE TO SAY.

THE SEQUIDS ARRIVED HERE **HUNDREDS** OF YEARS AGO. AFTER A MALFUNCTION OF THEIR MOTHER SHIP CAUSED IT TO **CRASH** ON THE SURFACE ABOVE US. ALL THEIR HOSTS **DIED** IN THE CRASH.

SEQUIDS HAVE ONE MIND--A SINGLE CONSCIOUSNESS BETWEEN THEM. THEY ARE ONLY LINKED THROUGH THE MINDS OF THEIR HOSTS. WITHOUT A HOST THEY ARE MINDLESS BEASTS, EASILY MANIPULATED-- THE PERFECT **SLAVE RACE**.

THEIR WILL TO BOND WITH SOLIDS IS INSURMOUNTABLE. WE MARTIANS WERE INCOMPATIBLE AND COULD NOT BE BONDED WITH THEM DUE TO OUR SHAPE-SHIFTING ABILITY. WITHOUT A SINGLE HOST TO LINK THEIR MINDS THEY WERE **EASILY CONQUERED**.



THEY HAVE EXISTED AS A SLAVE RACE FOR **CENTURIES**--ASSISTING US IN ALL ASPECTS OF LIFE. WE HAVE BEEN MINDFUL OF THE FACT THAT IF EVEN **ONE** SOLID WERE TO BE FOUND ON OUR PLANET-- IT COULD MEAN DOOM FOR US ALL.

WE HAVE BEEN BREEDING SEQUIDS, MAKING THEM STRONGER IN ORDER FOR THEM TO BETTER SERVE US. WERE THEY TO DISCOVER A HOST WHO COULD LINK THEIR MINDS I HAVE NO **DOUBT** THEY COULD OVERTHROW US ALMOST **INSTANTLY**.

WHICH IS WHY WE HAVE TAKEN YOUR "**AS-TRO-NOTS**" INTO CUSTODY, TO PREVENT THEM FROM BEING TAKEN OVER. **YOU**, THOUGH, ARE SOLID AS WELL--AND **RESISTED** THE SEQUIDS ATTEMPTS--YOUR SKIN COULD NOT BE PUNCTURED BY THEIR TENDRILS.

HOW IS THIS? **HOW** IS IT YOU WERE ABLE TO RESIST THEM?



I GUESS I WAS TOO TOUGH FOR THEM. I'M NOT A HUMAN--I'M NOT FROM EARTH--WELL I AM... BUT MY DAD--I'M A VILTRUMITE.



I HAVE NEVER HEARD OF SUCH A RACE. WHERE DO YOU ORIGINATE?



REALLY FAR AWAY FROM HERE...A PLANET CALLED VILTRUM.



SERIOUSLY THOUGH... I WAS SENT HERE TO PROTECT THOSE ASTRONAUTS. I GOTTA MAKE SURE THEY GET HOME SAFELY OR MY BOSS IS GOING TO BE PISSED. IT'S REALLY IMPORTANT THAT YOU--Y'KNOW... GIVE THEM BACK.

IF YOU CAN TELL ME WHERE THEY ARE I'LL MAKE SURE I GET THEM TO THE SURFACE WITHOUT ANY SEQUIDS ATTACHING TO THEM. I JUST NEED TO GET THEM BACK TO OUR SHIP SO WE CAN LEAVE.



I'M AFRAID THAT IS NOT POSSIBLE. THEY ARE SCHEDULED TO BE EXECUTED.

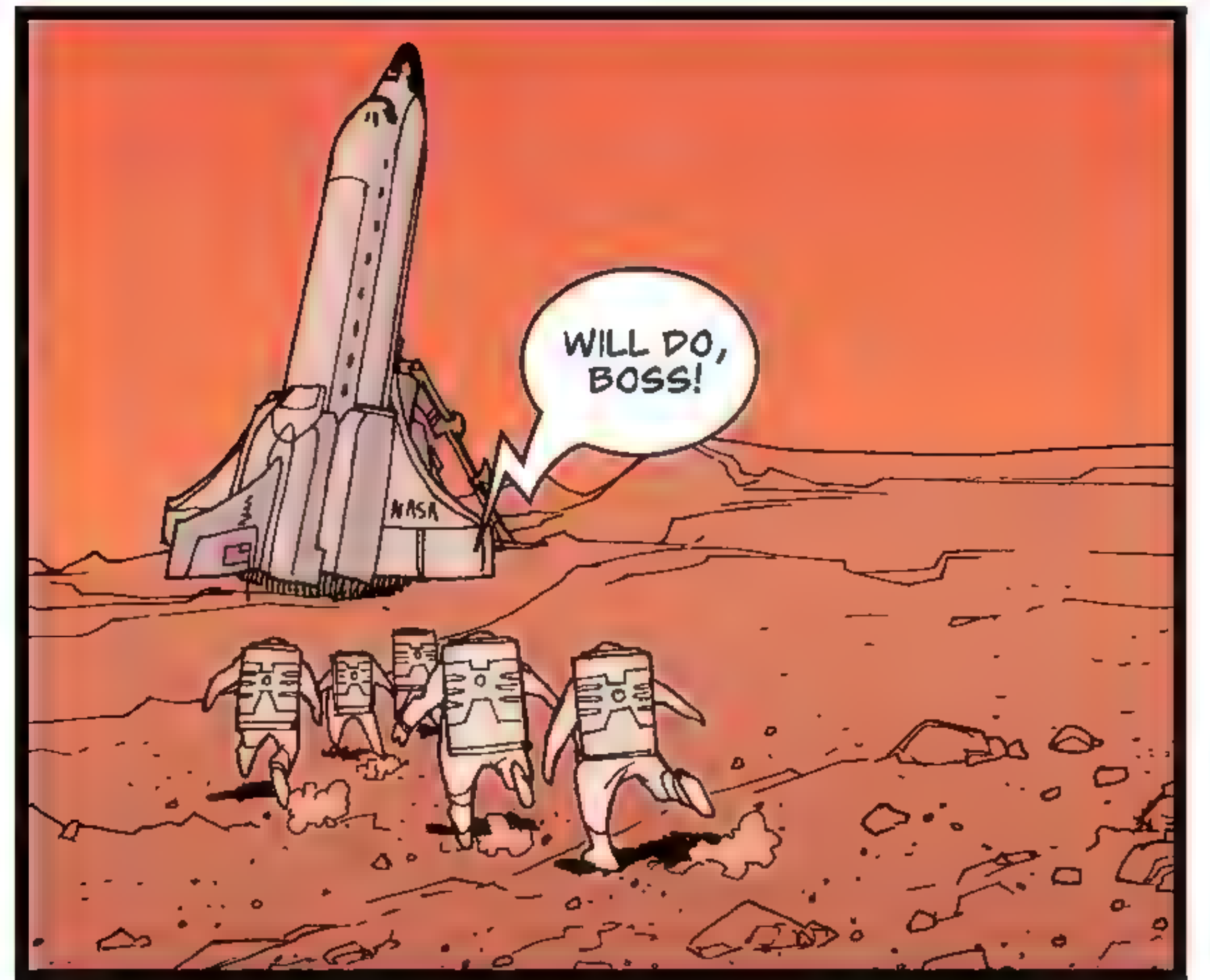
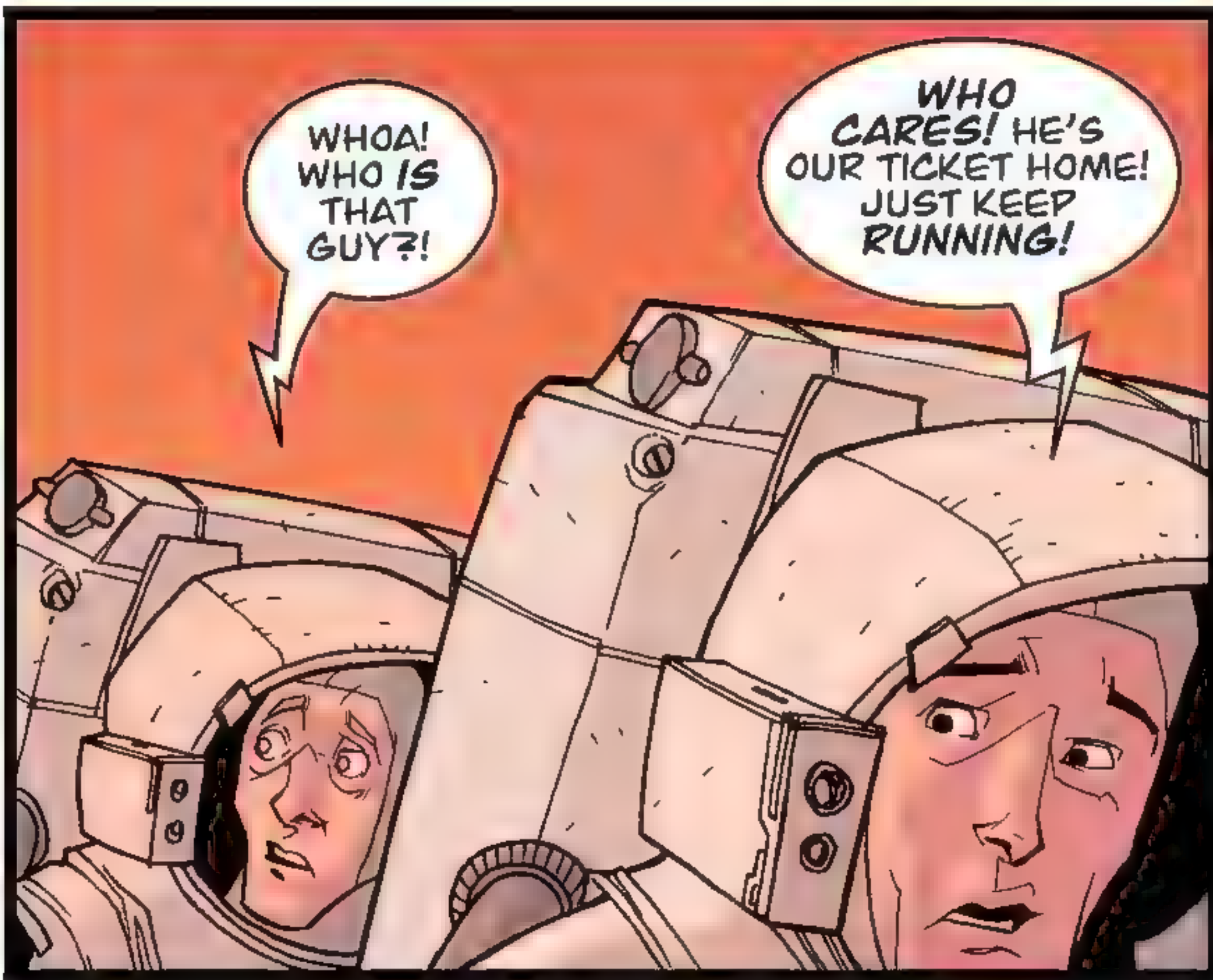
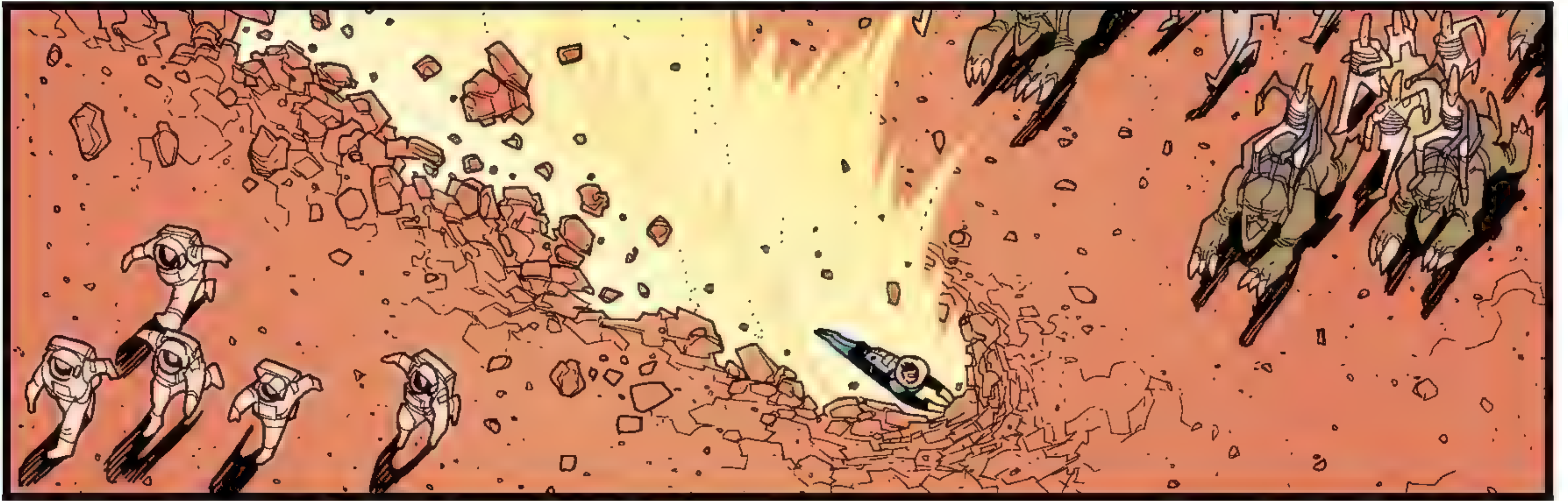


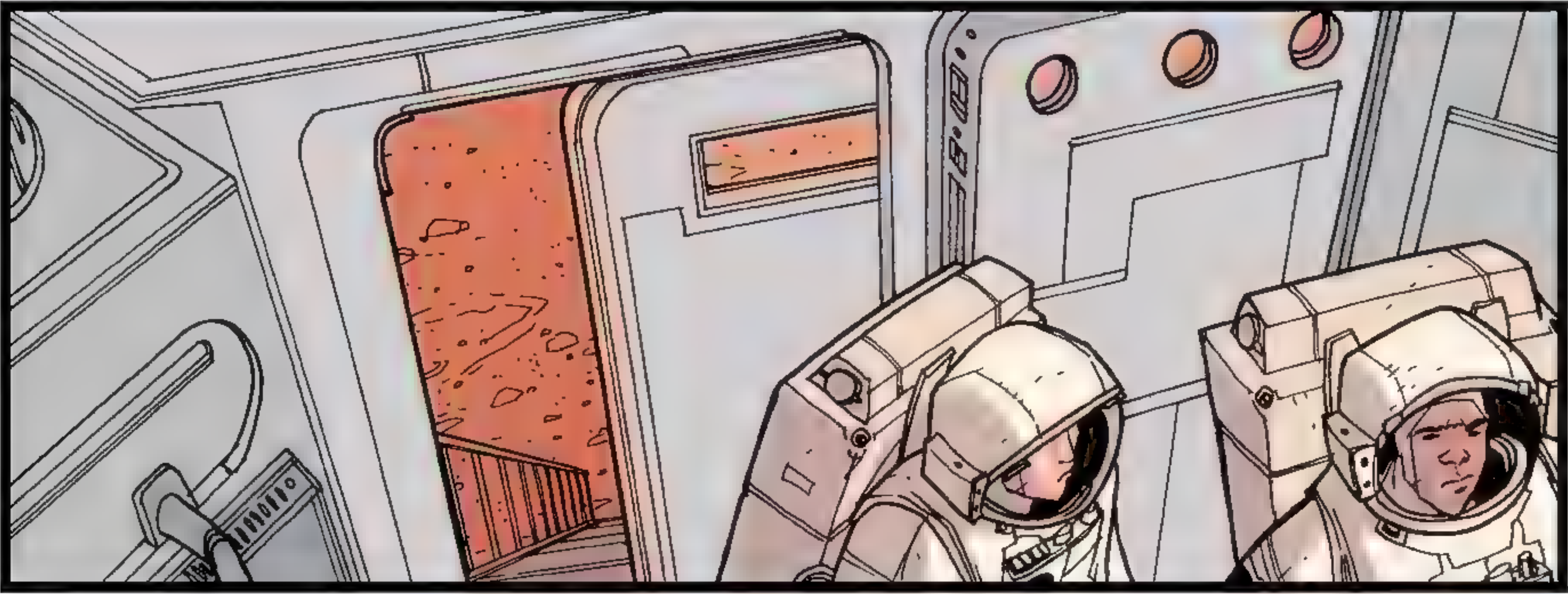
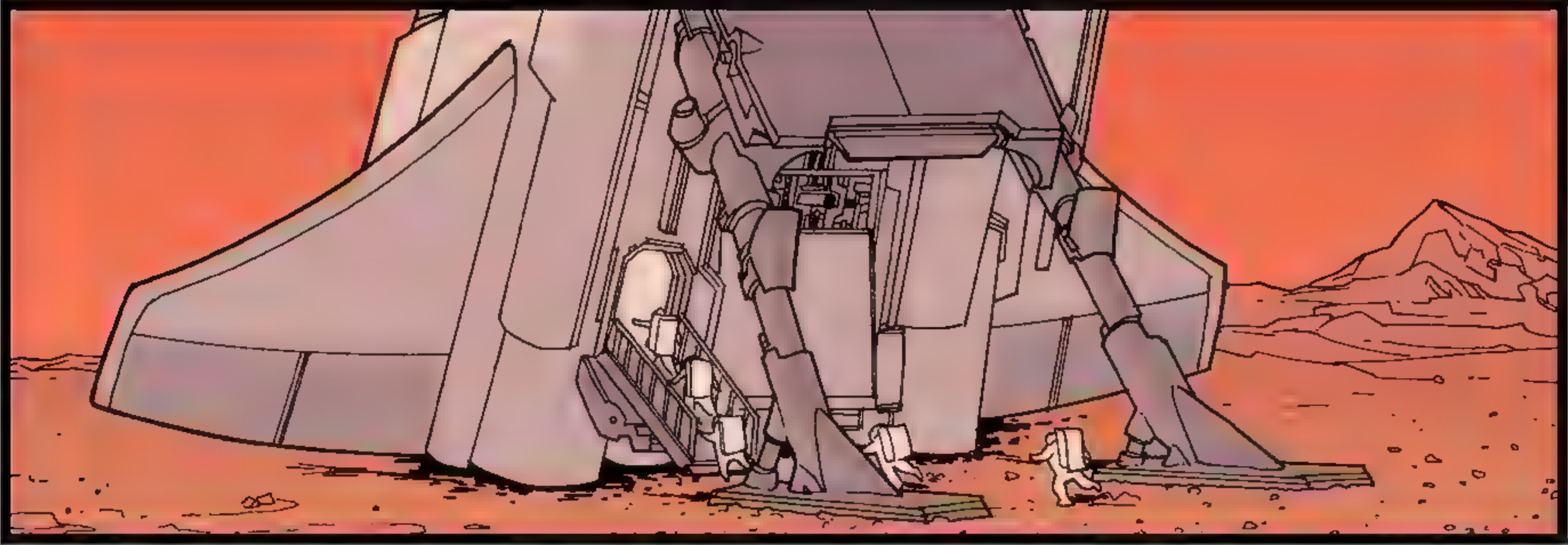
EXECUTED?!

RUN!!
RUN AS
FAST
AS YOU
CAN!!

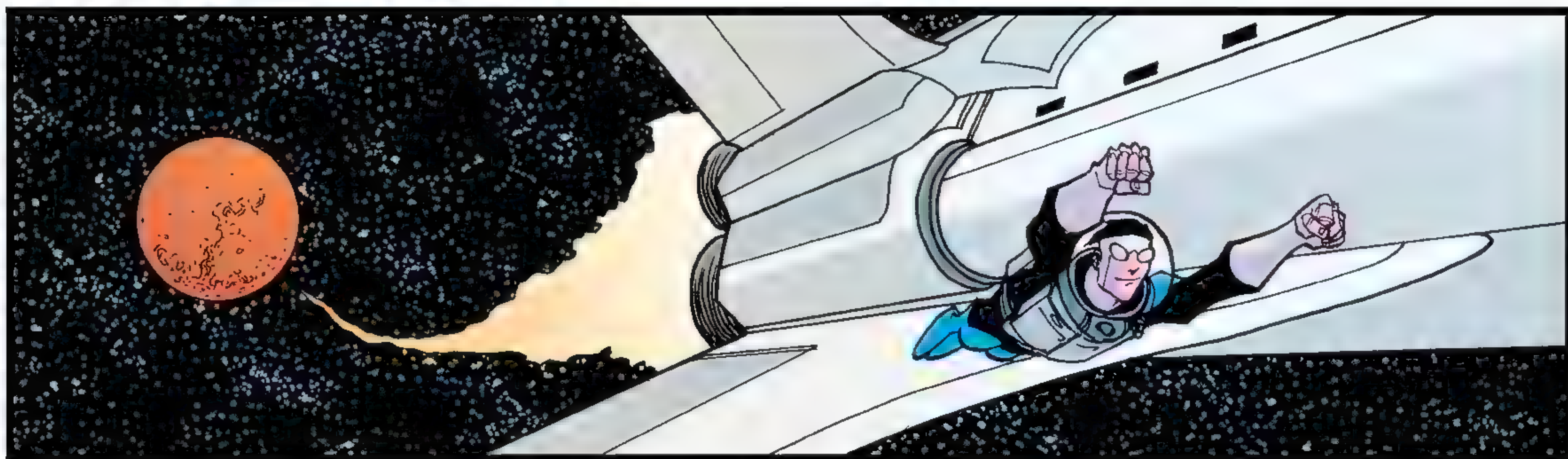
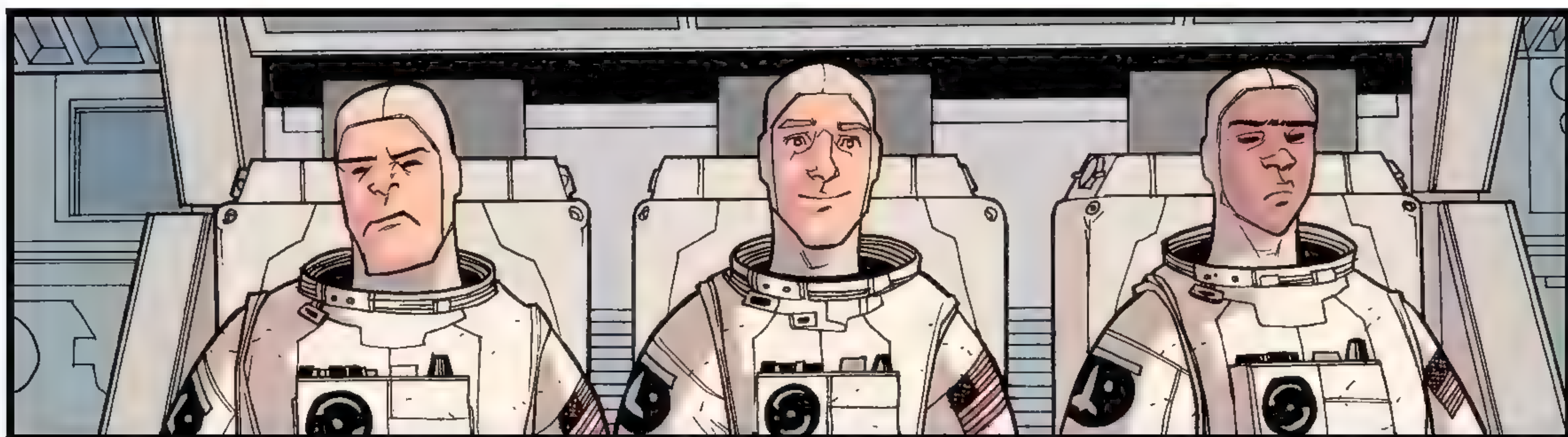
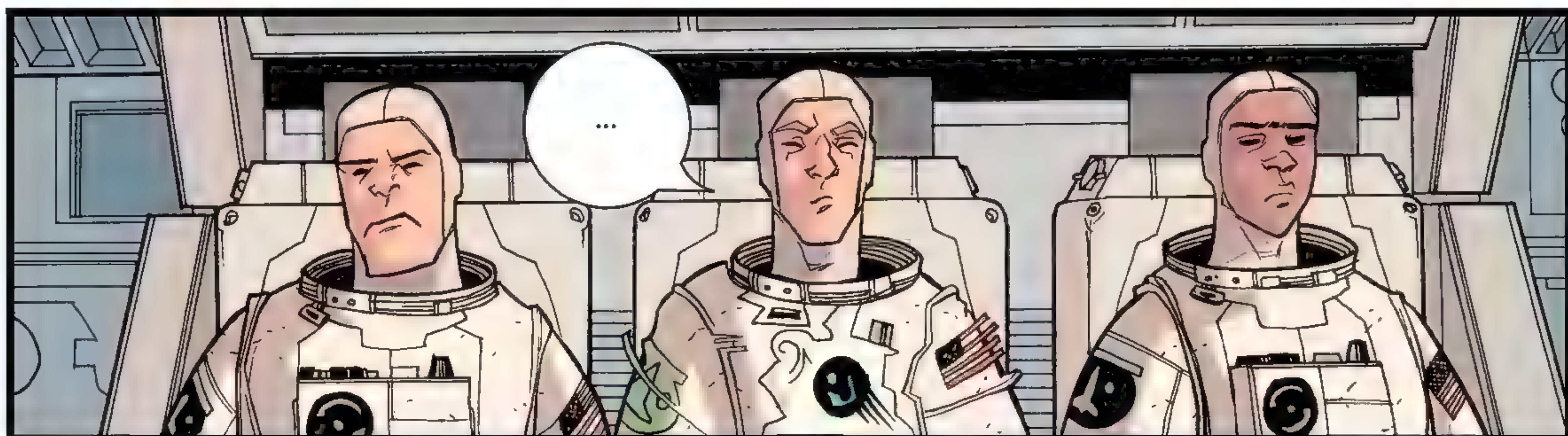
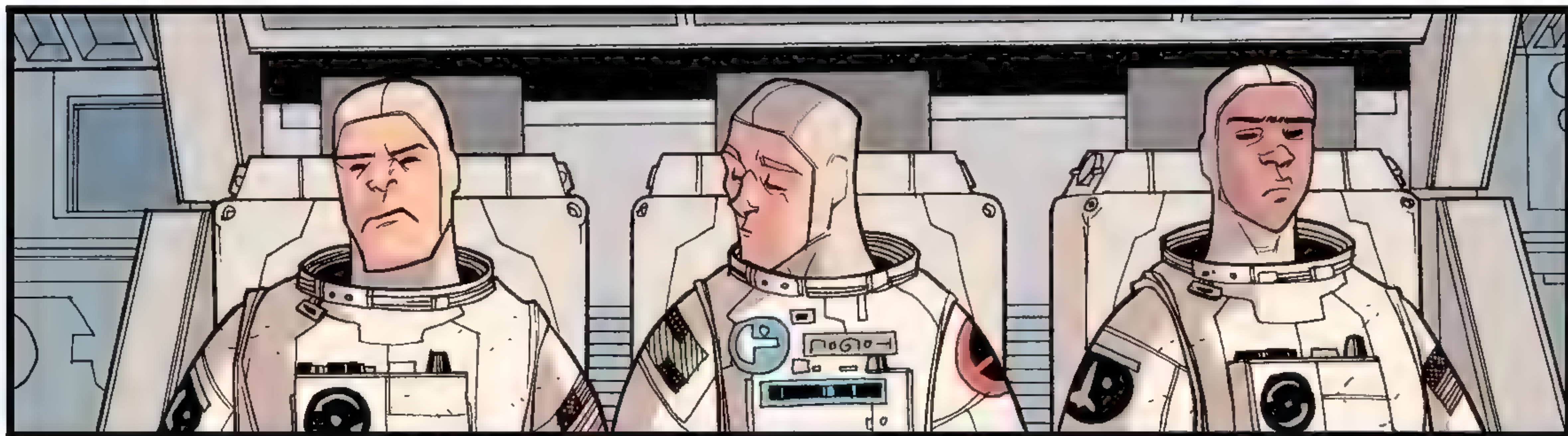
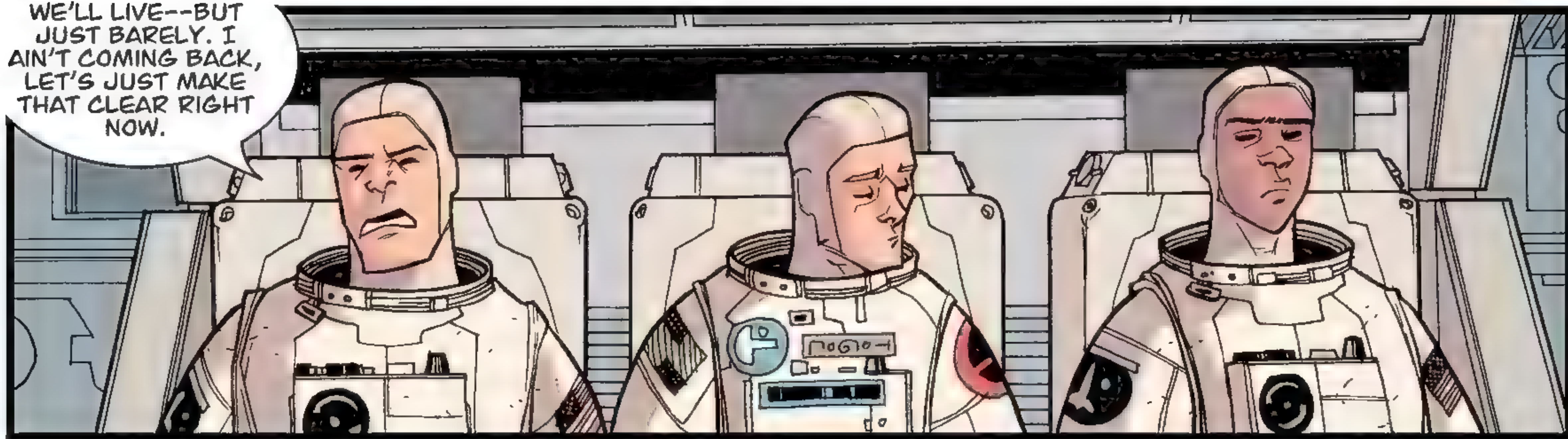
I'LL
HOLD
THEM
OFF!!

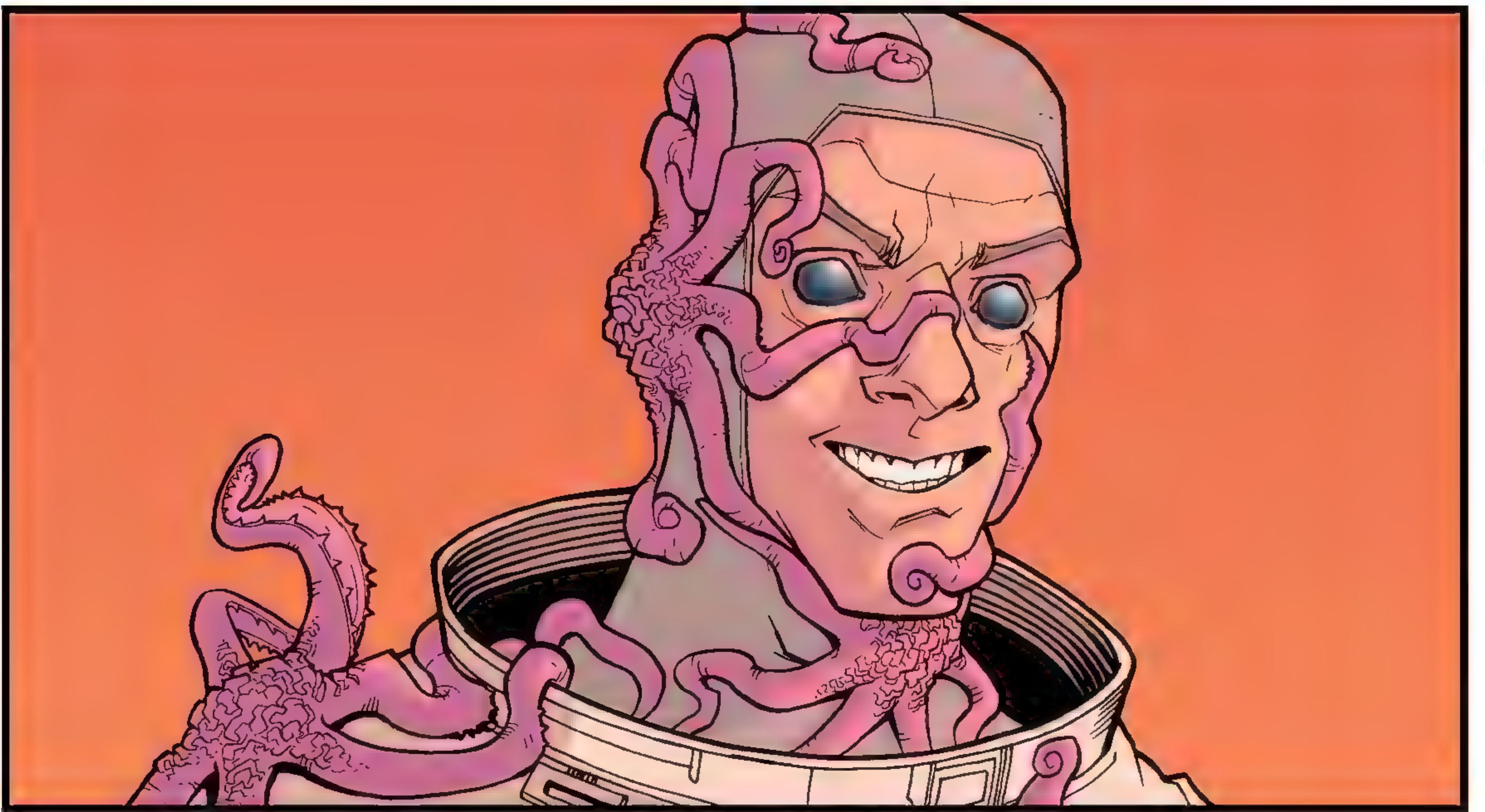
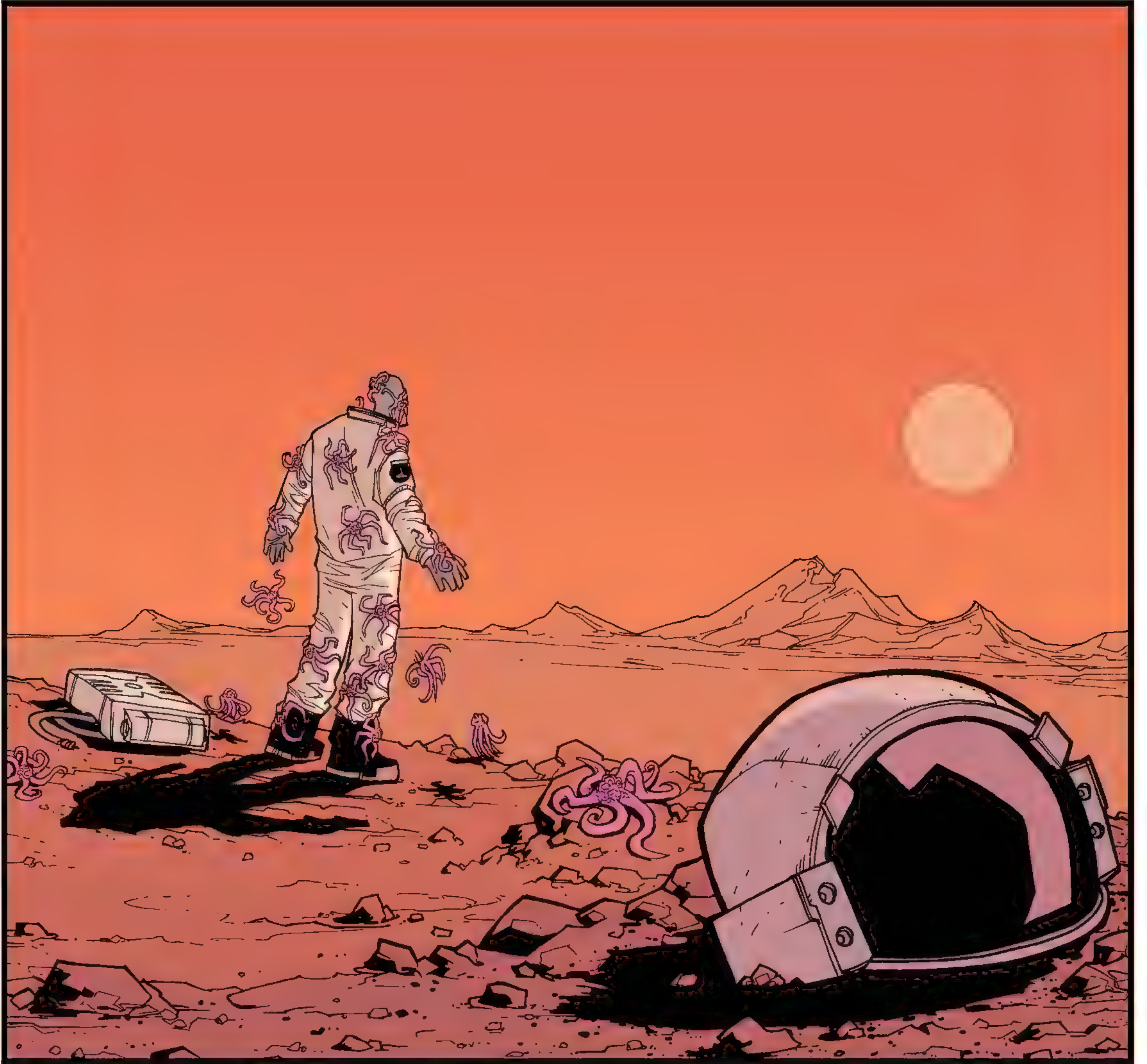






WE'LL LIVE---BUT
JUST BARELY. I
AIN'T COMING BACK,
LET'S JUST MAKE
THAT CLEAR RIGHT
NOW.



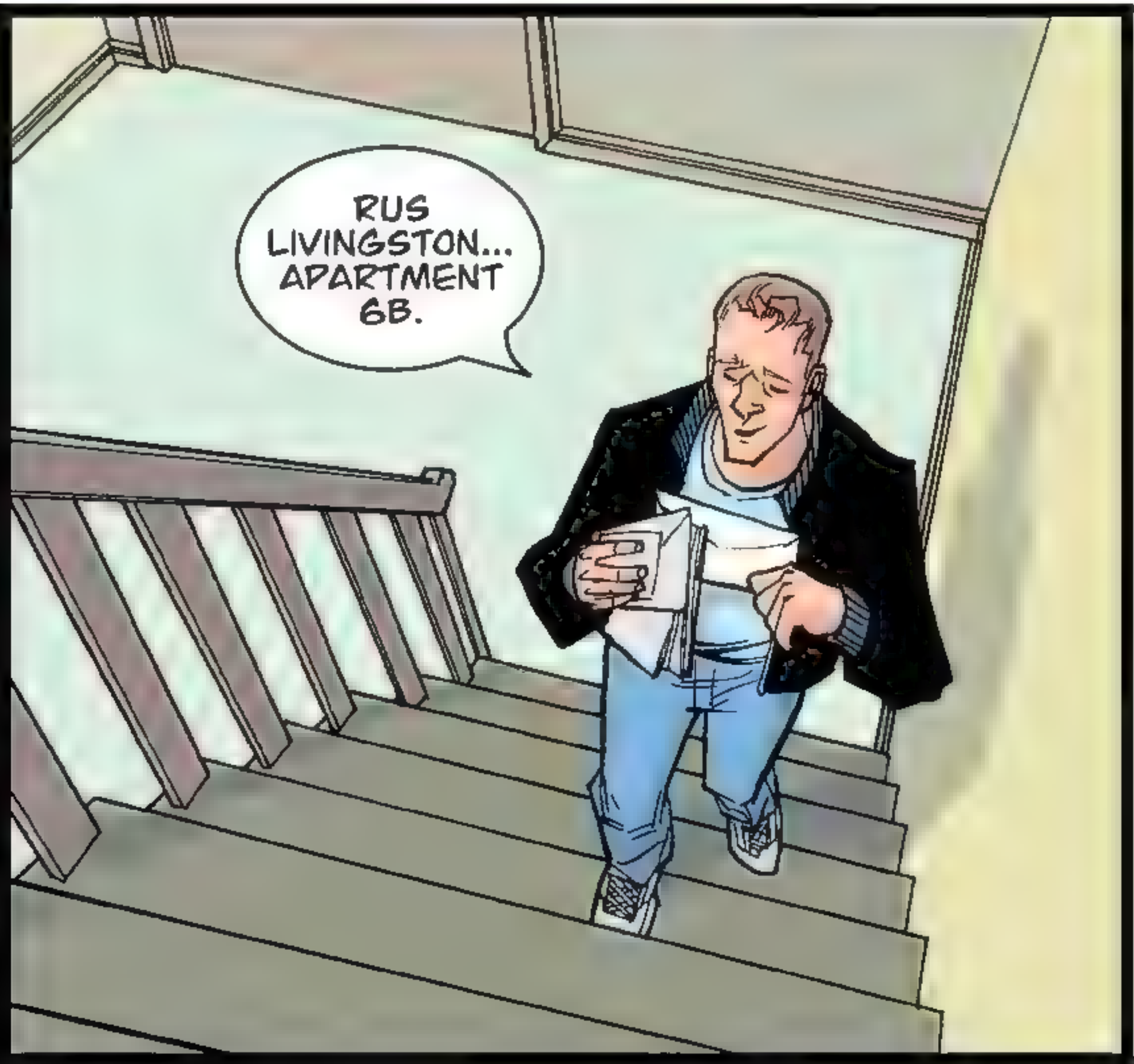
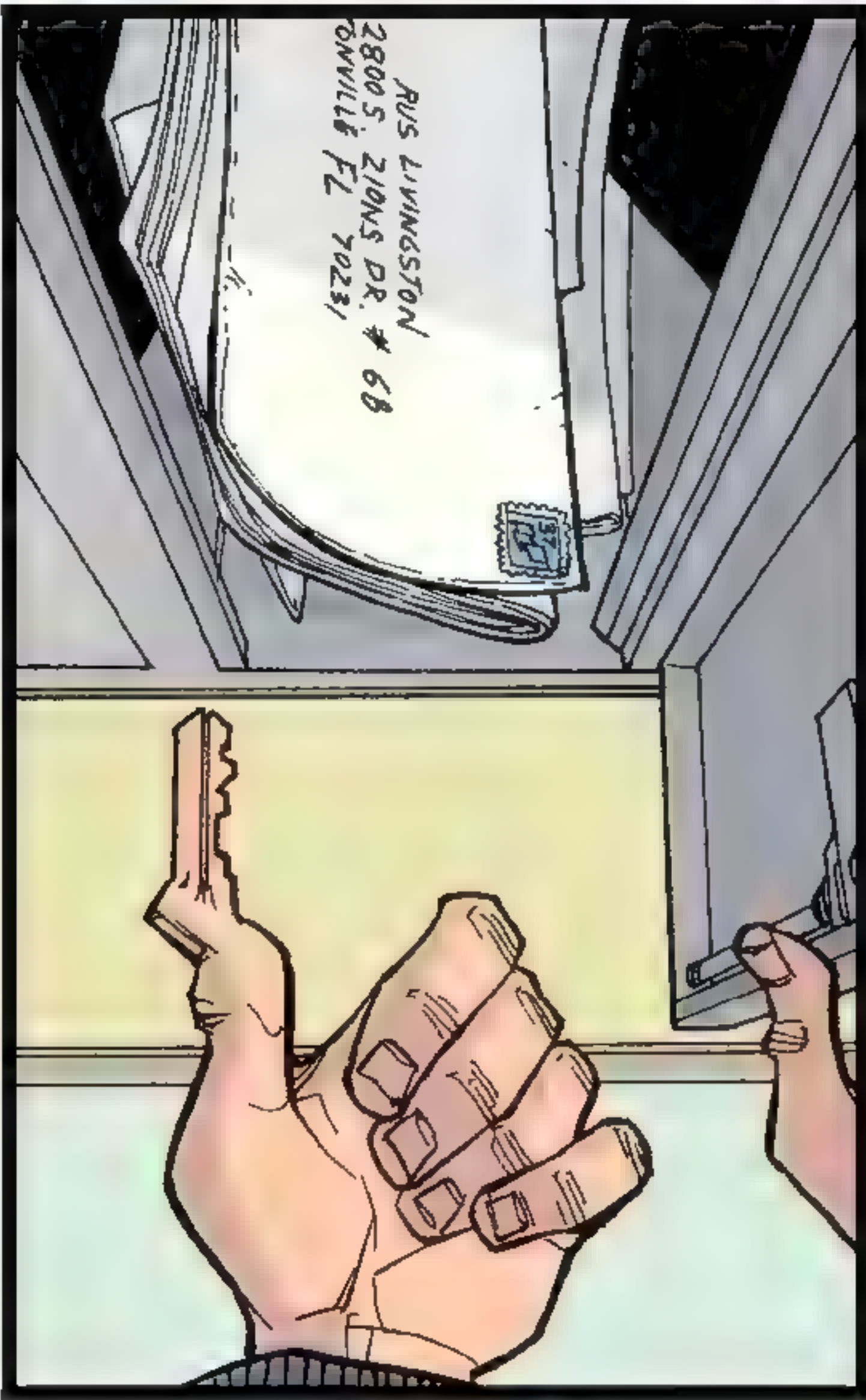
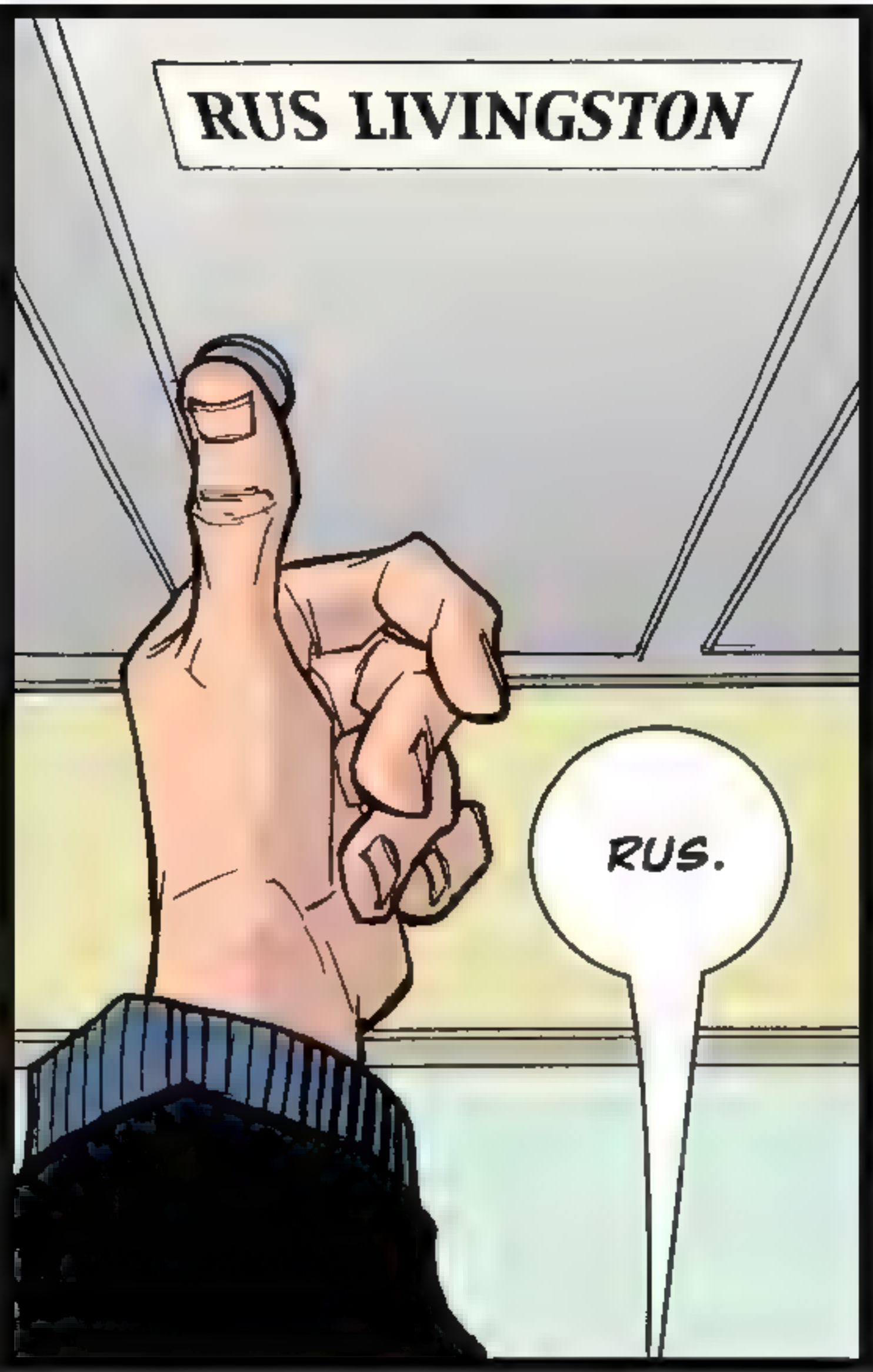


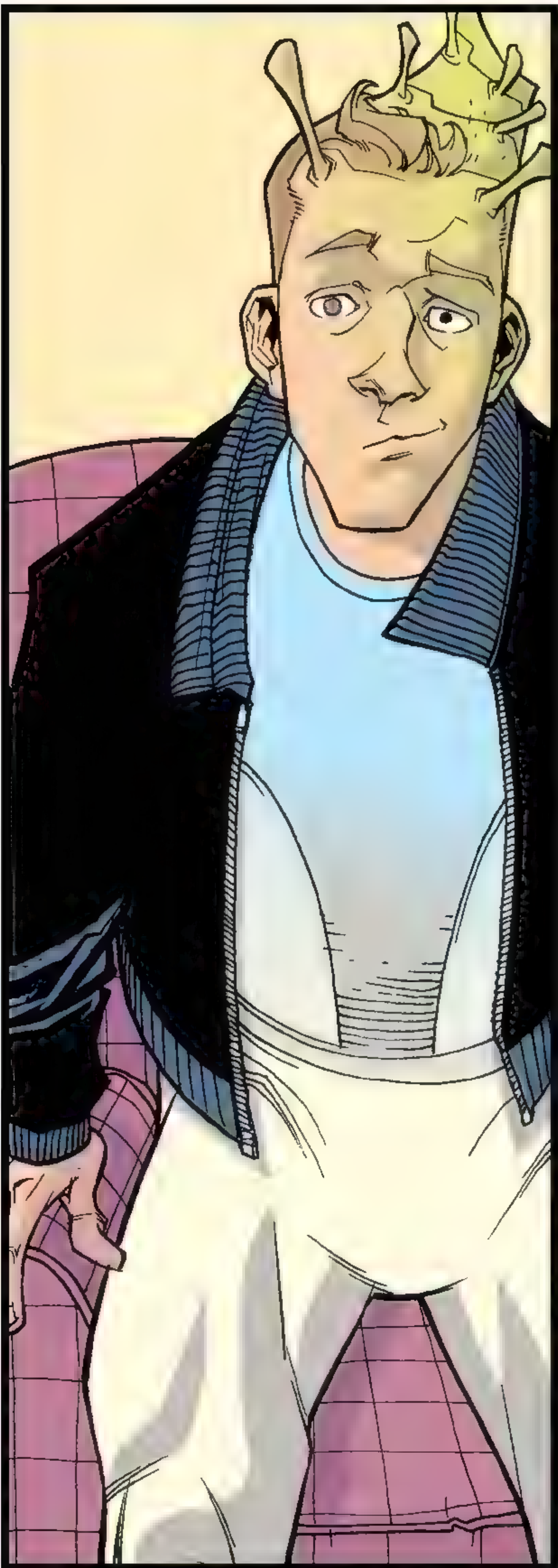
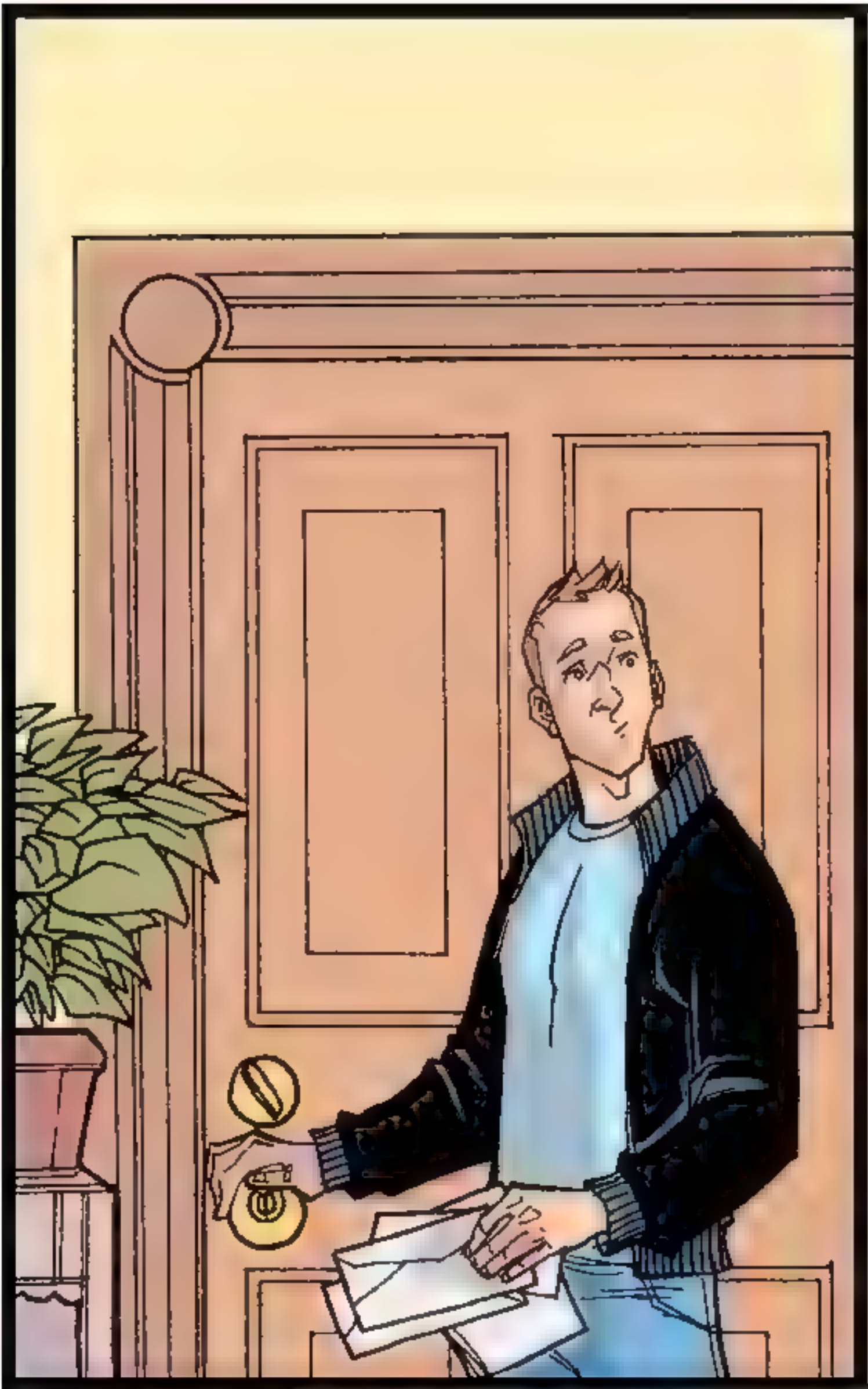


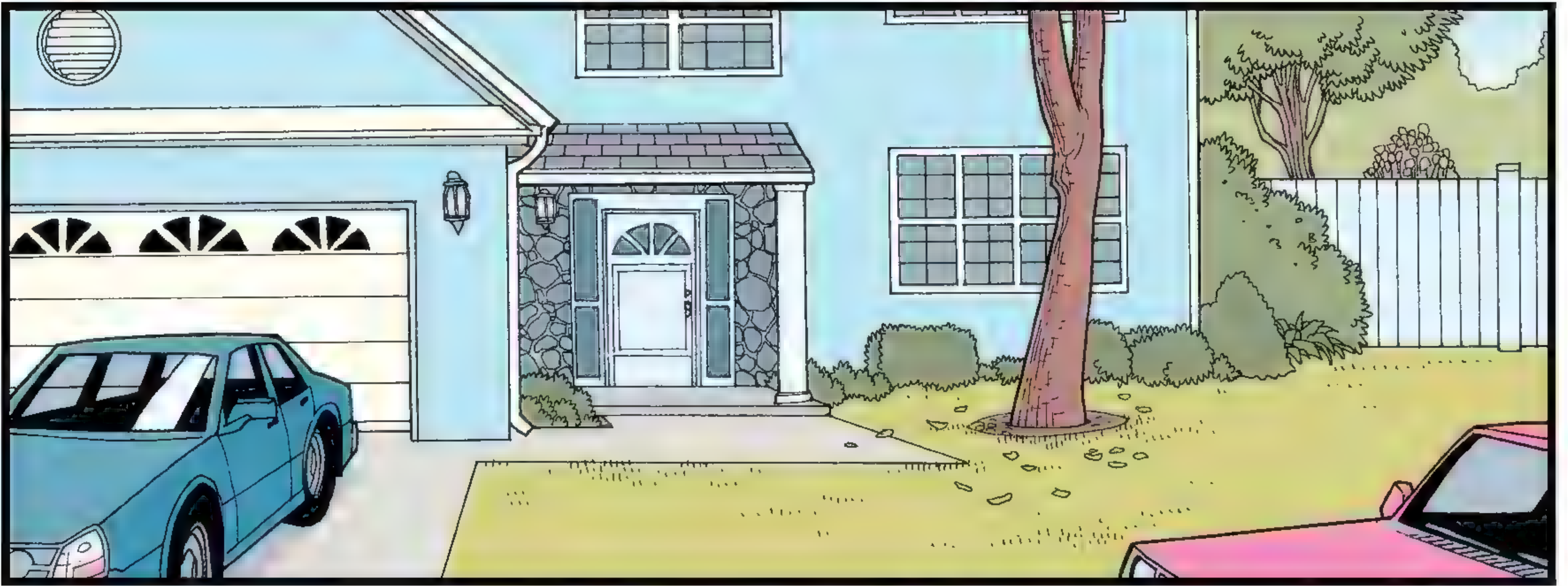
ISSUE NINETEEN

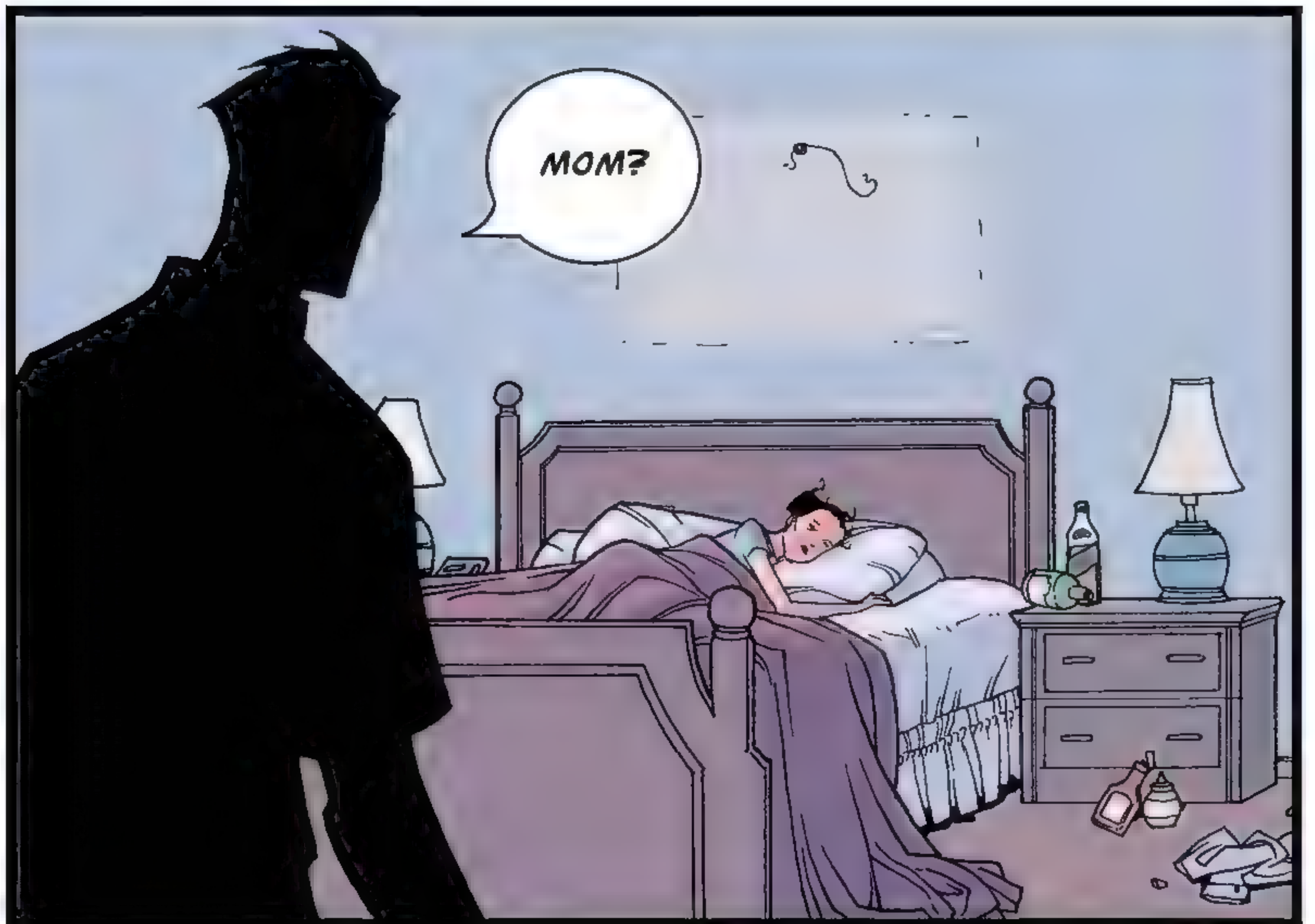
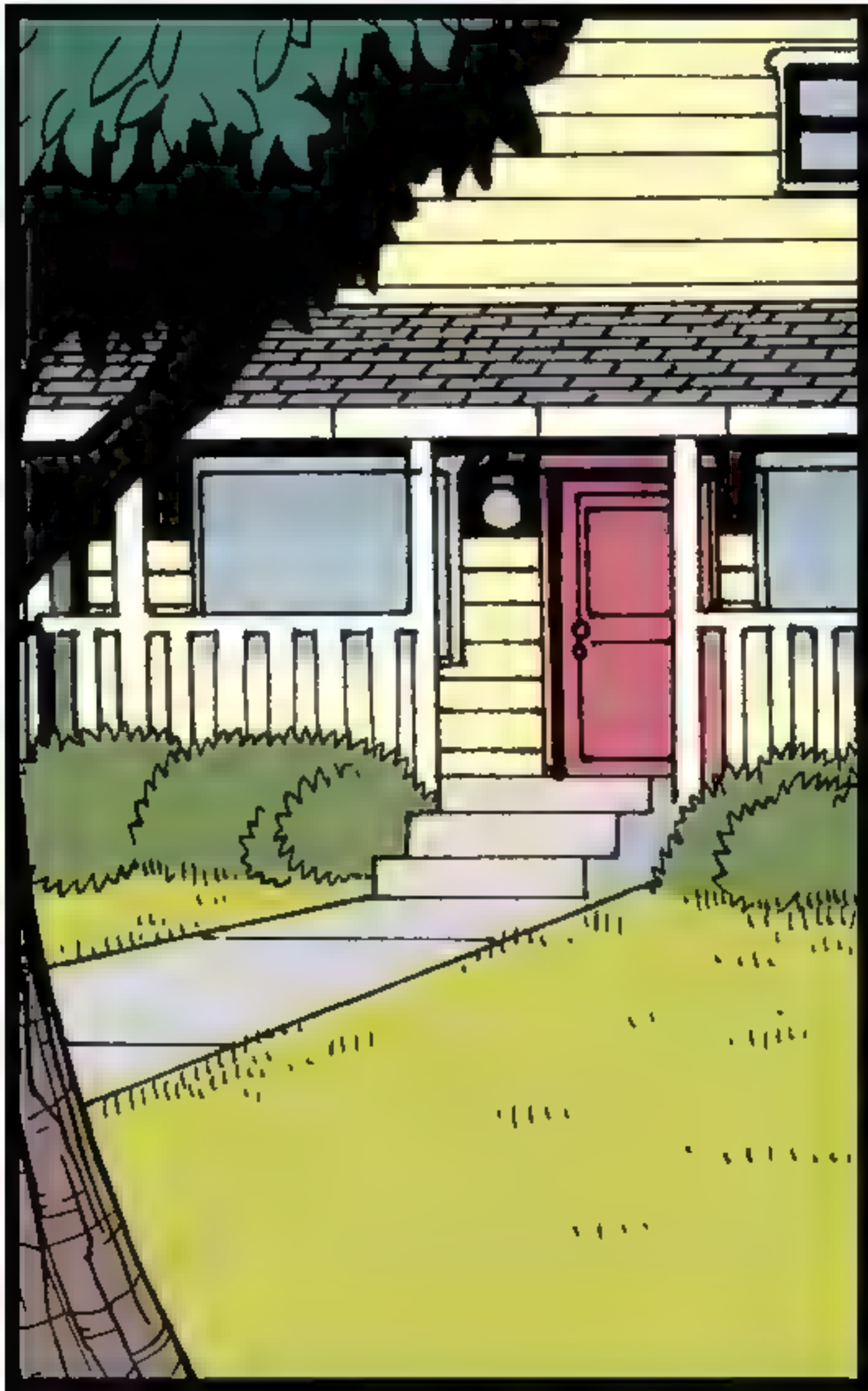


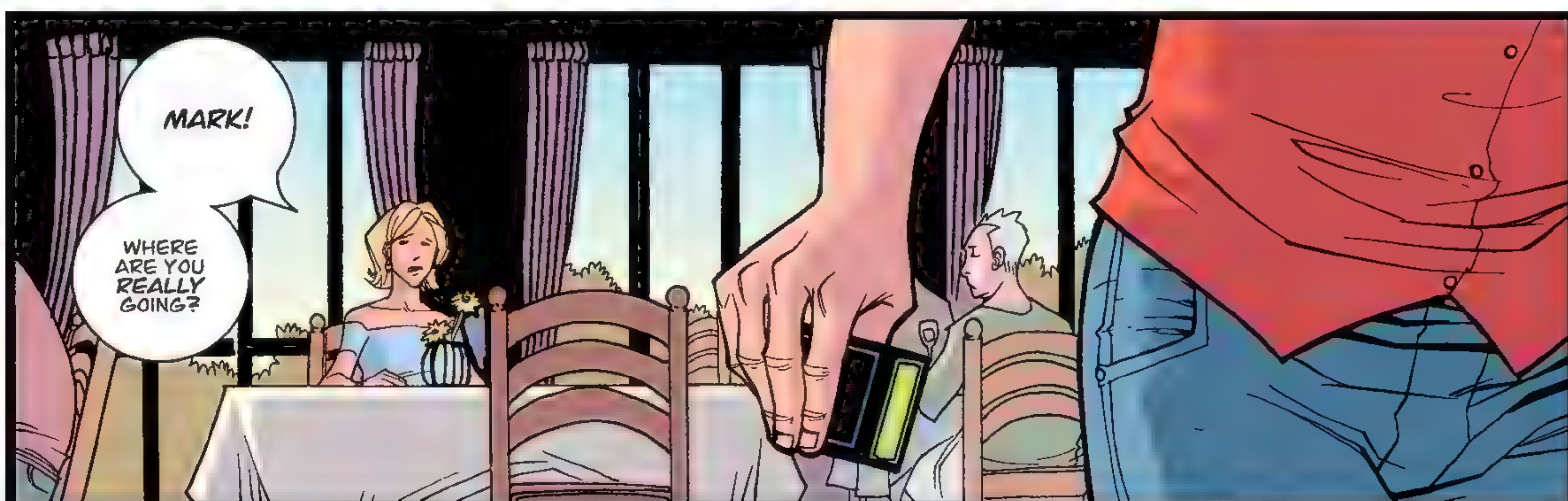
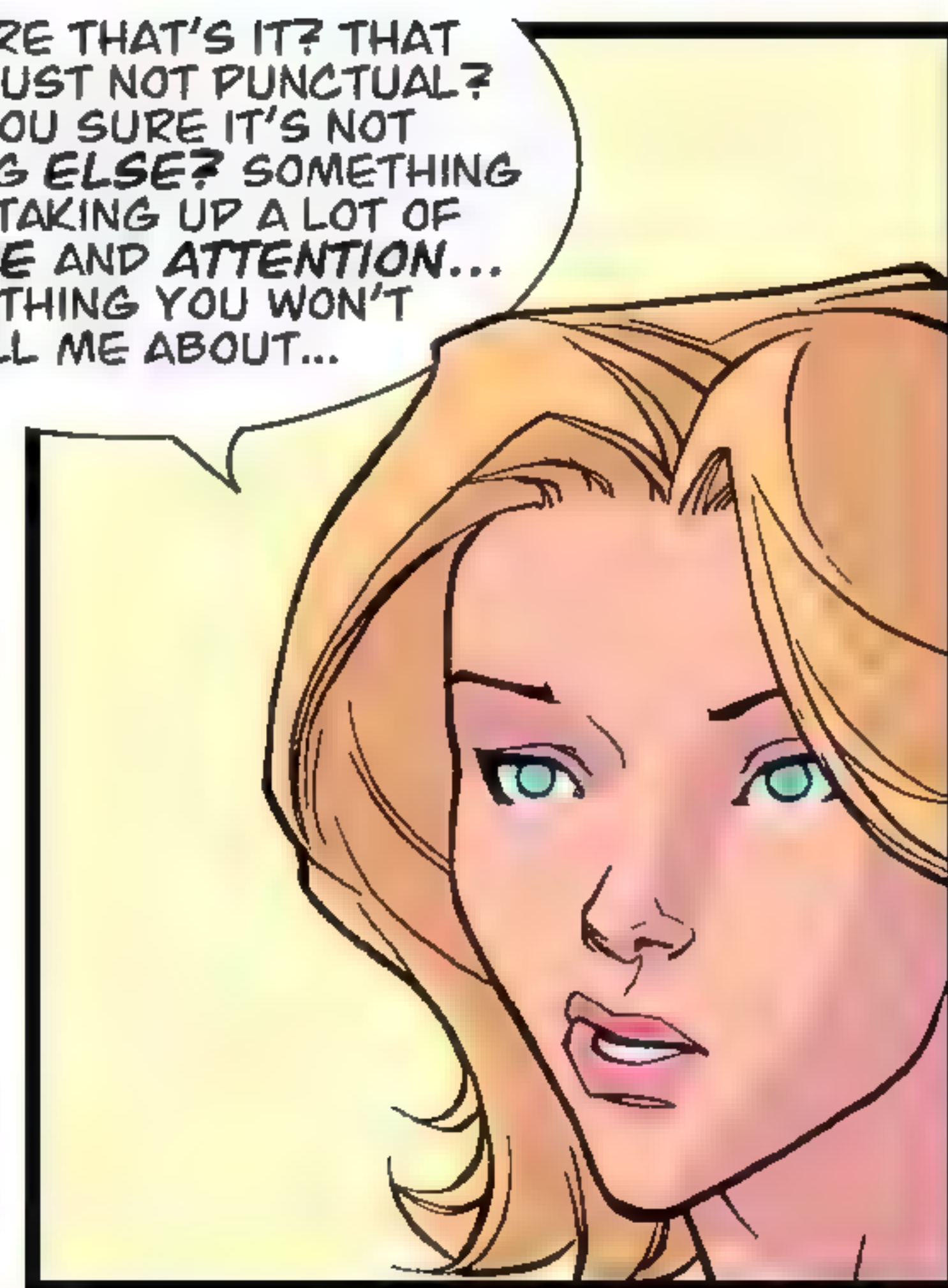
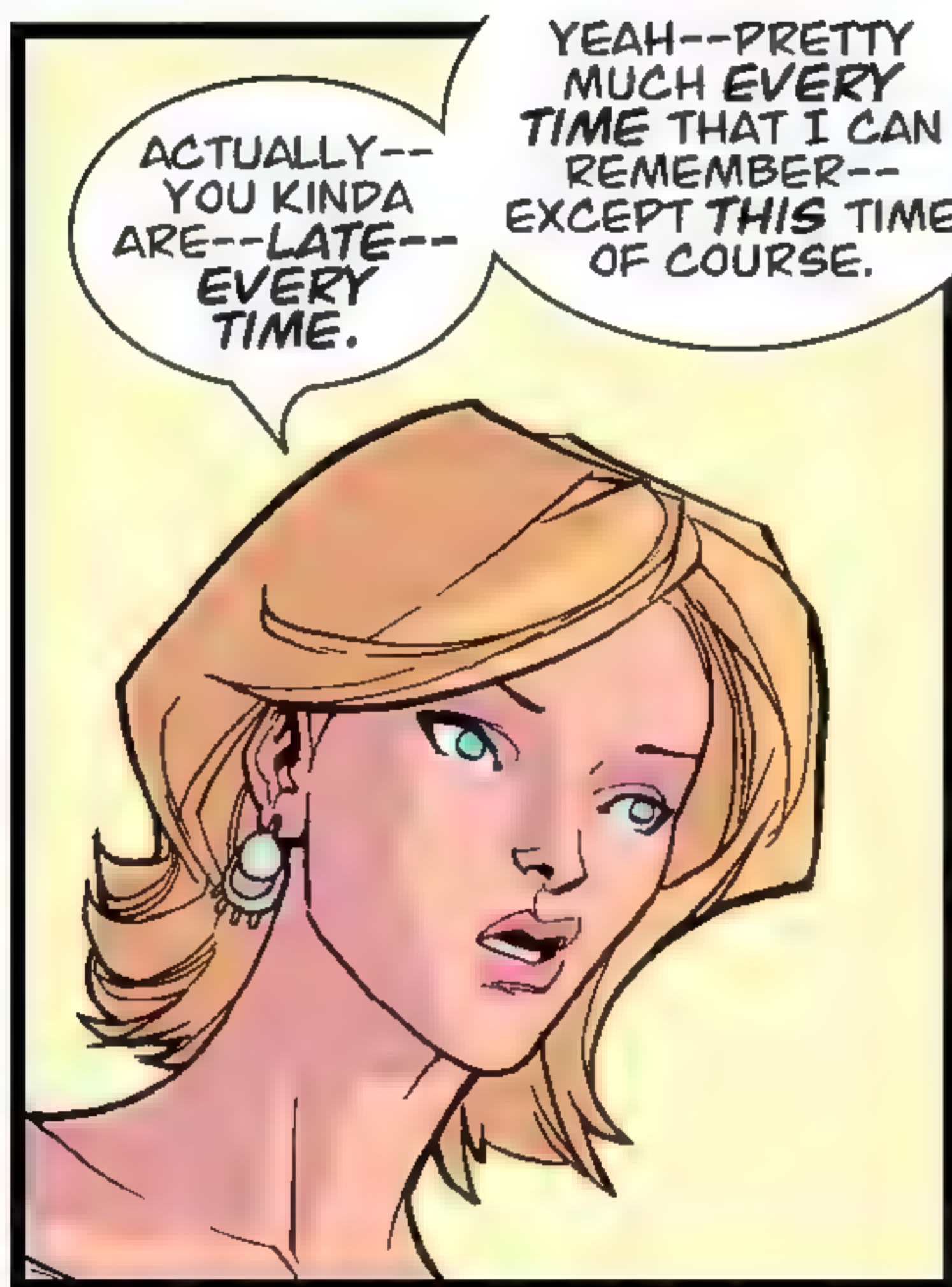
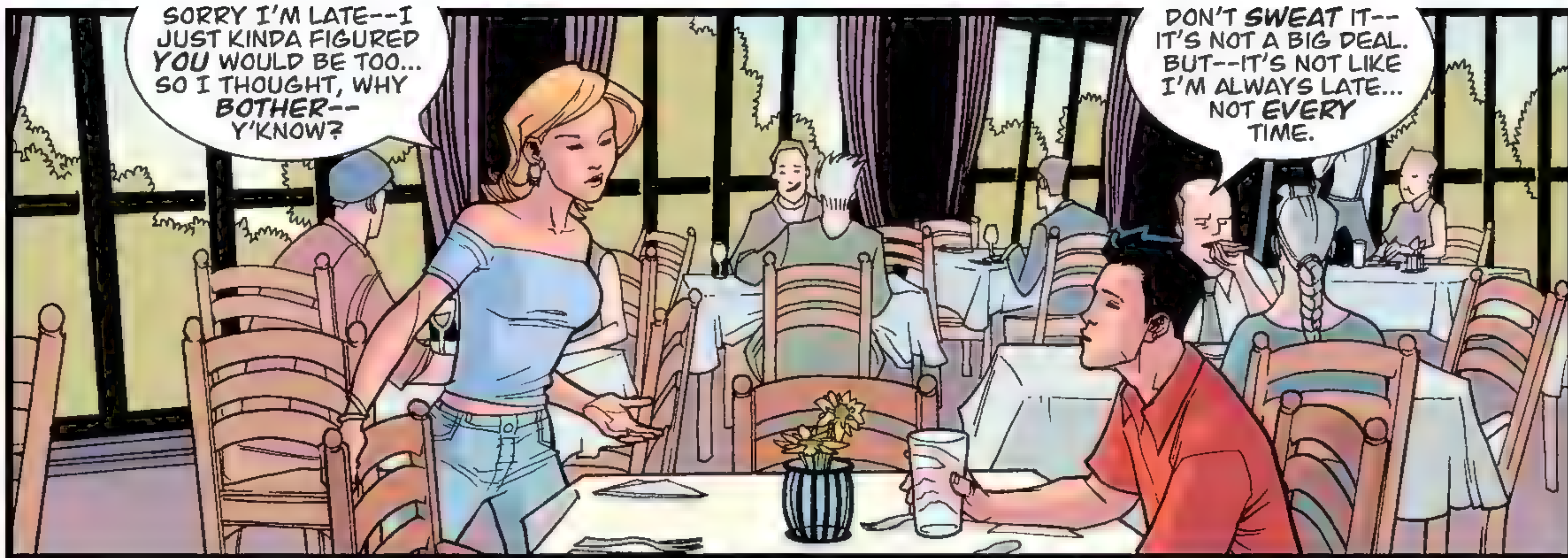
WYB

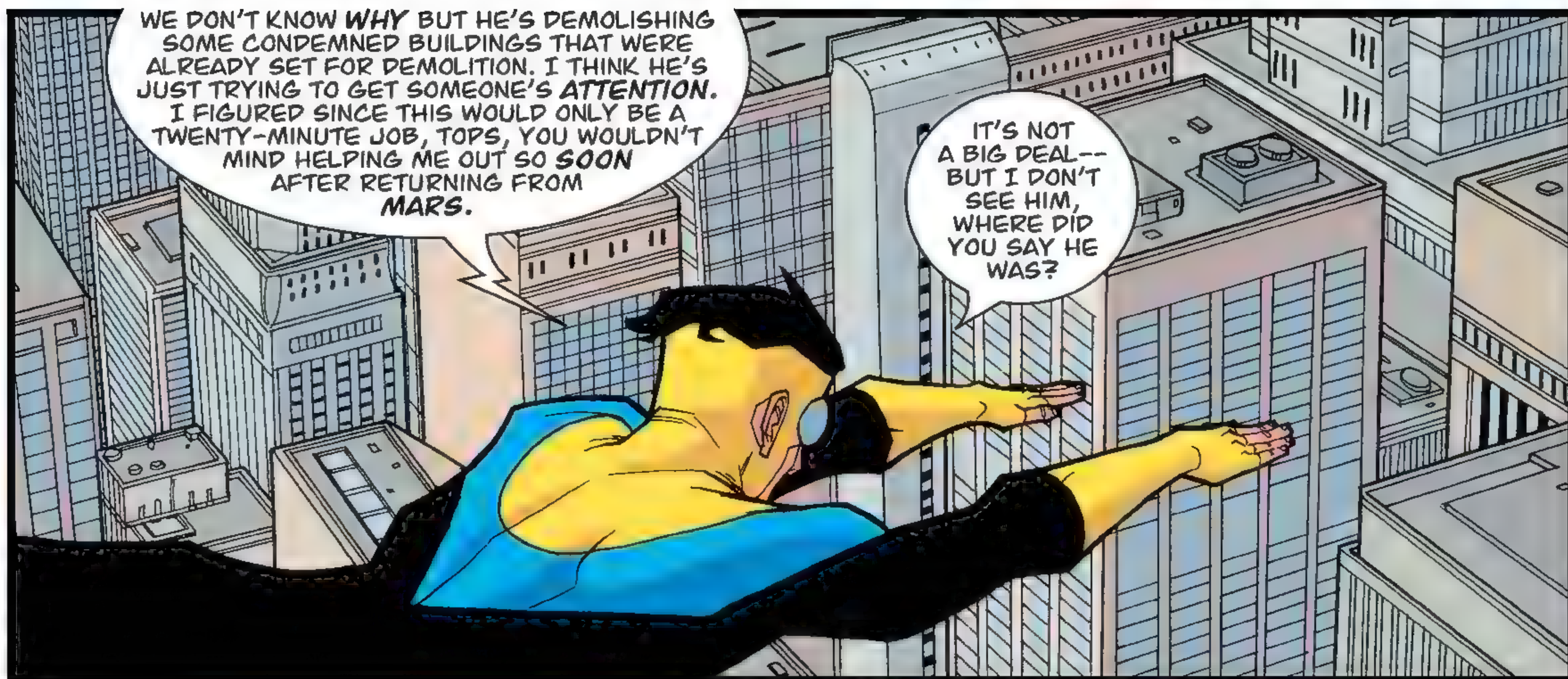












WE DON'T KNOW **WHY** BUT HE'S DEMOLISHING SOME CONDEMNED BUILDINGS THAT WERE ALREADY SET FOR DEMOLITION. I THINK HE'S JUST TRYING TO GET SOMEONE'S **ATTENTION**. I FIGURED SINCE THIS WOULD ONLY BE A TWENTY-MINUTE JOB, TOPS, YOU WOULDN'T MIND HELPING ME OUT SO **SOON** AFTER RETURNING FROM **MARS**.

IT'S NOT A BIG DEAL-- BUT I DON'T SEE HIM, WHERE DID YOU SAY HE WAS?



OH WAIT-- THERE YOU ARE.

OH, **GOOD**. I HAD HOPED IT'D BE YOU WHO SHOWED UP.

IF YOU SAY SO. ALTHOUGH, BY MY ACCOUNT I'VE KICKED YOUR BUTT **TWICE** ALREADY SO I DON'T SEE WHY YOU'D BE HAPPY TO SEE **ME**. WHATEVER-- LET'S GET STARTED.

TWICE?



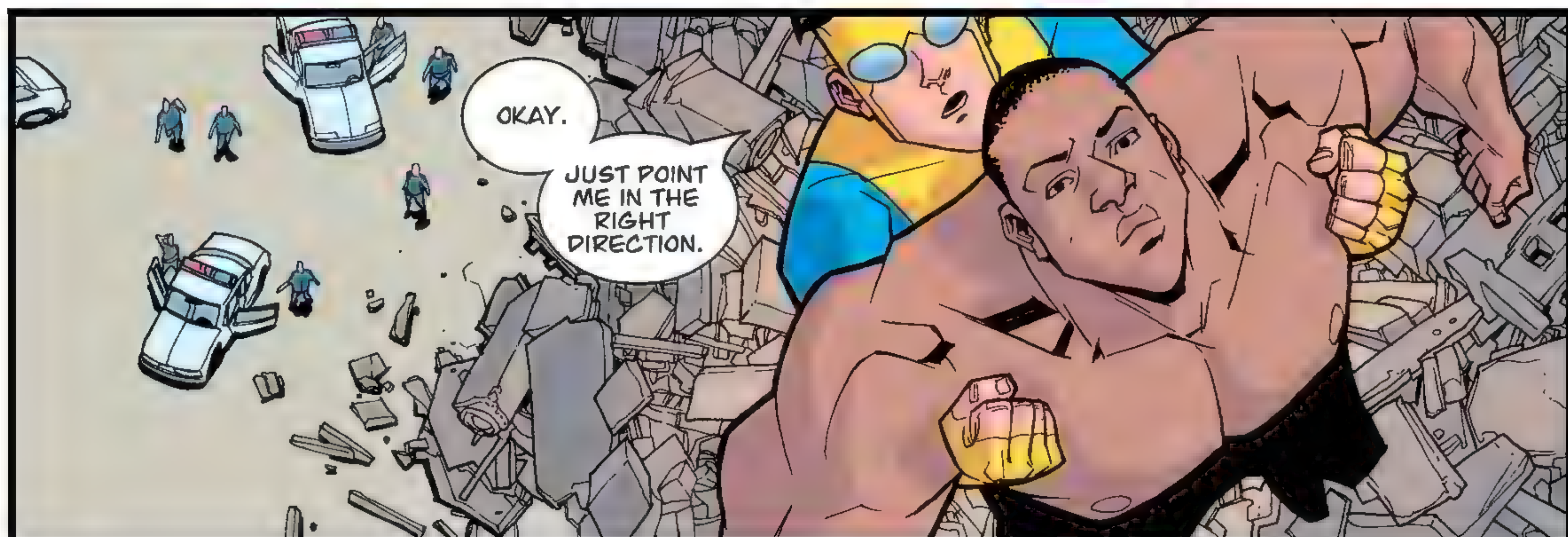
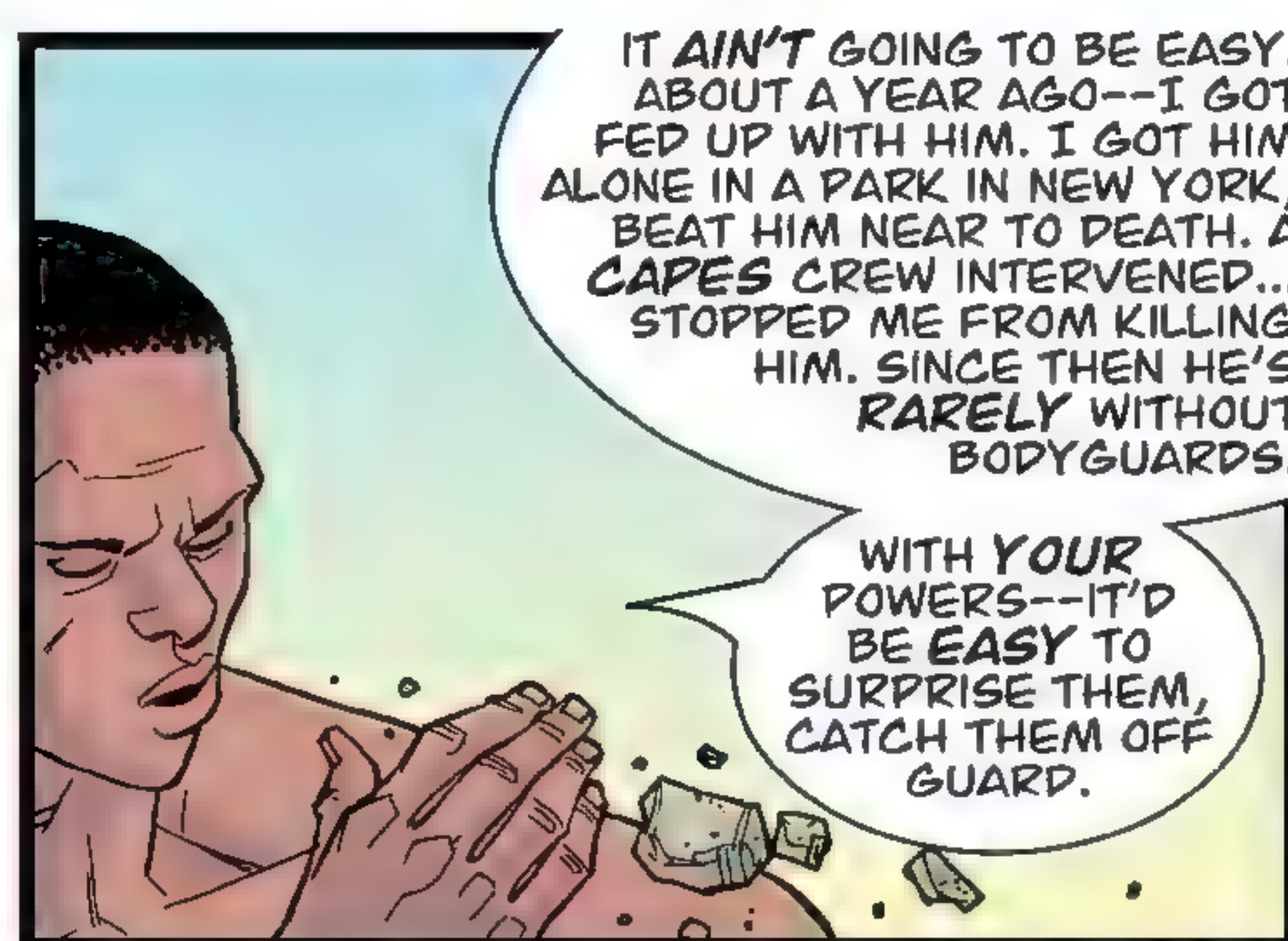
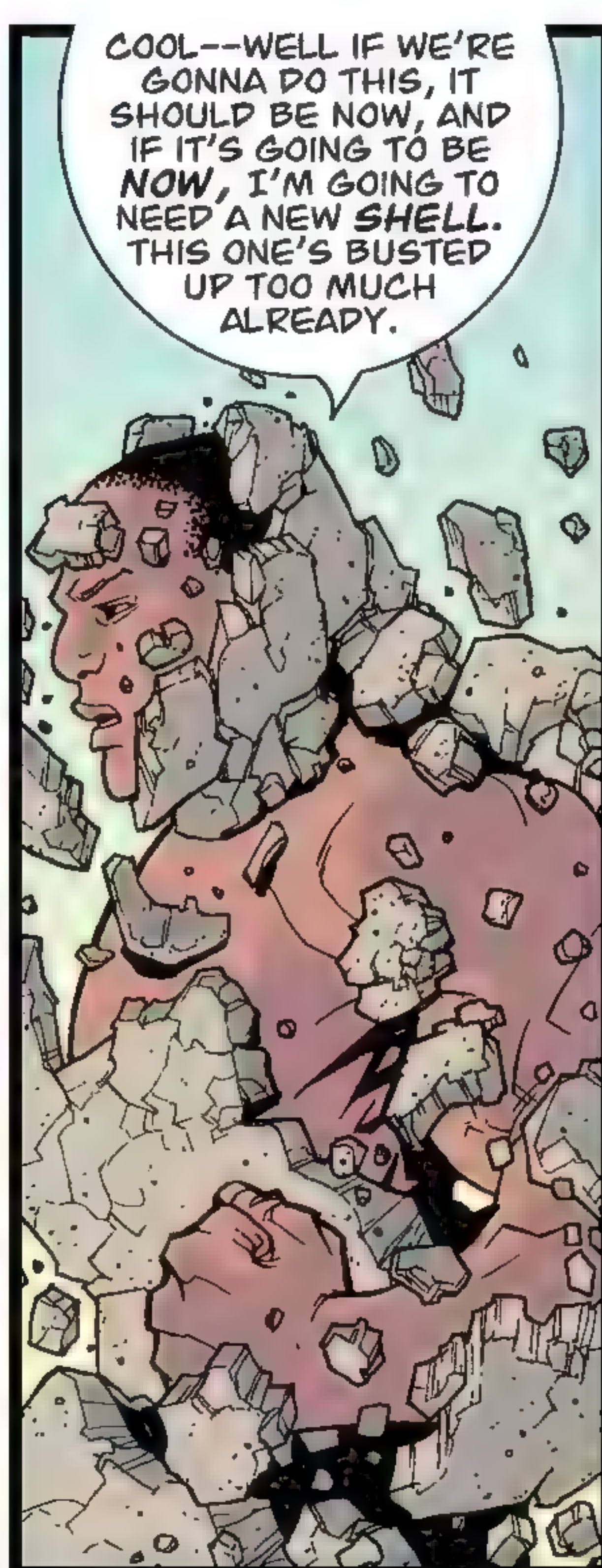
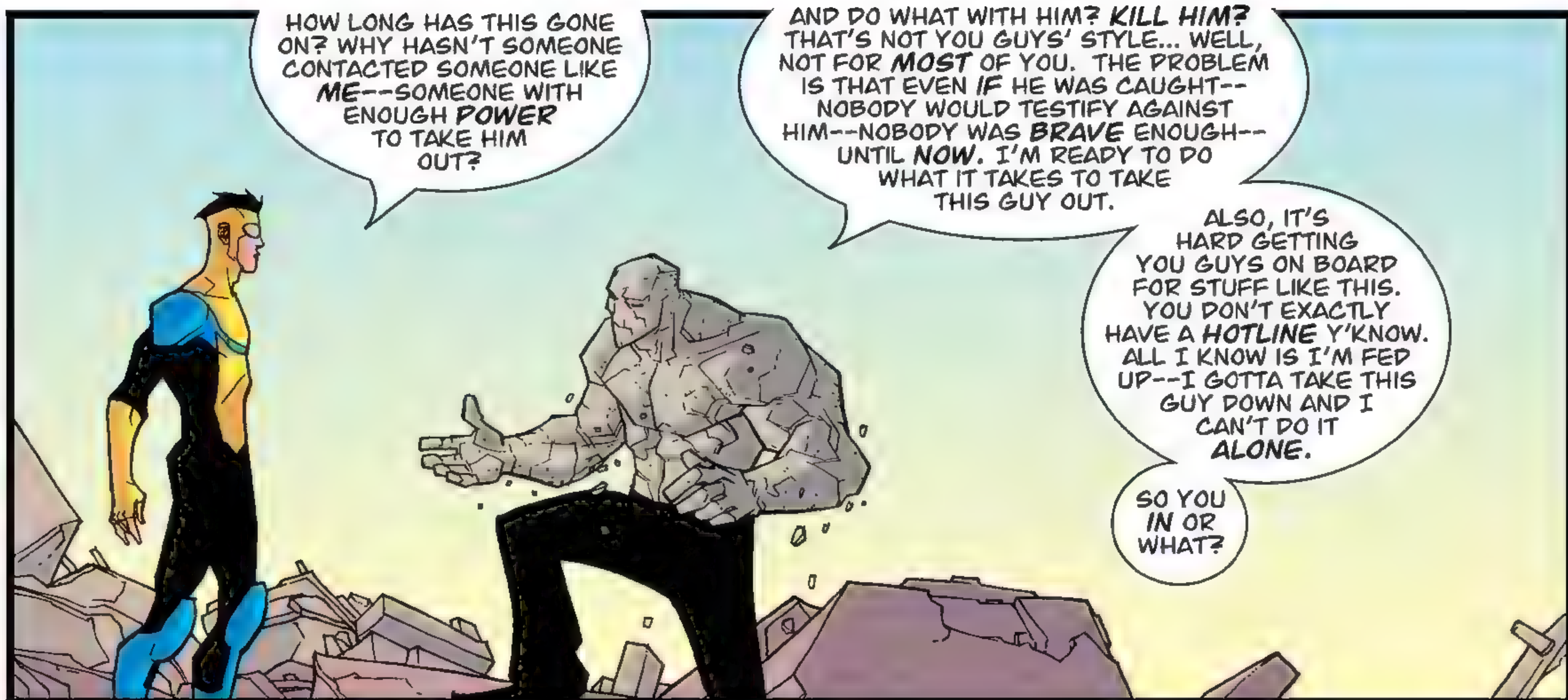
WHOA, WHOA, **WHOA!** I NEED YOUR **HELP**. I AIN'T HERE FOR A **FIGHT**. I NEED YOU TO HELP ME TAKE DOWN **MACHINE HEAD** ONCE AND FOR ALL.

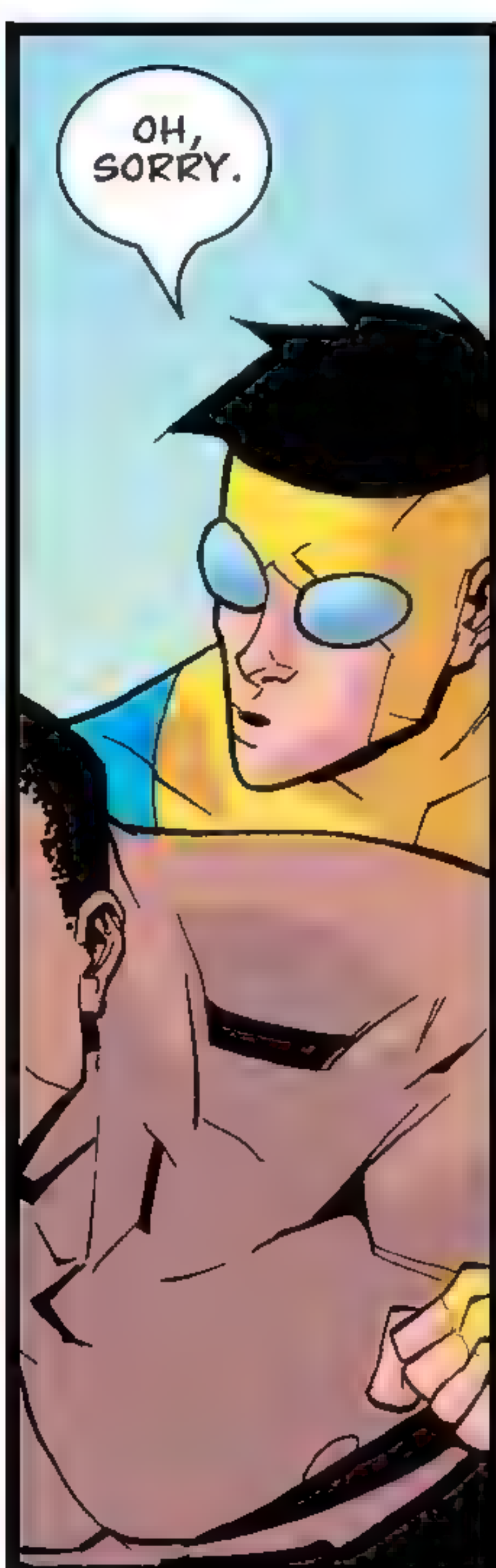
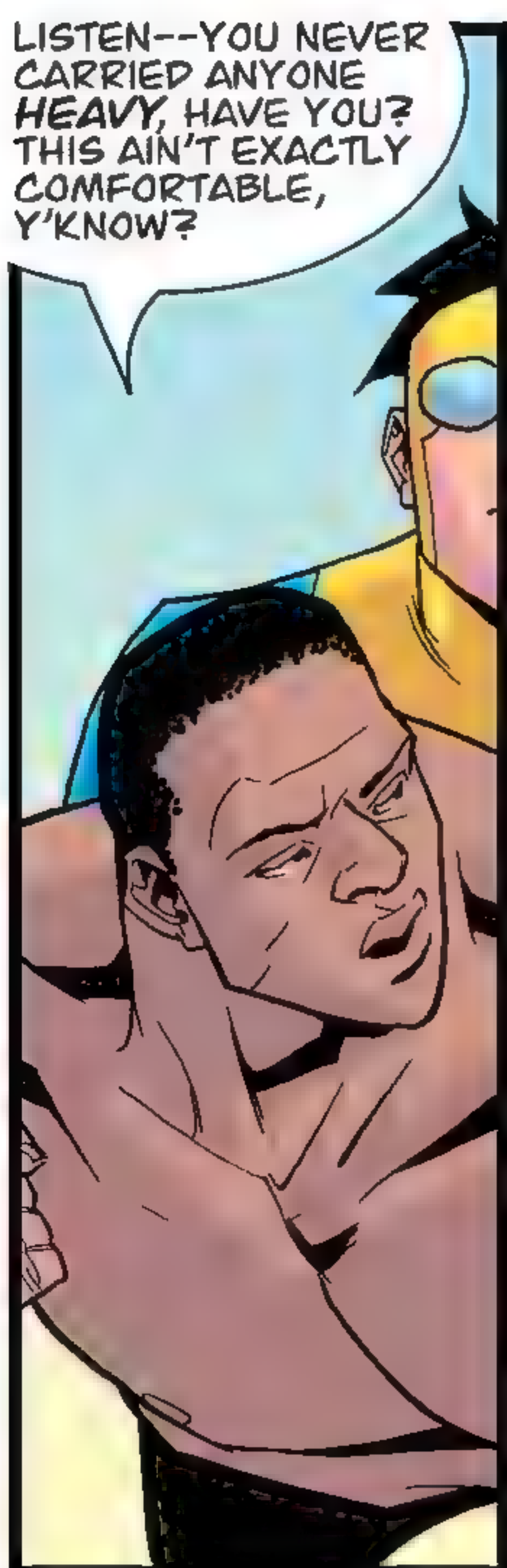
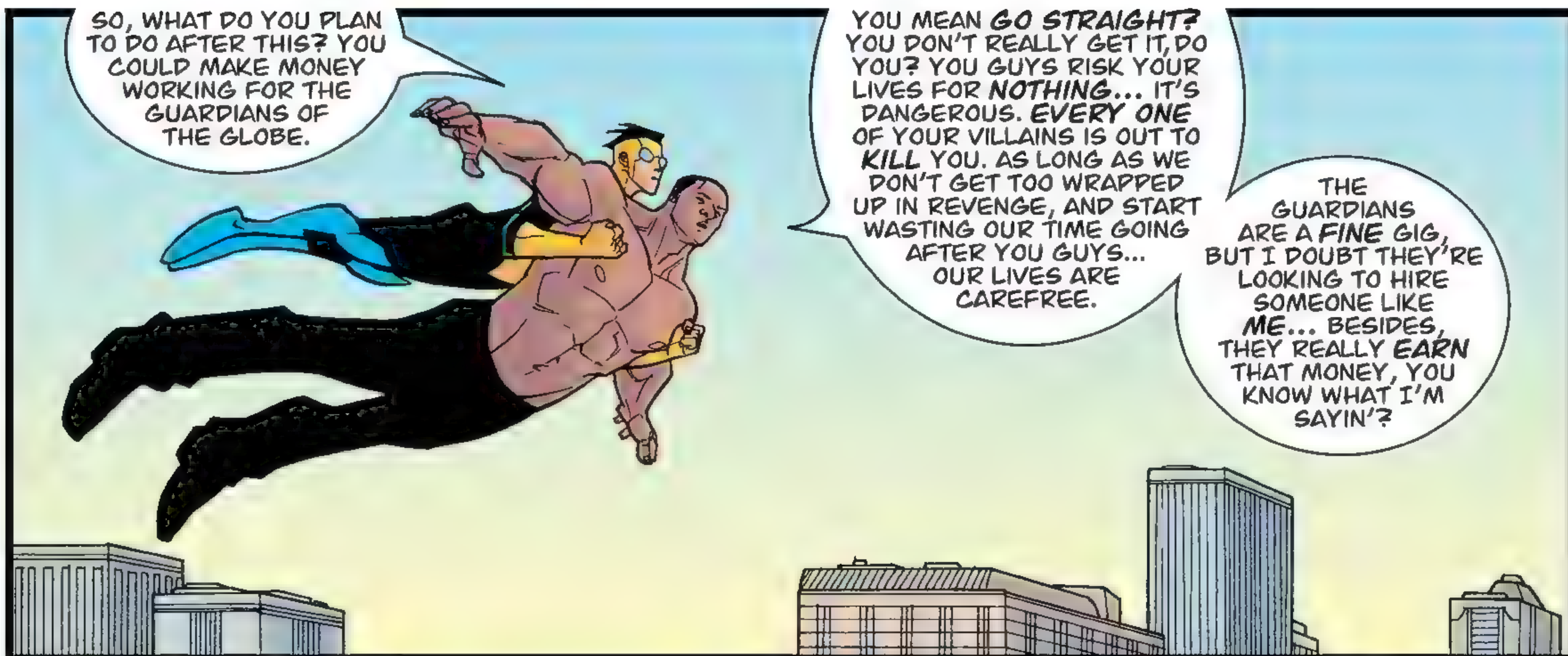


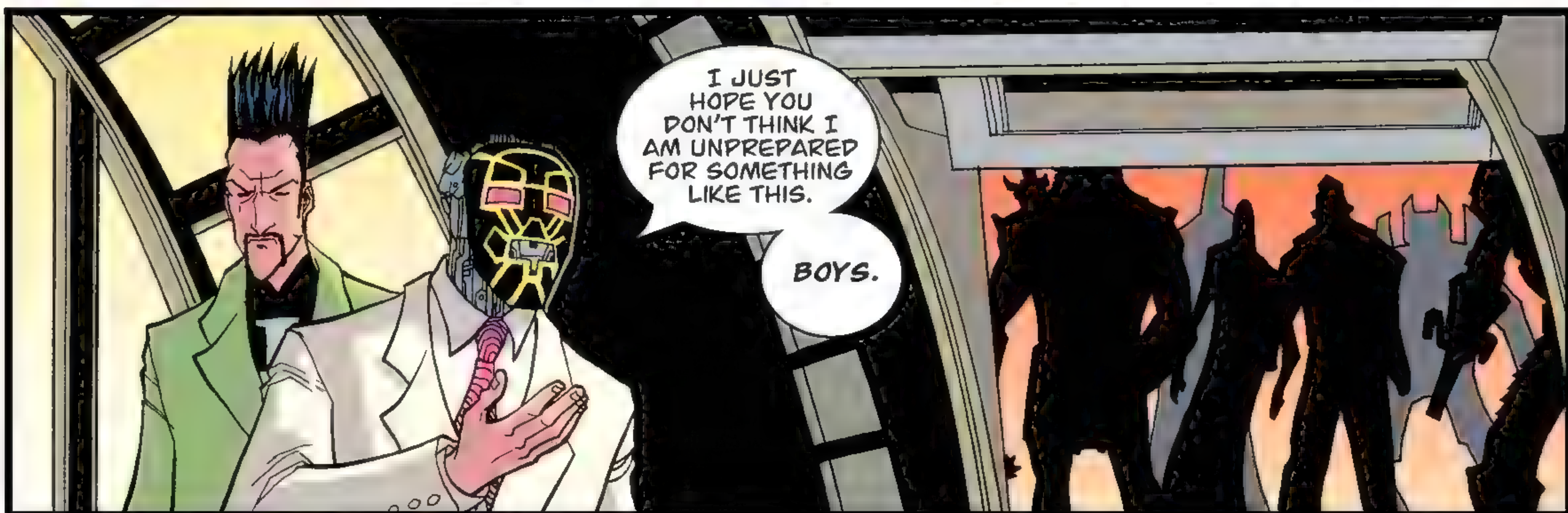
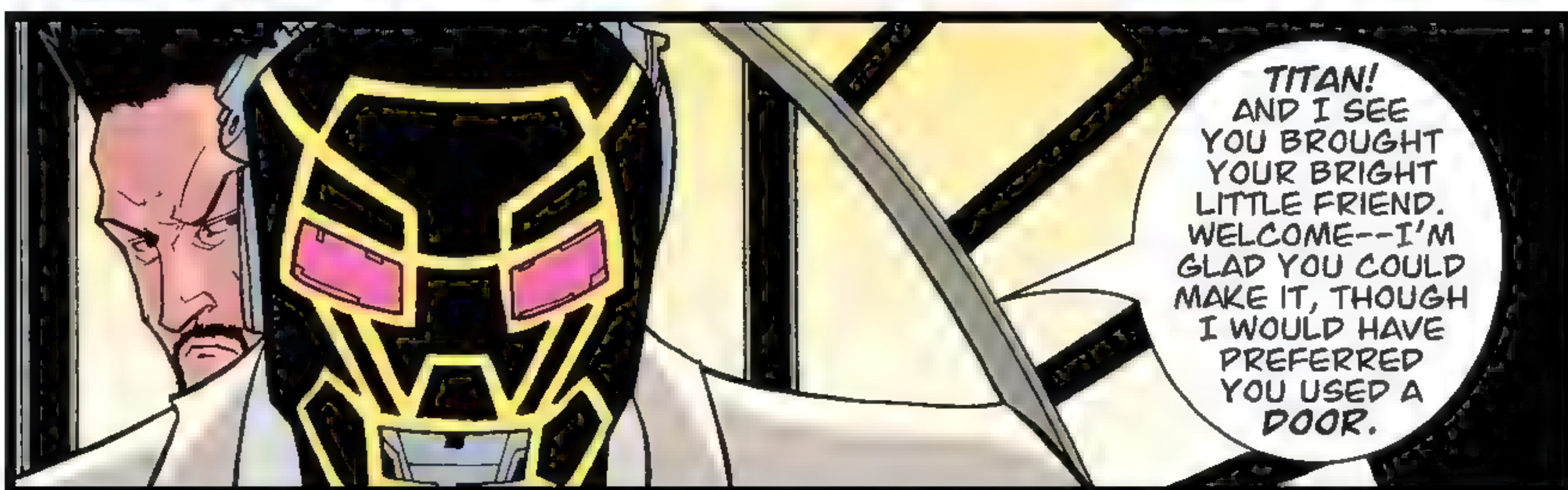
WHO?



MACHINE HEAD... HE'S THE TOP CRIME BOSS IN THE ENTIRE COUNTRY. NOT MUCH HAPPENS WITHOUT **HIS** SAY SO. POLICE CAN'T **TOUCH** HIM. HE'S GOT TOO MUCH FIREPOWER--AND MANPOWER. HE JUST SITS IN THERE DOING WHATEVER HE PLEASES. MURDER, DRUGS, **EVERYTHING**... HE DOES IT ALL.





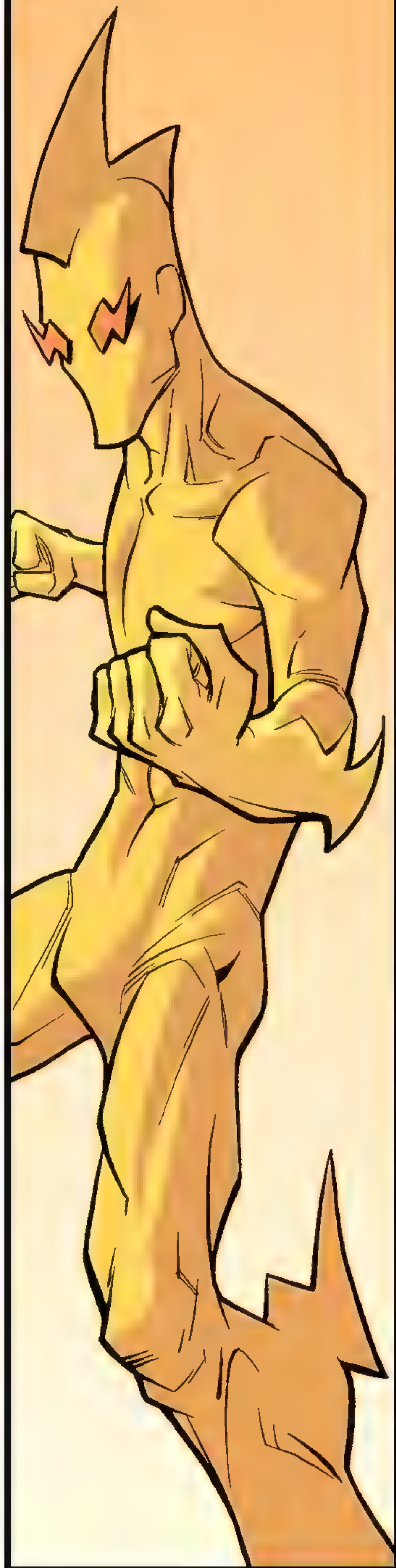
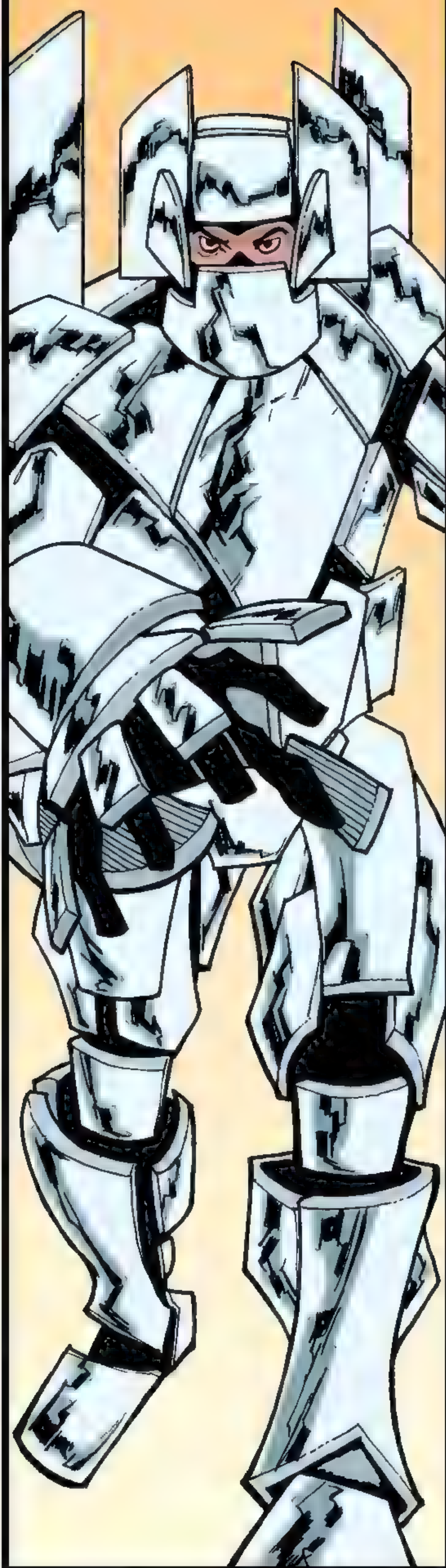
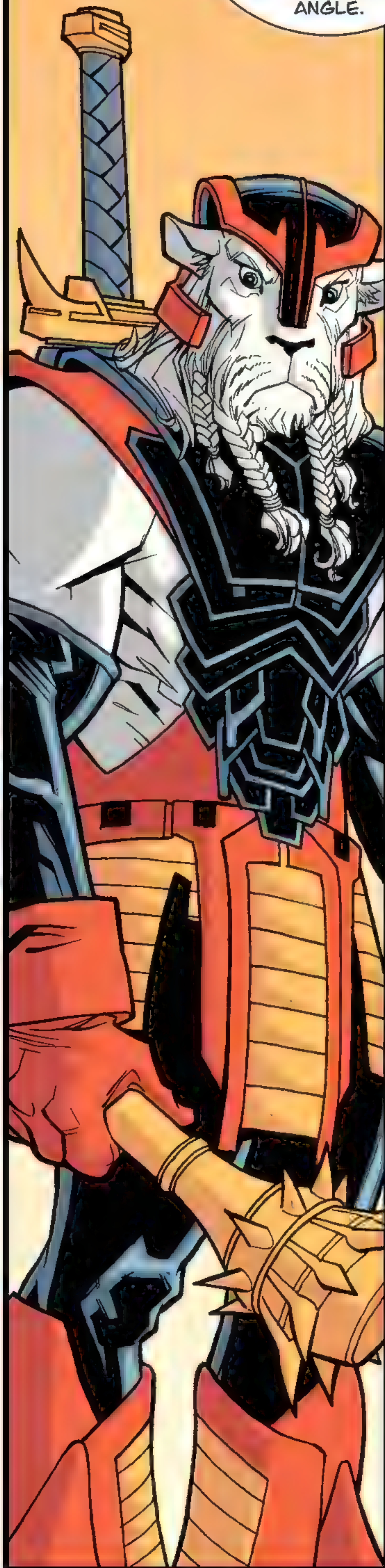


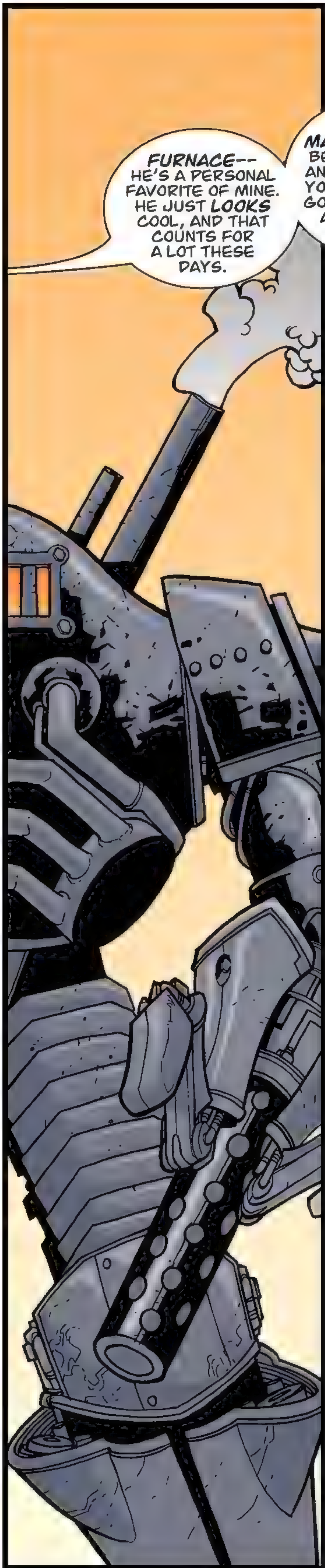
ALLOW
ME TO
INTRODUCE
YOU.

FIRST UP IS
BATTLE BEAST--
SCOURGE OF TWIN
GALAXIES, WHATEVER
THAT MEANS. HE LIKES
TO TAKE TROPHIES SO
MAKE SURE YOUR NECK
DOESN'T MEET ONE
OF HIS WEAPONS
AT THE WRONG
ANGLE.

NEXT UP IS
MAGNATTACK.
YOU'LL FIND OUT
HIS POWERS SOON
ENOUGH. I DON'T
WANT TO RUIN THE
SURPRISE.

THEN,
STRAIGHT FROM
RUSSIA COMES
KURSK. HE'S GOT
SOME KIND OF
ELECTRICITY POWERS.
I'M NOT CLEAR ON
THE SPECIFICS... HE'S
DEADLY, AND THAT'S
REALLY ALL THAT
MATTERS.





FURNACE--
HE'S A PERSONAL
FAVORITE OF MINE.
HE JUST LOOKS
COOL, AND THAT
COUNTS FOR
A LOT THESE
DAYS.

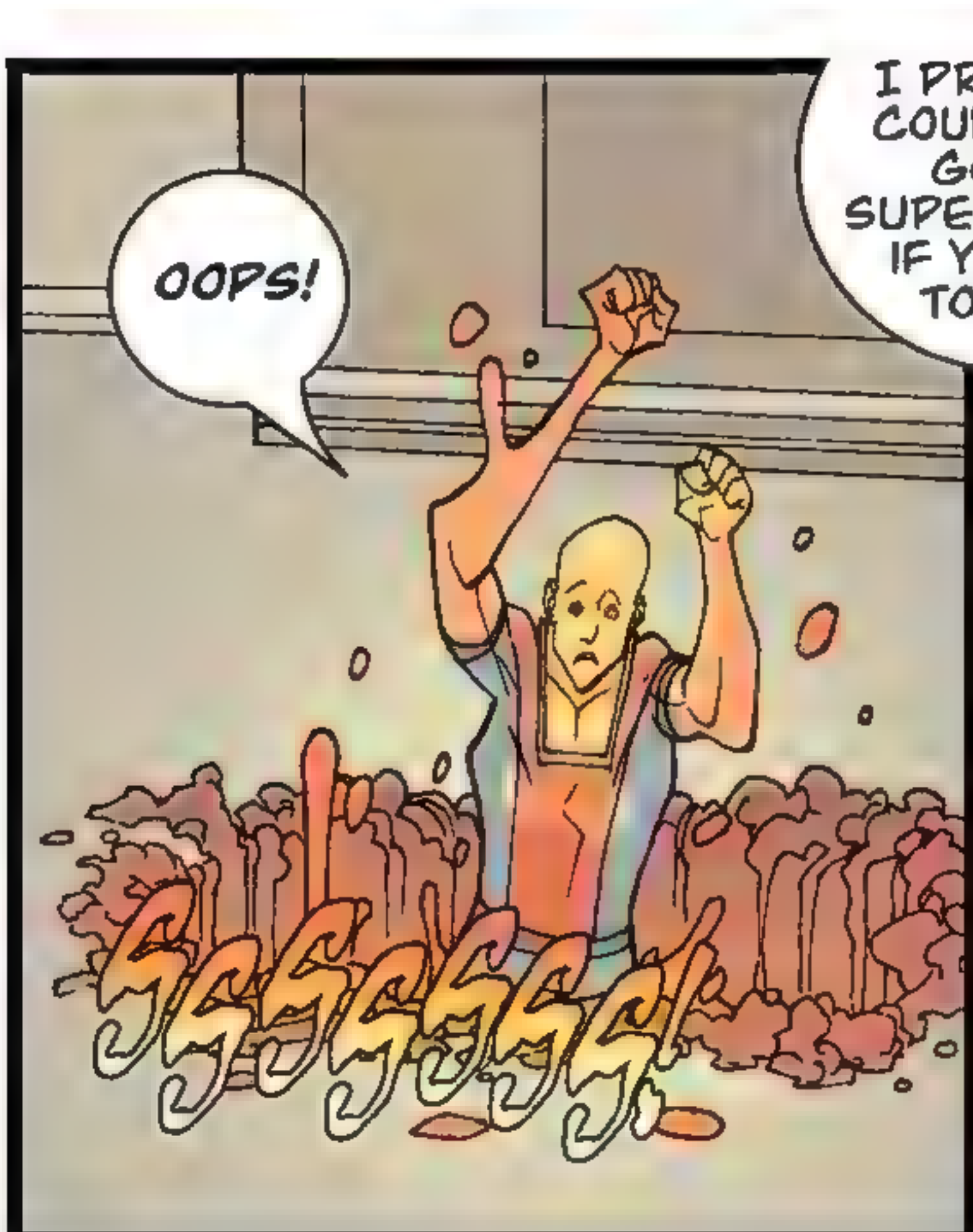
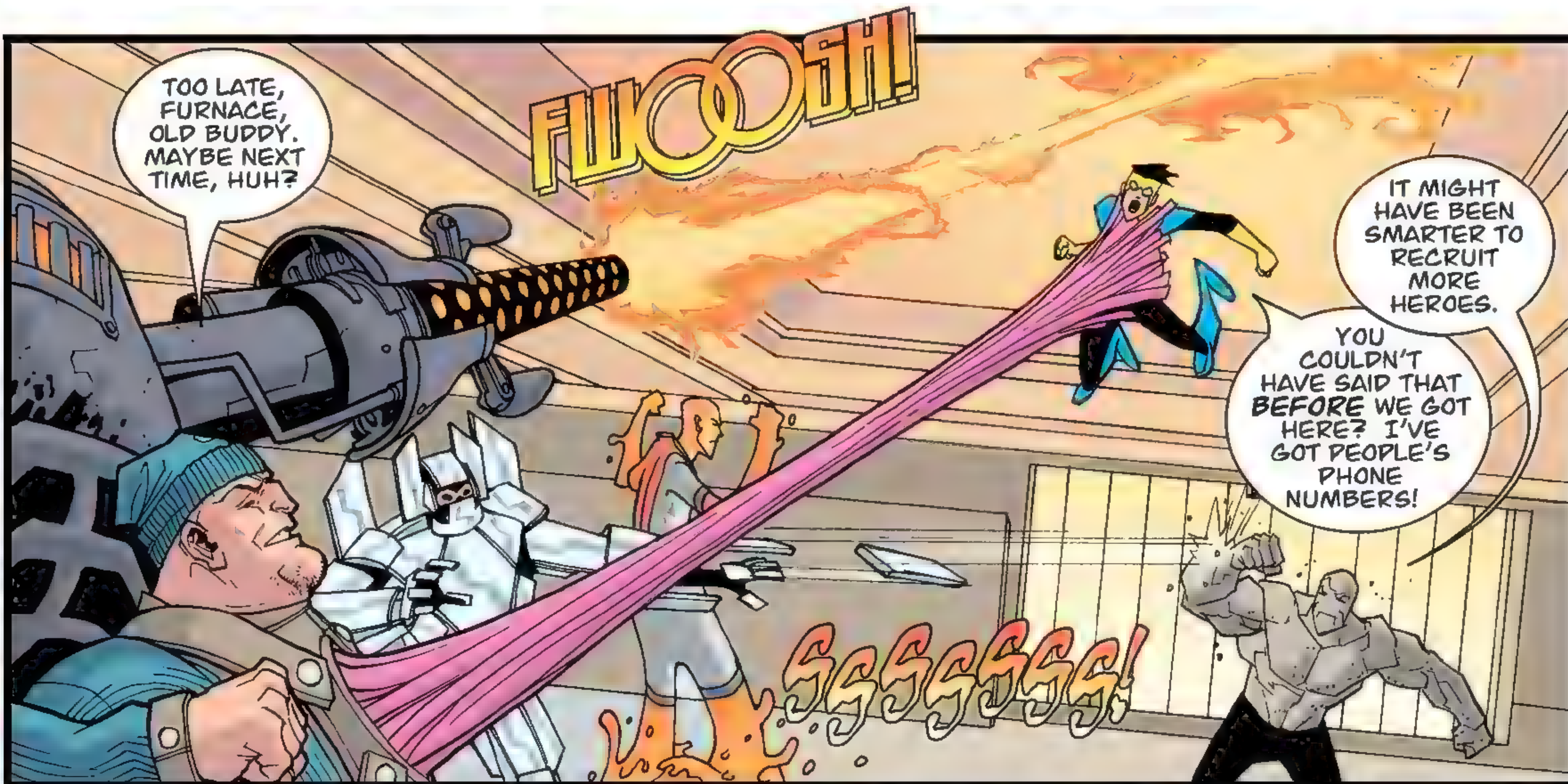
THIS IS
MAGMANIAC.
BETWEEN HIM
AND FURNACE,
YOU GUYS ARE
GOING TO HAVE
A HOT TIME
TODAY.

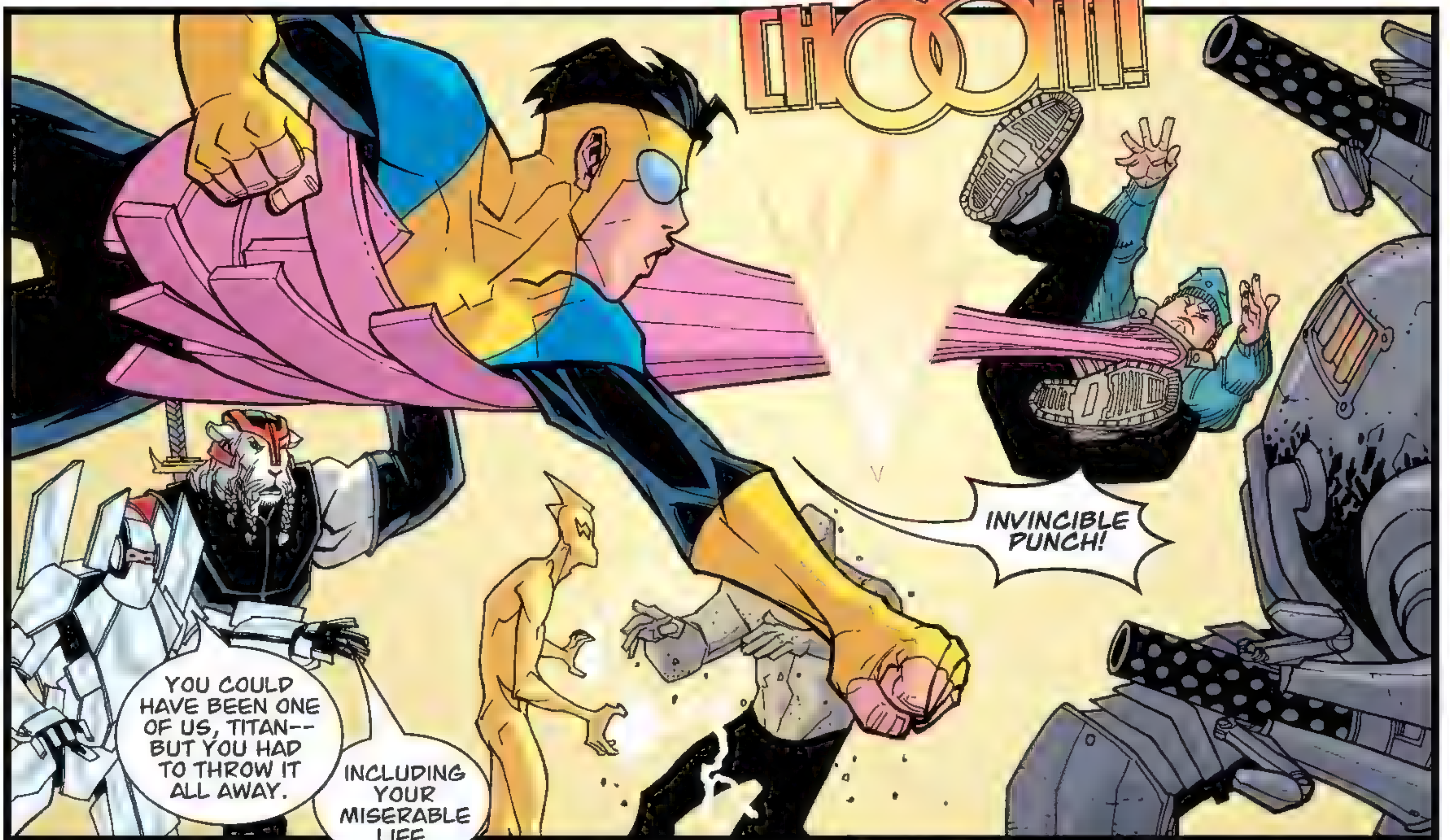
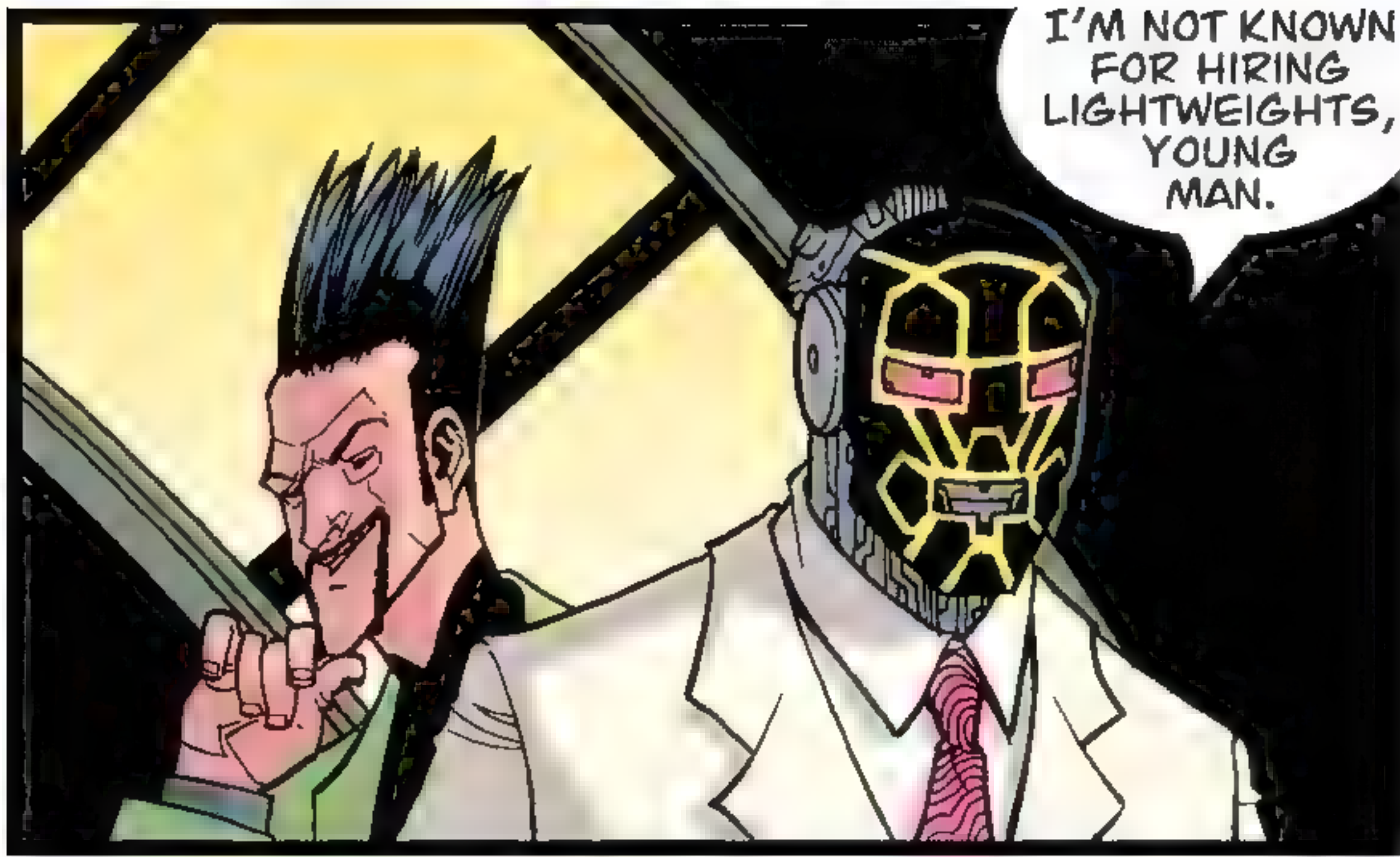
HE'LL
CERTAINLY
PUT YOUR
NAMESAKE
TO THE TEST,
INVINCIBLE.

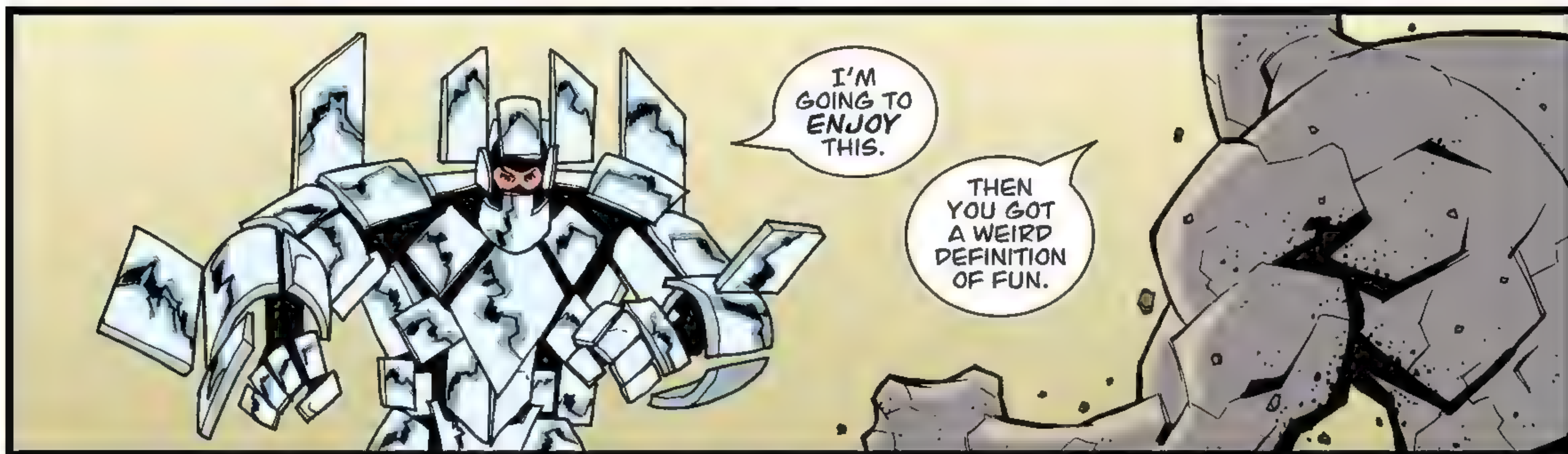
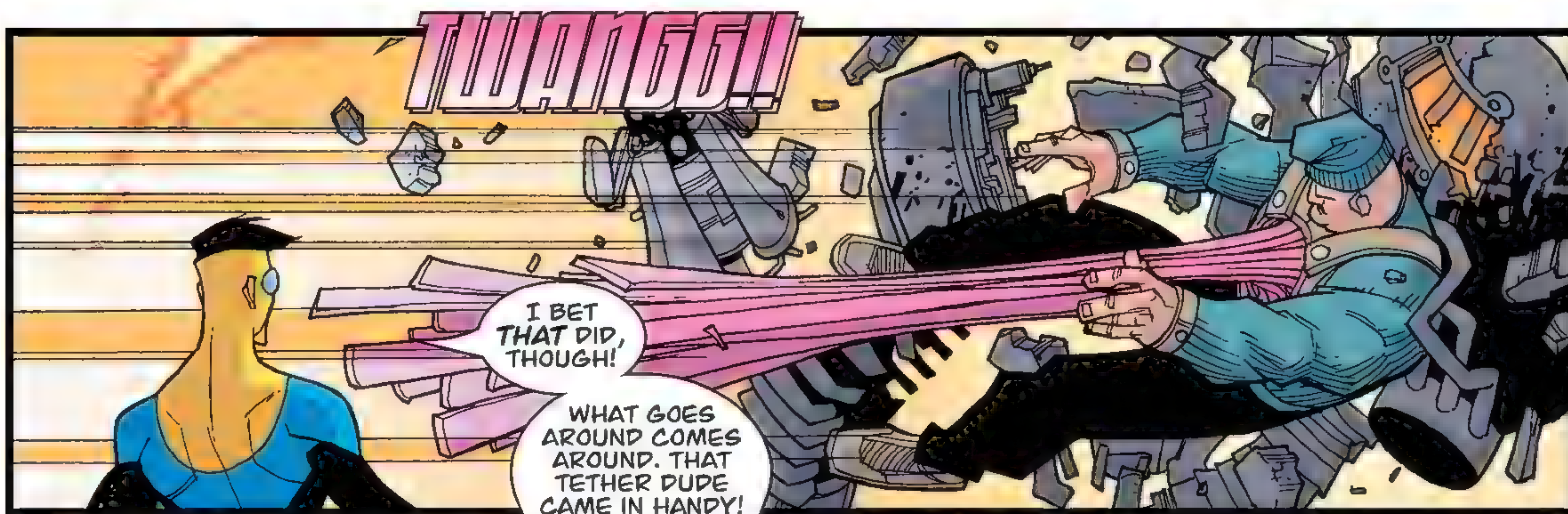
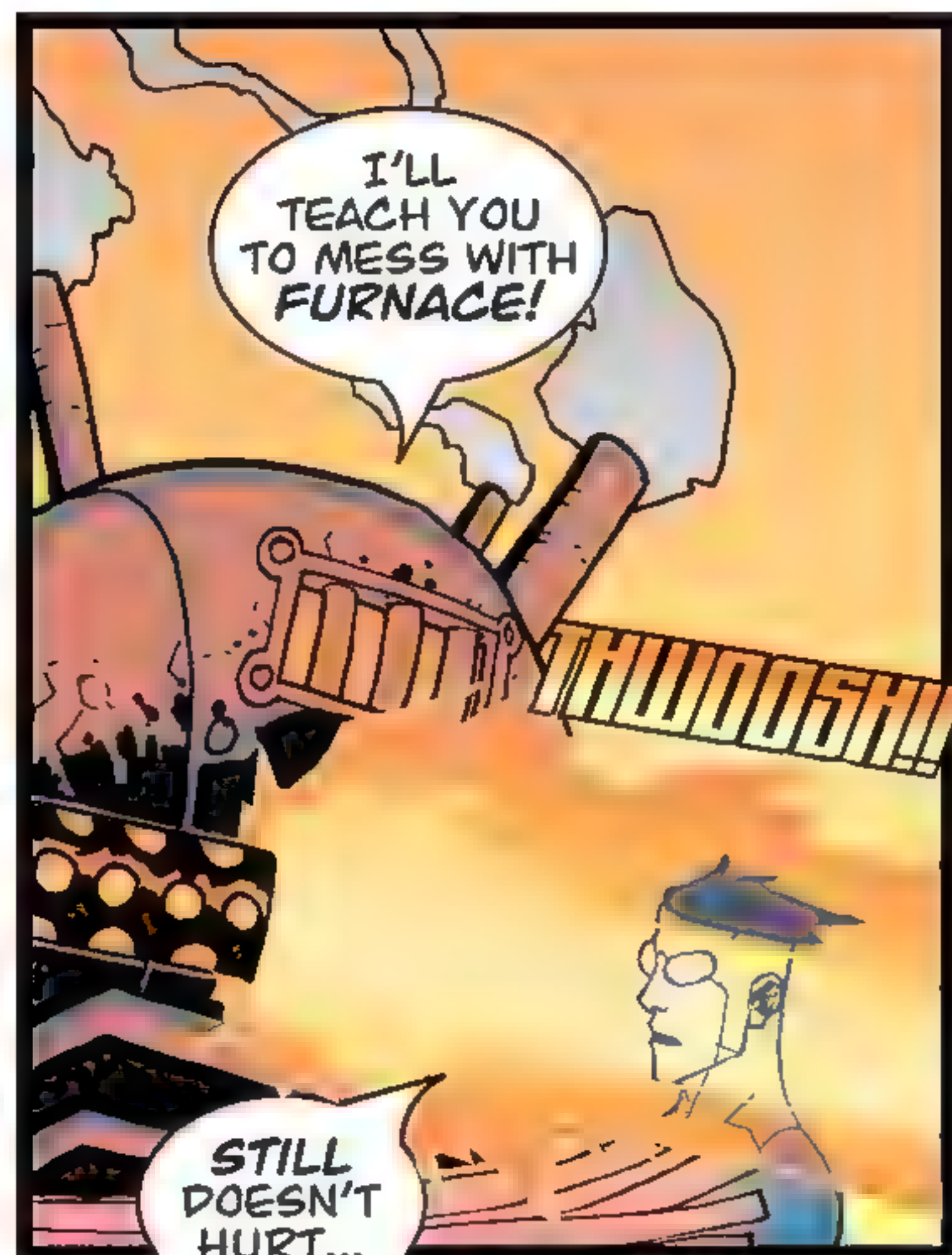
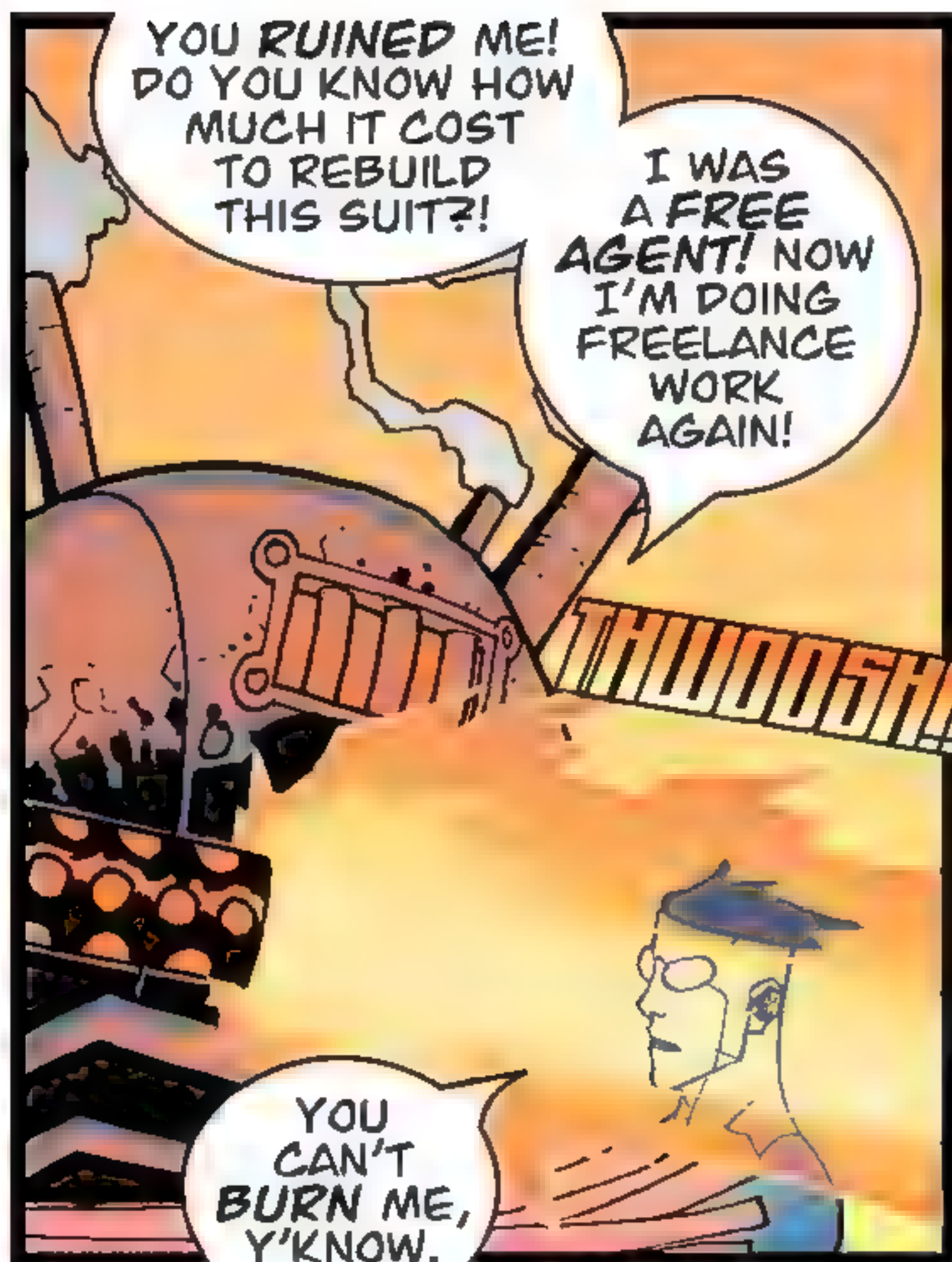
AND
LASTLY--THE
TETHER TYRANT.
NOT SURE EXACTLY
WHAT IT IS THAT
HE DOES... BUT
HE DOES IT
WELL.

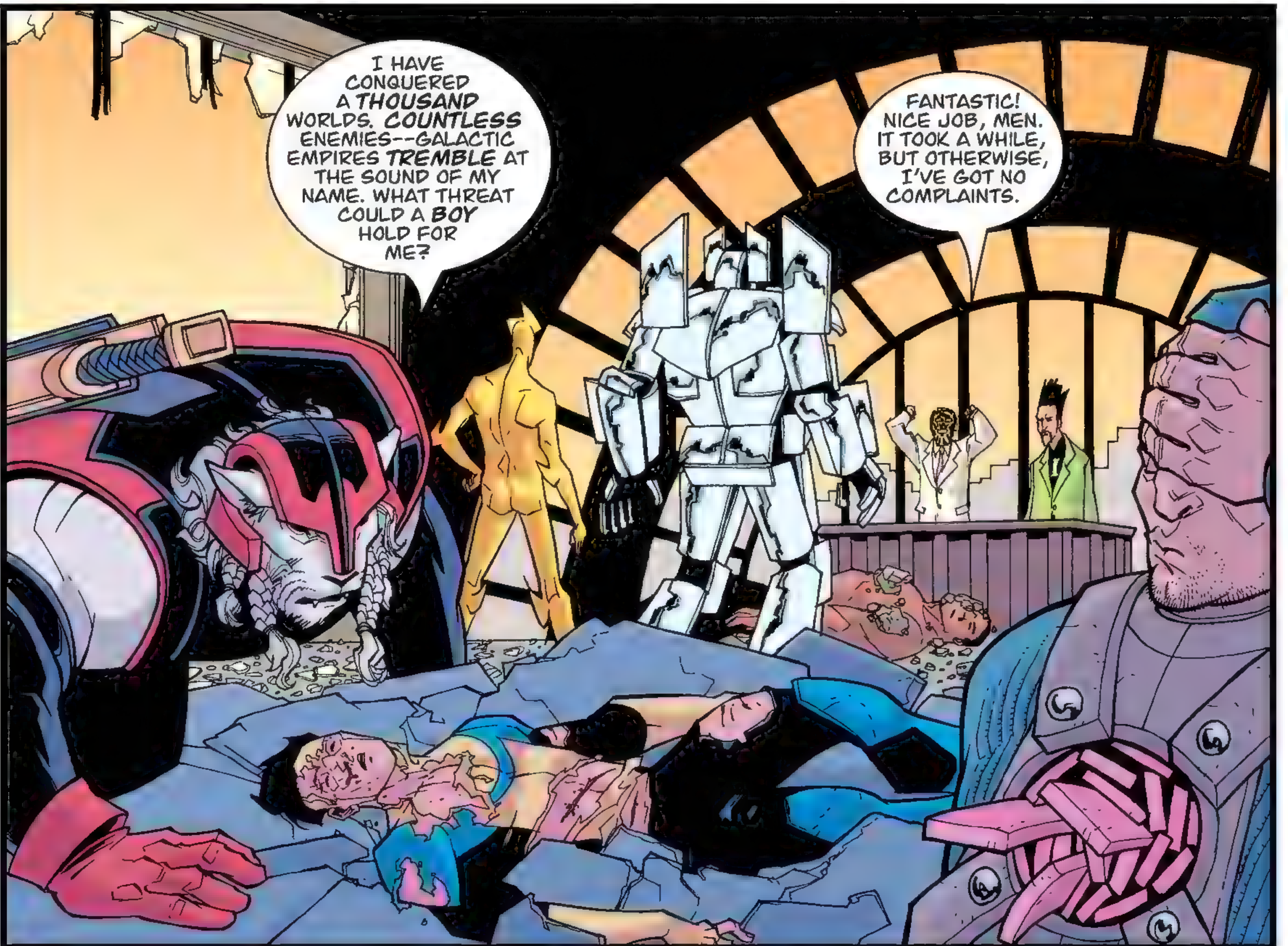
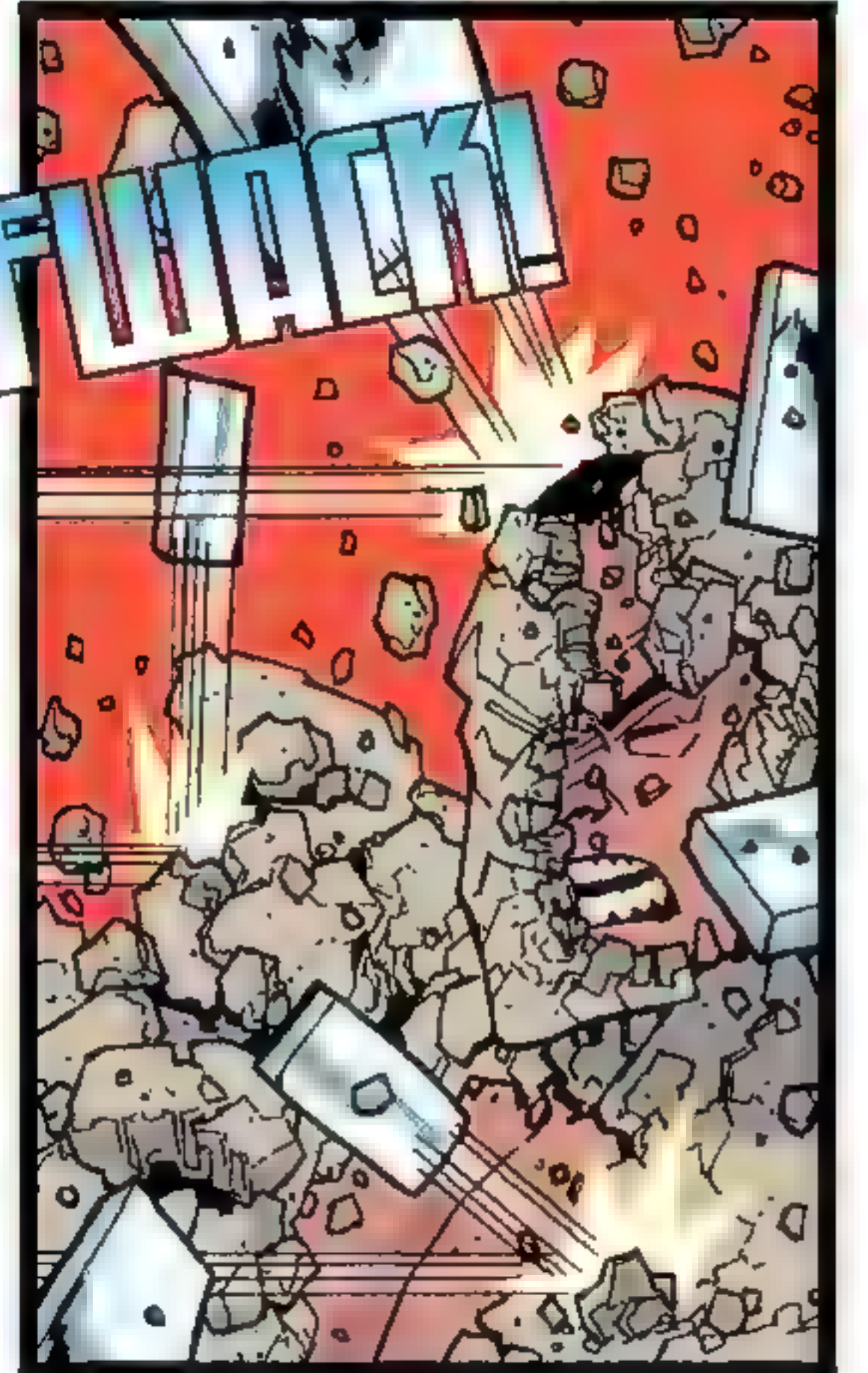
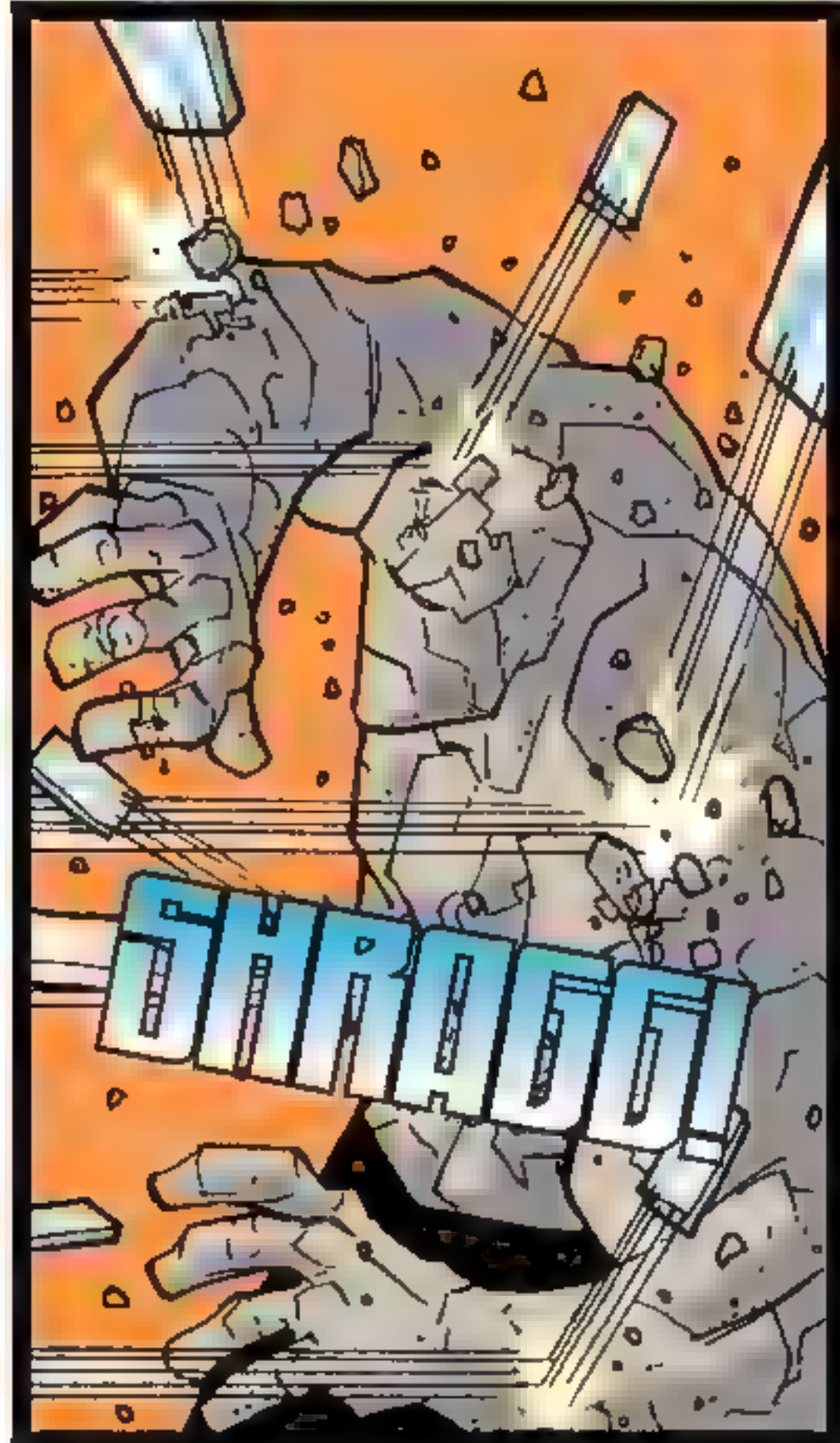
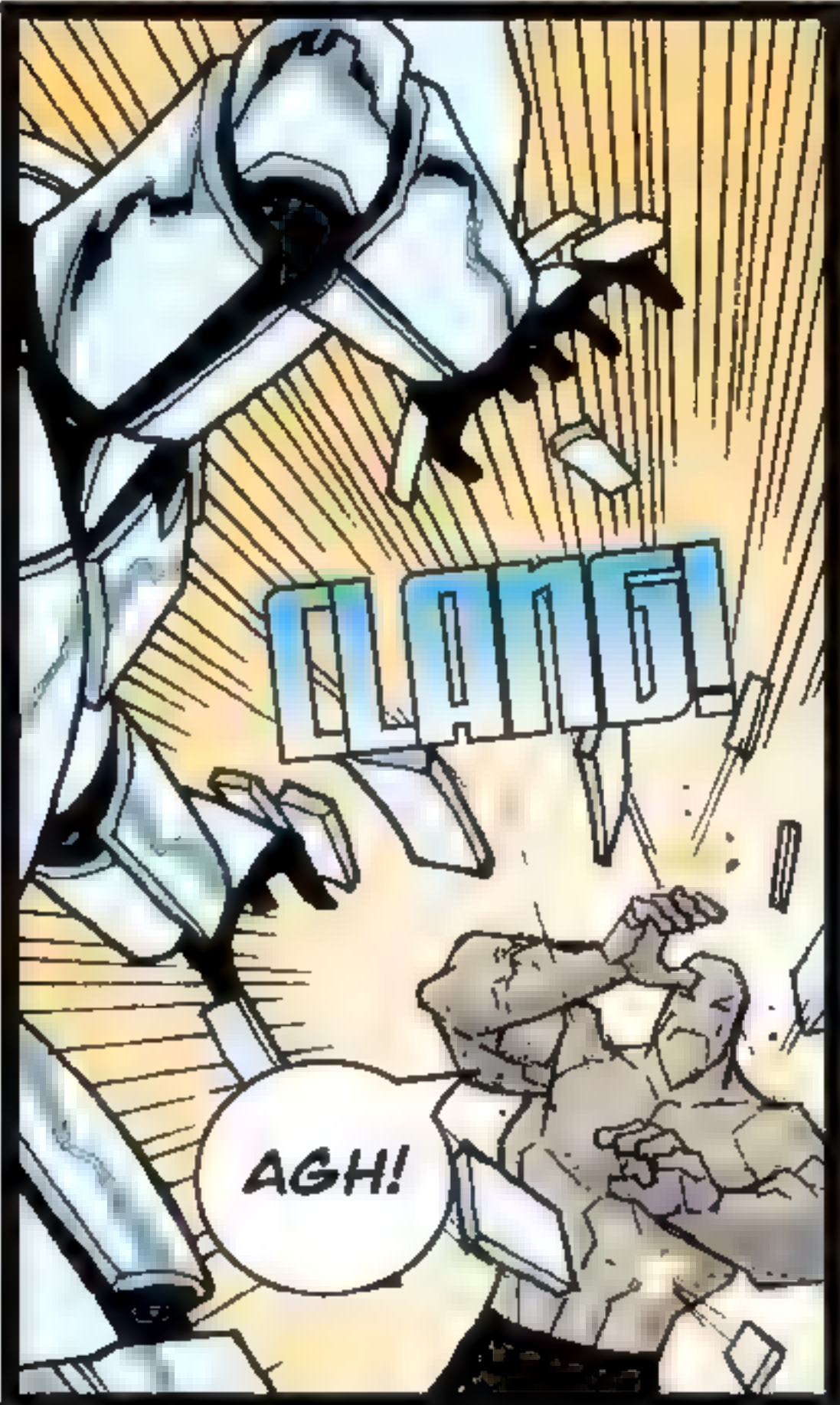
PLAY
NICE, NOW.
I'VE ALREADY
GOT A
WINDOW
TO FIX.

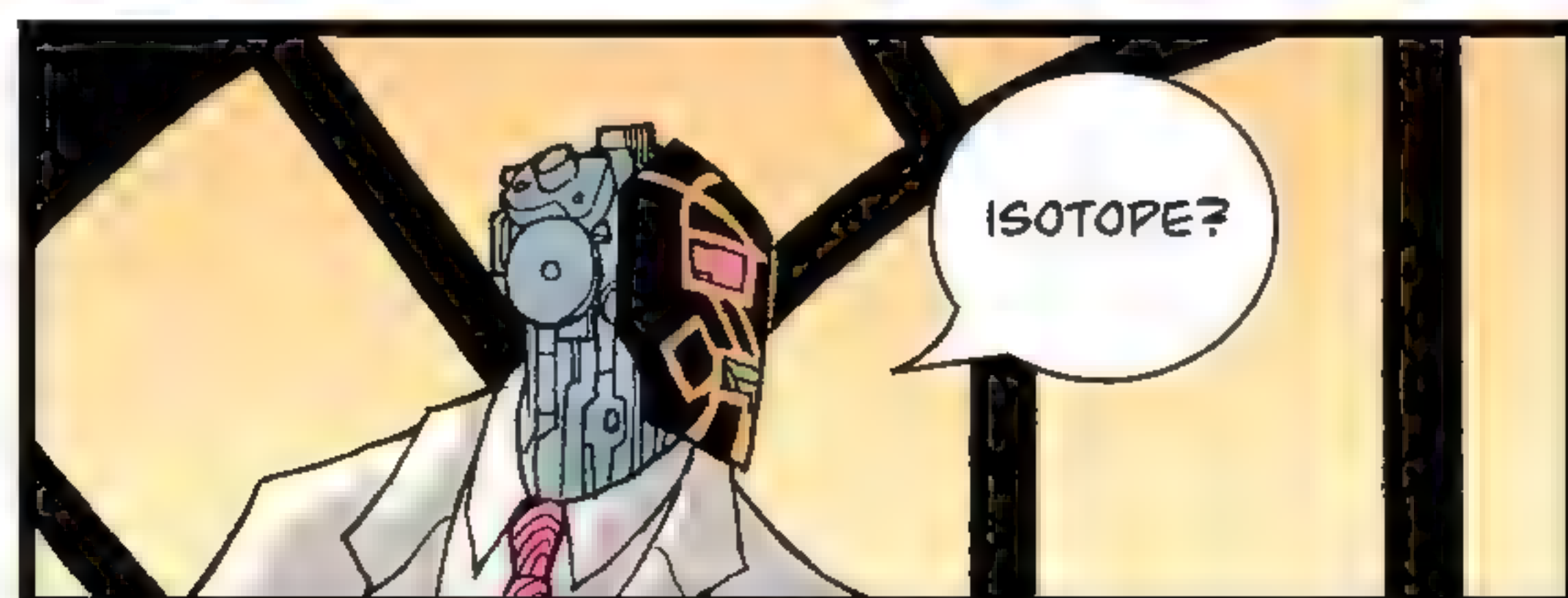
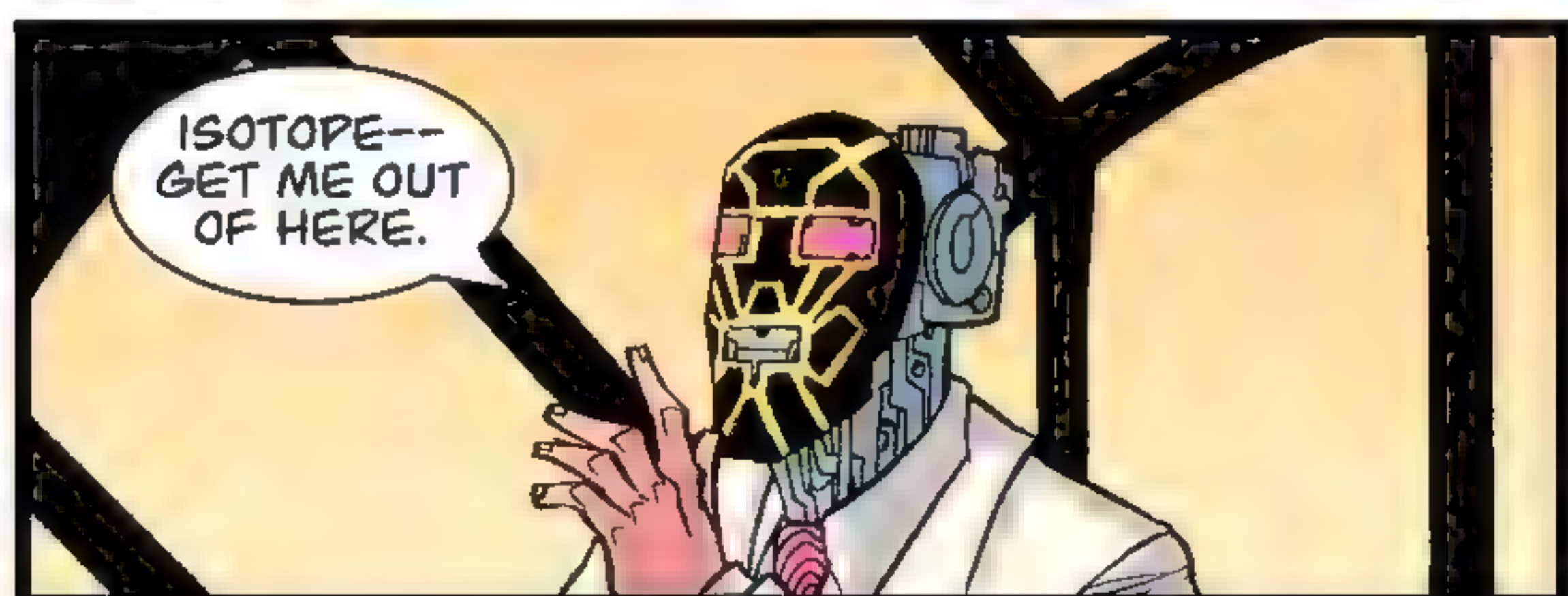


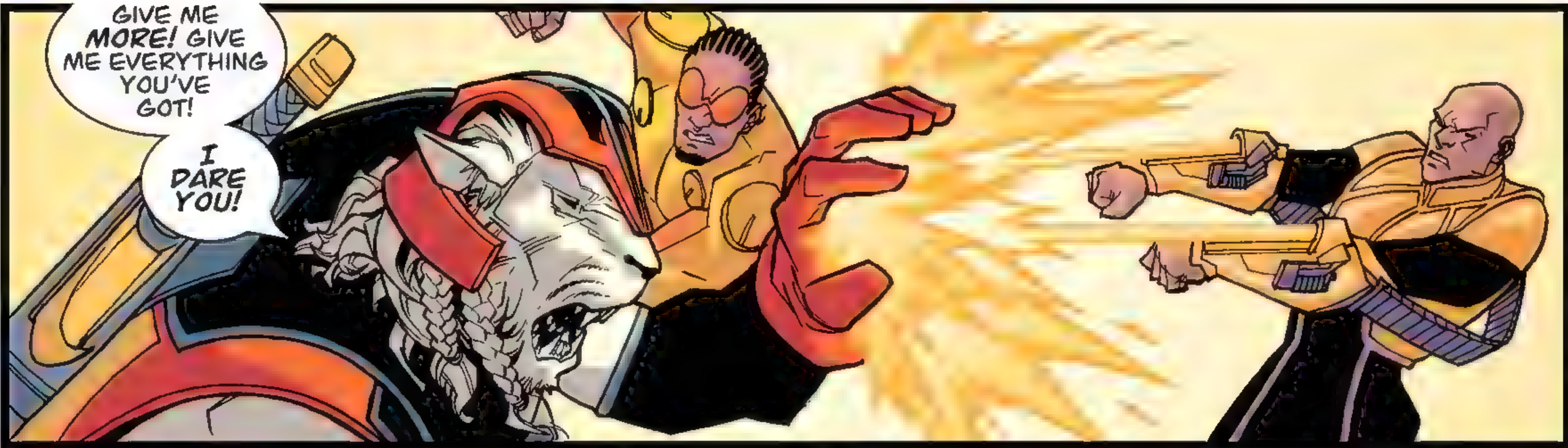
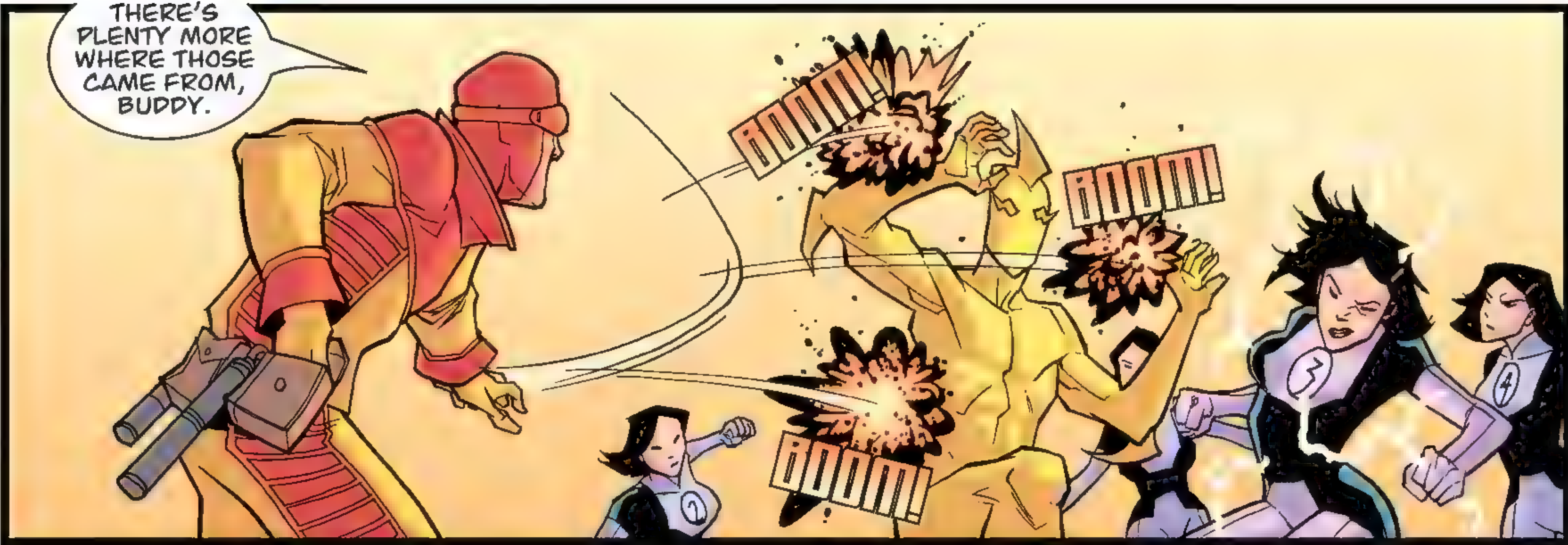


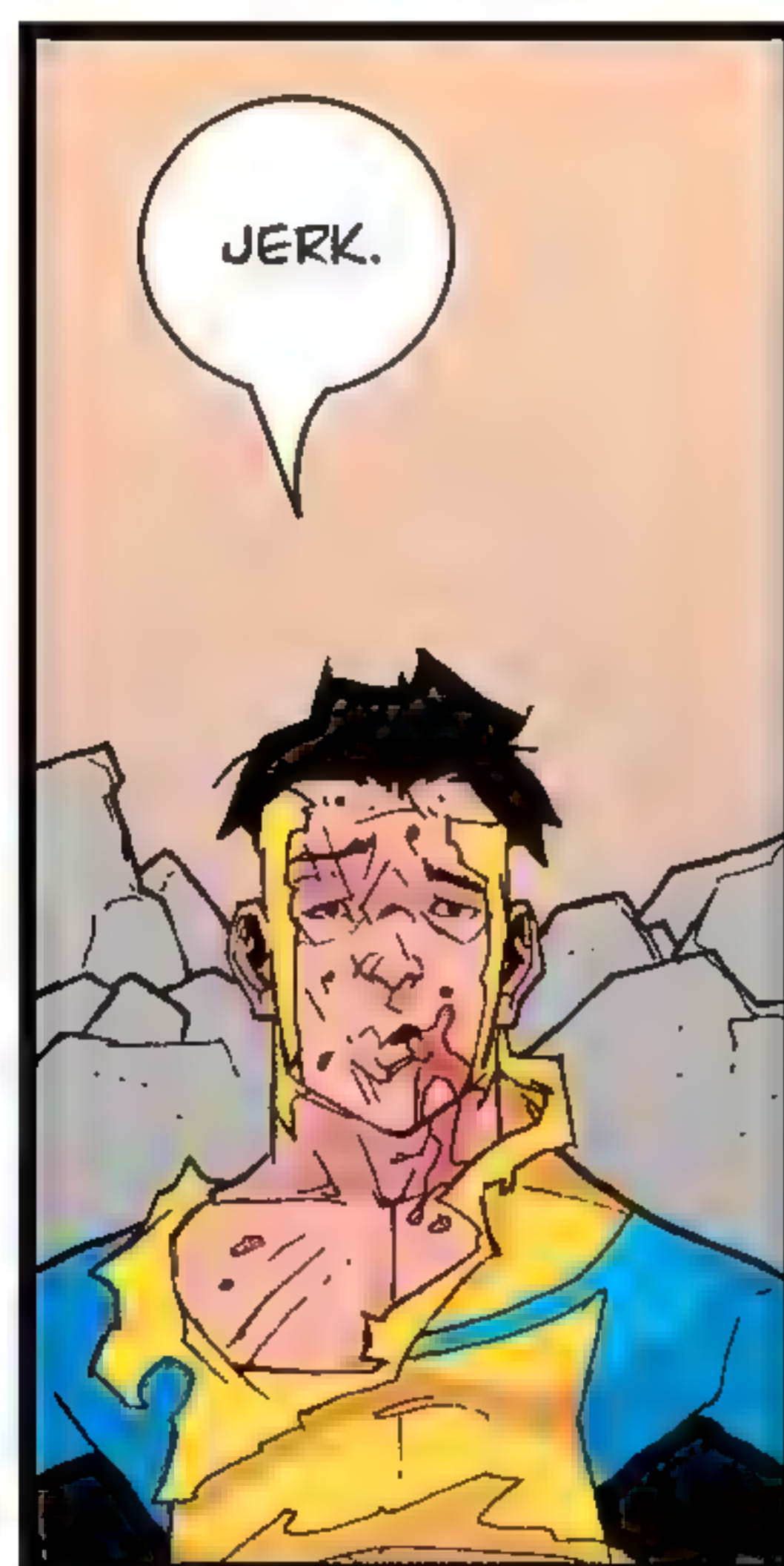
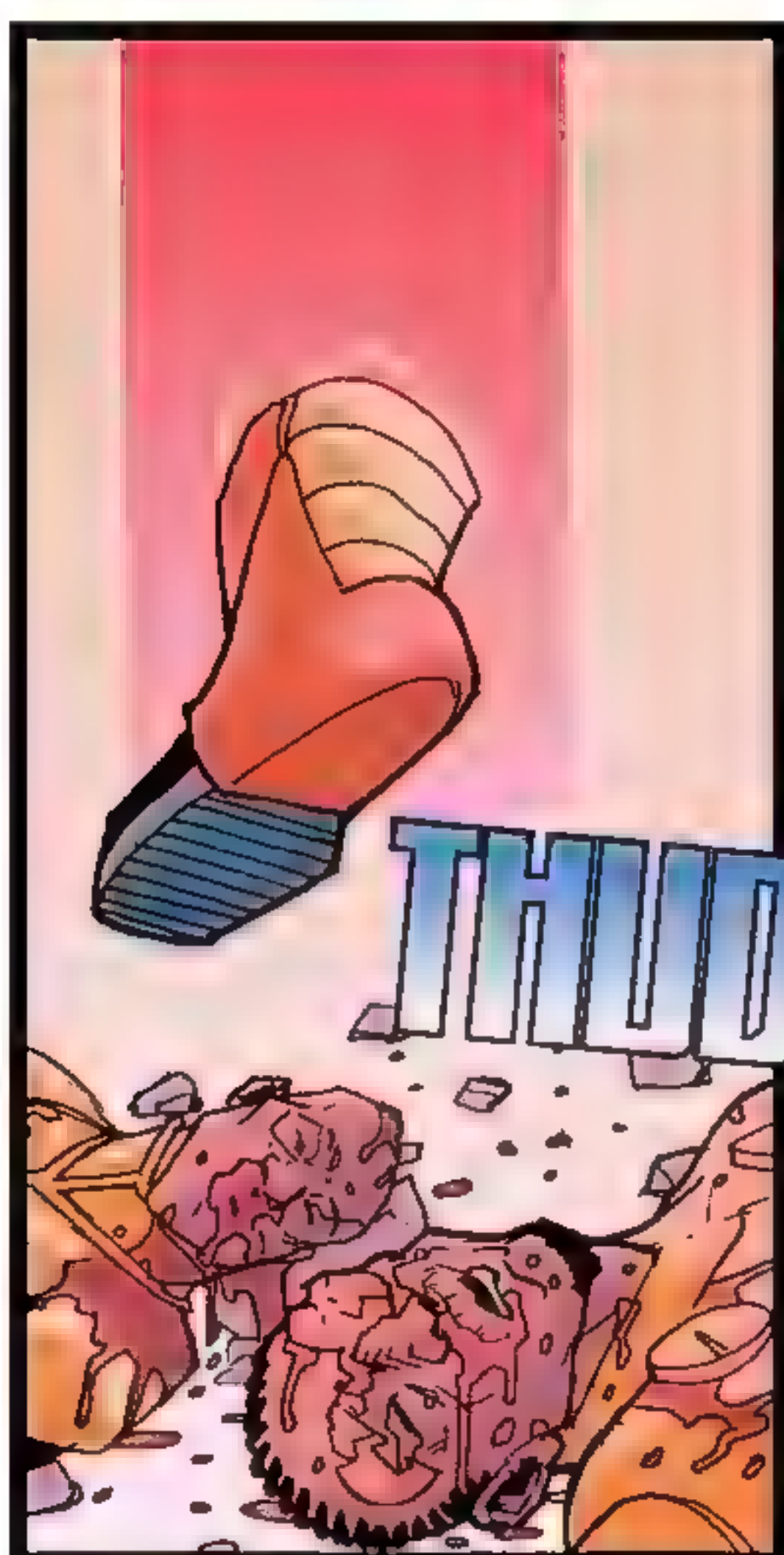


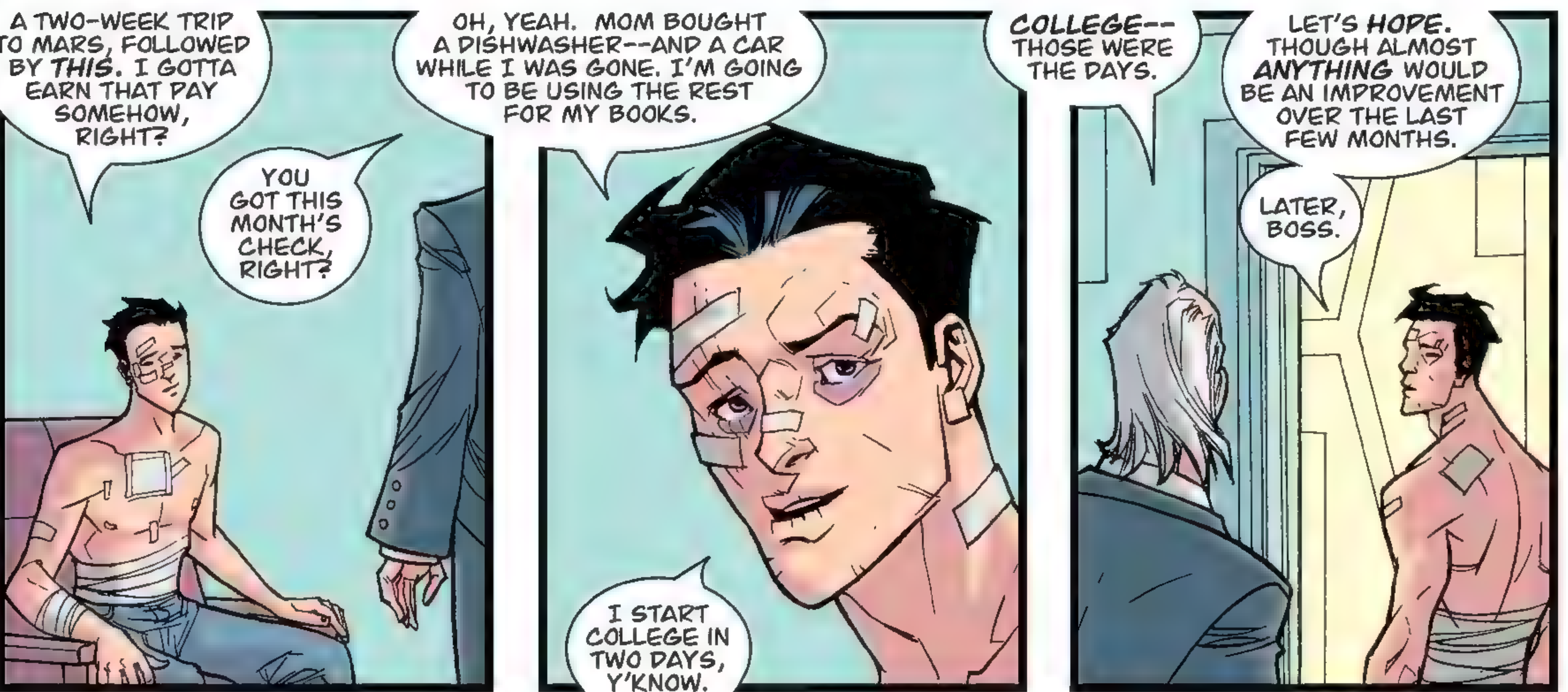
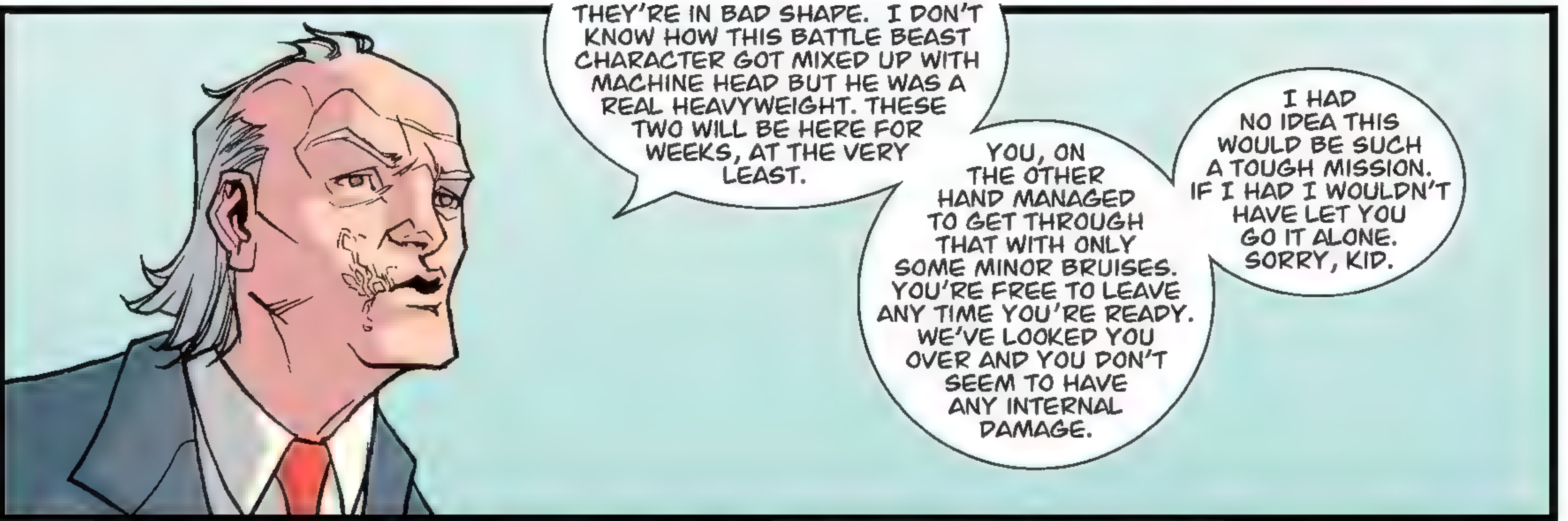
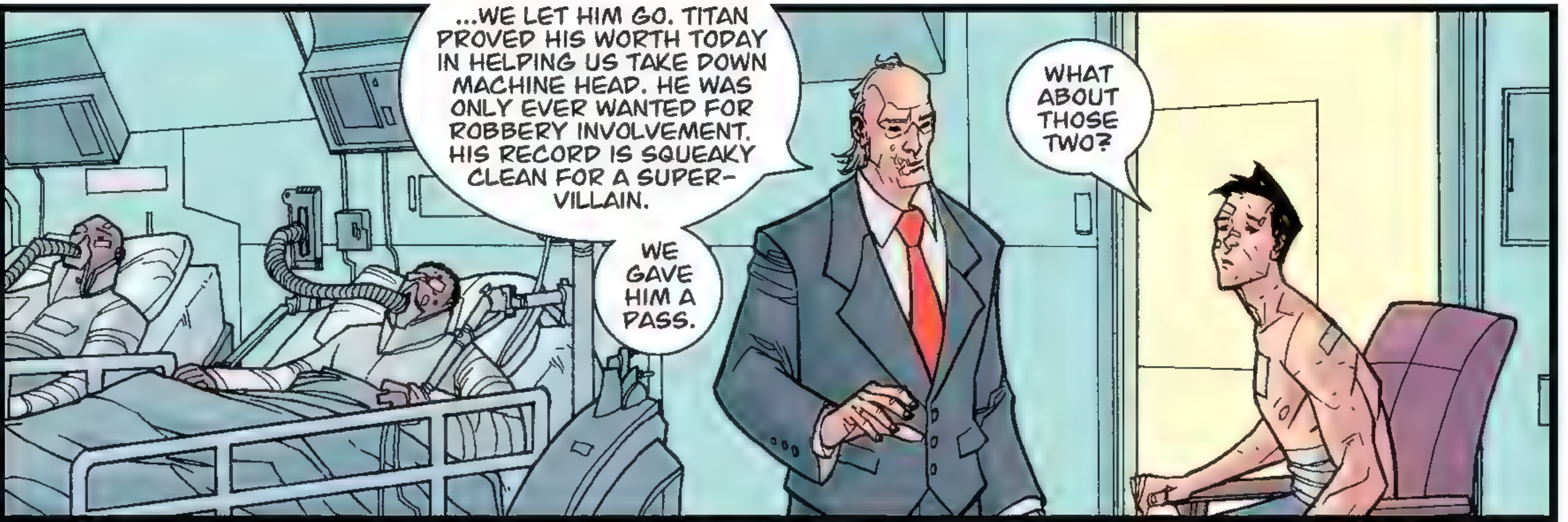
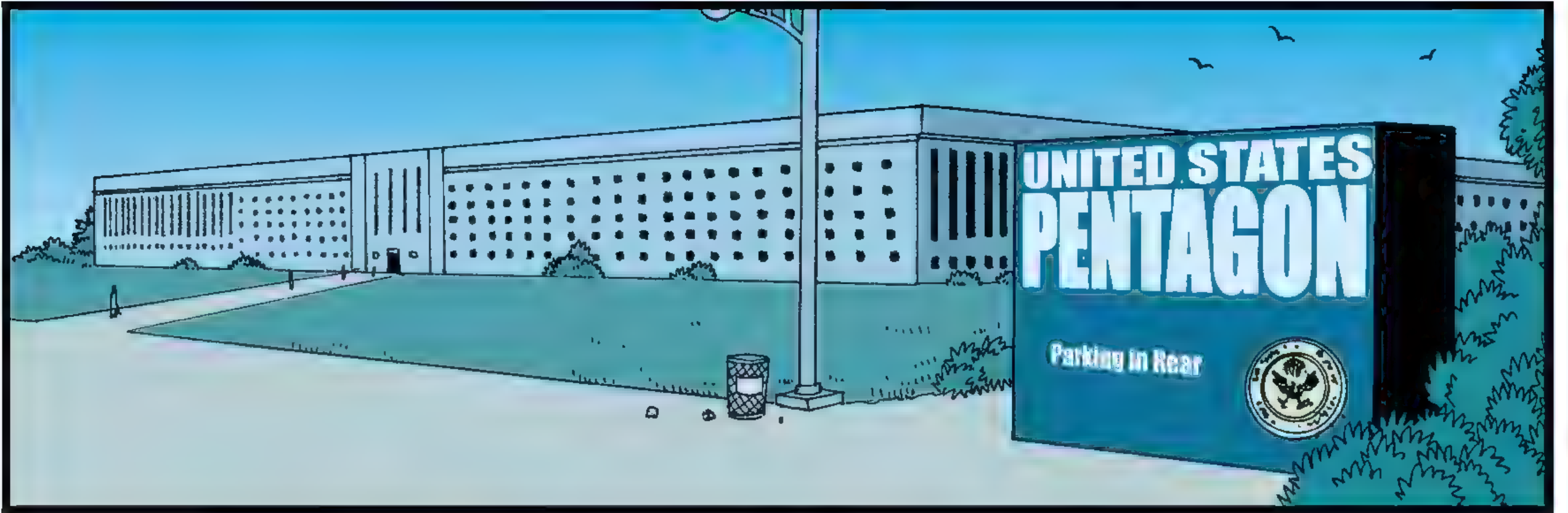


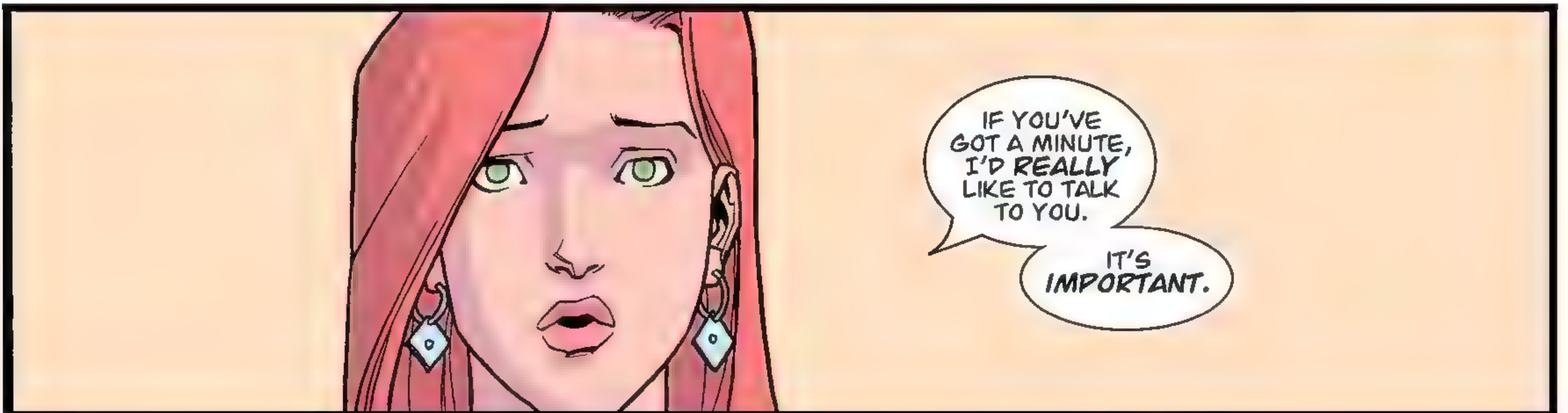
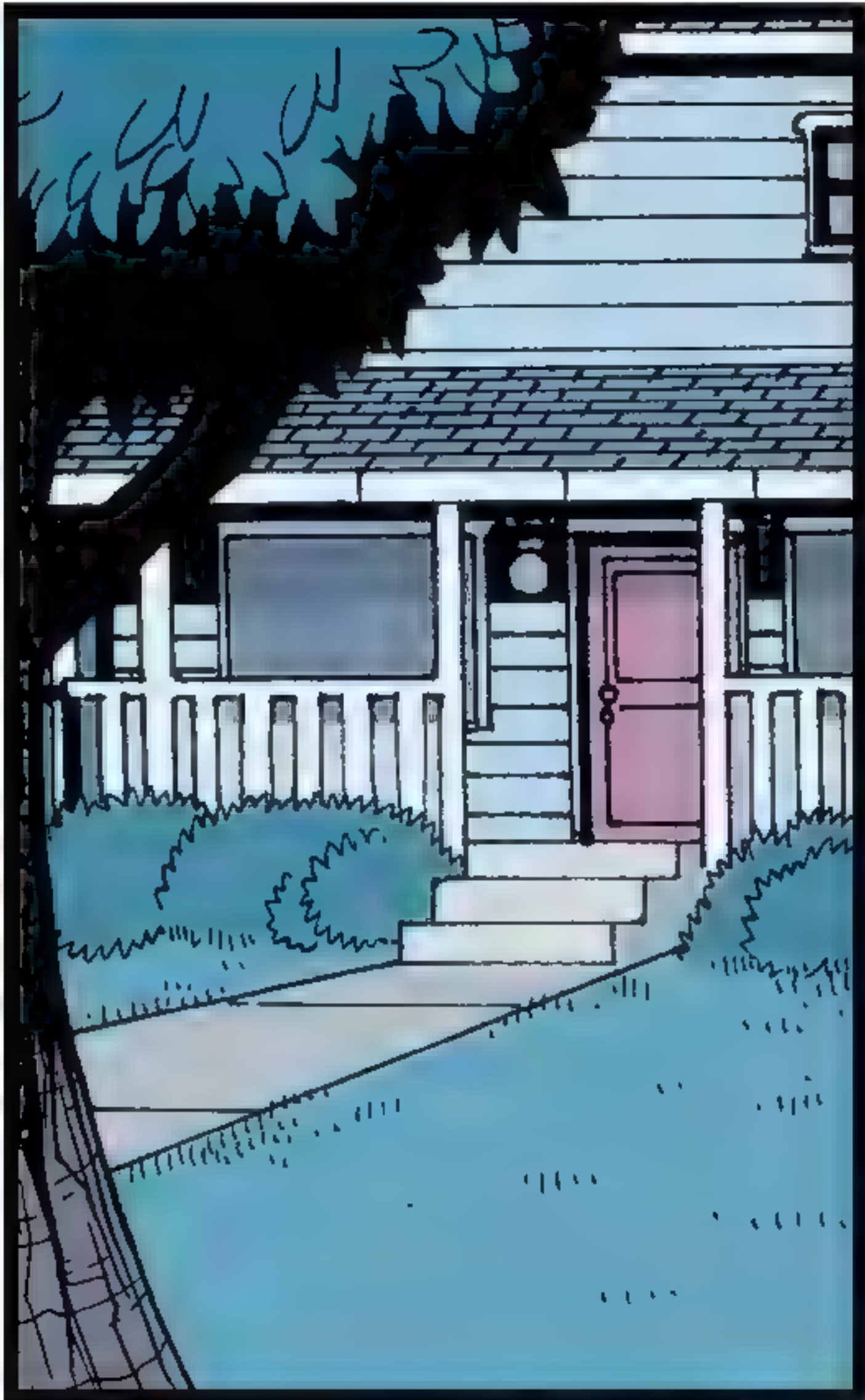


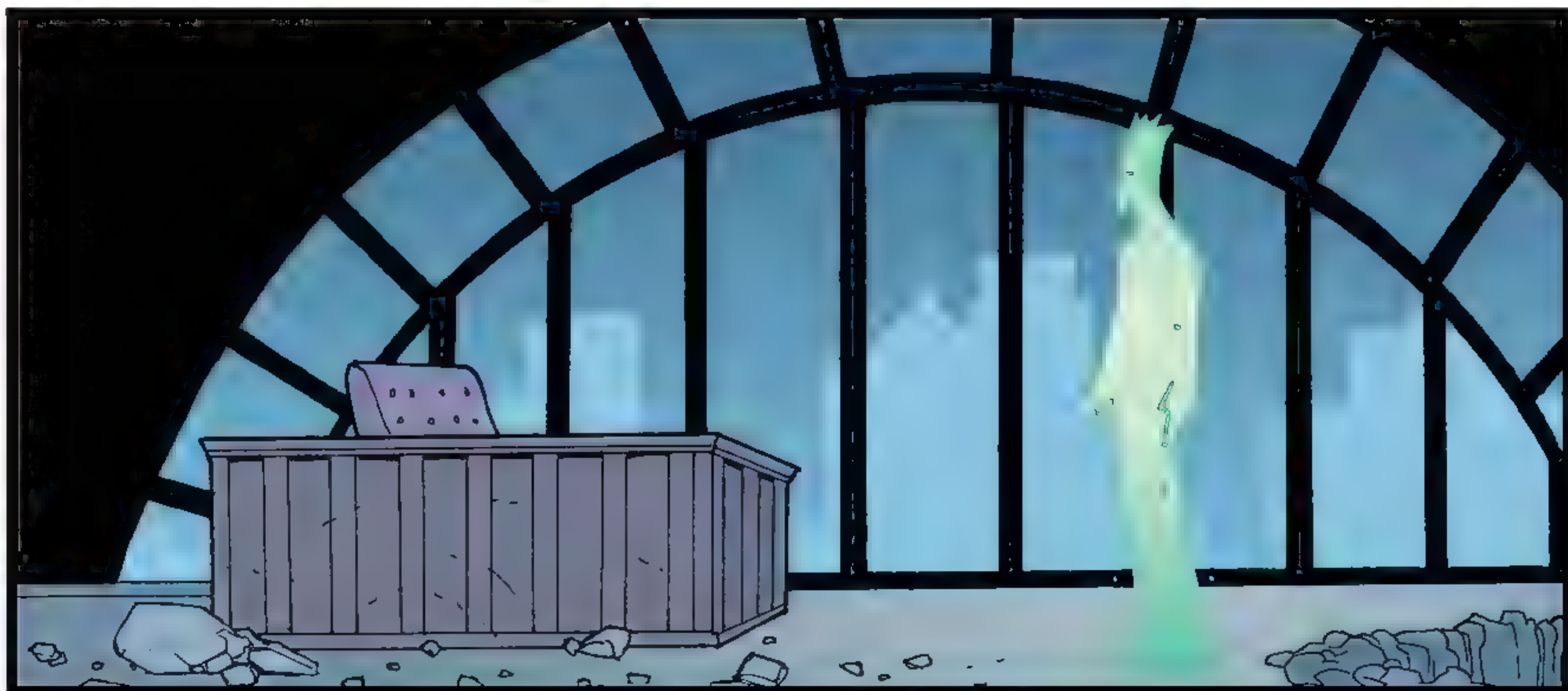














YES...

YES
THEY
WILL.

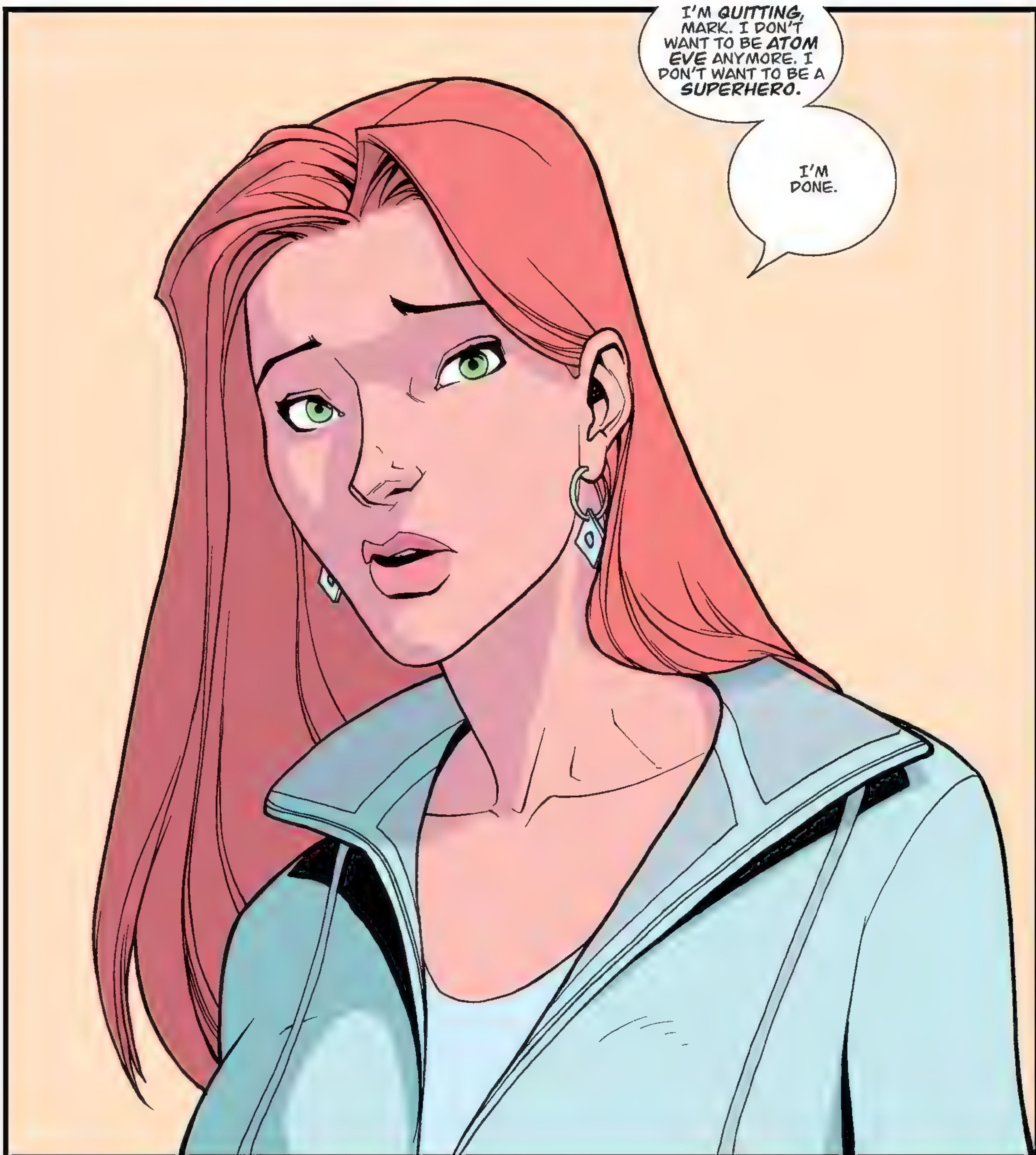


ISSUE TWENTY



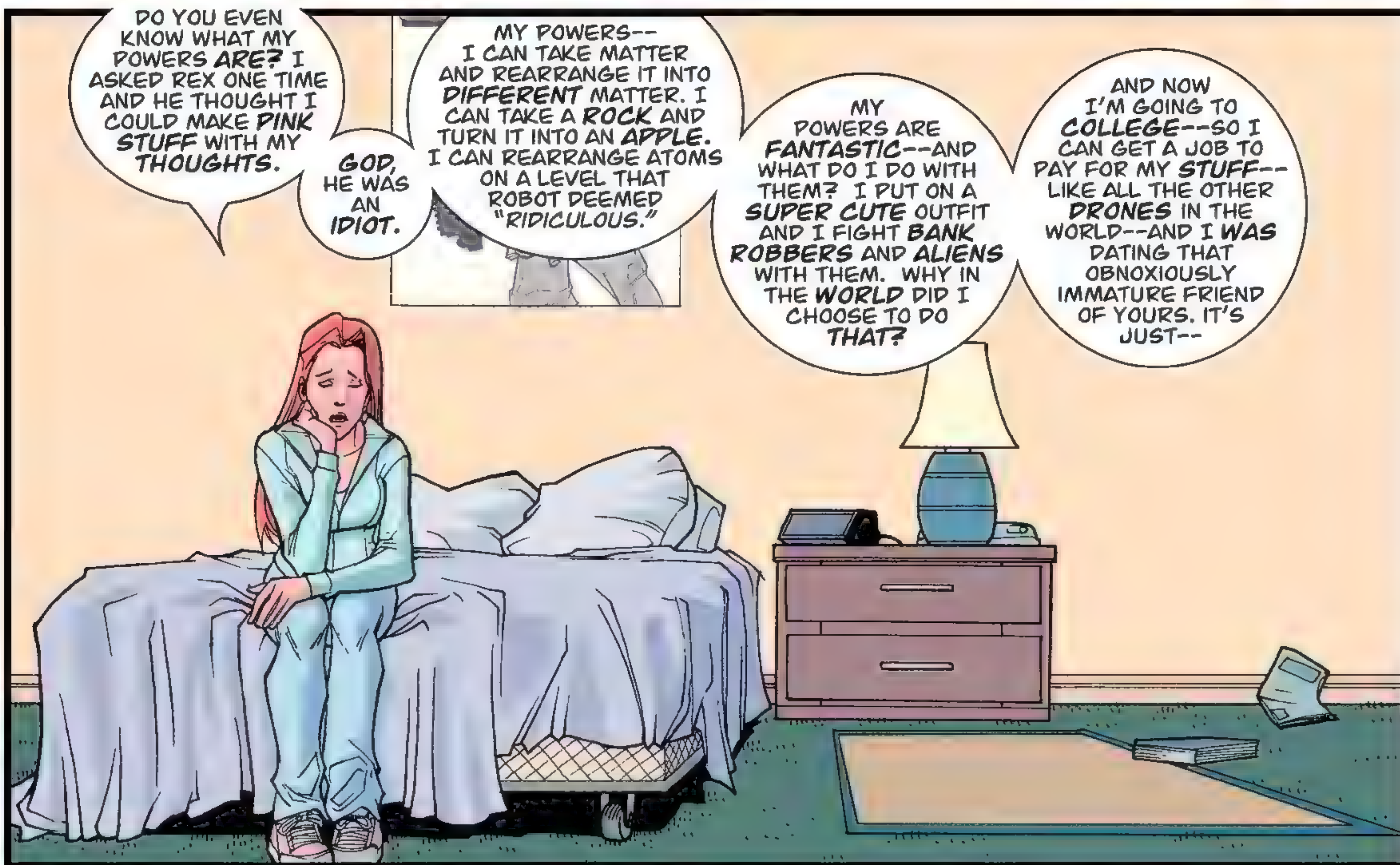


WHAT
IS IT, EVE?
WHAT DO YOU
WANT TO TALK
TO ME
ABOUT?



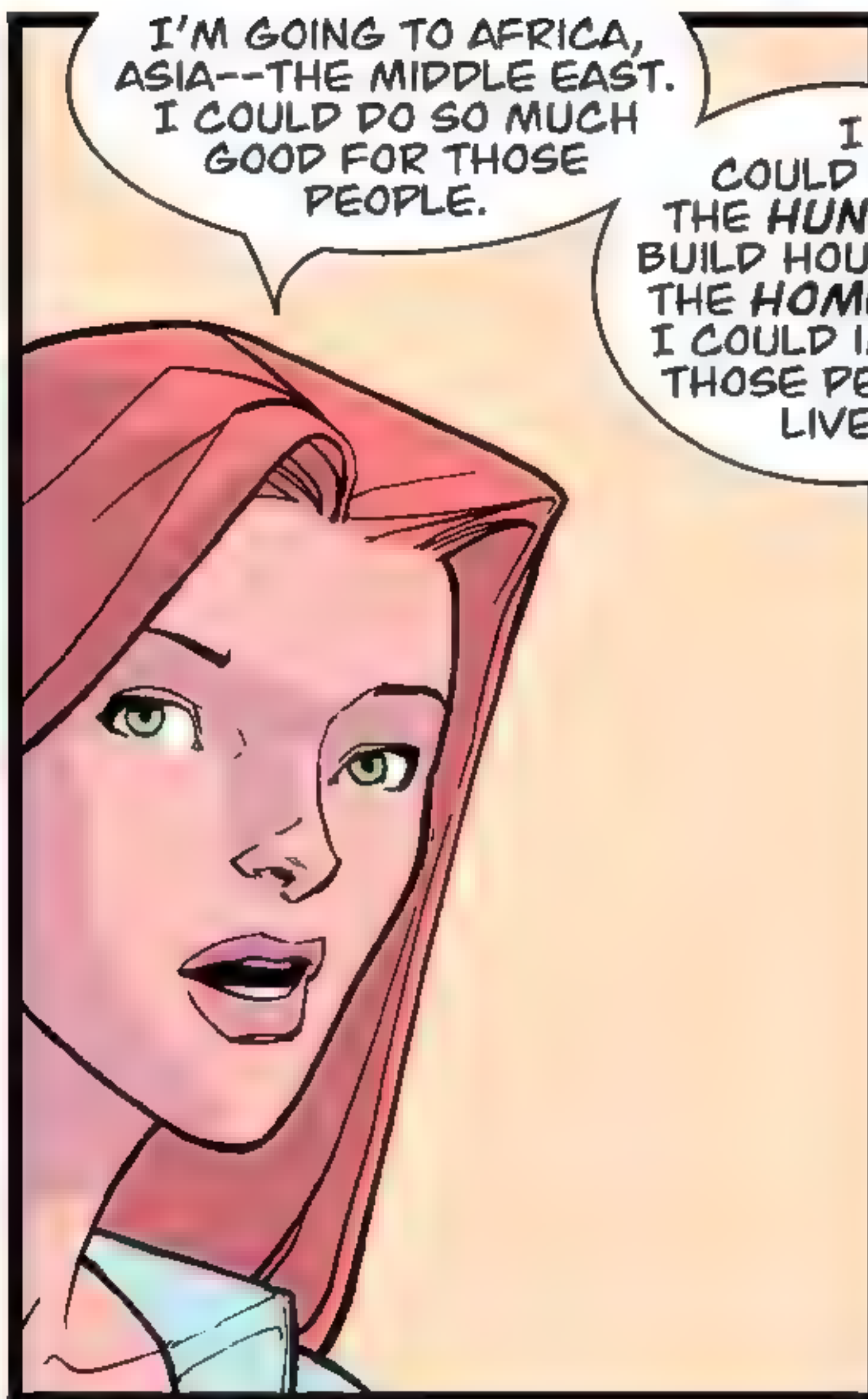
I'M QUITTING,
MARK. I DON'T
WANT TO BE **ATOM**
EVE ANYMORE. I
DON'T WANT TO BE A
SUPERHERO.

I'M
DONE.



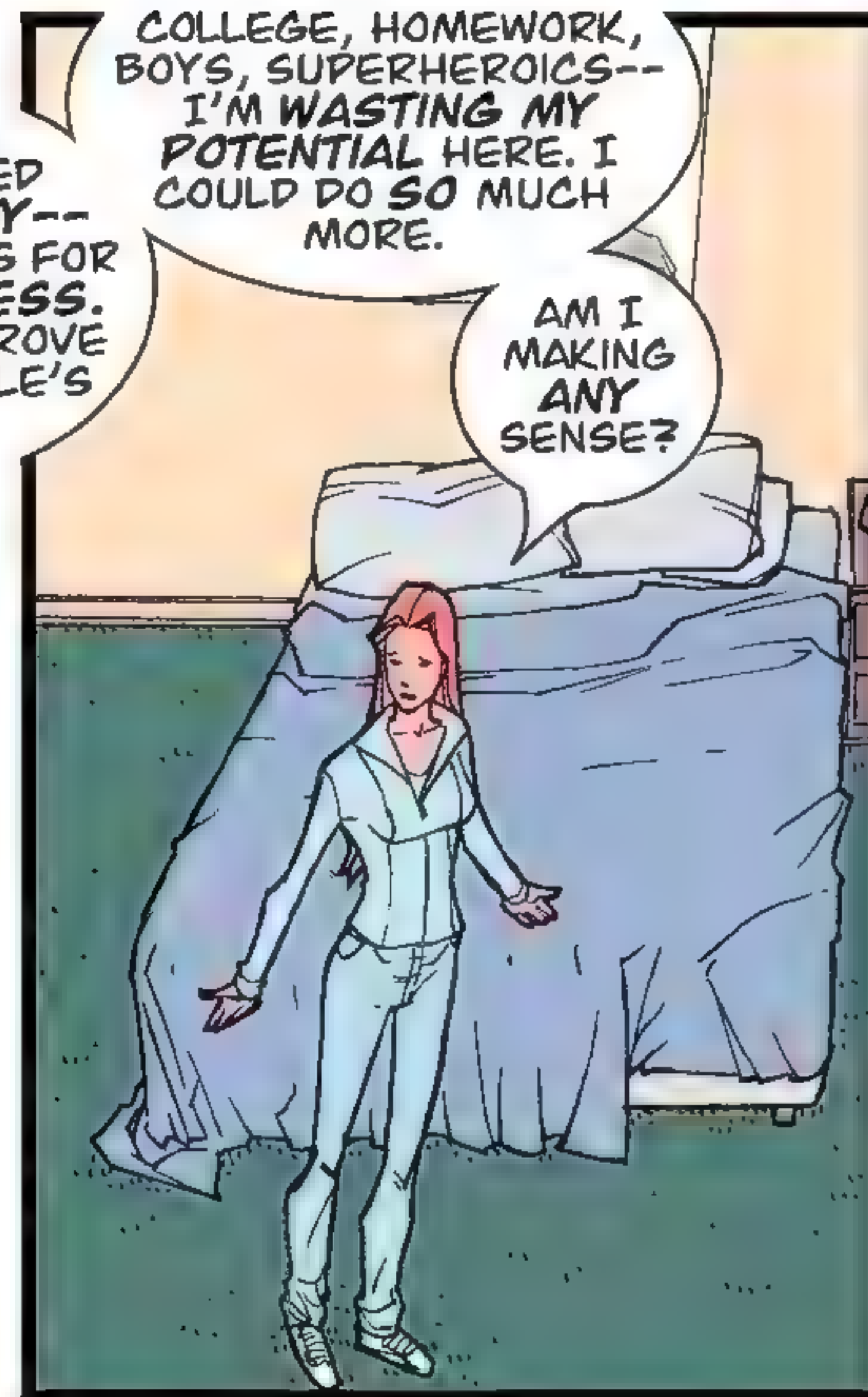


IT'S JUST THAT MY POWERS ARE WASTED ON THIS. THE WORLD HAS GUYS LIKE YOU OUT THERE SAVING THE WORLD. MY POWERS COULD BE PUT TO USE ELSEWHERE, DOING MORE GOOD THAN I'M DOING NOW.



I'M GOING TO AFRICA, ASIA--THE MIDDLE EAST. I COULD DO SO MUCH GOOD FOR THOSE PEOPLE.

I COULD FEED THE HUNGRY-- BUILD HOUSES FOR THE HOMELESS. I COULD IMPROVE THOSE PEOPLE'S LIVES.



COLLEGE, HOMEWORK, BOYS, SUPERHEROICS-- I'M WASTING MY POTENTIAL HERE. I COULD DO SO MUCH MORE.

AM I MAKING ANY SENSE?



YEAH. YOU'RE MAKING ABSOLUTELY PERFECT SENSE. I'VE NEVER EVEN LOOKED AT STUFF THAT WAY.

I THINK IT'S A GOOD IDEA.



OH, MARK-- I'M SO GLAD YOU UNDERSTAND. I THOUGHT FOR SURE YOU'D TRY TO GIVE ME SOME SPEECH ABOUT FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT OR SOMETHING EQUALLY AS RIDICULOUS.

I NEVER SHOULD HAVE DOUBTED YOU.

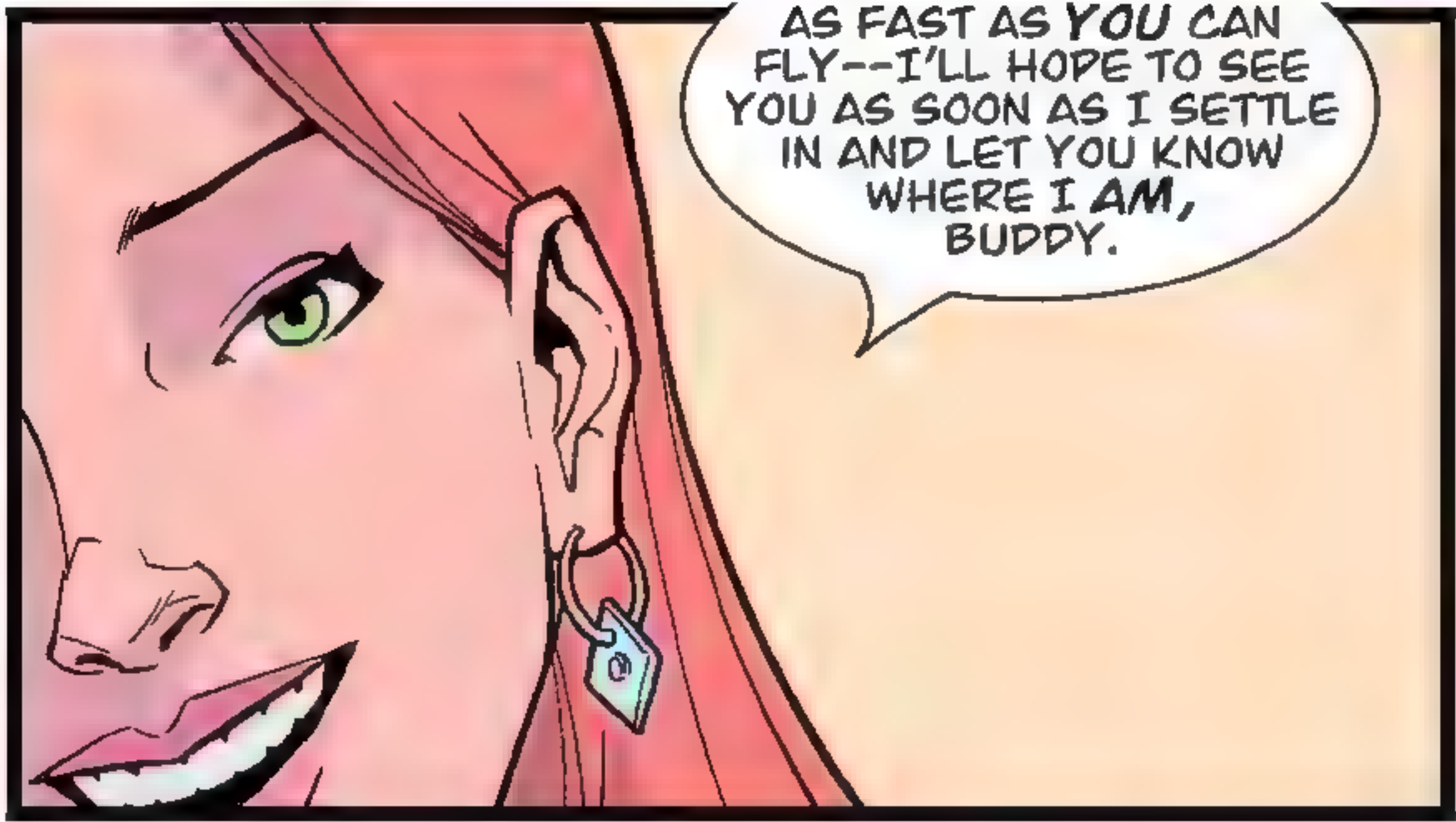


ARE YOU GOING NOW? TONIGHT?

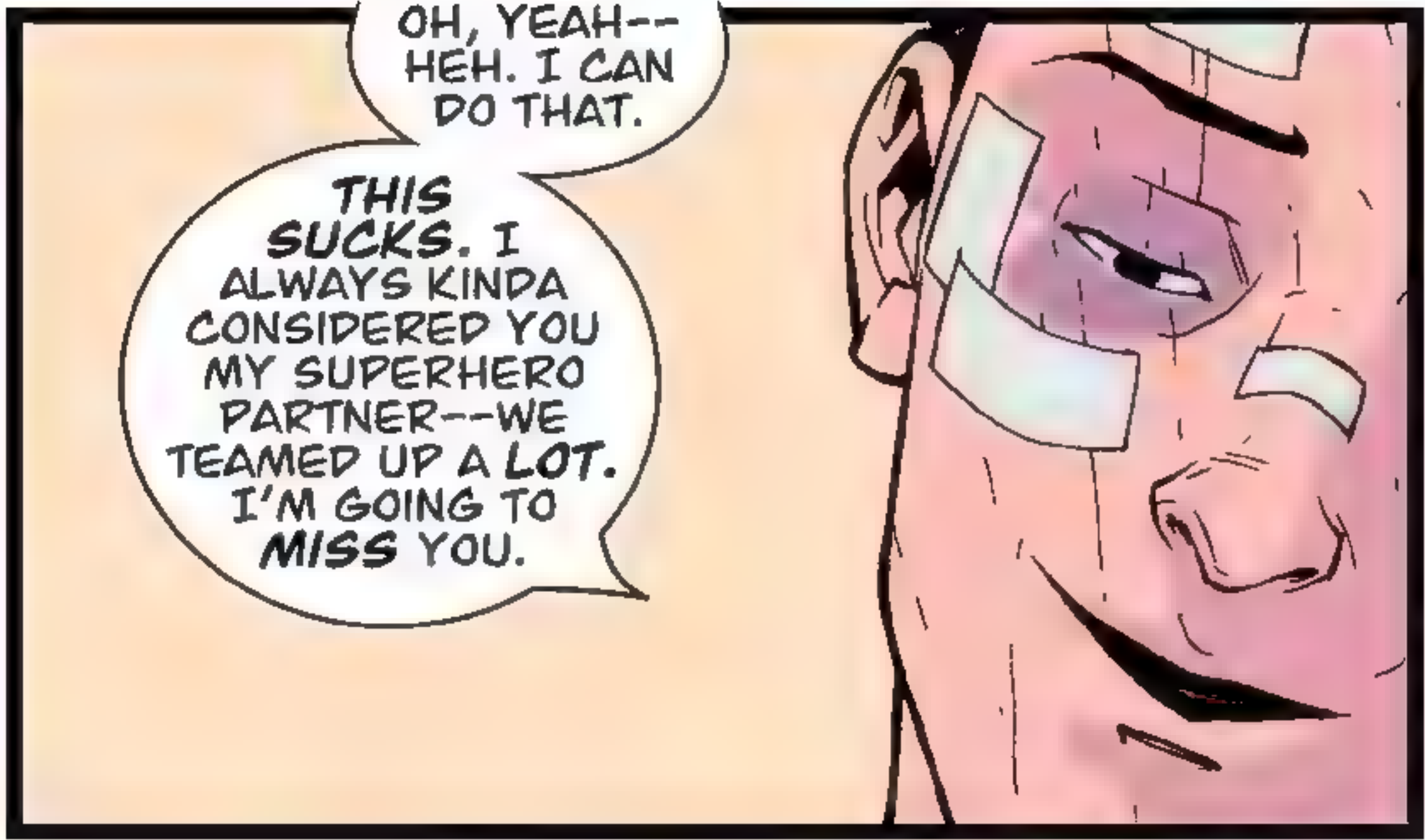
YEAH...MY PARENTS ARE GOING TO FLIP OUT. I DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO TELL THEM SO I JUST LEFT THEM A NOTE. THEY NEVER REALLY WERE TOO COMFORTABLE WITH ME HAVING POWERS ANYWAY...THIS IS GOING TO KILL THEM.

TRUTH BE TOLD-- THEY KINDA DESERVE IT.

WHEN WILL I SEE YOU AGAIN?

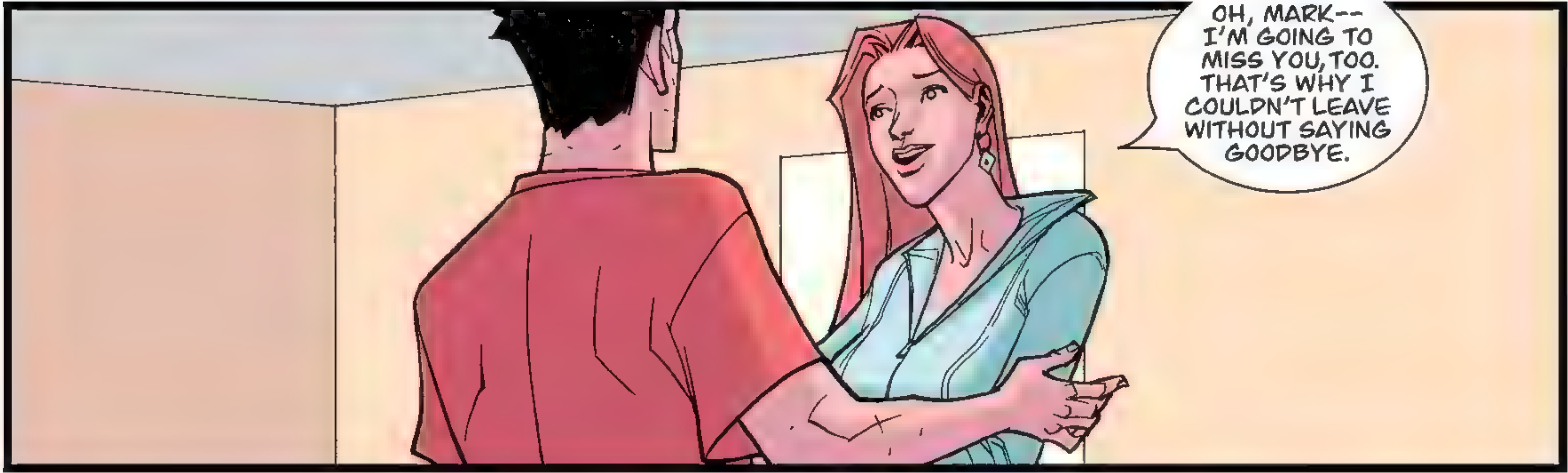


AS FAST AS YOU CAN
FLY--I'LL HOPE TO SEE
YOU AS SOON AS I SETTLE
IN AND LET YOU KNOW
WHERE I AM,
BUDDY.

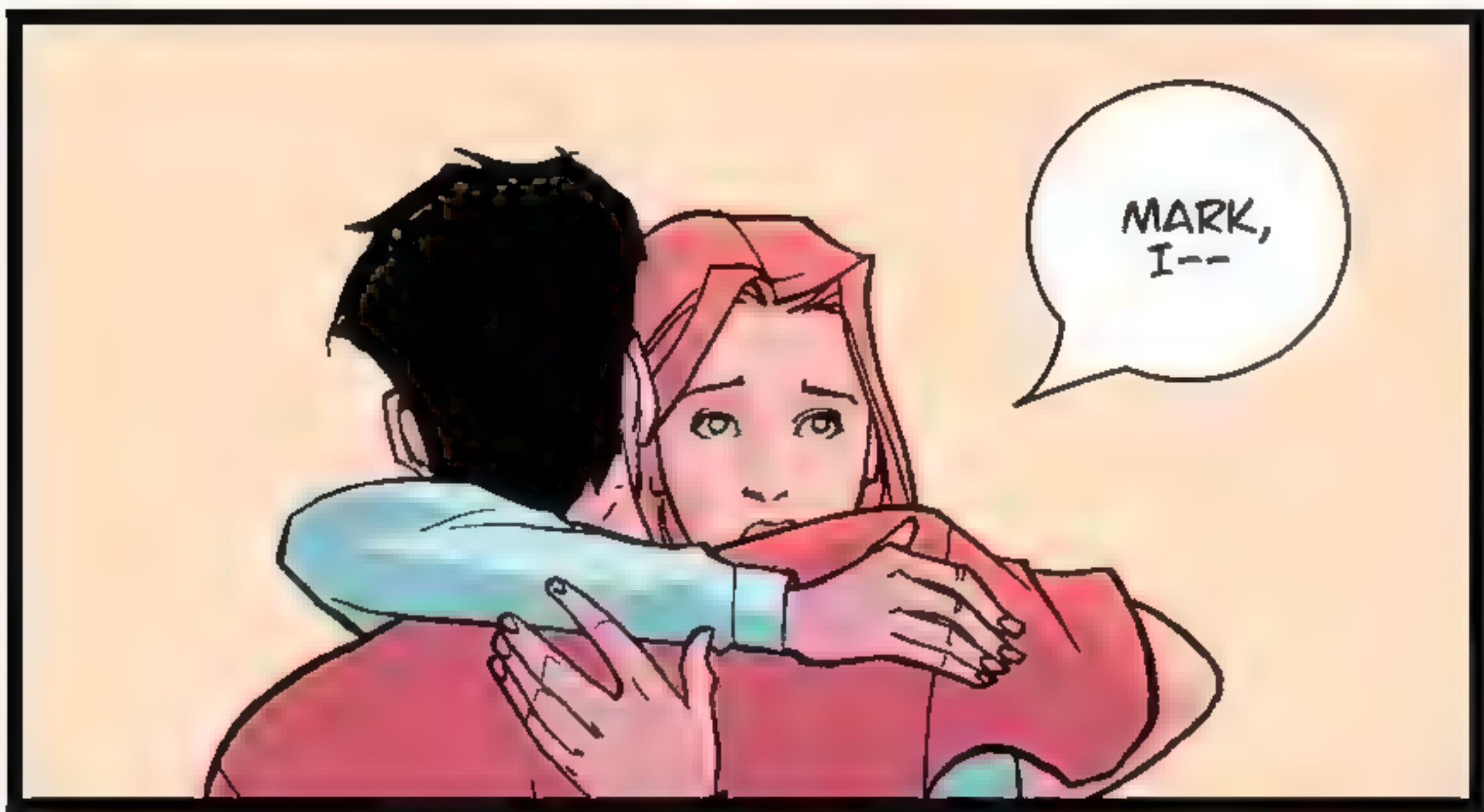


OH, YEAH--
HEH. I CAN
DO THAT.

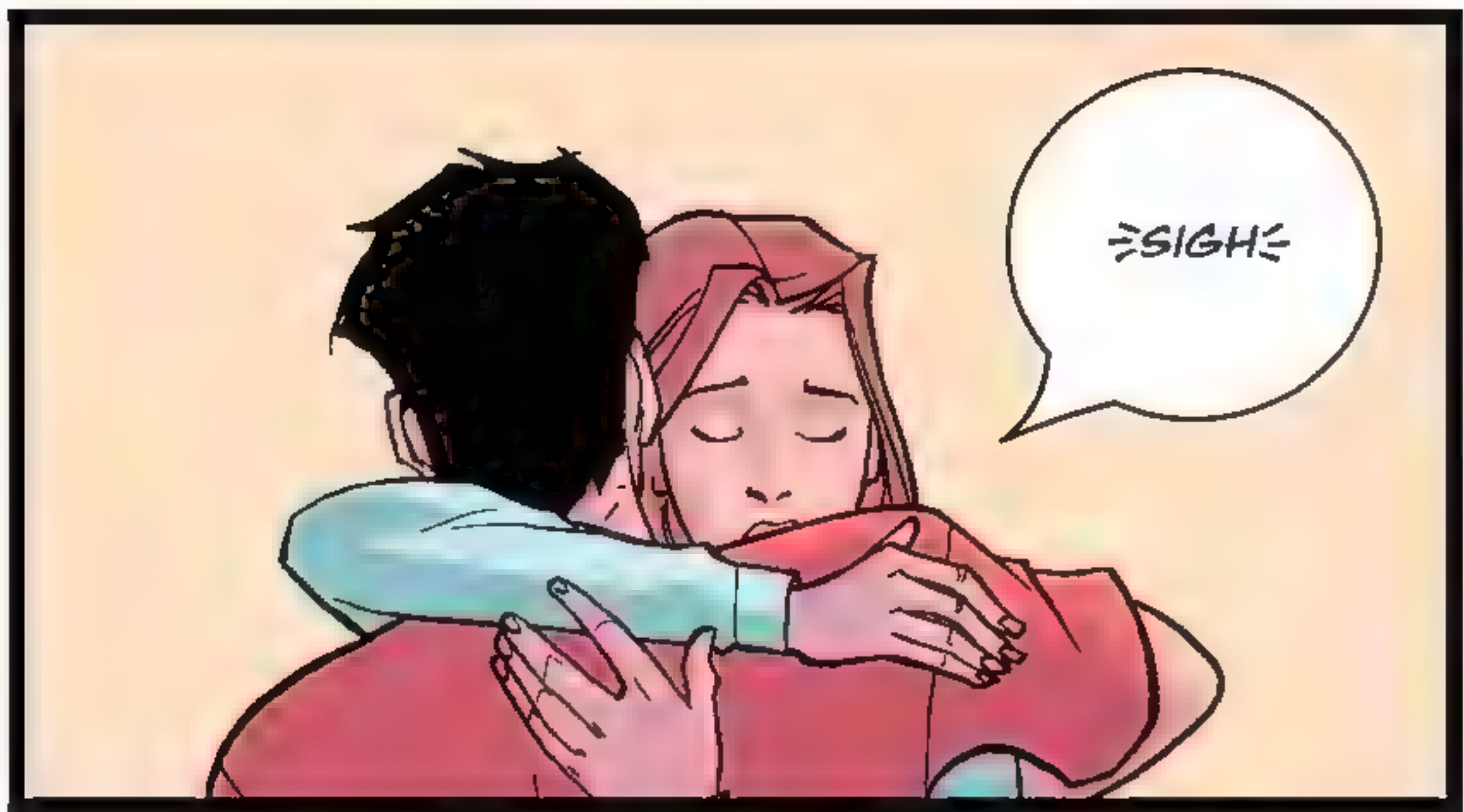
**THIS
SUCKS.** I
ALWAYS KINDA
CONSIDERED YOU
MY SUPERHERO
PARTNER--WE
TEAMED UP A LOT.
I'M GOING TO
MISS YOU.



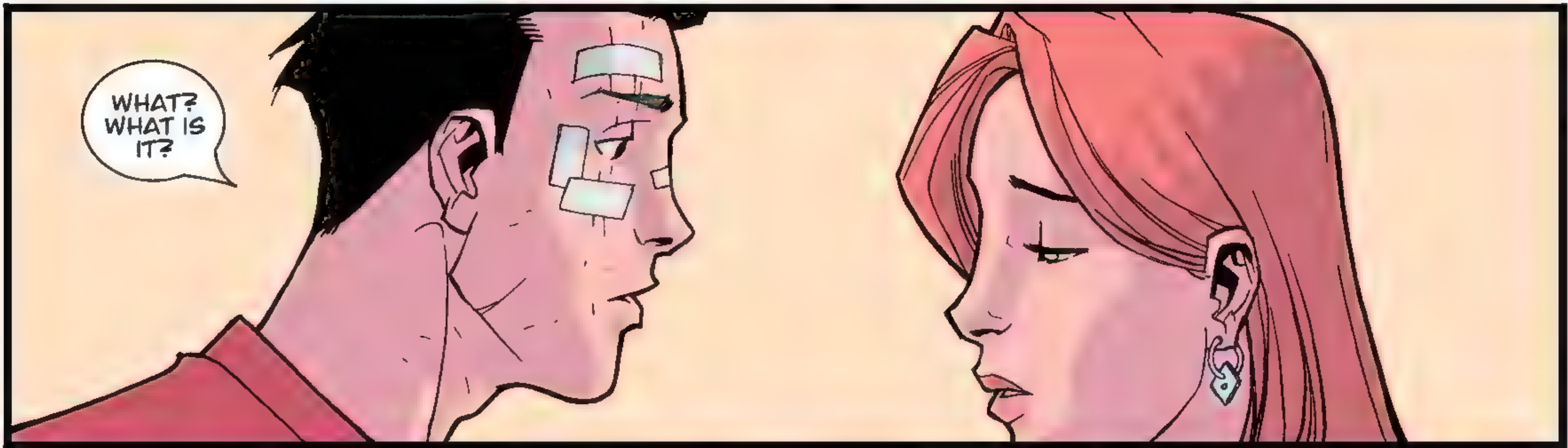
OH, MARK--
I'M GOING TO
MISS YOU, TOO.
THAT'S WHY I
COULDN'T LEAVE
WITHOUT SAYING
GOODBYE.



MARK,
I--



≡SIGH≡



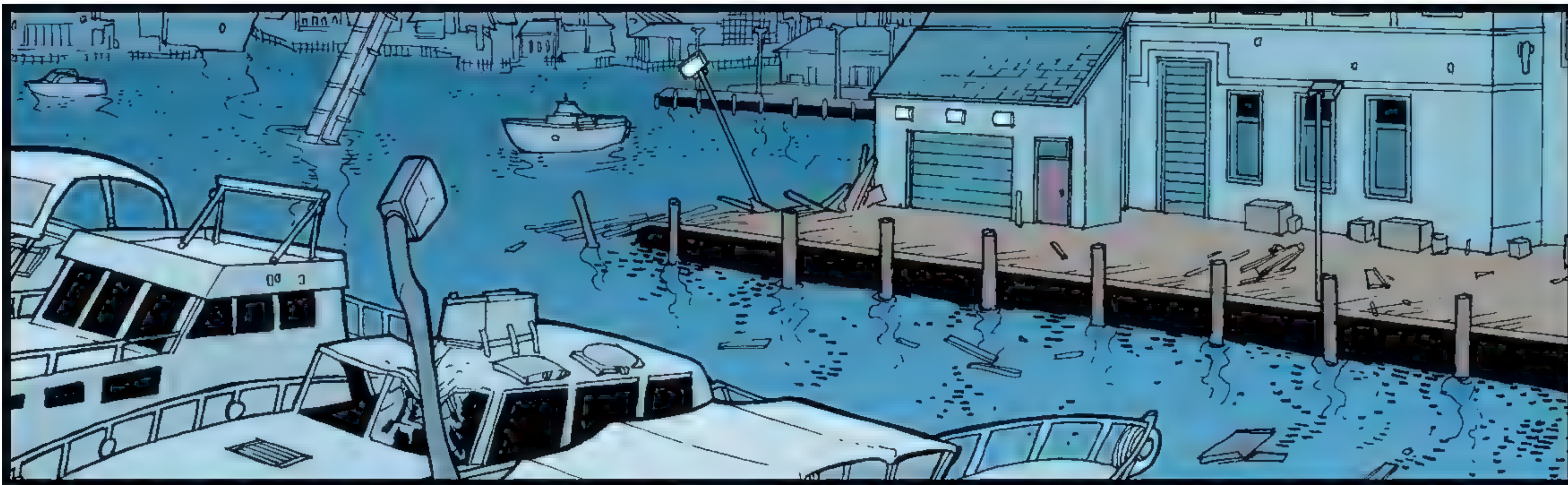
WHAT?
WHAT IS
IT?



IT'S--IT'S
NOTHING. I'LL
SEE YOU LATER,
MARK.

GOOD-
BYE.

GOOD-
BYE.



GOOD EYE, MAULER. YOU AND YOUR DOUBLE NEVER CEASE TO IMPRESS ME. I DISCOVERED A REALITY WHERE A VIRUS ATTACKED THE Y CHROMOSOME, KILLING ALL THE MALES ON EARTH. I THOUGHT MY OTHER DIMENSIONAL COUNTERPARTS DESERVED SOME R & R AFTER ALL THIS WAITING AROUND.

LET ME TELL YOU-- THEY'RE GETTING A ROYAL TREATMENT THERE. I'LL BE HEADING OVER MYSELF, SHORTLY. YOU'RE WELCOME TO COME ALONG AFTER YOU REACH A STOPPING POINT. WE'RE GOING TO HAVE QUITE A TIME.

THAT'S NOT SOMETHING THAT INTERESTS US NEARLY AS MUCH AS GETTING THIS PROJECT DONE SO WE CAN GET BACK TO OUR PLANS.

I'VE DISCOVERED SOMETHING NEW, ANGSTROM. I BELIEVE IT'S CALLED "ELBOW ROOM."

YOU'LL BE HAPPY TO KNOW WE PERFECTED THE PROCESS I USED TO DOWNLOAD MY MEMORIES INTO MY CLONE.

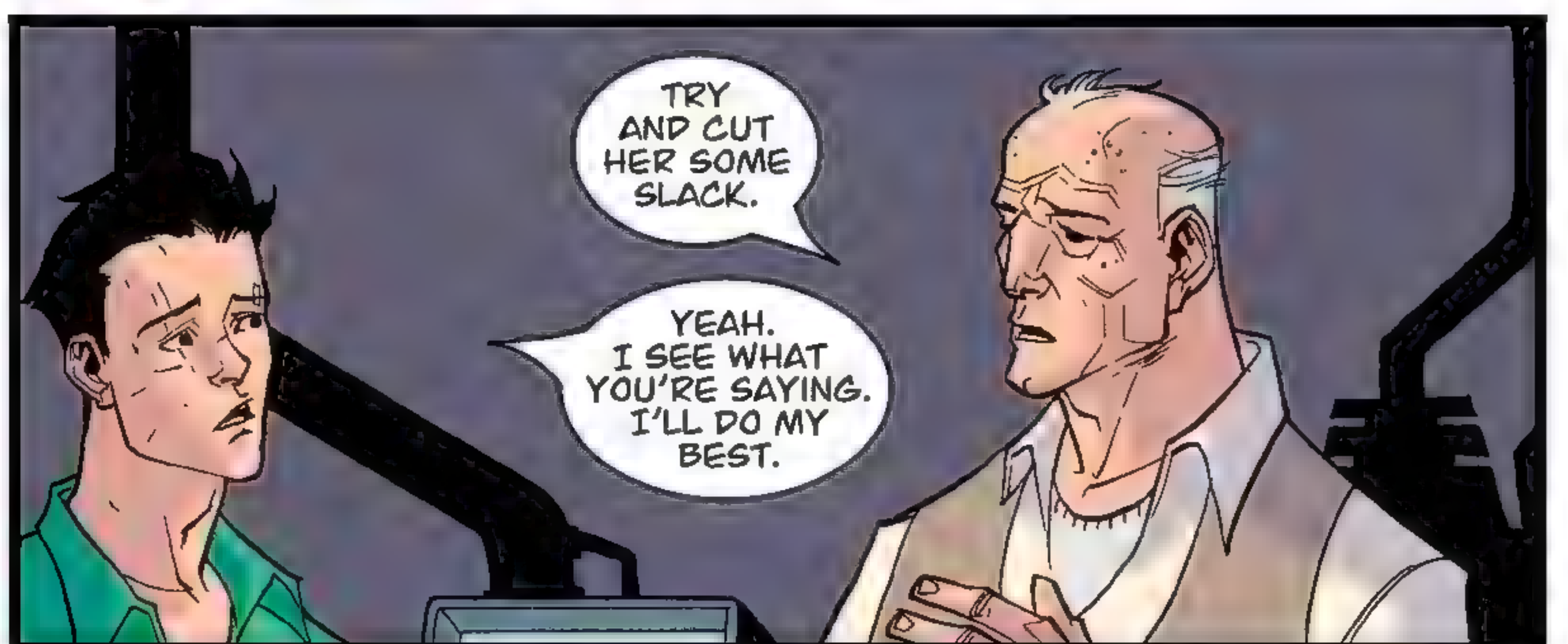
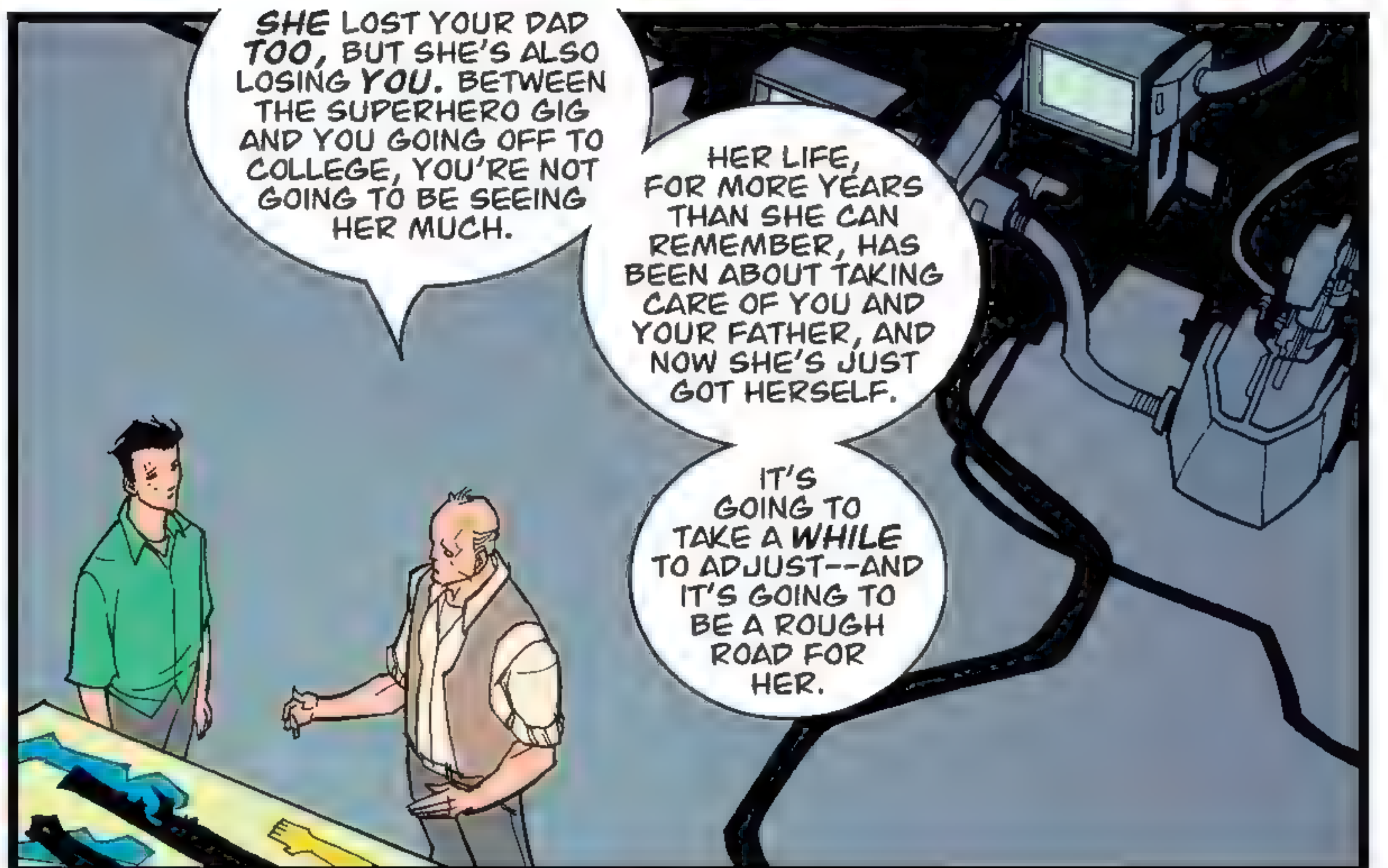
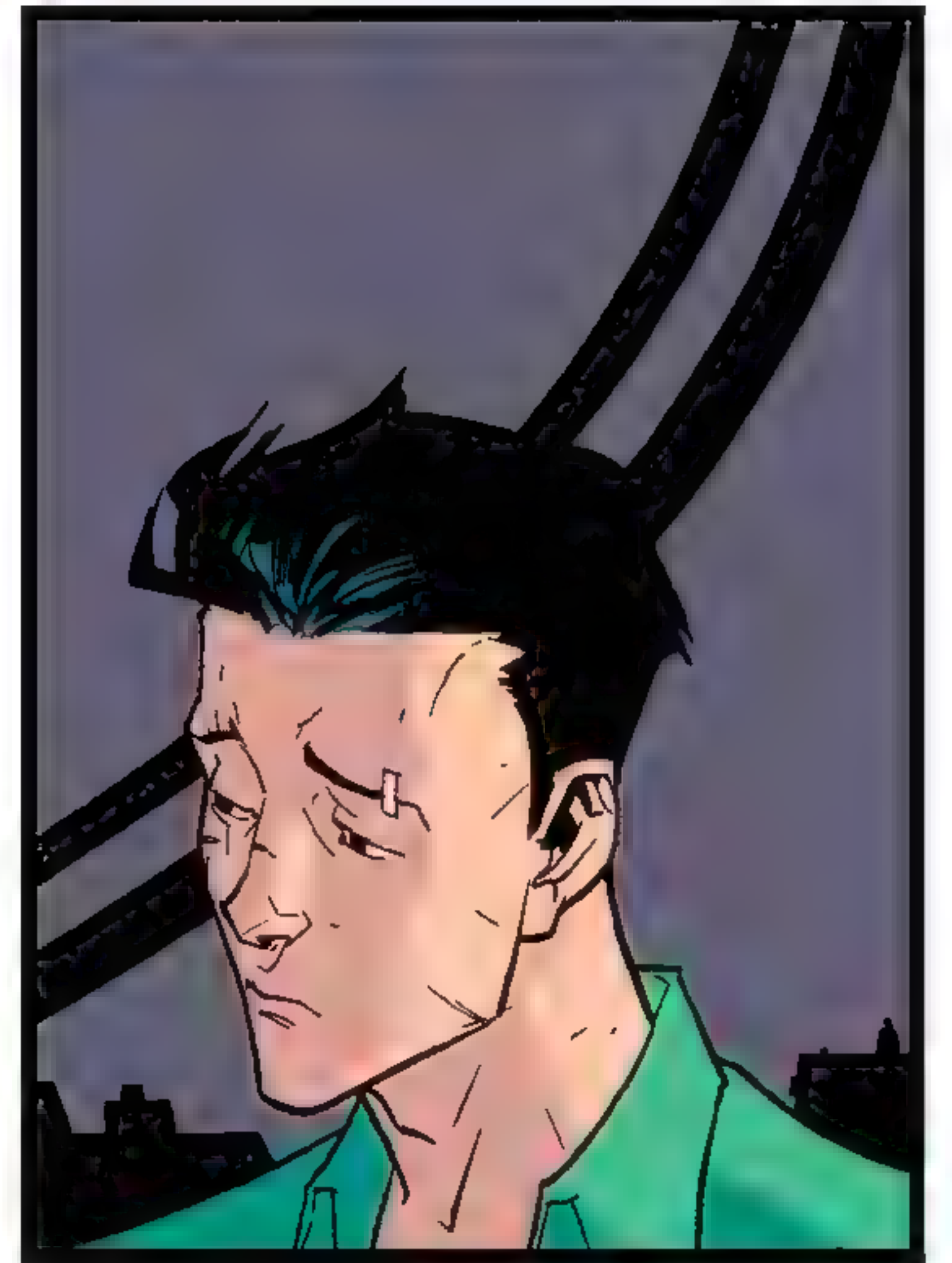
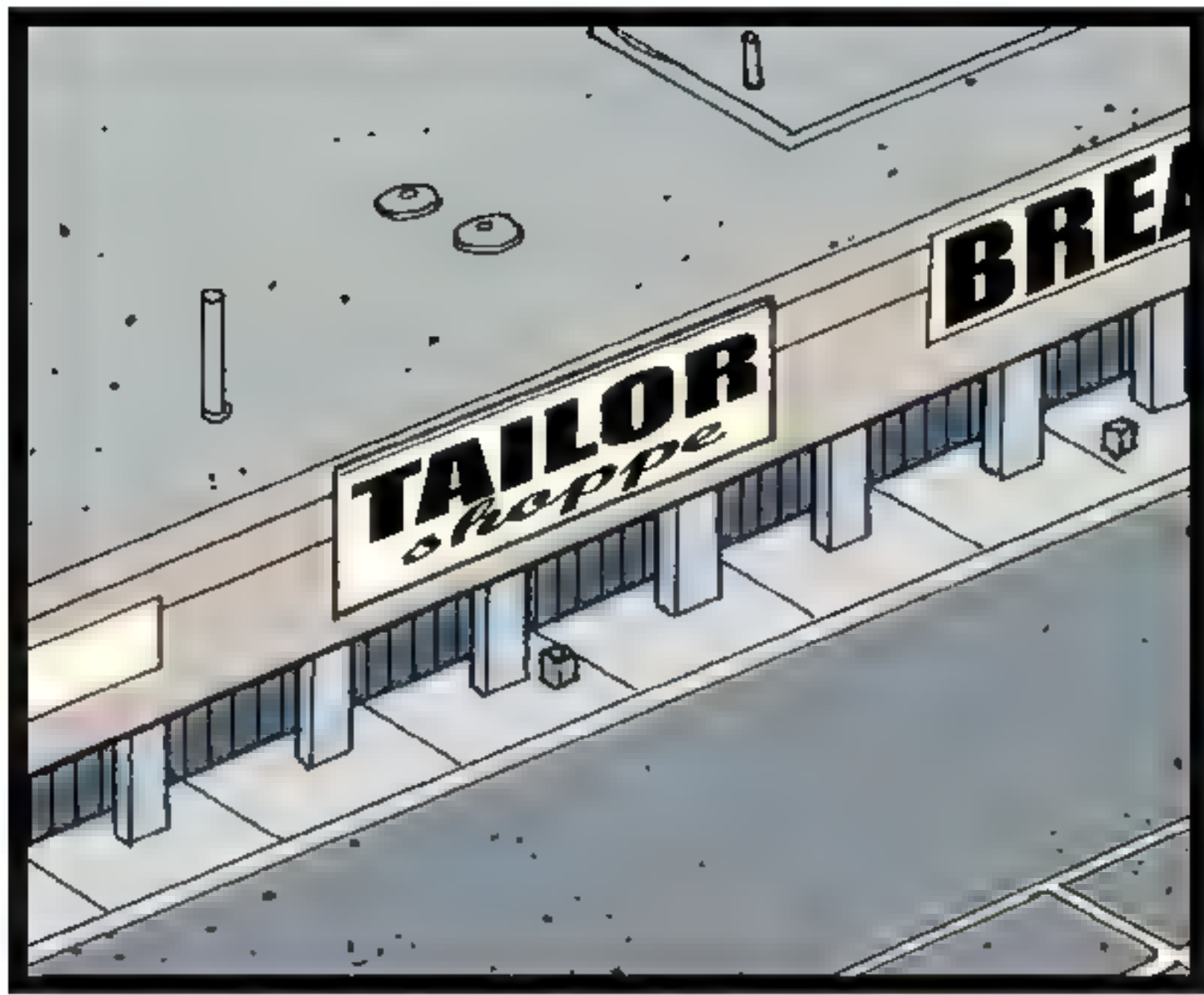
YOU MEAN THAT I USED, RIGHT, CLONE?

CAN WE NOT DO THIS? ANYWAY--EVERYTHING SEEMS TO BE IN ORDER. WE ARE VERY CLOSE TO COMPLETING ALL THE MACHINES IN YOUR VARIOUS DIMENSIONAL SAFE HOUSES.

WE ARE PROBABLY ONLY A WEEK AWAY.

FANTASTIC. KEEP ME POSTED. I CAN'T KEEP ENTIRE CITIES WORTH OF LADIES WAITING.

I'LL BE BACK BY MORNING... MAYBE.





IF I HAD KNOWN YOU'D BE ON TIME I WOULD HAVE SUGGESTED YOU PICK ME UP. WE COULD HAVE SAVED ON GAS.

AND WASTE AN OPPORTUNITY TO USE THAT NEW CAR OF YOURS? FOR SHAME.

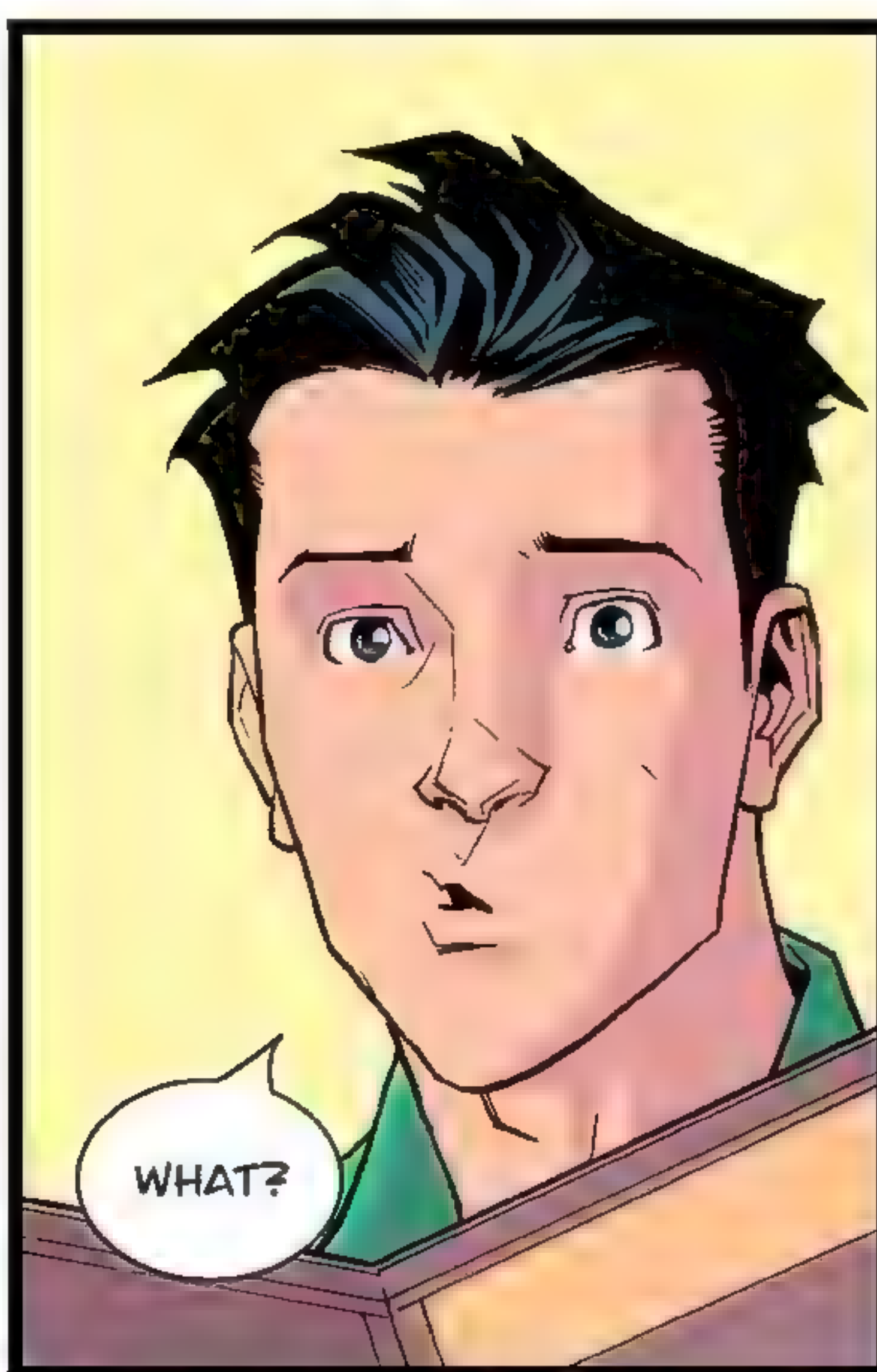
BESIDES, AREN'T WE SOMEWHAT WEALTHY THESE DAYS?



YEAH, IT'LL BE A WHILE BEFORE I'M USED TO THAT. YOUR FATHER ALWAYS MADE SURE WE HAD **JUST** ENOUGH. WE NEVER WANTED FOR ANYTHING, BUT WE COULDN'T GET SILLY, LIKE NOW.

I GUESS HE DIDN'T WANT TO DRAW ATTENTION TO HIMSELF.

HUH.

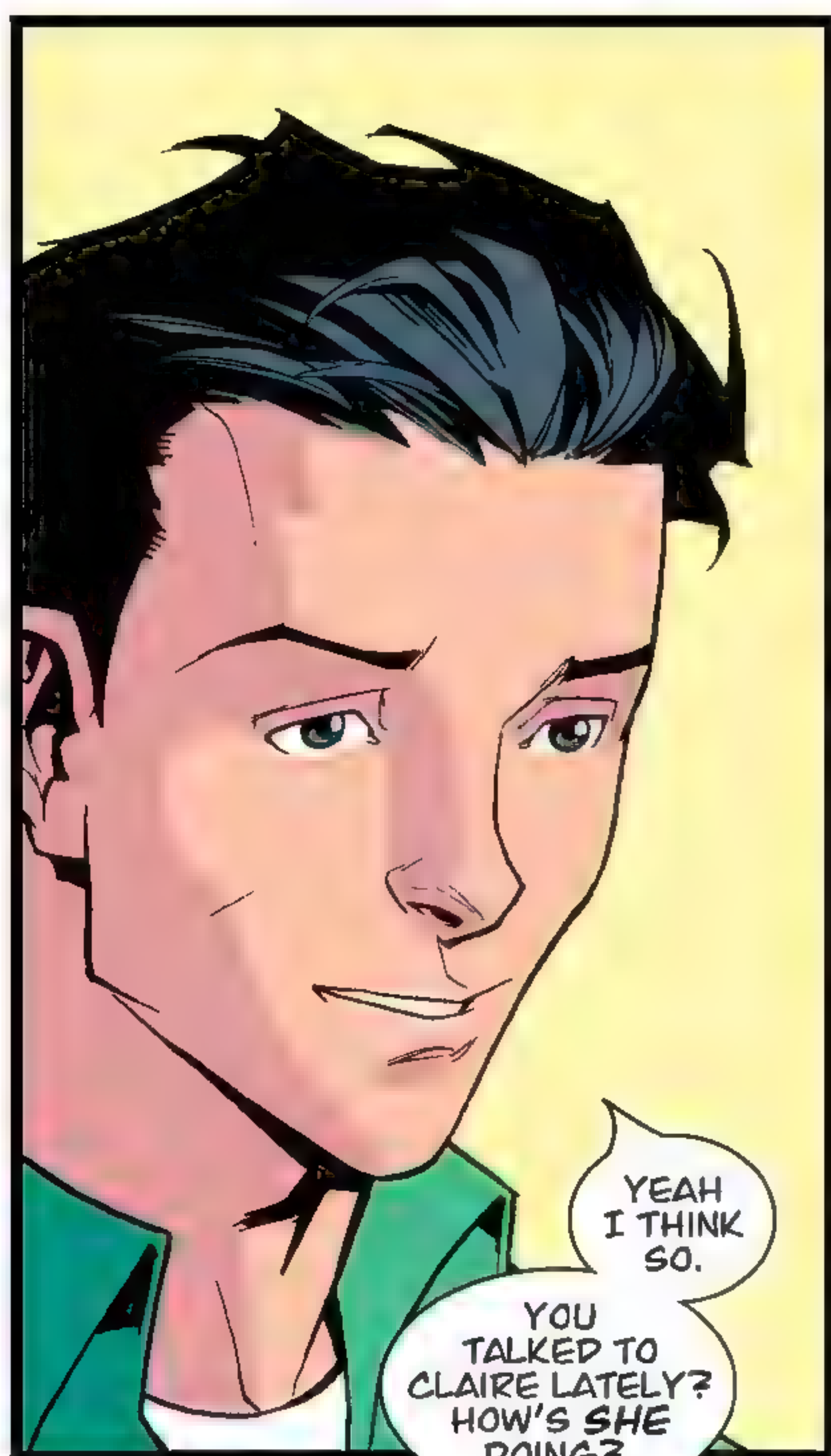


WHAT?



I THINK THAT'S THE FIRST TIME THE MERE MENTION OF YOUR FATHER HASN'T MADE ME WANT TO CRAWL IN BED AND NEVER GET UP.

THAT'S PROGRESS, RIGHT?



YEAH I THINK SO.

YOU TALKED TO CLAIRE LATELY? HOW'S SHE DOING?



OH, FINE. SHE SAYS, HI. HER AND SUPERPATRIOT ARE TRYING TO HAVE A BABY.

OH, AND SHE SAYS HE HAS NO IDEA WHO YOU ARE.



REALLY?



NO, I'M PULLING YOUR LEG. HE SAID HE REMEMBERED YOU FROM THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE FUNERAL HE SAYS YOU DO GOOD WORK.



SO, HOW ARE THINGS WITH YOU AND AMBER-- YOU TWO SERIOUS NOW?

KINDA.

MAYBE A LITTLE.

I GUESS.



SO NO MORE, "WE'RE JUST STUDYING" EXCUSES FOR ME TO SEE THROUGH? YOU'RE ADMITTING IT NOW?

YEAH, I GUESS. CAN WE NOT--



SO, DOES THAT MEAN I SHOULD TALK TO YOU ABOUT--?



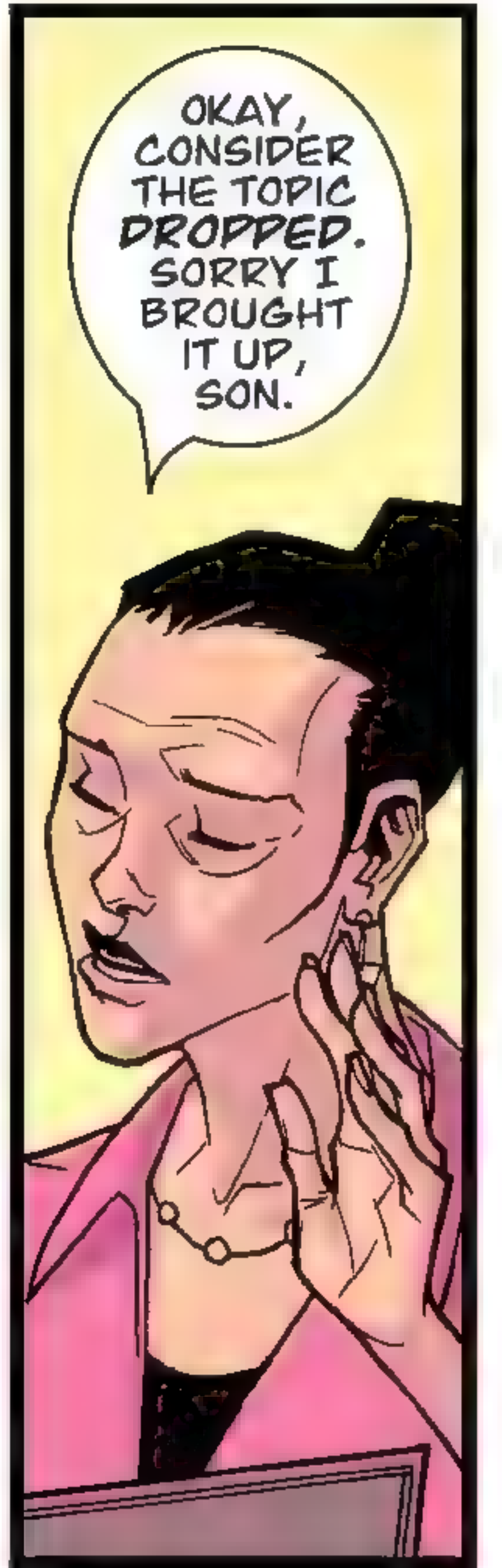
NO.



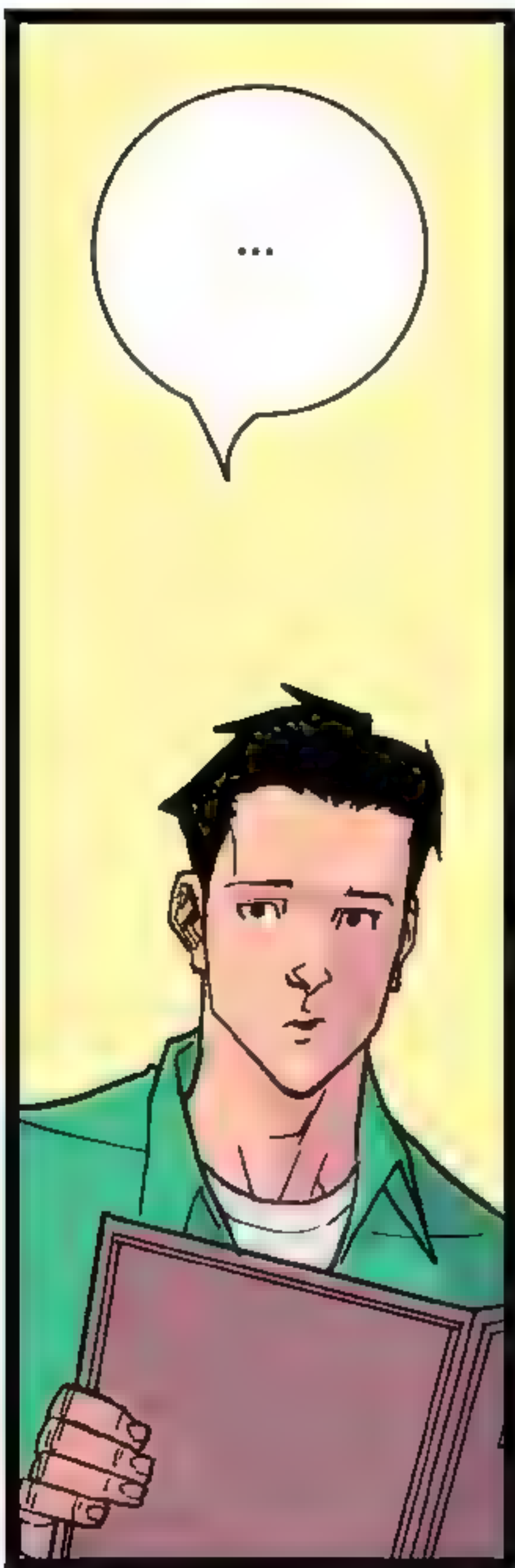
I JUST WANT TO MAKE SURE YOU TWO ARE "SAFE." ARE YOU GUYS--?



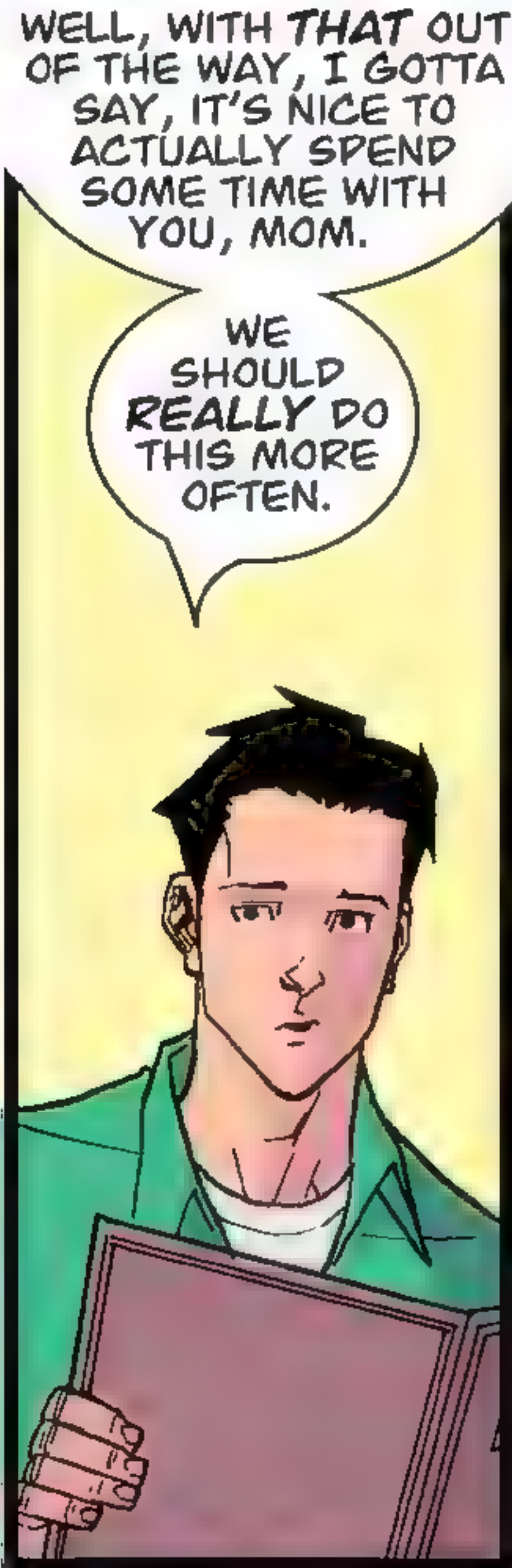
NO.



OKAY, CONSIDER THE TOPIC DROPPED. SORRY I BROUGHT IT UP, SON.

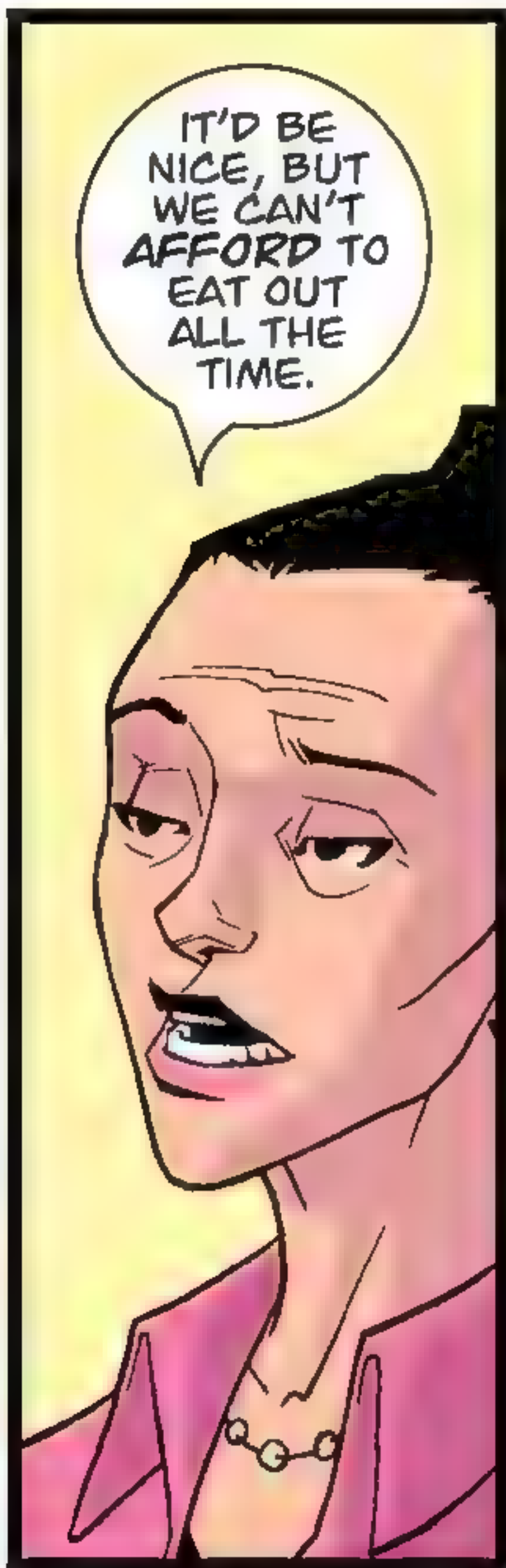


...

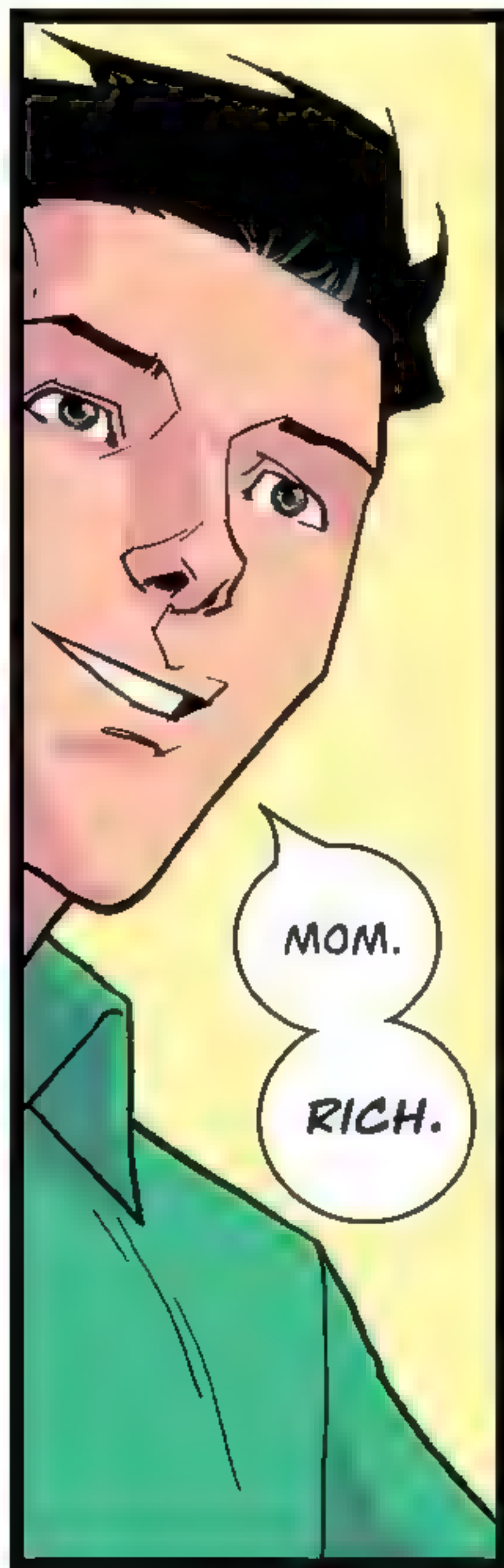


WELL, WITH THAT OUT OF THE WAY, I GOTTA SAY, IT'S NICE TO ACTUALLY SPEND SOME TIME WITH YOU, MOM.

WE SHOULD REALLY DO THIS MORE OFTEN.



IT'D BE NICE, BUT WE CAN'T AFFORD TO EAT OUT ALL THE TIME.



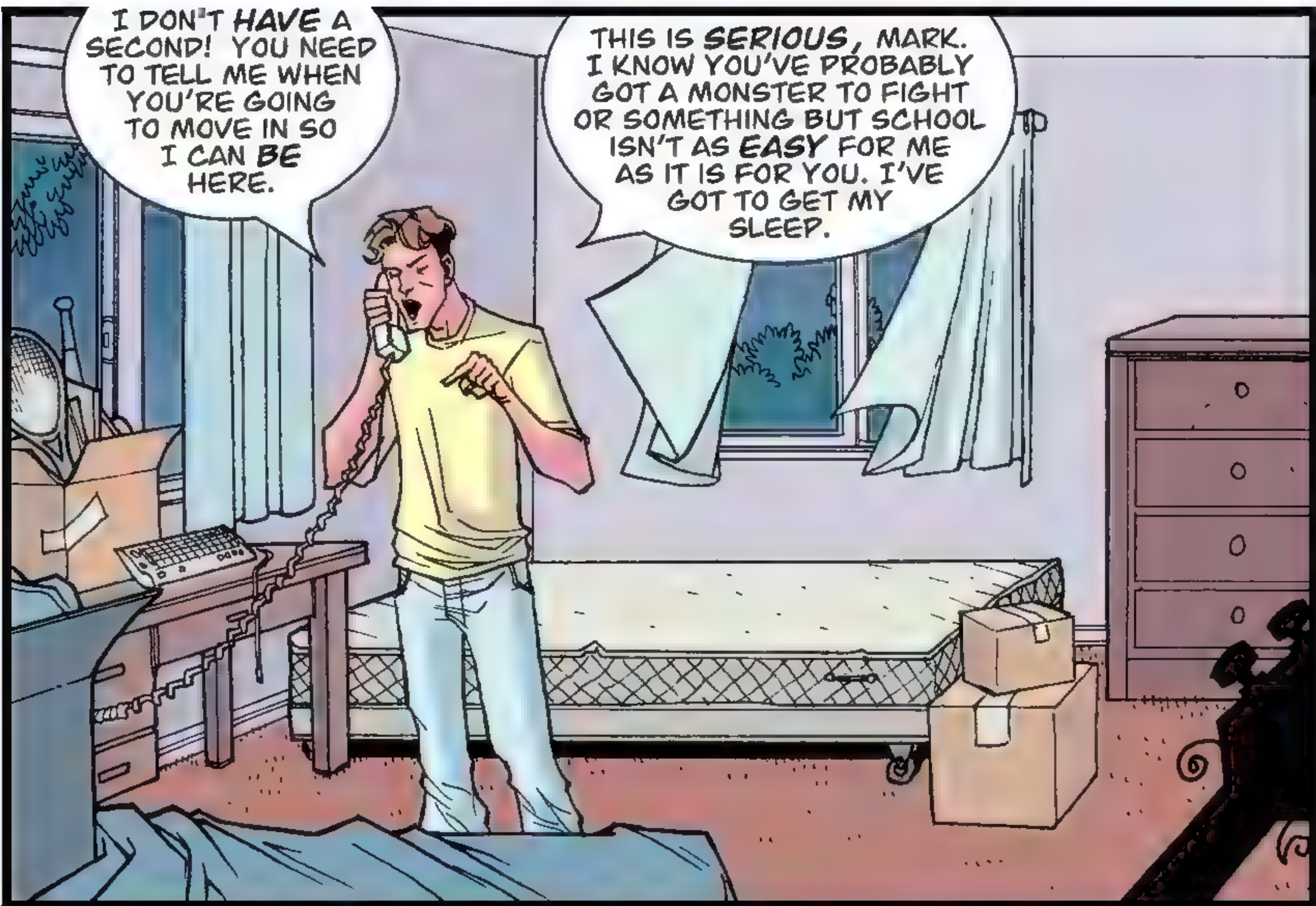
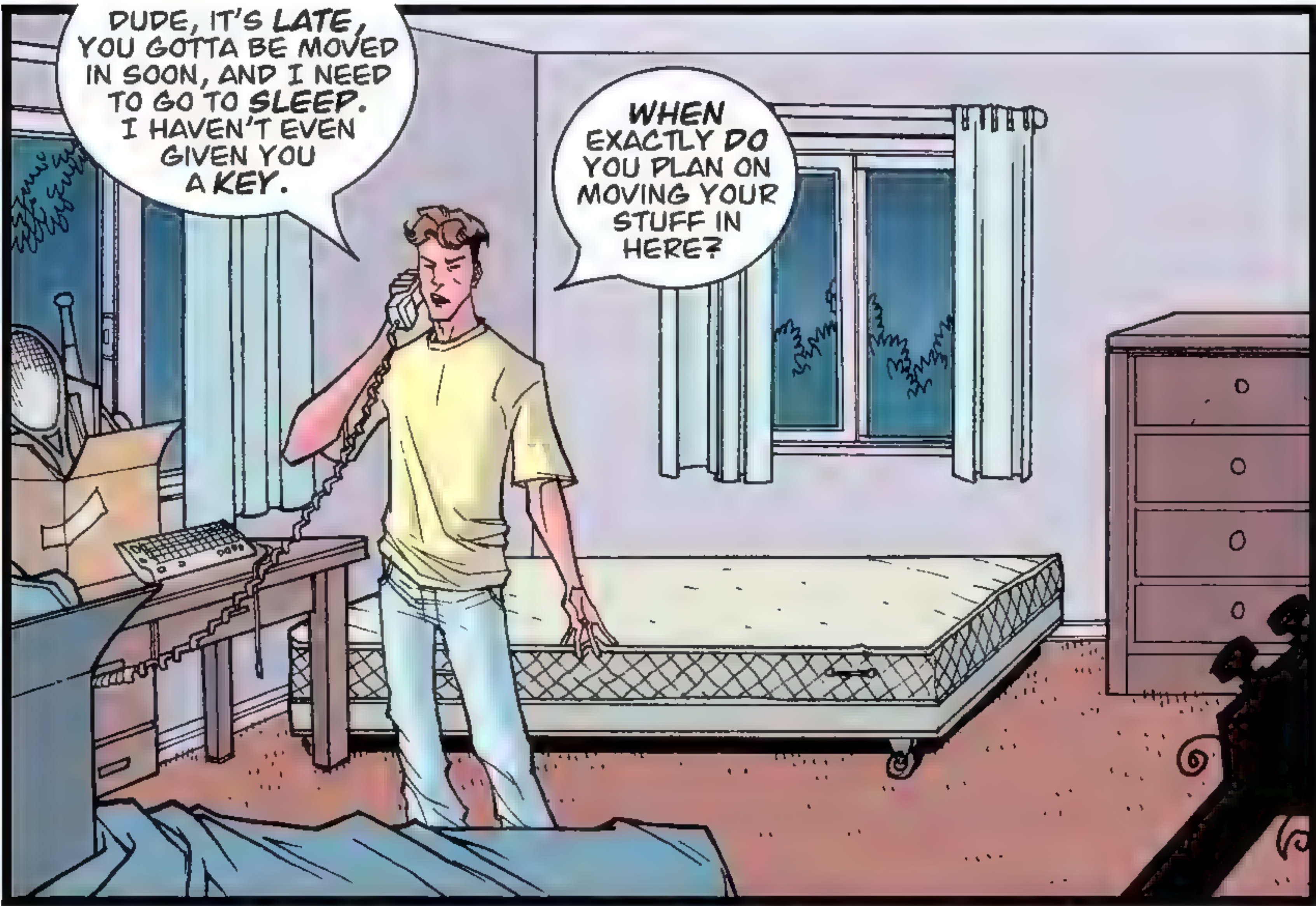
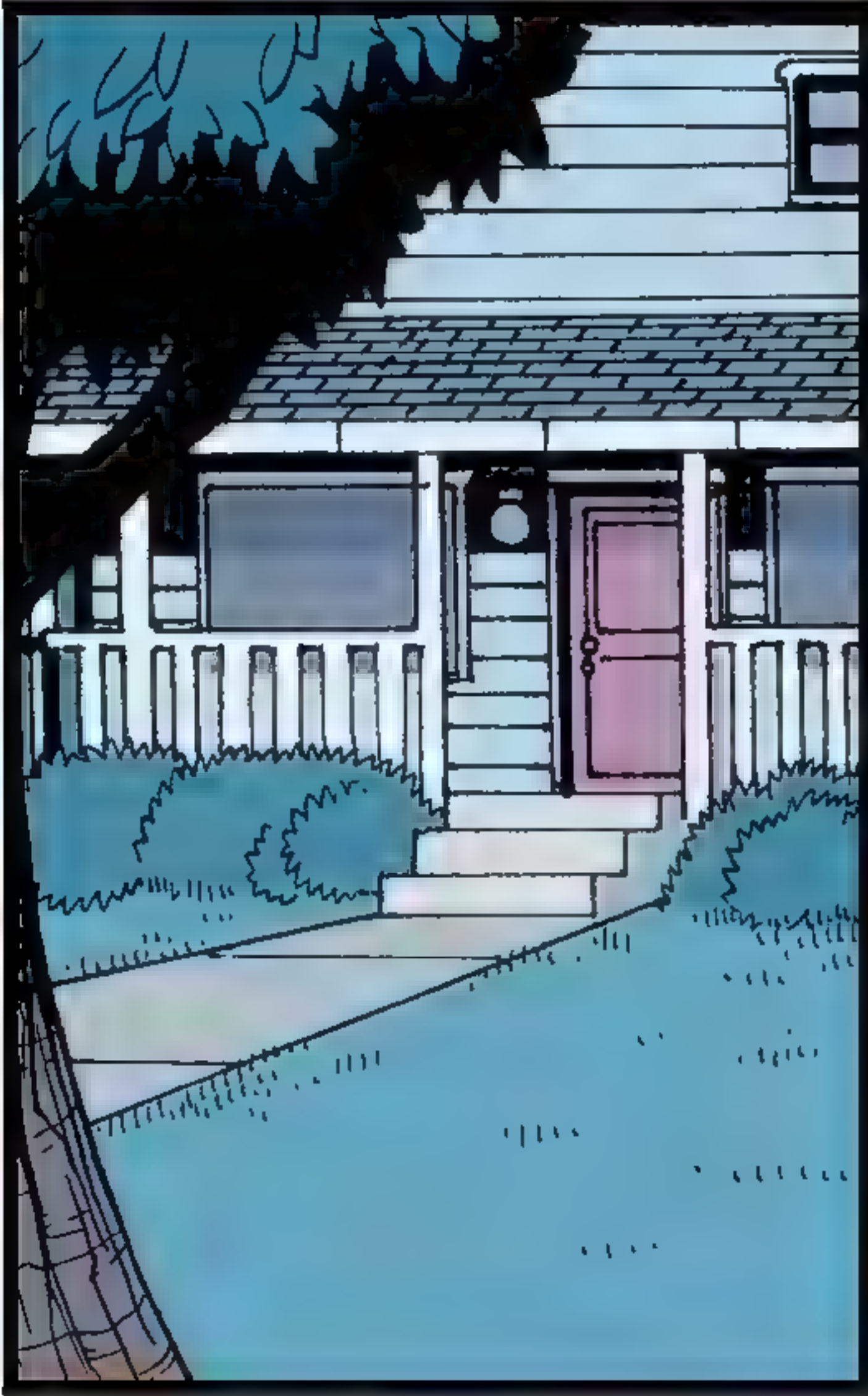
MOM.

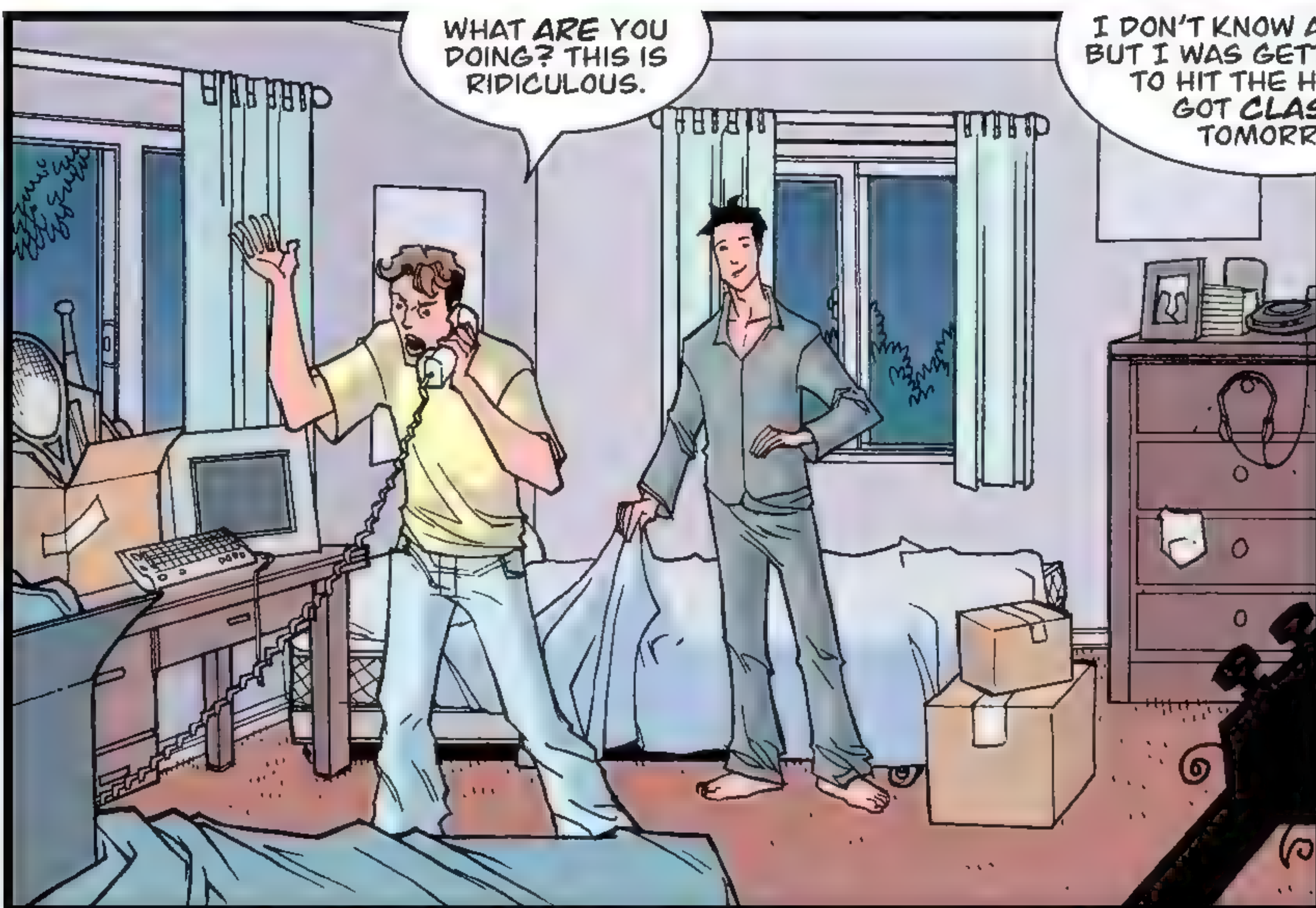
RICH.

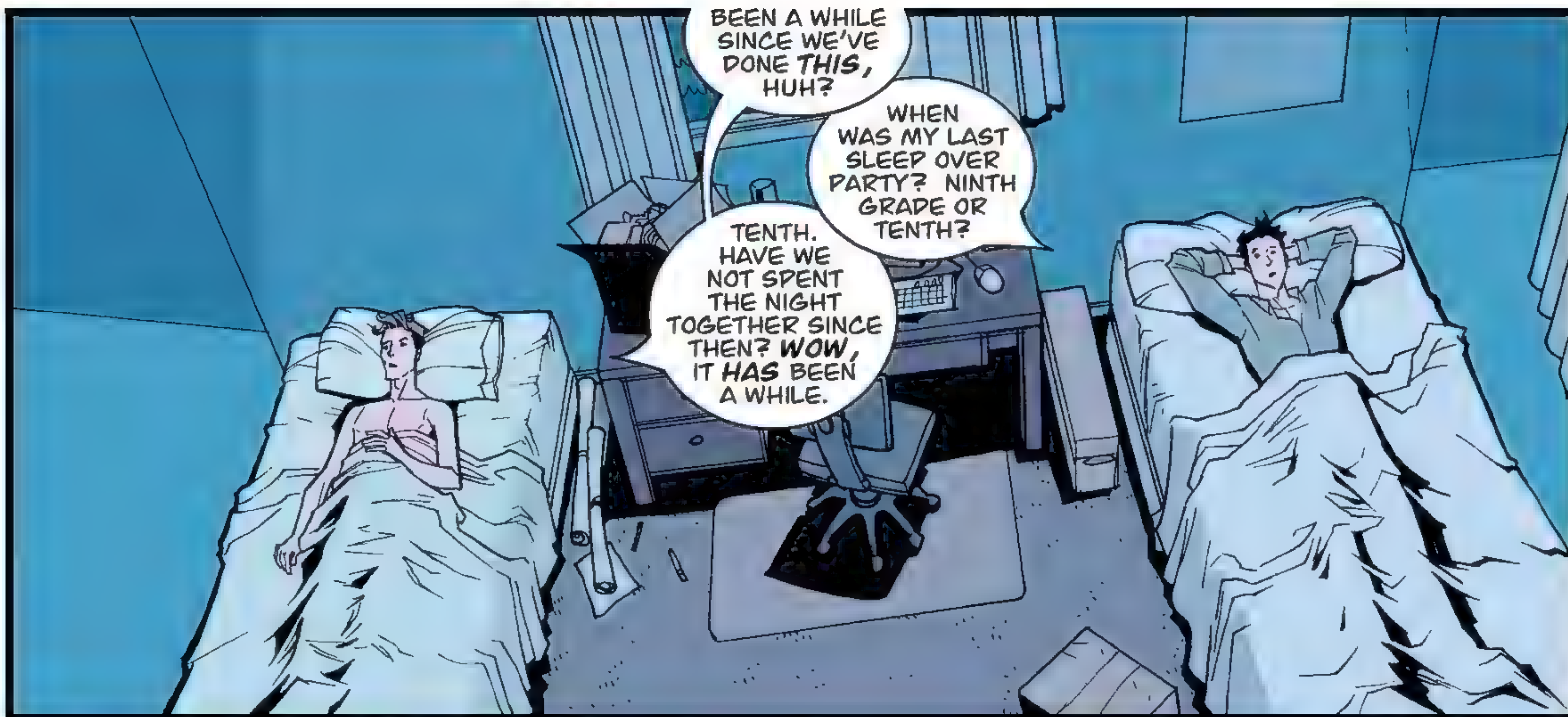


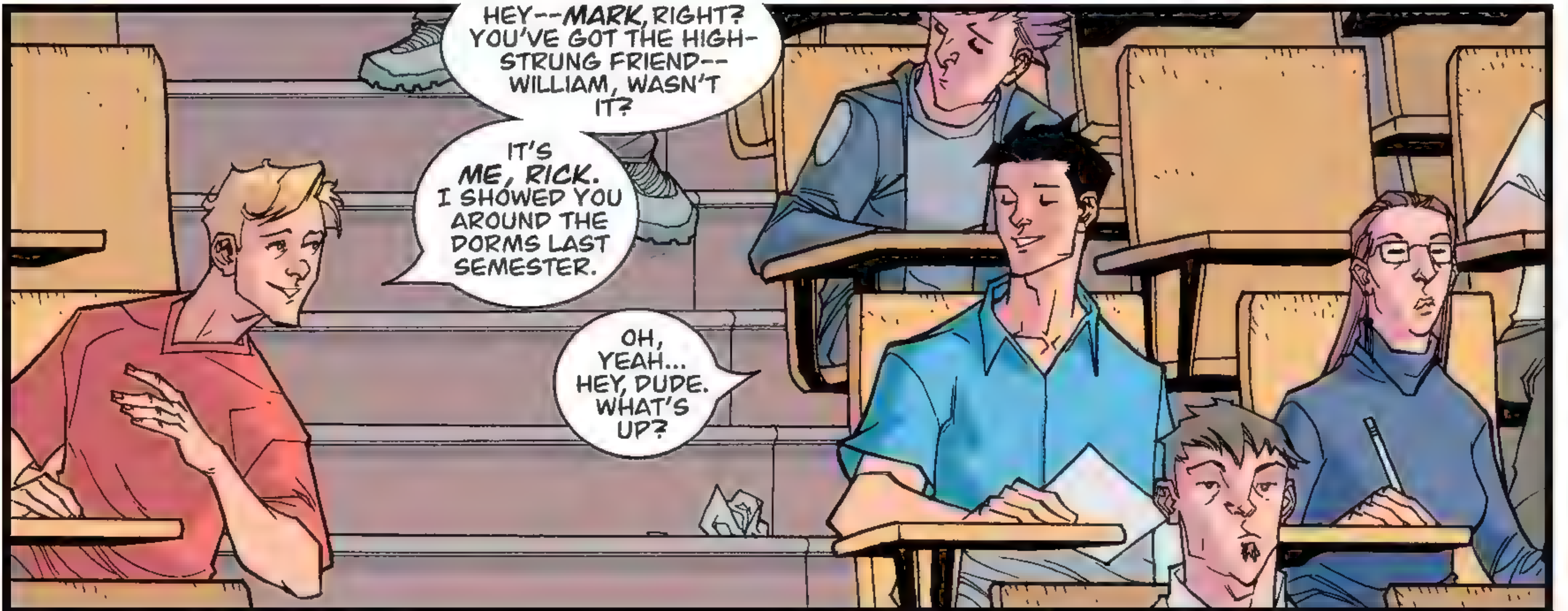
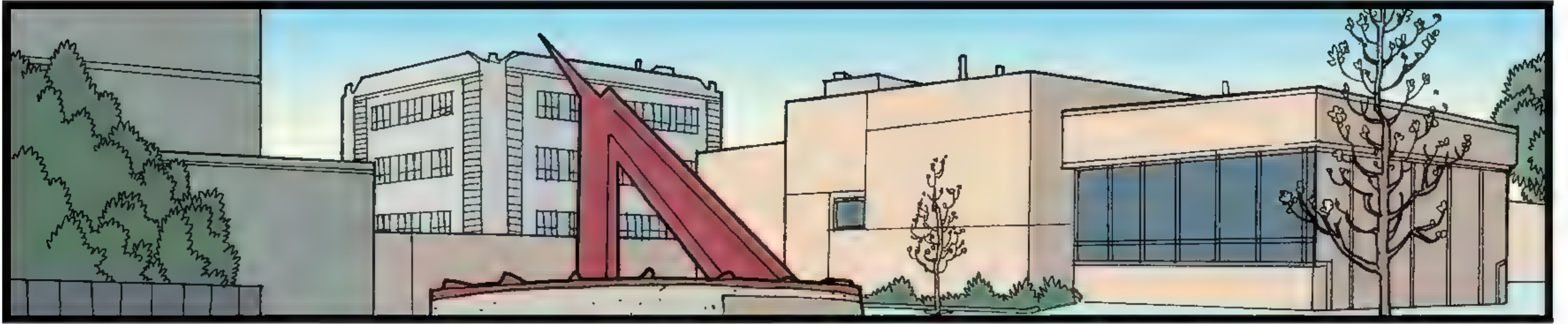
OH, YEAH.

FORGOT.





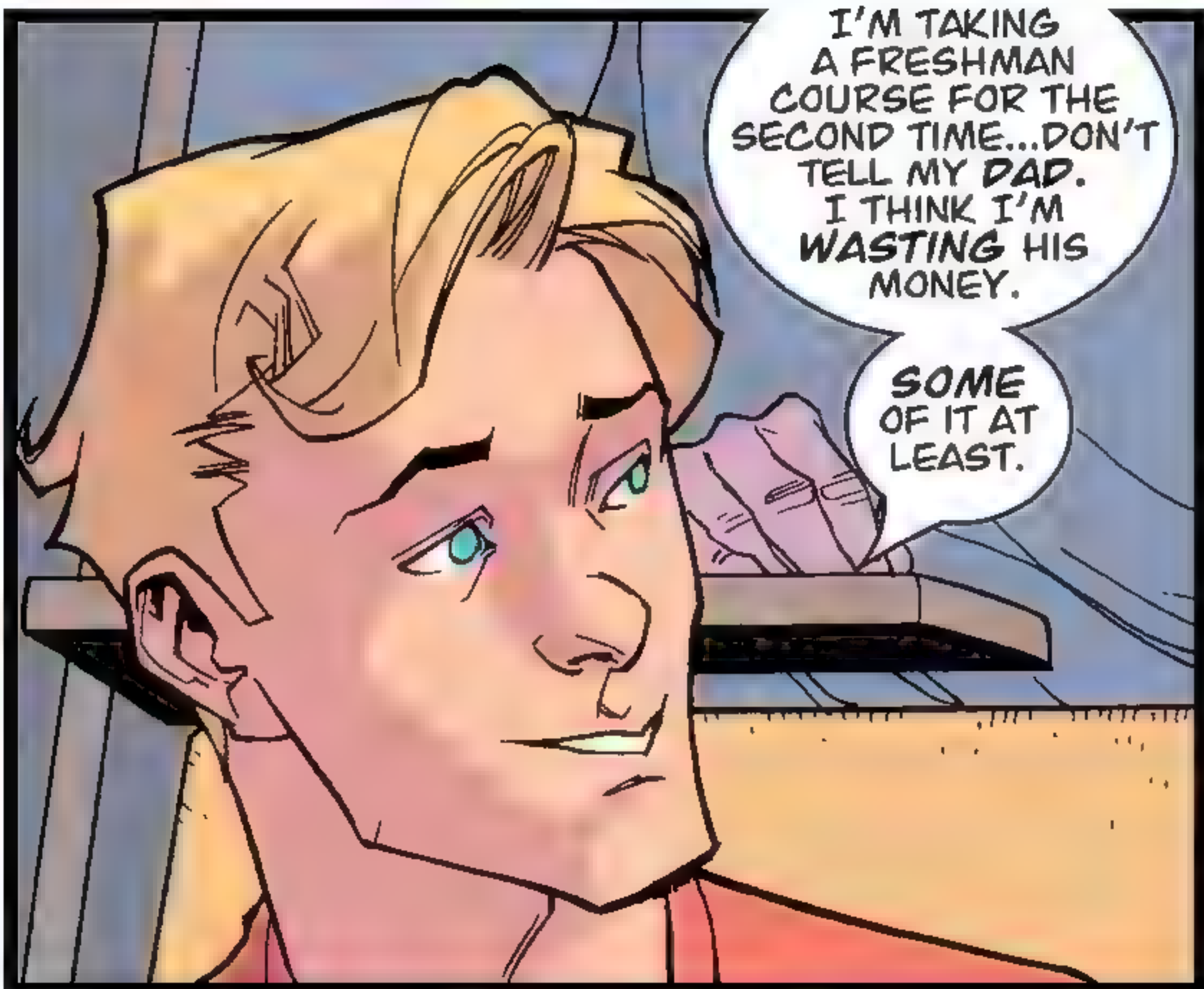




HEY--MARK, RIGHT? YOU'VE GOT THE HIGH-STRUNG FRIEND-- WILLIAM, WASN'T IT?

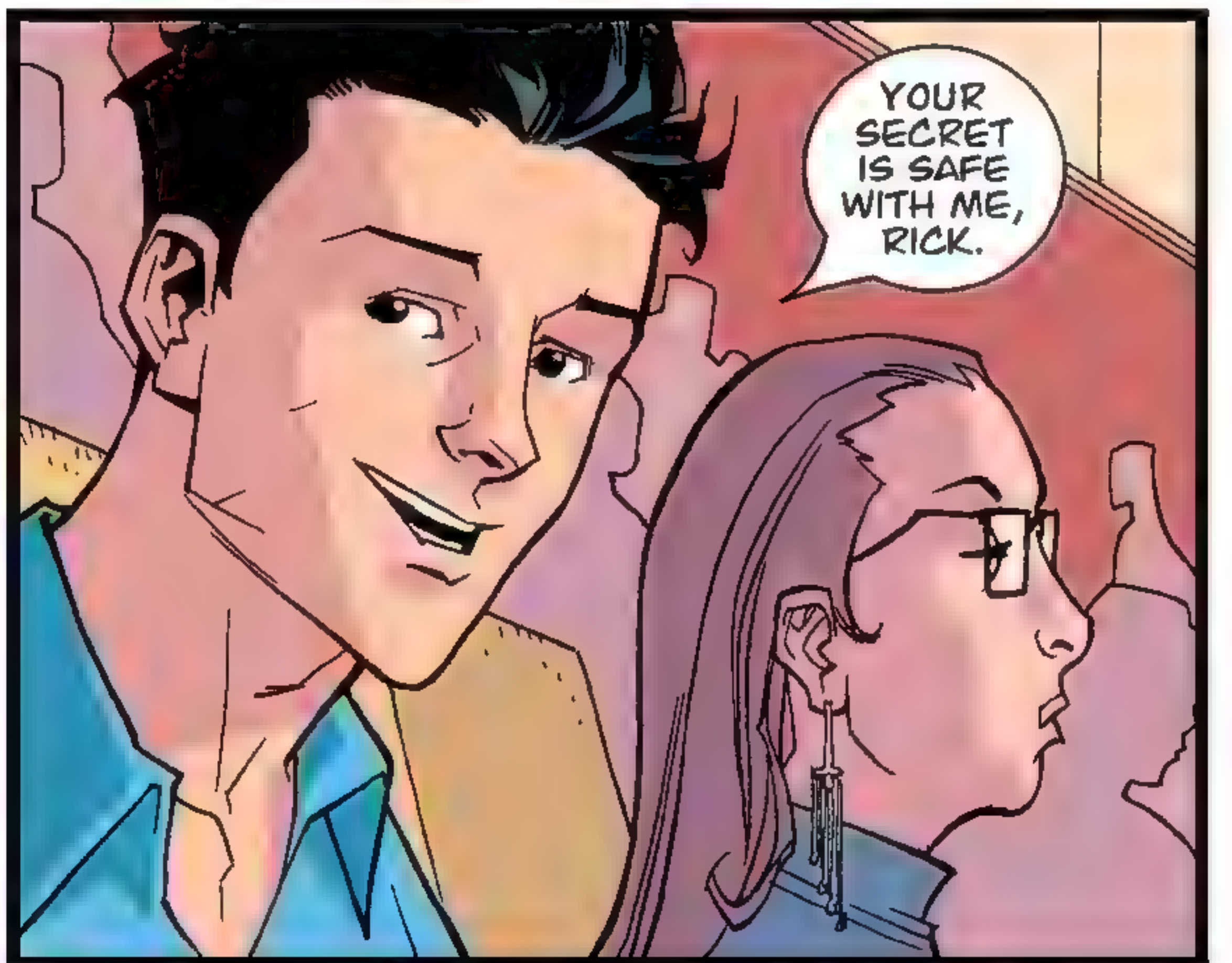
IT'S ME, RICK. I SHOWED YOU AROUND THE DORMS LAST SEMESTER.

OH, YEAH... HEY, DUDE. WHAT'S UP?



I'M TAKING A FRESHMAN COURSE FOR THE SECOND TIME...DON'T TELL MY DAD. I THINK I'M WASTING HIS MONEY.

SOME OF IT AT LEAST.



YOUR SECRET IS SAFE WITH ME, RICK.

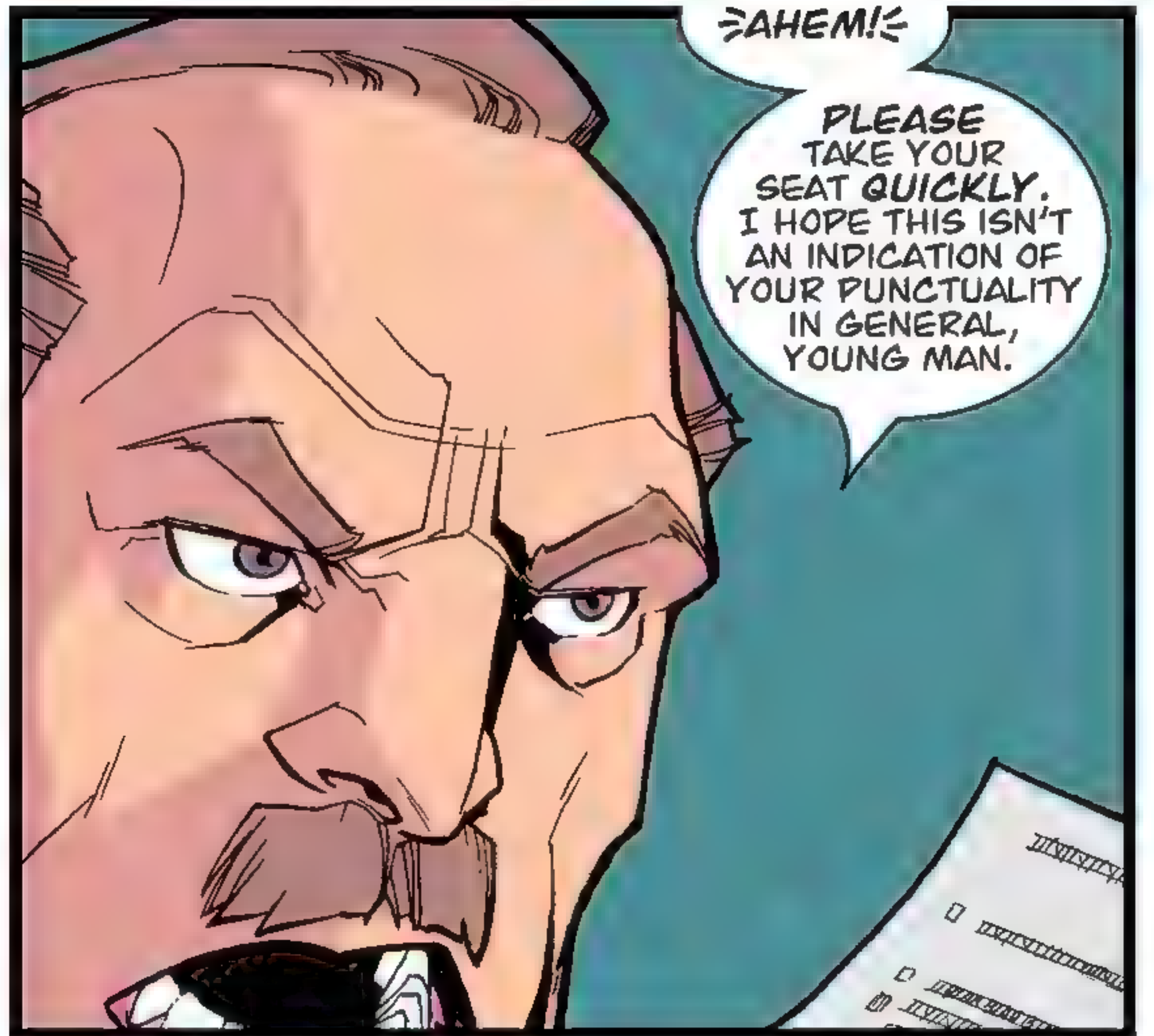
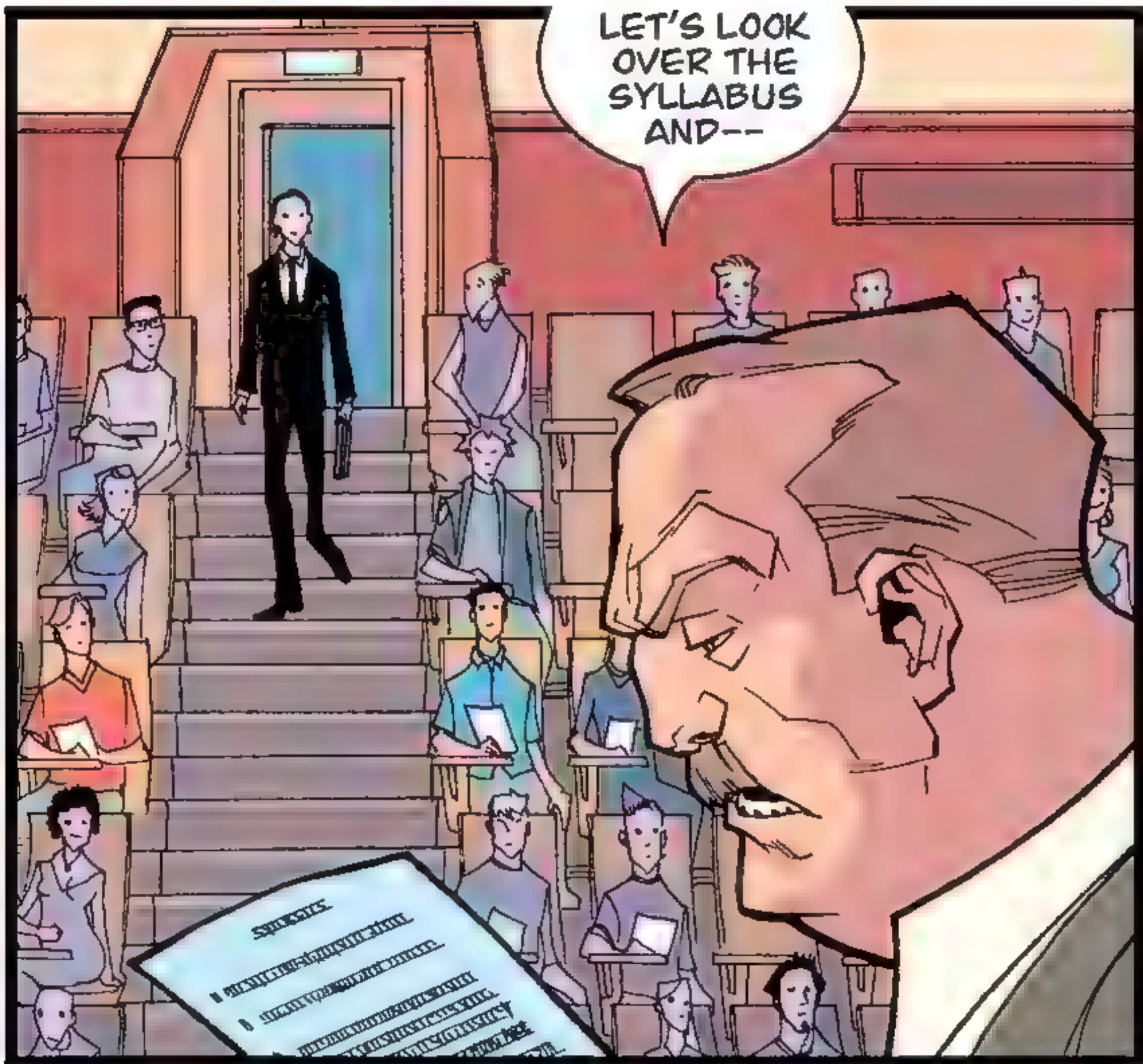


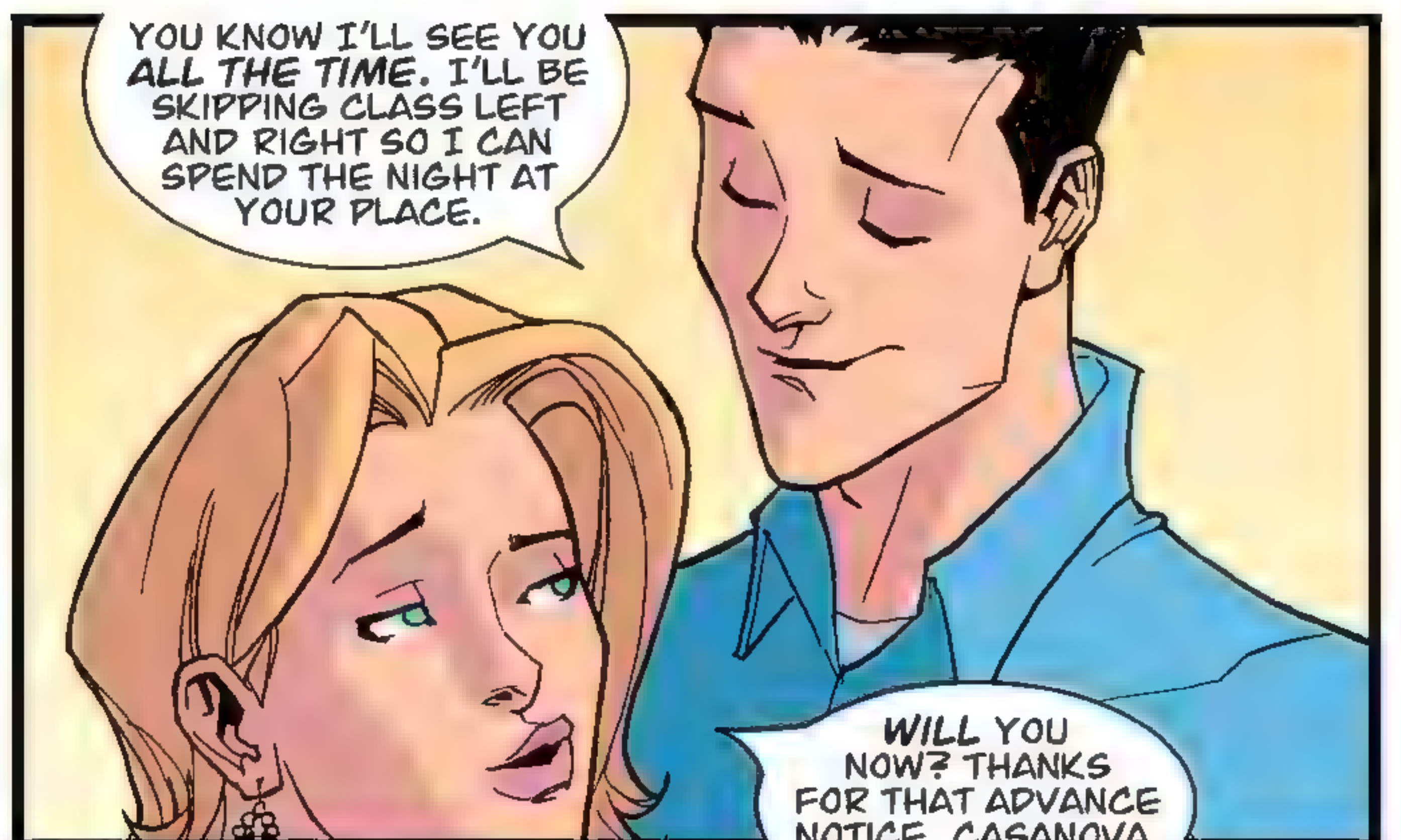
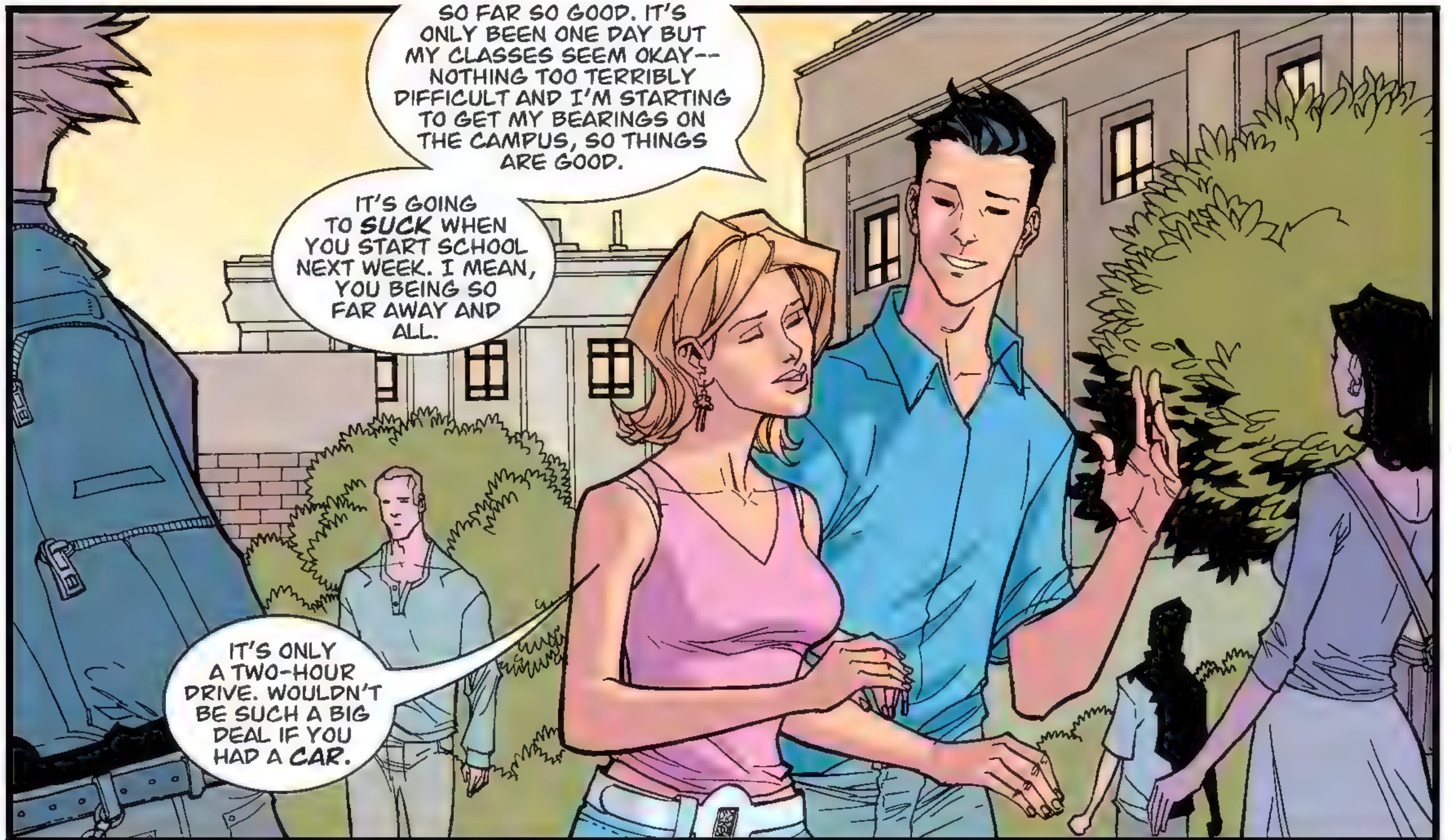
GOOD MORNING AND WELCOME TO BIOLOGY 101. I'M PROFESSOR VARNER, OR DOCTOR VARNER IF YOU PREFER. PLEASE, WHATEVER YOU DO... DO NOT CALL ME "MISTER."

IT'S RUDE.

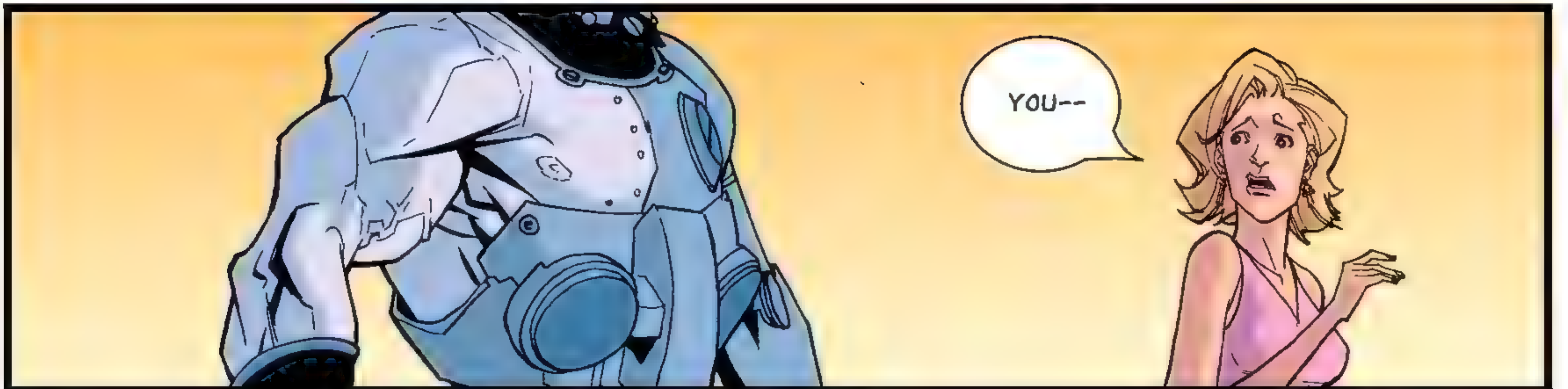
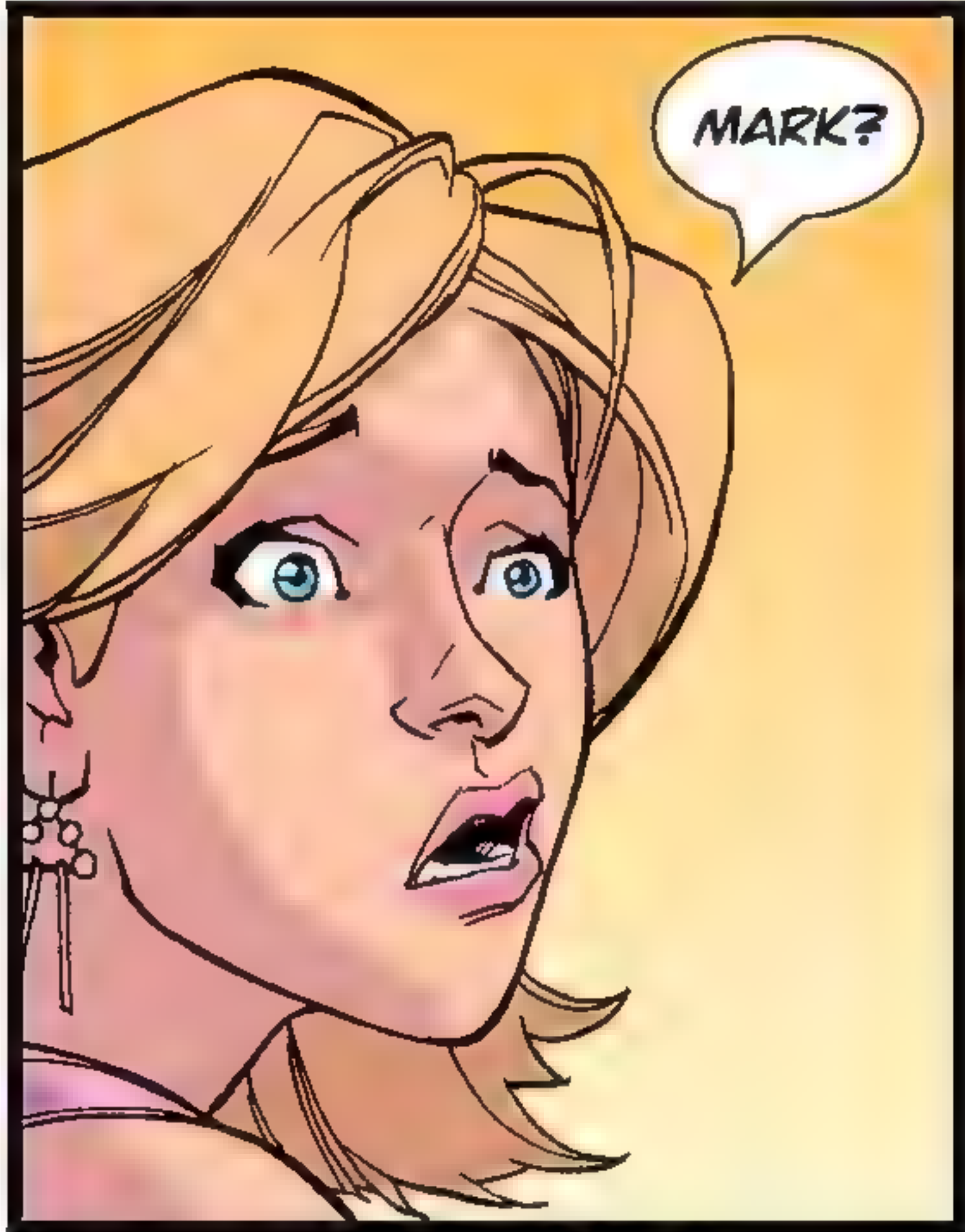
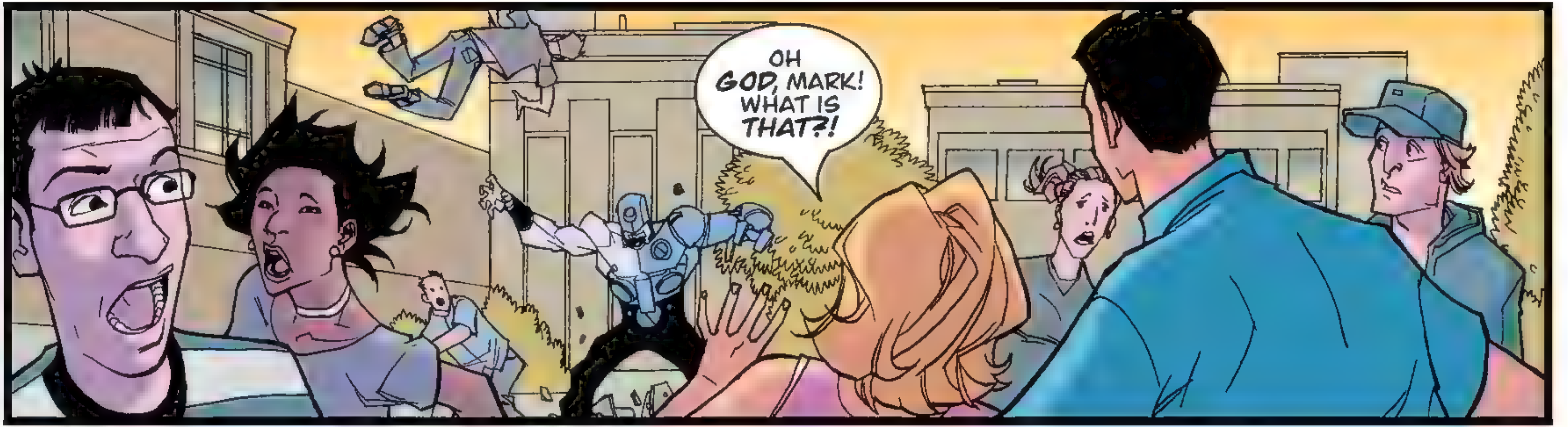
IT'S NOT AN ARROGANCE THING. IT'S JUST ABOUT COMMON COURTESY, AND IF I CAN TEACH YOU A LITTLE ABOUT COURTESY DURING YOUR TIME HERE, THE WORLD WOULD BE A MUCH BETTER PLACE.

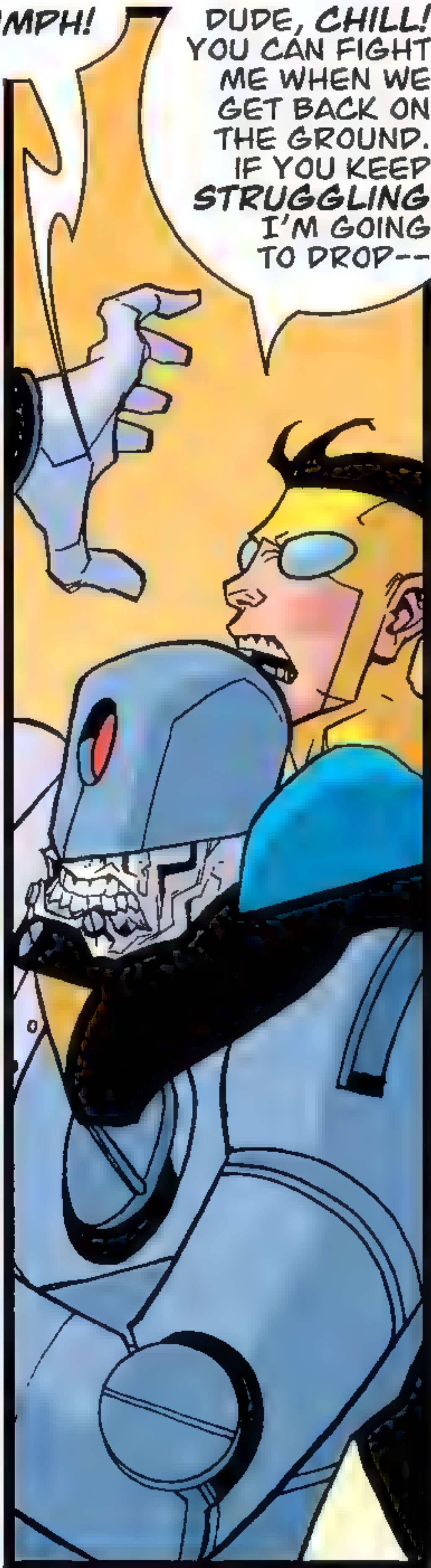
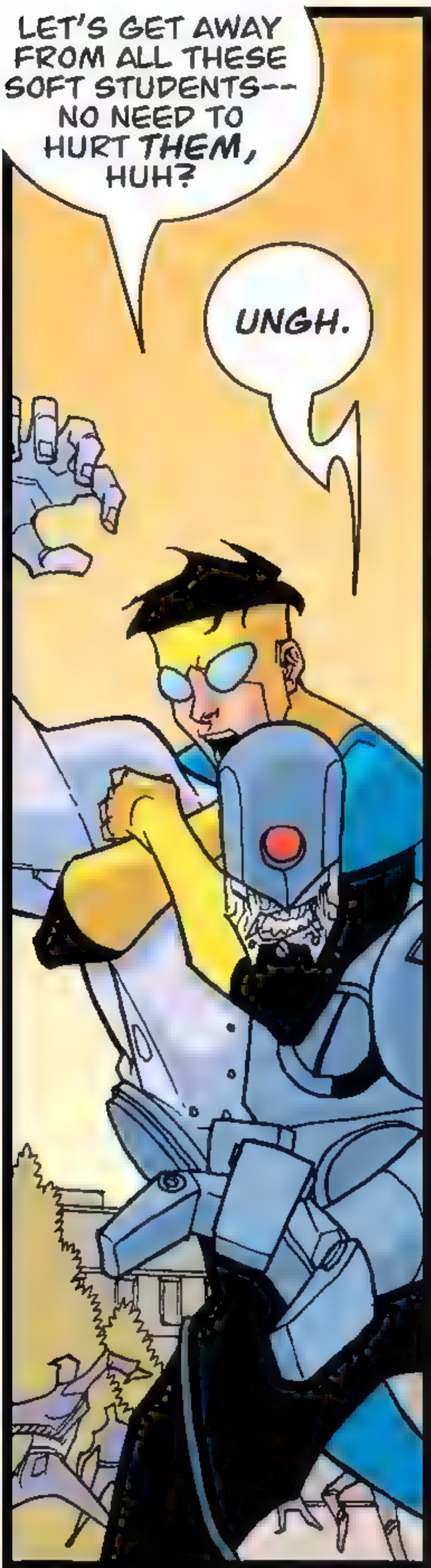
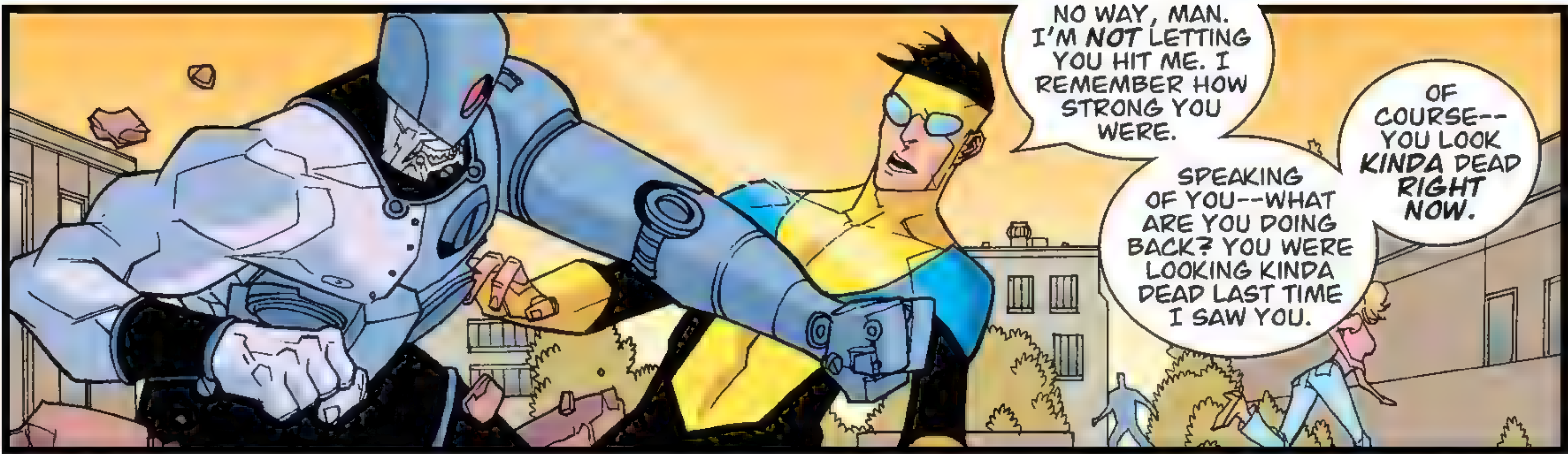
YOU SHOULD ALL HAVE HAD A SYLLABUS ON YOUR DESK WHEN YOU CAME IN. IF ANYONE IS MISSING ONE, PLEASE RAISE YOUR HAND.



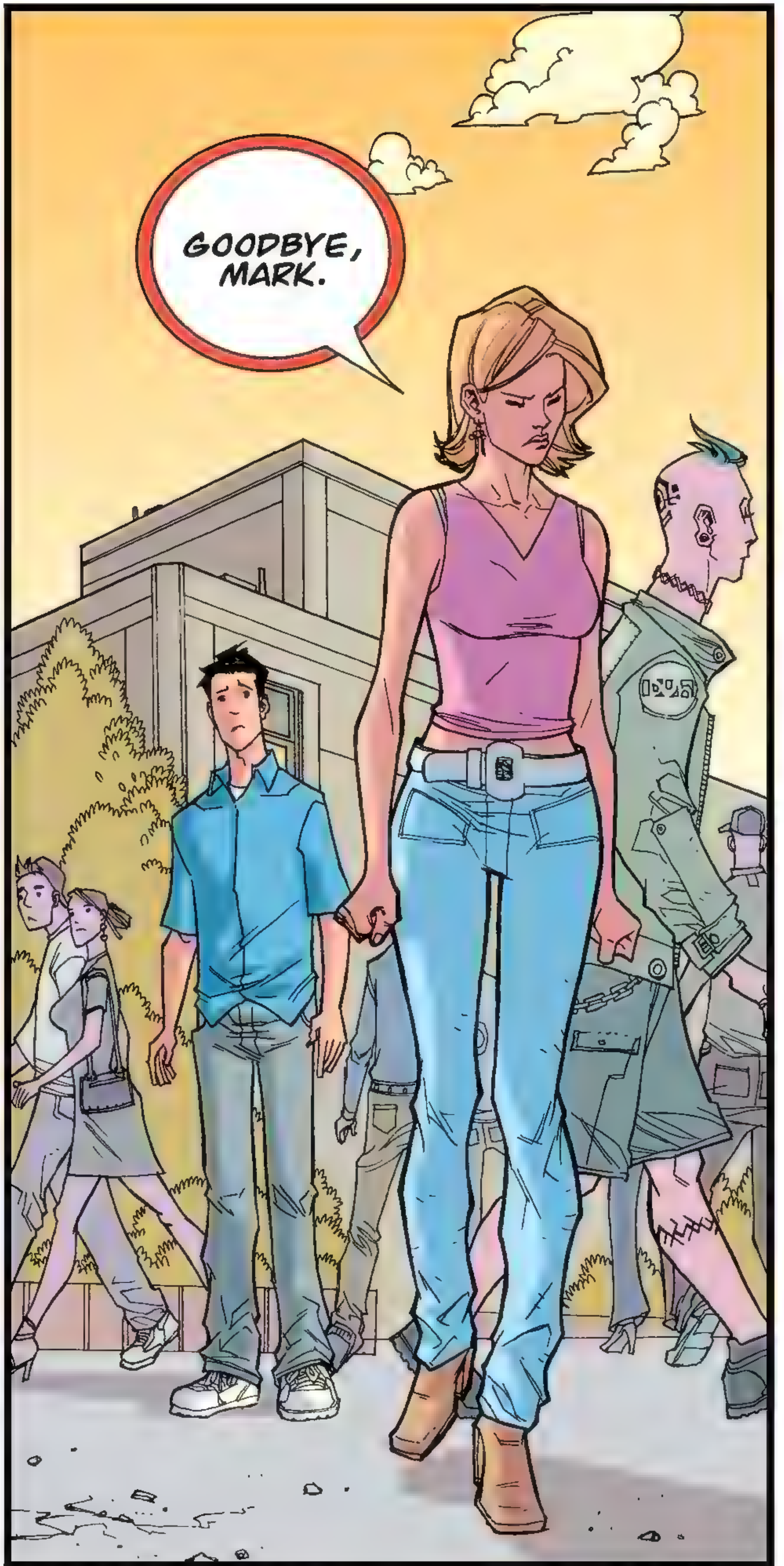
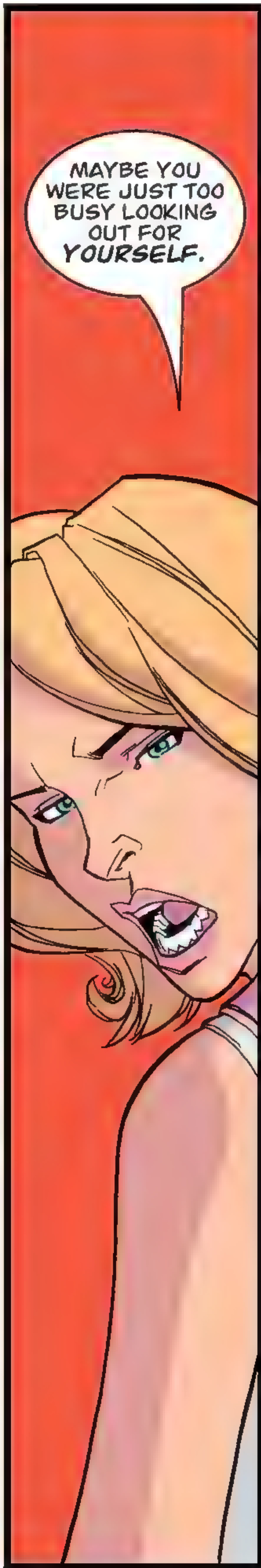
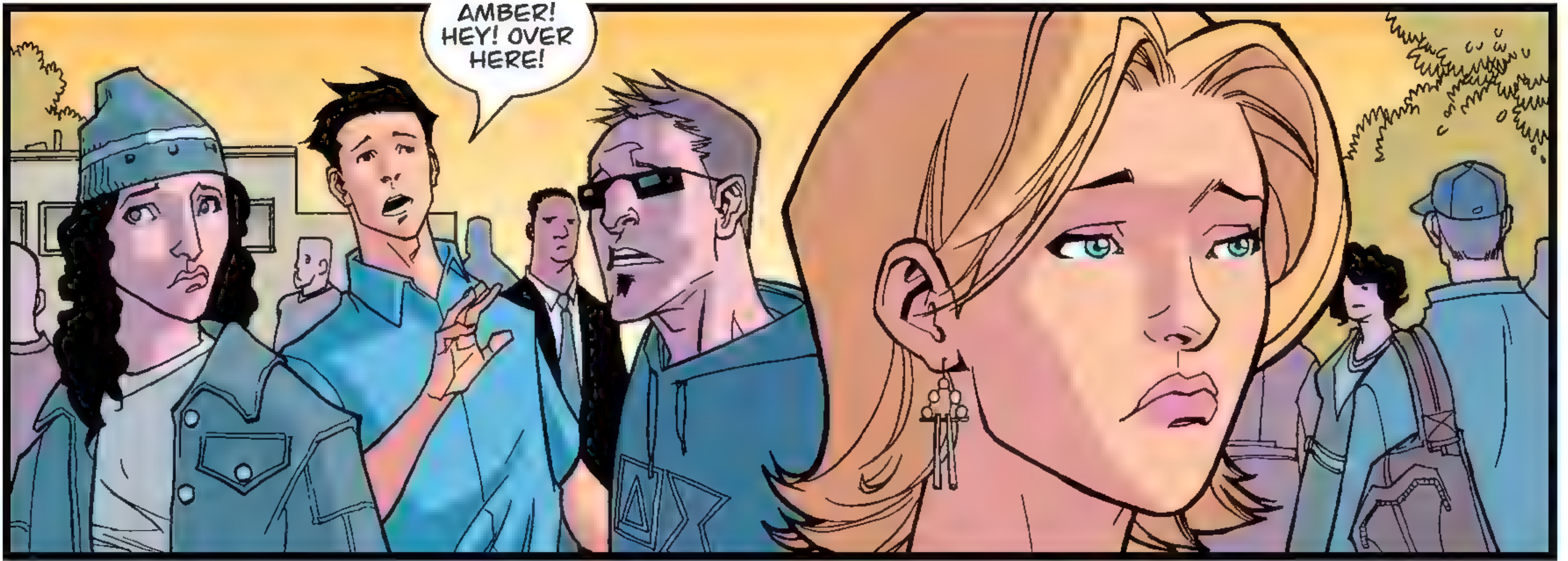


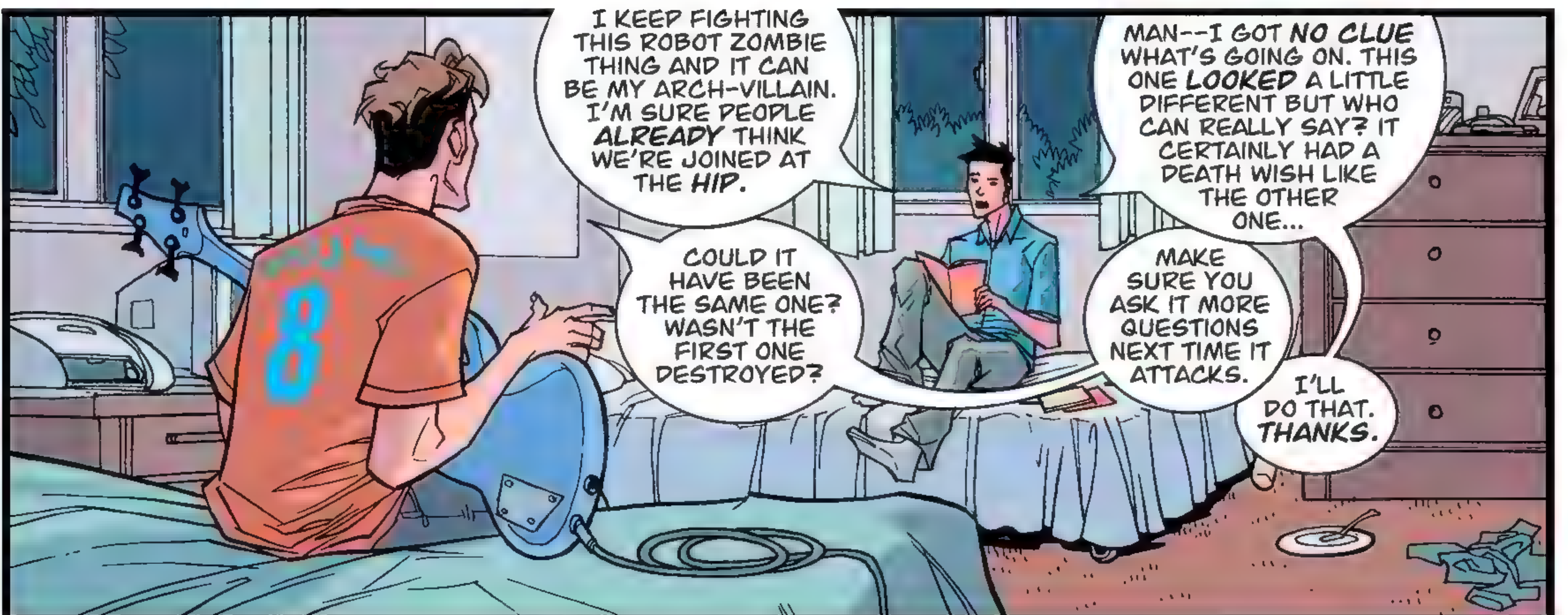
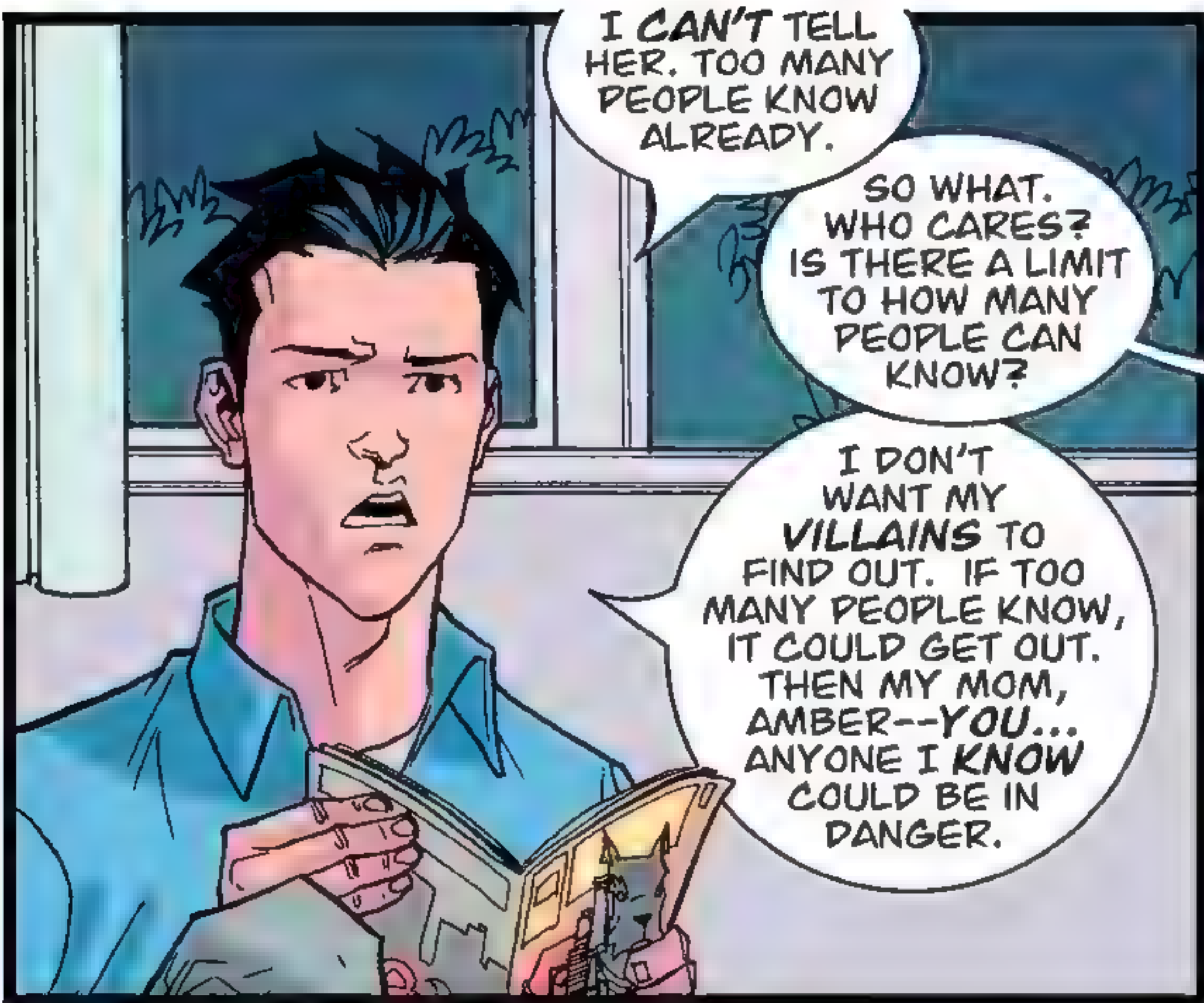


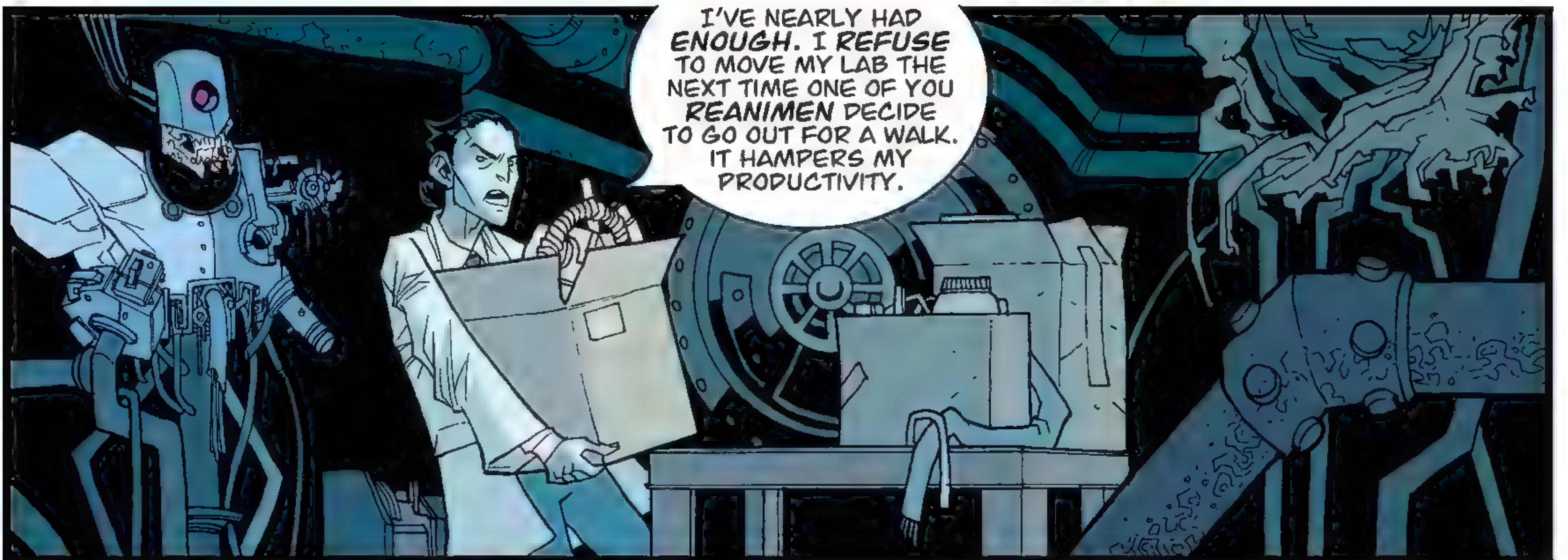
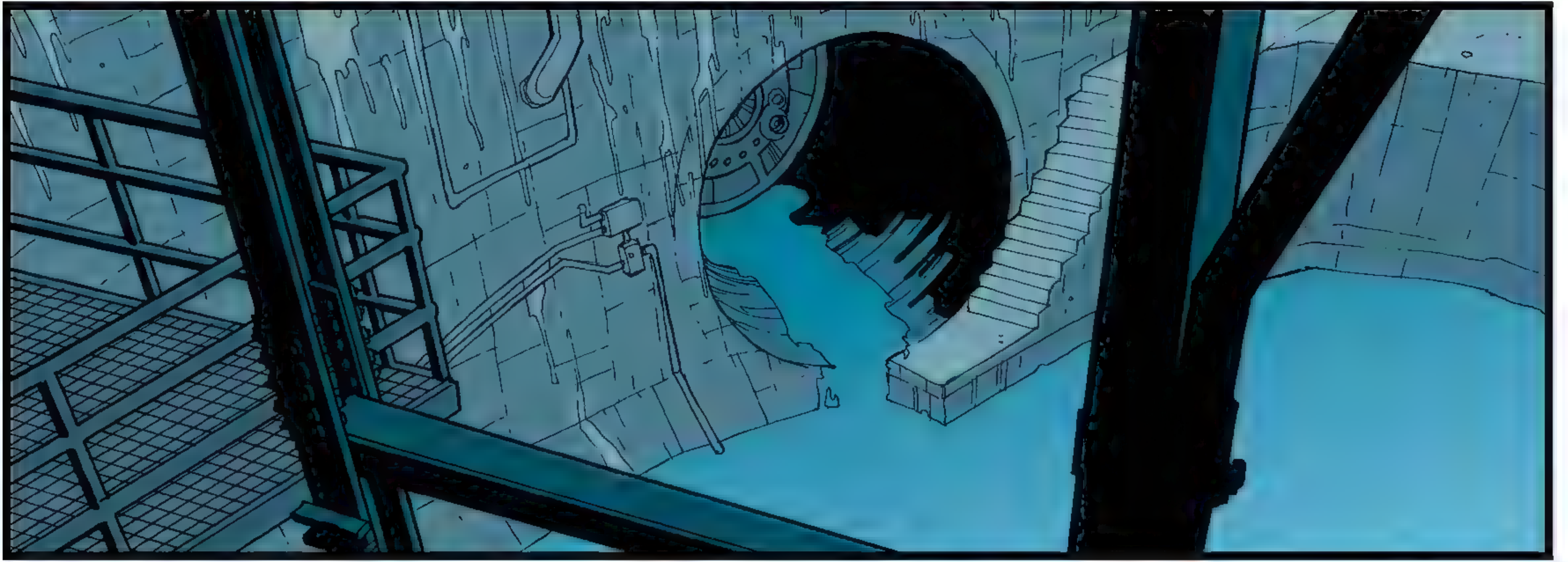


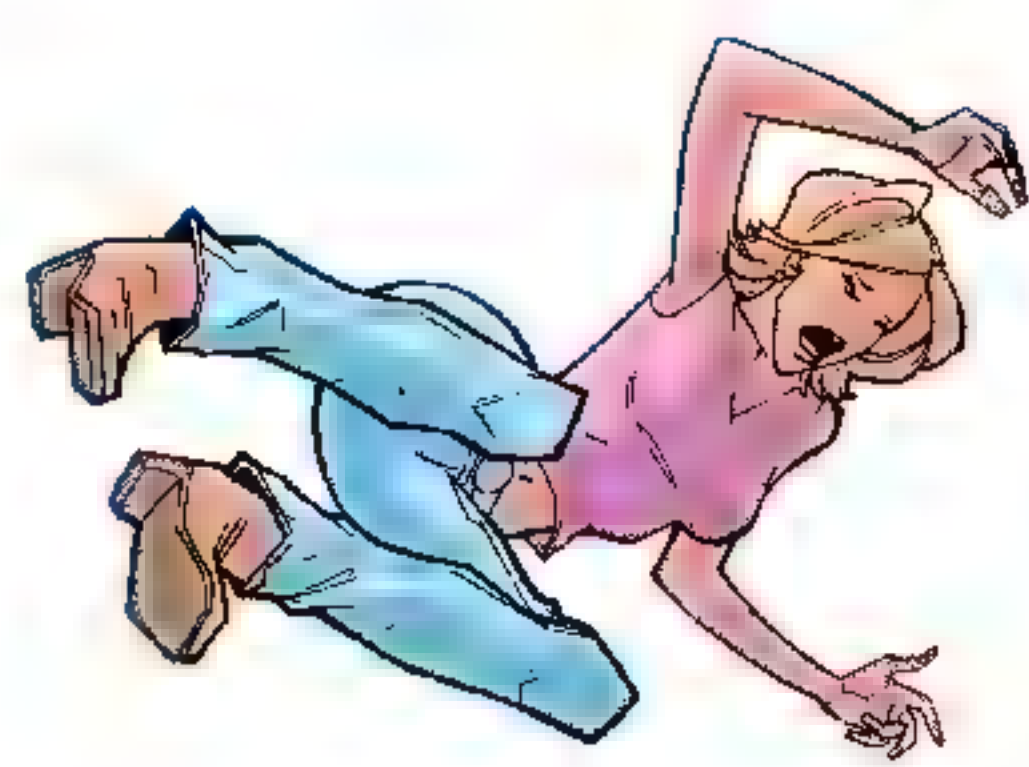






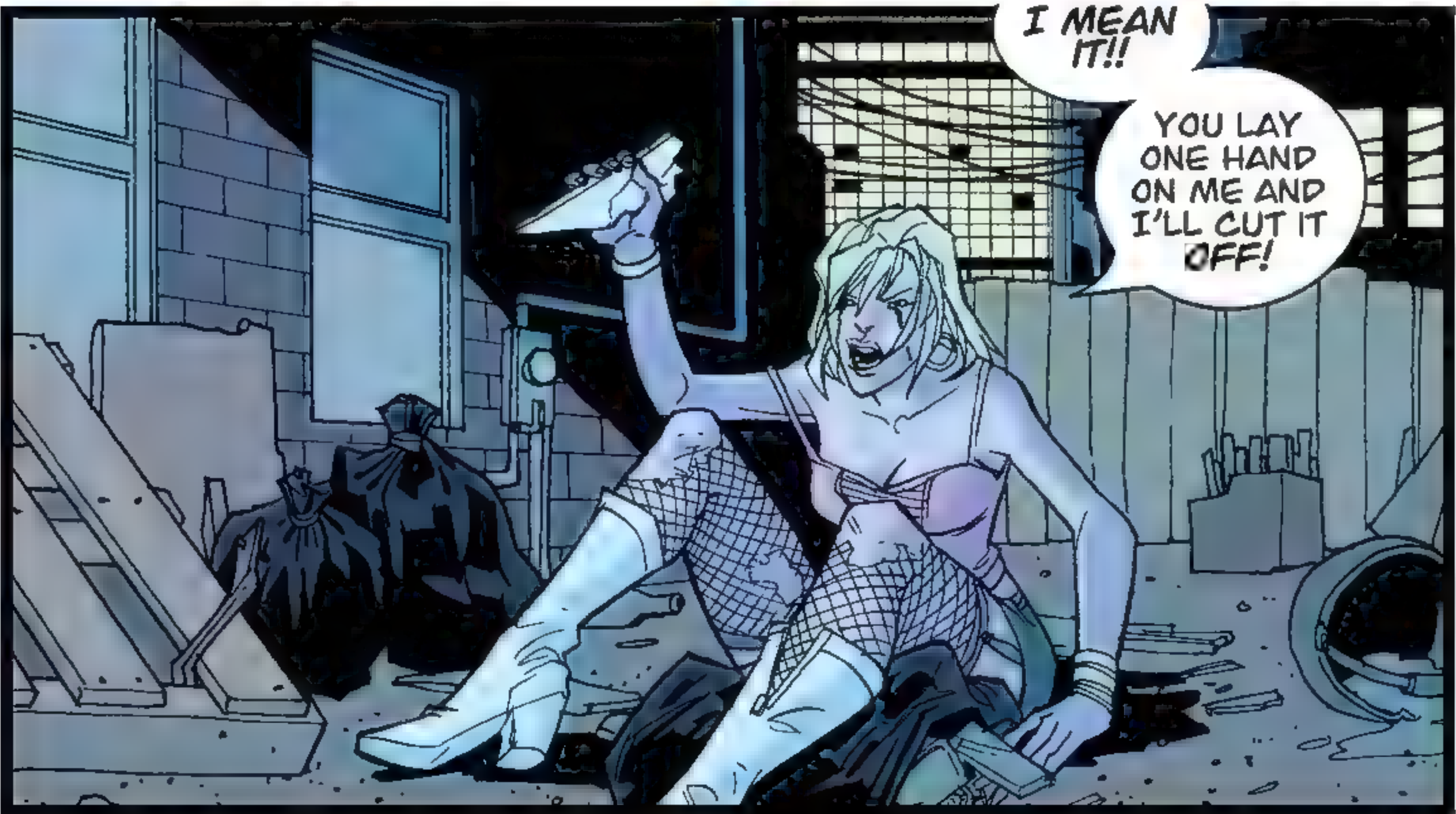






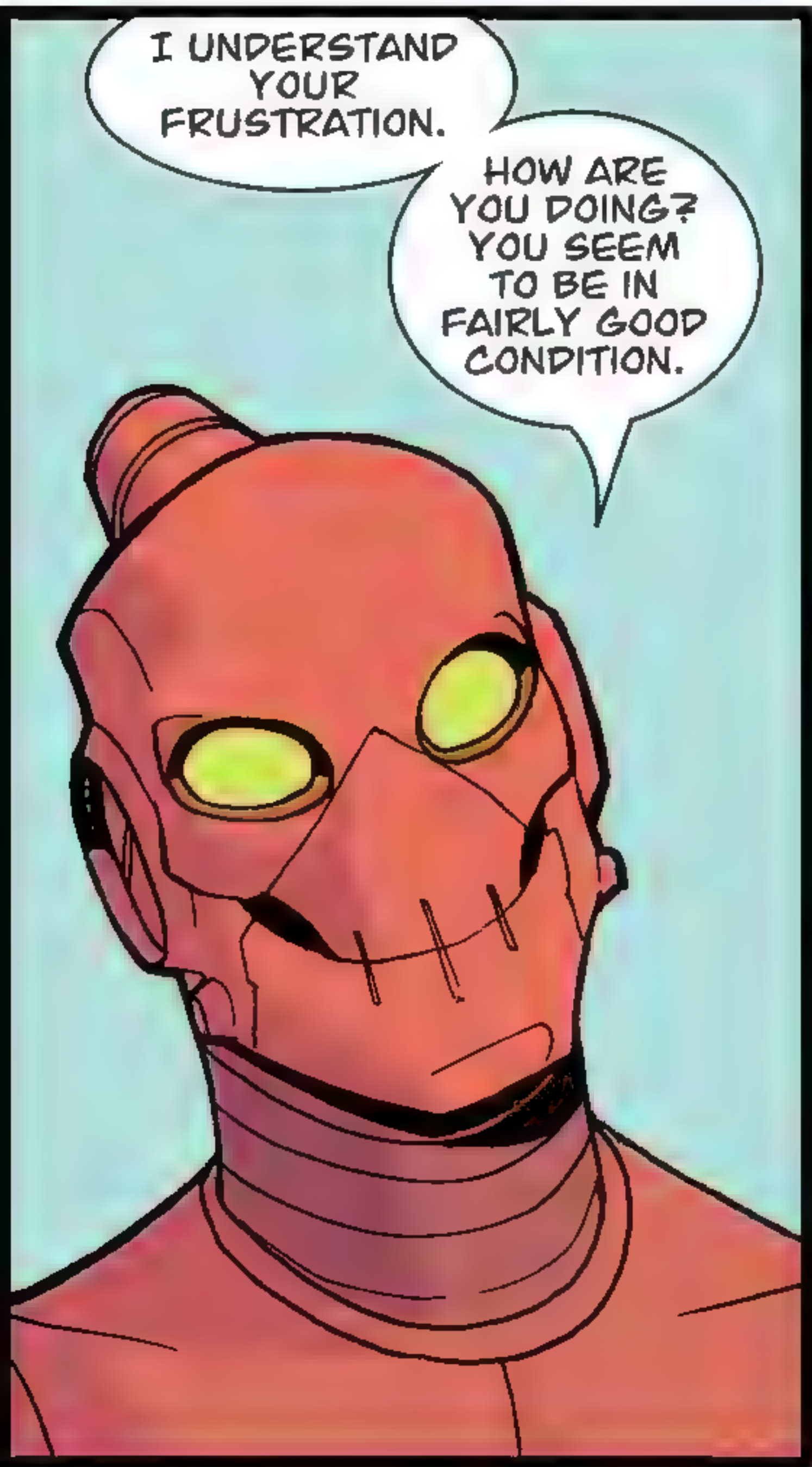
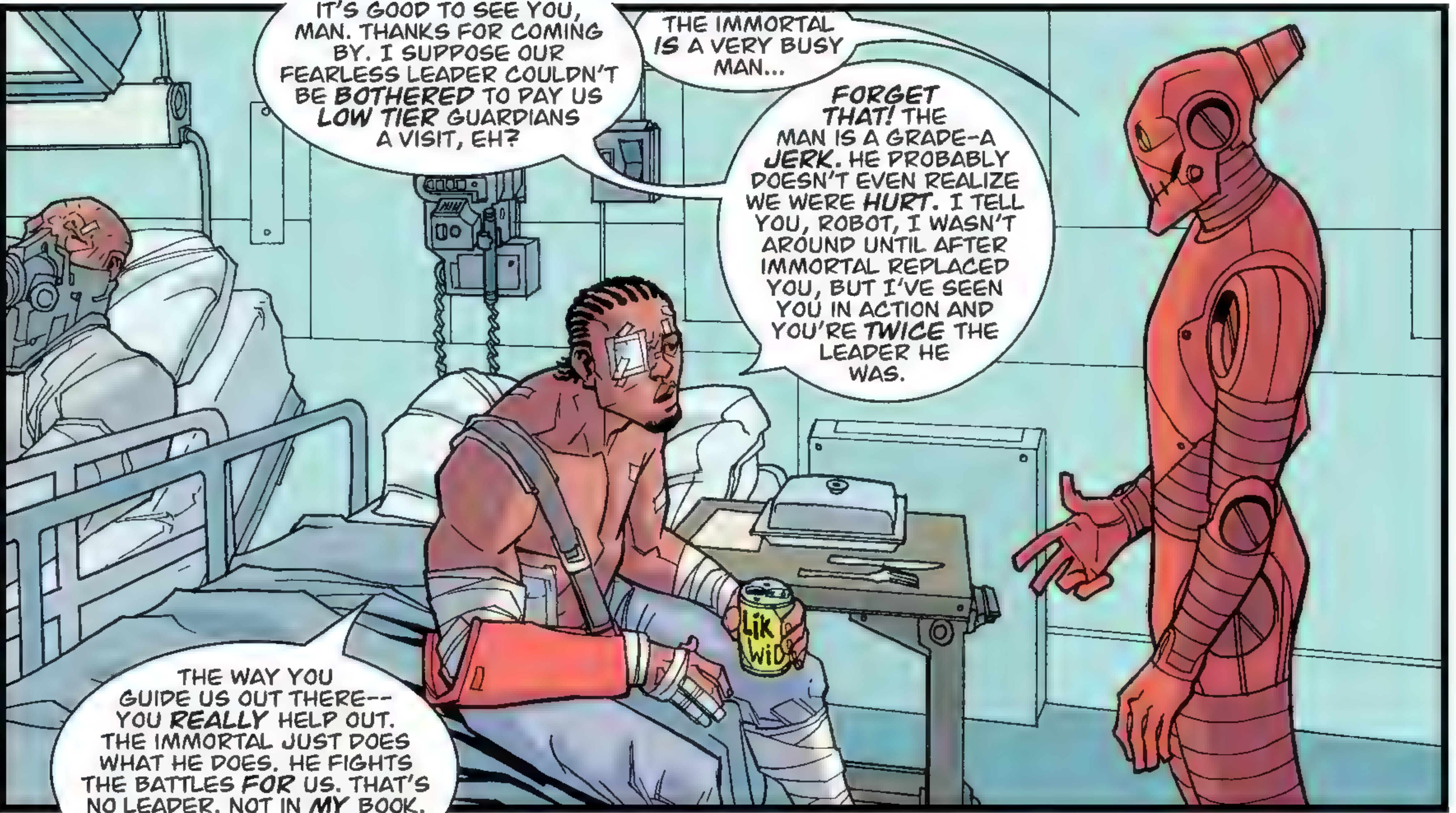
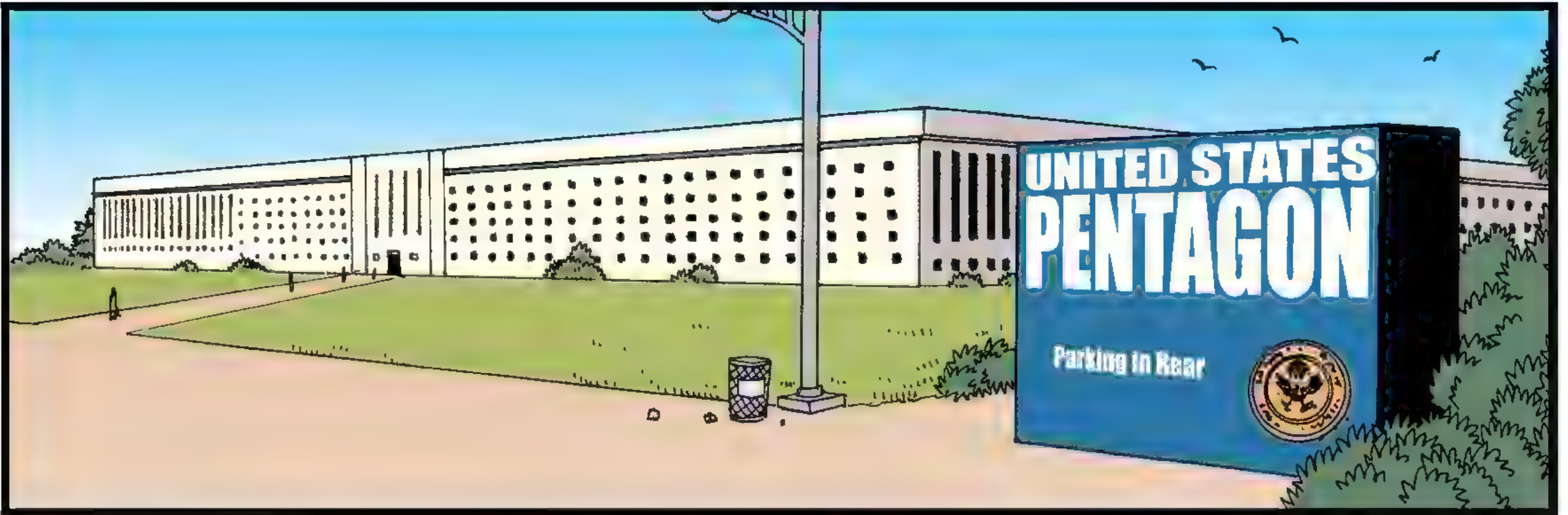
ISSUE TWENTY-ONE

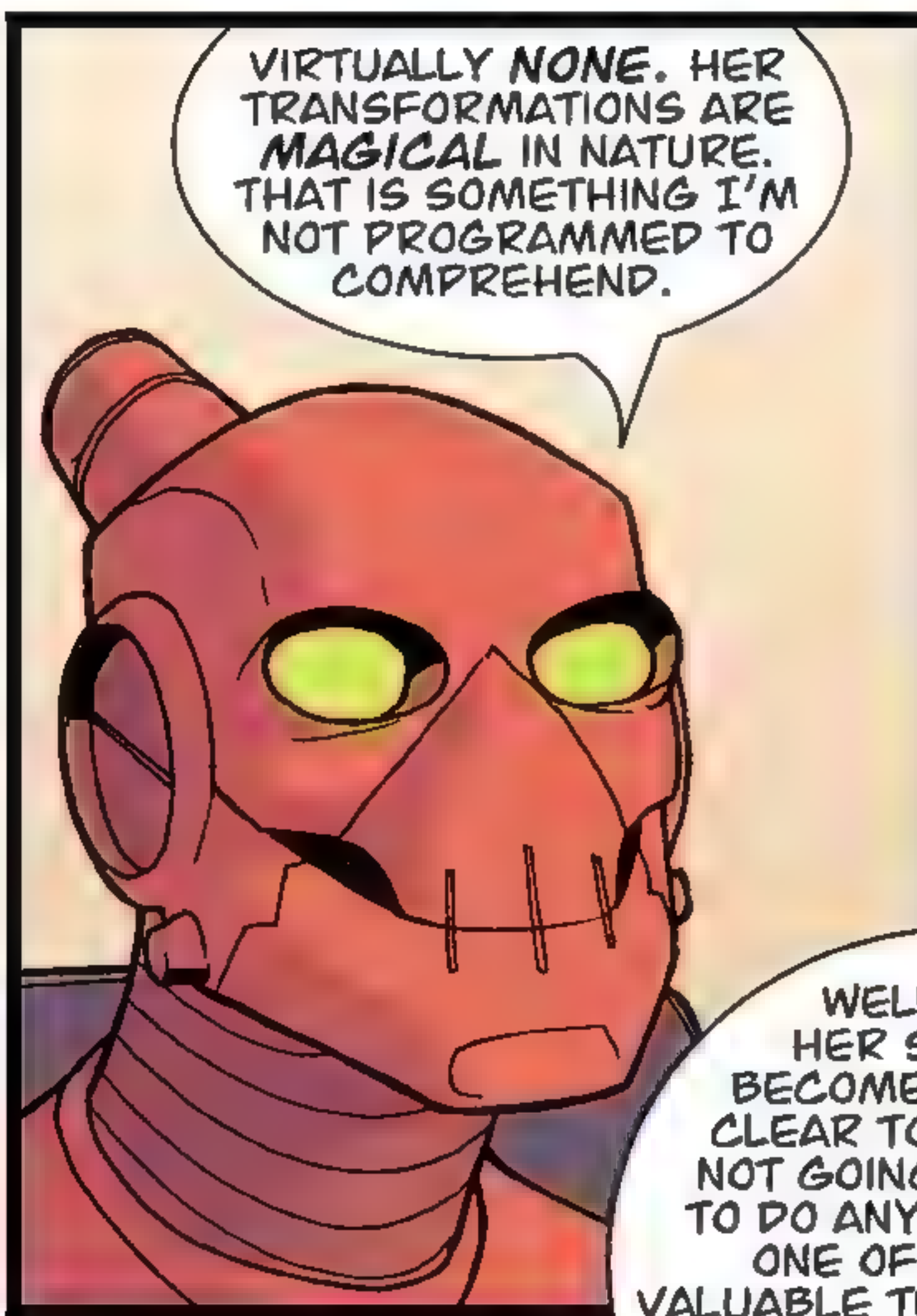
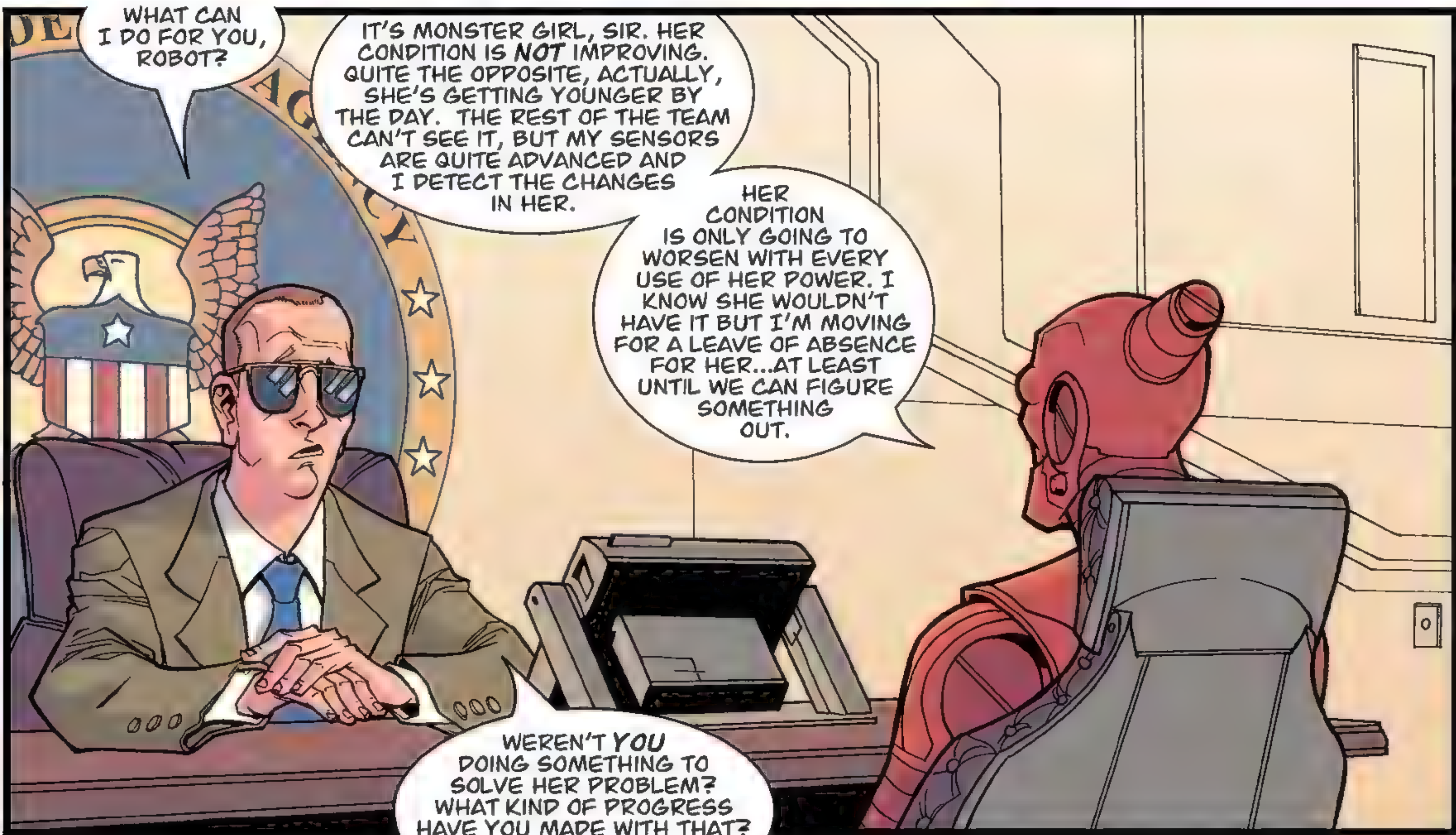
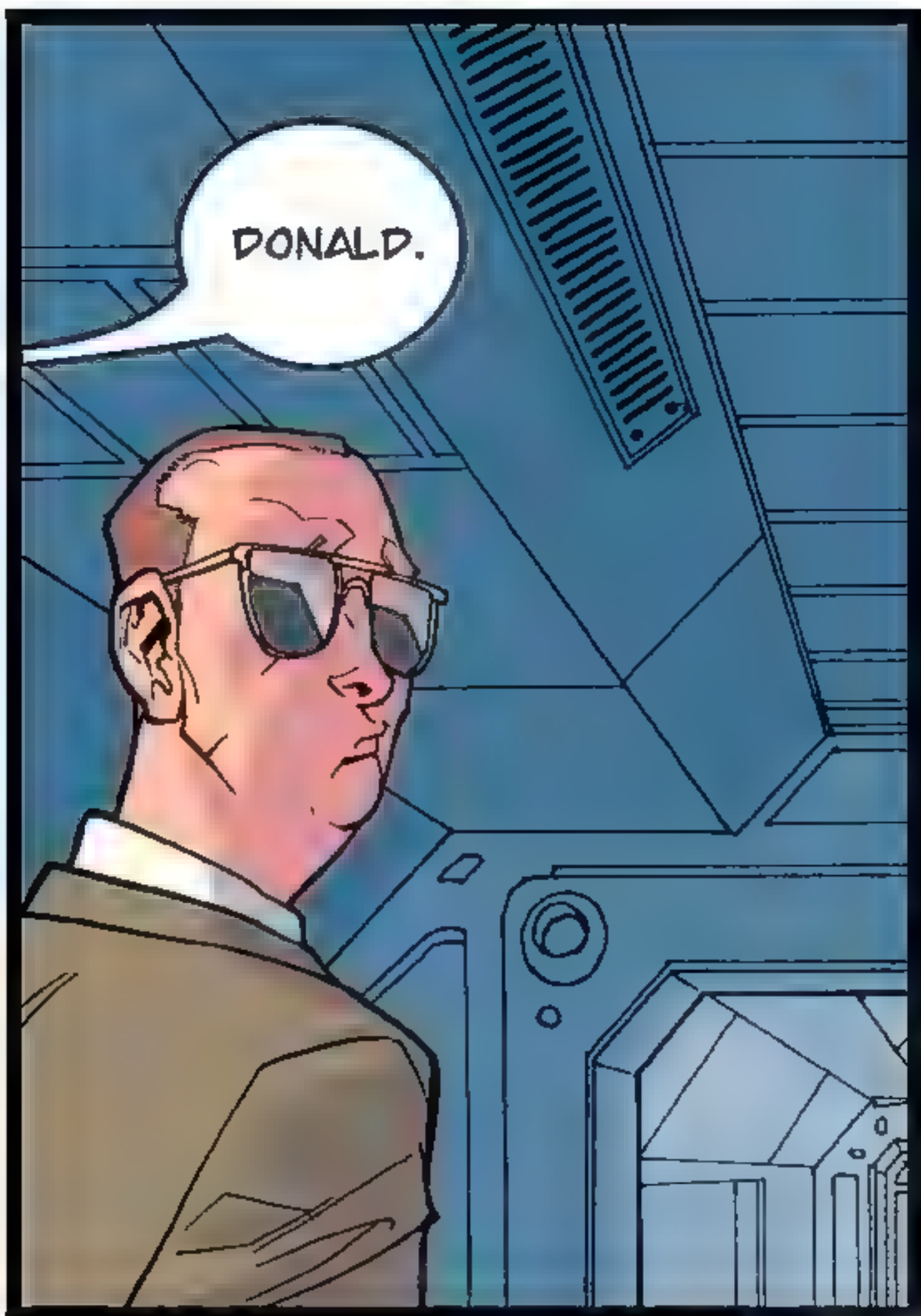


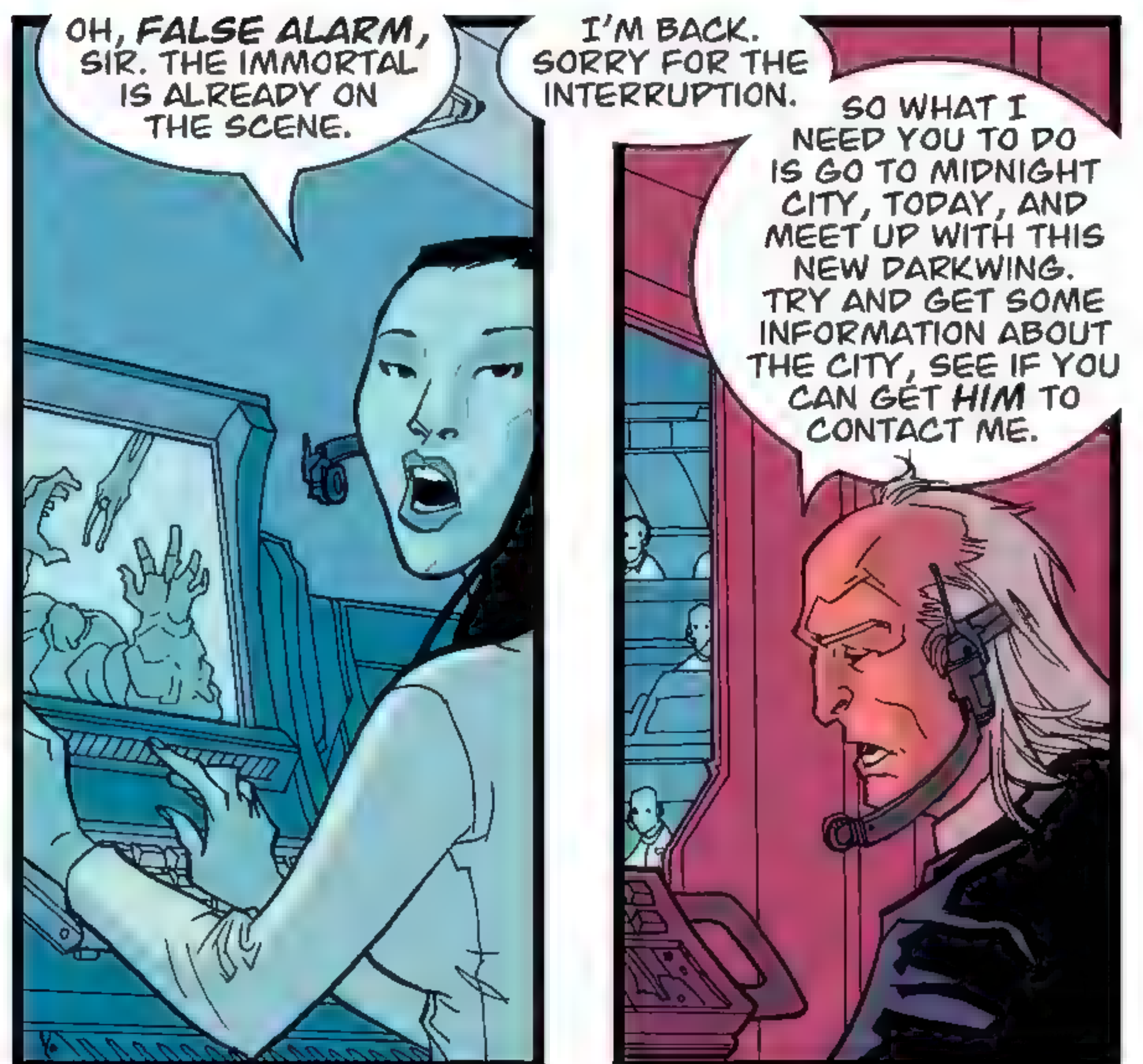
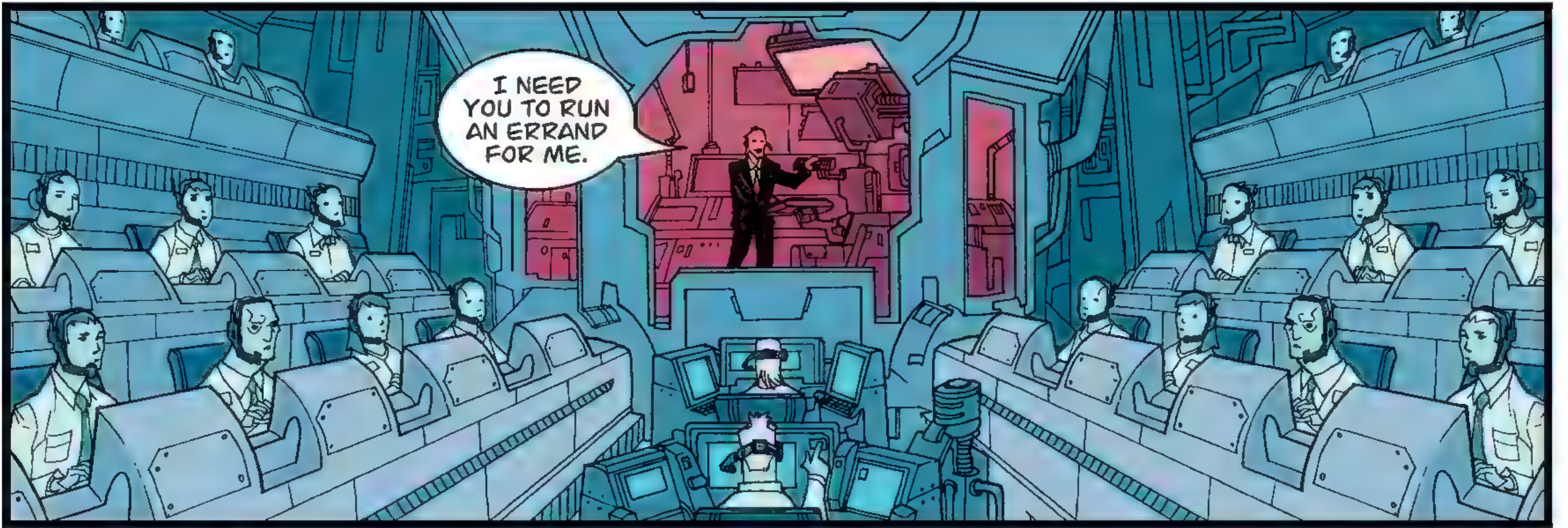




YOU
WILL
BE!

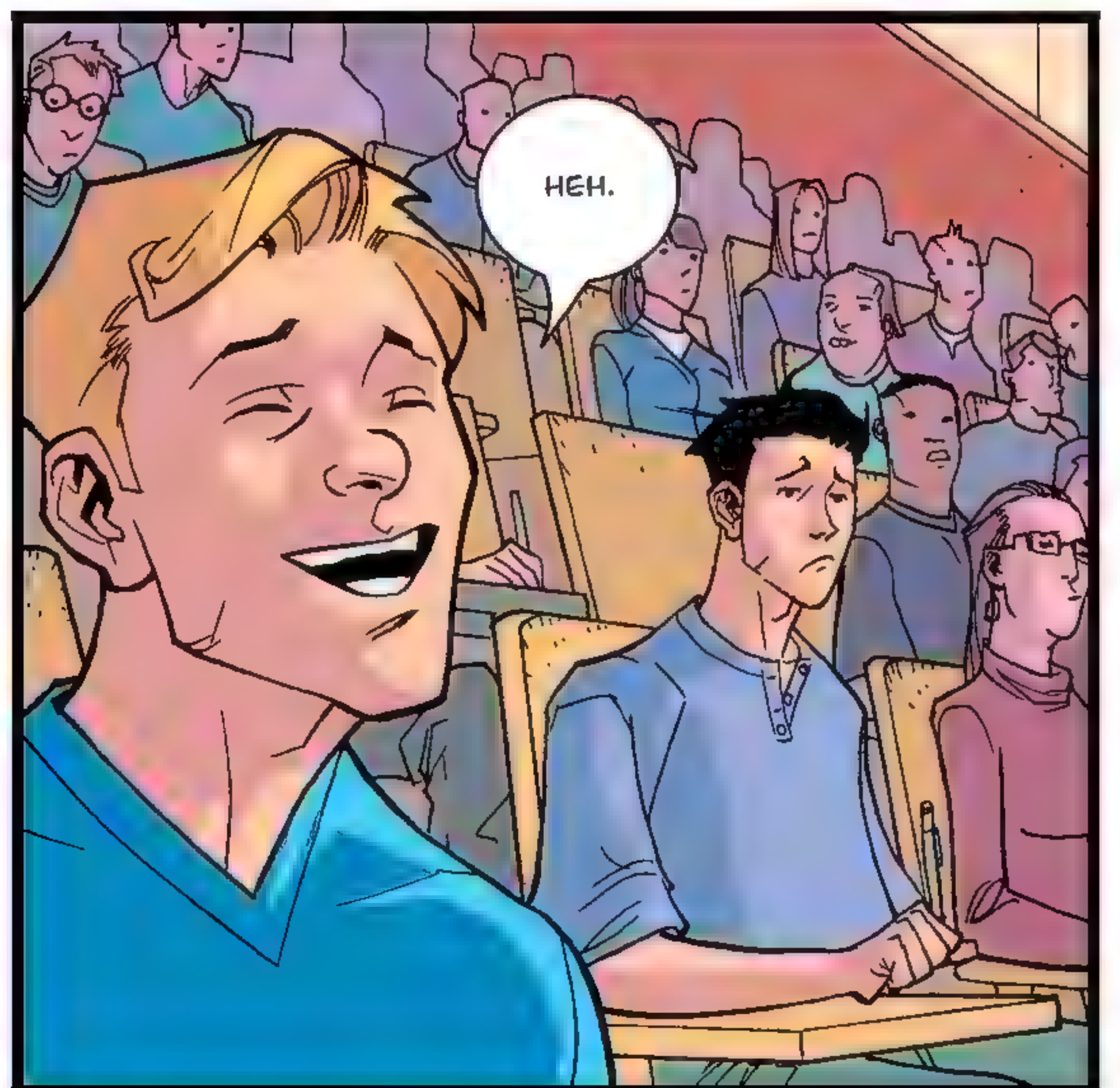
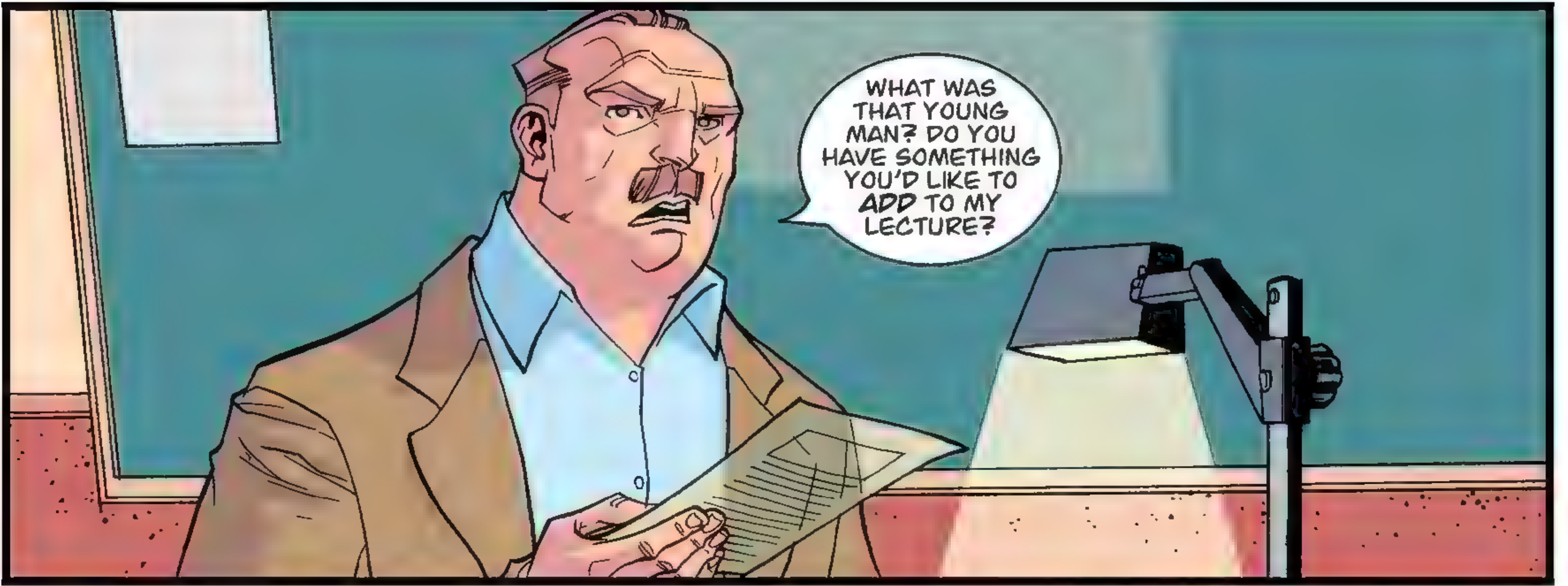








YES
SIR.





I'M WORRIED. I HAVEN'T HEARD FROM HER SINCE SHE CAME TO VISIT. Y'KNOW, WHEN I DITCHED HER TO GO FIGHT THAT BIG ROBOT THING? SHE THINKS I LEFT HER ALONE AND RAN FOR THE HILLS.



I'VE CALLED AMBER EVERY DAY FOR TWO WEEKS. I DON'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO DO. I'M WORRIED-- I'M WORRIED THAT IT'S OVER.

WELL, SHE IS AT COLLEGE NOW. I'M SURE SHE'S GOT ALL KINDS OF OTHER GUYS AROUND TO KEEP HER BUSY.



WAS THAT TOO INSENSITIVE? YEAH, THAT WAS INSENSITIVE, WASN'T IT?

SORRY.

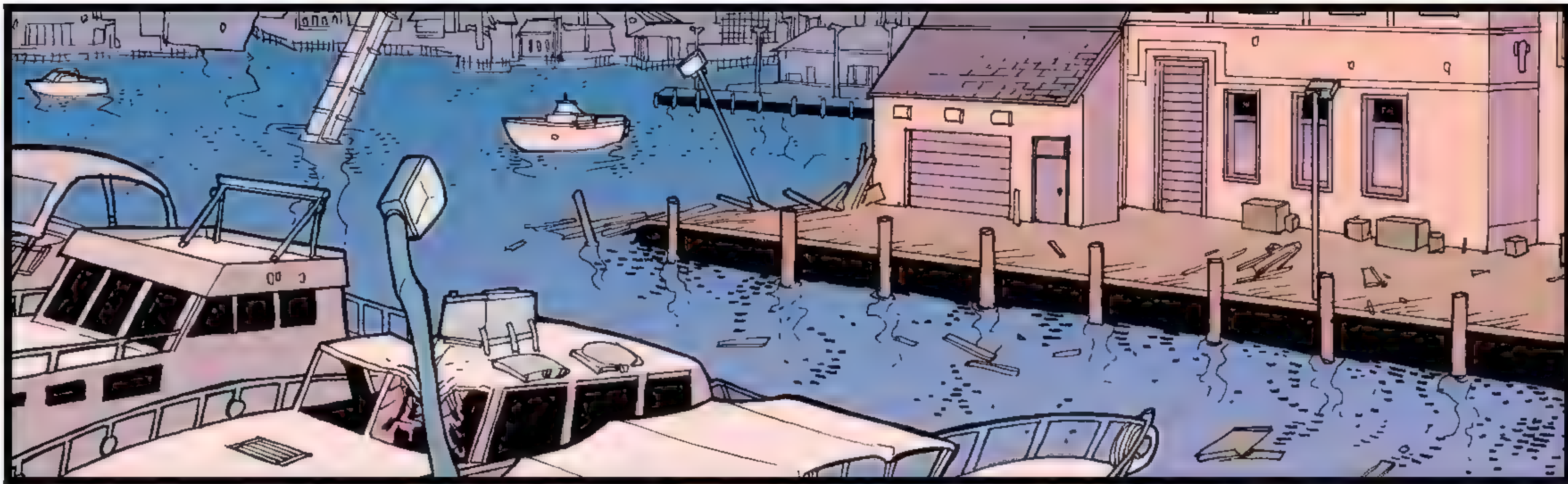


YEAH--THANKS FOR THAT. I'M GOING TO GO BEAT THE CRAP OUT OF A BUNCH OF BAD GUYS NOW.

I HOPE.

TELL EVE I SAID-- OH, SORRY. I FORGOT THAT SHE DUMPED YOU.

JERK.







ASSISTANT?
YOU MEAN
"SIDEKICK?"



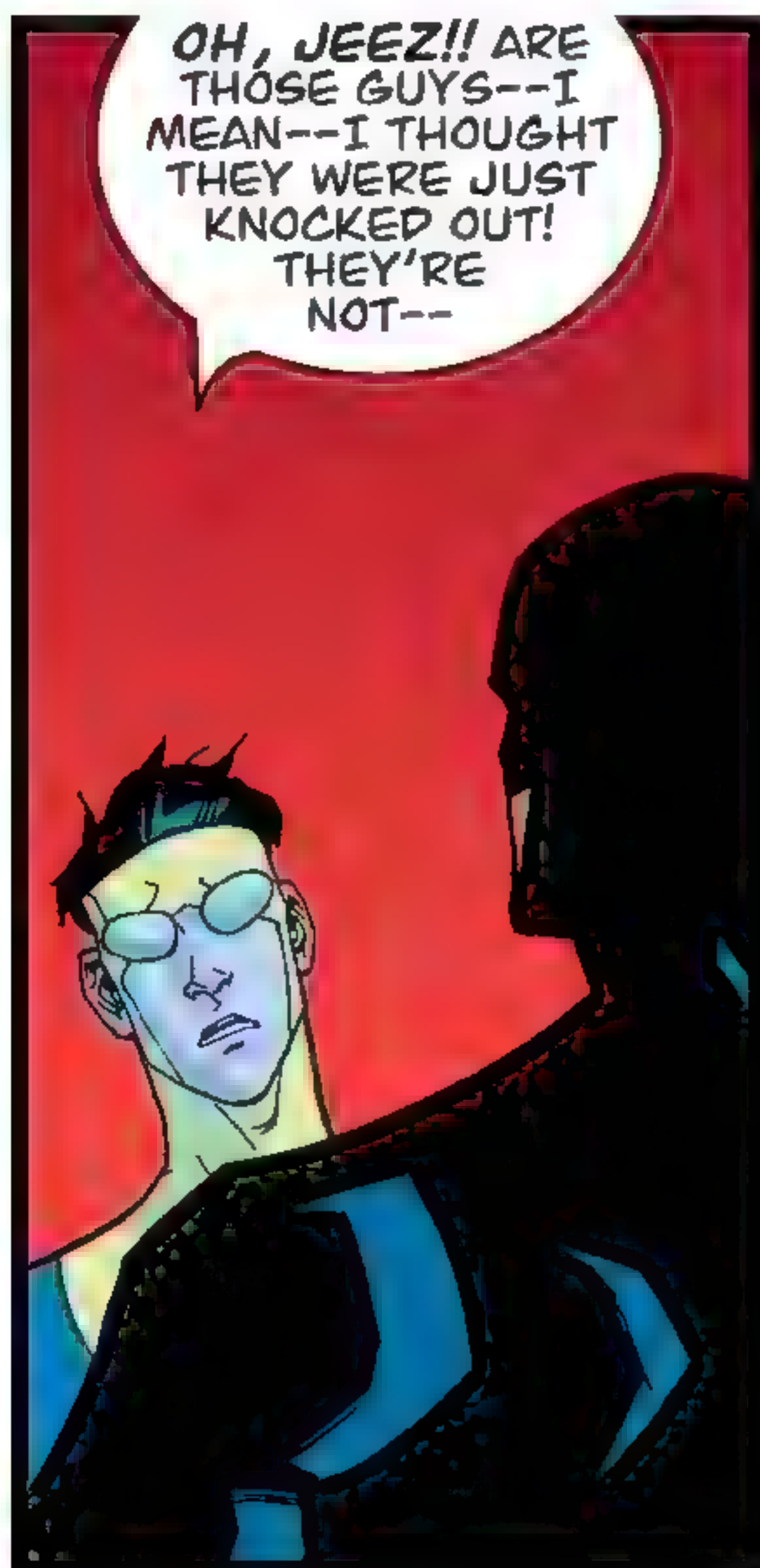
WE DON'T USE
THAT TERM. IT'S
DEMEANING.



HEH, GOOD
ONE--
REALLY--



OH, WAIT...
YOU'RE
SERIOUS.

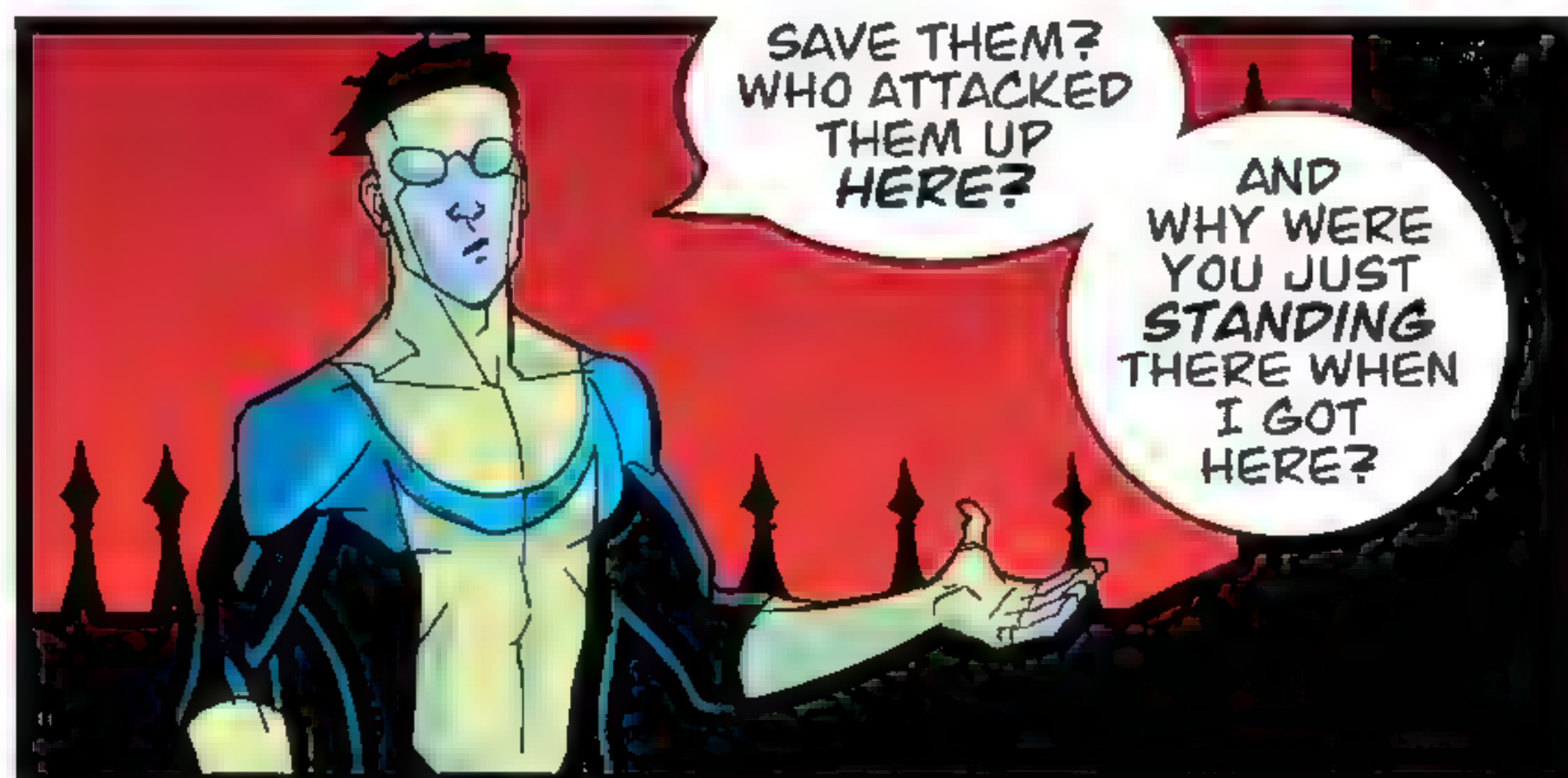


OH, JEEZ!! ARE
THOSE GUYS--I
MEAN--I THOUGHT
THEY WERE JUST
KNOCKED OUT!
THEY'RE
NOT--



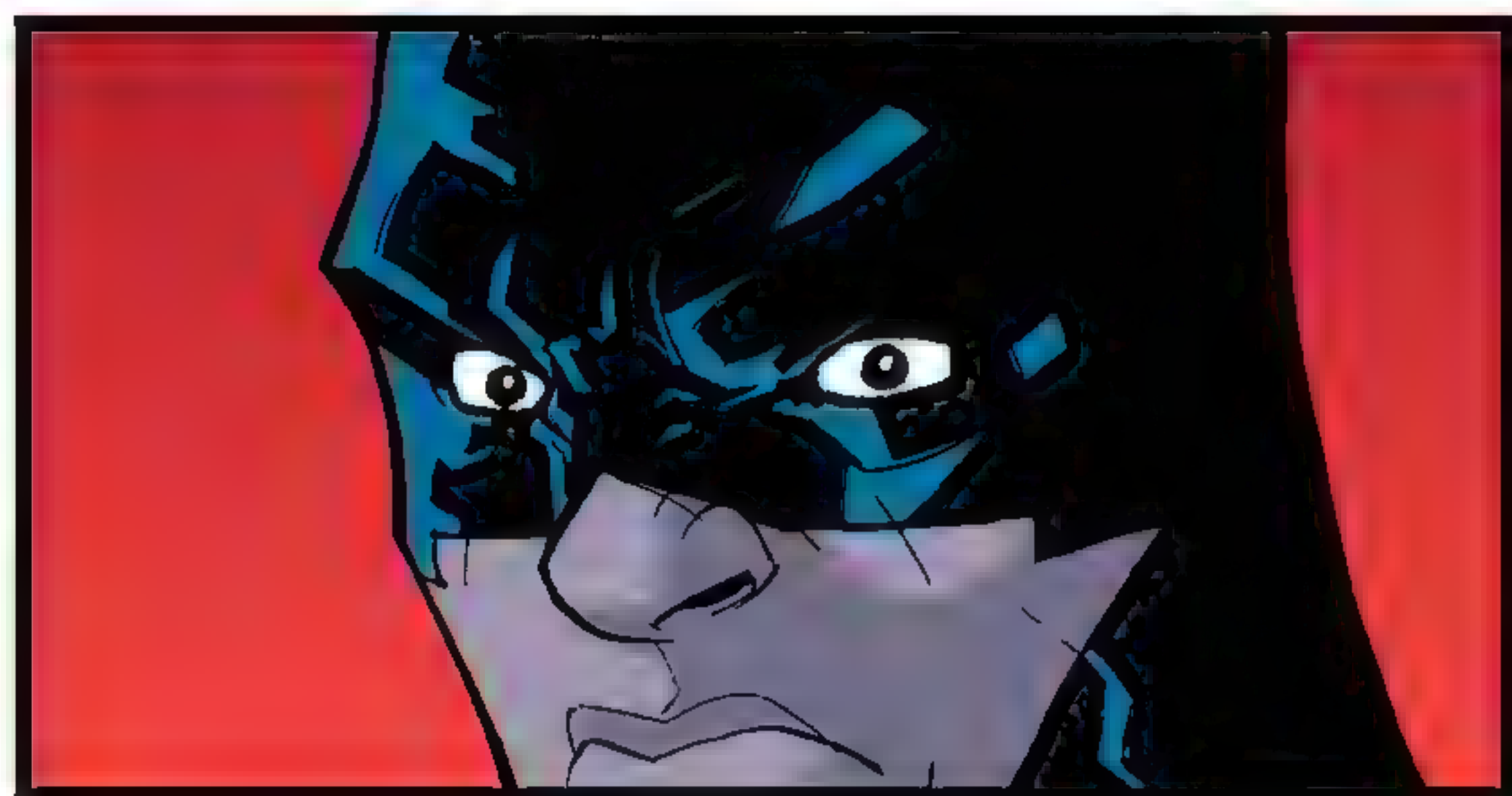
DEAD?
YES.

I WAS
TOO LATE
TO SAVE
THEM.



SAVE THEM?
WHO ATTACKED
THEM UP
HERE?

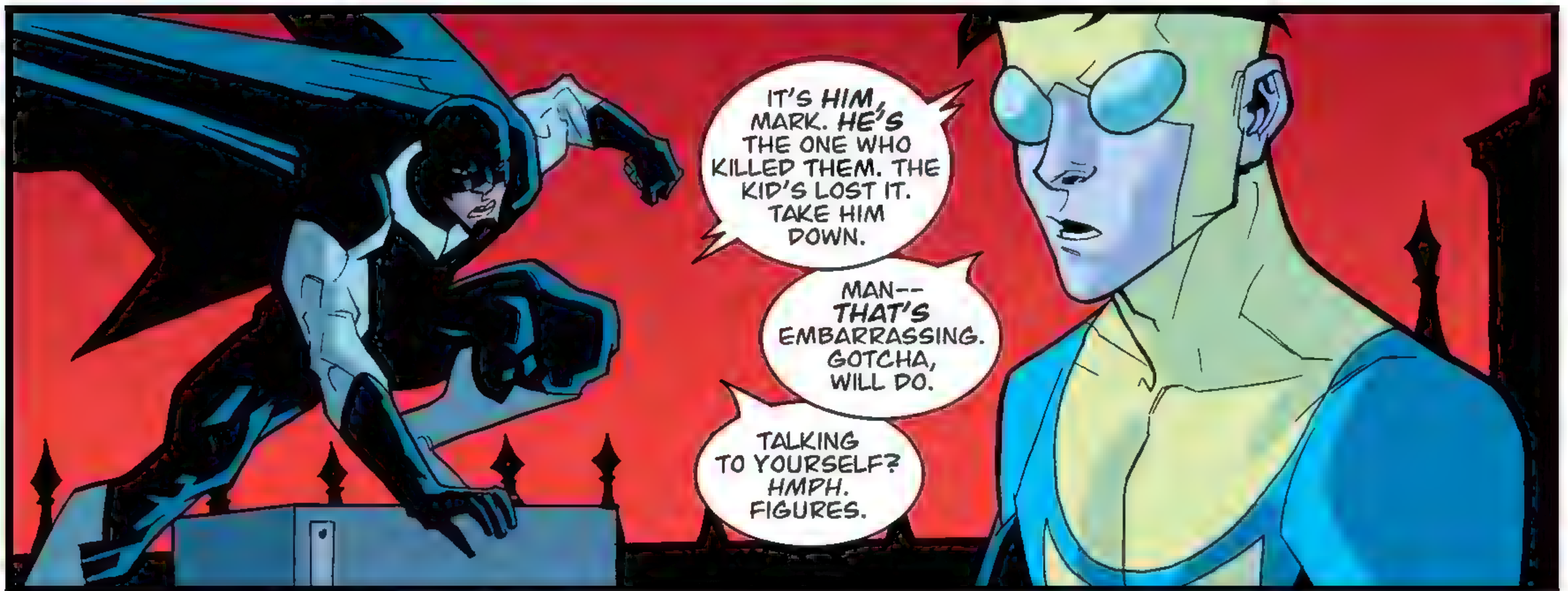
AND
WHY WERE
YOU JUST
STANDING
THERE WHEN
I GOT
HERE?



WHY
AREN'T WE
GOING AFTER
THE BAD
GUY?

WHAT'S
GOING ON
HERE?

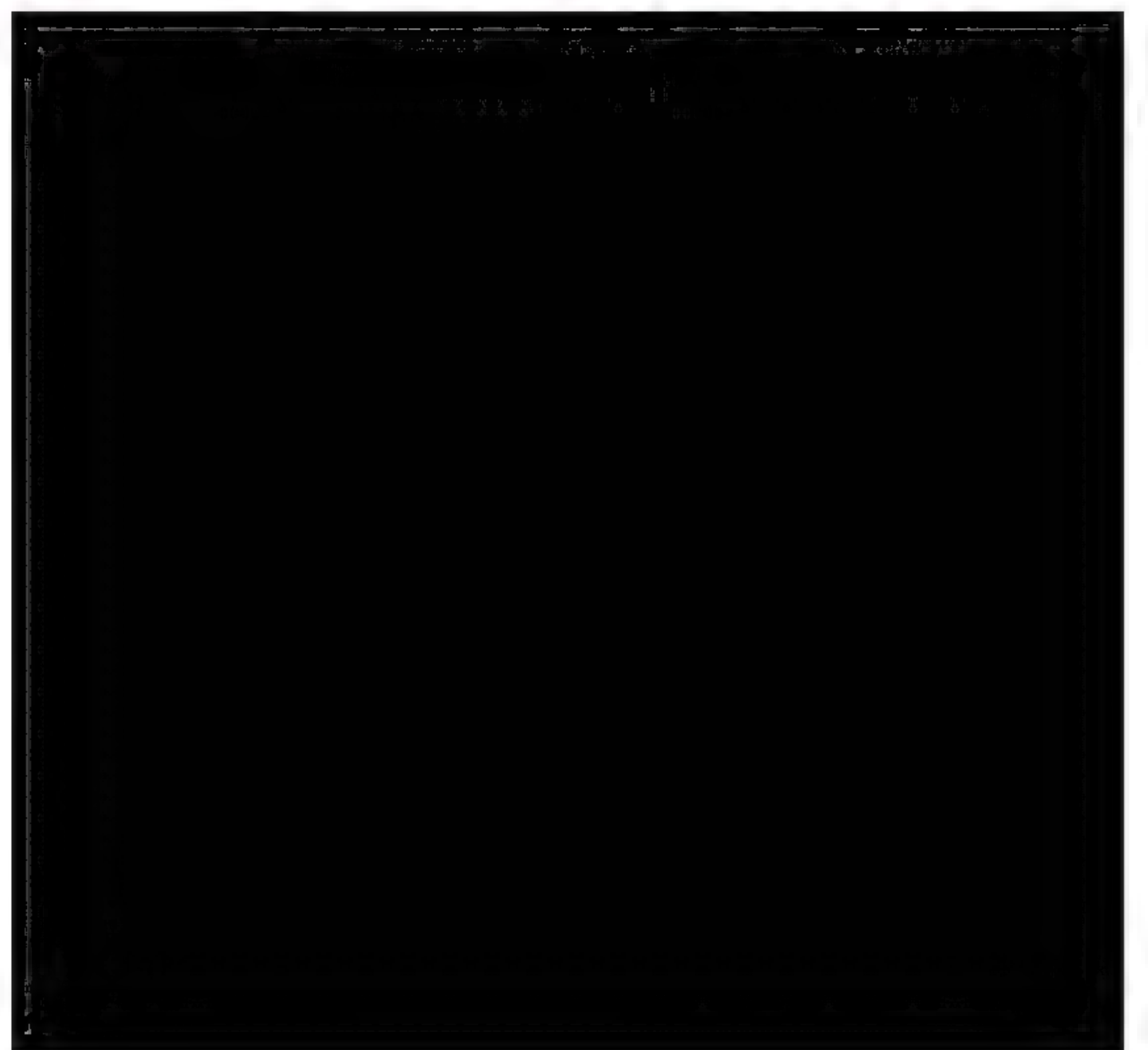
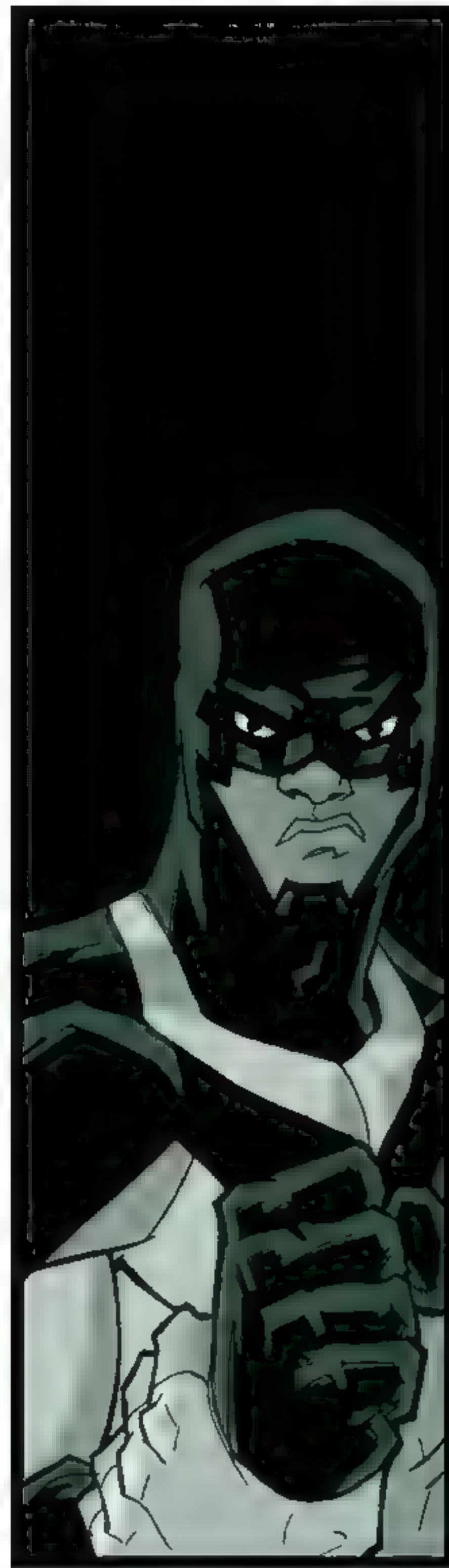
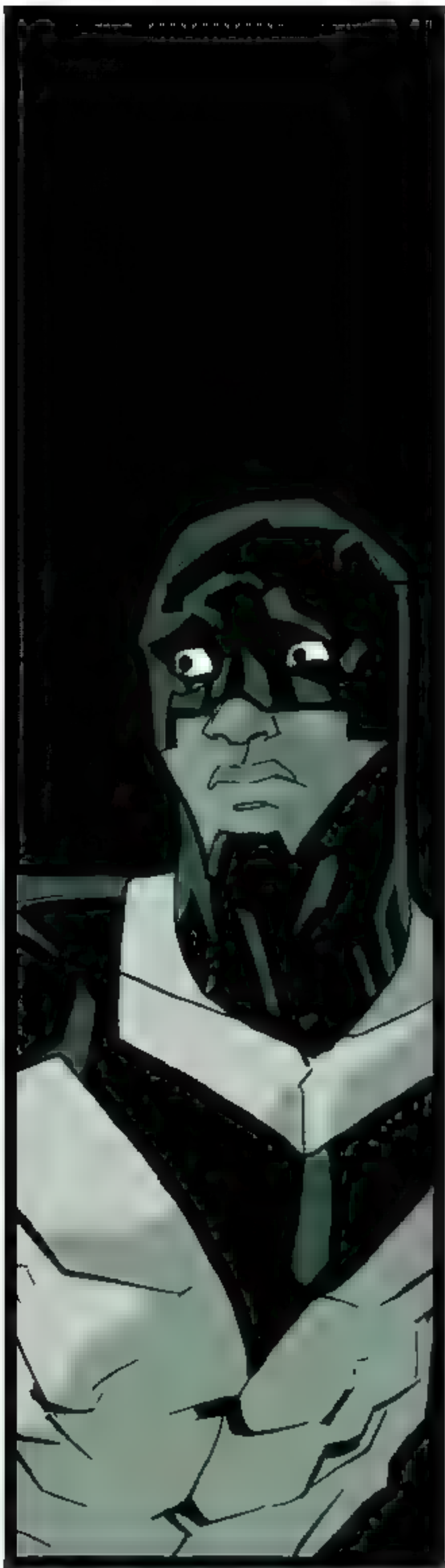
YOU'RE
ASKING TOO
MANY
QUESTIONS.



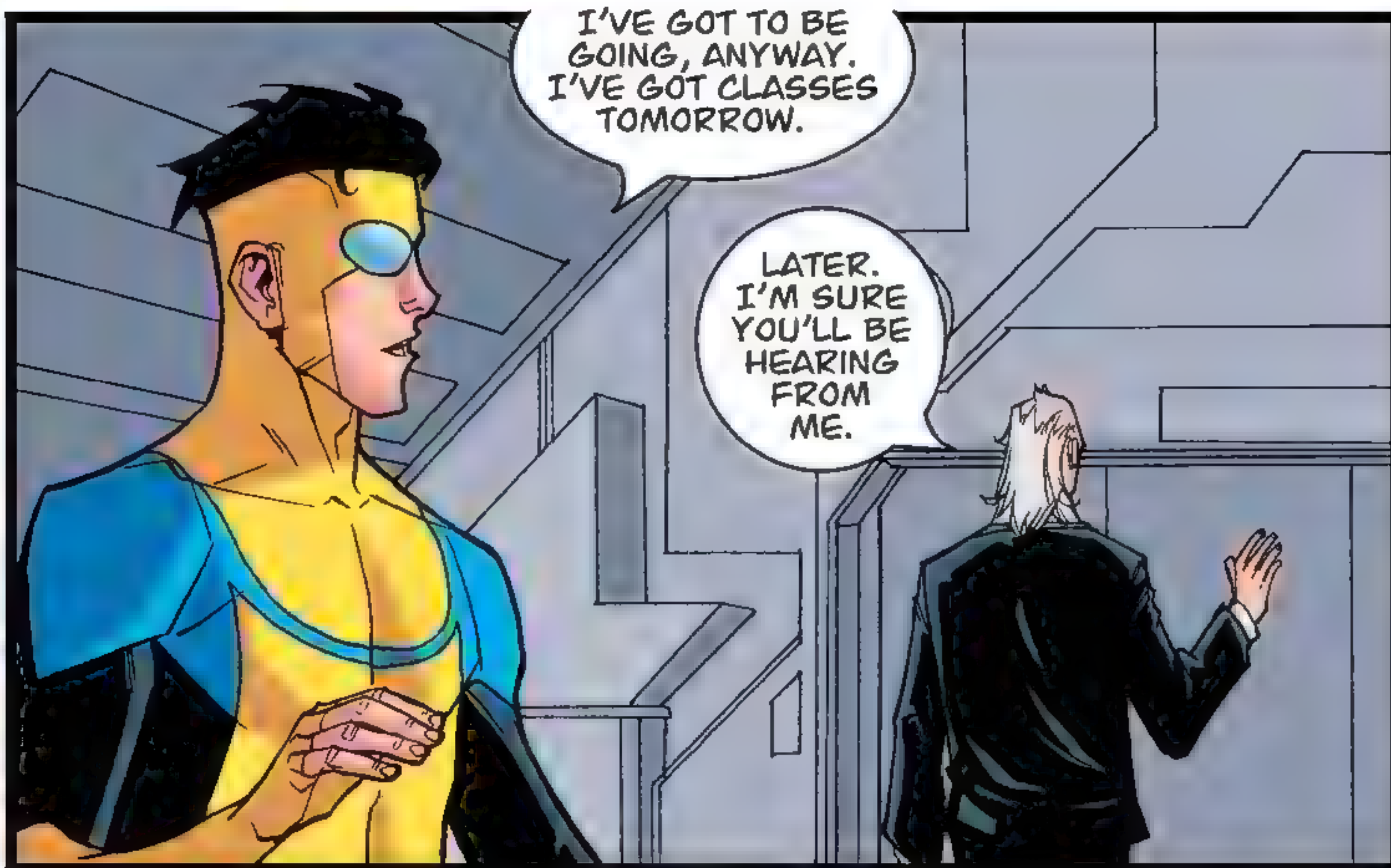
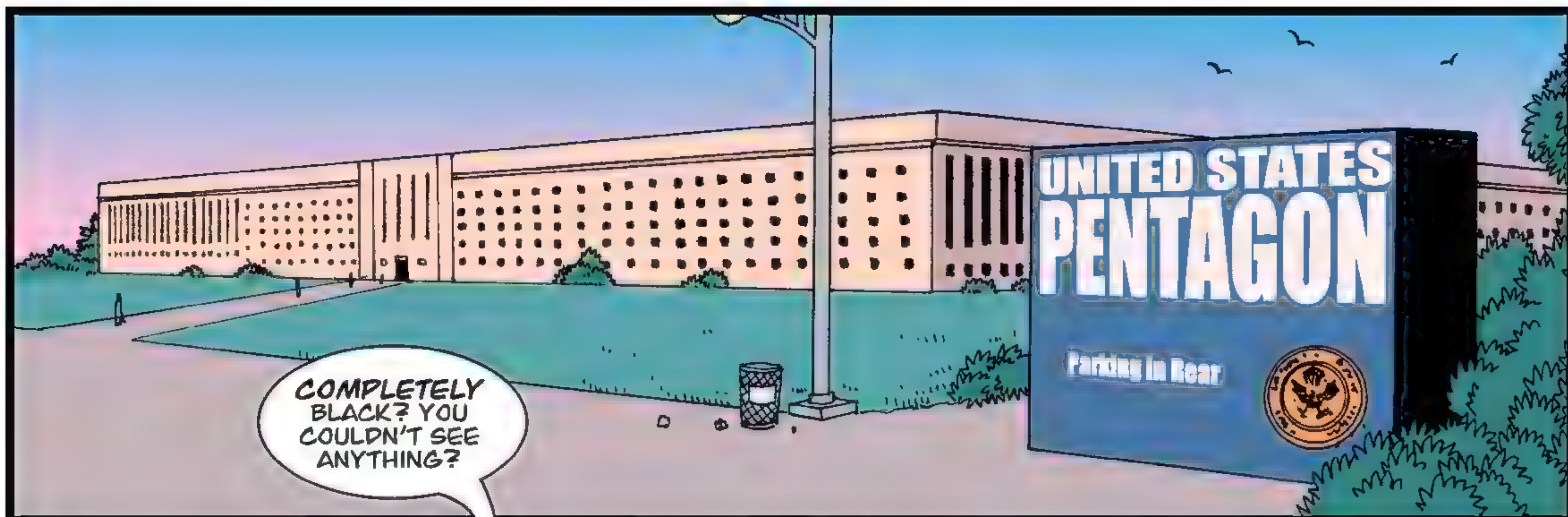
KRAAK!

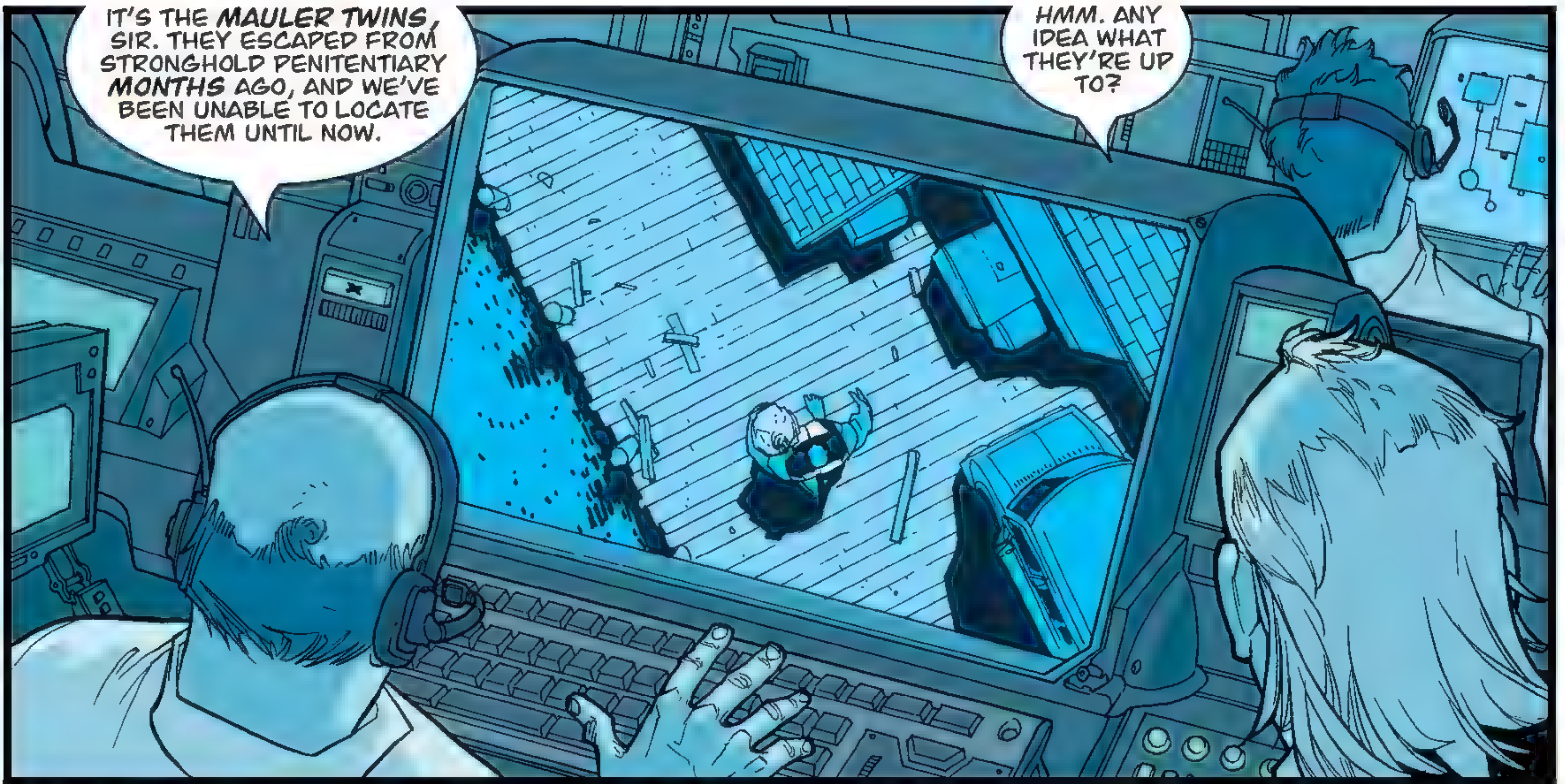


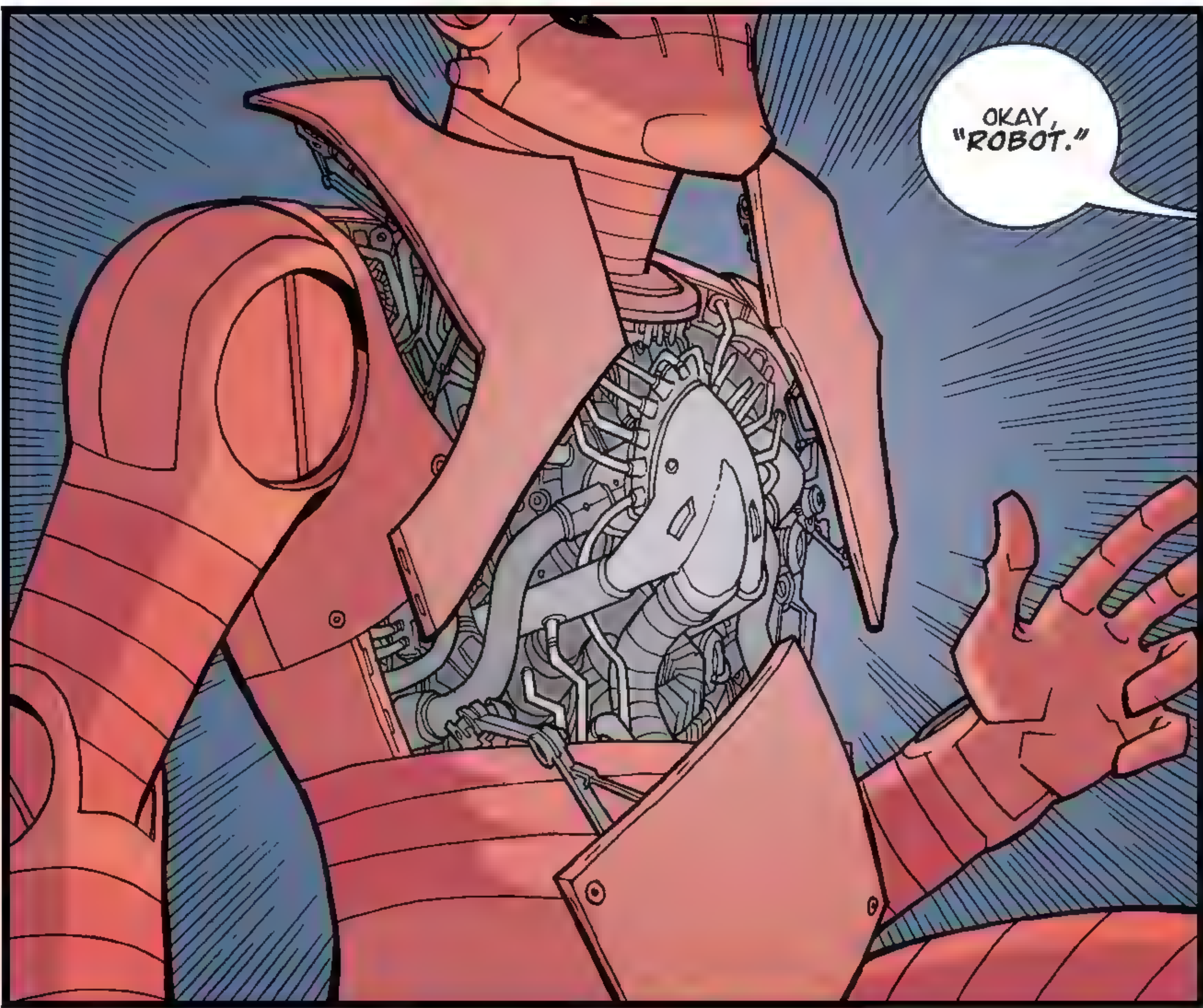
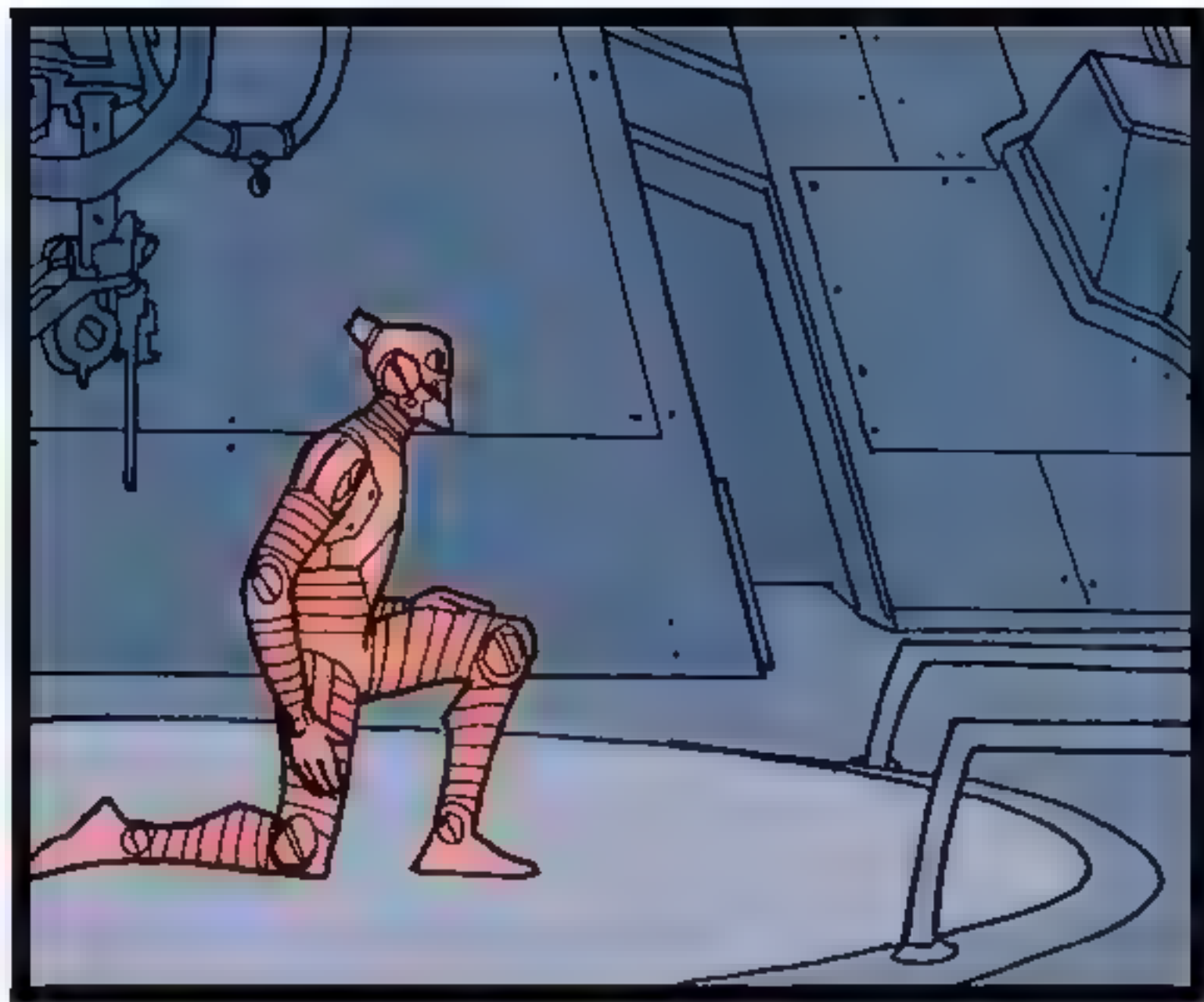
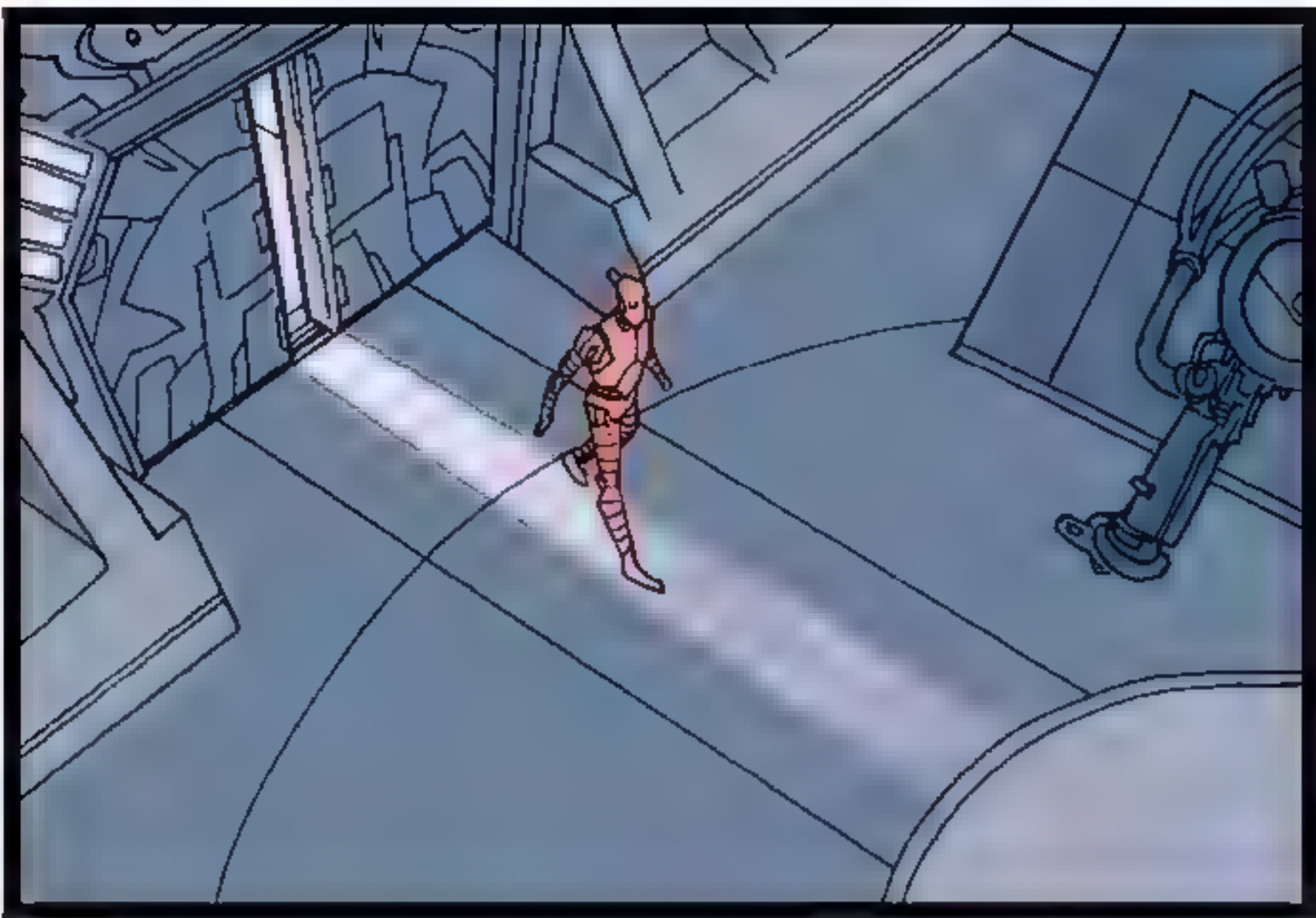
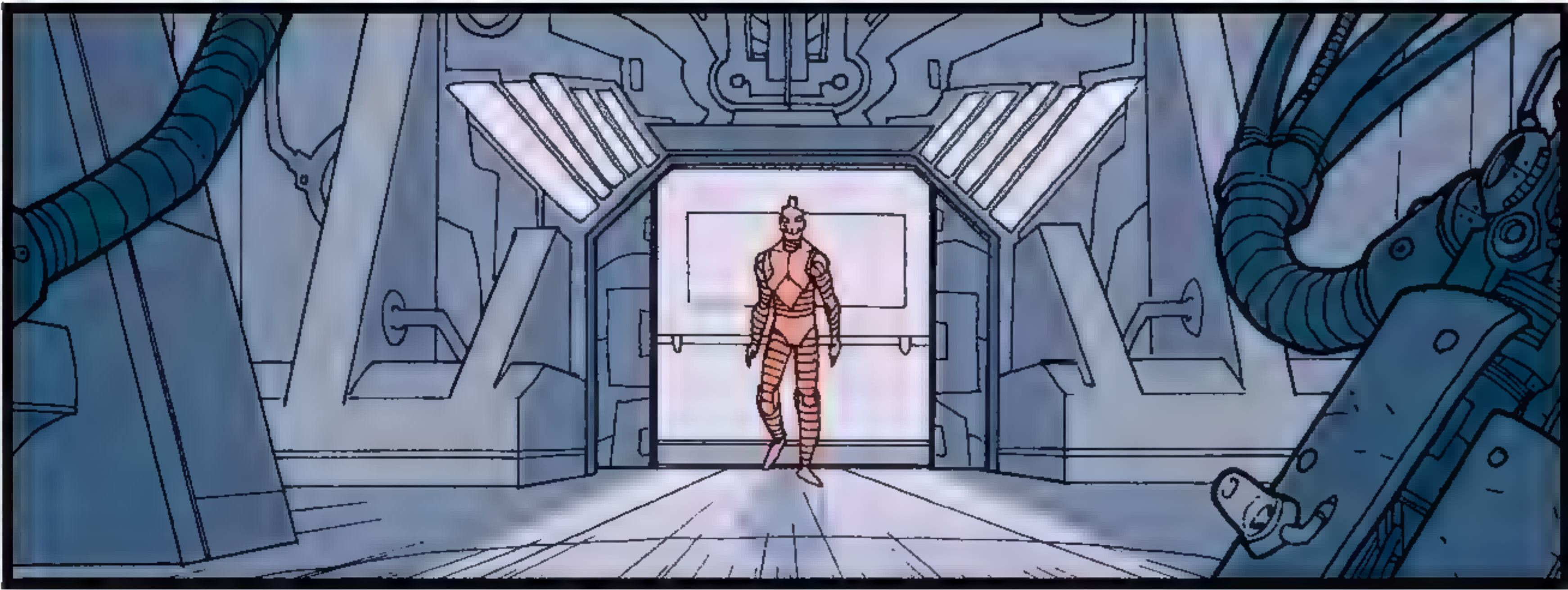
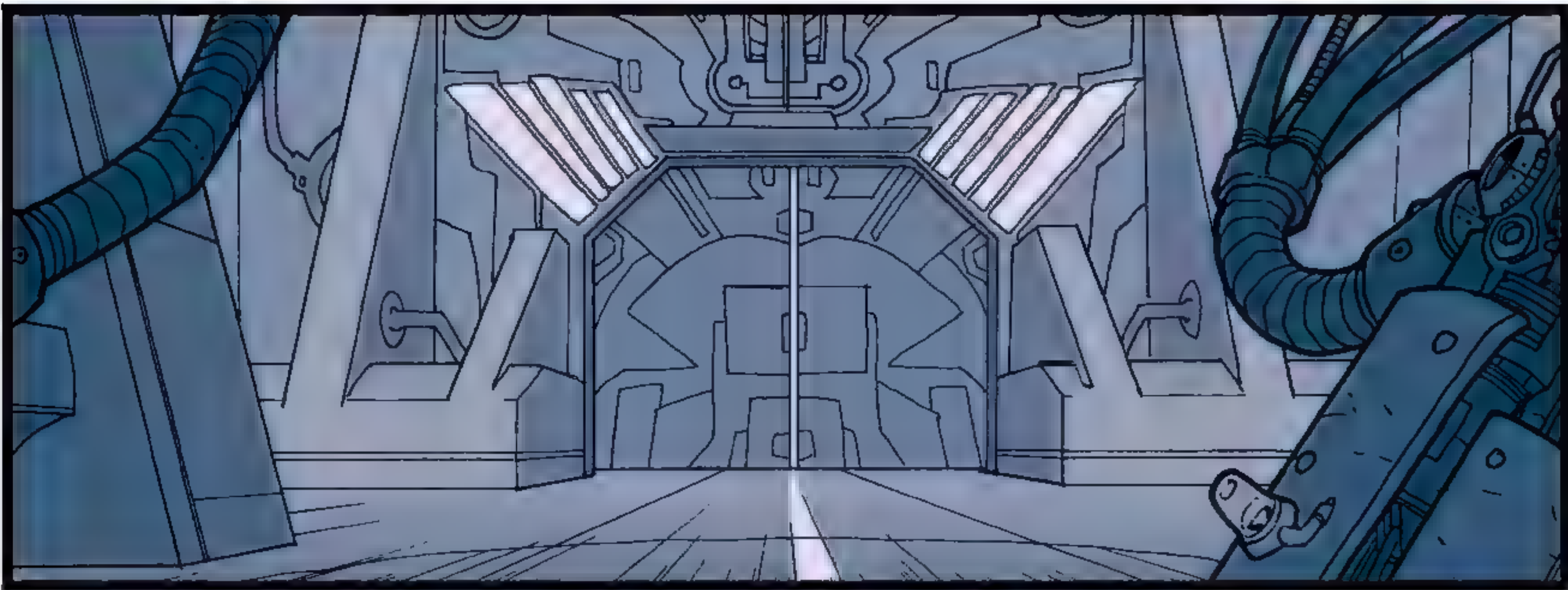


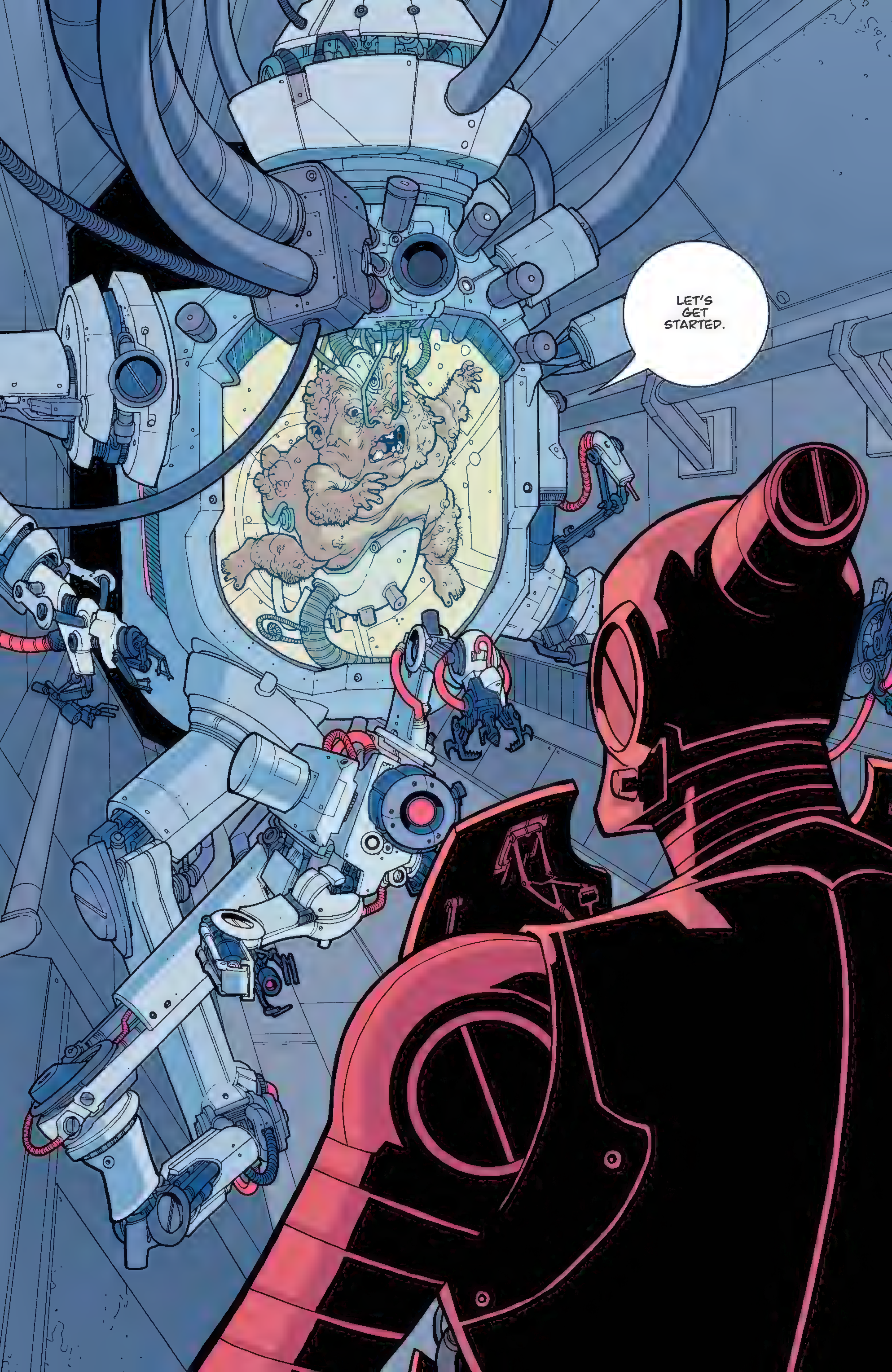




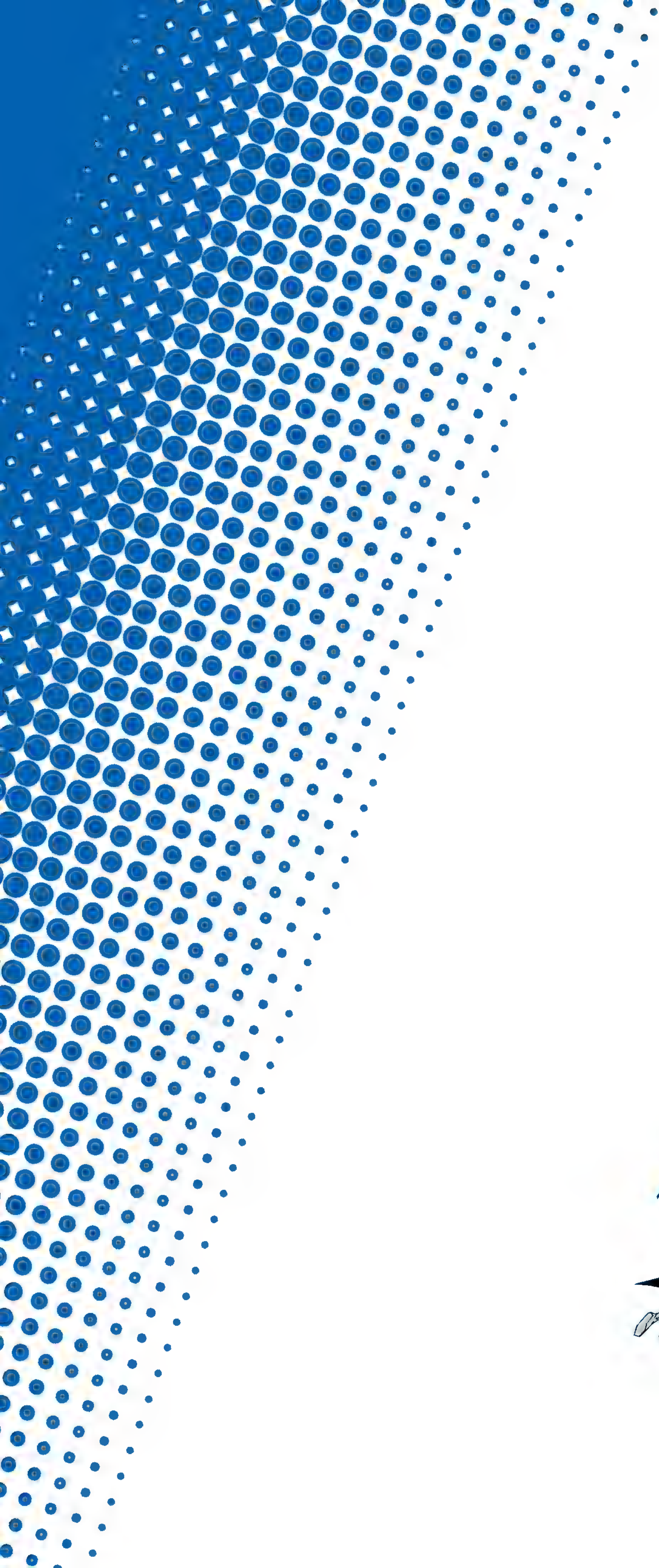








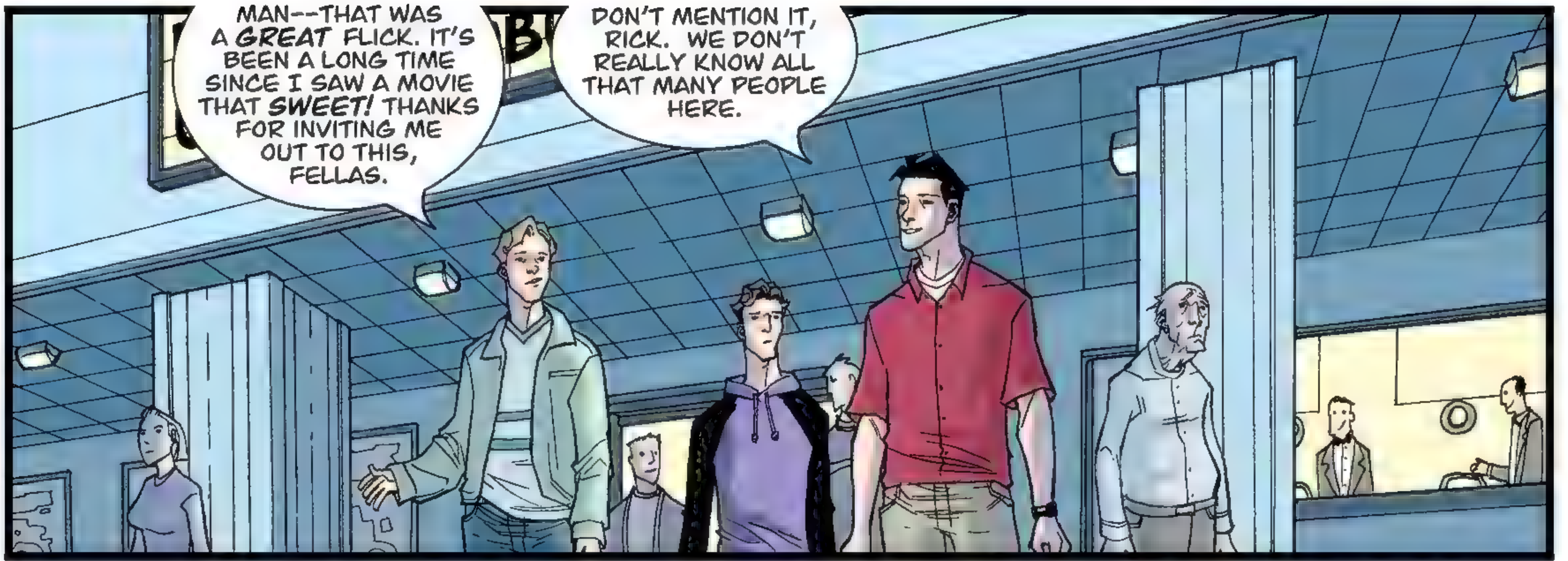
LET'S
GET
STARTED.

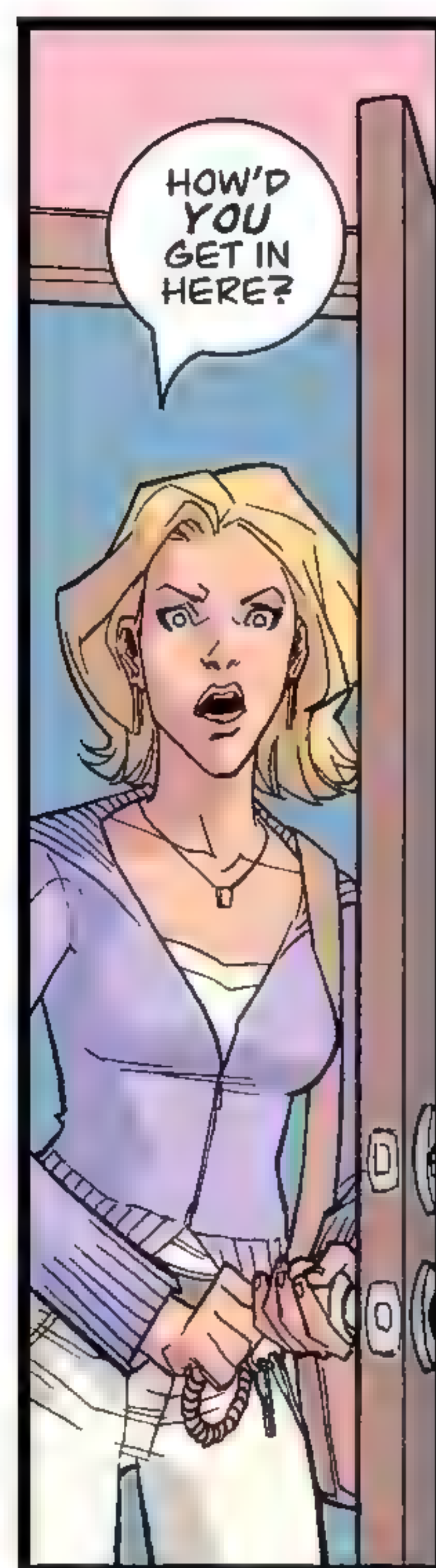
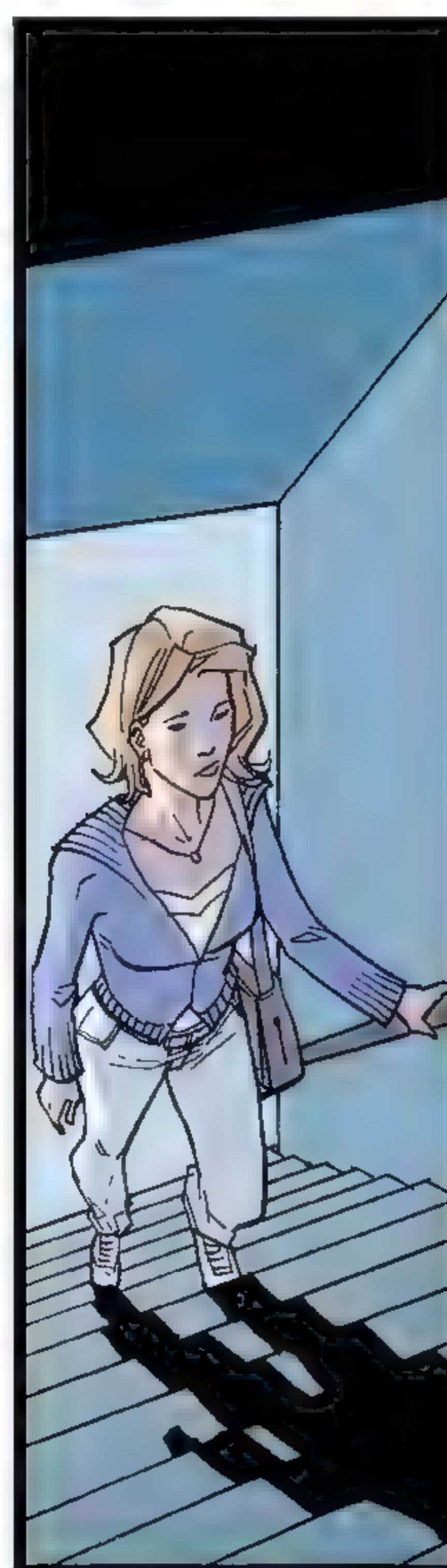
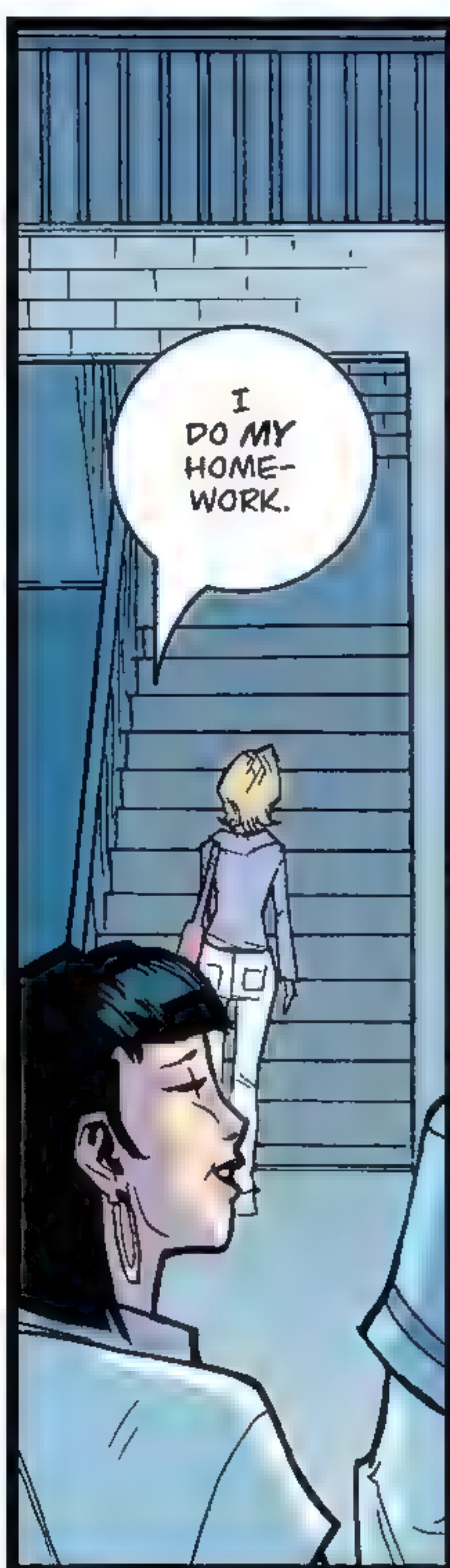
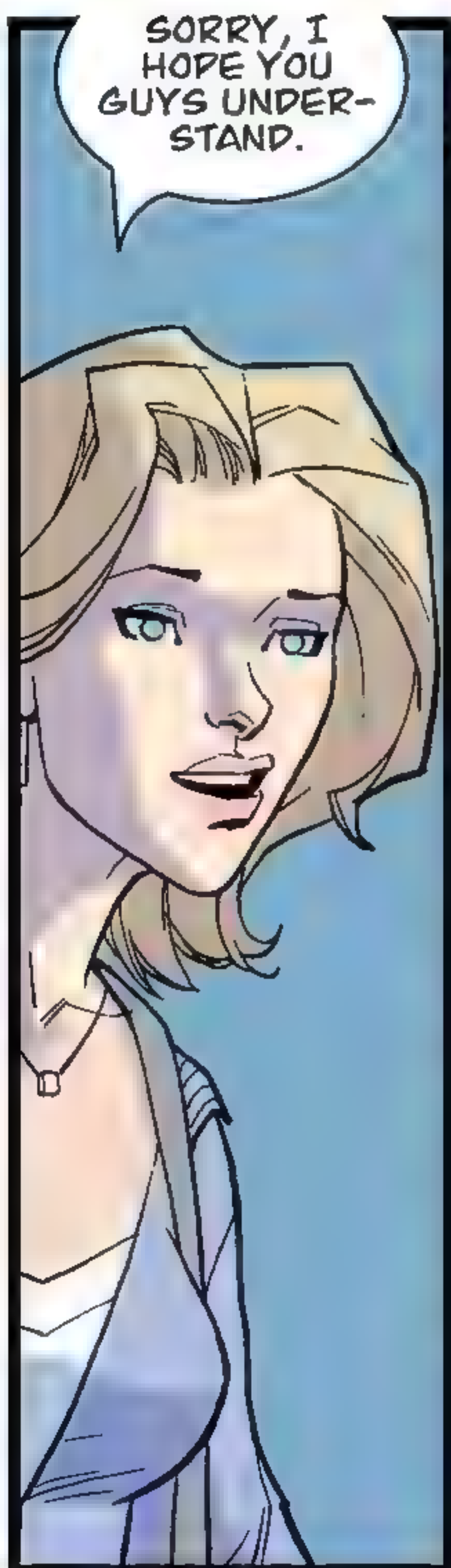
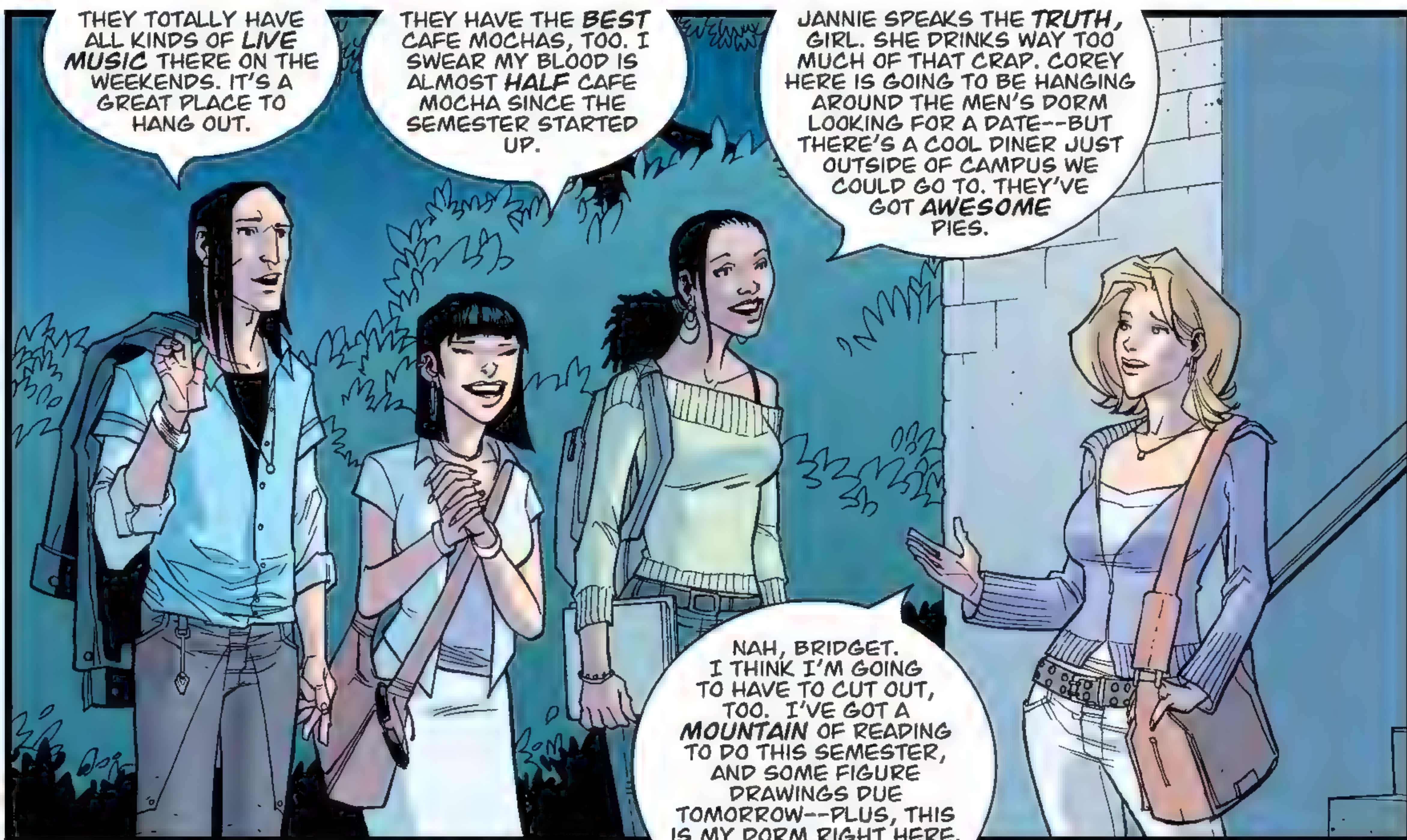


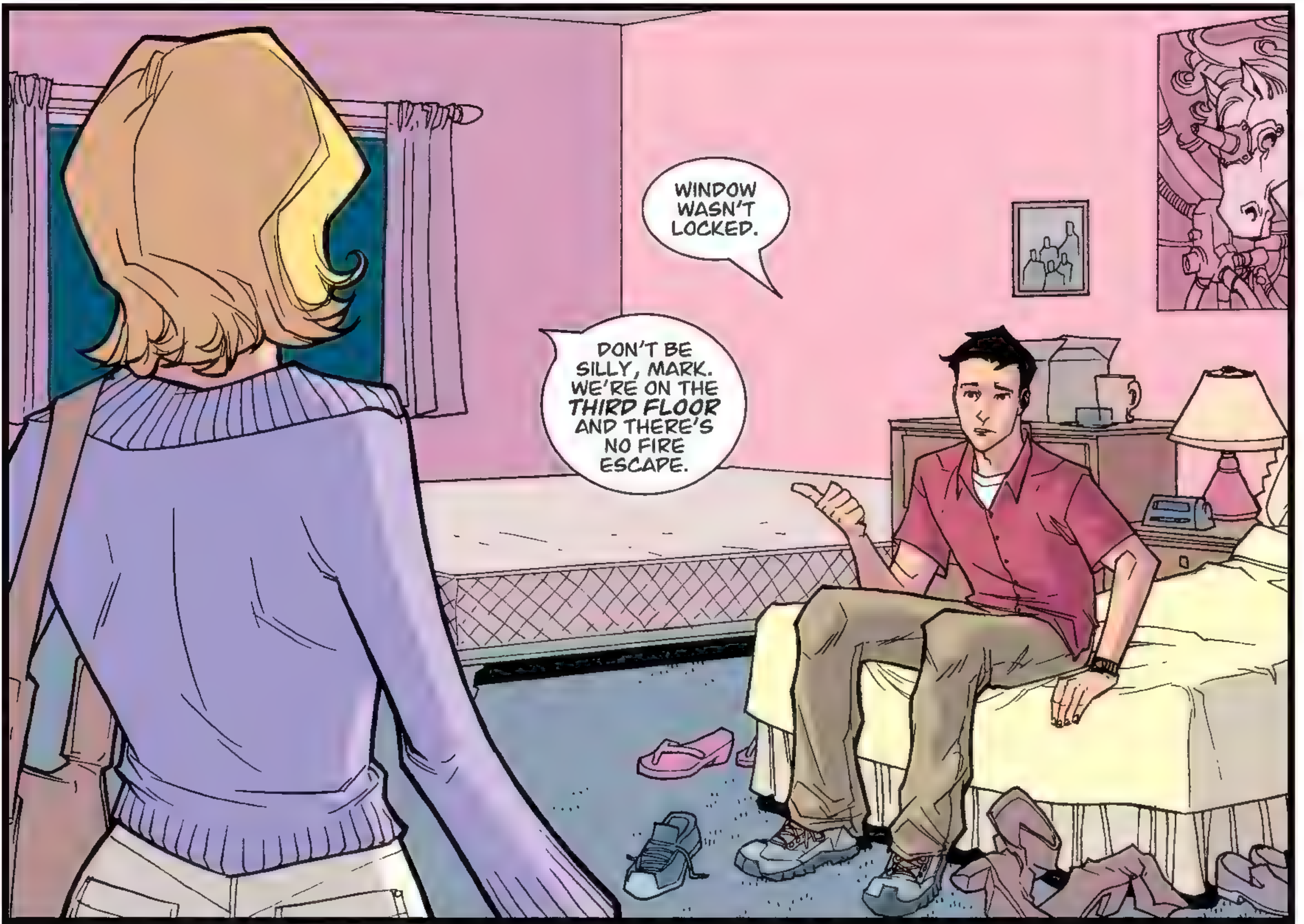
ISSUE TWENTY-TWO



WY9

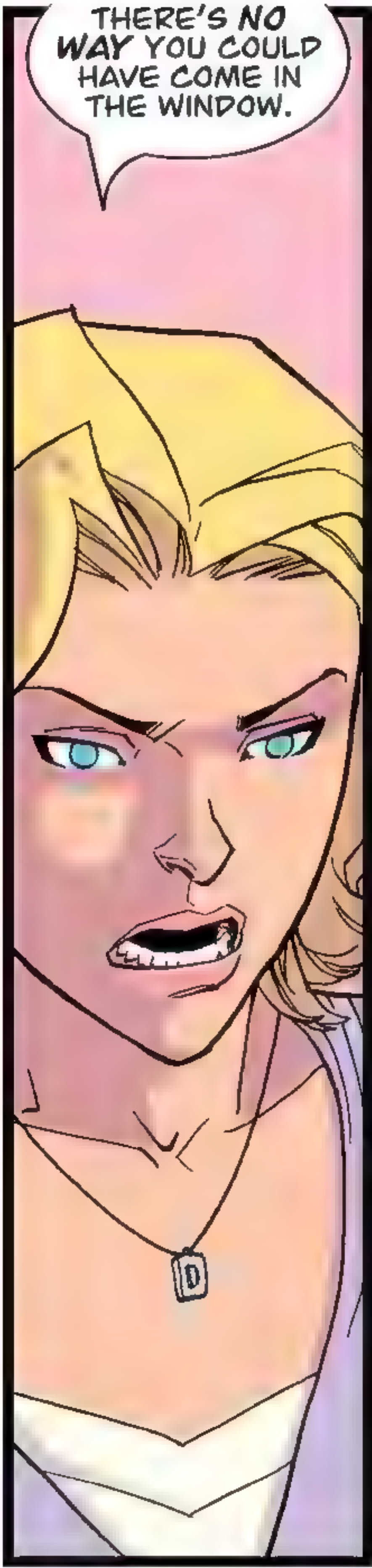






WINDOW WASN'T LOCKED.

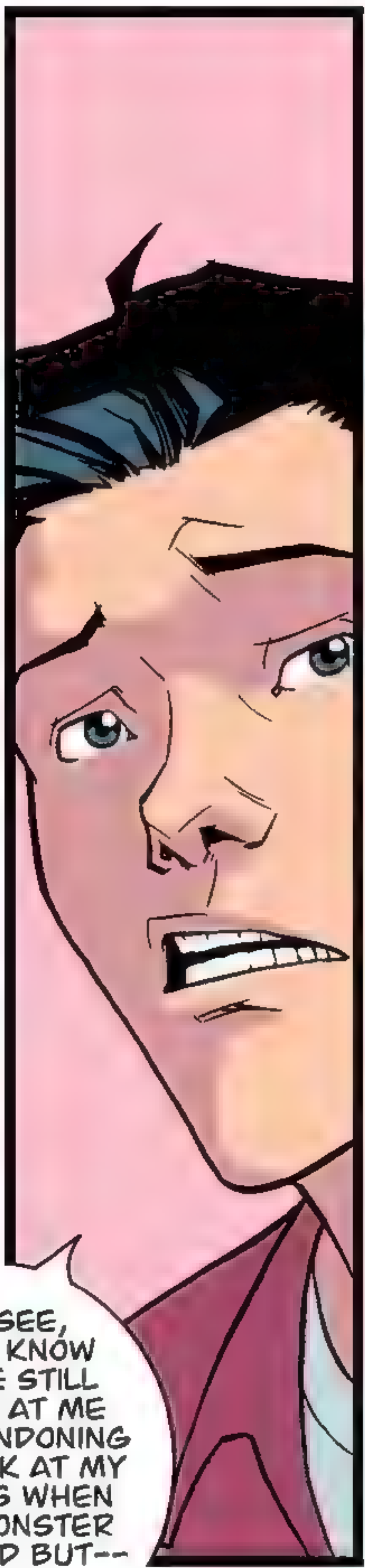
DON'T BE SILLY, MARK. WE'RE ON THE THIRD FLOOR AND THERE'S NO FIRE ESCAPE.



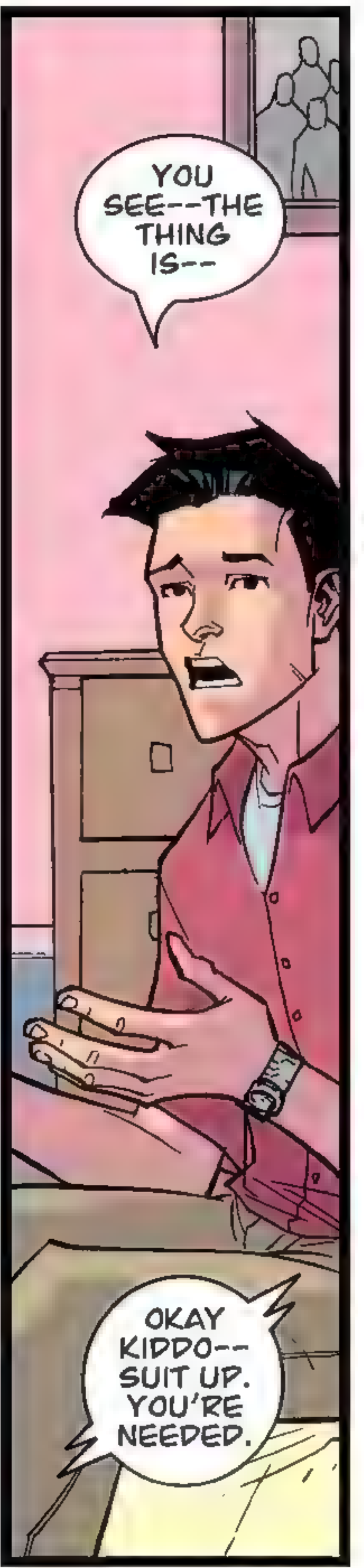
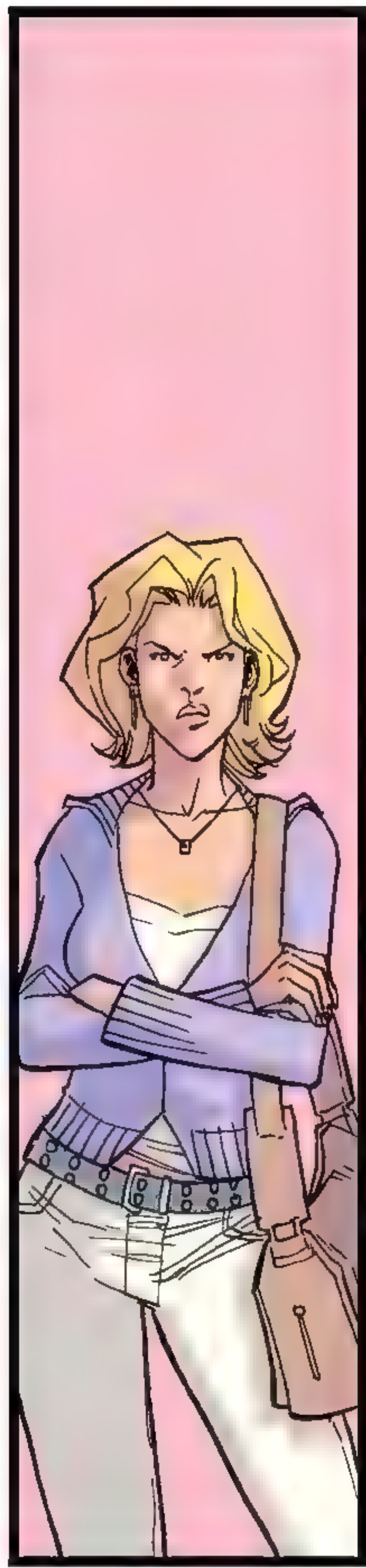
THERE'S NO WAY YOU COULD HAVE COME IN THE WINDOW.



THAT'S ACTUALLY WHAT I CAME TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT... KINDA... MORE OR LESS.

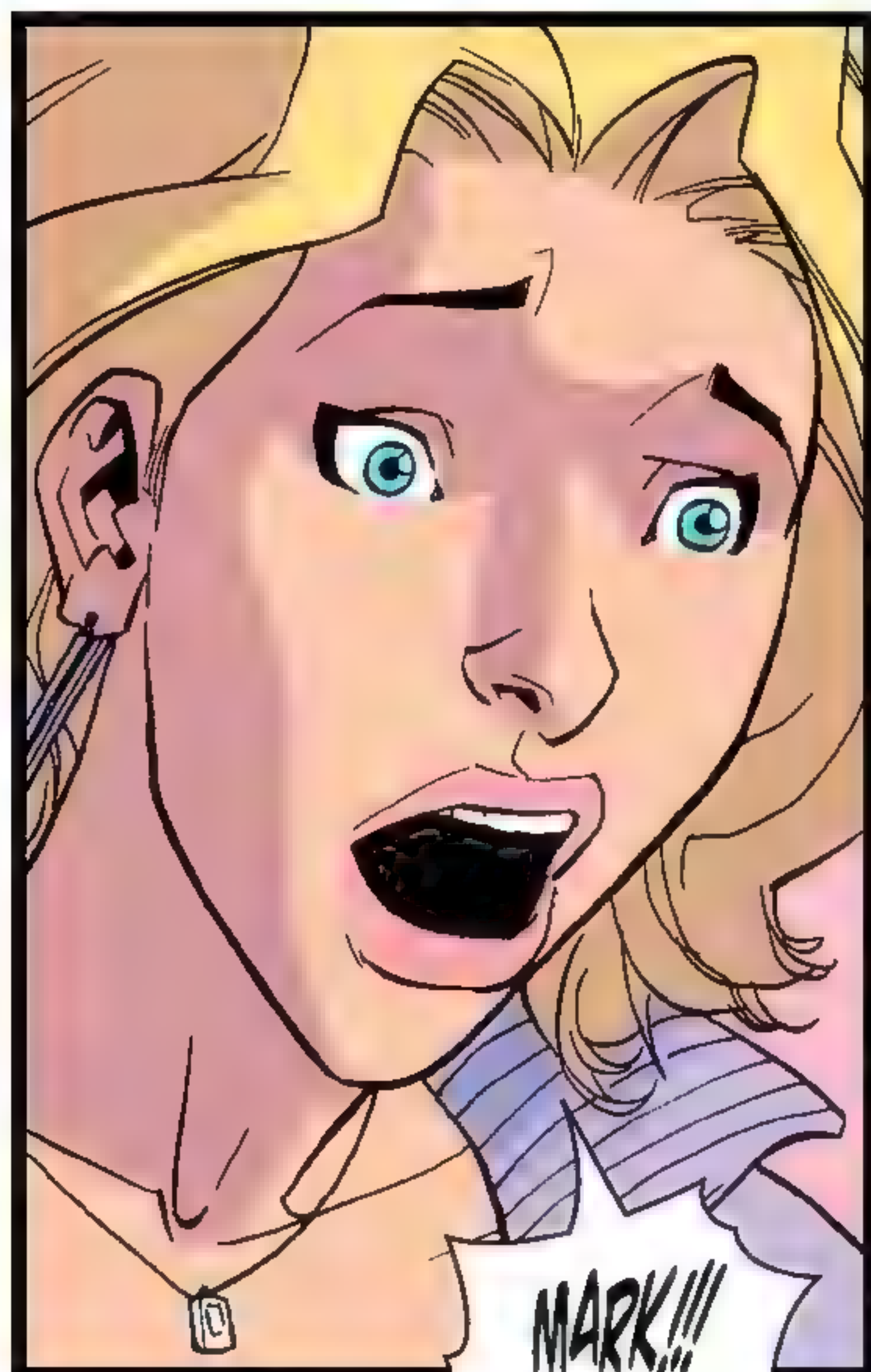
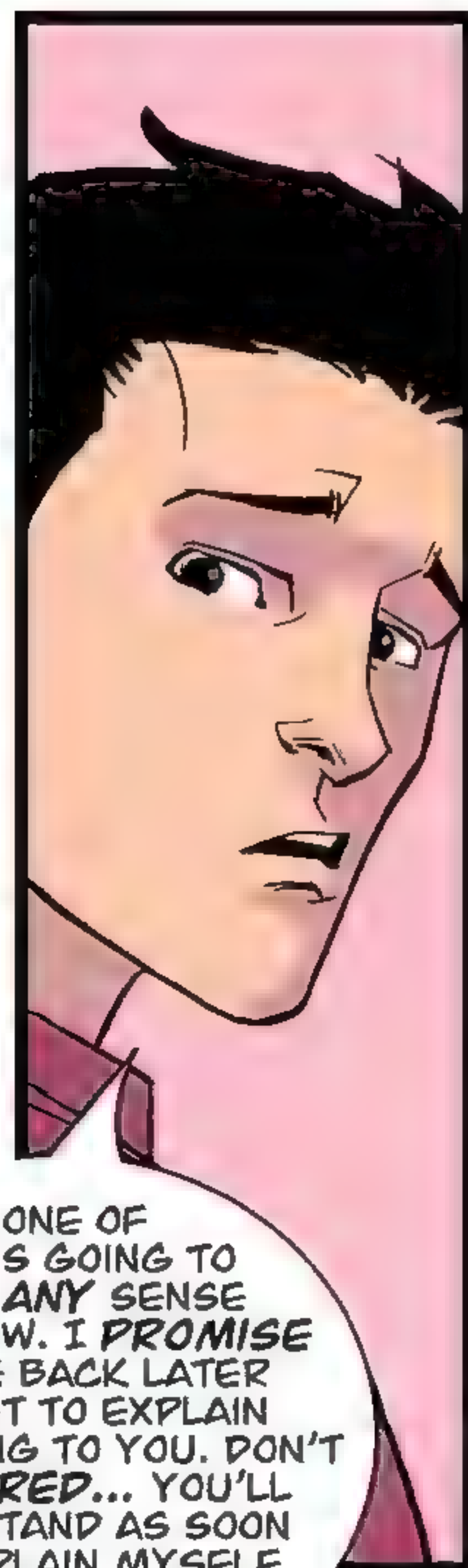
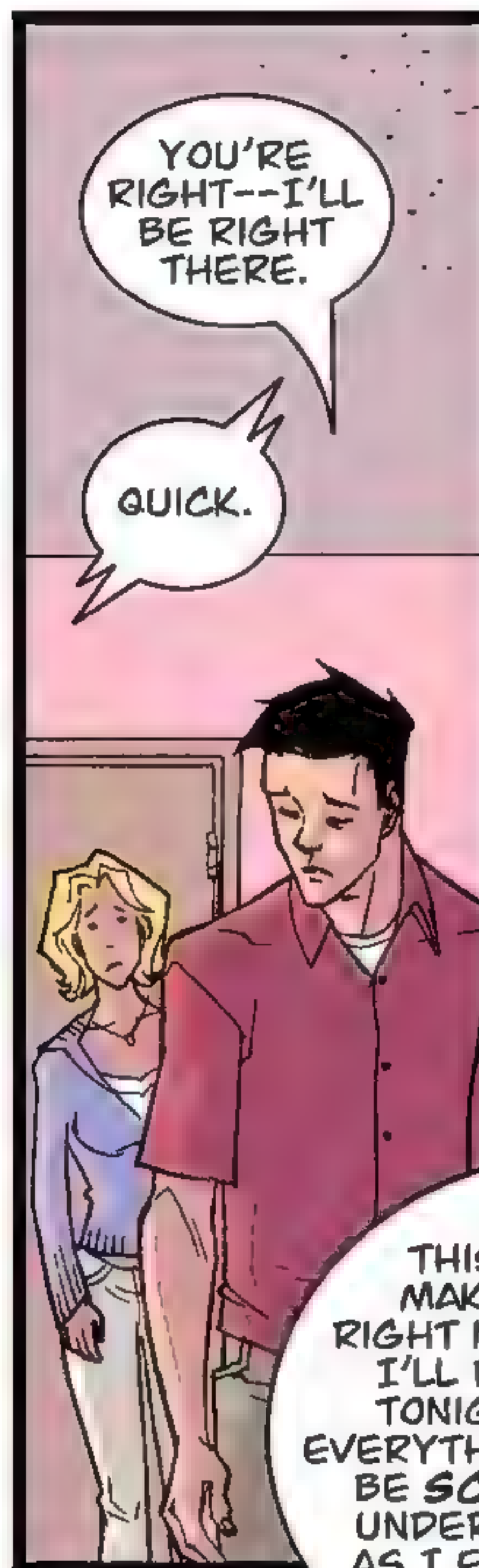
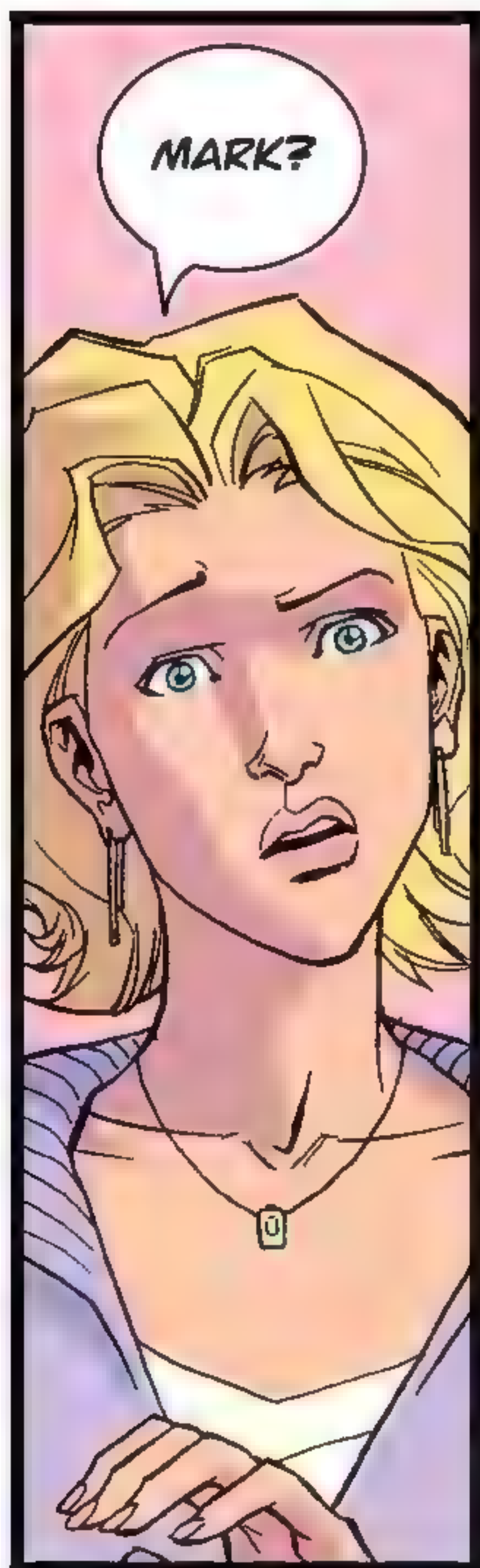


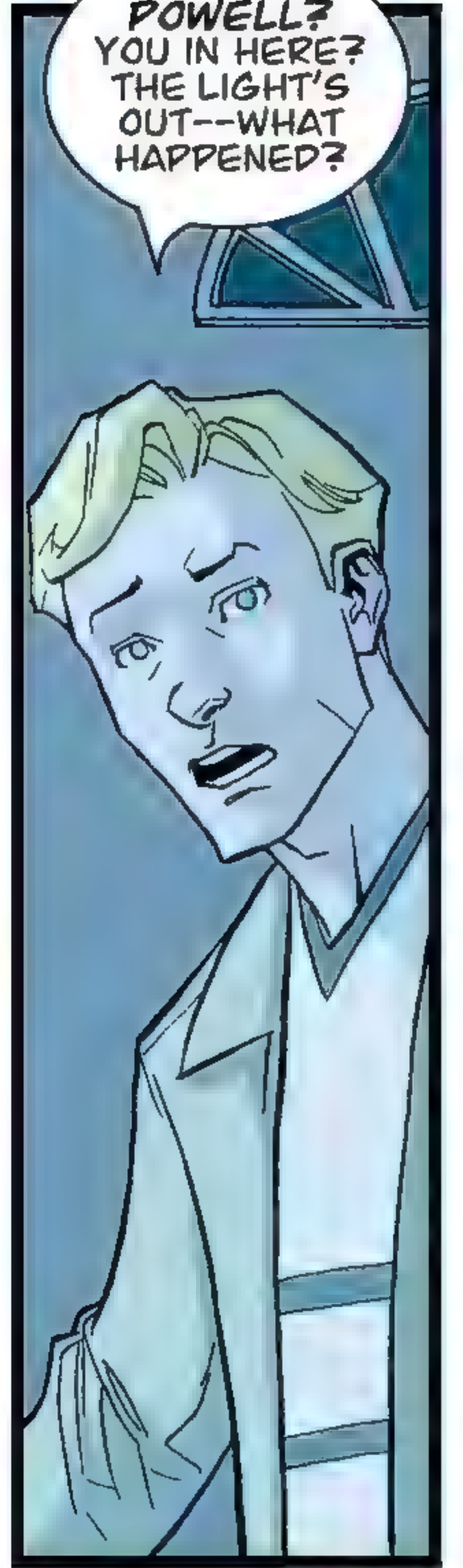
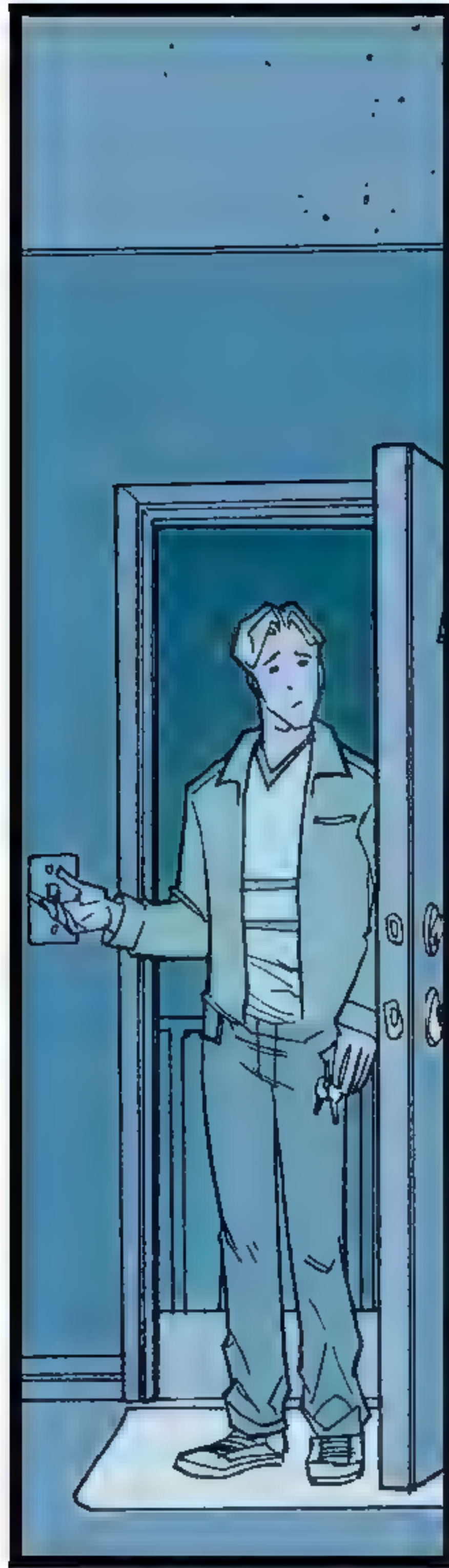
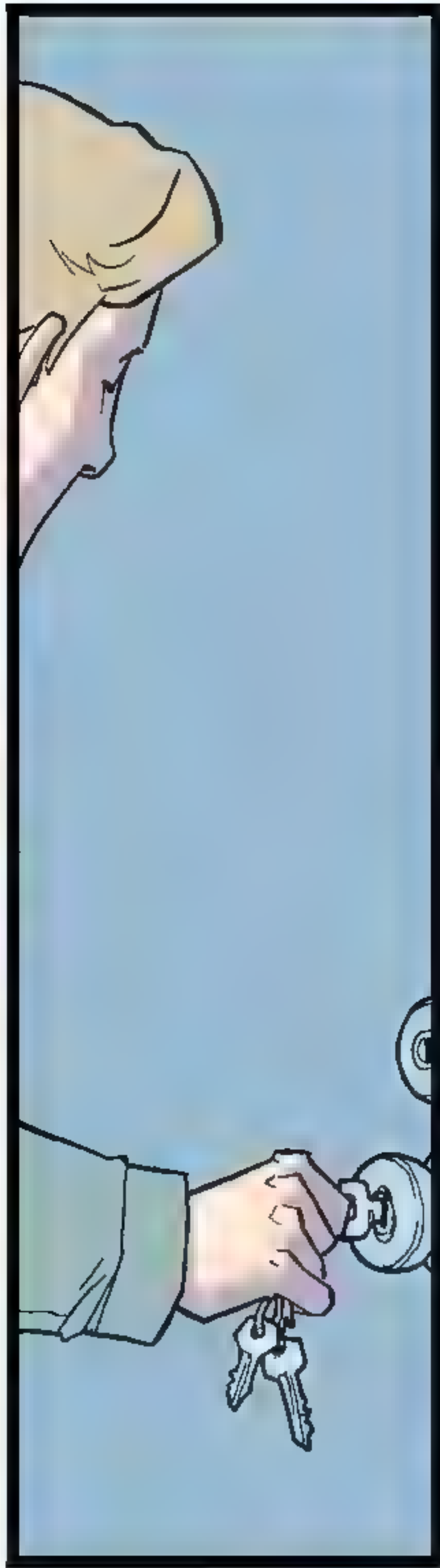
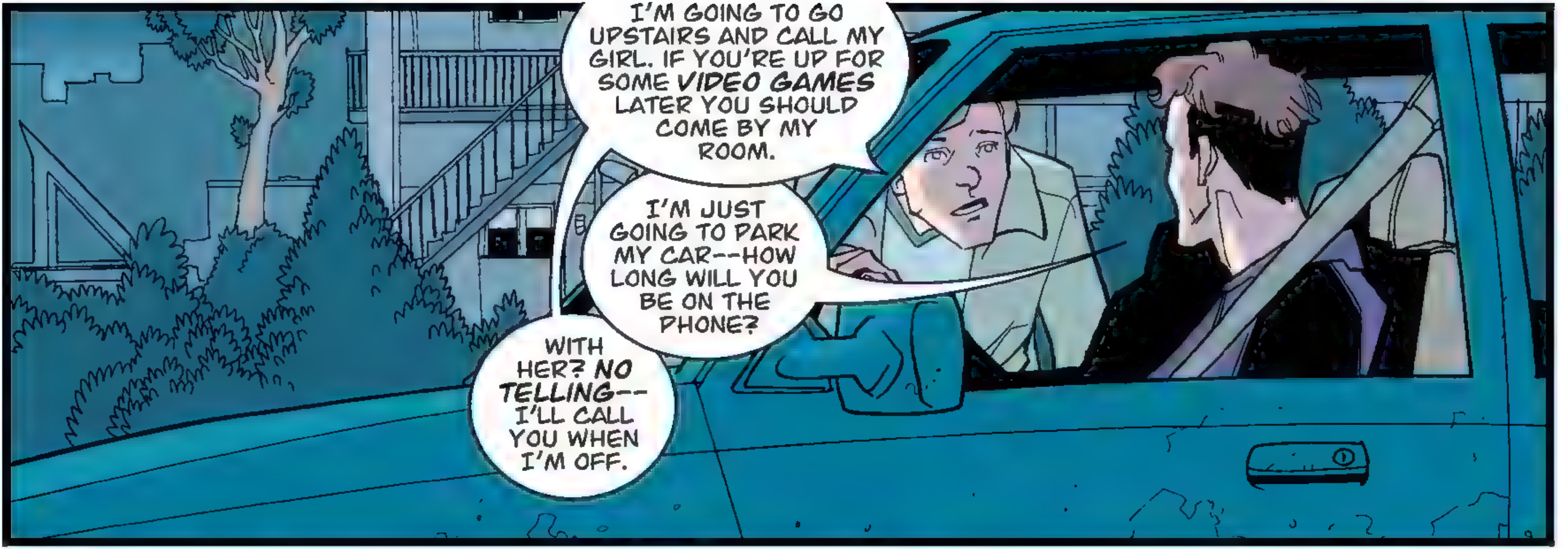
YOU SEE, UH... I KNOW YOU'RE STILL PISSED AT ME FOR ABANDONING YOU BACK AT MY CAMPUS WHEN THAT MONSTER ATTACKED BUT--

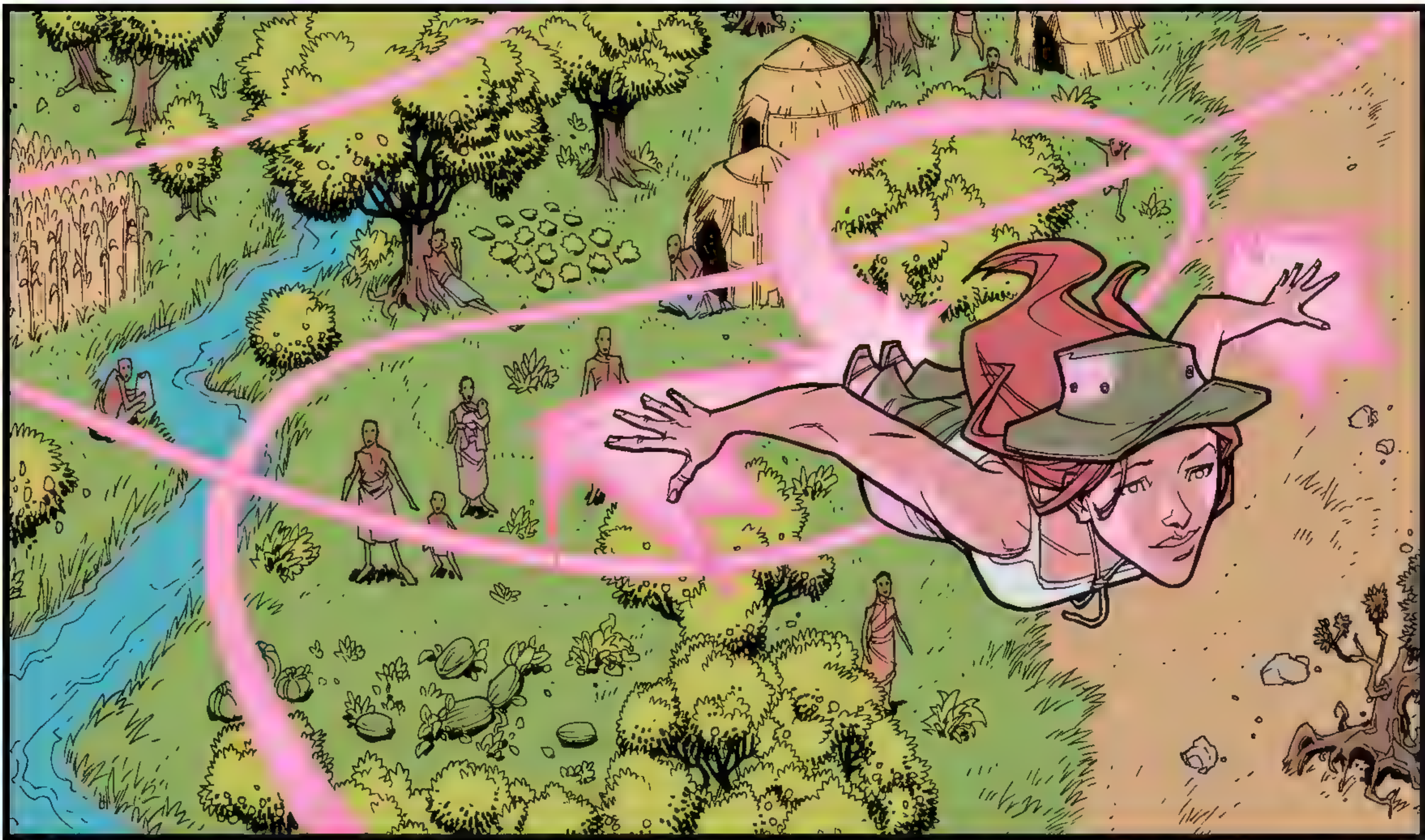
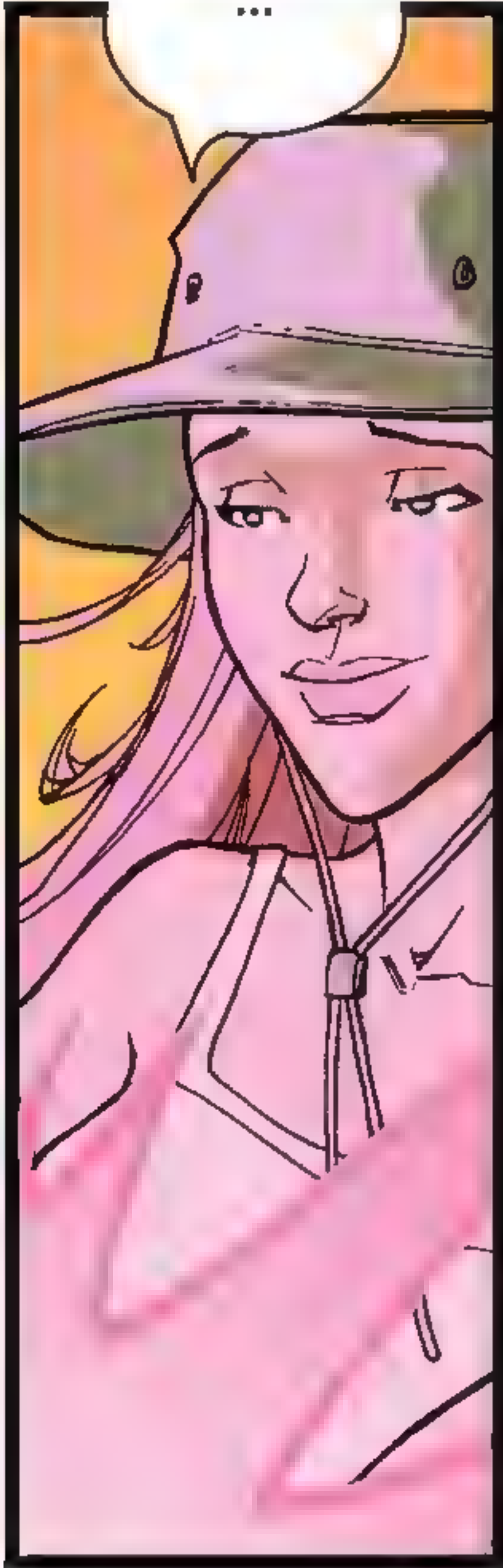
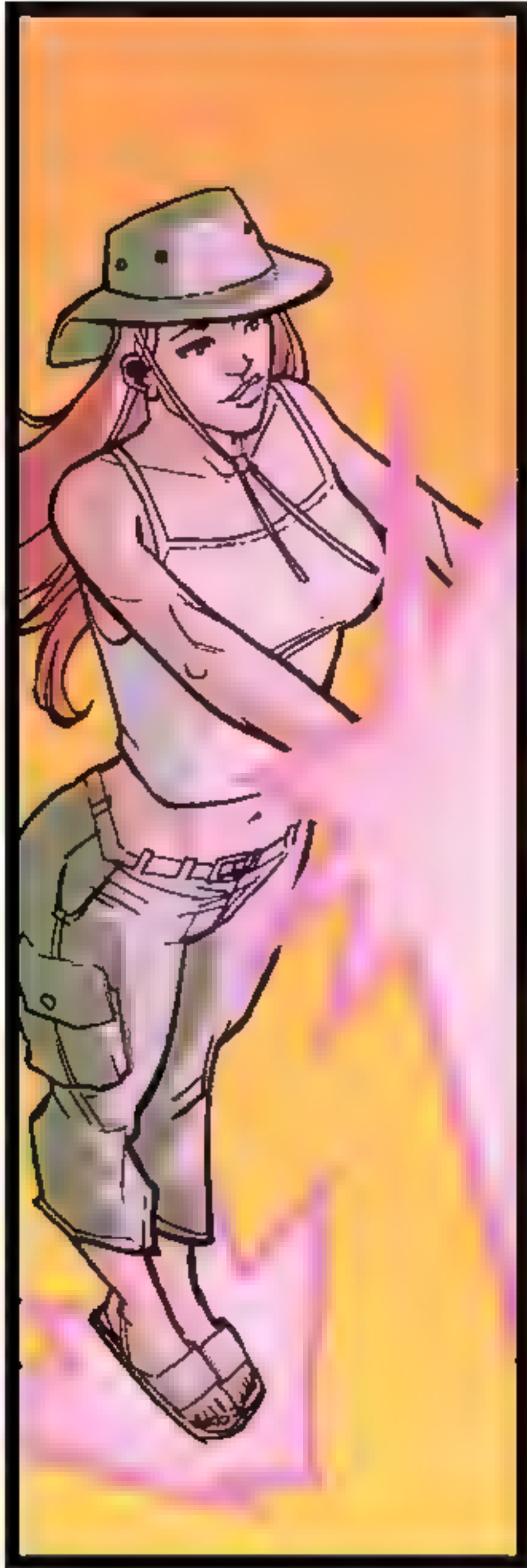
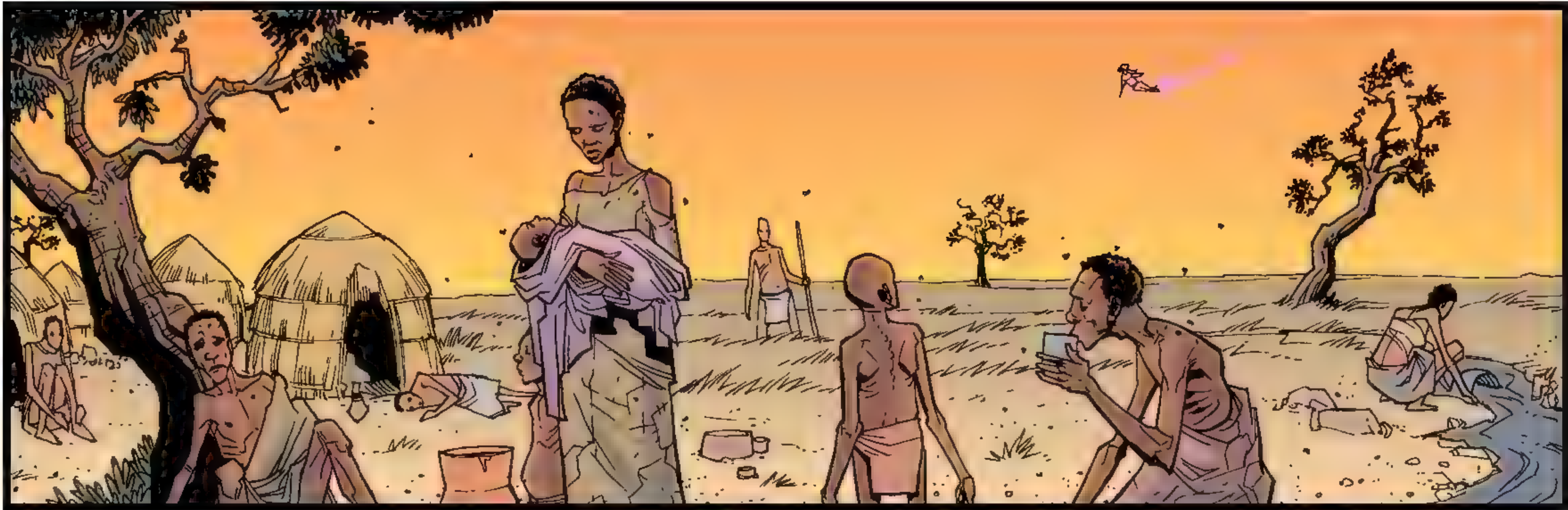


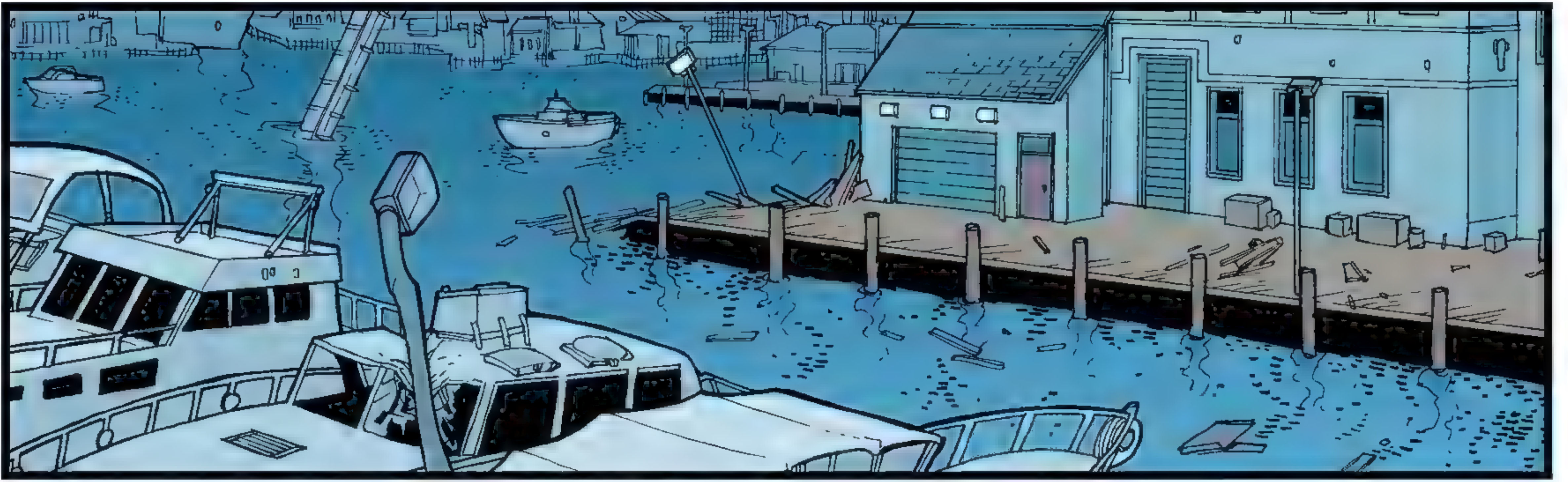
YOU SEE--THE THING IS--

OKAY KIDDO-- SUIT UP. YOU'RE NEEDED.









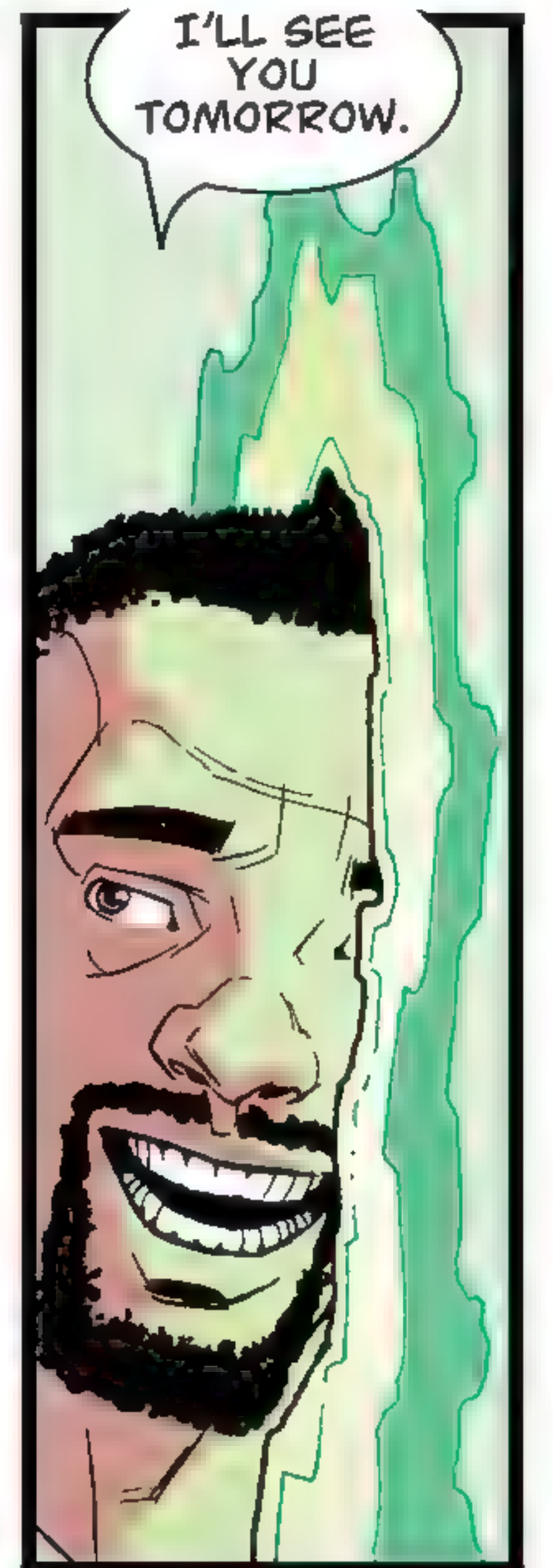
IT IS TIME, ANGSTROM LEVY.

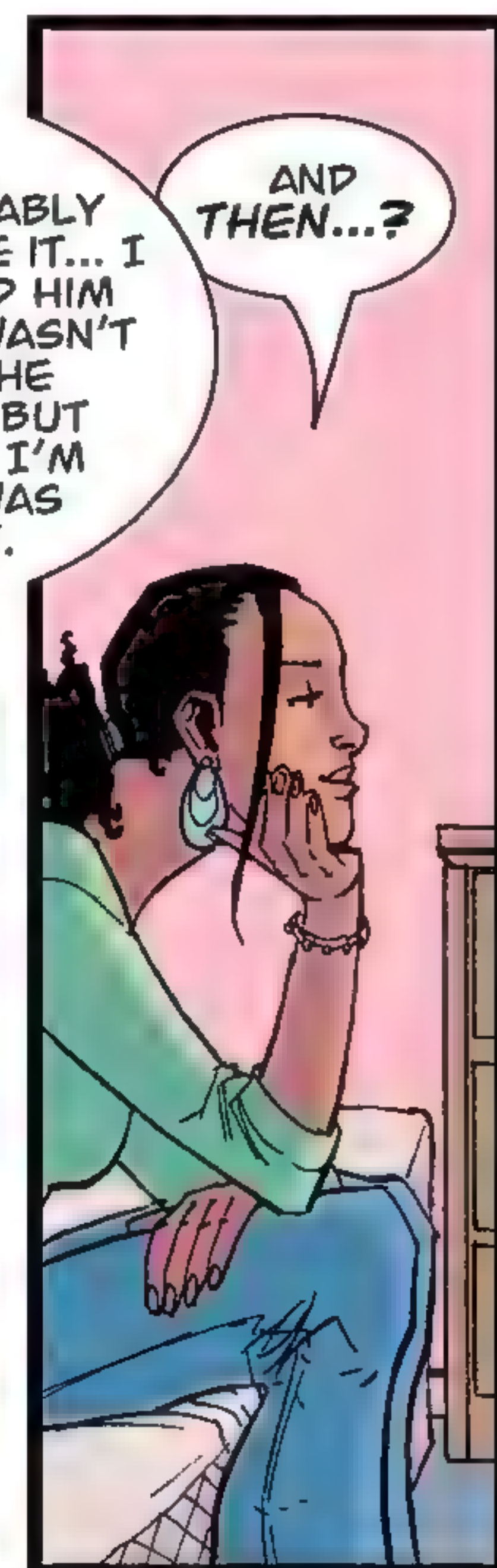
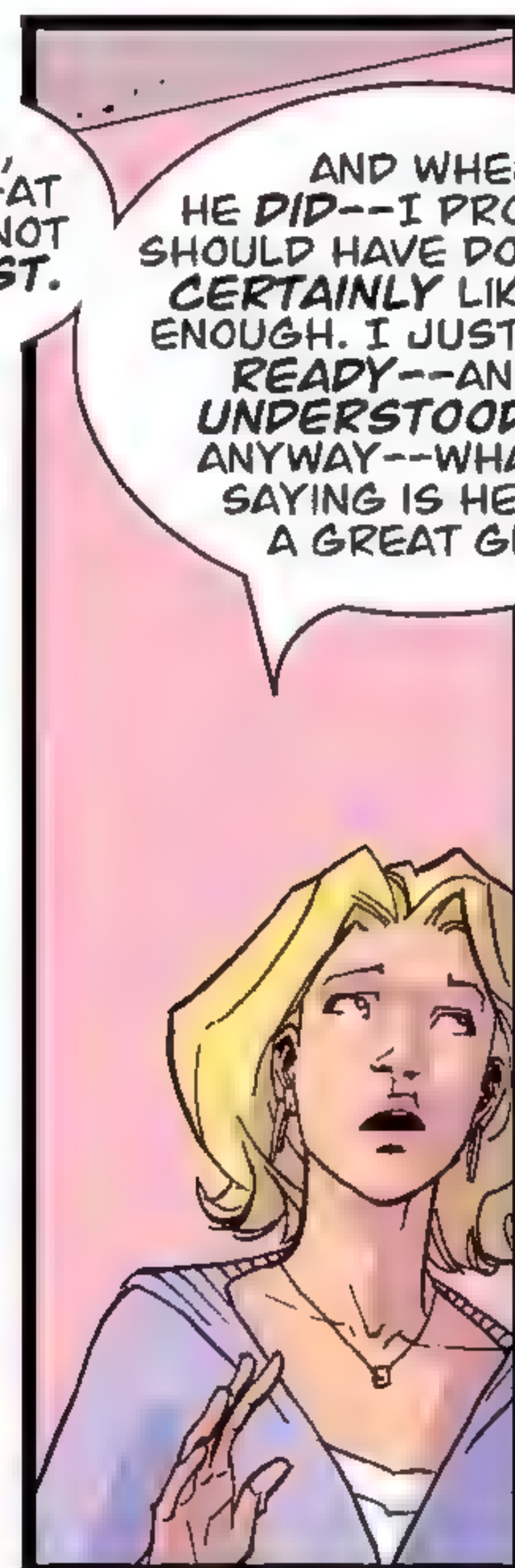
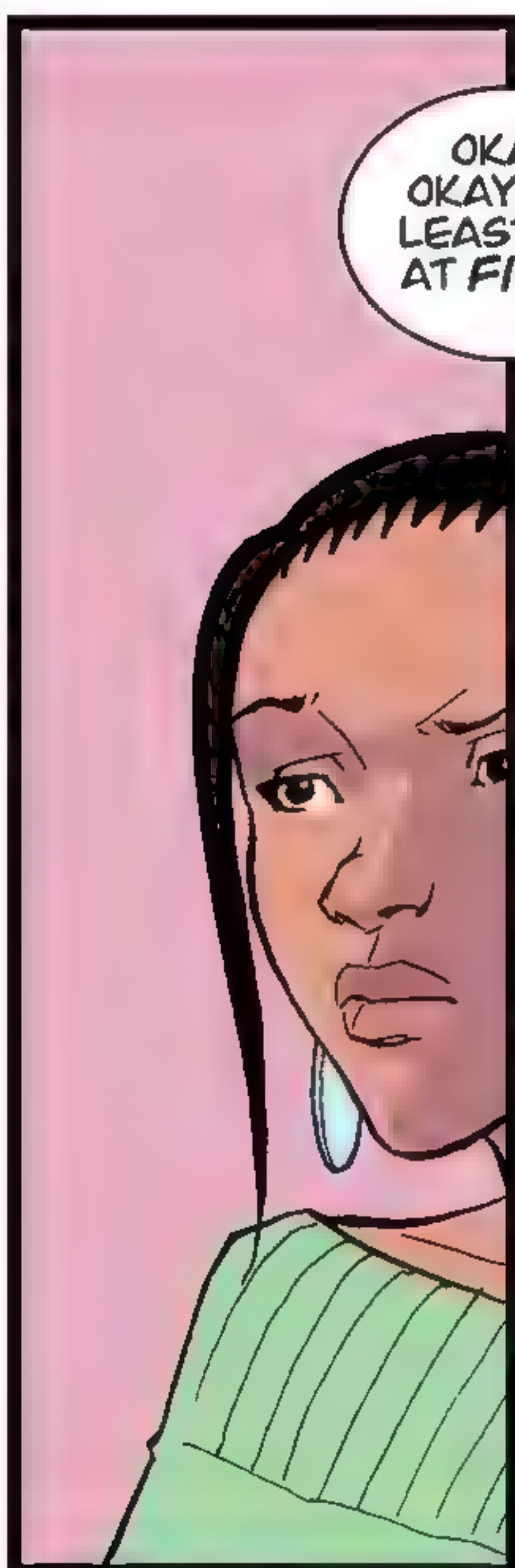
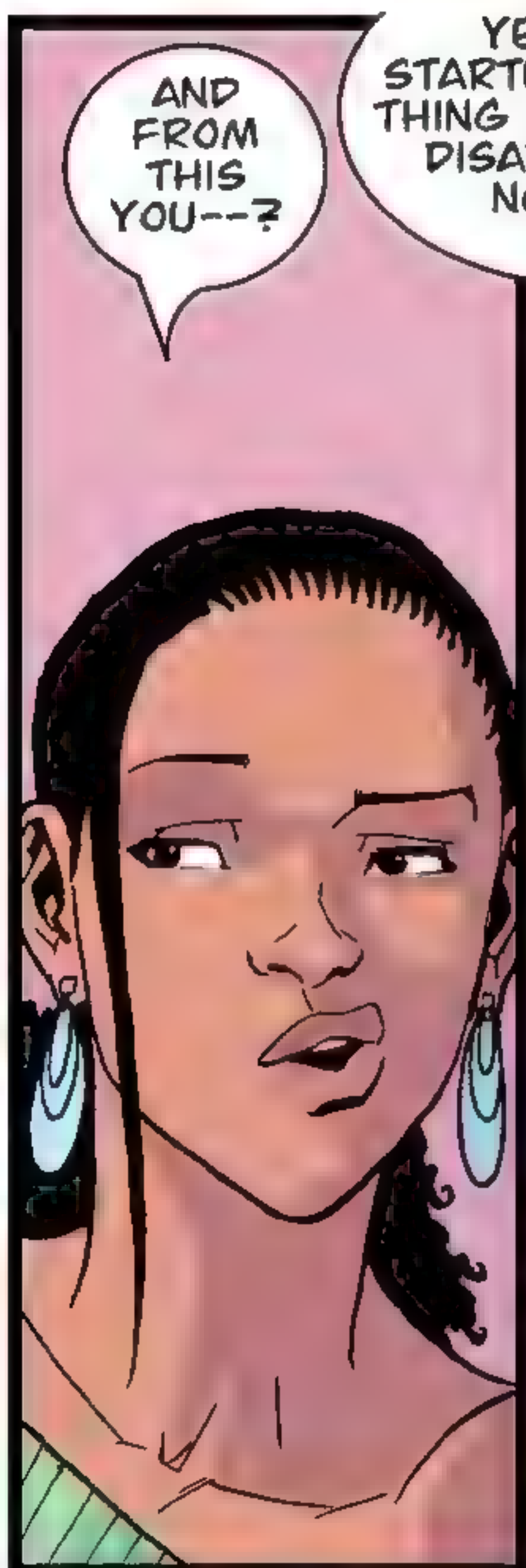
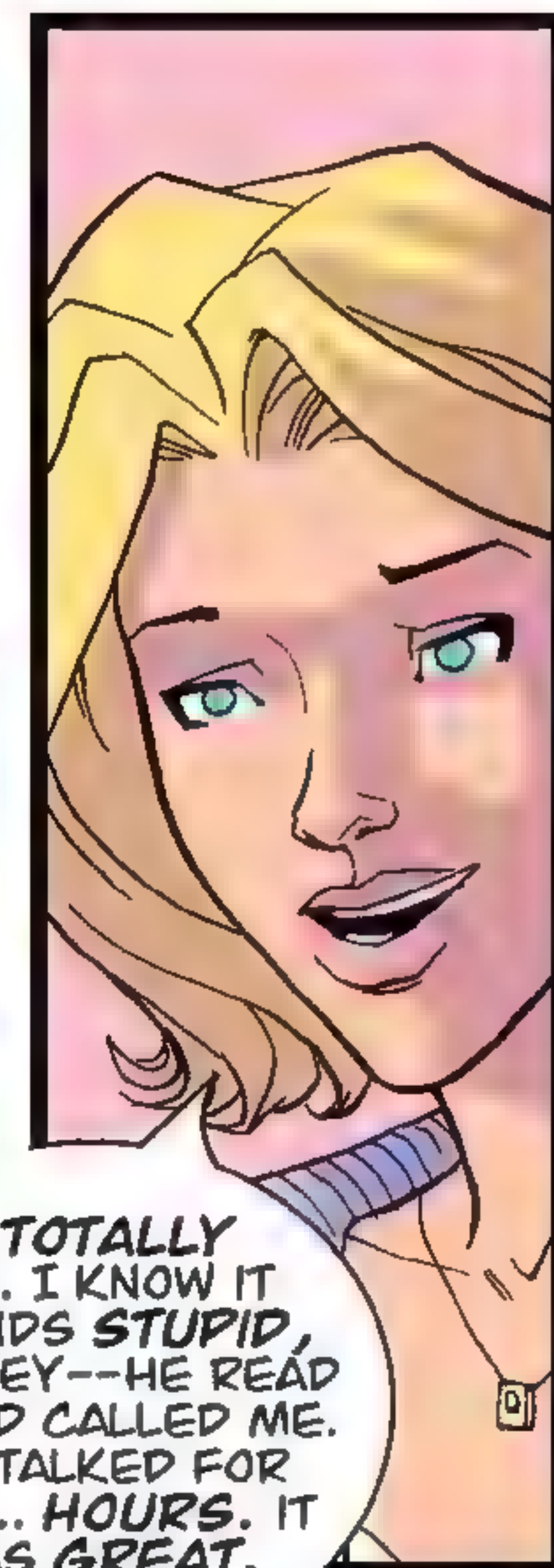
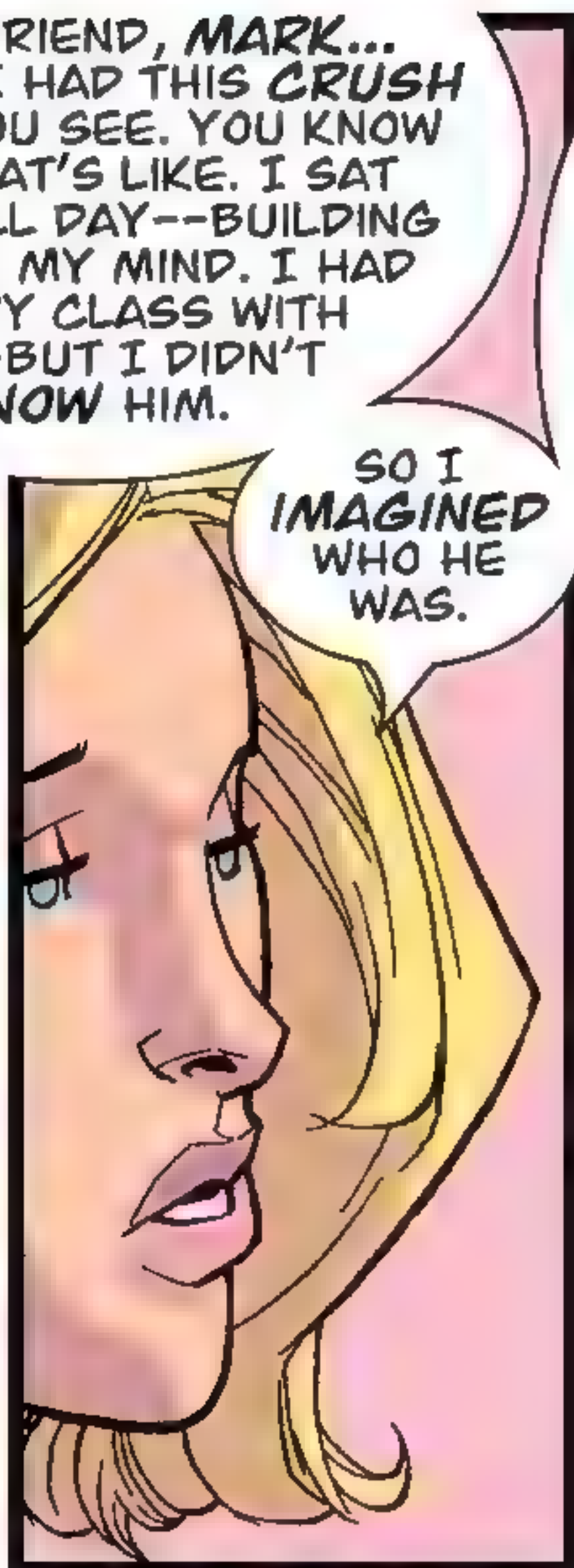
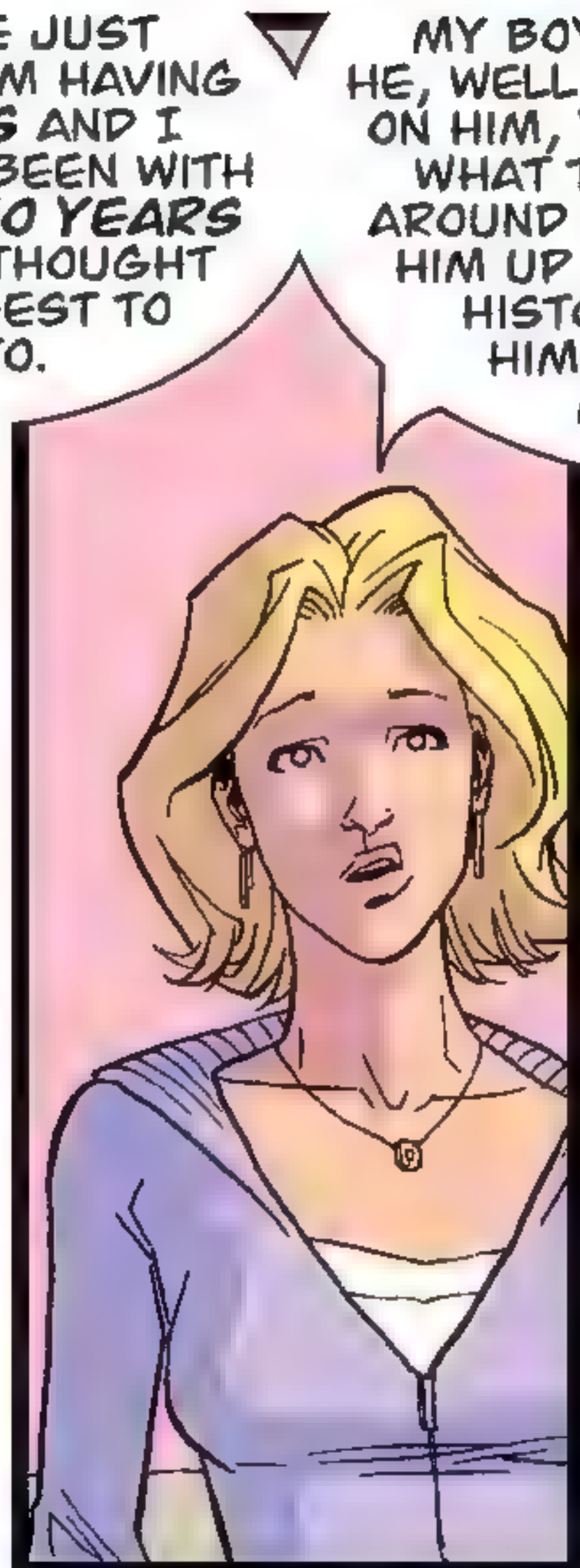
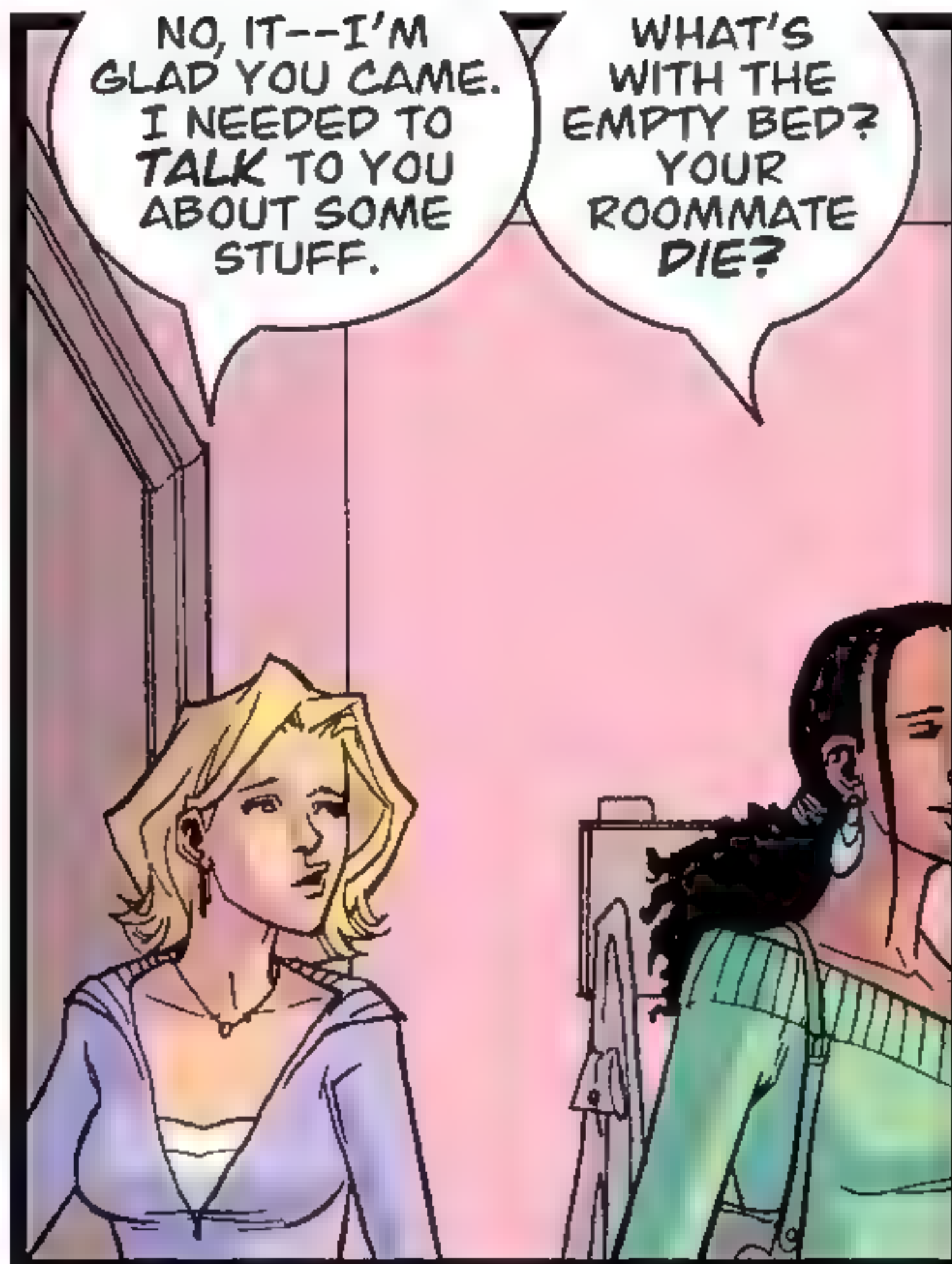
WE HAVE EVERYTHING WE NEED. ALL THE MACHINES ACROSS THE DOZEN WORLDS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED. I HAVE CONSULTED WITH THE OTHERS BROUGHT IN AFTER YESTERDAY'S SETBACK AND WE'RE ALL READY TO GO. THANKS FOR CONTACTING THEM FOR US, BY THE WAY. THEY'VE BEEN A HUGE HELP.

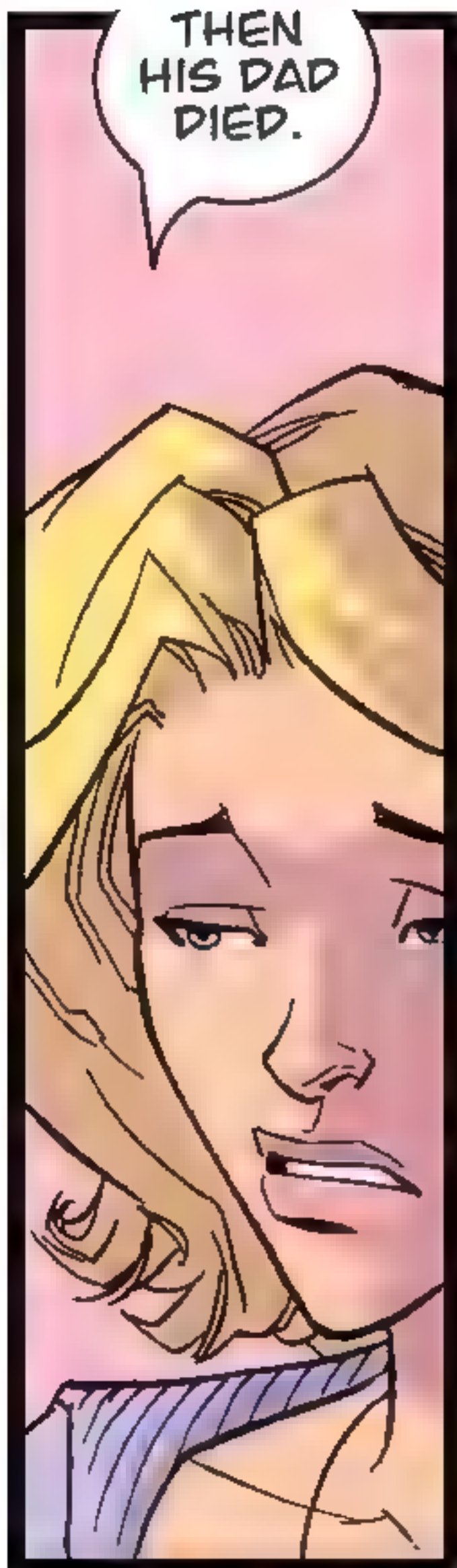
IF YOU CAN HAVE ALL YOUR DUPLICATES HERE TOMORROW MORNING--WE'LL COMPLETE THE PROCESS TOMORROW. WE COULD BE DONE BY LUNCH-TIME. THIS TIME FOR SURE.

BY THIS TIME TOMORROW, ALL THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR DIMENSIONS WILL BE YOURS--AND YOU'LL FINALLY BE ABLE TO EXPLORE THE MULTIVERSE WITHOUT HAVING TO RISK ENTERING A WORLD TOO HARSH TO SURVIVE IN.

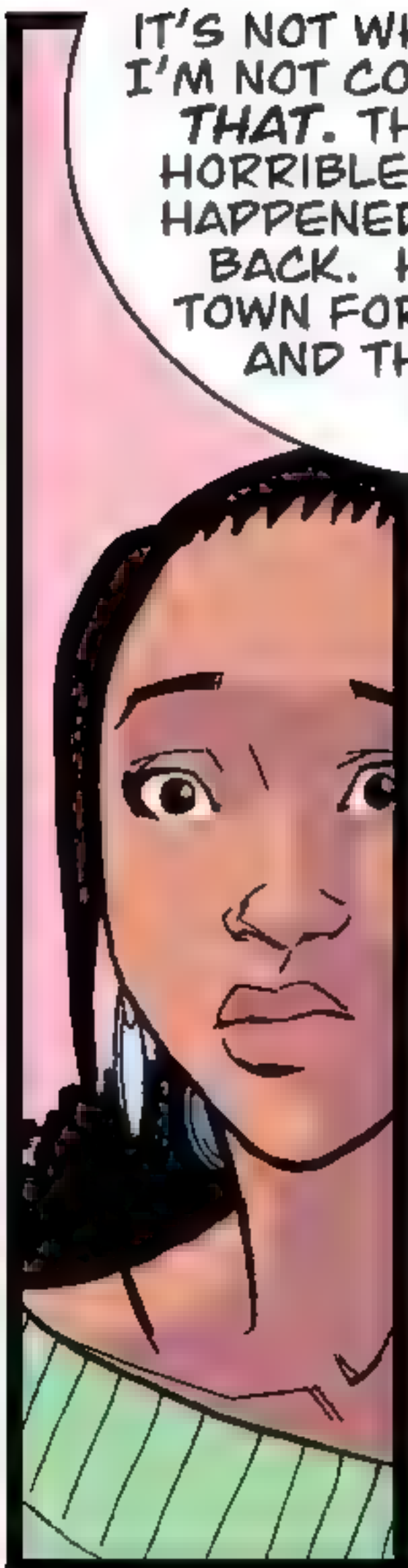
I TAKE IT YOU ARE PLEASED?



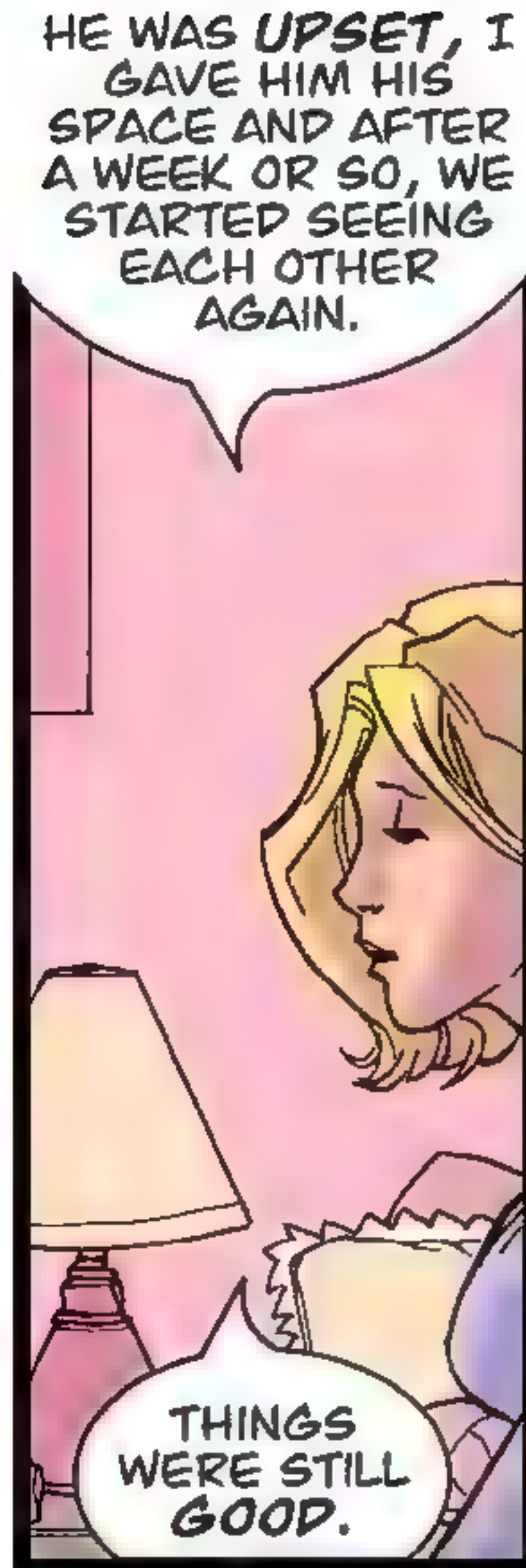
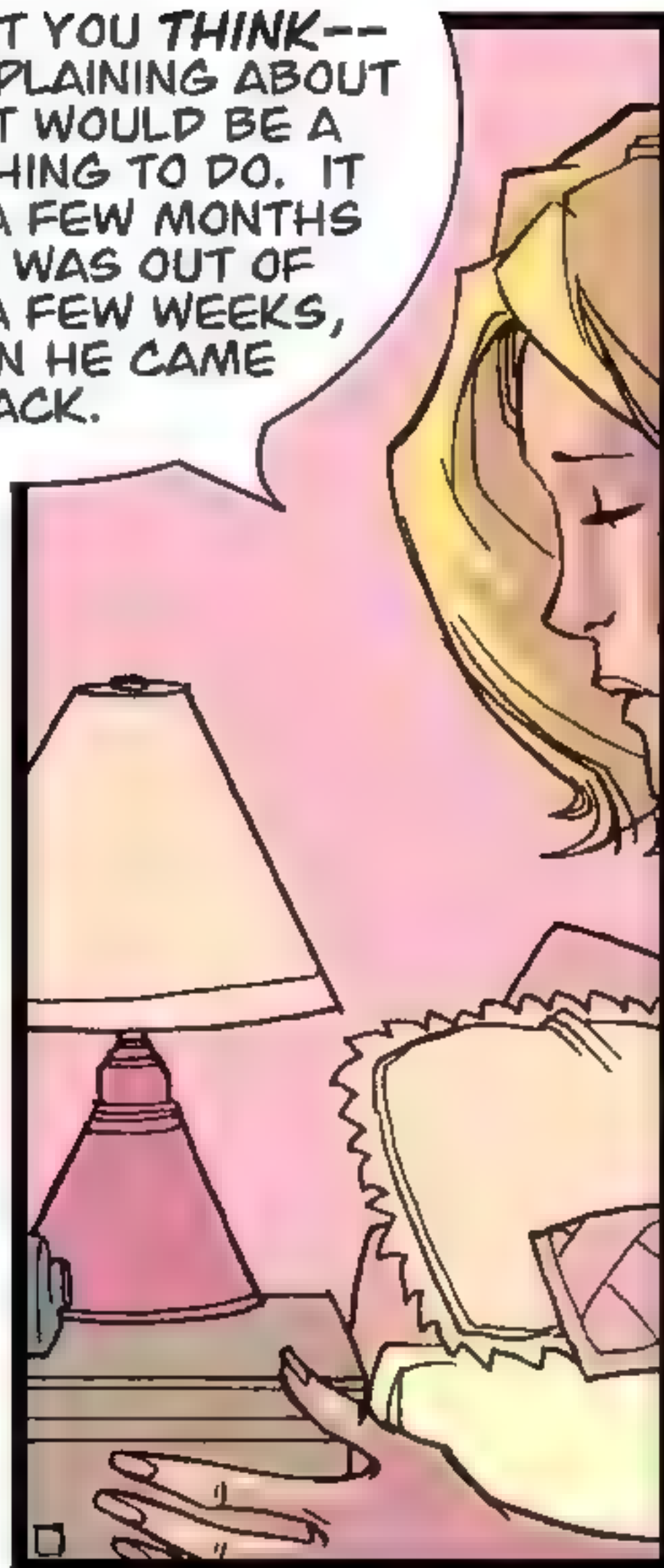




THEN HIS DAD DIED.

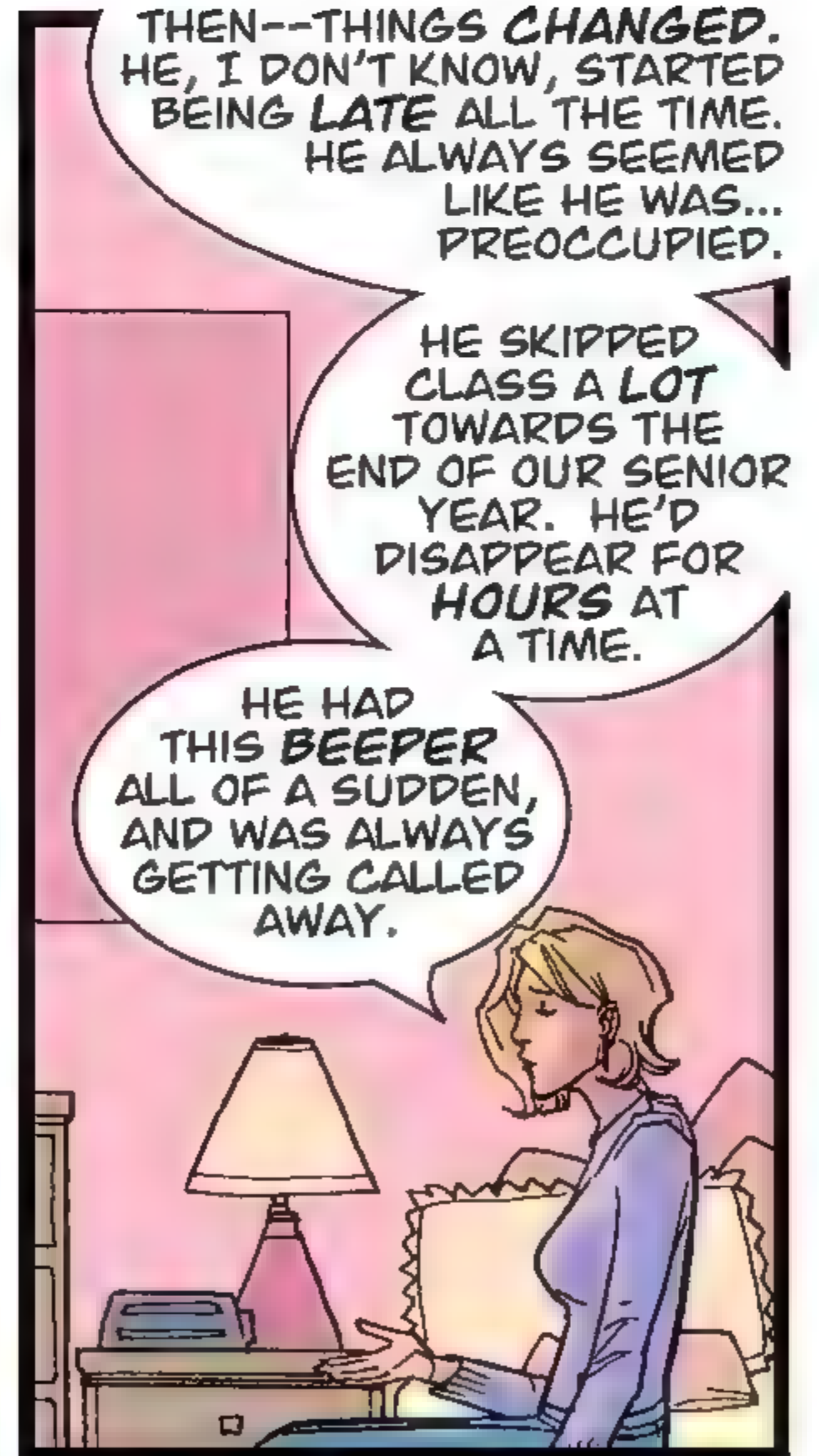


IT'S NOT WHAT YOU **THINK**-- I'M NOT COMPLAINING ABOUT **THAT**. THAT WOULD BE A HORRIBLE THING TO DO. IT HAPPENED A FEW MONTHS BACK. HE WAS OUT OF TOWN FOR A FEW WEEKS, AND THEN HE CAME BACK.



HE WAS **UPSET**, I GAVE HIM HIS SPACE AND AFTER A WEEK OR SO, WE STARTED SEEING EACH OTHER AGAIN.

THINGS WERE STILL **GOOD**.



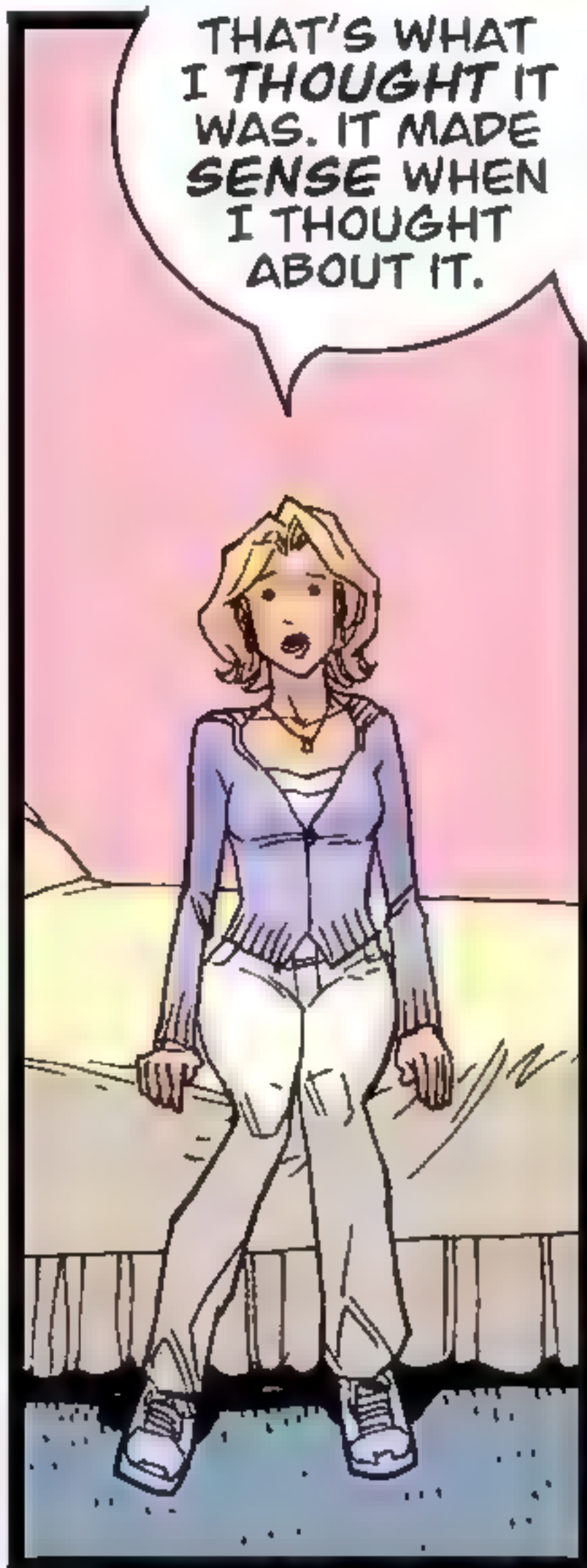
THEN--THINGS **CHANGED**. HE, I DON'T KNOW, STARTED BEING **LATE** ALL THE TIME. HE ALWAYS SEEMED LIKE HE WAS... **PREOCCUPIED**.

HE SKIPPED CLASS A LOT TOWARDS THE END OF OUR SENIOR YEAR. HE'D DISAPPEAR FOR HOURS AT A TIME.

HE HAD THIS **BEEPER** ALL OF A SUDDEN, AND WAS ALWAYS GETTING CALLED AWAY.



DRUGS?



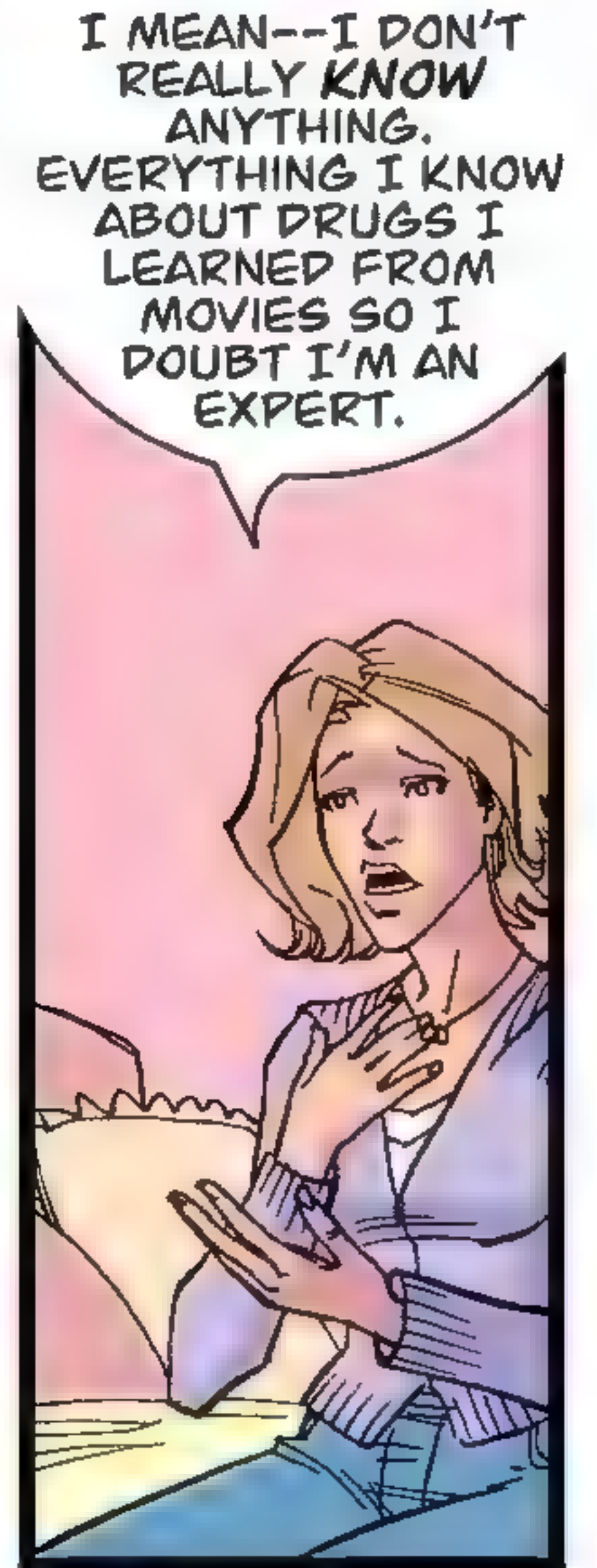
THAT'S WHAT I **THOUGHT** IT WAS. IT MADE **SENSE** WHEN I THOUGHT ABOUT IT.



HIS DAD **DIED**. IT WAS JUST HIM AND HIS MOM. I COULD SEE THEY NEEDED AN EXTRA INCOME. HIS DAD WAS AN AUTHOR, AND SALES PICKED UP WHEN HE DIED, BUT I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH OF THAT MONEY HE GOT.



IF HE WAS HELPING HIS MOM MAKE ENDS MEET-- HOW COULD I FAULT HIM FOR IT? BUT IT MADE ME **WORRY**. WHO HE WAS DEALING WITH NOW-- HOW DANGEROUS IT WAS.

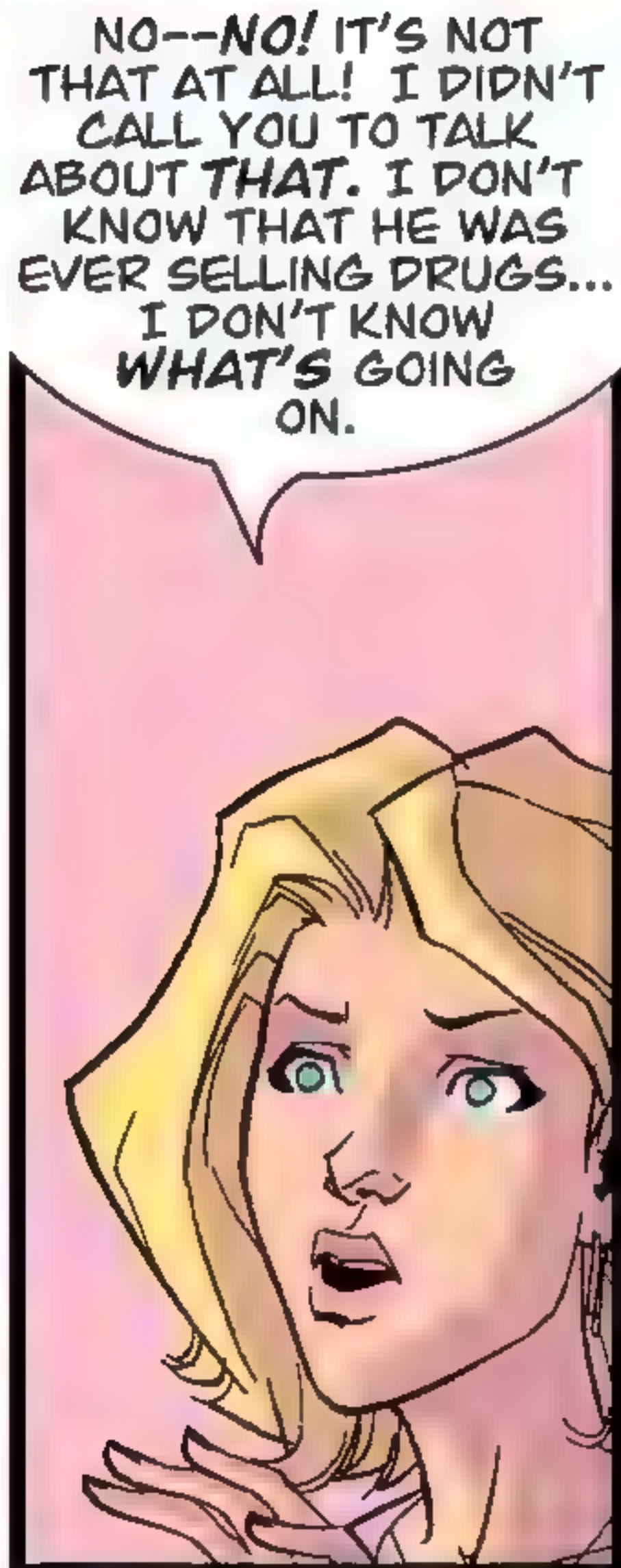


I MEAN--I DON'T REALLY **KNOW** ANYTHING. EVERYTHING I KNOW ABOUT DRUGS I LEARNED FROM MOVIES SO I DOUBT I'M AN EXPERT.



DON'T LOOK AT ME--THAT'S **RACIST**.

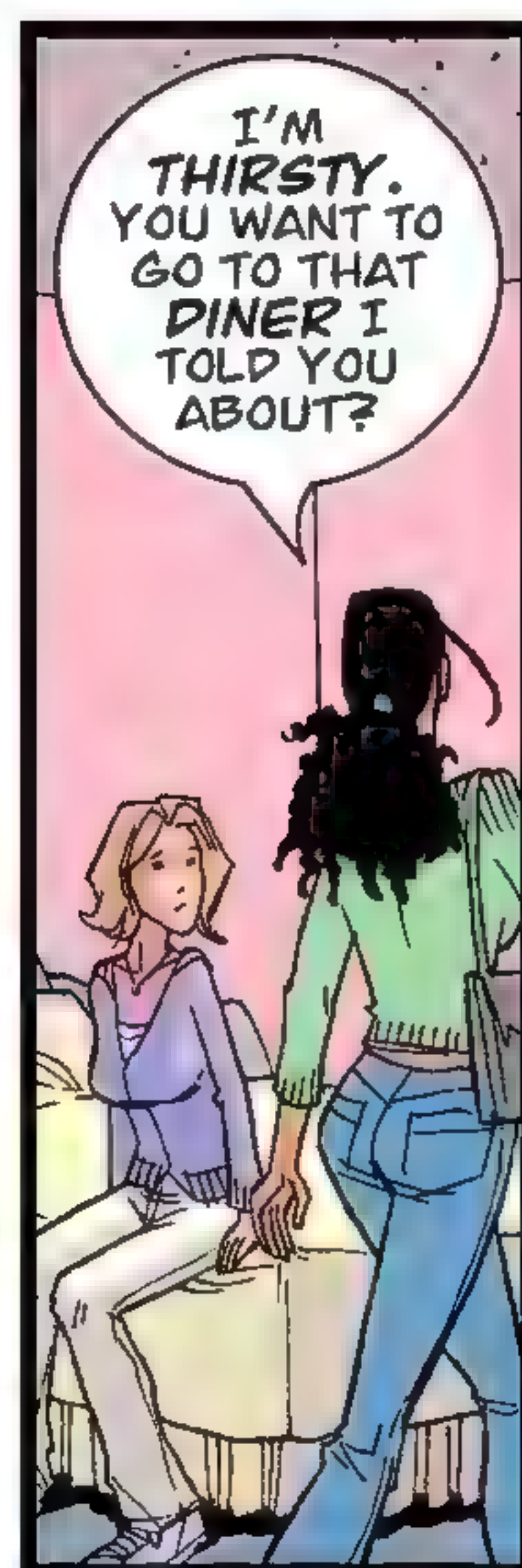
I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING **EITHER**. MY PARENTS ARE **DOCTORS**. YOU DIDN'T CALL THE BLACK GIRL TO GET **DRUG INFO** DID YOU?



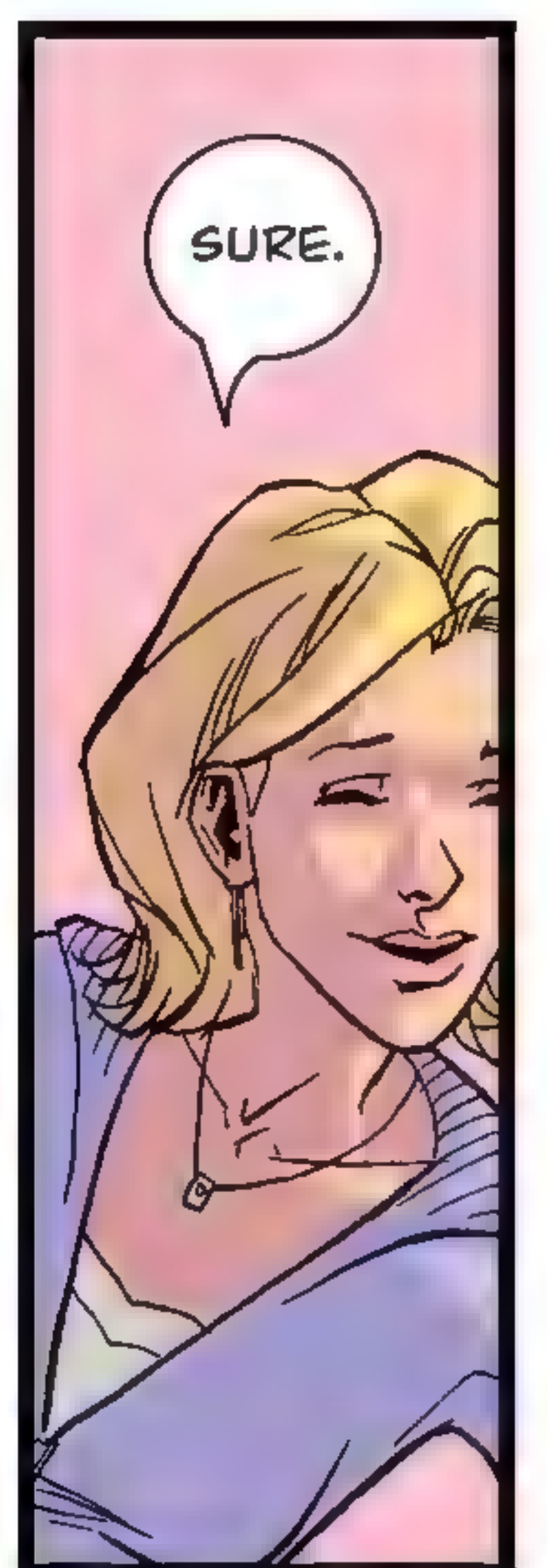
NO--NO! IT'S NOT THAT AT ALL! I DIDN'T CALL YOU TO TALK ABOUT **THAT**. I DON'T KNOW THAT HE WAS EVER SELLING DRUGS... I DON'T KNOW **WHAT'S** GOING ON.



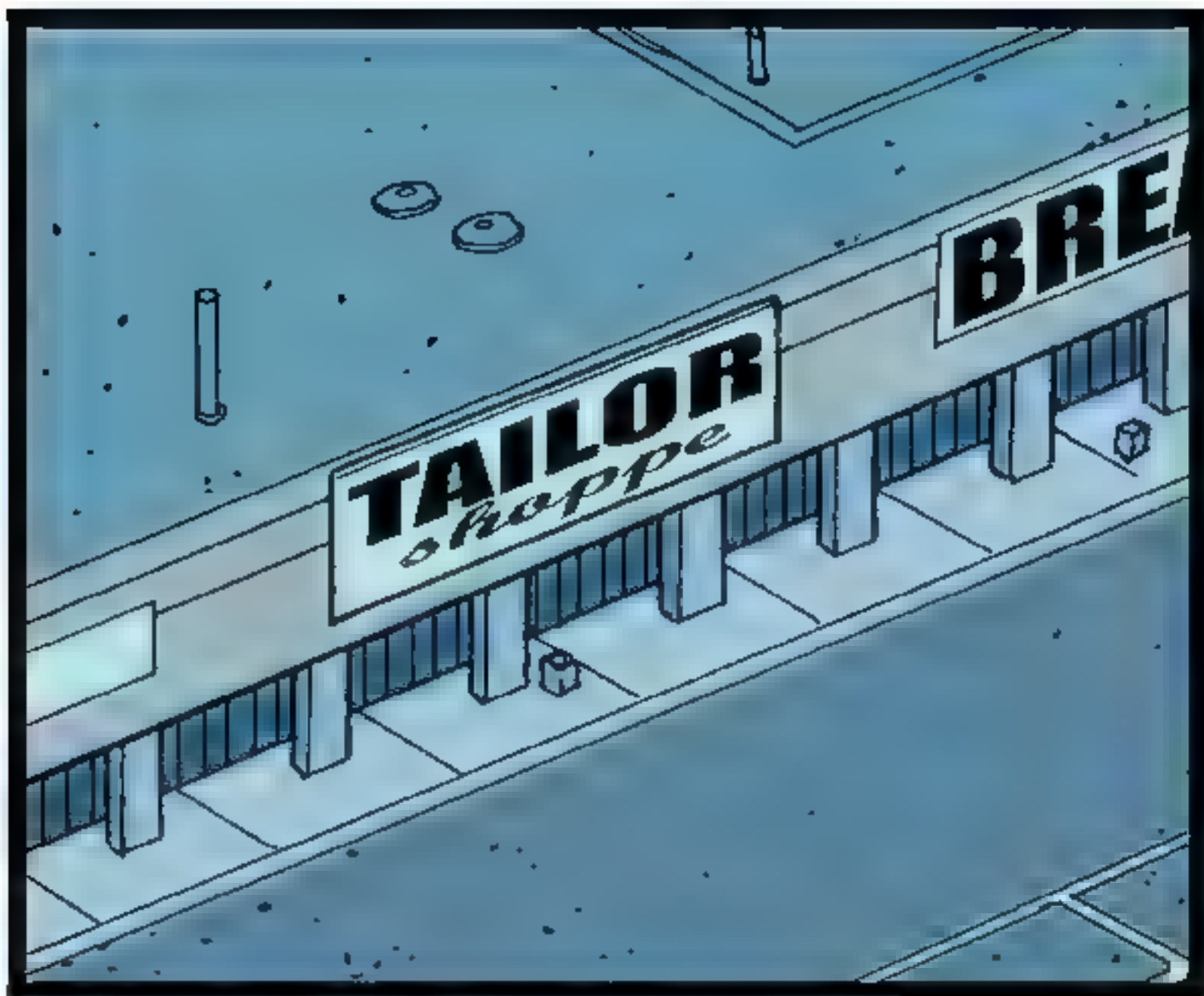
I DON'T KNOW **ANYTHING** ANYMORE.



I'M **THIRSTY**. YOU WANT TO GO TO THAT **DINER** I TOLD YOU ABOUT?

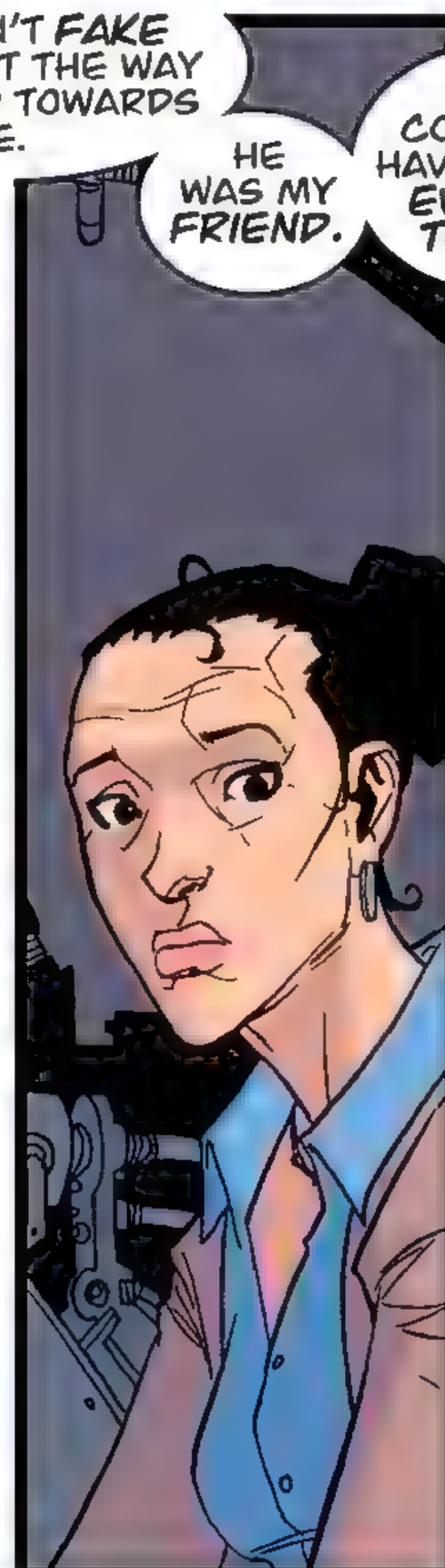
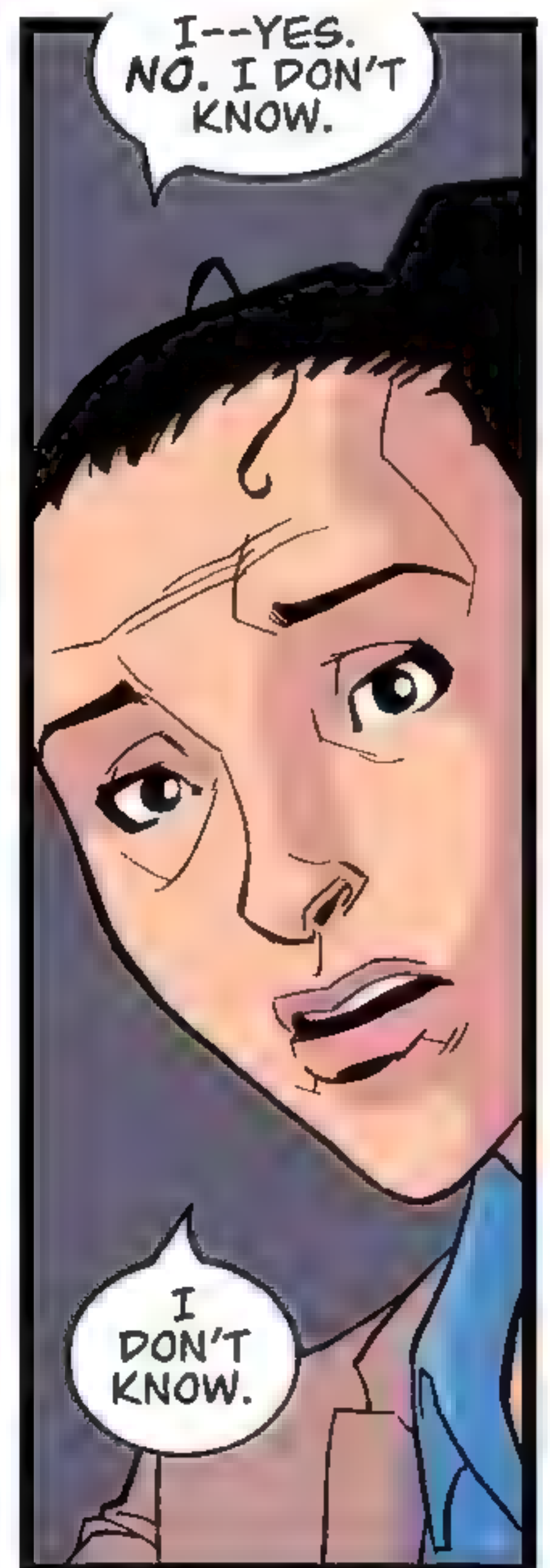
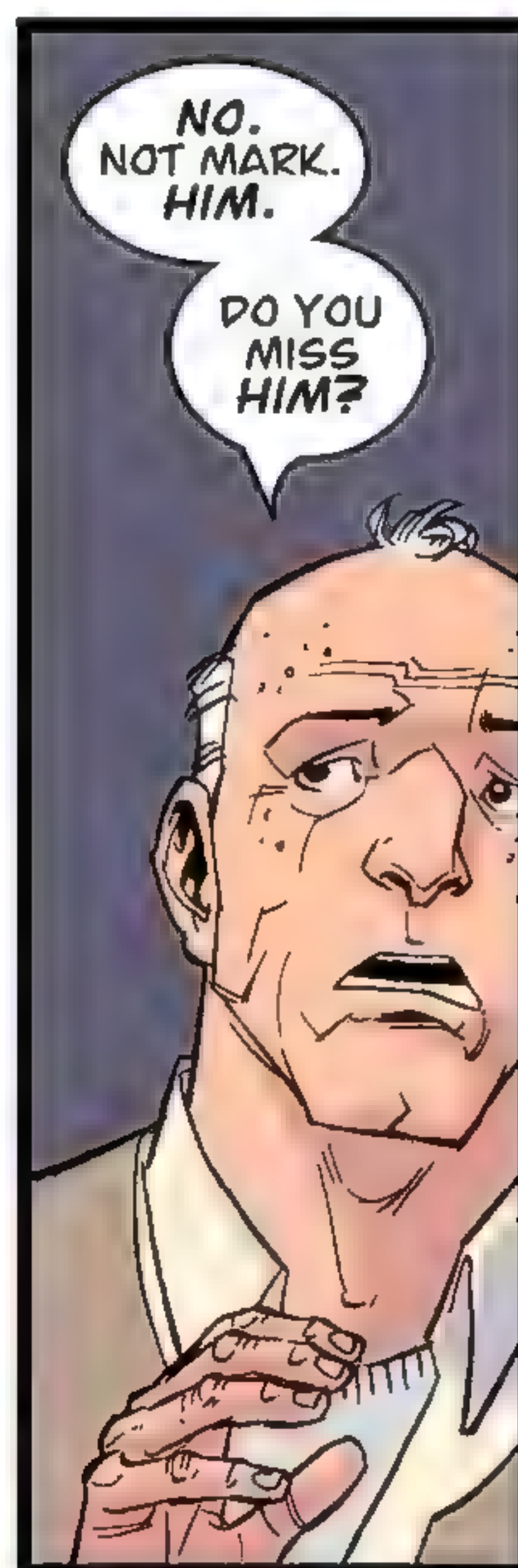


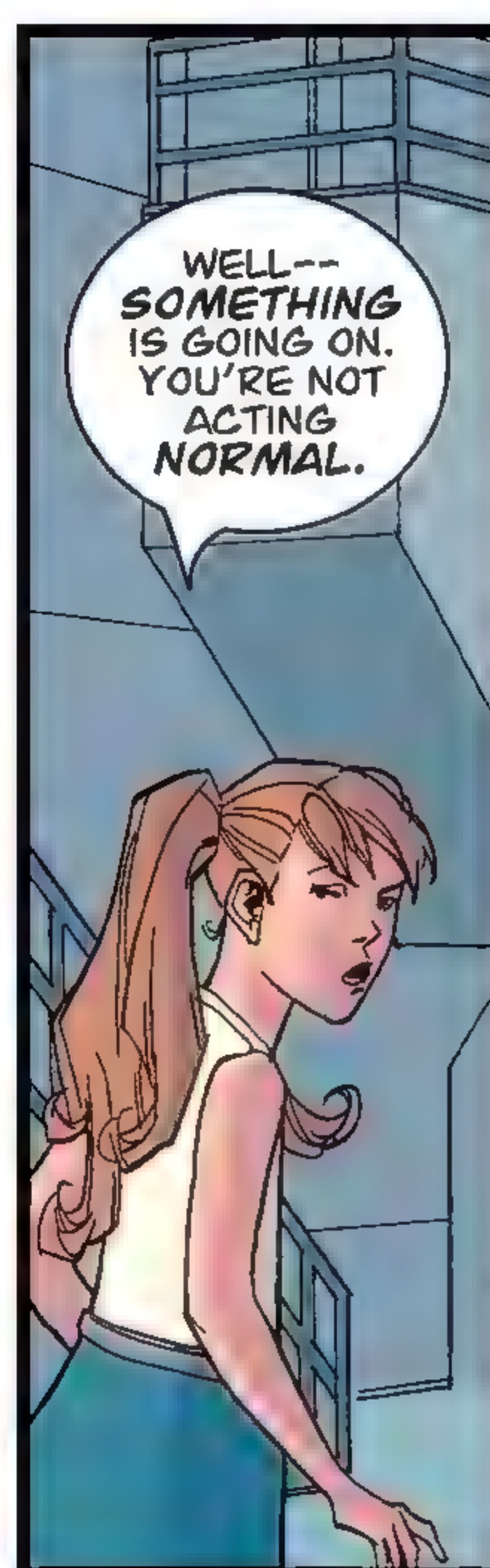
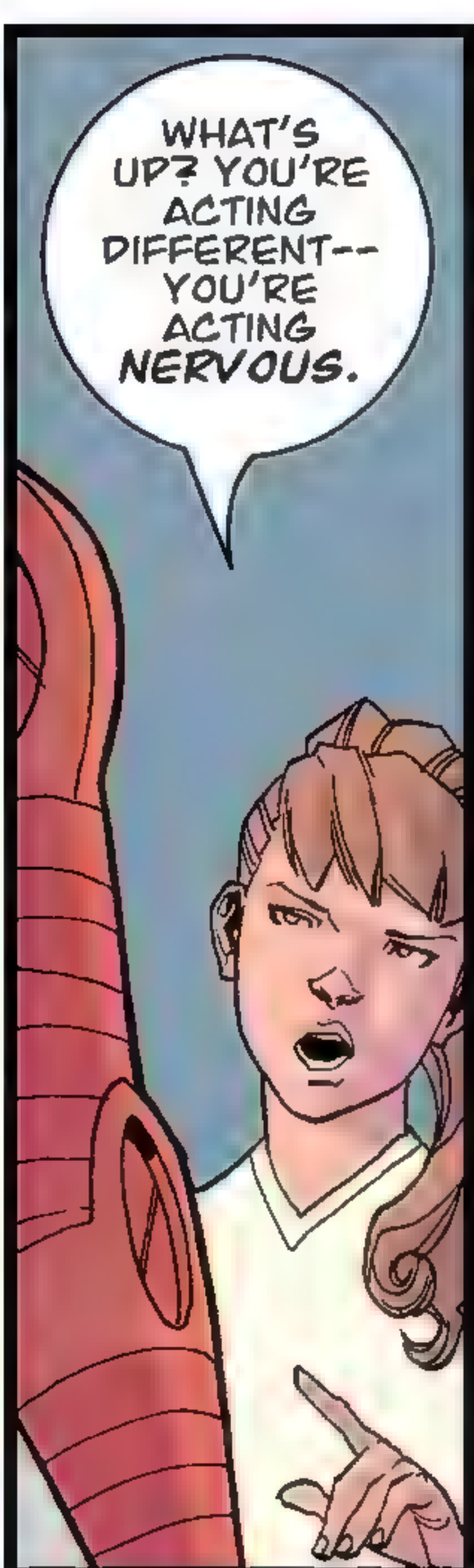
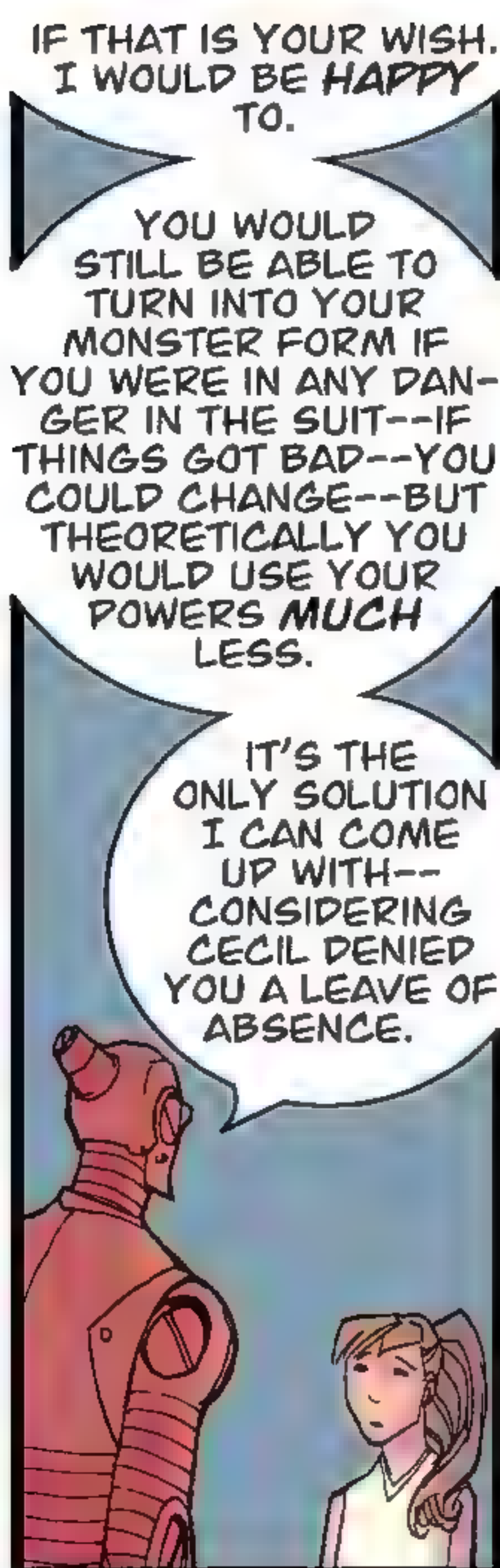
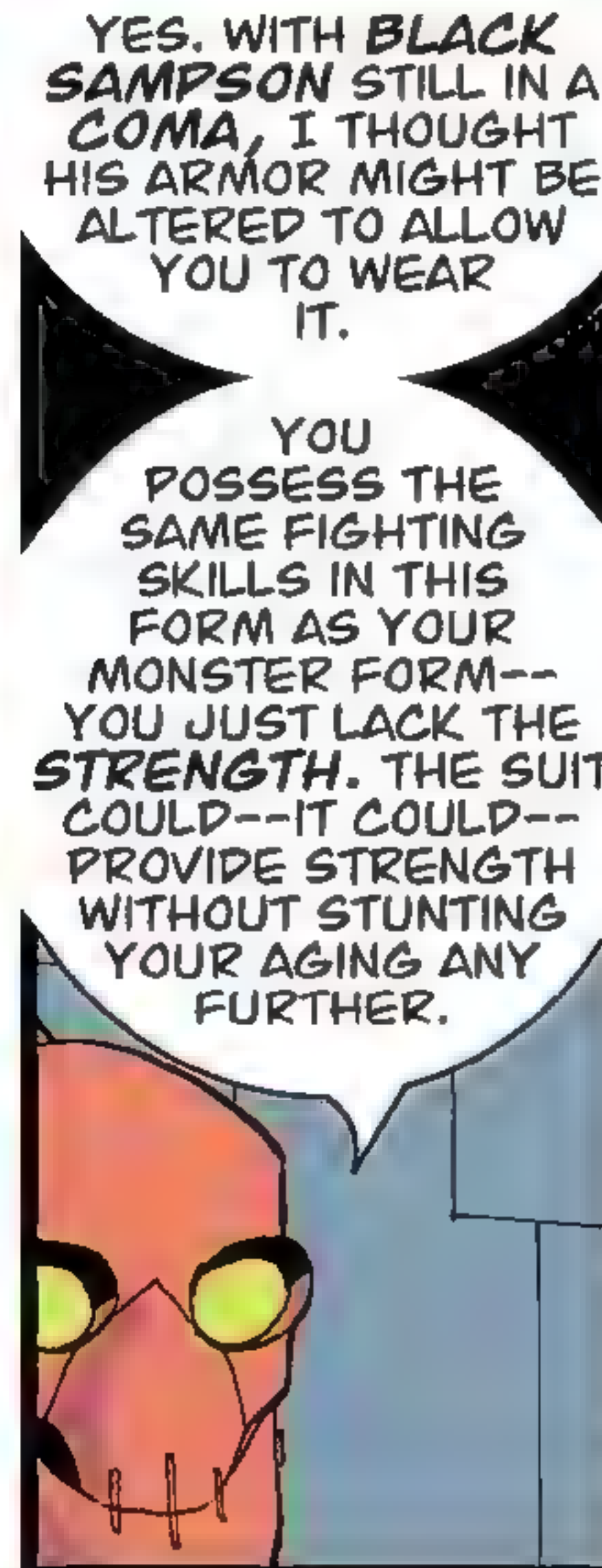
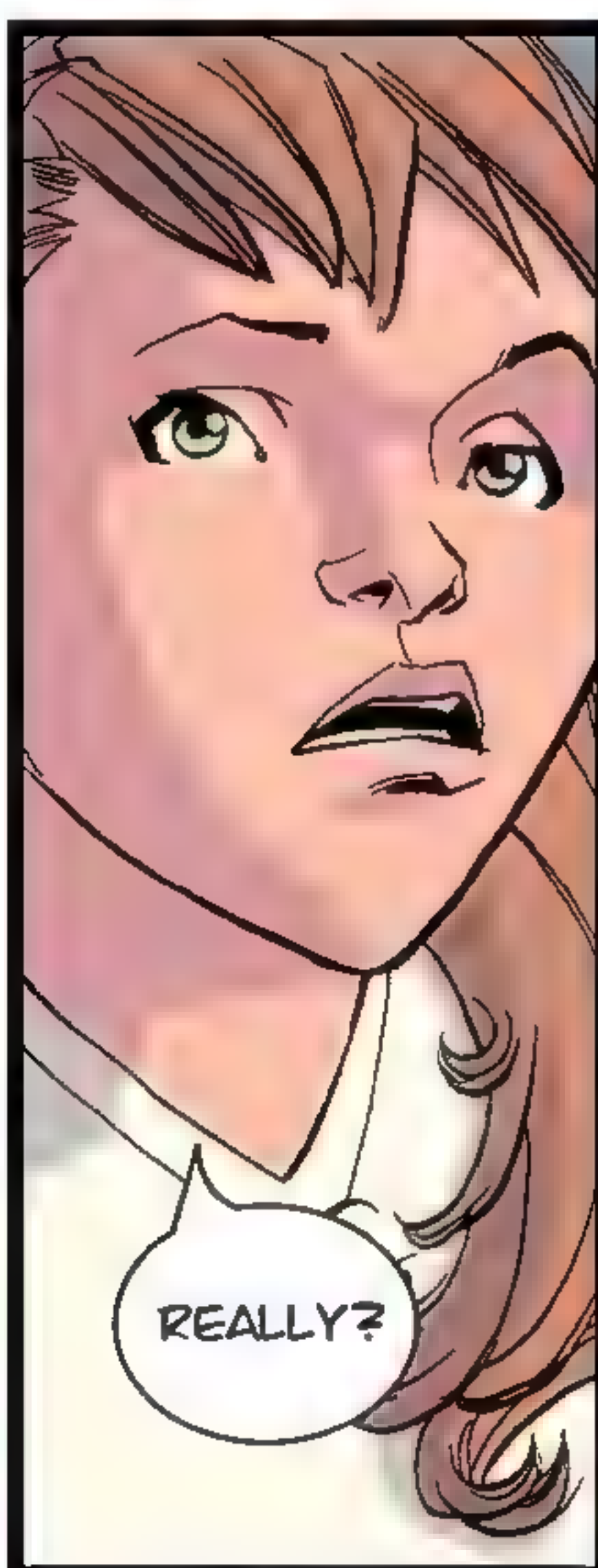
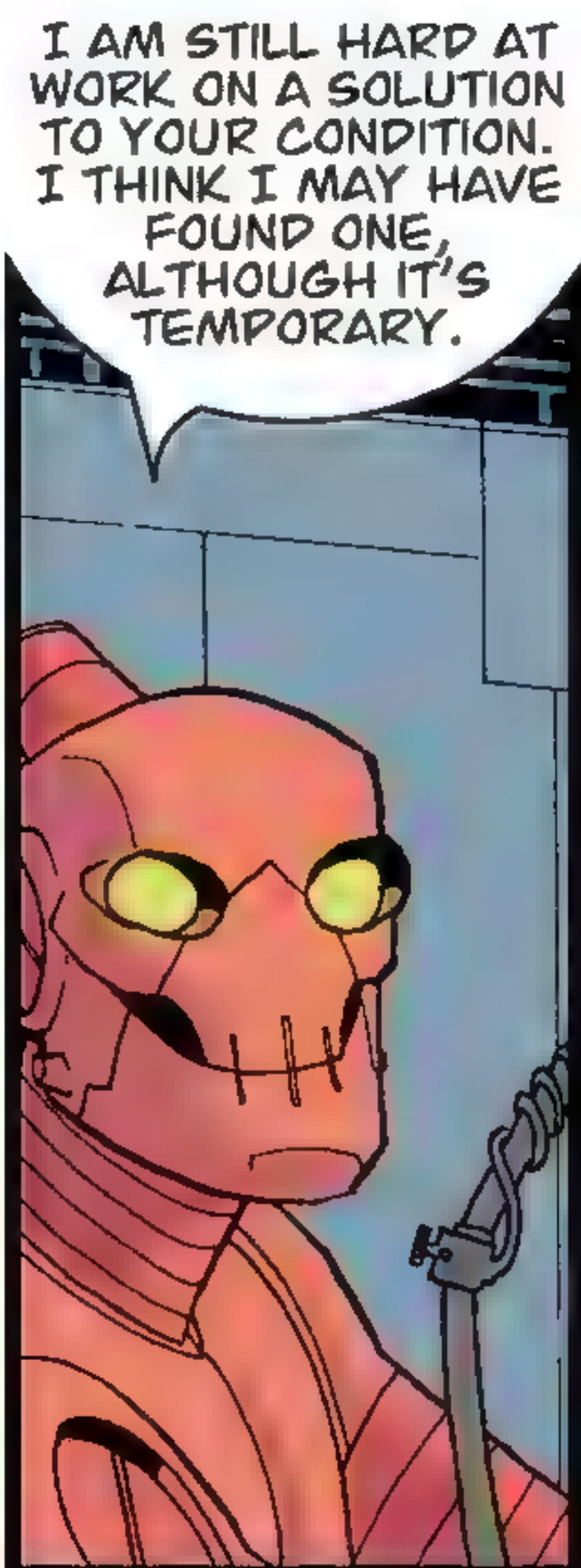
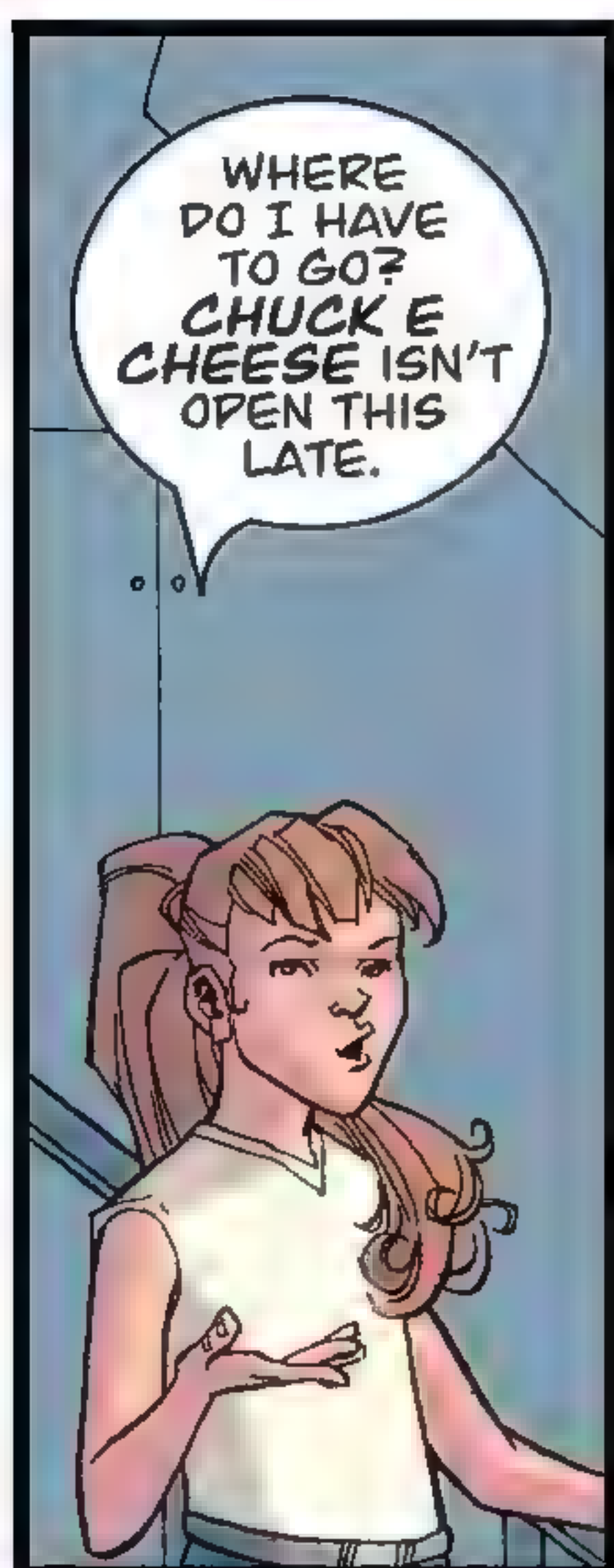
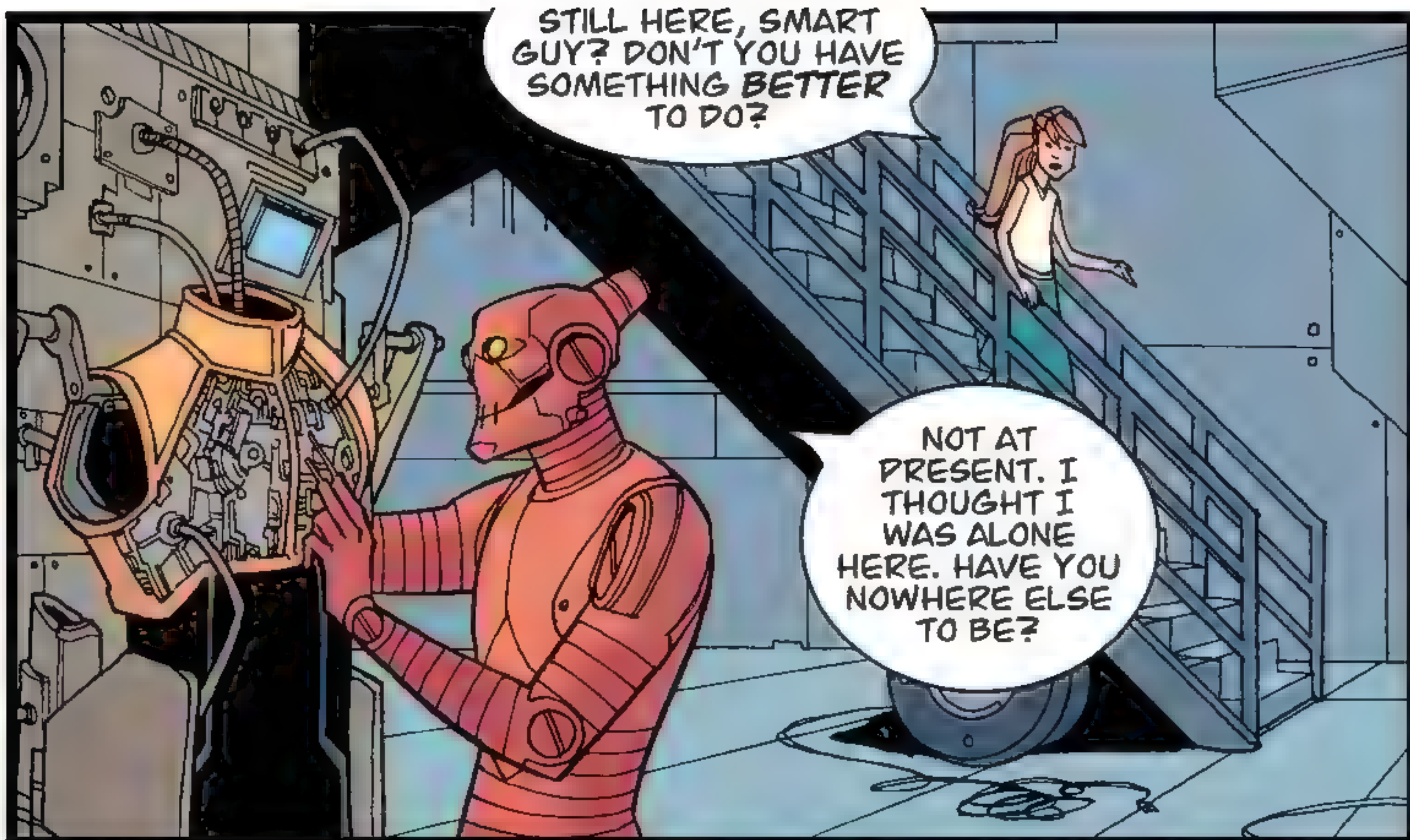
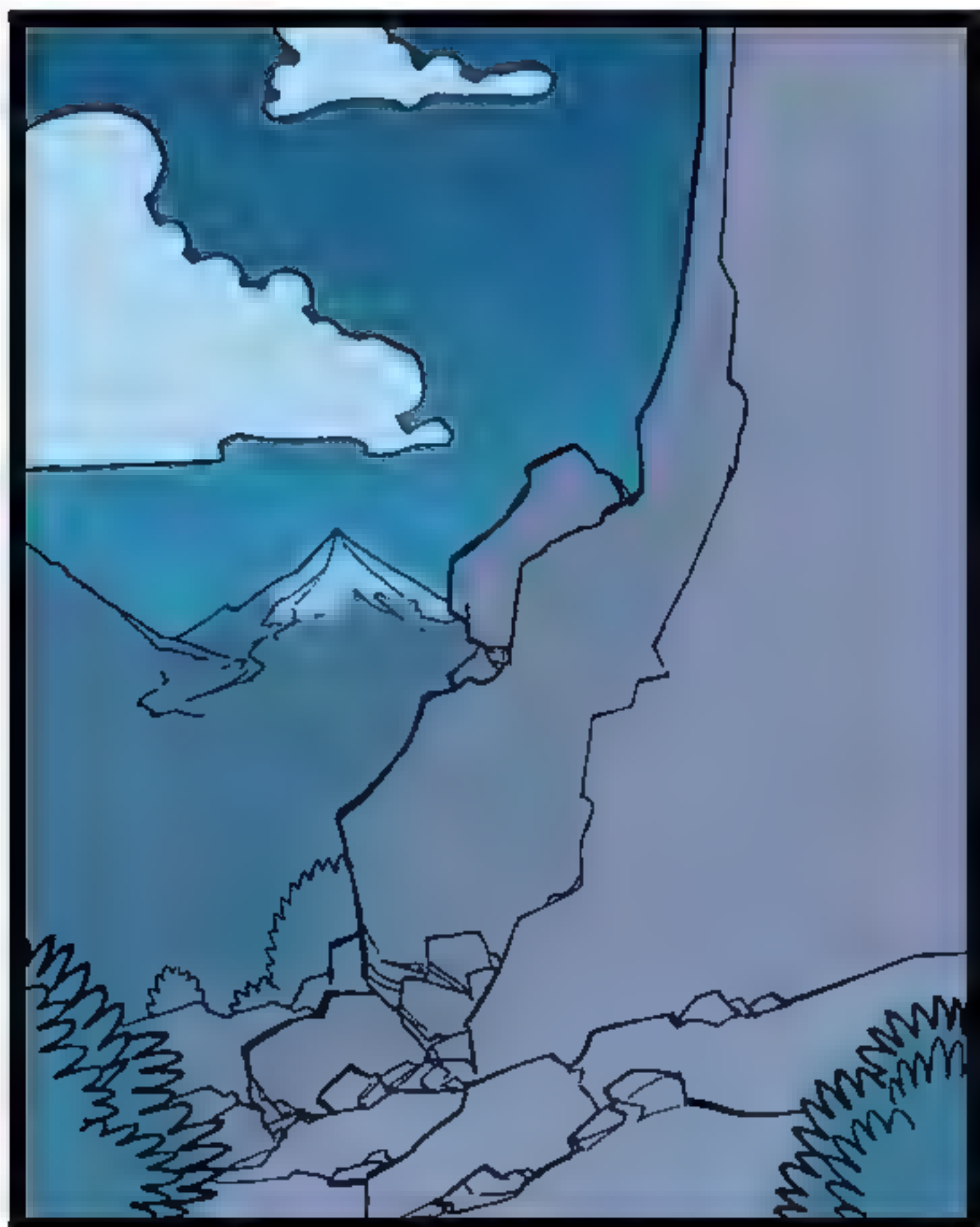
SURE.

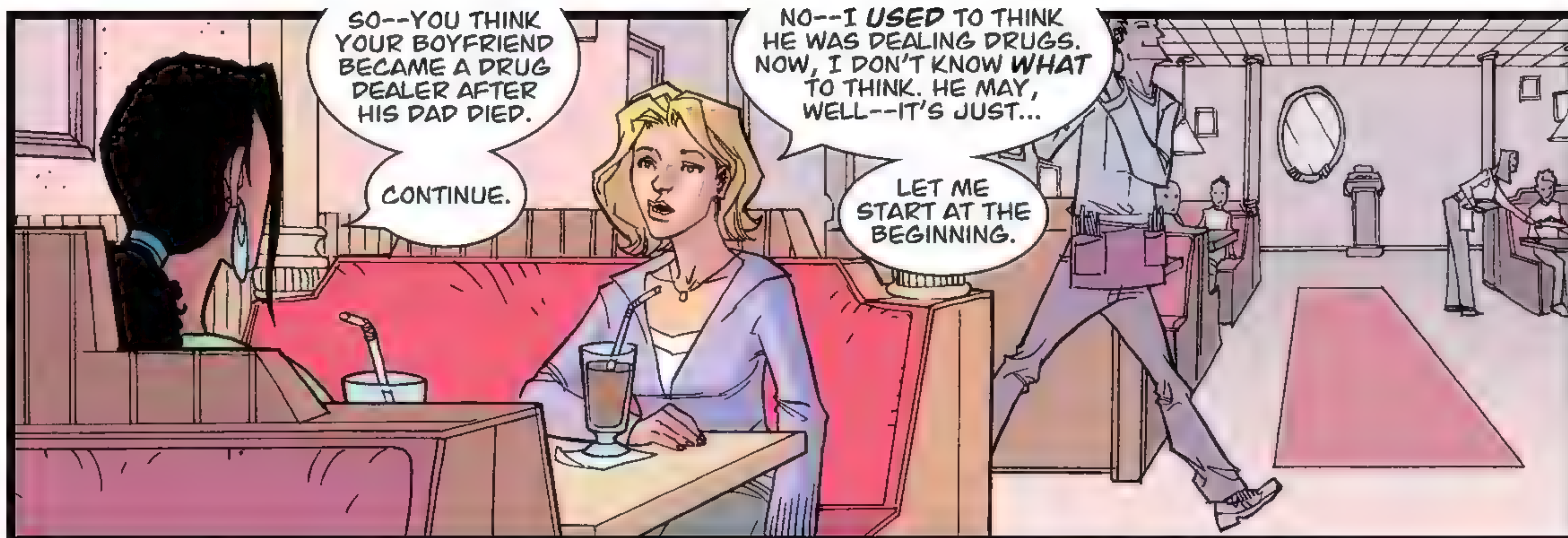


I DON'T CARE WHERE I WORK. I JUST--I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO. WITH MARK AWAY AT SCHOOL I'VE GOT NOTHING TO DO.

THE HOUSE IS EMPTY. I SWEAR IF I DIDN'T HAVE YOU AND CLAIRE TO TALK TO I'D GO CRAZY.







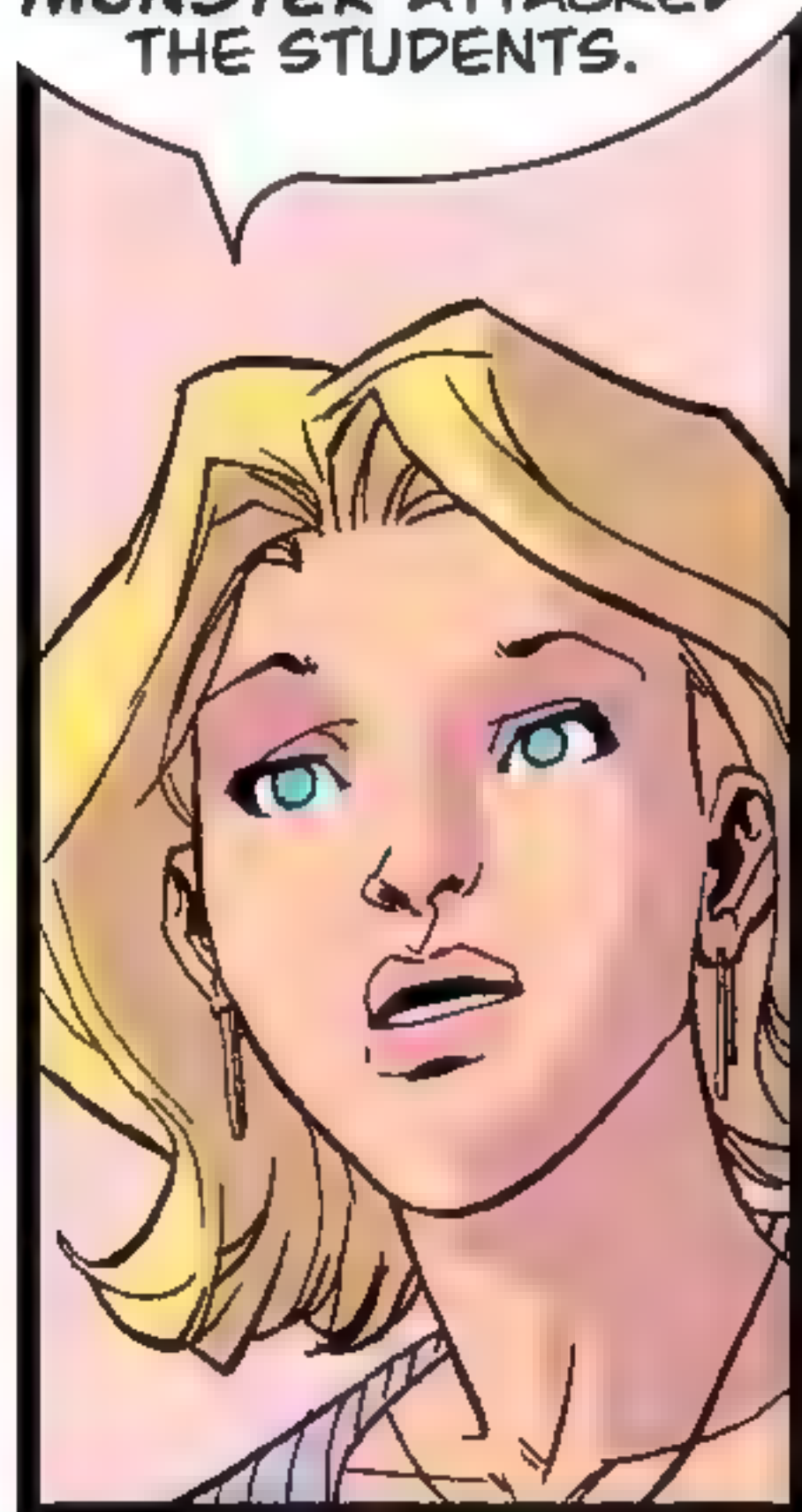
SO--YOU THINK YOUR BOYFRIEND BECAME A DRUG DEALER AFTER HIS DAD DIED.

CONTINUE.

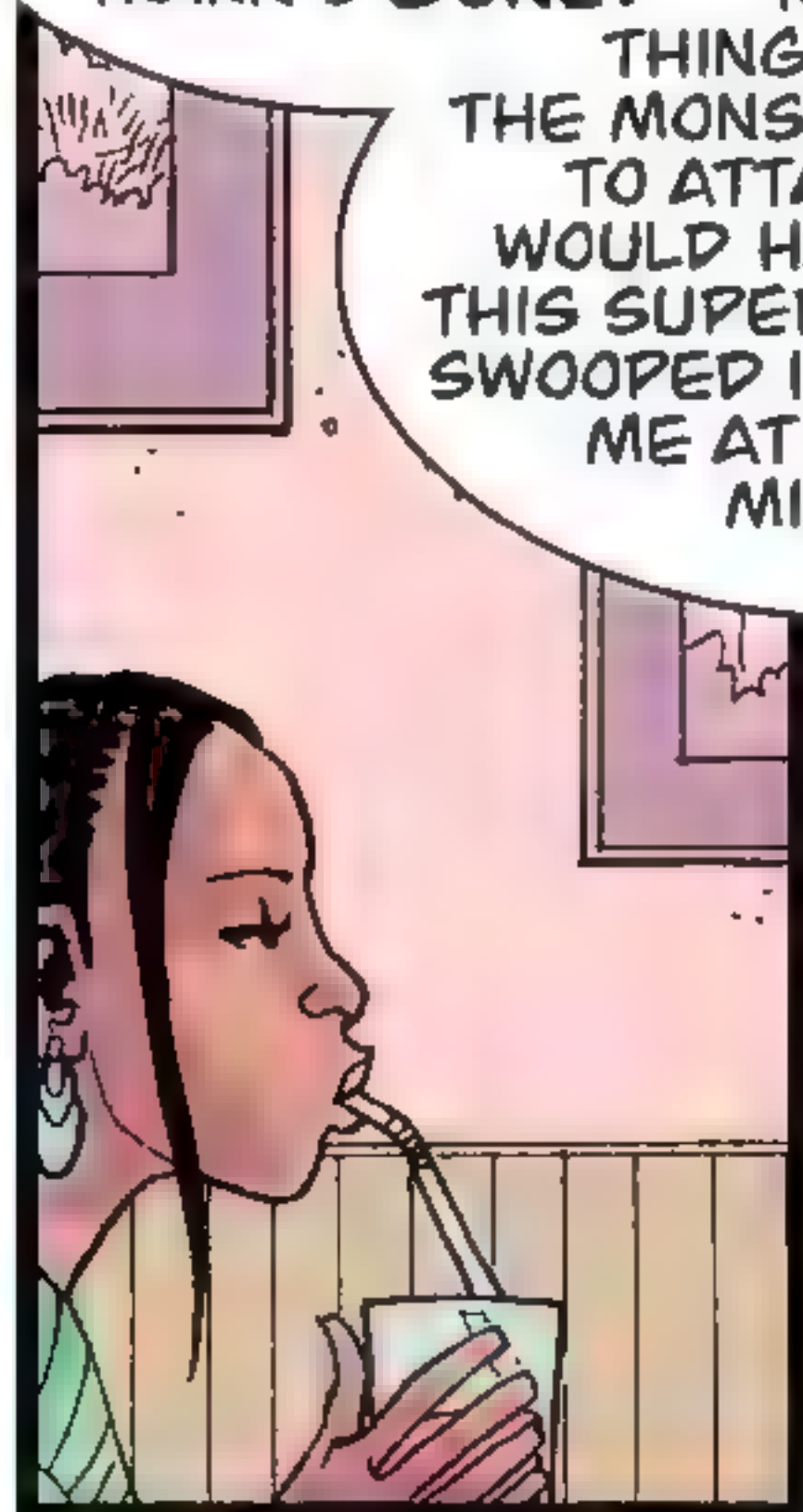
NO--I USED TO THINK HE WAS DEALING DRUGS. NOW, I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK. HE MAY, WELL--IT'S JUST...

LET ME START AT THE BEGINNING.

SEE, HIS SEMESTER STARTED BEFORE MINE. I VISITED HIM ON CAMPUS ON HIS FIRST DAY. THIS MONSTER ATTACKED THE STUDENTS.

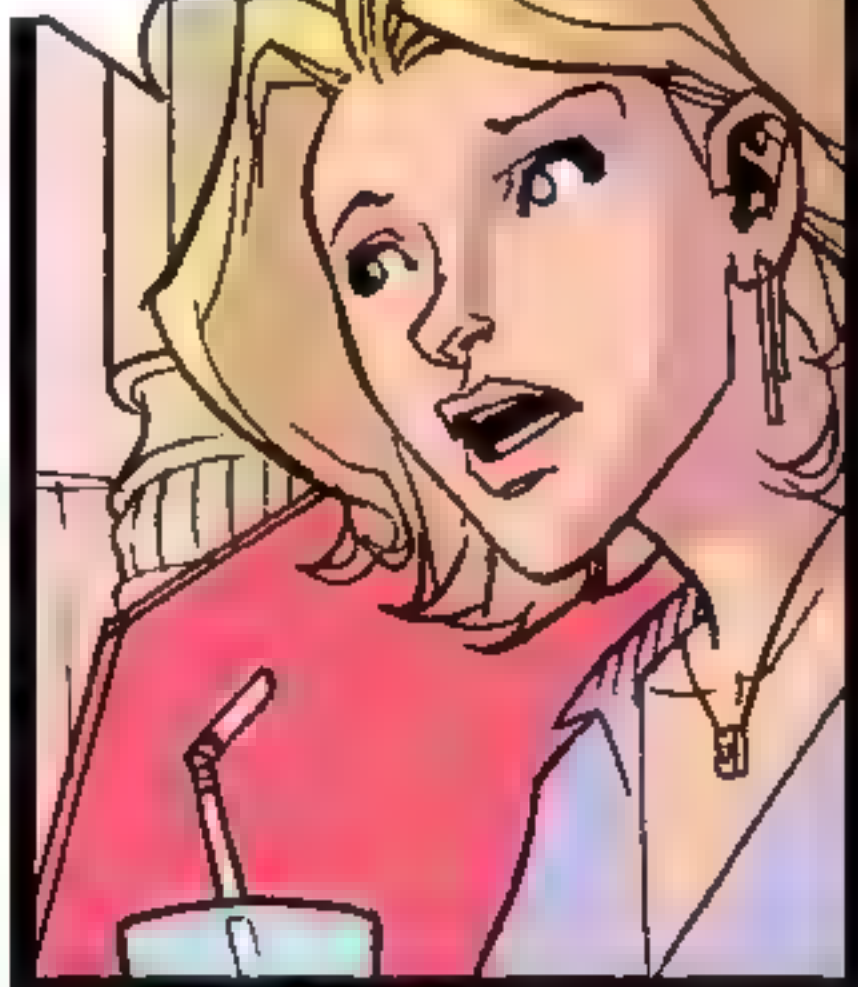


IT WAS TEARING THE PLACE UP, PEOPLE WERE RUNNING AROUND IN EVERY DIRECTION TRYING TO GET AWAY. THEN, I TURN AROUND--AND MARK'S GONE.

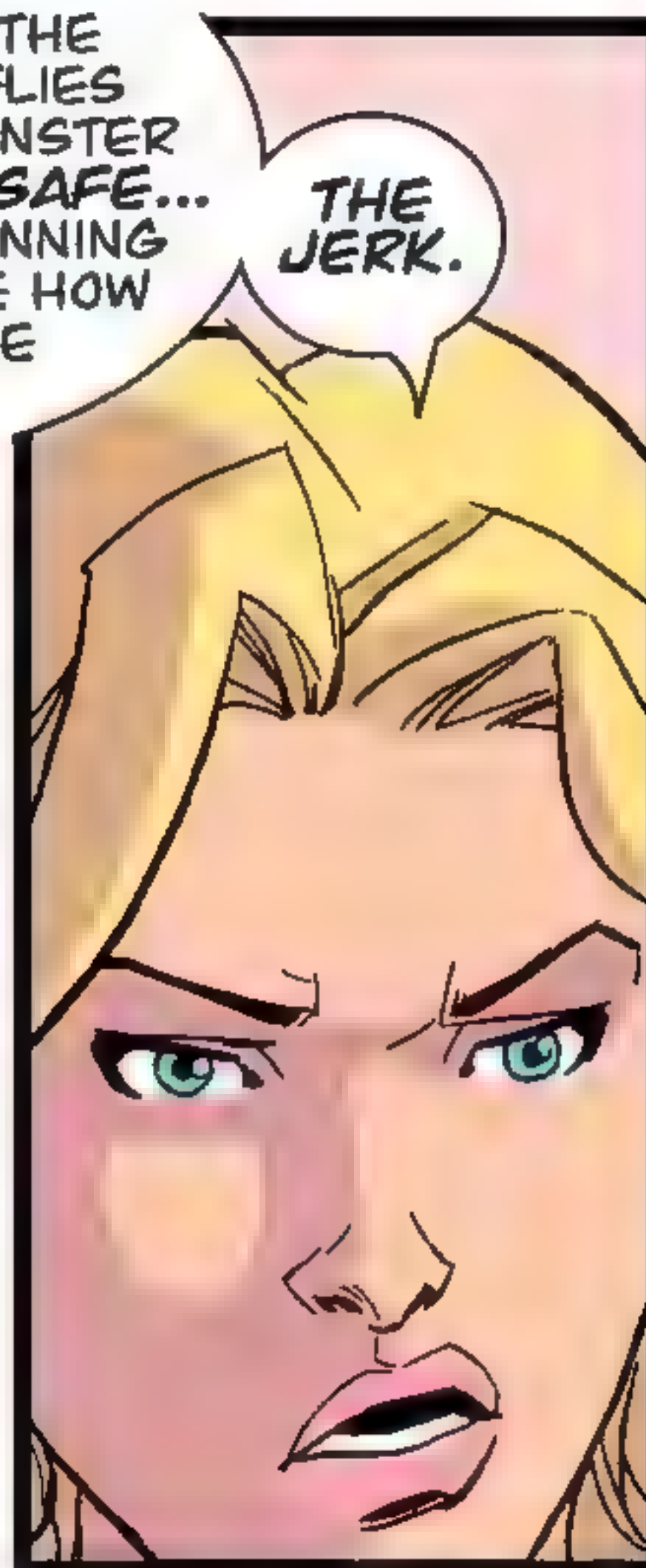


NEXT THING I KNOW, THE MONSTER IS ABOUT TO ATTACK ME. IT WOULD HAVE TOO, IF THIS SUPERHERO HADN'T SWOOPED IN AND SAVED ME AT THE LAST MINUTE.

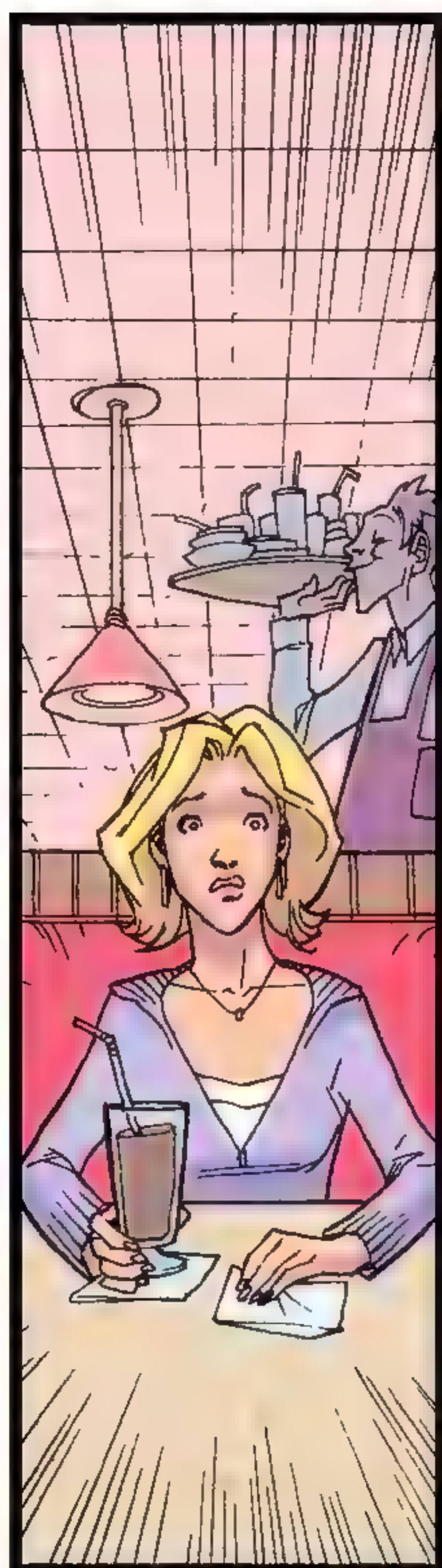
THEN--AFTER THE SUPERHERO FLIES OFF WITH THE MONSTER AND EVERYONE IS SAFE... MARK COMES RUNNING UP--TELLING ME HOW WORRIED HE WAS.



THE JERK.

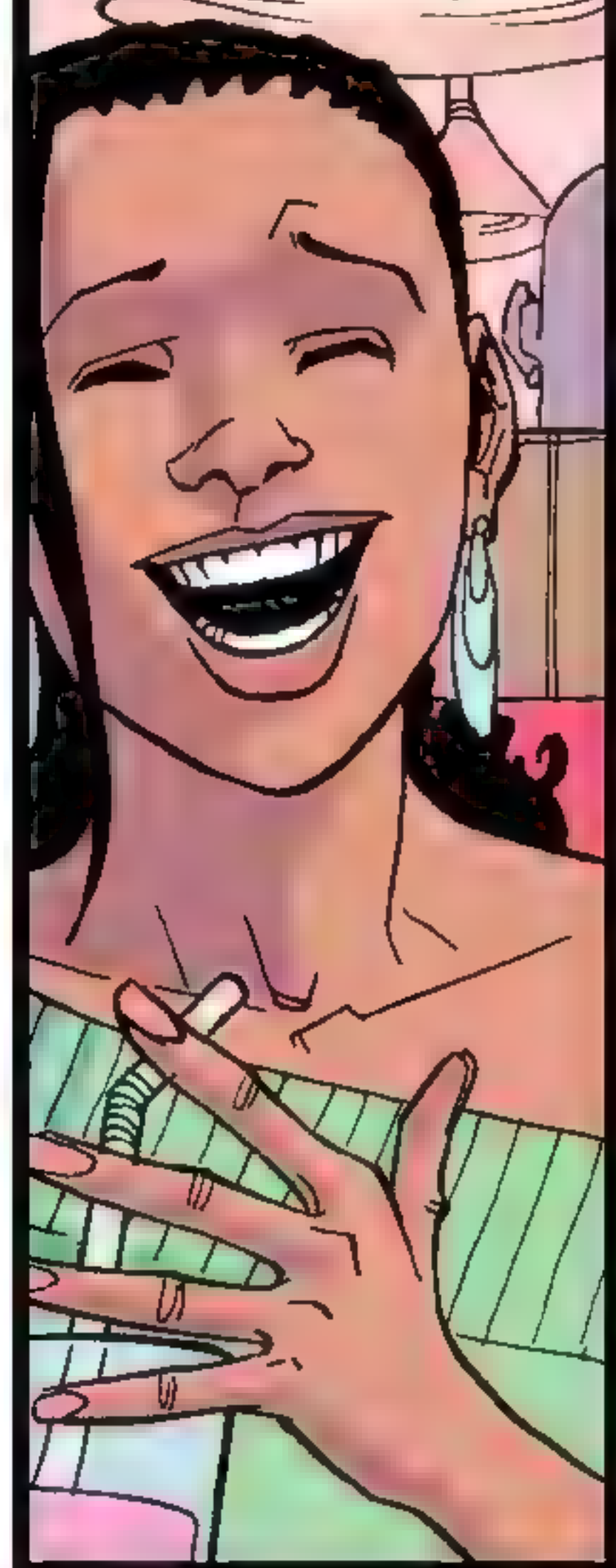


MAYBE HE'S THE SUPERHERO.

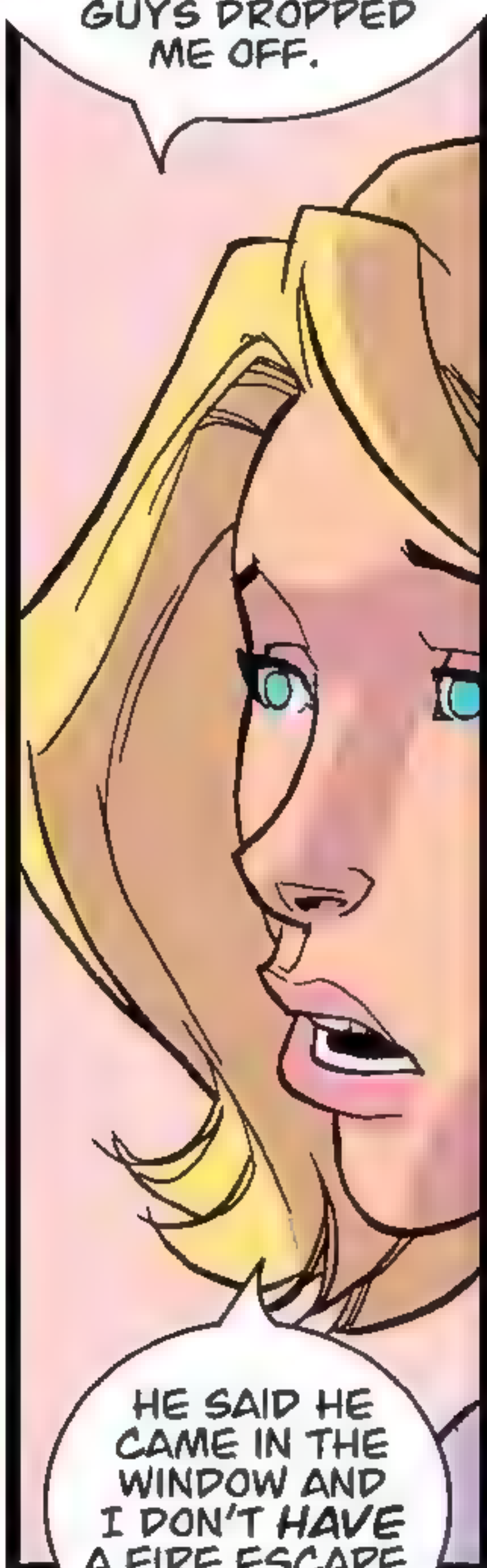


OKAY, YOU'RE RIGHT--IT'S STUPID. NEVER MIND.

CARRY ON.

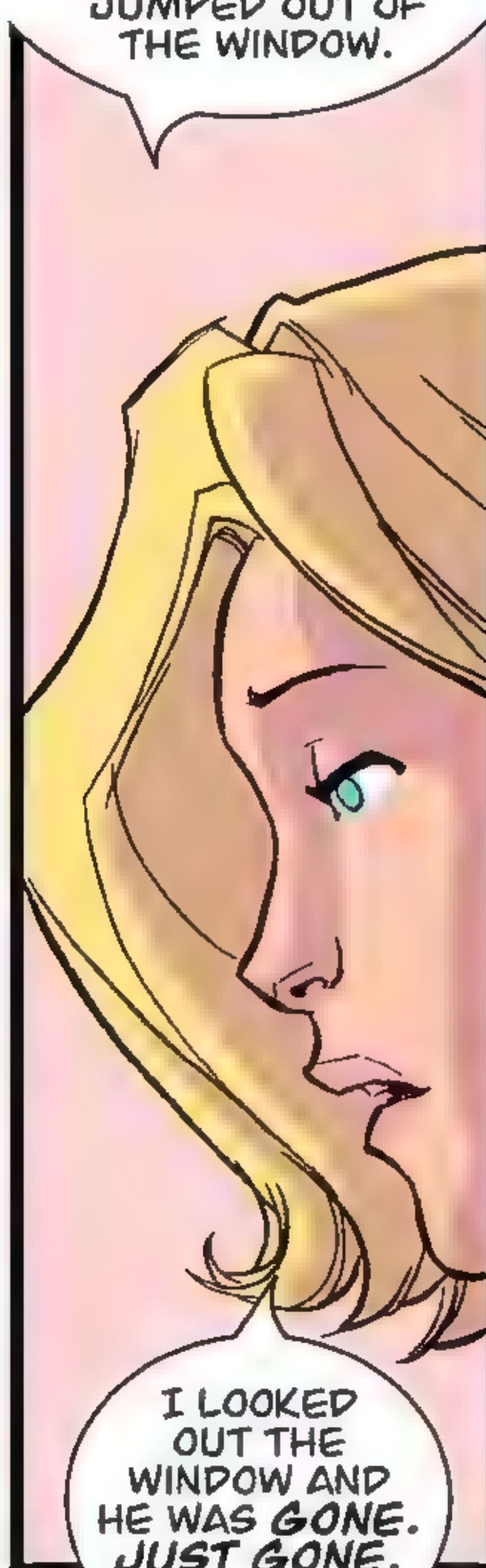


NO--THAT'S NOT STUPID. I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU BECAUSE HE SHOWED UP AT MY DORM ROOM TONIGHT AFTER YOU GUYS DROPPED ME OFF.



HE SAID HE CAME IN THE WINDOW AND I DON'T HAVE A FIRE ESCAPE.

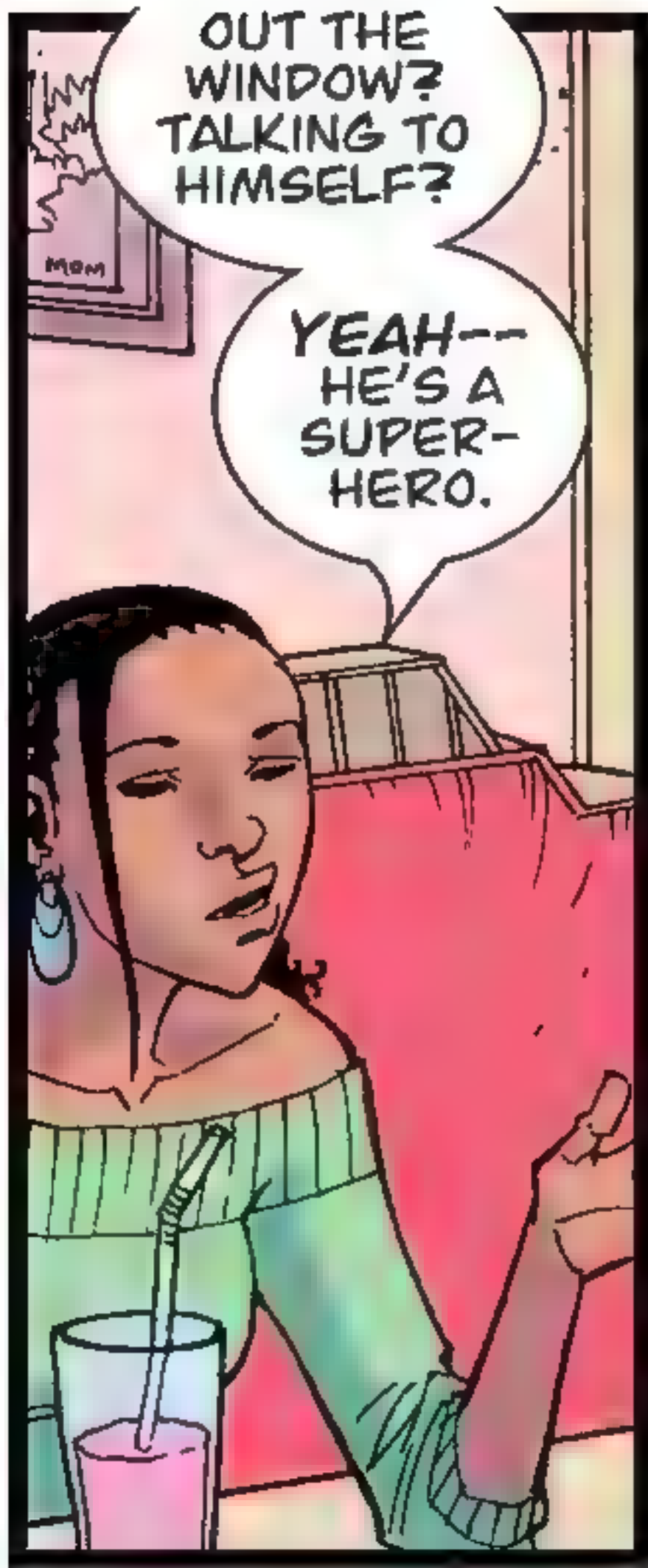
IN THE MIDDLE OF THE APOLOGY--HE STARTED TALKING TO HIMSELF--TOUCHED HIS EAR--AND THEN JUMPED OUT OF THE WINDOW.



I LOOKED OUT THE WINDOW AND HE WAS GONE. JUST GONE.

I THOUGHT HE WAS AN ALIEN.





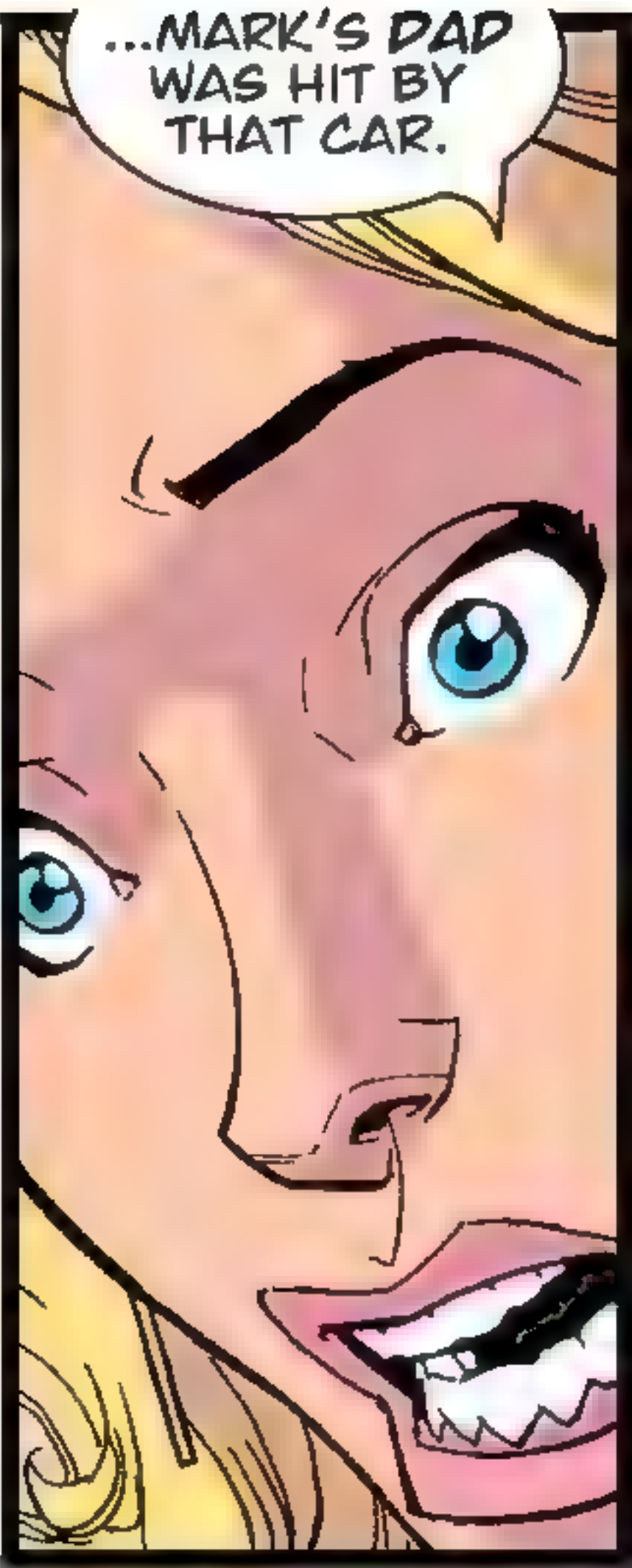
OUT THE WINDOW?
TALKING TO HIMSELF?

YEAH--
HE'S A SUPER-
HERO.

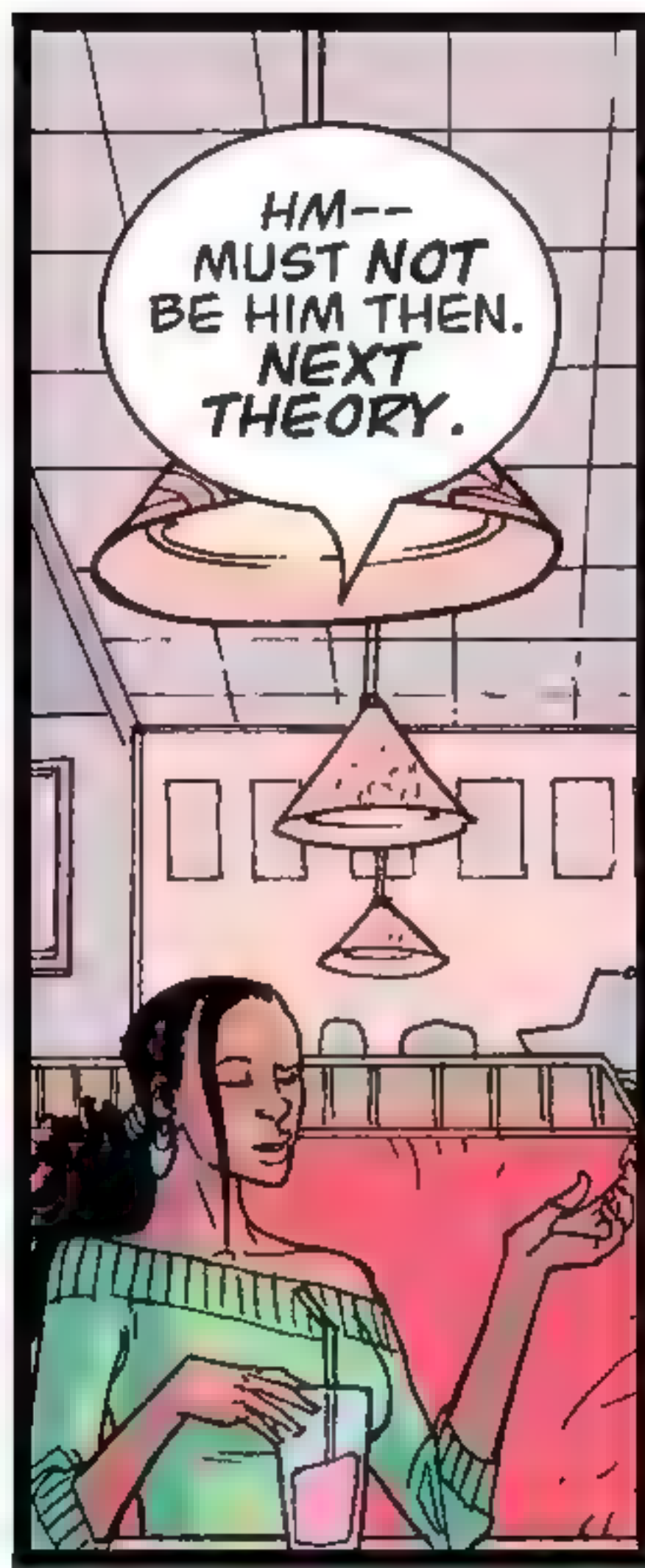


NO--HE CAN'T BE.
THE ONE THAT SAVED
ME WAS THAT KID--
INVINCIBLE.
THE NEW ONE. HE HAD
THAT BIG FIGHT WITH
HIS EVIL SUPERHERO
DAD. REMEMBER?
IT WAS ON THE NEWS.

IT
HAPPENED
RIGHT AROUND
THE TIME THAT--



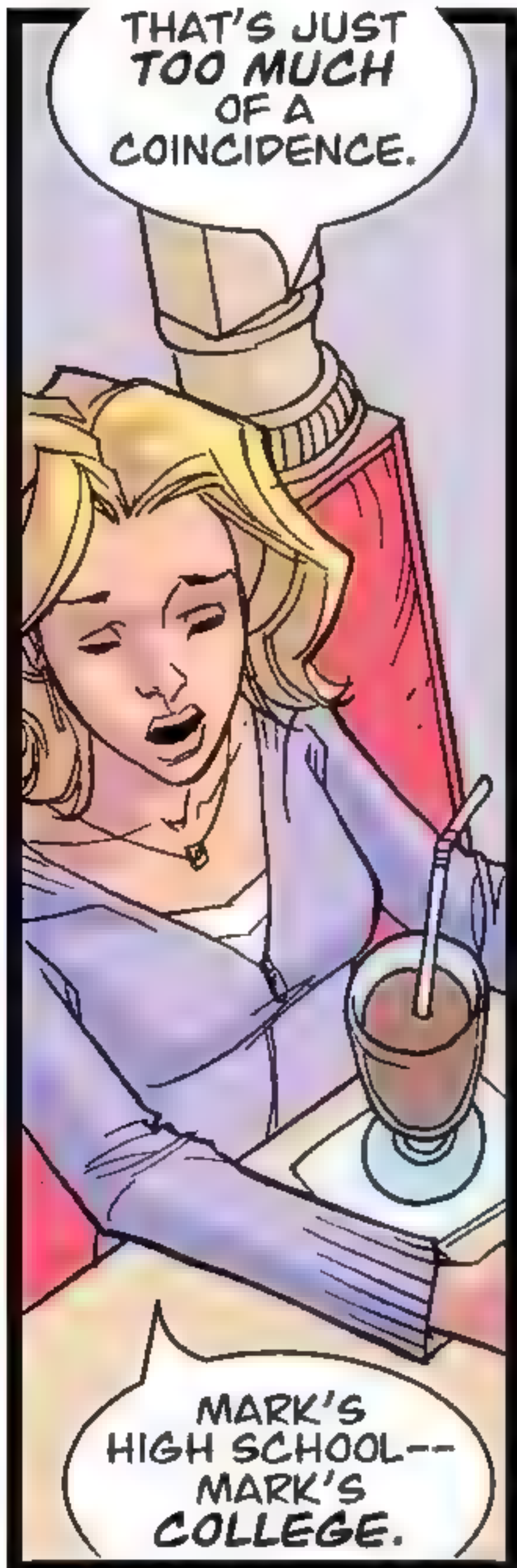
...MARK'S DAD
WAS HIT BY
THAT CAR.



HM--
MUST NOT
BE HIM THEN.
**NEXT
THEORY.**



NO, LISTEN... I
THINK INVINCIBLE
WAS THE SUPER-
HERO WHO CAUGHT
OUR **PHYSICS**
TEACHER WHEN
HE WAS TURNING
OUR CLASSMATES
INTO HUMAN
BOMBS.

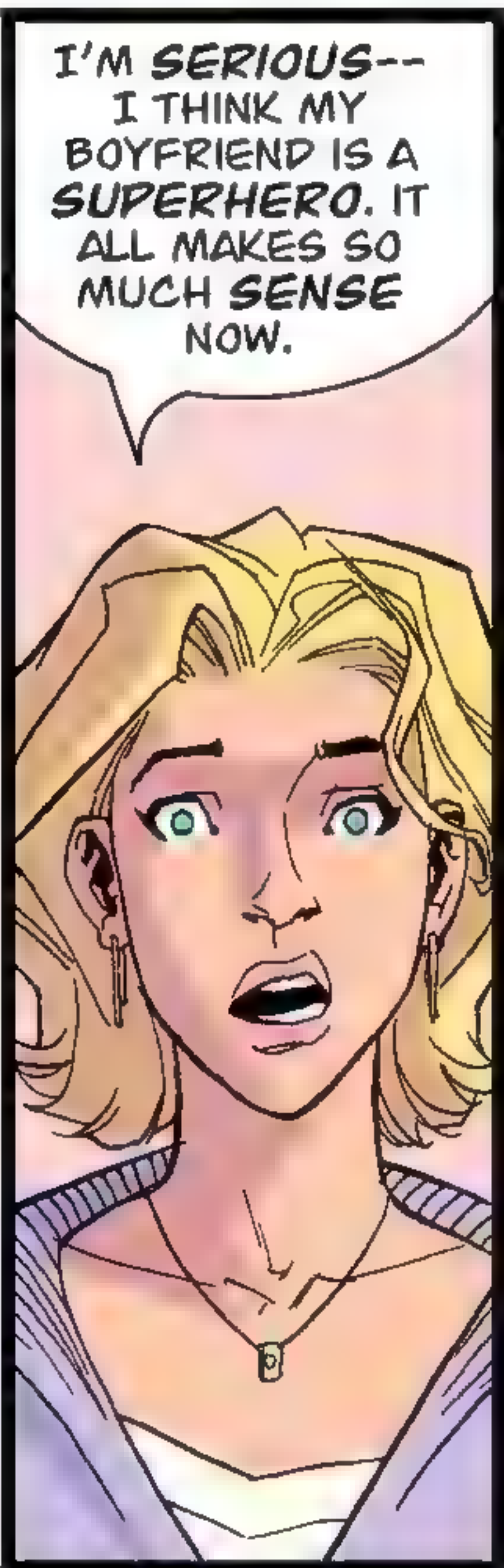


THAT'S JUST
TOO MUCH
OF A
COINCIDENCE.

MARK'S
HIGH SCHOOL--
MARK'S
COLLEGE.



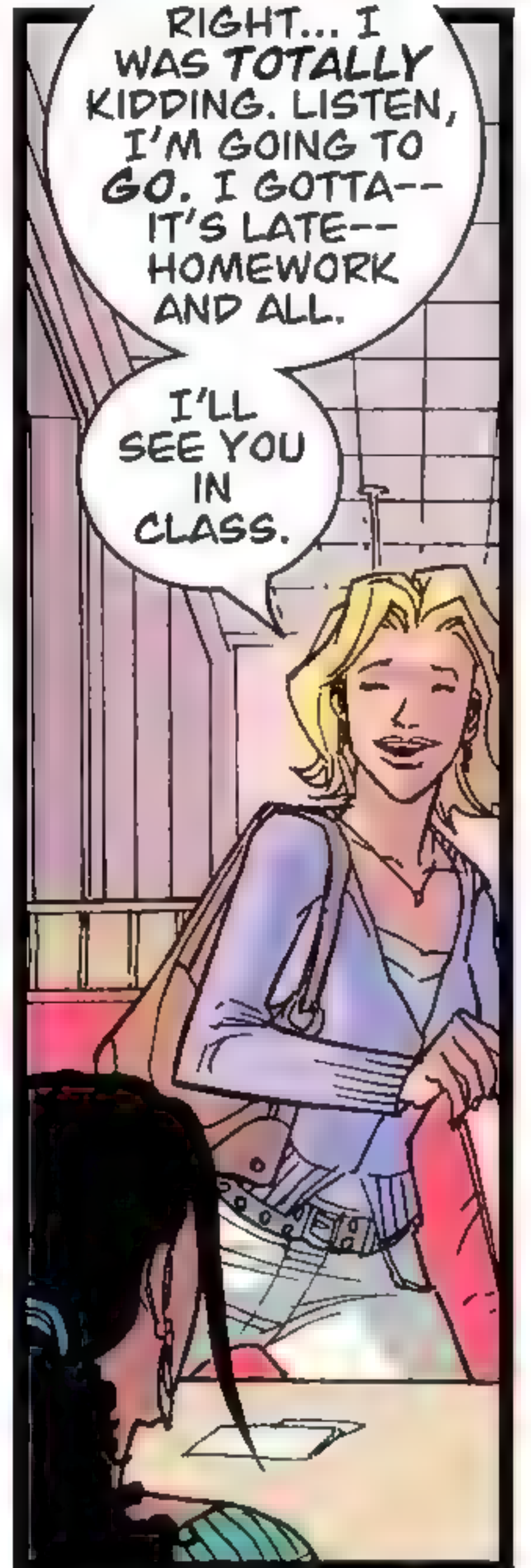
PHYSICS TEACHER,
HUH? MY MIDDLE
SCHOOL GYM
TEACHER WAS THE
KINETIC KILLER--
HE WAS PRETTY
SMALL TIME
THOUGH.



I'M **SERIOUS--**
I THINK MY
BOYFRIEND IS A
SUPERHERO. IT
ALL MAKES SO
MUCH **SENSE**
NOW.



YOU'RE **KIDDING,**
RIGHT? NO WAY
YOUR BOYFRIEND'S A
SUPERHERO.
YOU'RE NOT THAT
LUCKY. I WAS
JOKING--I
THOUGHT YOU
WERE TOO.

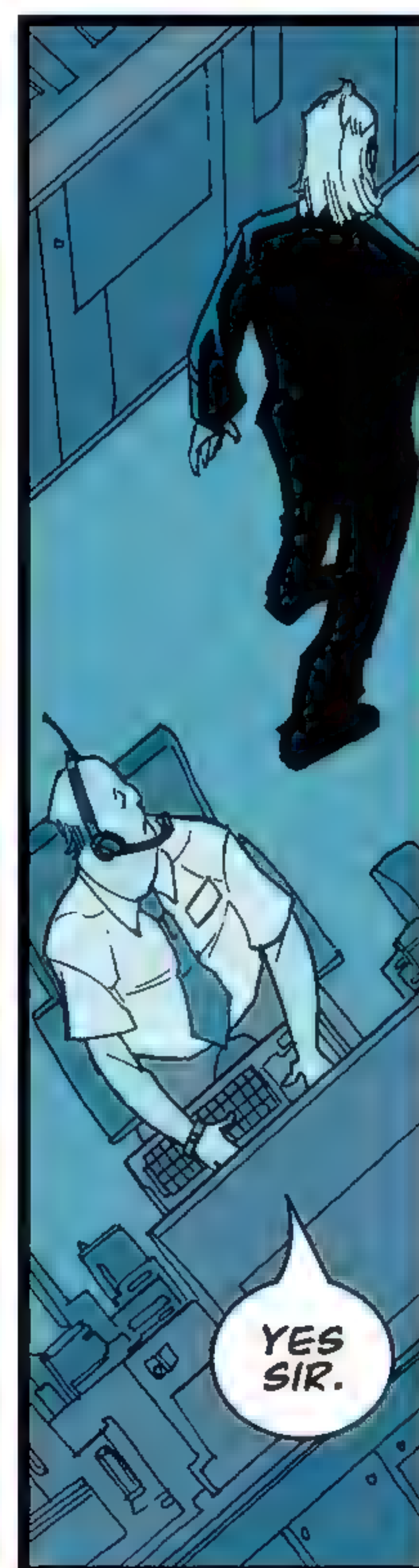
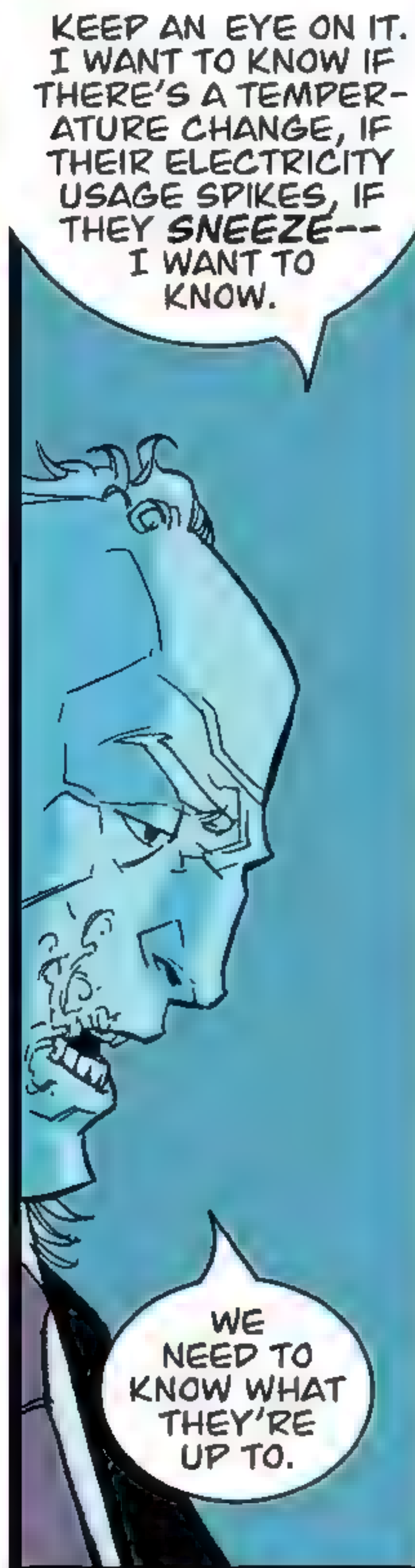
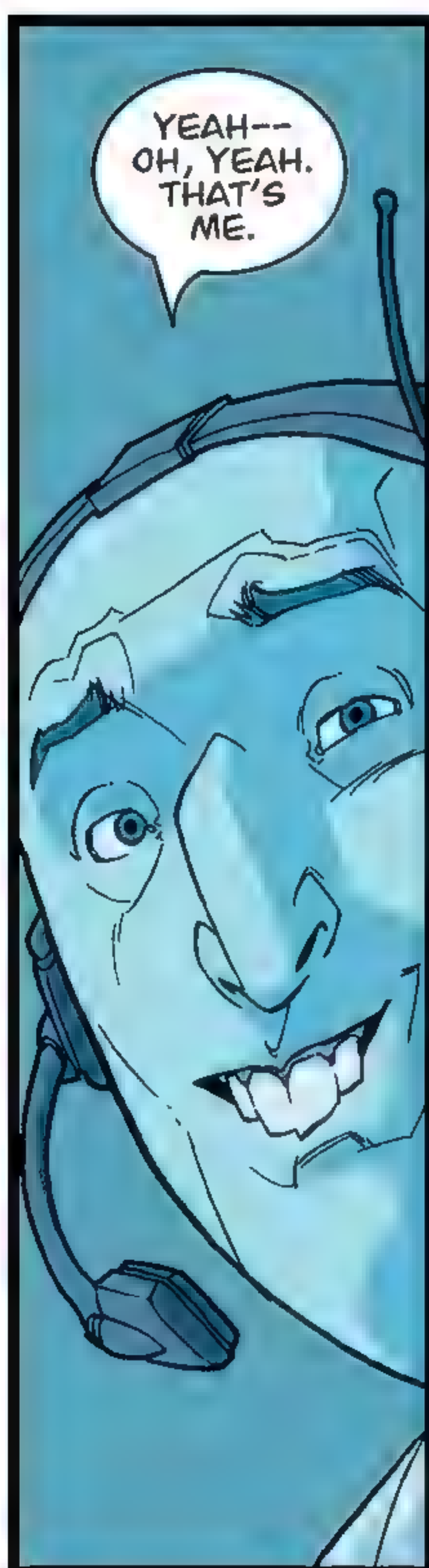
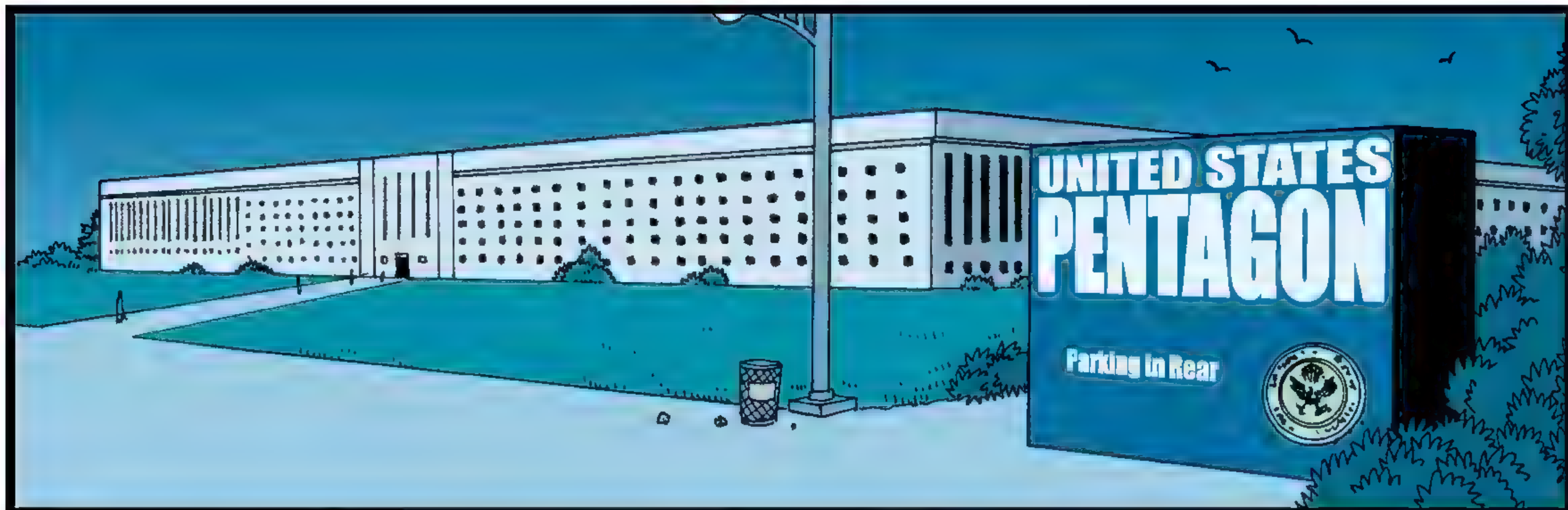


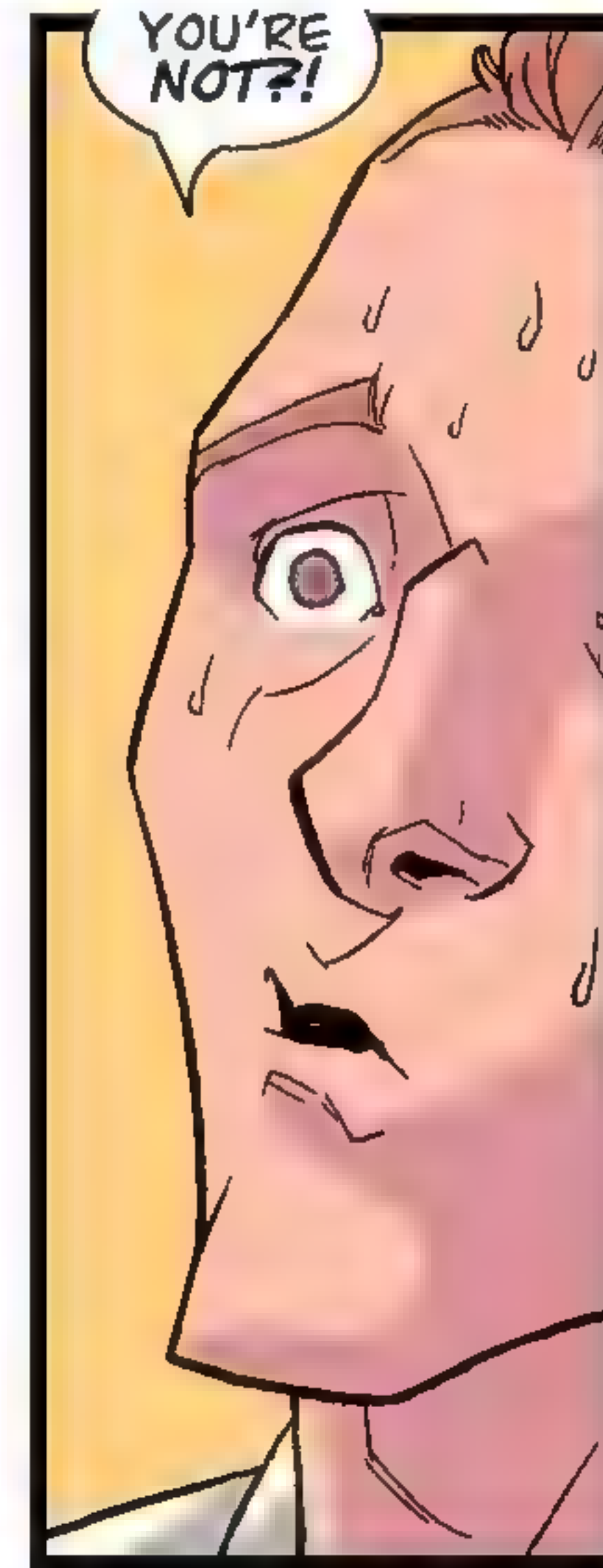
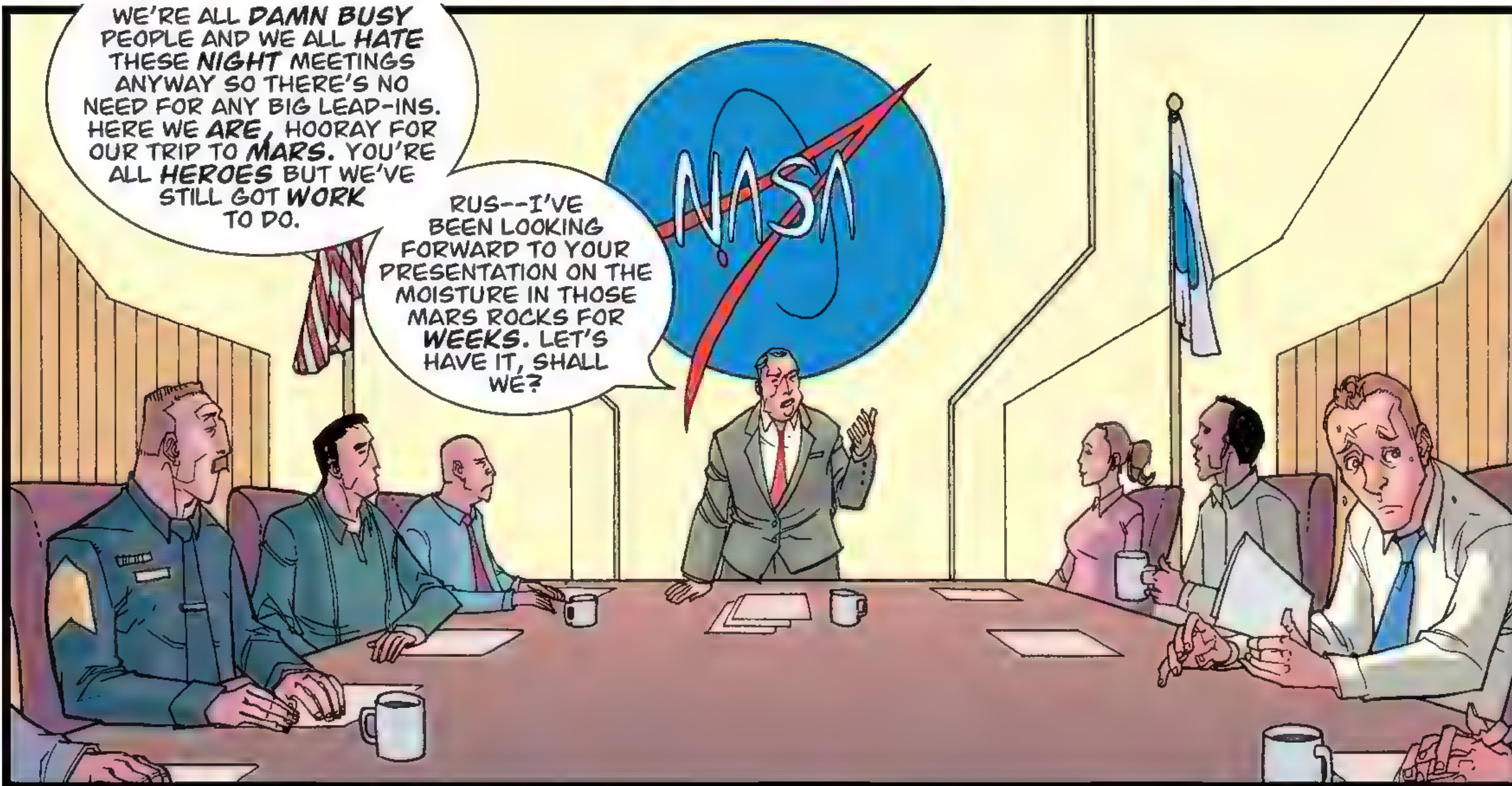
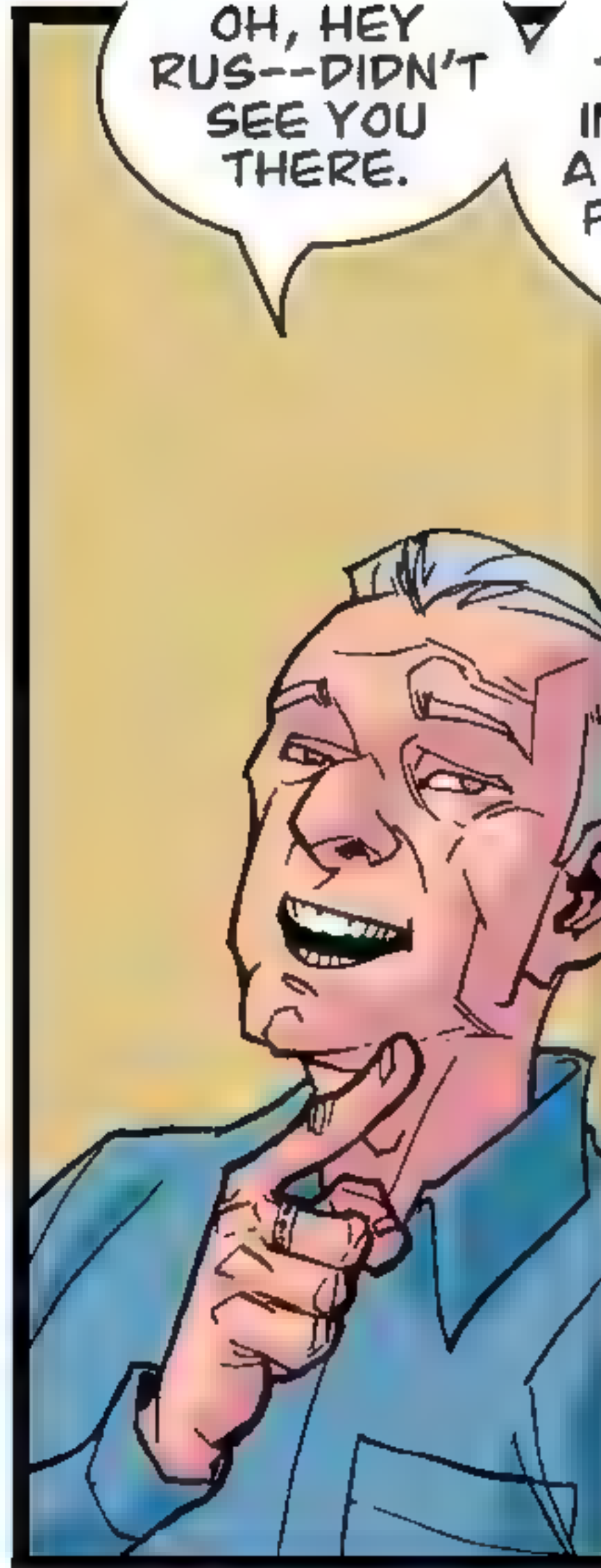
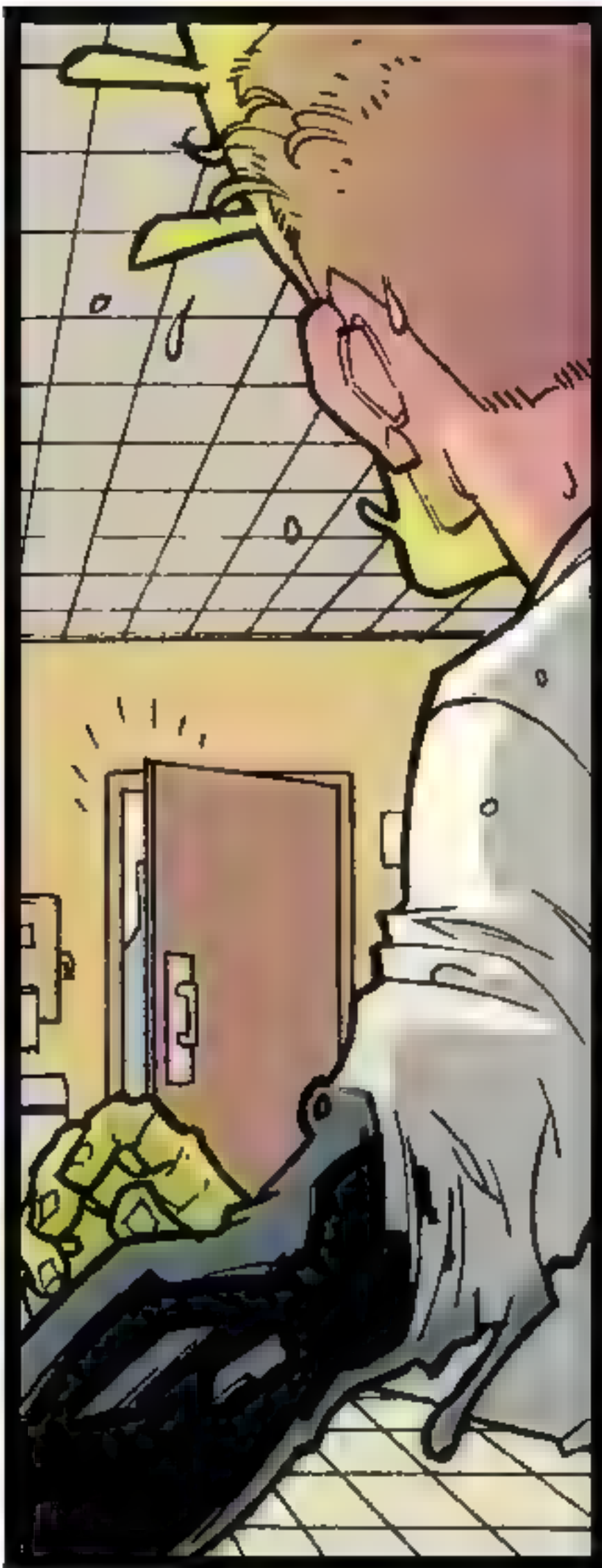
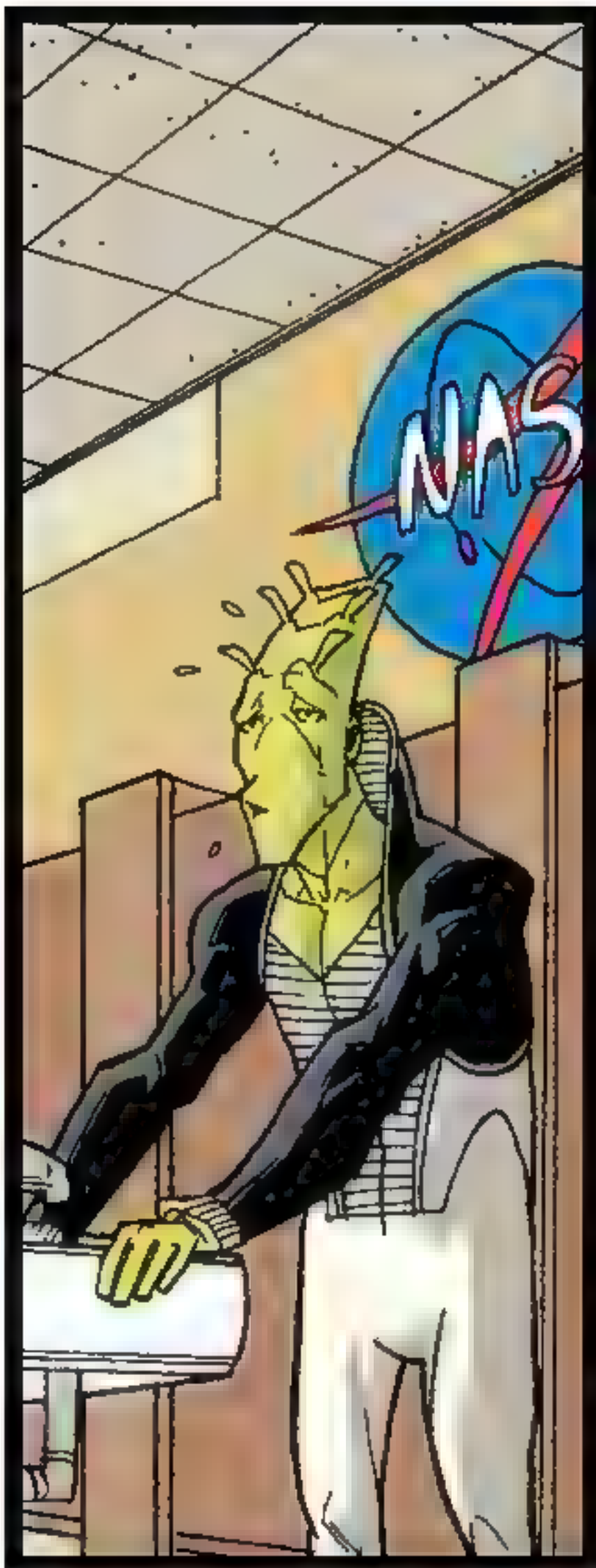
RIGHT... I
WAS **TOTALLY**
KIDDING. LISTEN,
I'M GOING TO
GO. I GOTTA--
IT'S LATE--
HOMESCHOOL
AND ALL.

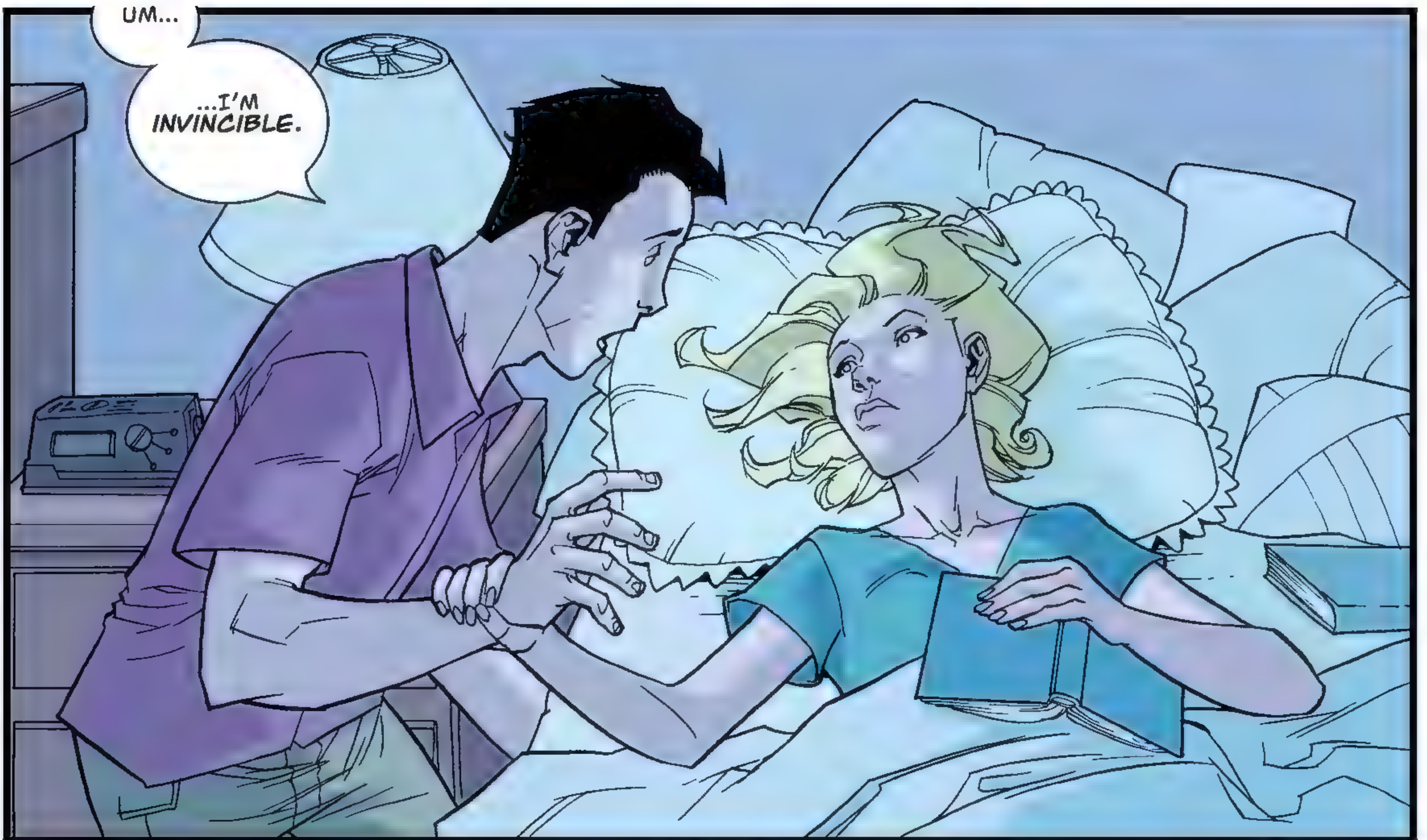
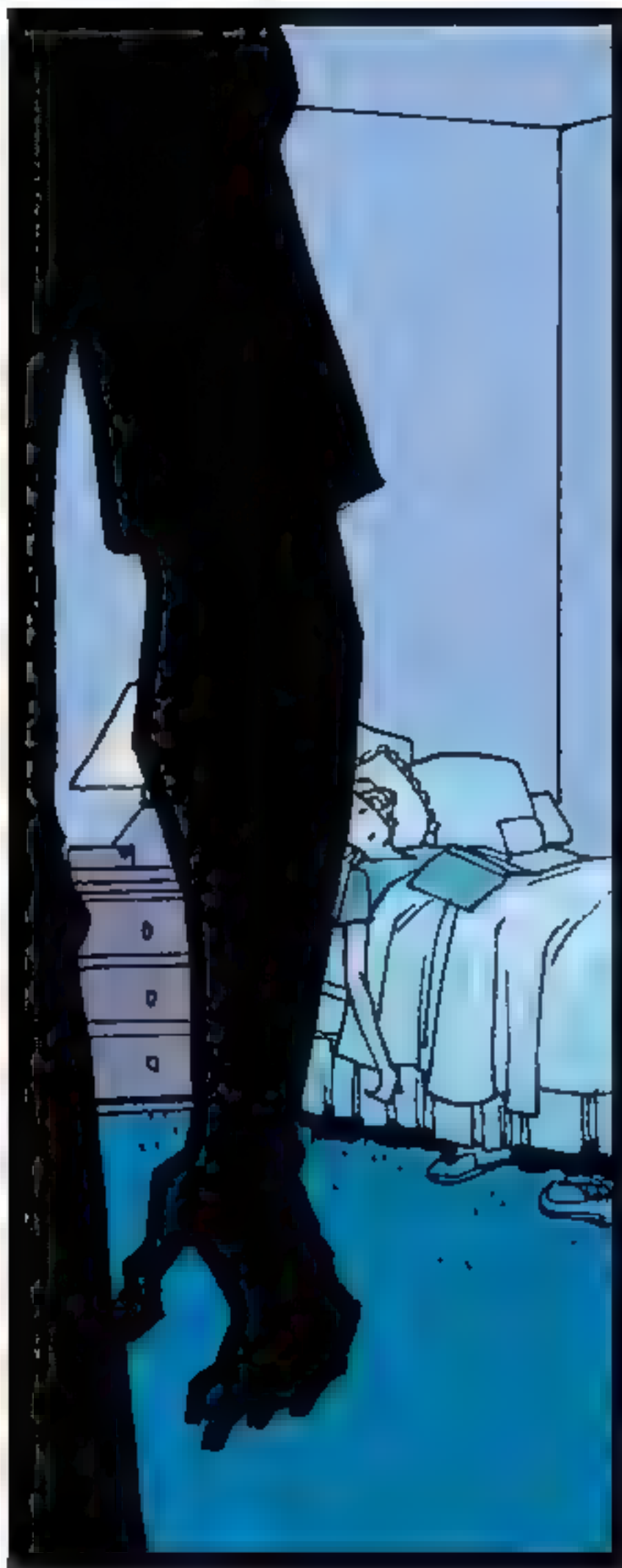
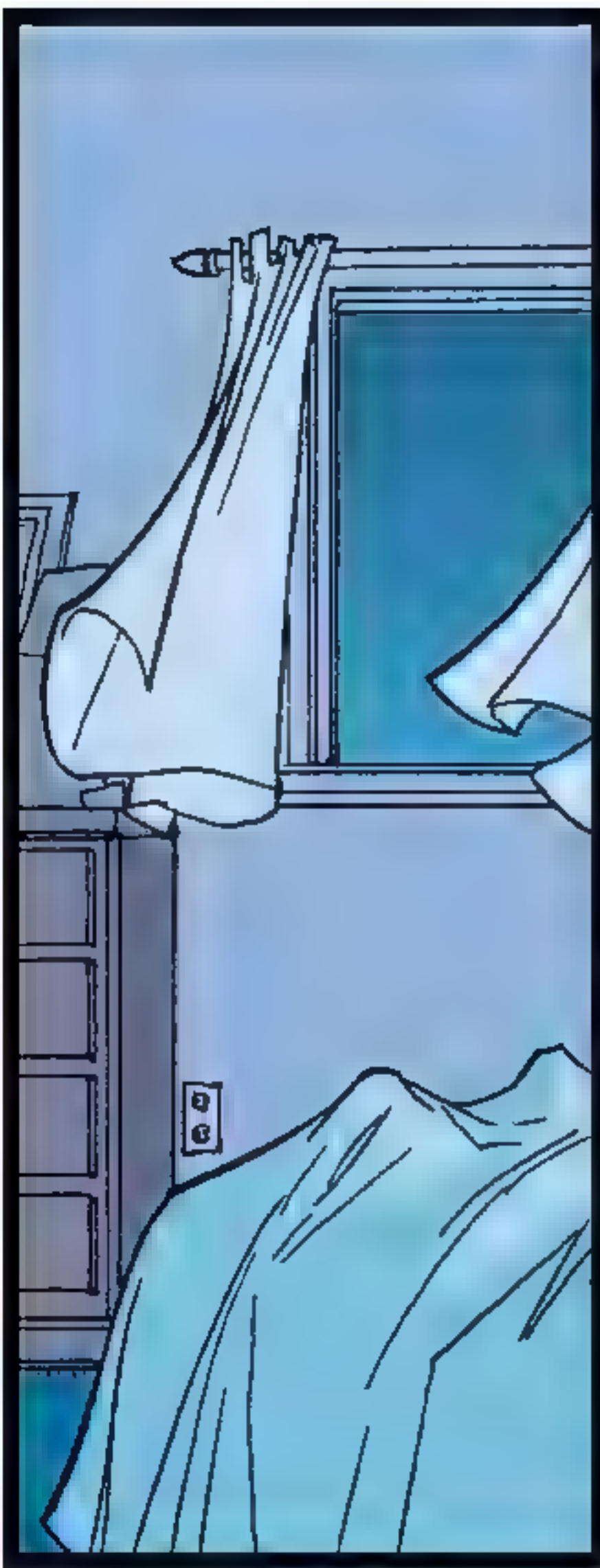
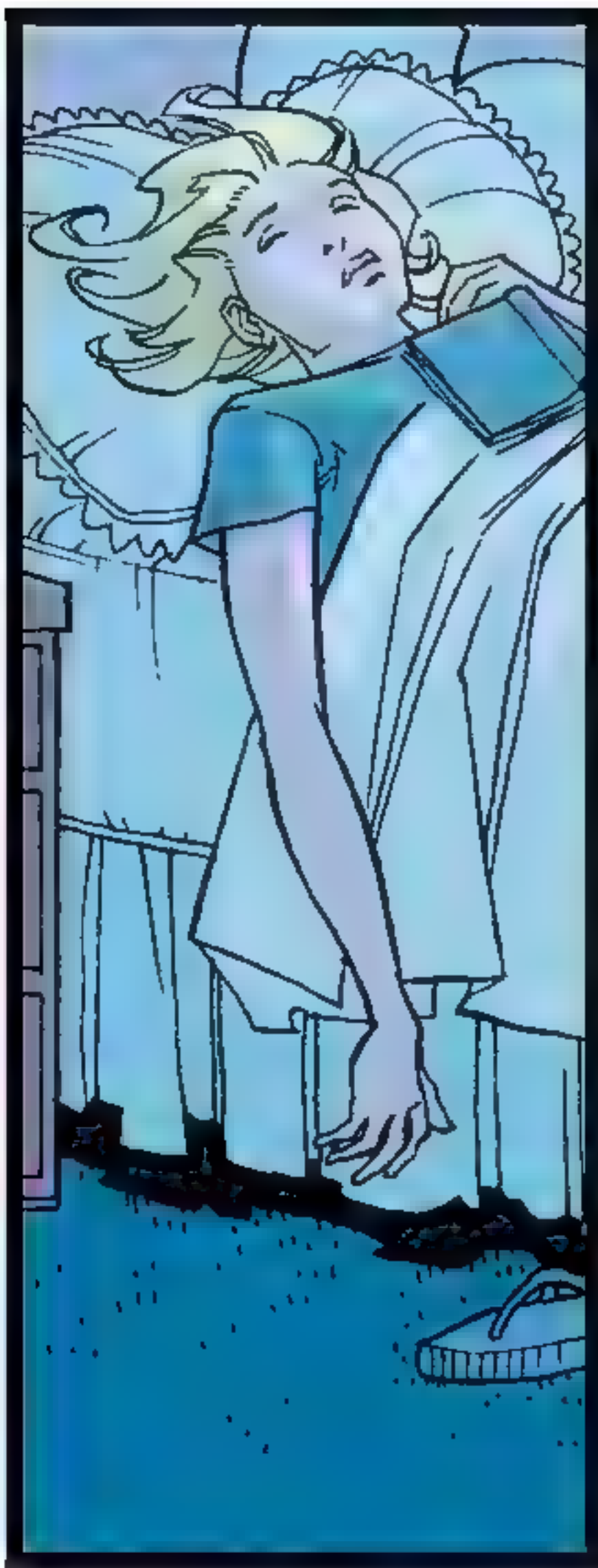
I'LL
SEE YOU
IN
CLASS.



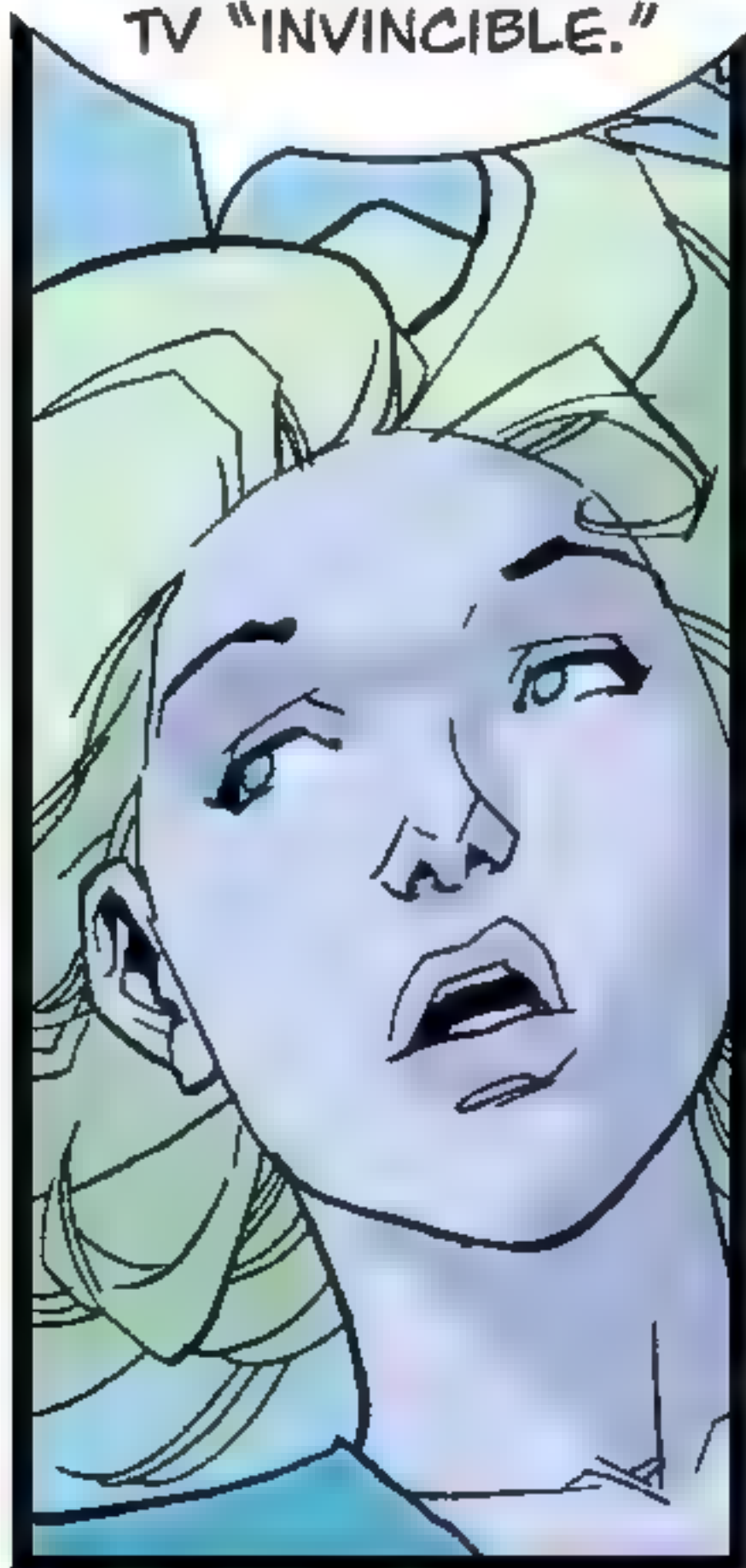
'KAY.
LATER.



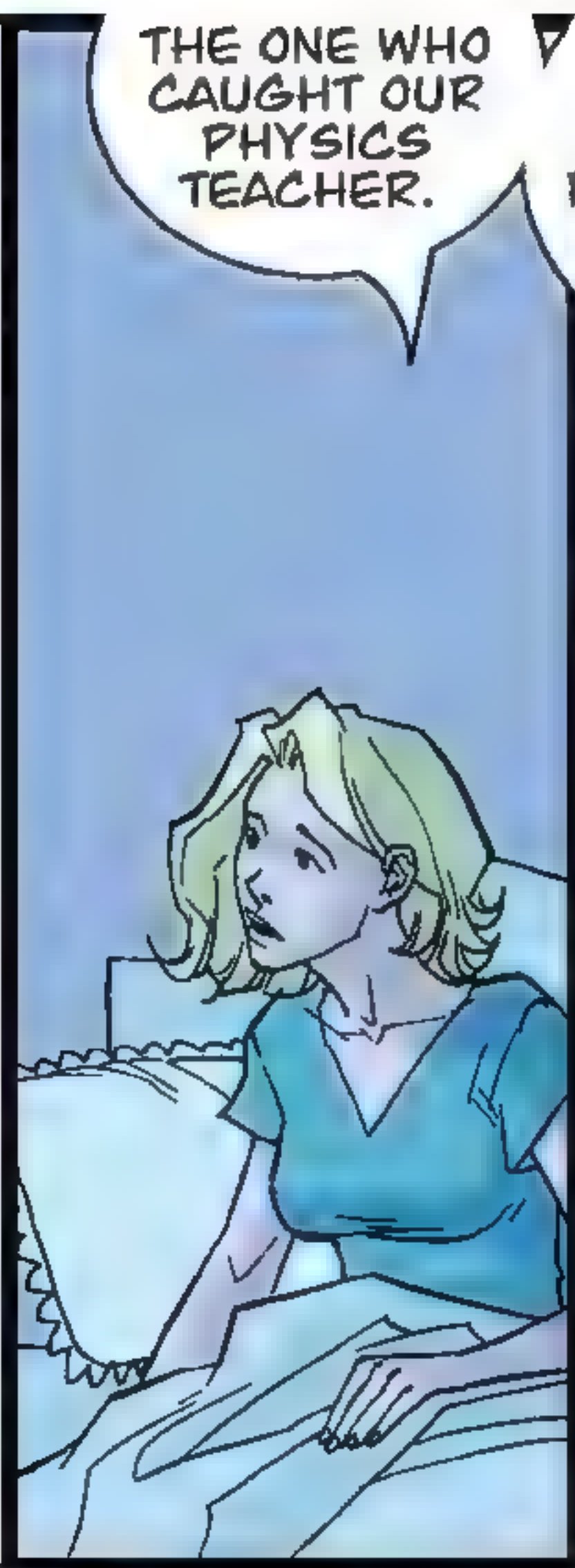




DON'T BE CUTE. I'M NOT MEANING, I-CAN'T-BE-HURT "INVINCIBLE." I MEAN I'M-THE-BLUE-AND-YELLOW-GUY-FROM-TV "INVINCIBLE."



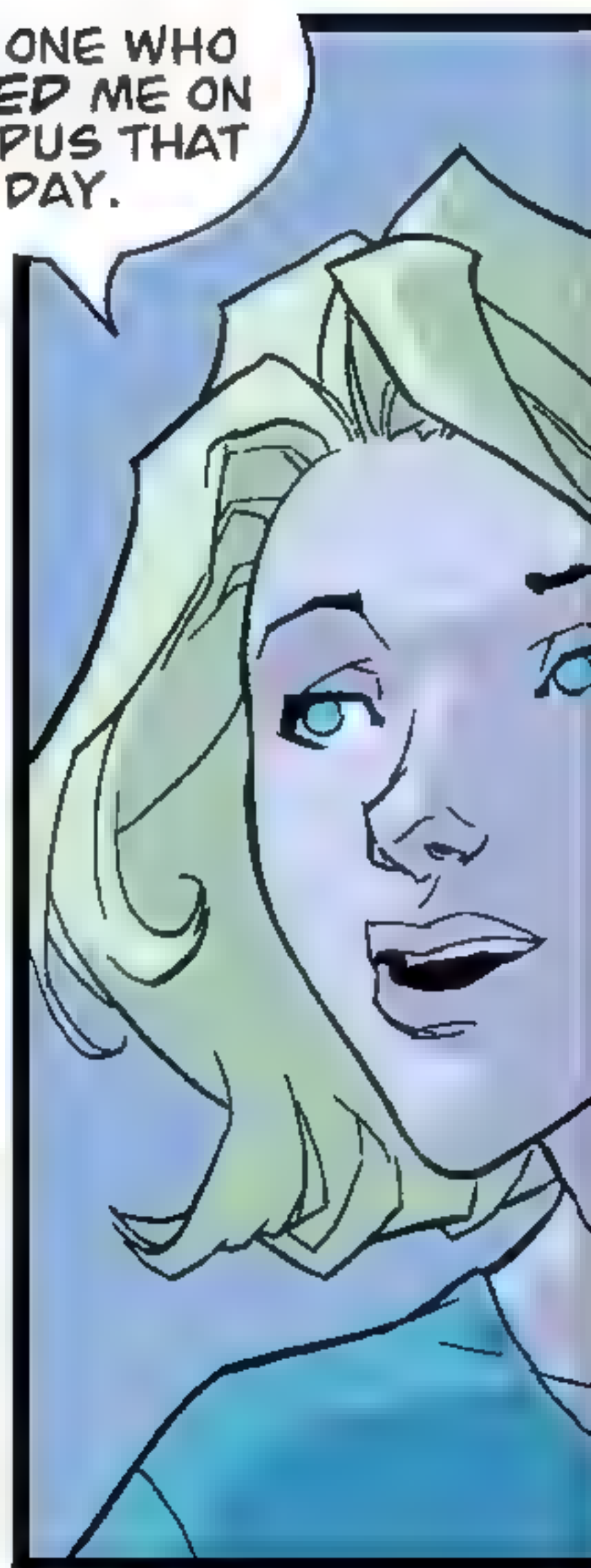
THE ONE WHO CAUGHT OUR PHYSICS TEACHER.



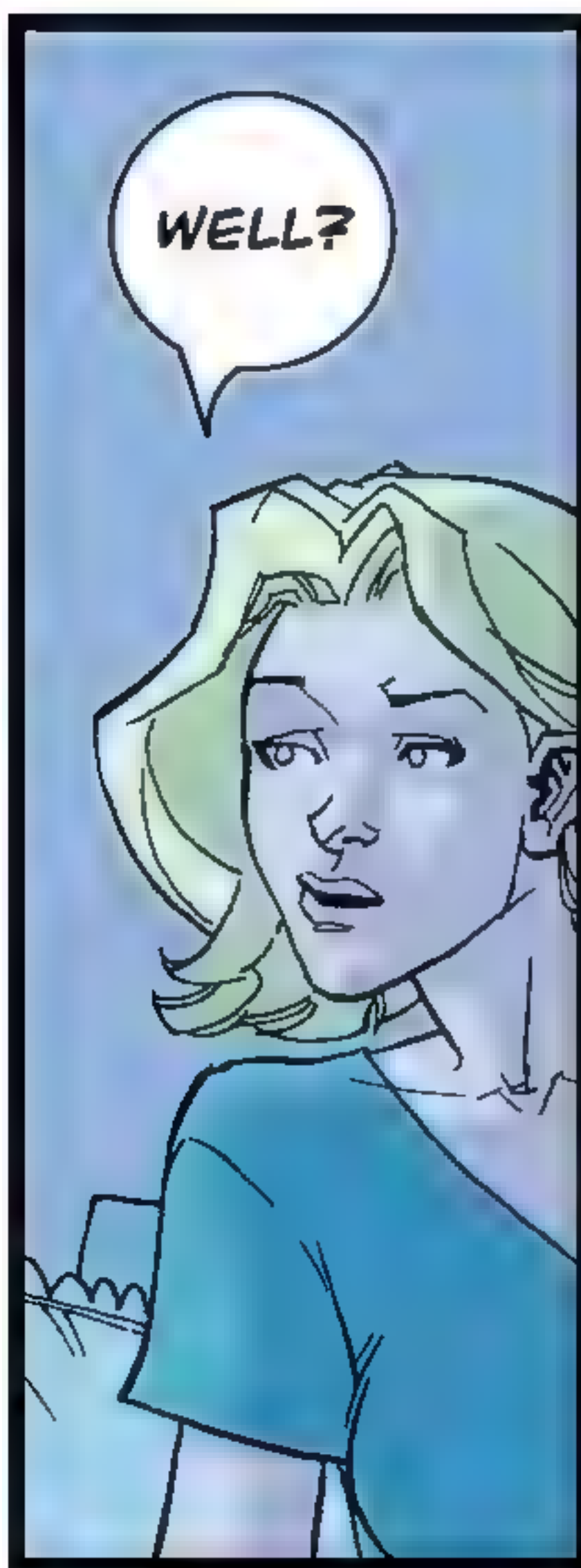
THE ONE WHOSE DAD KILLED ALL THOSE PEOPLE AND DISAPPEARED WHILE YOUR DAD DIED IN A CAR CRASH.



THE ONE WHO SAVED ME ON CAMPUS THAT DAY.



WELL?



OKAY. I'M HIM. I'M THE GUY. GOOFY GOGGLES, BIG COOL LOOKING "I" ON HIS CHEST. THAT'S ME.

I'M INVINCIBLE.

THE SUPERHERO.



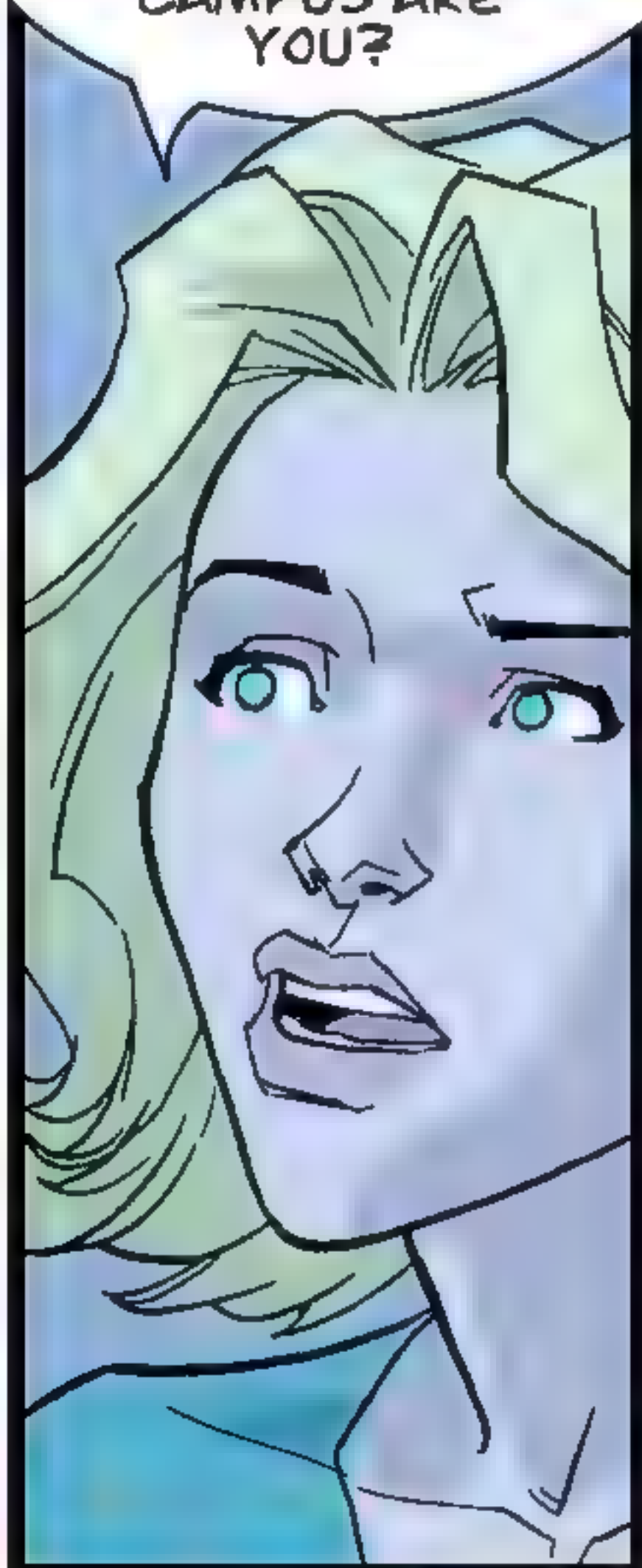
SO YOU'RE NOT A DRUG DEALER.



WHAT? NO!



YOU'RE NOT SAYING THIS TO GET OFF THE HOOK FOR ABANDONING ME ON CAMPUS ARE YOU?



NO. I'M HIM, I SWEAR. THAT'S WHAT I WAS GOING TO TELL YOU EARLIER TONIGHT.



PROVE IT.

OKAY, ONE SECOND.



SEE? I'M INVINCIBLE.

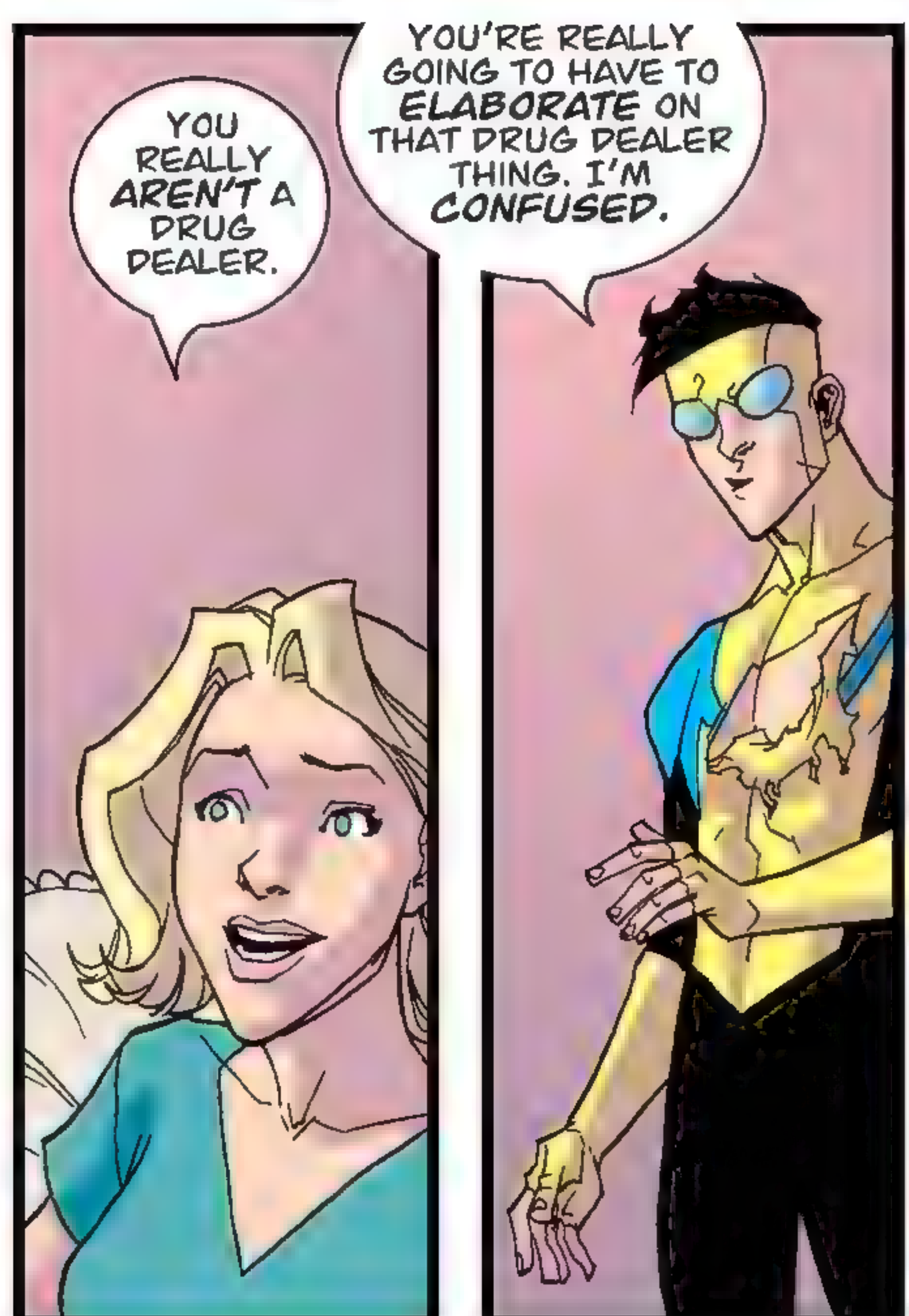
SORRY ABOUT THE RIP IN MY COSTUME. I WAS IN A FIGHT TONIGHT-- THAT'S WHAT I WAS CALLED AWAY FOR EARLIER.

THIS IS A NEW FABRIC-- ISN'T SUPPOSED TO RIP. I'M GOING TO HAVE TO GET MY MONEY BACK.

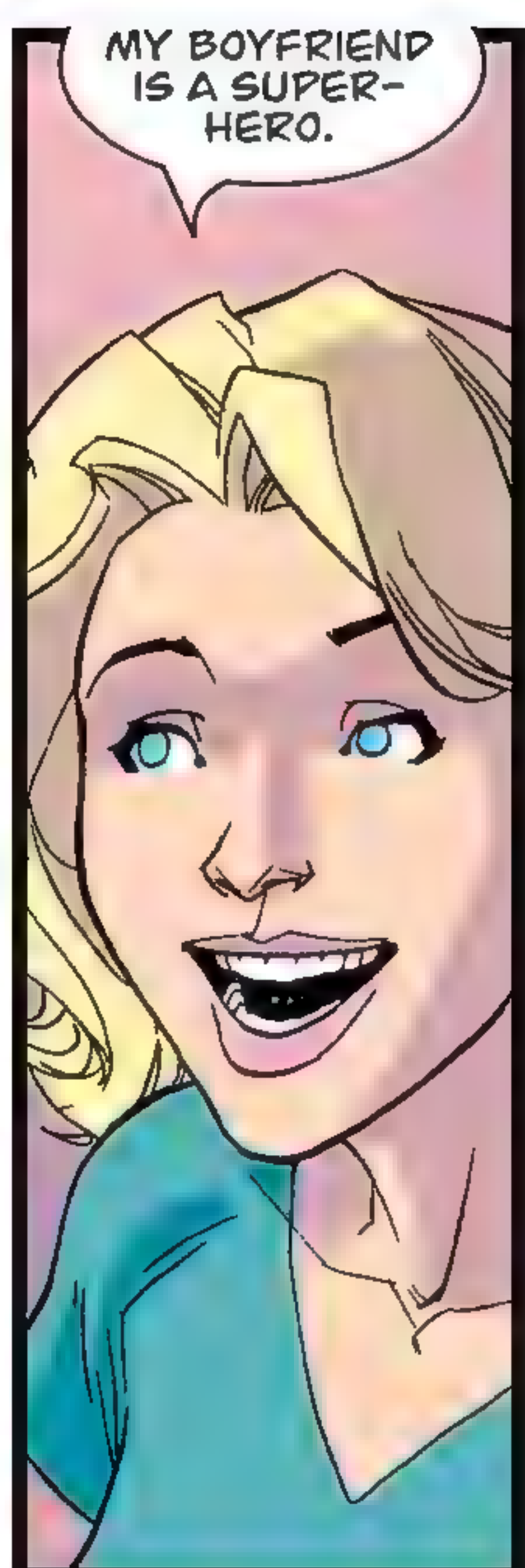


YOU REALLY AREN'T A DRUG DEALER.

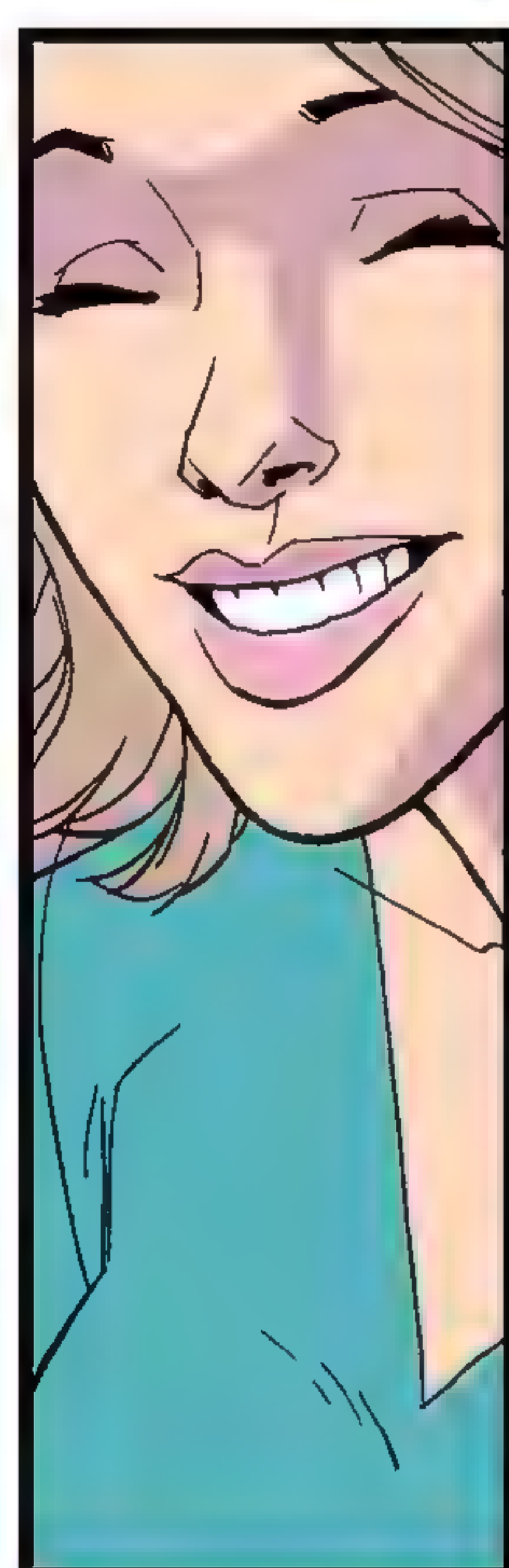
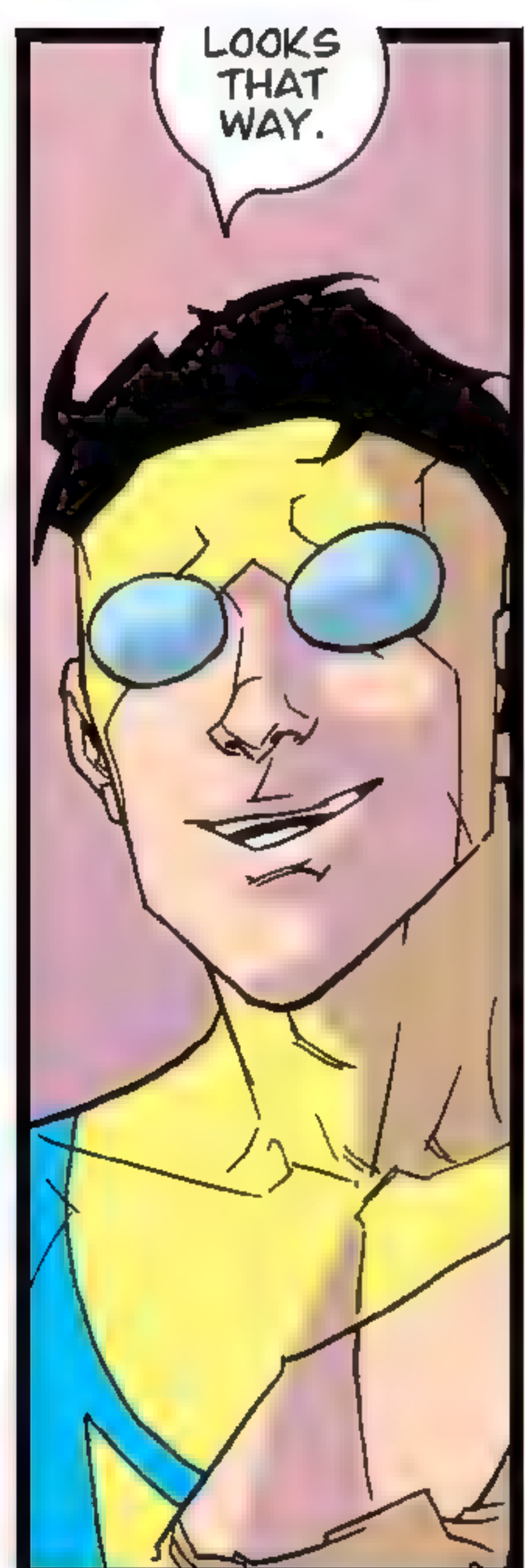
YOU'RE REALLY GOING TO HAVE TO ELABORATE ON THAT DRUG DEALER THING. I'M CONFUSED.



MY BOYFRIEND IS A SUPER-HERO.



LOOKS THAT WAY.





ALONE
AT
LAST.



I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW
IT'S TAKEN MY ENTIRE
COLLEGE CAREER TO GET
TO THIS POINT. YOU CAN'T
RUSH **GENIUS**, OF COURSE,
BUT I WOULD HAVE
PREFERRED TO
ACHIEVE MORE... OF
COURSE.

DID YOU
KNOW THIS
EXPERIMENT
STARTED OUT
SIMPLY AS A WAY
TO REANIMATE
DEAD TISSUE--TO
CREATE LIFE
WHERE THERE
IS NONE?

I WANTED
A NOBEL PRIZE--I
WANTED TO REUNITE
GRANDMOTHERS
AND LOVED
ONES.

I
WANTED
TO DO
GOOD.

LITTLE DID
I KNOW WHAT
MY STUDIES
WOULD LEAD ME
TO. WHAT **DOORS**
I WOULD BLOW
OPEN WITH MY
RESEARCH.

WHERE I SOUGHT
TO CREATE LIFE I
SUCCEEDED IN
CREATING
DEATH.

YOU KNOW,
NEWTON,
DISCOVERED
GRAVITY BY
ACCIDENT.

WHAT I
HAVE CREATED
IS NOT MERELY
A PROCESS WITH
WHICH TO RE-
ANIMATE LIFE--
BUT IT IS THE
ULTIMATE
KILLING
MACHINE.

A WEAPON
OF WAR WITH
LIMITLESS
POTENTIAL.

NOW,
I, **D.A.**
SINCLAIR,
HAVE BUT TO
PERFECT MY
DESIGN, STREAM-
LINE IT, IMPROVE
IT--**PERFECT**
IT.

WHAT AN
HONOR IT
MUST BE FOR
YOU--TO BE
THE **FIRST**.



MY FIRST
LIVE SUBJECT
TO BE TURNED
INTO A
REANIMAN.

THE FIRST
IN AN ARMY
OF KILLING
MACHINES.



ISSUE ZERO



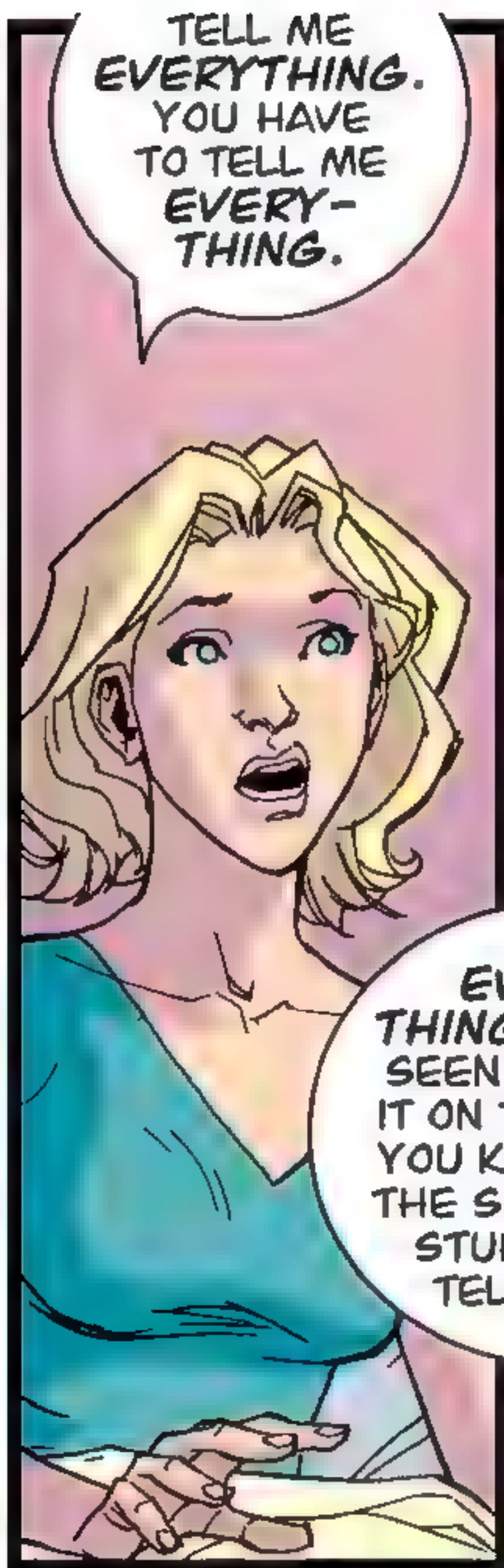


MY BOYFRIEND IS A **SUPERHERO**. I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW UNBELIEVABLY COOL THAT IS. I'M STILL IN **SHOCK**.



YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW **GOOD** IT FEELS TO FINALLY GET THAT OFF MY CHEST. I'M SO **HAPPY** YOU'RE TAKING THIS SO WELL.

I'VE BEEN PRETTY NERVOUS ABOUT THIS.

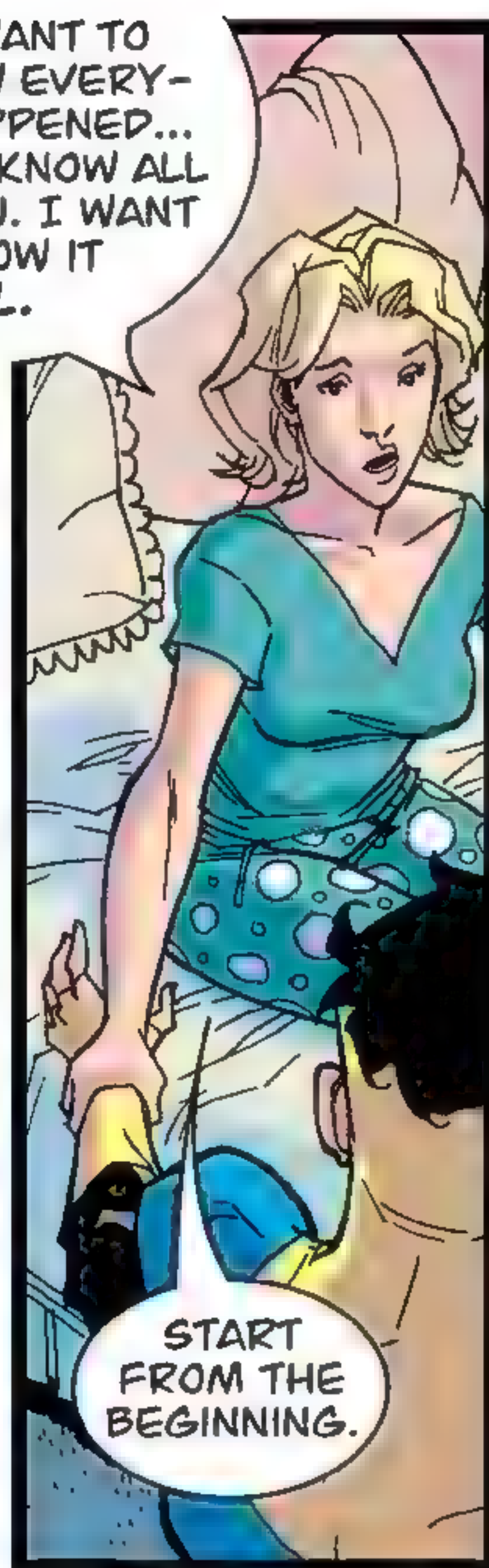


TELL ME **EVERYTHING**. YOU HAVE TO TELL ME **EVERYTHING**.

EVERYTHING? YOU'VE SEEN MOST OF IT ON THE NEWS. YOU KNOW ME-- THE **SUPERHERO** STUFF IS ALL **TELEVISIED**.



NO--I WANT TO KNOW HOW **EVERYTHING** HAPPENED... I WANT TO KNOW ALL ABOUT YOU. I WANT TO KNOW IT **ALL**.



START FROM THE BEGINNING.



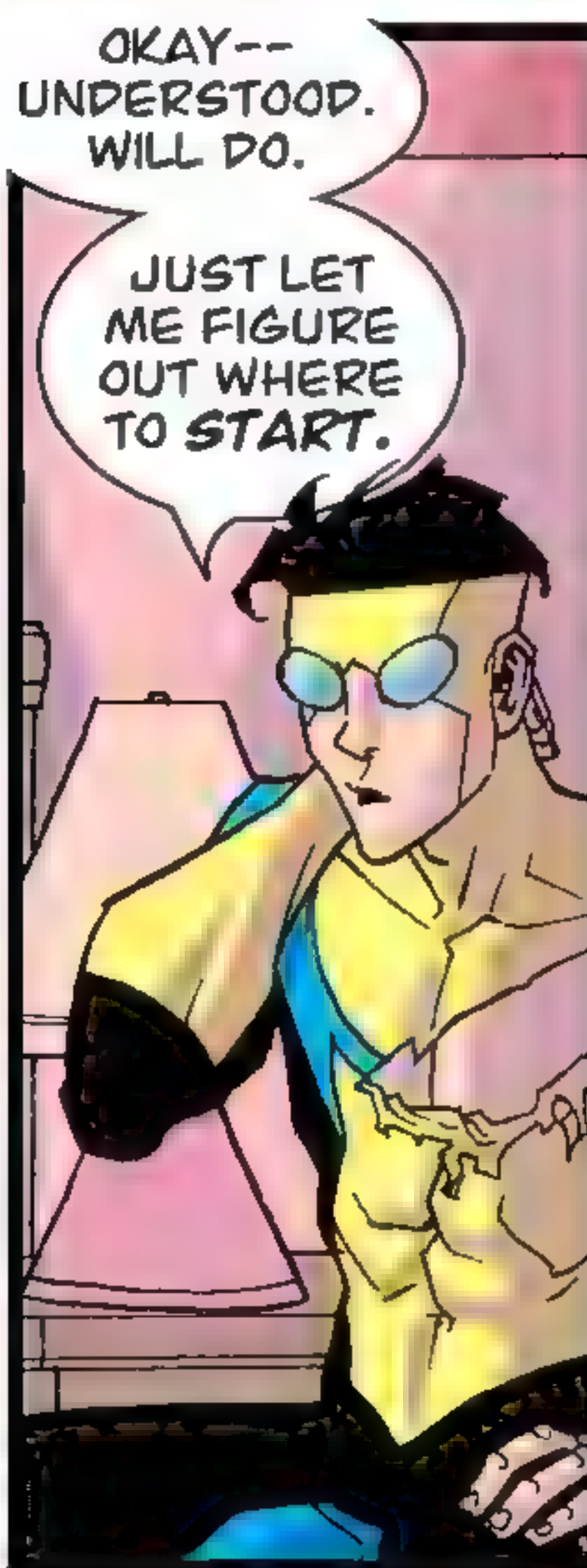
THE **BEGINNING?** IT'S KIND OF LATE ALREADY. ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT ME TO TELL YOU THE **WHOLE STORY** TONIGHT?

MARK, LISTEN TO ME. MY BOYFRIEND, **YOU**, JUST REVEALED TO ME HE'S A **SUPERHERO**. I DON'T THINK THERE'S ANY DANGER OF ME SLEEPING AT ALL TONIGHT. LET ALONE ANY TIME **SOON**.

TELL ME.

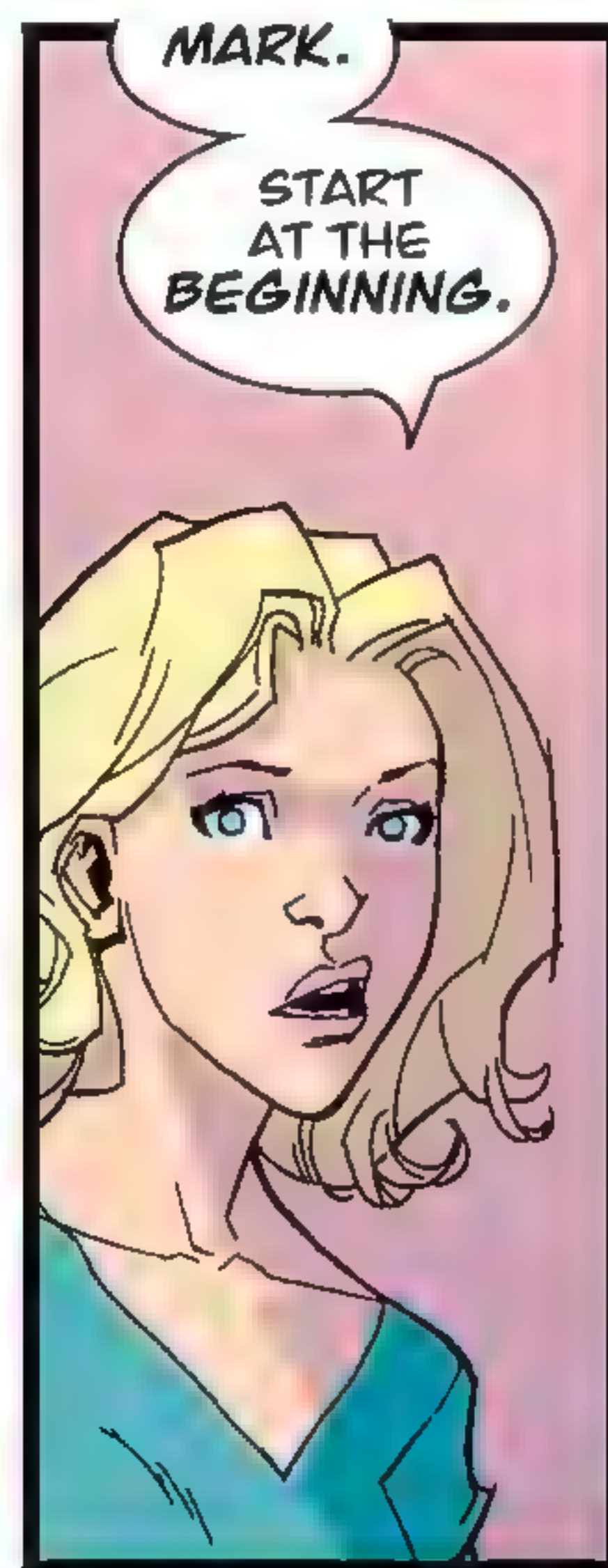
RIGHT NOW.

THE **WHOLE STORY**.



OKAY--UNDERSTOOD. WILL DO.

JUST LET ME FIGURE OUT WHERE TO **START**.



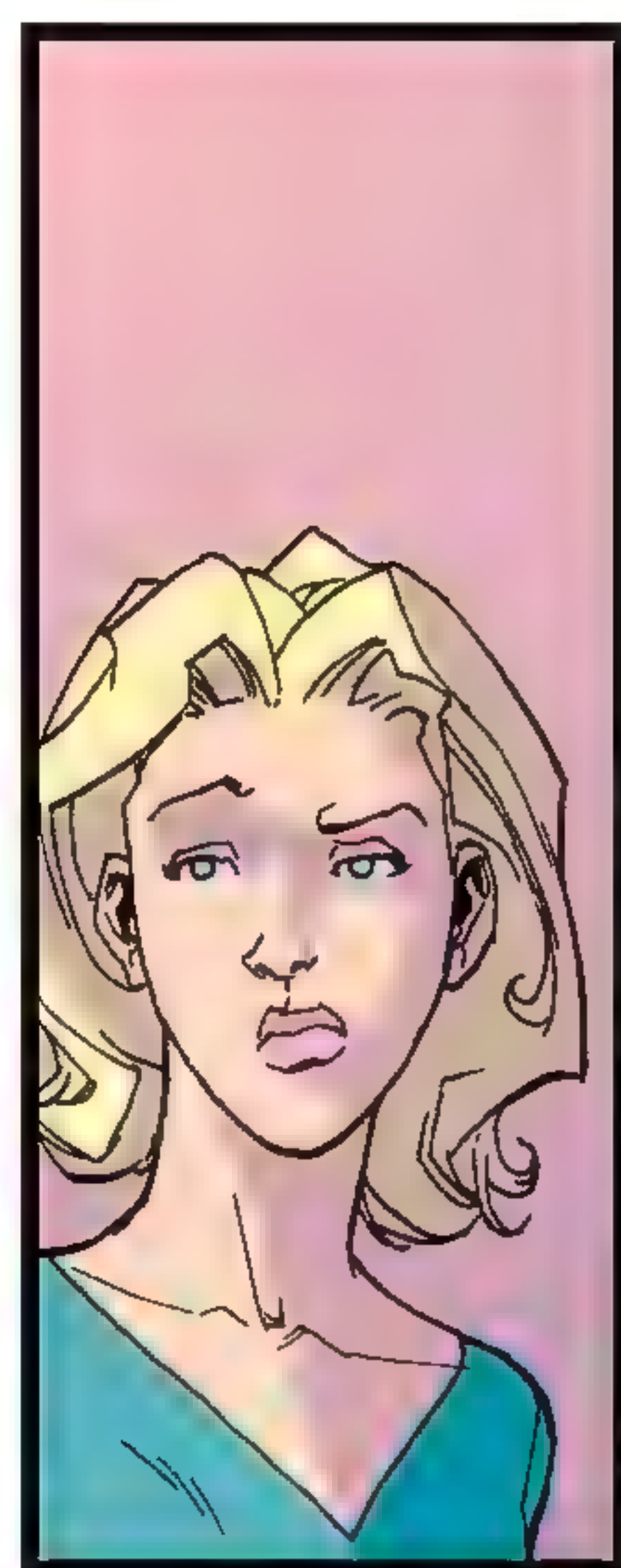
MARK.

START AT THE BEGINNING.

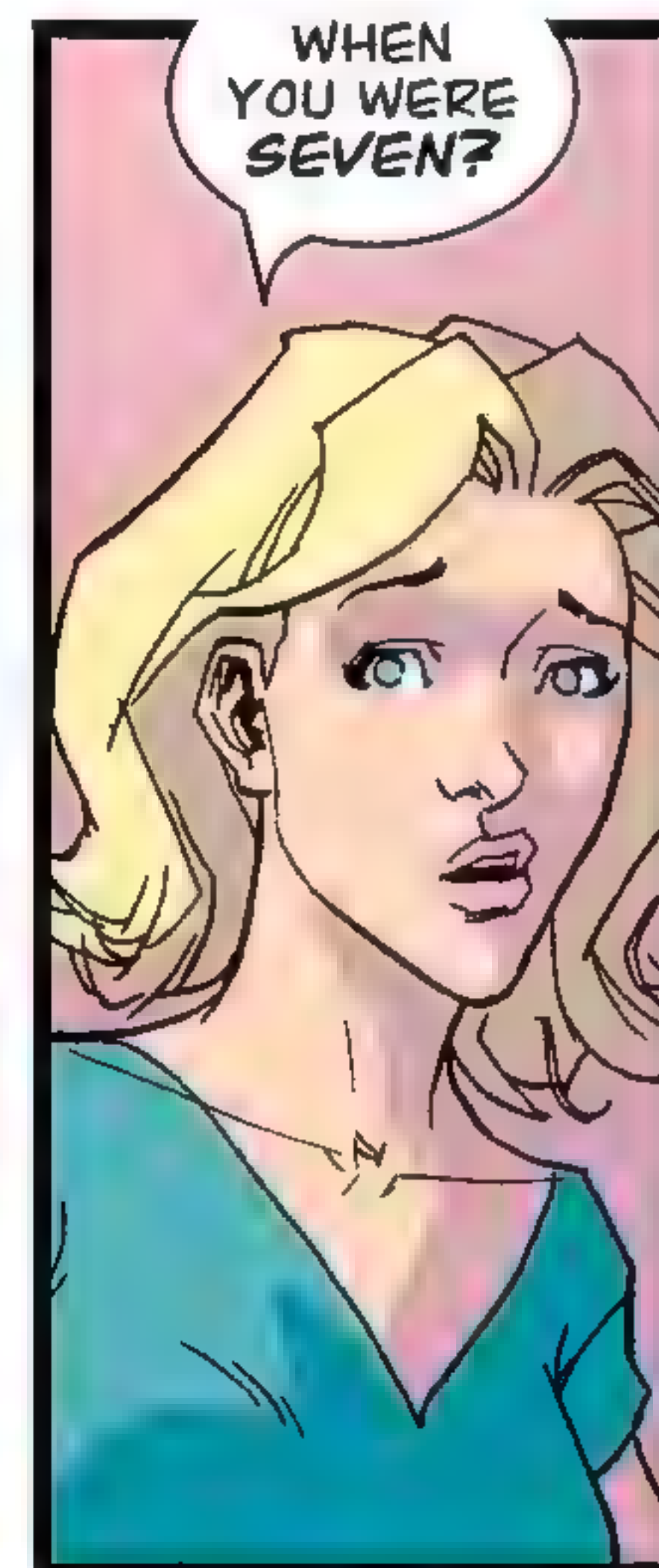
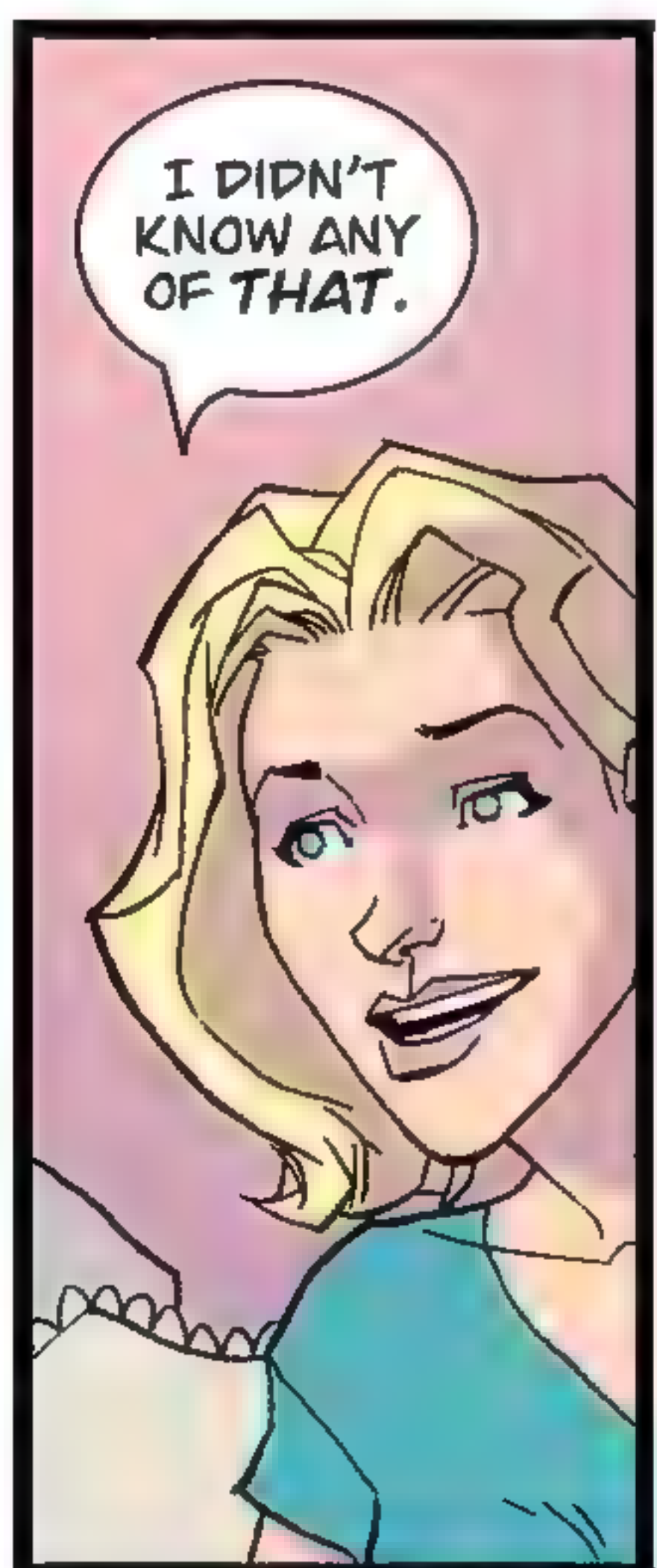
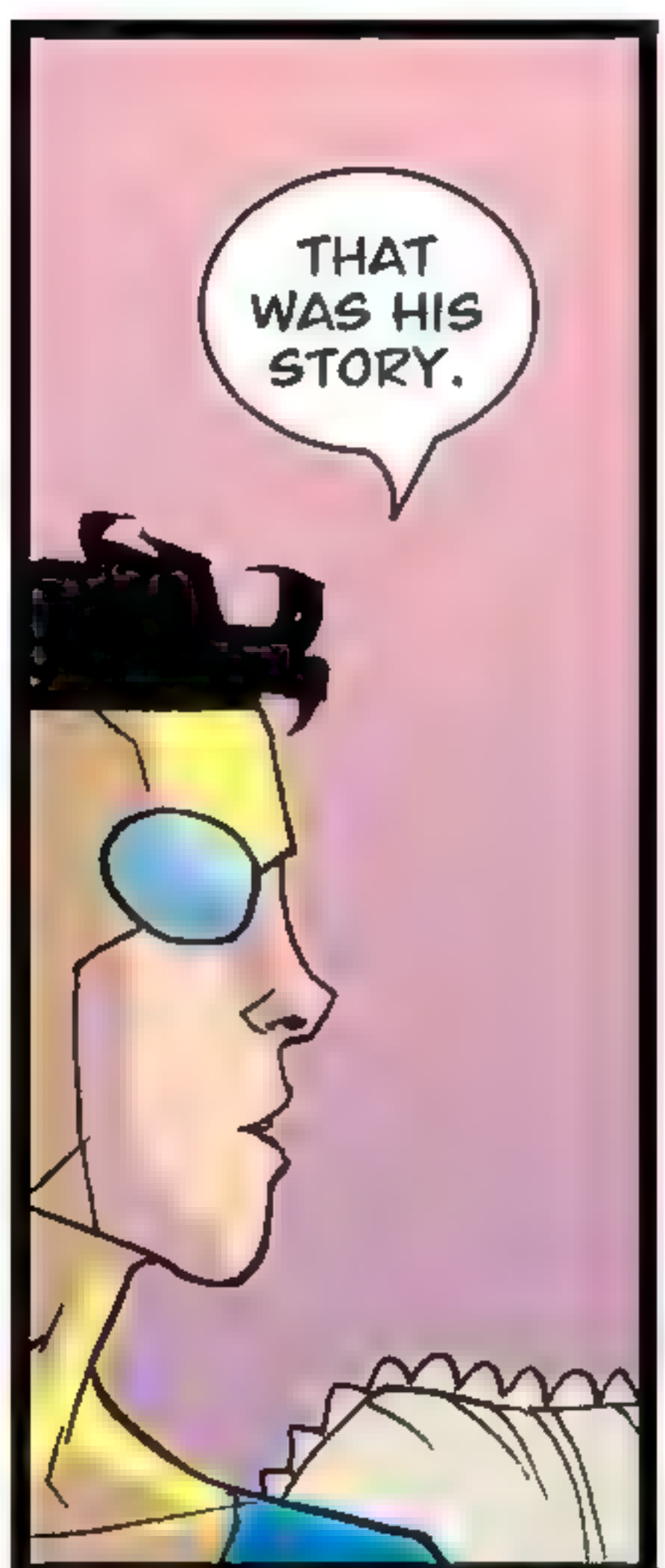
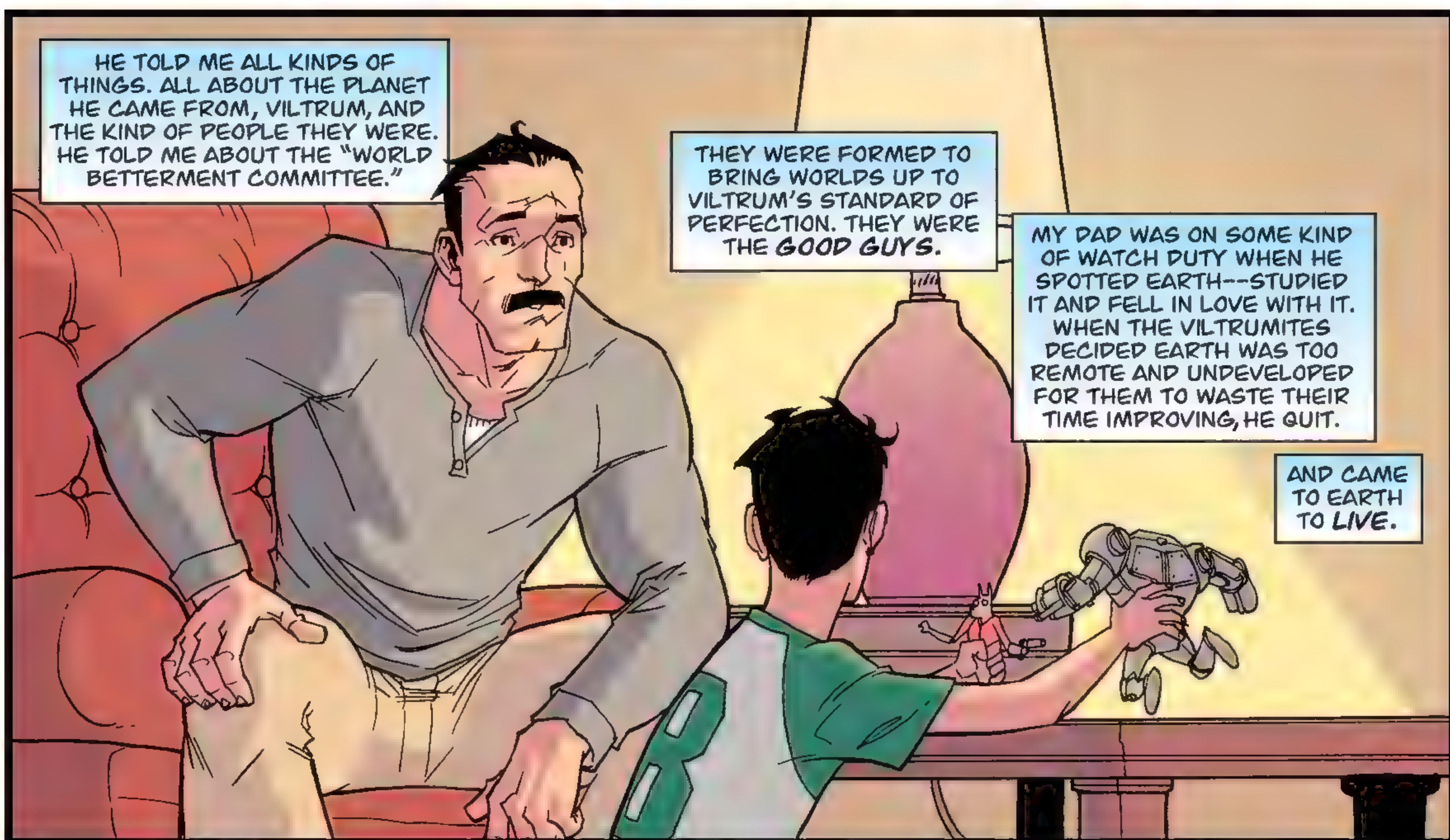
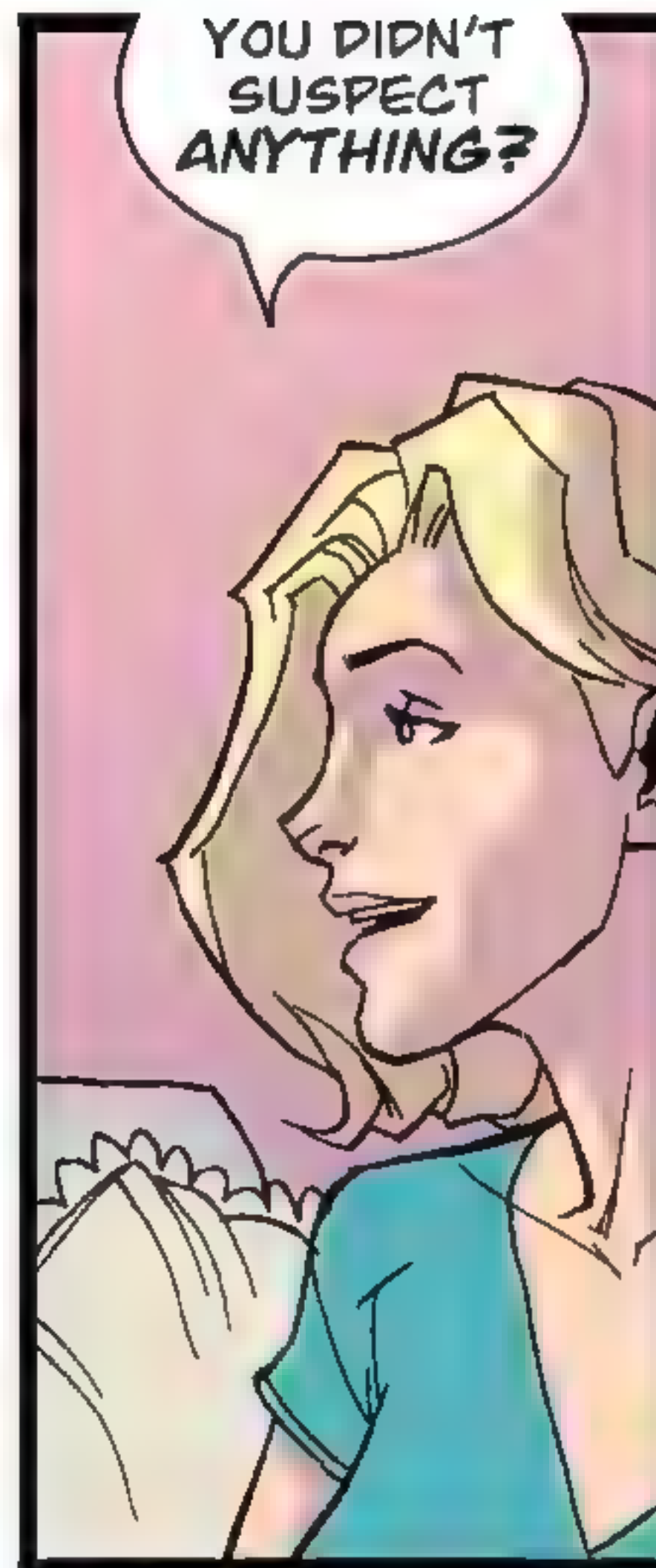
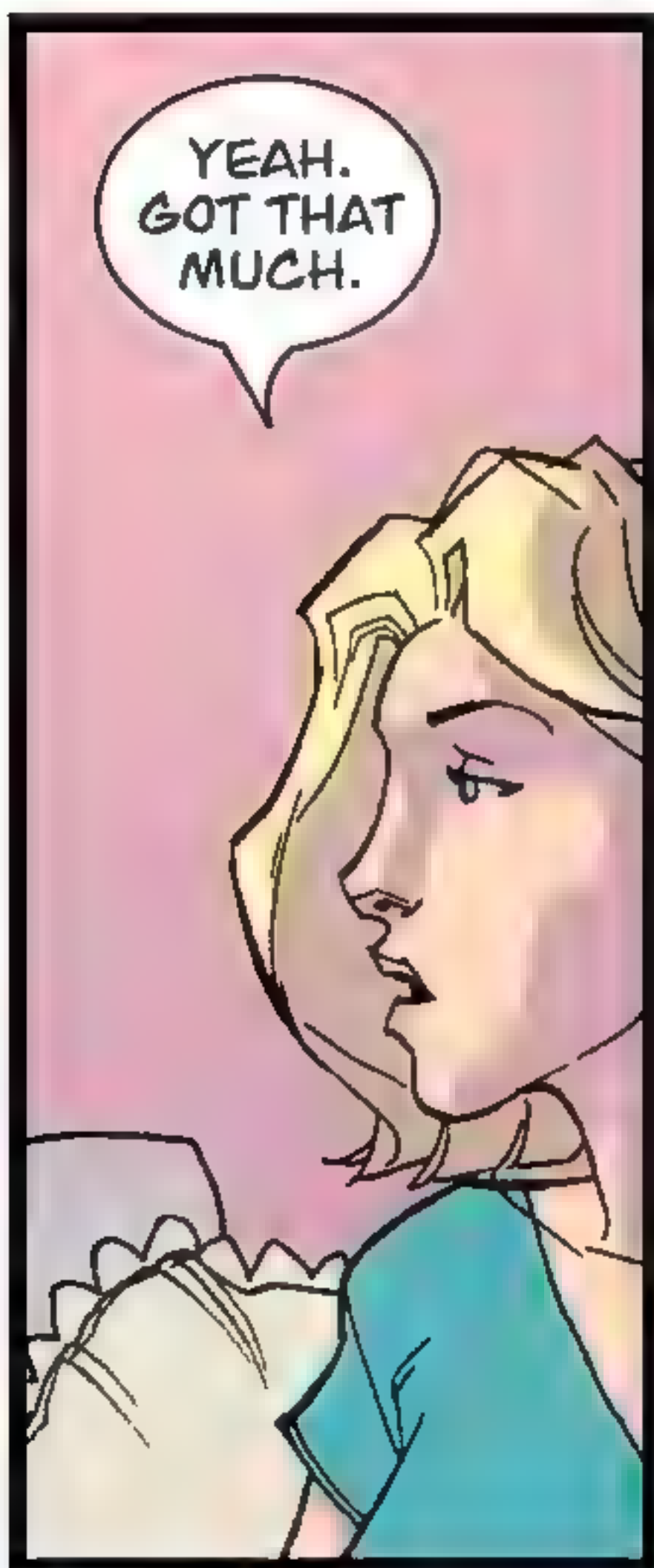
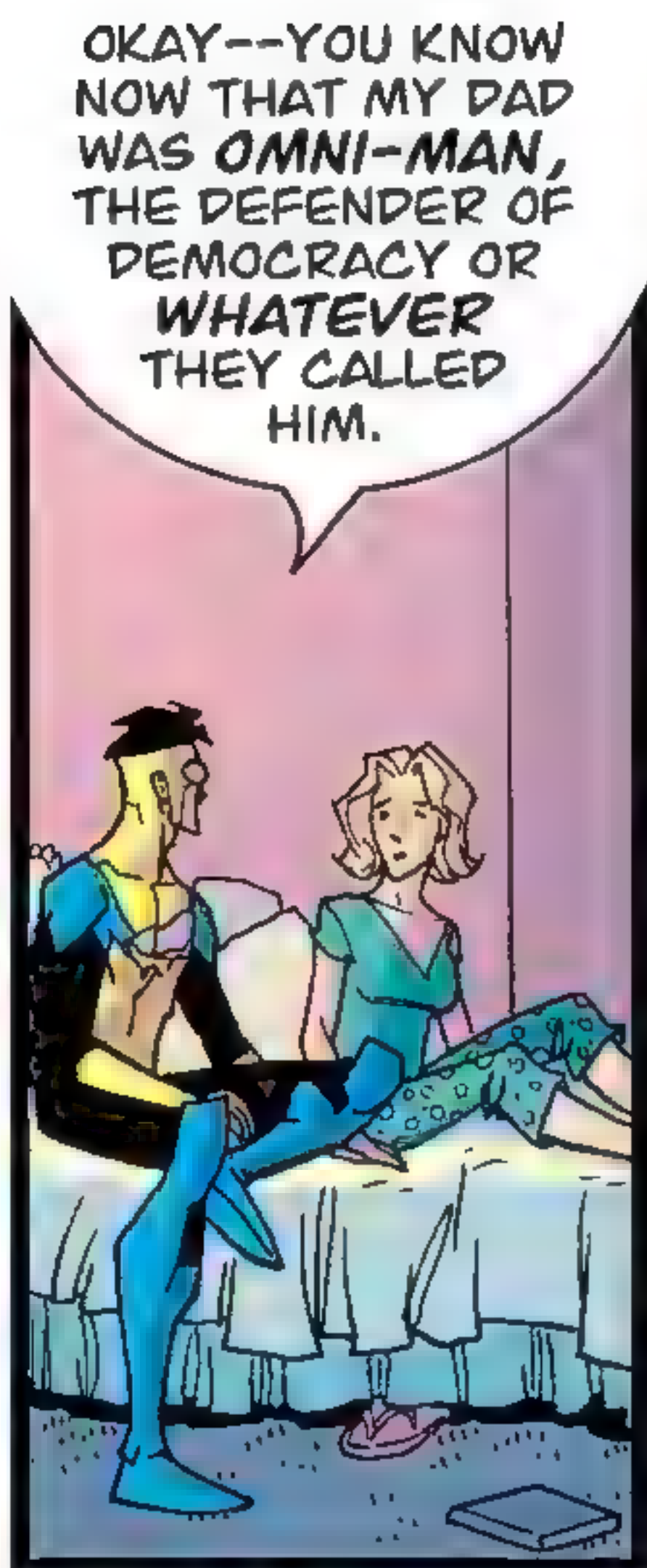


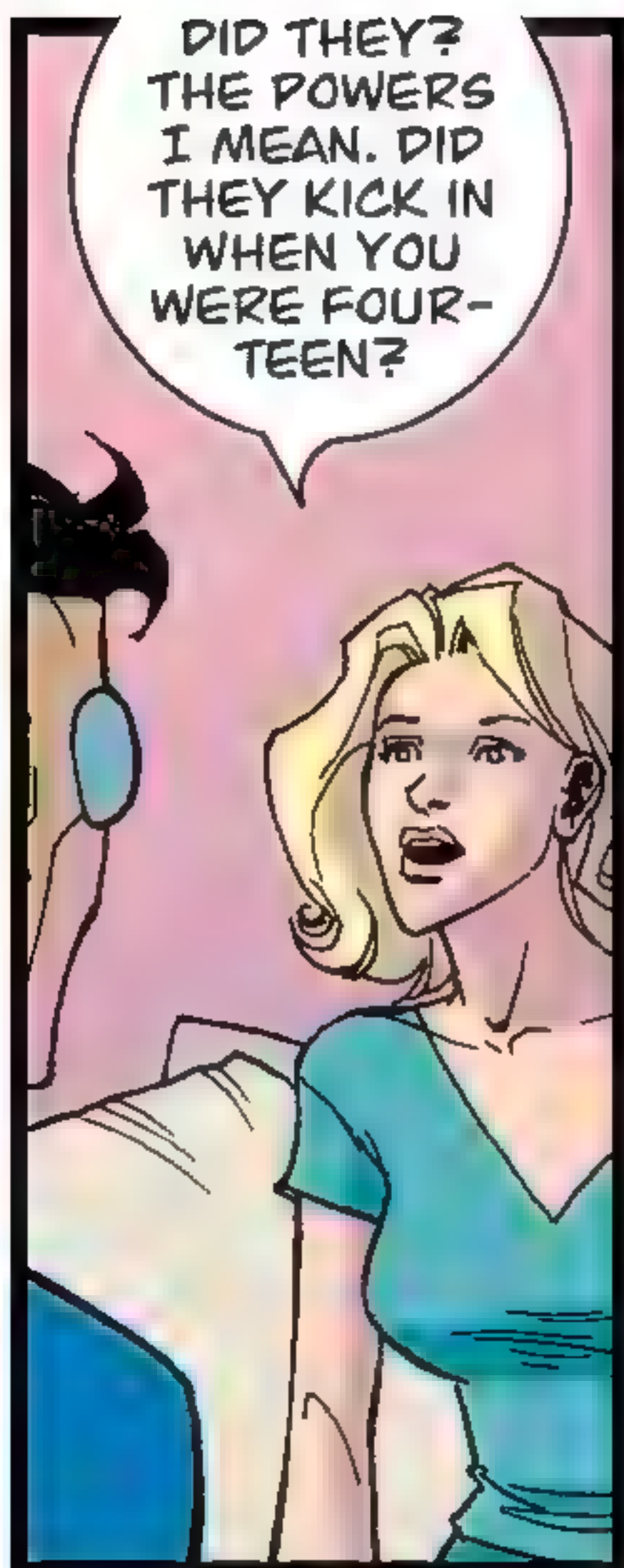
OKAY--LET ME REPHRASE.

I'M TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THE **BEGINNING** IS.



CUT ME SOME SLACK, OKAY? I'VE NEVER ACTUALLY SAT DOWN AND **TOLD** THIS STORY BEFORE.





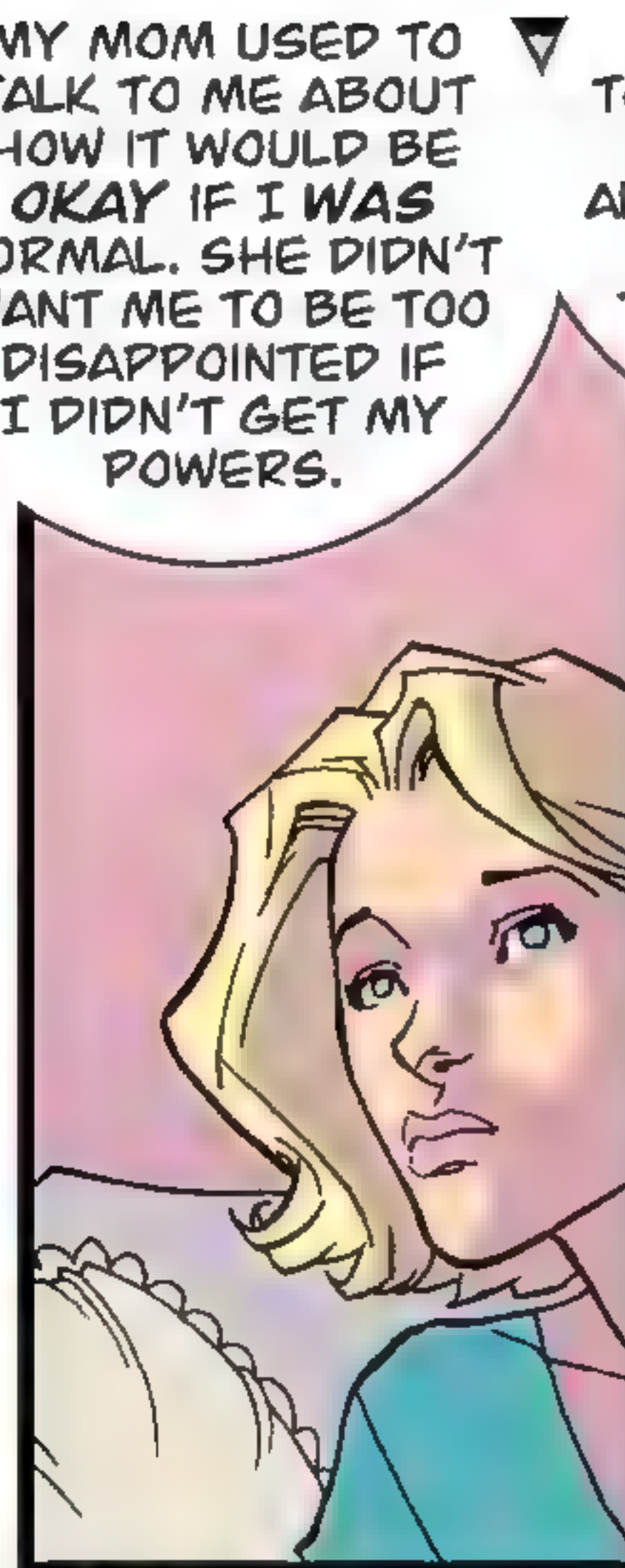
DID THEY?
THE POWERS
I MEAN. DID
THEY KICK IN
WHEN YOU
WERE FOUR-
TEEN?



NO--NOT UNTIL I WAS
SEVENTEEN. IT WAS
BARELY A YEAR AGO
ACTUALLY. I,UM... I
GUESS I'M A LATE
BLOOMER.



THAT'S THE THING,
SEE... I GREW UP
EXPECTING MY
POWERS. EVERY
DAY I WOKE UP
AND **COULDN'T**
FLY WAS A
DISAPPOINT-
MENT.



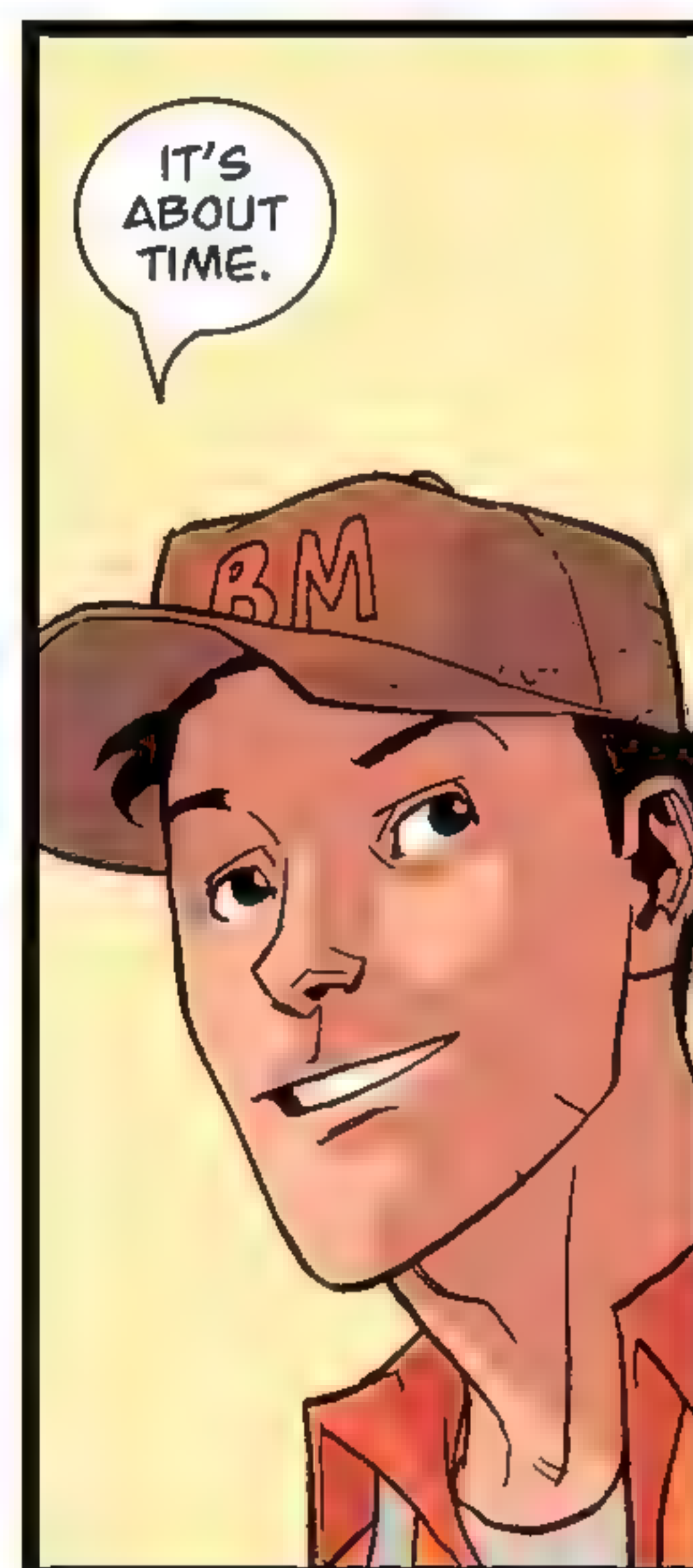
MY MOM USED TO
TALK TO ME ABOUT
HOW IT WOULD BE
OKAY IF I WAS
NORMAL. SHE DIDN'T
WANT ME TO BE TOO
DISAPPOINTED IF
I DIDN'T GET MY
POWERS.



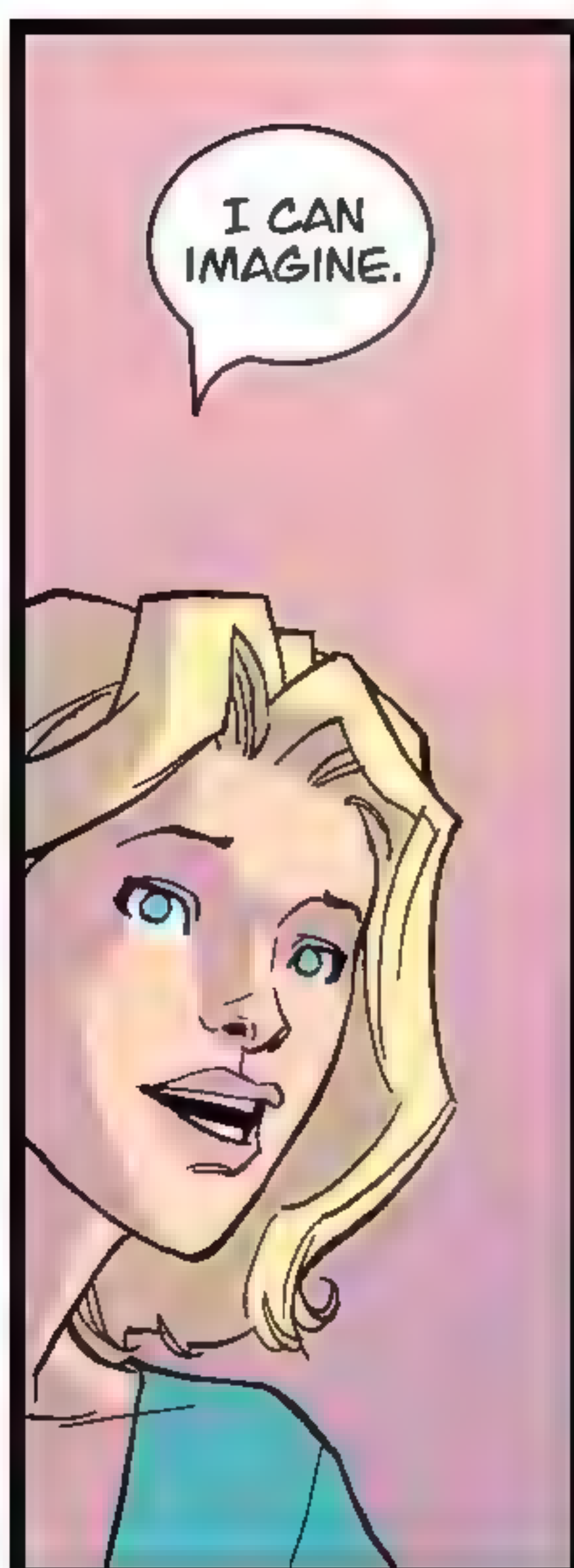
LIKE I SAID--IT
TOOK **FOREVER**...
I MEAN, I HAD
ALMOST GIVEN UP,
AND STOPPED
THINKING ABOUT
IT.



SO, OF COURSE, I
WAS THRILLED WHEN
I FINALLY **DID** GET
MY POWERS.



IT'S
ABOUT
TIME.



I CAN
IMAGINE.



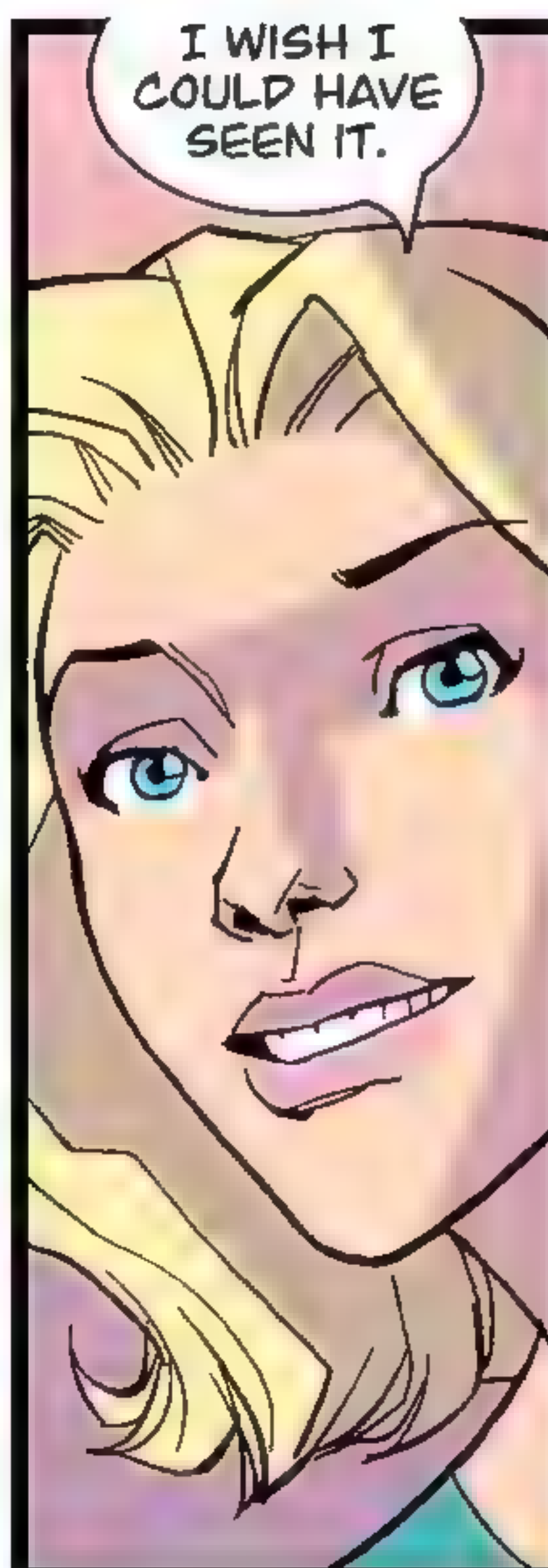
THE WEEKS THAT
FOLLOWED ARE A
BLUR. TESTING MY
STRENGTH, TRYING TO
FLY, LEARNING TO DO
THINGS REALLY
FAST...IT WAS A
LOT OF FUN.



I TELL YOU, SCHOOL
CERTAINLY TOOK A
BACK SEAT THOSE
FIRST COUPLE WEEKS.
IT WAS ALMOST
IMPOSSIBLE TO JUST
SIT IN A DESK KNOWING
I COULD DO ALL
THAT OTHER
STUFF.



I EVEN PUT TOGETHER
A LITTLE COSTUME, TO
MASK MY IDENTITY
WHILE I PRACTICED
FLYING. RUBBER
GLOVES, A BANDANA--
SWEATPANTS. IT WAS
RIDICULOUS.



I WISH I
COULD HAVE
SEEN IT.

I CAN SHOW IT TO YOU. I STILL HAVE IT AT HOME... EXCEPT THE GLOVES. MY MOM USED THOSE ON DISHES...



ANYWAY--MY DAD SAW ME IN THAT GETUP **ONCE** AND TOOK ME TO GET MY FIRST COSTUME.

WHERE DO YOU GO FOR THAT?



MY DAD KNEW A GUY--A **TAILOR**--SUPER SECRET STUFF. HE STILL MAKES ALL MY COSTUMES. HE'S A FRIEND OF THE FAMILY.



ONCE I HAD THE COSTUME, I DOVE HEAD FIRST INTO MY LIFE AS A SUPERHERO. I FOUGHT SOME GUYS--MET SOME OTHER HEROES--ALL IN THE SPAN OF A MONTH.

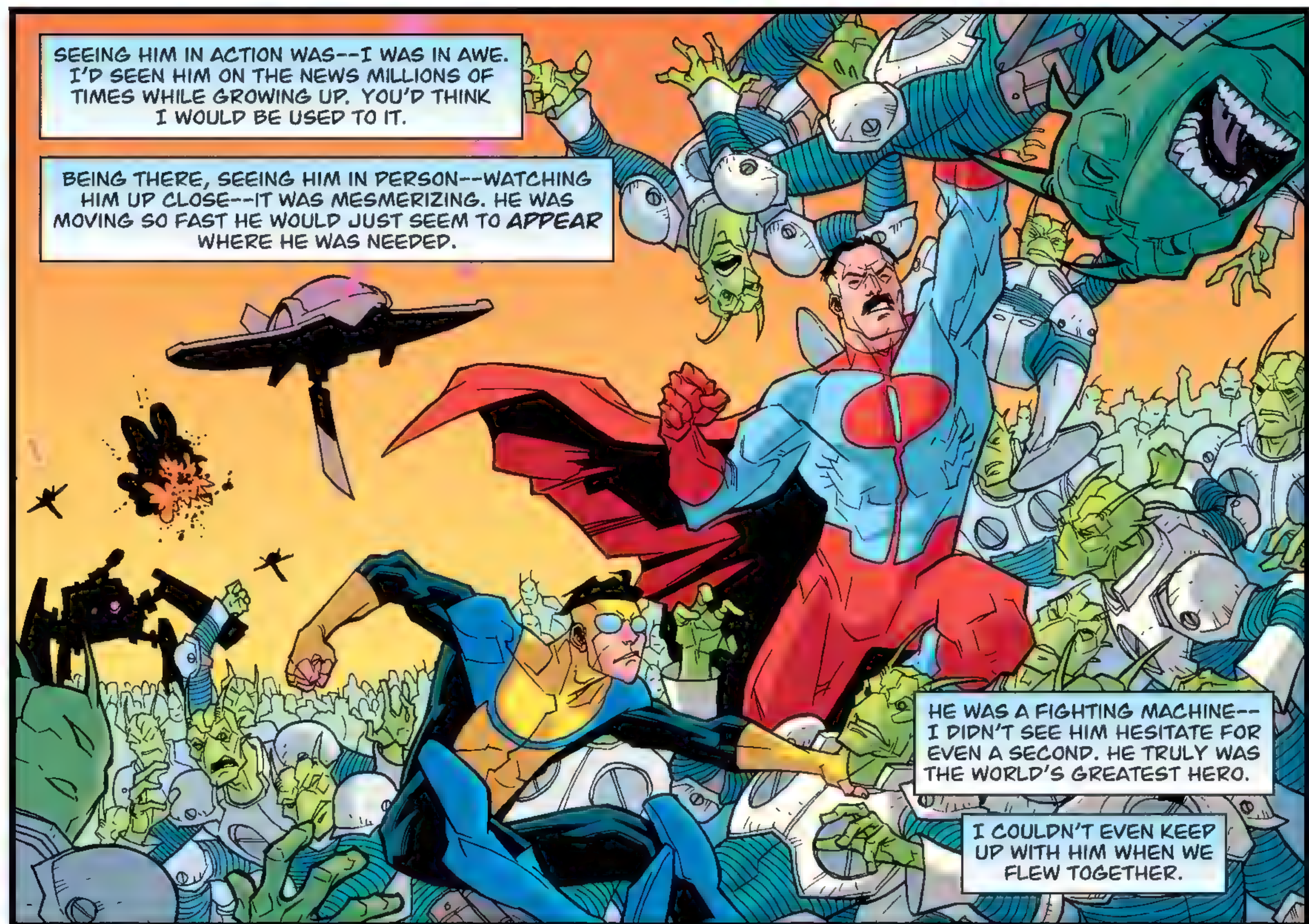


AFTER A WHILE--I EVEN GOT TO GO ON A FEW MISSIONS WITH MY DAD.



SEEING HIM IN ACTION WAS--I WAS IN AWE. I'D SEEN HIM ON THE NEWS MILLIONS OF TIMES WHILE GROWING UP. YOU'D THINK I WOULD BE USED TO IT.

BEING THERE, SEEING HIM IN PERSON--WATCHING HIM UP CLOSE--IT WAS MESMERIZING. HE WAS MOVING SO FAST HE WOULD JUST SEEM TO **APPEAR** WHERE HE WAS NEEDED.



HE WAS A FIGHTING MACHINE--I DIDN'T SEE HIM HESITATE FOR EVEN A SECOND. HE TRULY WAS THE WORLD'S GREATEST HERO.

I COULDN'T EVEN KEEP UP WITH HIM WHEN WE FLEW TOGETHER.



MARK? WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

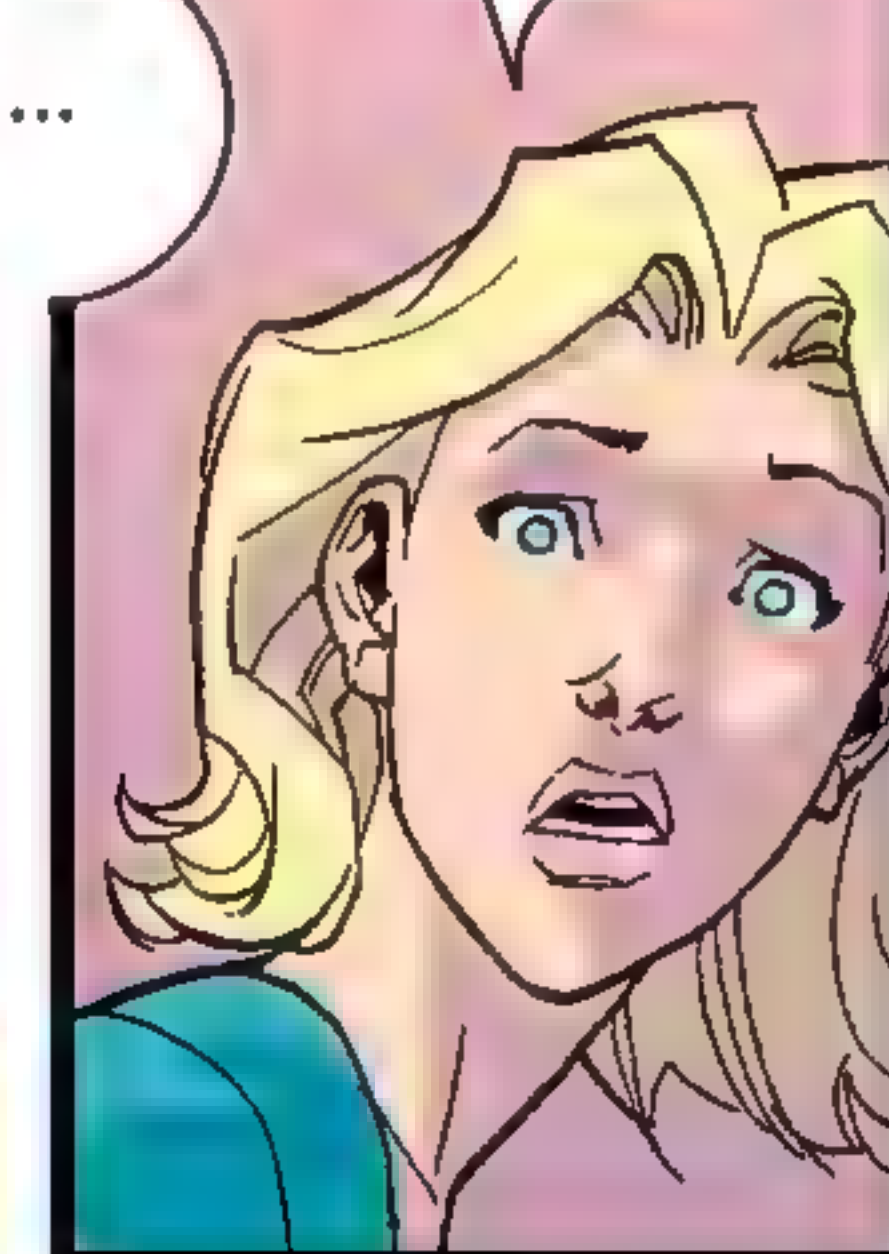


OH, SORRY. I WAS JUST--I WAS THINKING ABOUT THE WAY THINGS WERE. BEFORE HE--

...



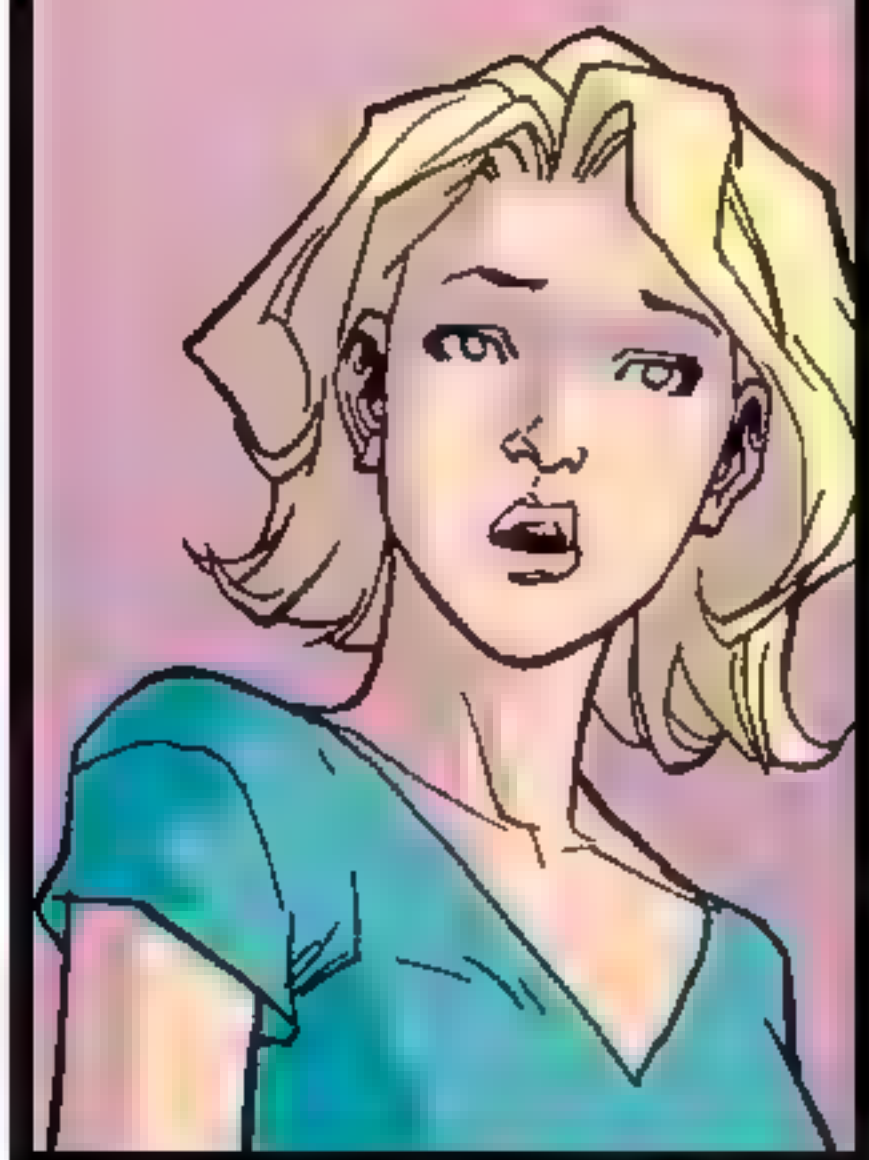
ARE YOU OKAY?



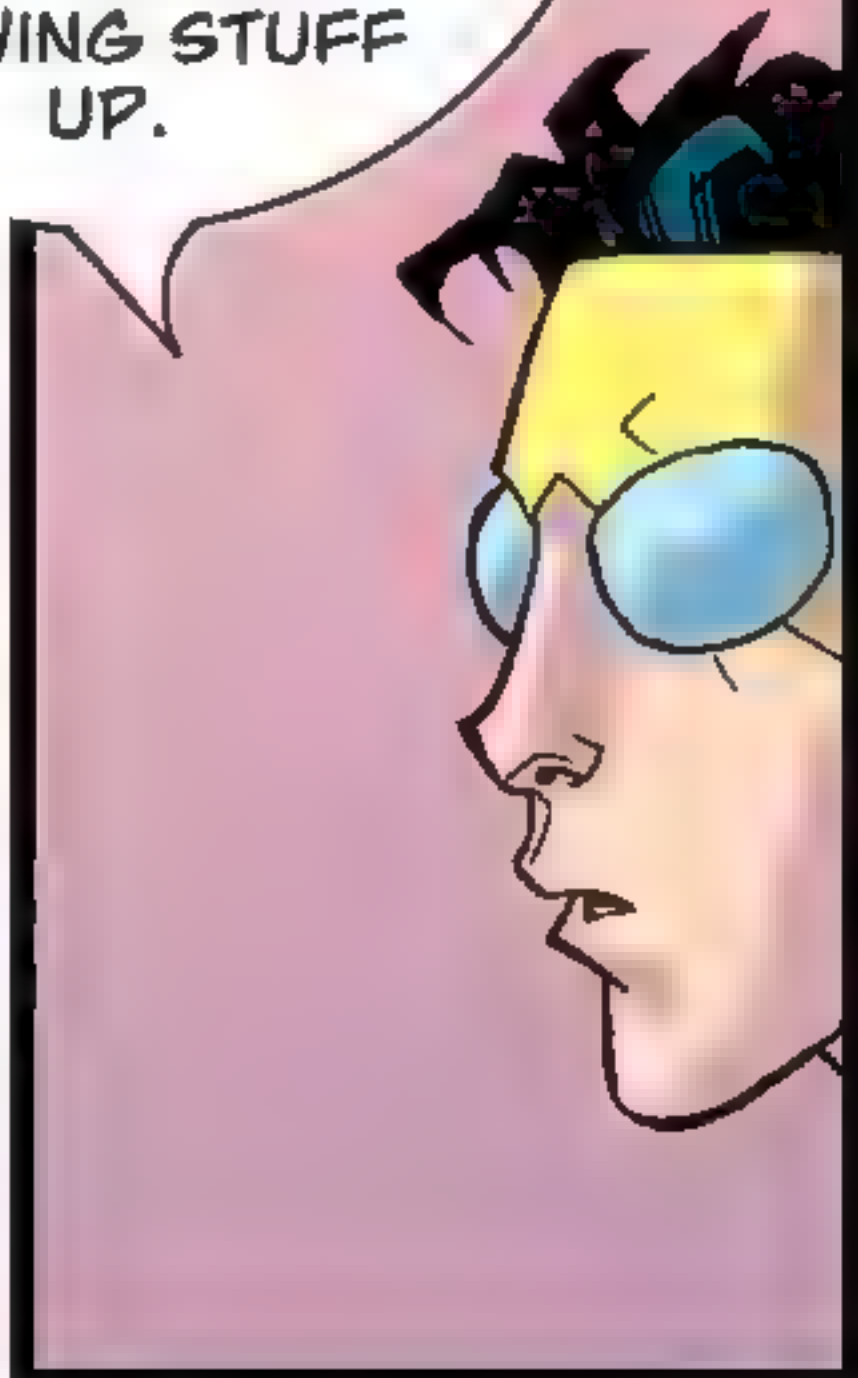
YEAH, OF COURSE. SORRY I--WHERE WAS I?



YOU HAD JUST BECOME A SUPER-HERO.



OH, YEAH. AROUND THAT SAME TIME, STUDENTS AT OUR HIGH SCHOOL, YOU'LL REMEMBER, WERE TURNING UP ALL OVER TOWN, WITH BOMBS INSIDE THEM-- BLOWING STUFF UP.



I REMEMBER. TWIN PINES MALL WAS CLOSED FOR LIKE--FOUR MONTHS. IT WAS HORRIBLE.

THE WHOLE THING--NOT JUST THE MALL BEING CLOSED--OF COURSE.



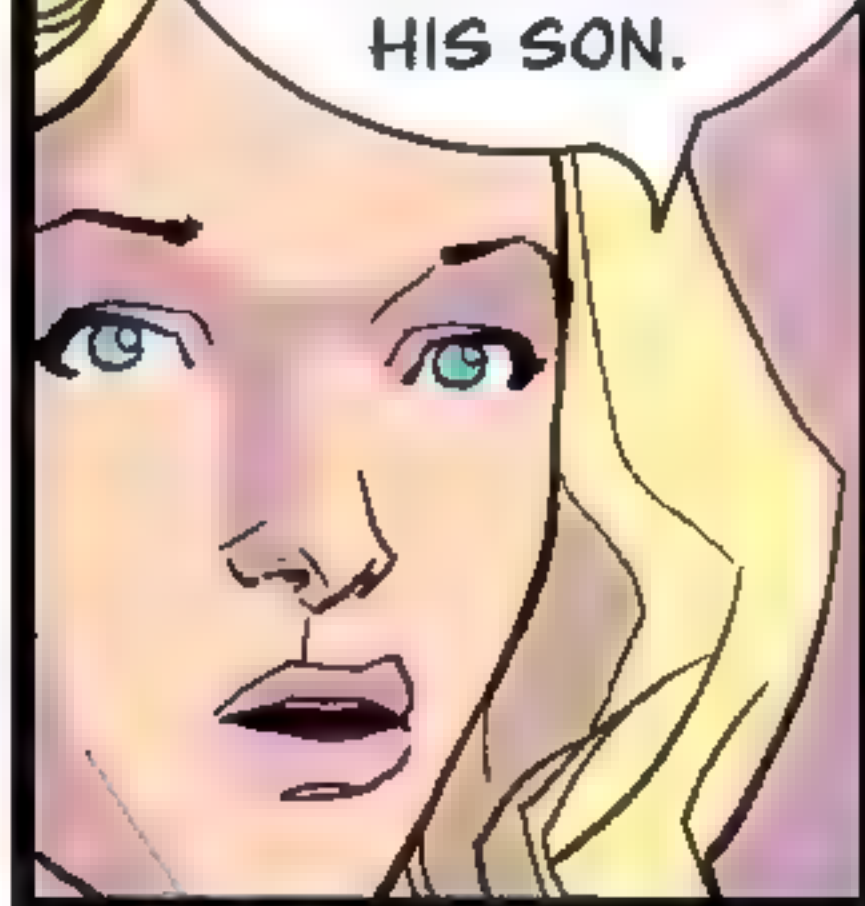
OF COURSE. ANYWAY-- I FIRST DISCOVERED THEY WERE STUDENTS FROM OUR SCHOOL BECAUSE MY DAD AND I ENCOUNTERED ONE OF THEM IN LAKESIDE MALL.

THE GUY MUST HAVE HATED MALLS. ANYWAY, WE GOT TO HIM JUST BEFORE HE WENT OFF--



I RECOGNIZED HIM FROM SCHOOL. DAD THREW HIM INTO THE SKY AND SAVED THE MALL.

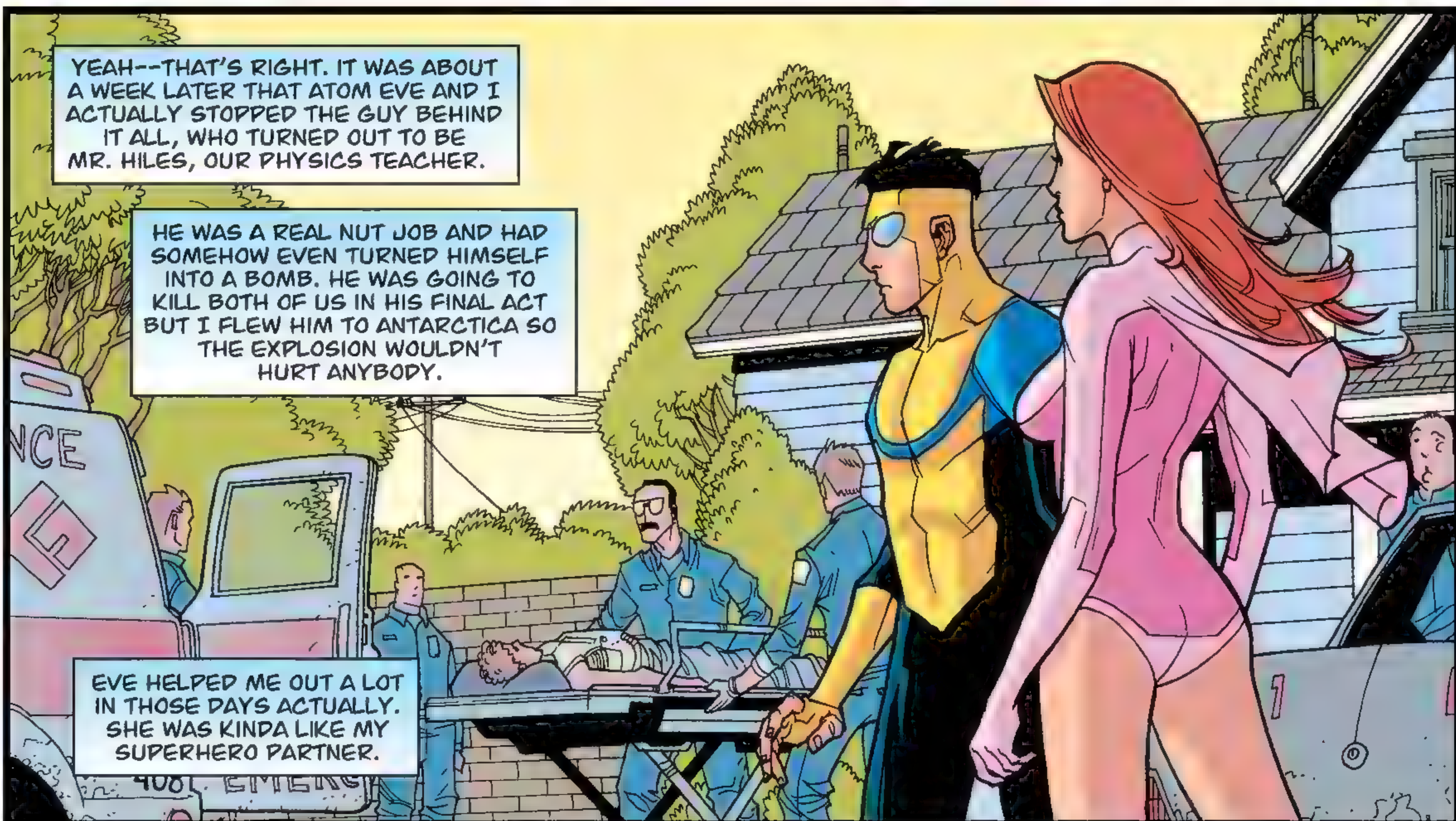
YOU WERE ON TV, THEN. THAT WAS WHEN YOU CALLED OMNI-MAN "DAD" AND EVERYONE FOUND OUT YOU WERE HIS SON.



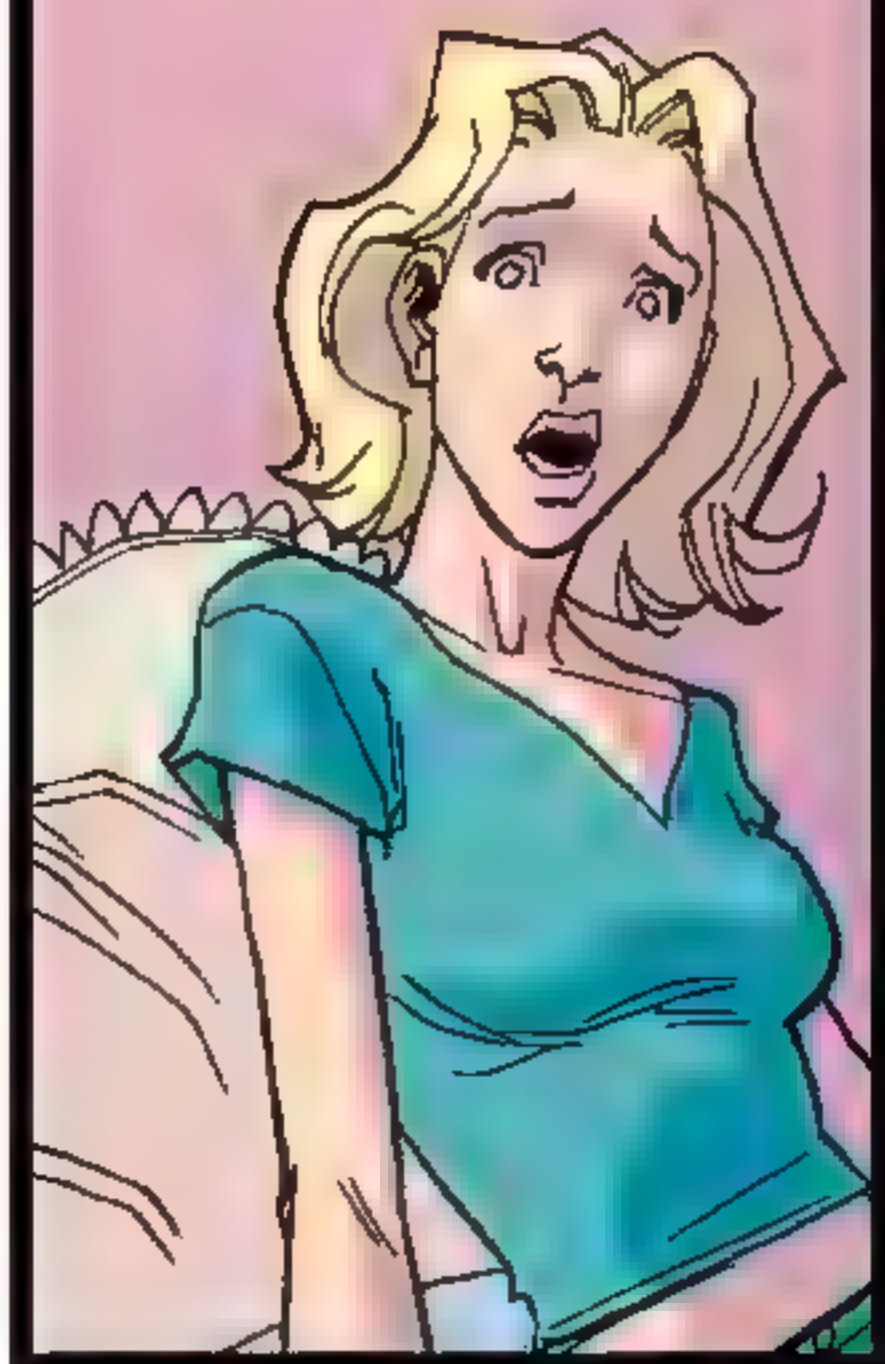
YEAH--THAT'S RIGHT. IT WAS ABOUT A WEEK LATER THAT ATOM EVE AND I ACTUALLY STOPPED THE GUY BEHIND IT ALL, WHO TURNED OUT TO BE MR. HILES, OUR PHYSICS TEACHER.

HE WAS A REAL NUT JOB AND HAD SOMEHOW EVEN TURNED HIMSELF INTO A BOMB. HE WAS GOING TO KILL BOTH OF US IN HIS FINAL ACT BUT I FLEW HIM TO ANTARCTICA SO THE EXPLOSION WOULDN'T HURT ANYBODY.

EVE HELPED ME OUT A LOT IN THOSE DAYS ACTUALLY. SHE WAS KINDA LIKE MY SUPERHERO PARTNER.



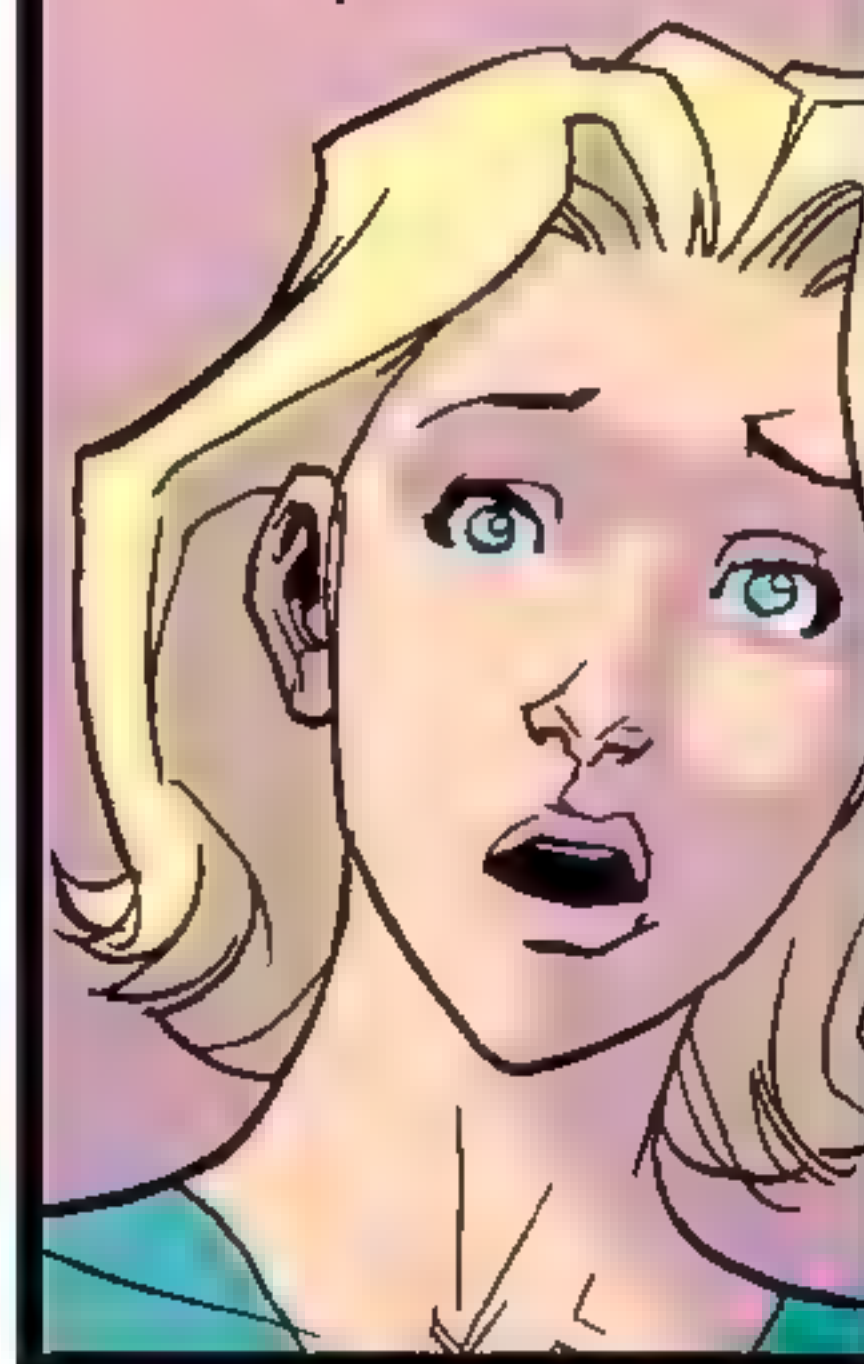
ATOM EVE? SHE'S NOT--I MEAN--THAT'S NOT OUR EVE IS IT?



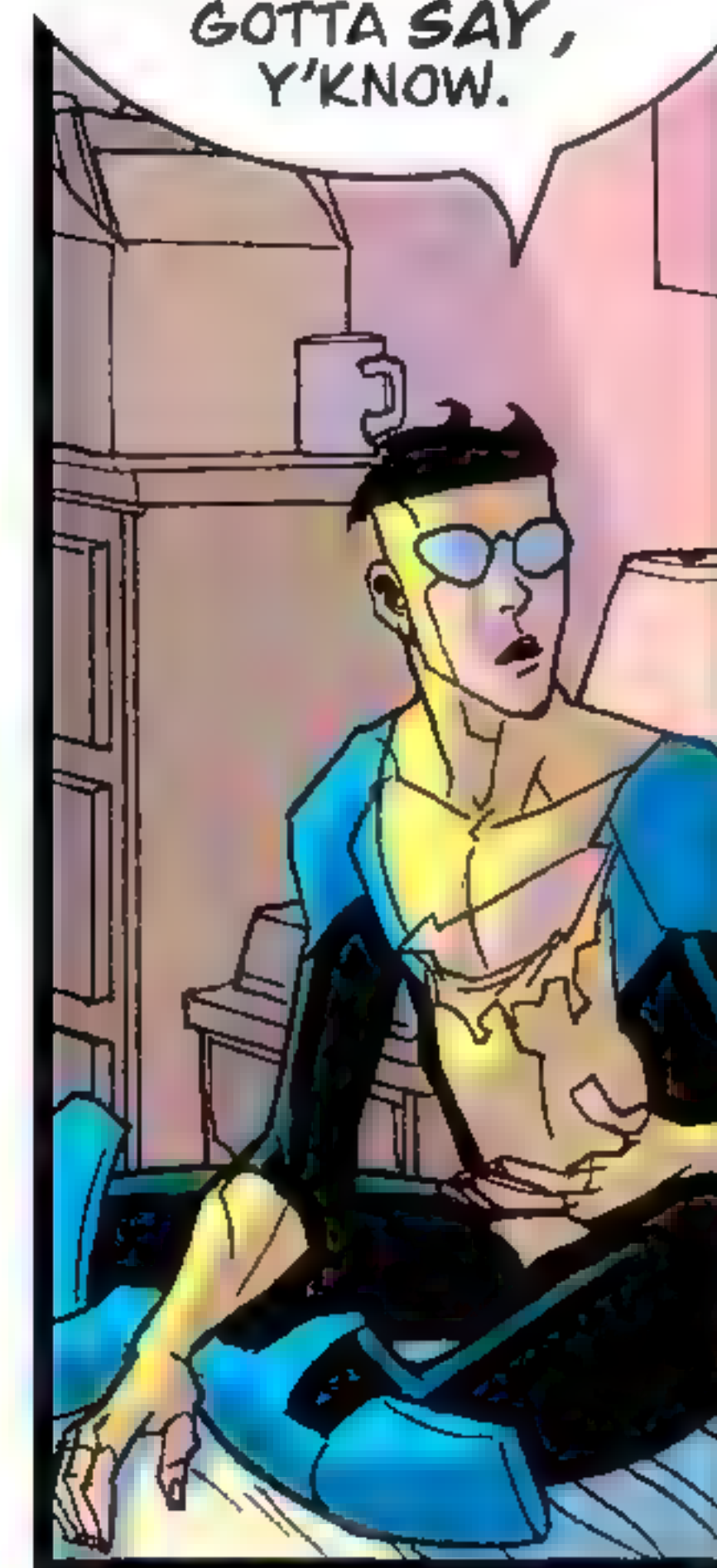
YEAH--IT KINDA IS. JEEZ, DON'T SAY ANYTHING, THOUGH. SHE'D BE REALLY PISSED IF SHE FOUND OUT I TOLD YOU.



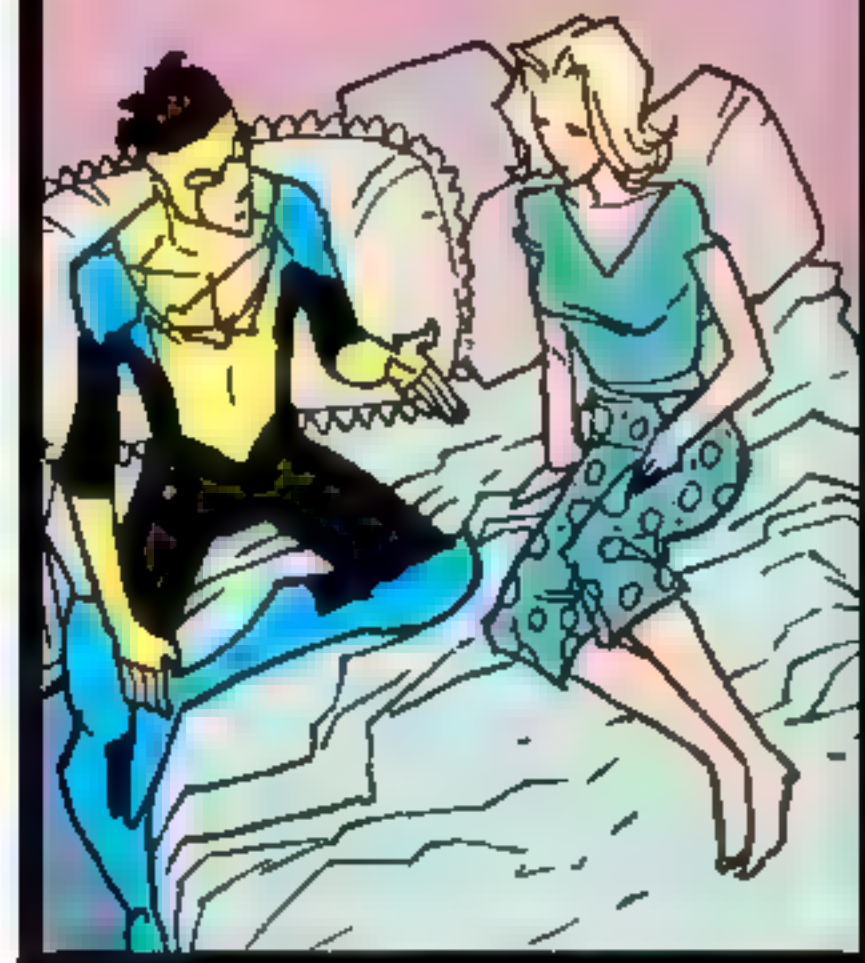
YOU CAN TRUST ME, MARK. I PROMISE. IF NOTHING ELSE COMES OF THIS TALK--I REALLY WANT TO MAKE SURE YOU AT LEAST KNOW THAT.



I TRUST YOU, AMBER. I WOULDN'T BE TELLING YOU ALL THIS IF I DIDN'T. IT'S JUST SOMETHING YOU GOTTA SAY, Y'KNOW.



SO YEAH, HILES WAS MY FIRST BIG SUPERVILLAIN. IF YOU CAN EVEN CALL HIM THAT.



I FACED A FEW GOOD ONES: THE MAULER TWINS, TITAN, DOC SEISMIC, THE LIZARD LEAGUE, AND THIS ONE DUDE CALLED "THE ELEPHANT" BUT HE WAS REALLY JUST A LAME RIP-OFF OF "THE RHINO."

THAT GUY KINDA SUCKED.

I'VE NEVER HEARD OF ANY OF THOSE GUYS.

YEAH, WELL--THAT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT IN "THE BUSINESS." OTHERWISE YOU'D TOTALLY KNOW WHO THEY WERE.

NO. I WATCH THE NEWS. THERE'S A NEW SUPERVILLAIN ON THERE EVERY WEEK. THE CHRONODILE, MEGA-BRAIN, SEBASTIAN KAHN... I SEE VILLAINS ON TV-- BUT NONE OF THE GUYS YOU MENTIONED.

YEAH--UH--ANYWAY, THINGS WENT ALONG PRETTY SMOOTHLY FOR A LONG TIME. THEN--SHORTLY BEFORE YOU AND I GOT TOGETHER EVERYTHING CHANGED.

THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE WERE KILLED.

THE PREMIER SUPER TEAM, A TEAM WHO HAD SAVED THE WHOLE PLANET MORE TIMES THAN ANYONE COULD COUNT--WAS WIPED OUT IN ONE DAY. THEY WERE GONE.

AND NOBODY KNEW WHO KILLED THEM.

NOBODY BUT YOU...

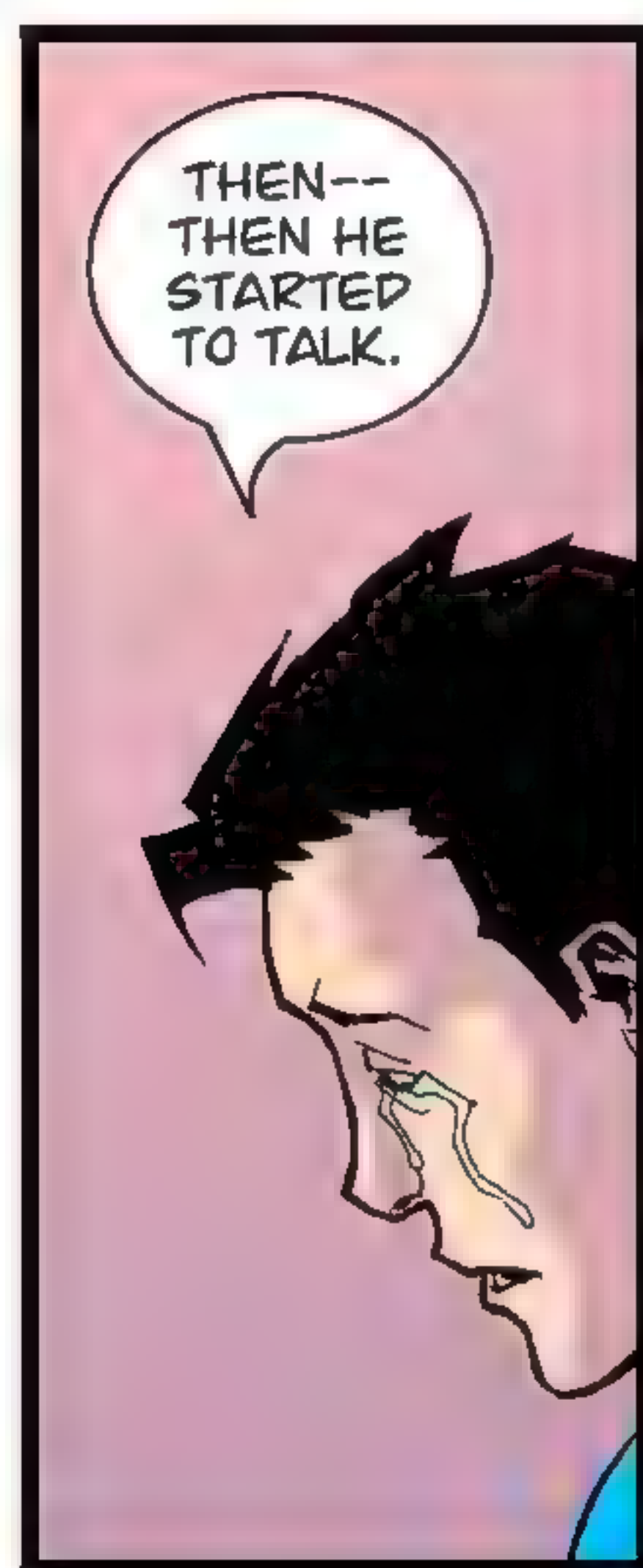
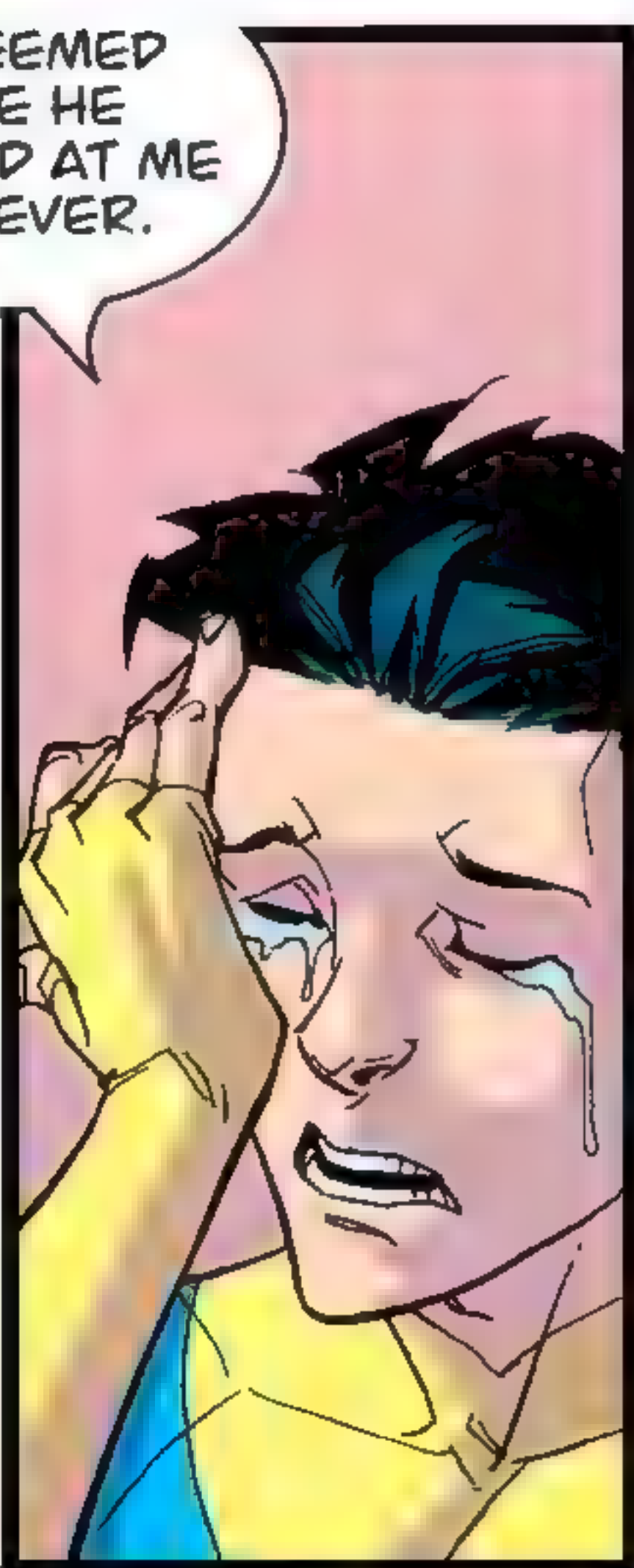
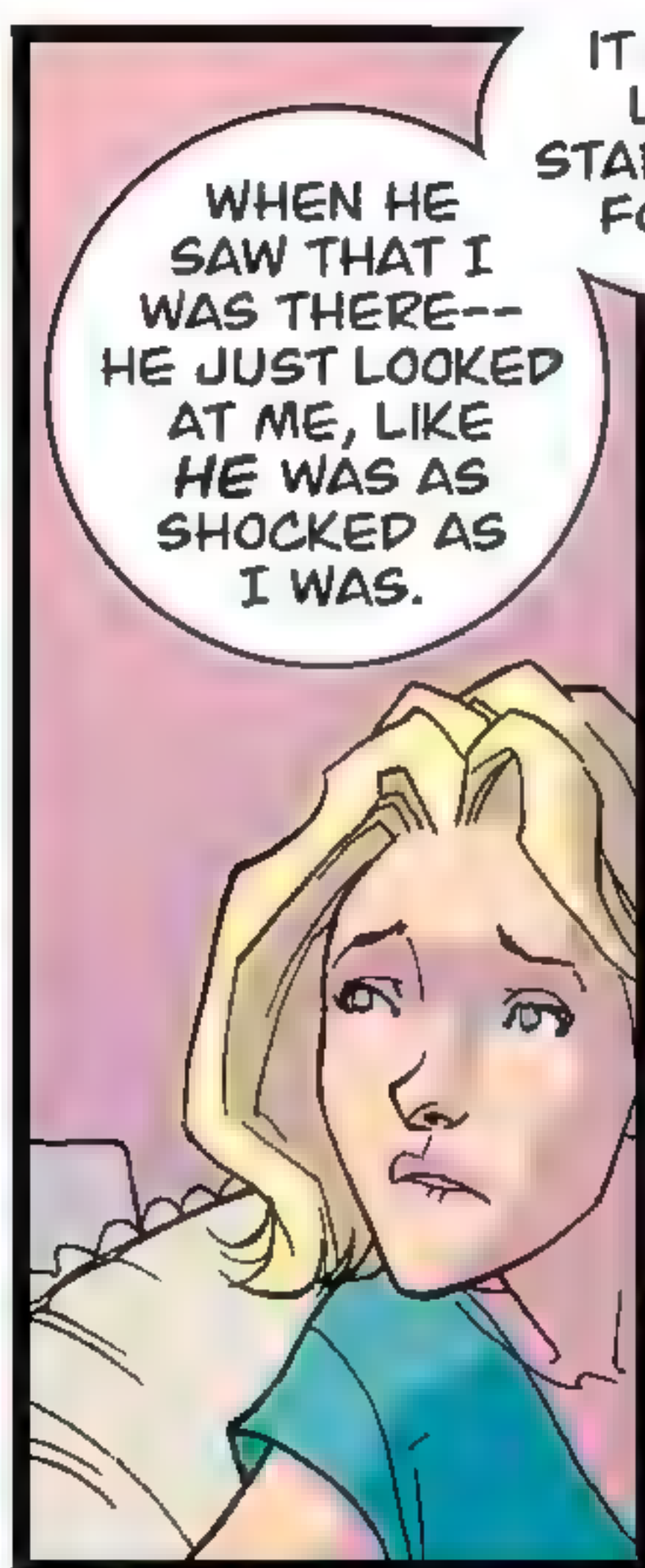
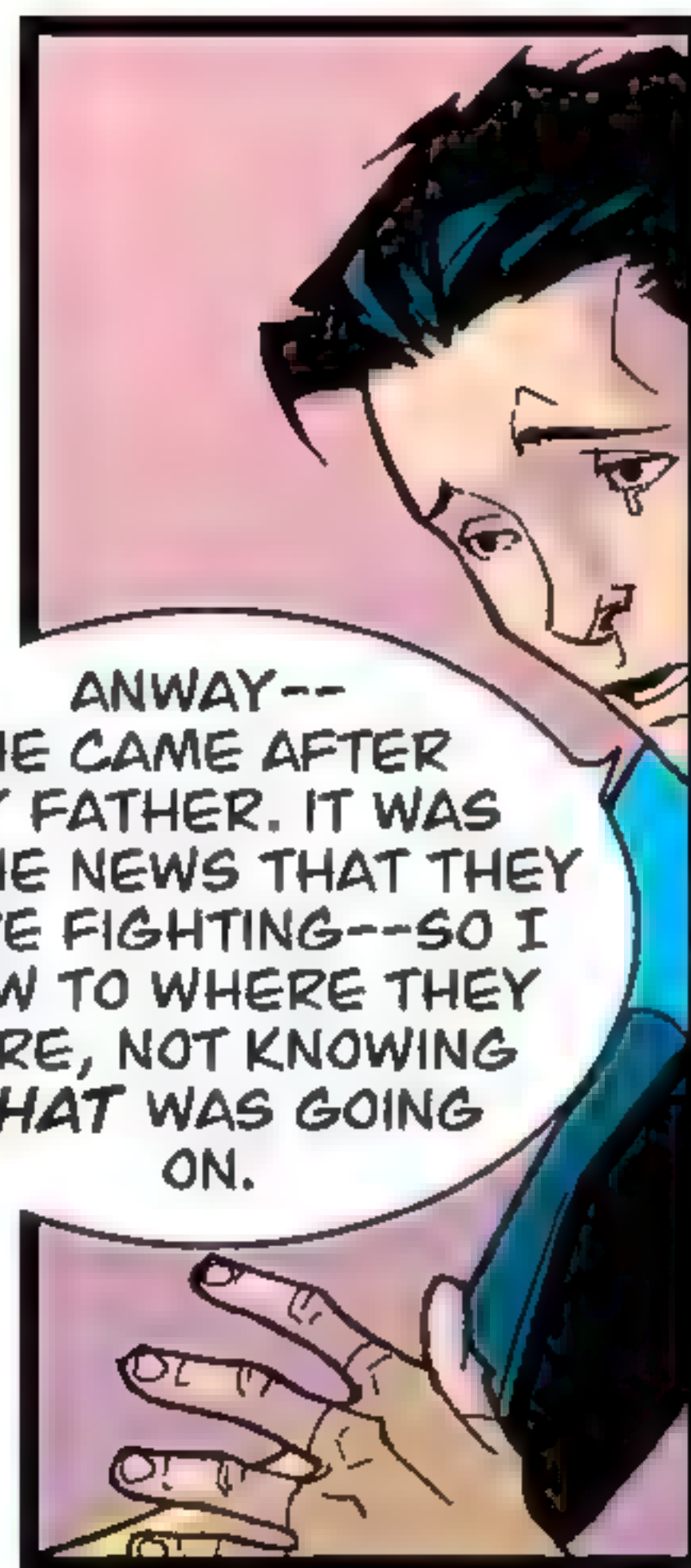
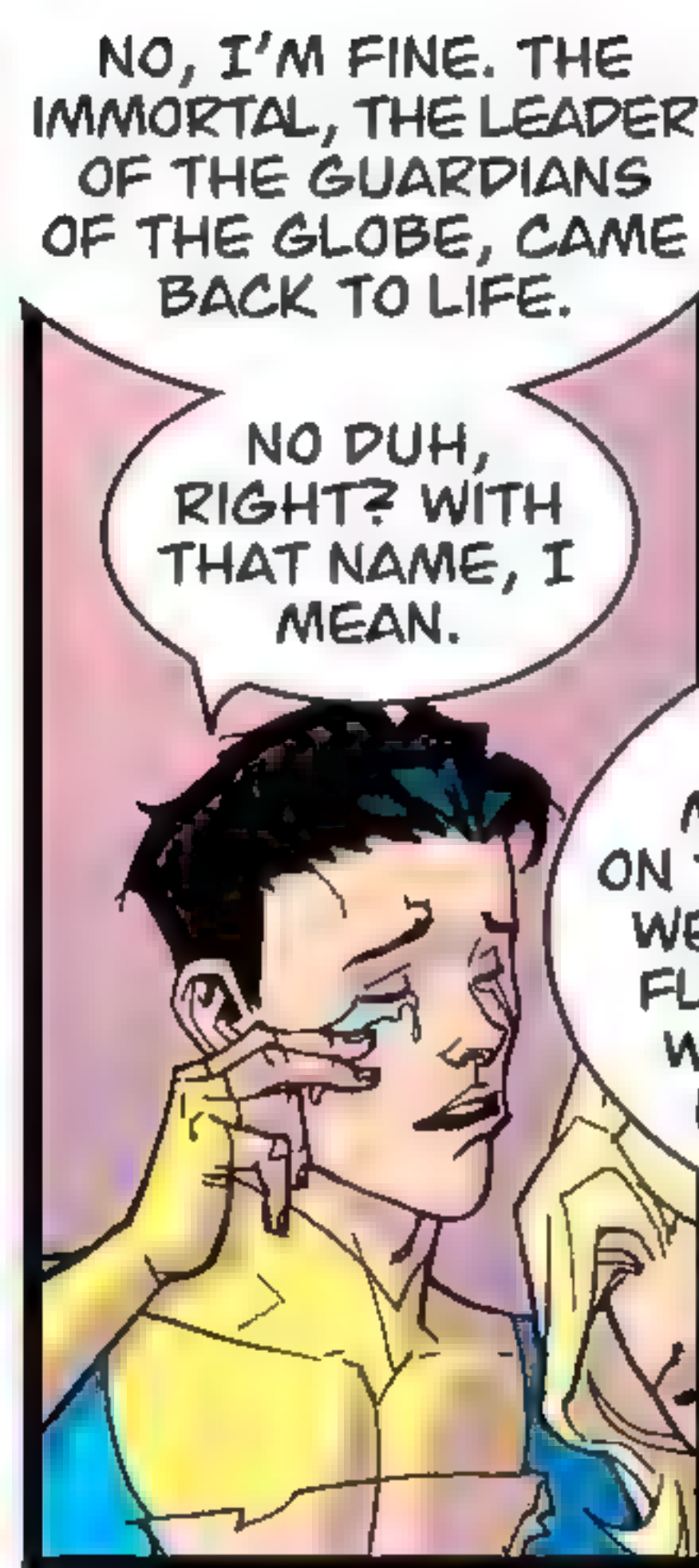
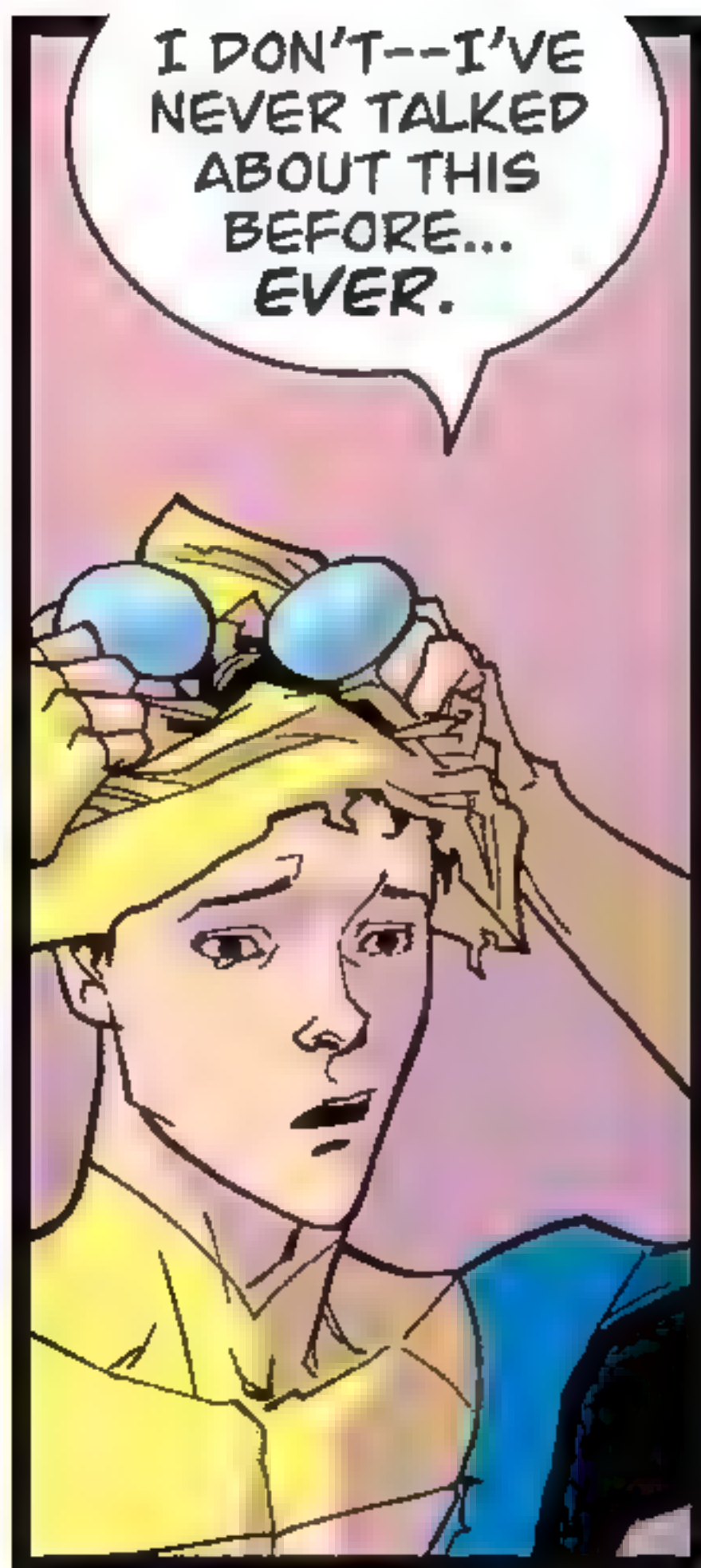
RIGHT?

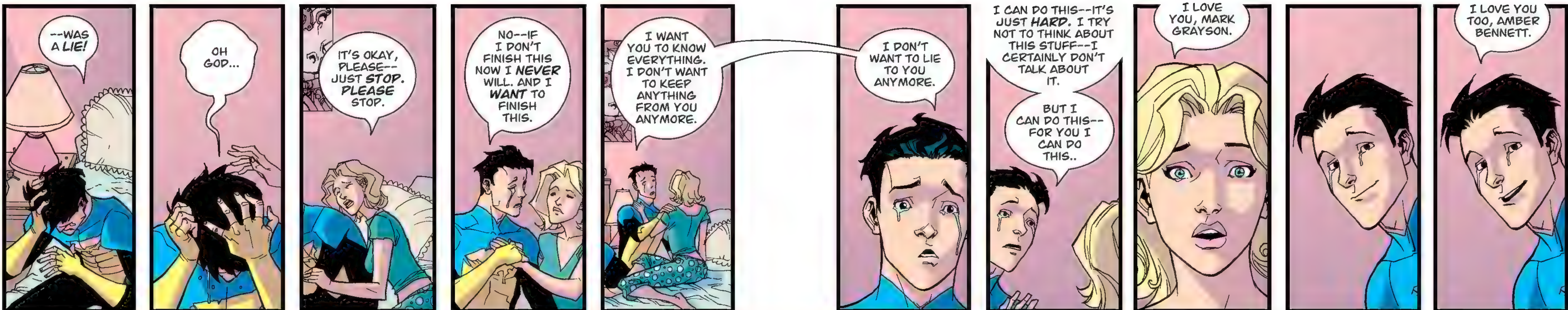
NO! I HAD NO IDEA WHO HAD DONE IT.

OH--HOW LONG WAS IT BEFORE YOU FOUND OUT?

I DON'T KNOW... A MONTH.

HOW DID YOU FIND OUT?





--WAS A LIE!

OH GOD...

IT'S OKAY, PLEASE-- JUST STOP. PLEASE STOP.

NO--IF I DON'T FINISH THIS NOW I NEVER WILL. AND I WANT TO FINISH THIS.

I WANT YOU TO KNOW EVERYTHING. I DON'T WANT TO KEEP ANYTHING FROM YOU ANYMORE.

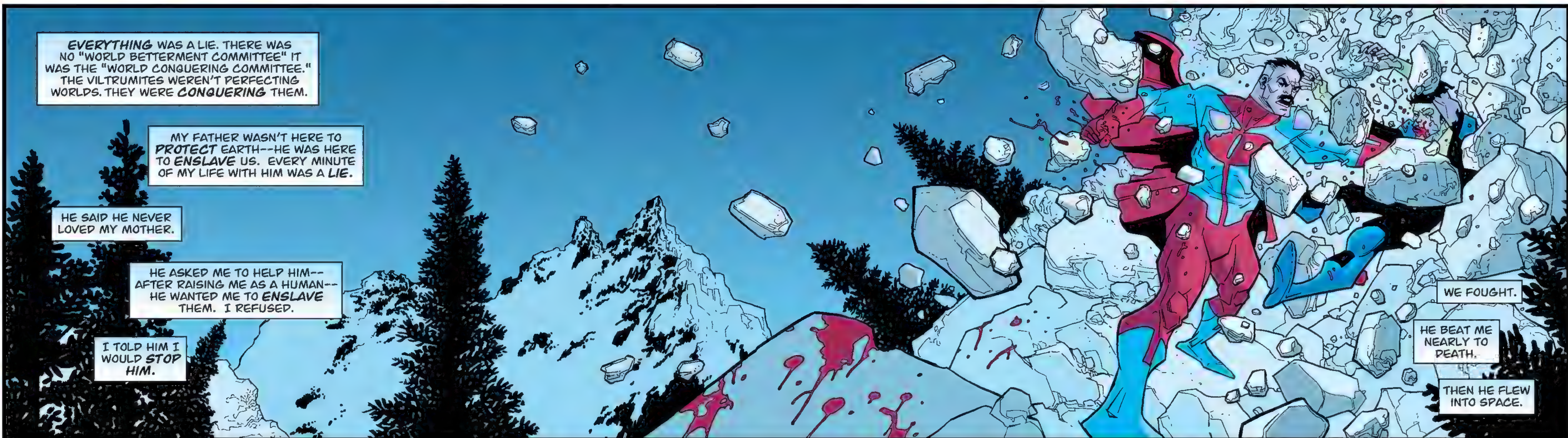
I DON'T WANT TO LIE TO YOU ANYMORE.

I CAN DO THIS--IT'S JUST HARD. I TRY NOT TO THINK ABOUT THIS STUFF--I CERTAINLY DON'T TALK ABOUT IT.

BUT I CAN DO THIS--FOR YOU I CAN DO THIS..

I LOVE YOU, MARK GRAYSON.

I LOVE YOU TOO, AMBER BENNETT.



EVERYTHING WAS A LIE. THERE WAS NO "WORLD BETTERMENT COMMITTEE" IT WAS THE "WORLD CONQUERING COMMITTEE." THE VILTRUMITES WEREN'T PERFECTING WORLDS. THEY WERE CONQUERING THEM.

MY FATHER WASN'T HERE TO PROTECT EARTH--HE WAS HERE TO ENSLAVE US. EVERY MINUTE OF MY LIFE WITH HIM WAS A LIE.

HE SAID HE NEVER LOVED MY MOTHER.

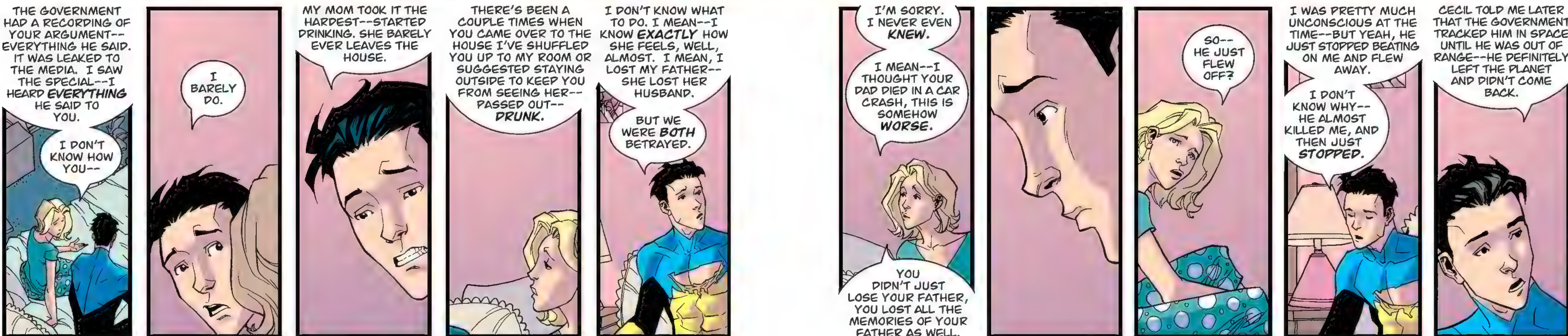
HE ASKED ME TO HELP HIM-- AFTER RAISING ME AS A HUMAN-- HE WANTED ME TO ENSLAVE THEM. I REFUSED.

I TOLD HIM I WOULD STOP HIM.

WE FOUGHT.

HE BEAT ME NEARLY TO DEATH.

THEN HE FLEW INTO SPACE.



THE GOVERNMENT HAD A RECORDING OF YOUR ARGUMENT-- EVERYTHING HE SAID. IT WAS LEAKED TO THE MEDIA. I SAW THE SPECIAL--I HEARD EVERYTHING HE SAID TO YOU.

I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU--

I BARELY DO.

MY MOM TOOK IT THE HARDEST--STARTED DRINKING. SHE BARELY EVER LEAVES THE HOUSE.

THERE'S BEEN A COUPLE TIMES WHEN YOU CAME OVER TO THE HOUSE I'VE SHUFFLED YOU UP TO MY ROOM OR SUGGESTED STAYING OUTSIDE TO KEEP YOU FROM SEEING HER-- PASSED OUT-- DRUNK.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO. I MEAN--I KNOW EXACTLY HOW SHE FEELS, WELL, ALMOST. I MEAN, I LOST MY FATHER-- SHE LOST HER HUSBAND.

BUT WE WERE BOTH BETRAYED.

I'M SORRY. I NEVER EVEN KNEW.

I MEAN--I THOUGHT YOUR DAD DIED IN A CAR CRASH, THIS IS SOMEHOW WORSE.

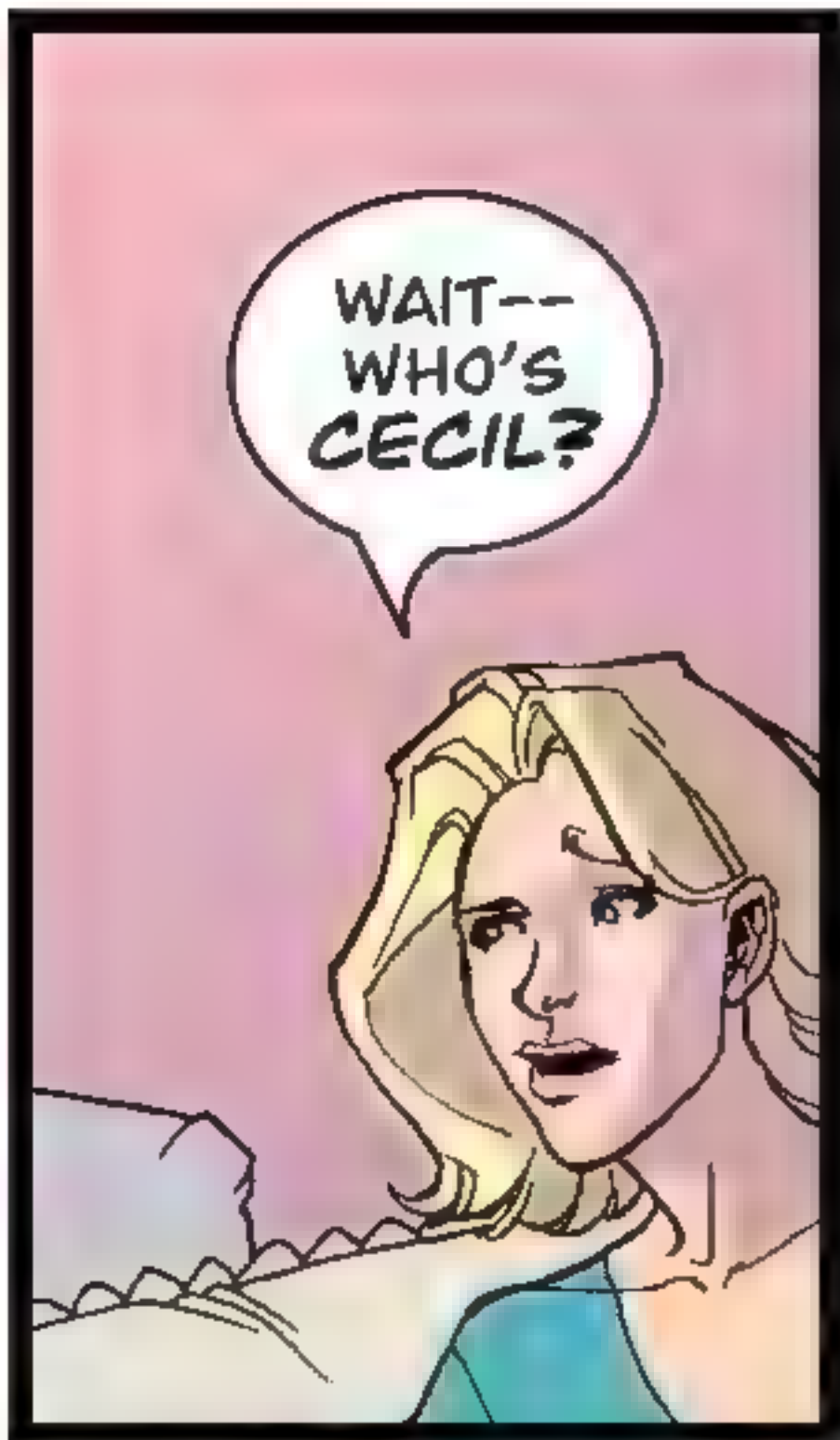
YOU DIDN'T JUST LOSE YOUR FATHER, YOU LOST ALL THE MEMORIES OF YOUR FATHER AS WELL.

SO-- HE JUST FLEW OFF?

I WAS PRETTY MUCH UNCONSCIOUS AT THE TIME--BUT YEAH, HE JUST STOPPED BEATING ON ME AND FLEW AWAY.

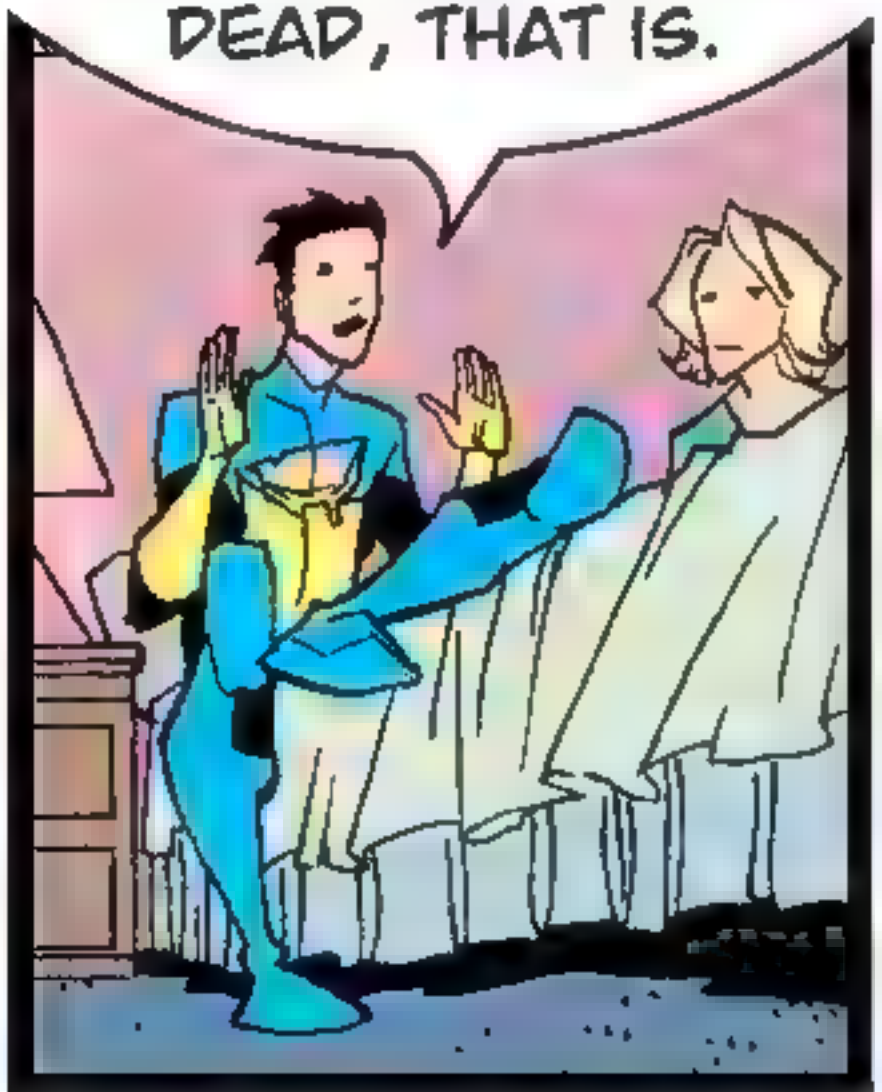
I DON'T KNOW WHY-- HE ALMOST KILLED ME, AND THEN JUST STOPPED.

CECIL TOLD ME LATER THAT THE GOVERNMENT TRACKED HIM IN SPACE UNTIL HE WAS OUT OF RANGE--HE DEFINITELY LEFT THE PLANET AND DIDN'T COME BACK.



WAIT--
WHO'S
CECIL?

OH, SORRY. I GUESS
I GOT A LITTLE AHEAD
OF MYSELF. CECIL
WAS THE GUY THAT
SAVED ME--AFTER MY
DAD LEFT ME FOR
DEAD, THAT IS.



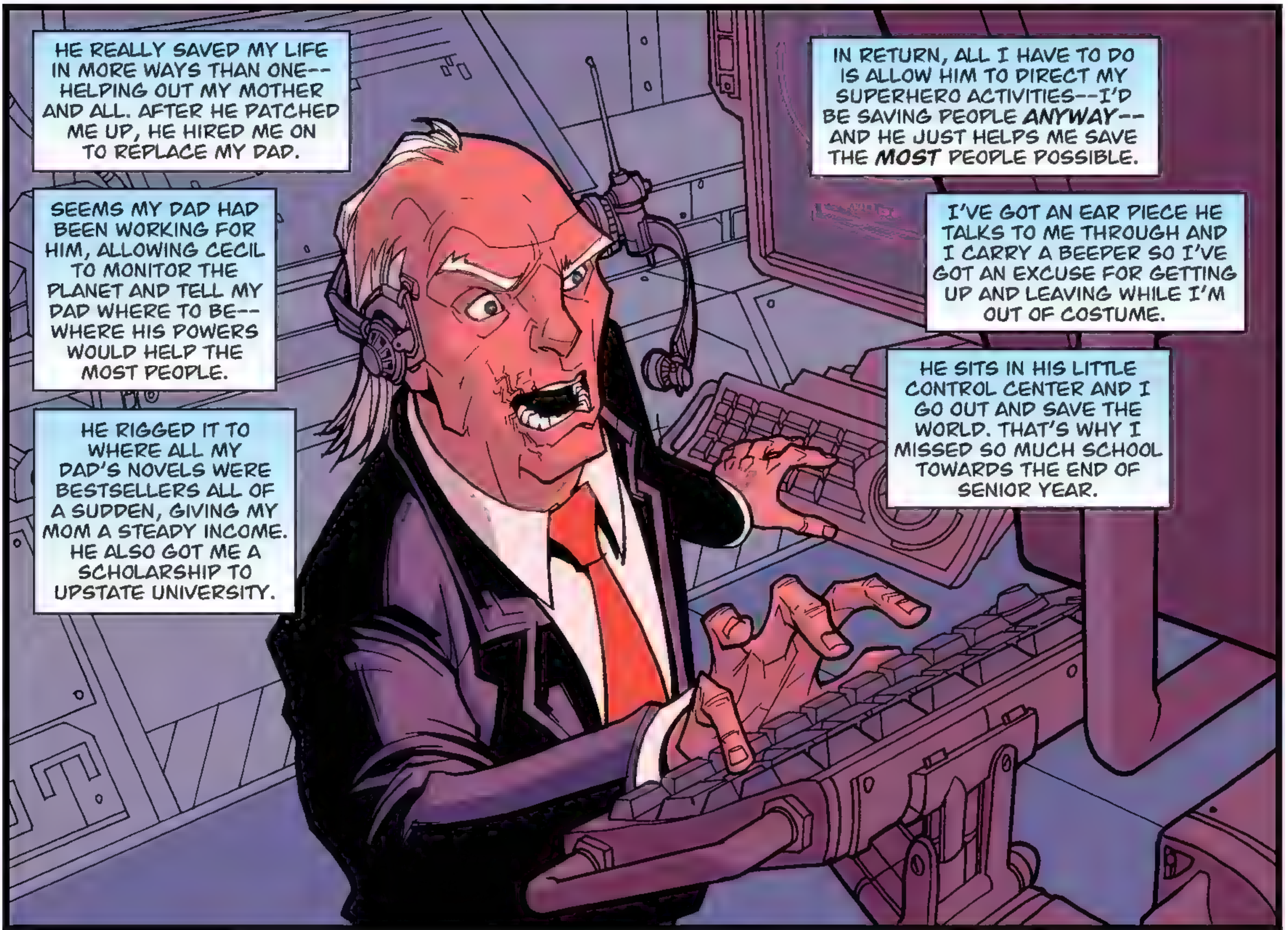
OH,
IS HE A
SUPER-
HERO?



CALLED CECIL?
OH, NO--HE'S A
SPOOKY GOVERN-
MENT GUY--REALLY
NICE THOUGH. I
LIKE HIM.



HE'S GOT
SOME KIND OF
SUPER SECRET
UNDERGROUND BASE
BELOW THE PENTAGON.
THEY HAD THE ONLY
HOSPITAL QUALIFIED
TO TREAT MY
INJURIES.



HE REALLY SAVED MY LIFE
IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE--
HELPING OUT MY MOTHER
AND ALL. AFTER HE PATCHED
ME UP, HE HIRED ME ON
TO REPLACE MY DAD.

SEEMS MY DAD HAD
BEEN WORKING FOR HIM,
ALLOWING CECIL TO
MONITOR THE
PLANET AND TELL MY
DAD WHERE TO BE--
WHERE HIS POWERS
WOULD HELP THE
MOST PEOPLE.

HE RIGGED IT TO
WHERE ALL MY
DAD'S NOVELS WERE
BESTSELLERS ALL OF
A SUDDEN, GIVING MY
MOM A STEADY INCOME.
HE ALSO GOT ME A
SCHOLARSHIP TO
UPSTATE UNIVERSITY.

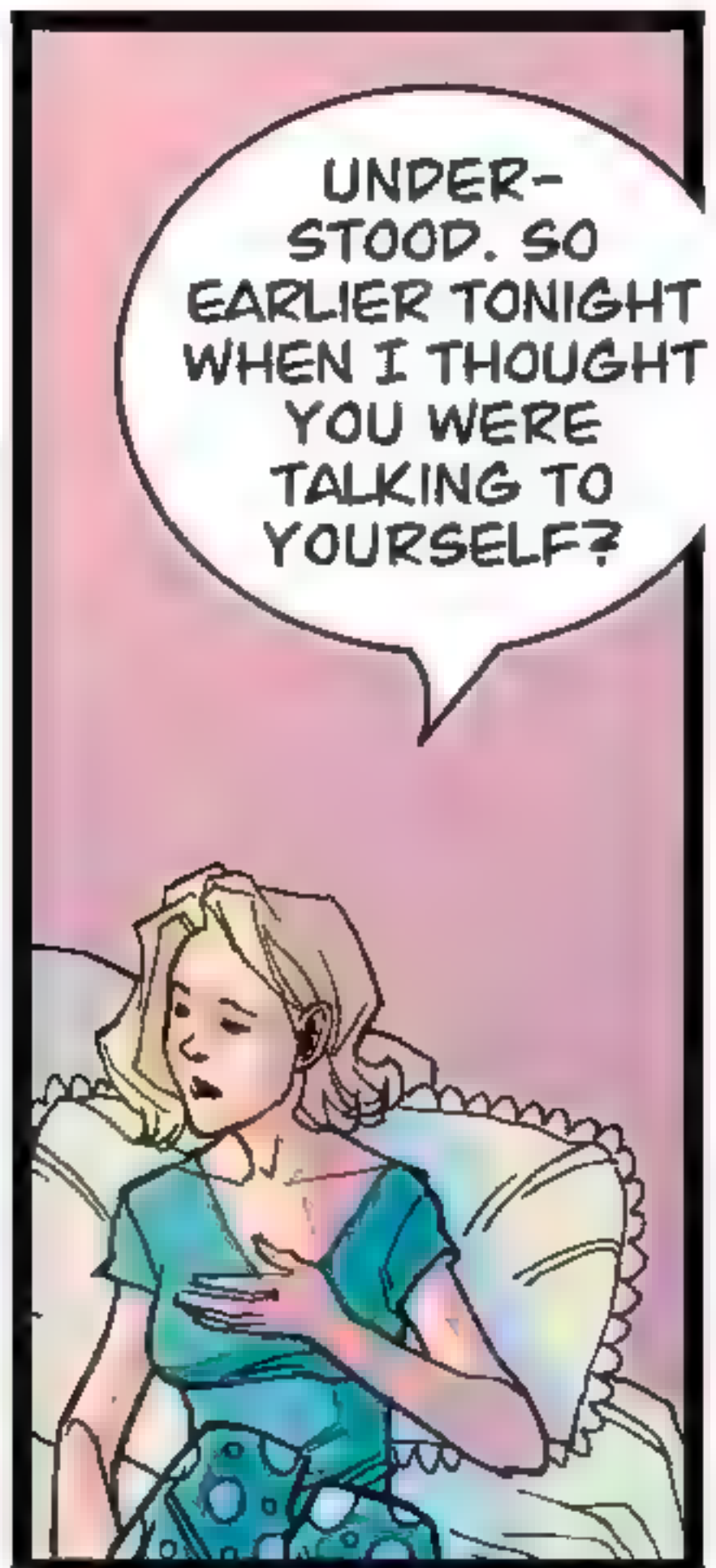
IN RETURN, ALL I HAVE TO DO
IS ALLOW HIM TO DIRECT MY
SUPERHERO ACTIVITIES--I'D
BE SAVING PEOPLE ANYWAY--
AND HE JUST HELPS ME SAVE
THE **MOST** PEOPLE POSSIBLE.

I'VE GOT AN EAR PIECE HE
TALKS TO ME THROUGH AND
I CARRY A BEEPER SO I'VE
GOT AN EXCUSE FOR GETTING
UP AND LEAVING WHILE I'M
OUT OF COSTUME.

HE SITS IN HIS LITTLE
CONTROL CENTER AND I
GO OUT AND SAVE THE
WORLD. THAT'S WHY I
MISSED SO MUCH SCHOOL
TOWARDS THE END OF
SENIOR YEAR.



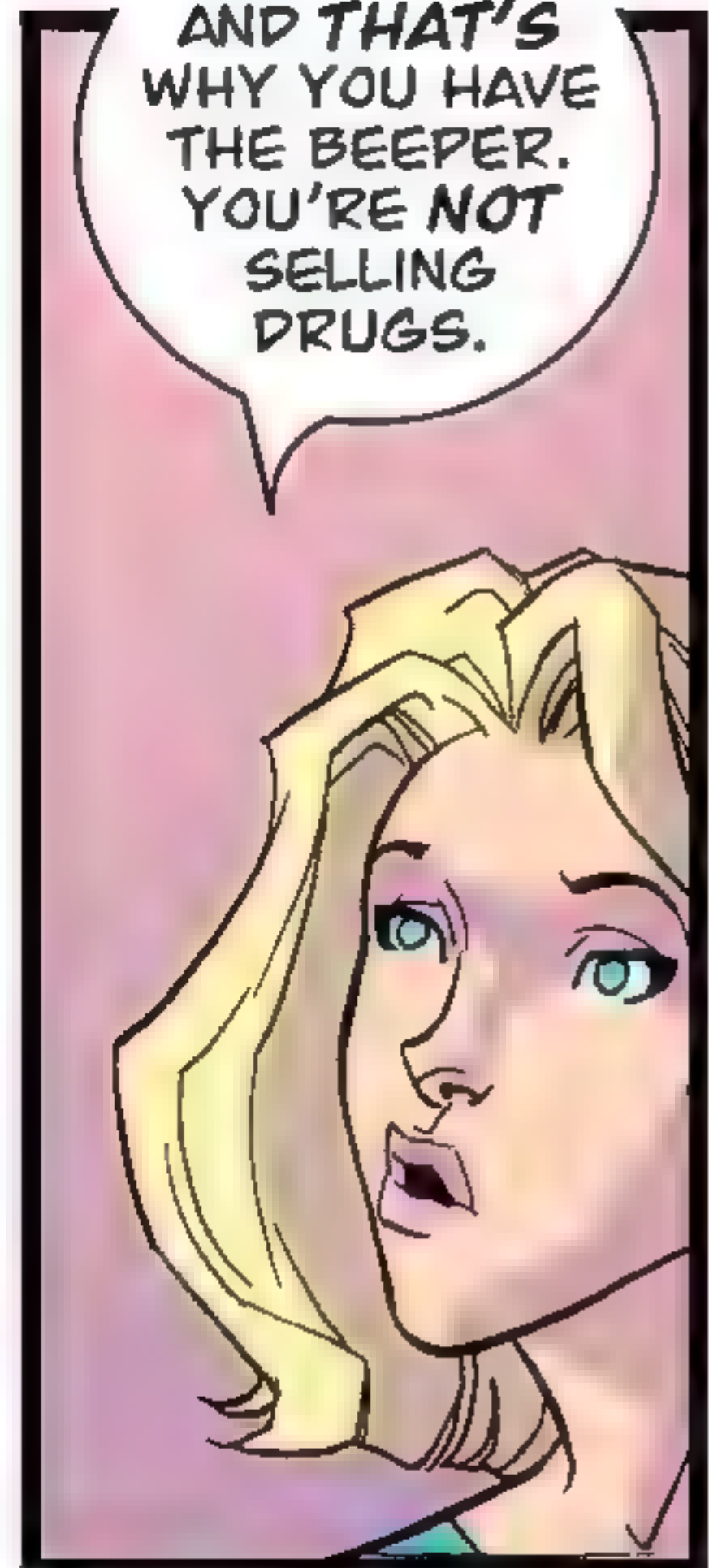
OH, AND
DON'T EVER
SAY ANYTHING
ABOUT **HIM** TO
ANYONE. HE'S
WAY TOP SECRET.
I KNOW--I CAN
TRUST YOU.
JUST GOTTA
SAY IT
Y'KNOW?



UNDER-
STOOD. SO
EARLIER TONIGHT
WHEN I THOUGHT
YOU WERE
TALKING TO
YOURSELF?



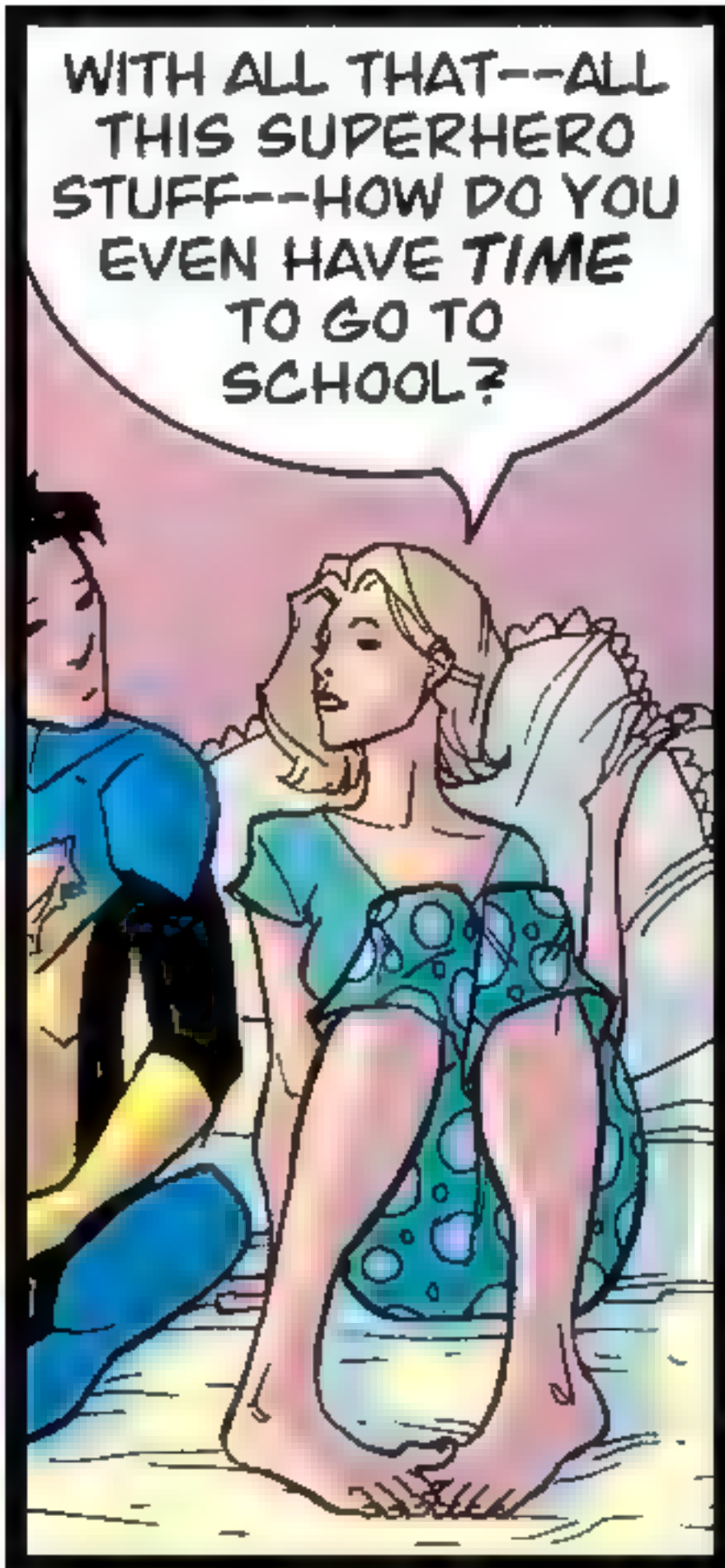
YEP.
THAT WAS
HIM.



AND THAT'S
WHY YOU HAVE
THE BEEPER.
YOU'RE NOT
SELLING
DRUGS.



NOPE. I'M OUT SAVING
THE WORLD--FIGHTING
BAD GUYS AND STUFF.
I CAN'T **BELIEVE** YOU
THOUGHT I WAS A
DRUG DEALER.



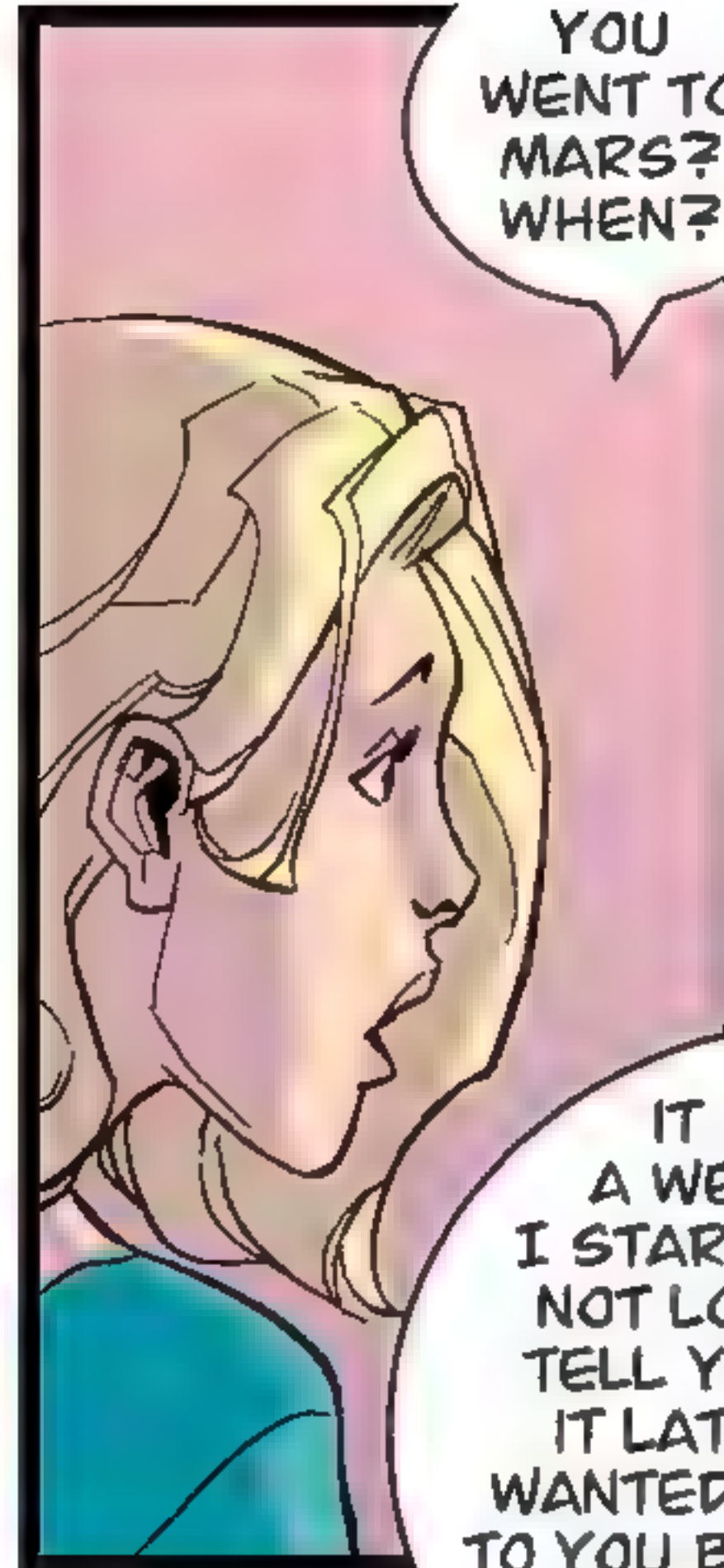
WITH ALL THAT--ALL THIS SUPERHERO STUFF--HOW DO YOU EVEN HAVE **TIME** TO GO TO SCHOOL?



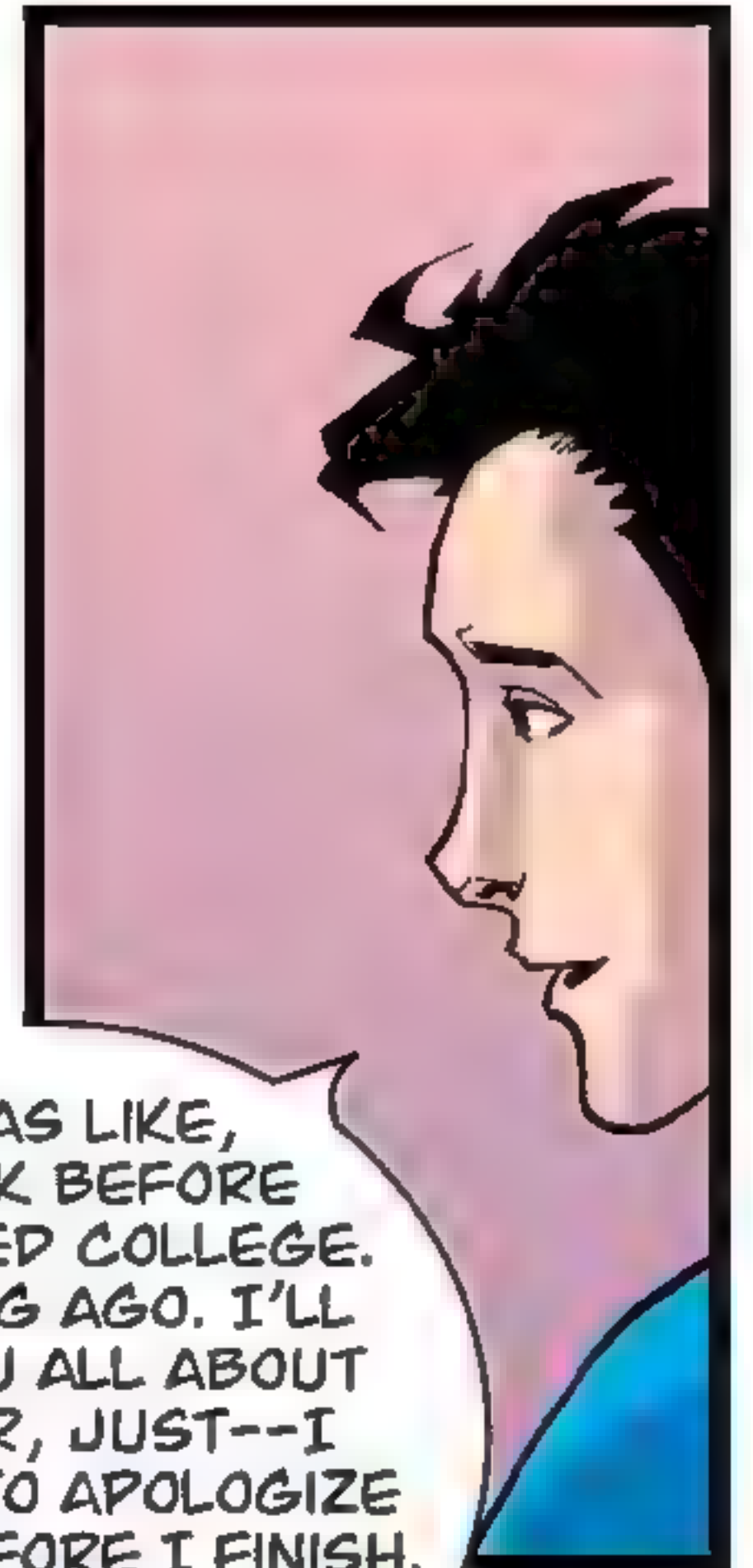
IT'S NOT THAT BAD-- THERE ARE ENTIRE **WEEKS** THAT GO BY WITHOUT ME GETTING CALLED TO DO ANY-THING.



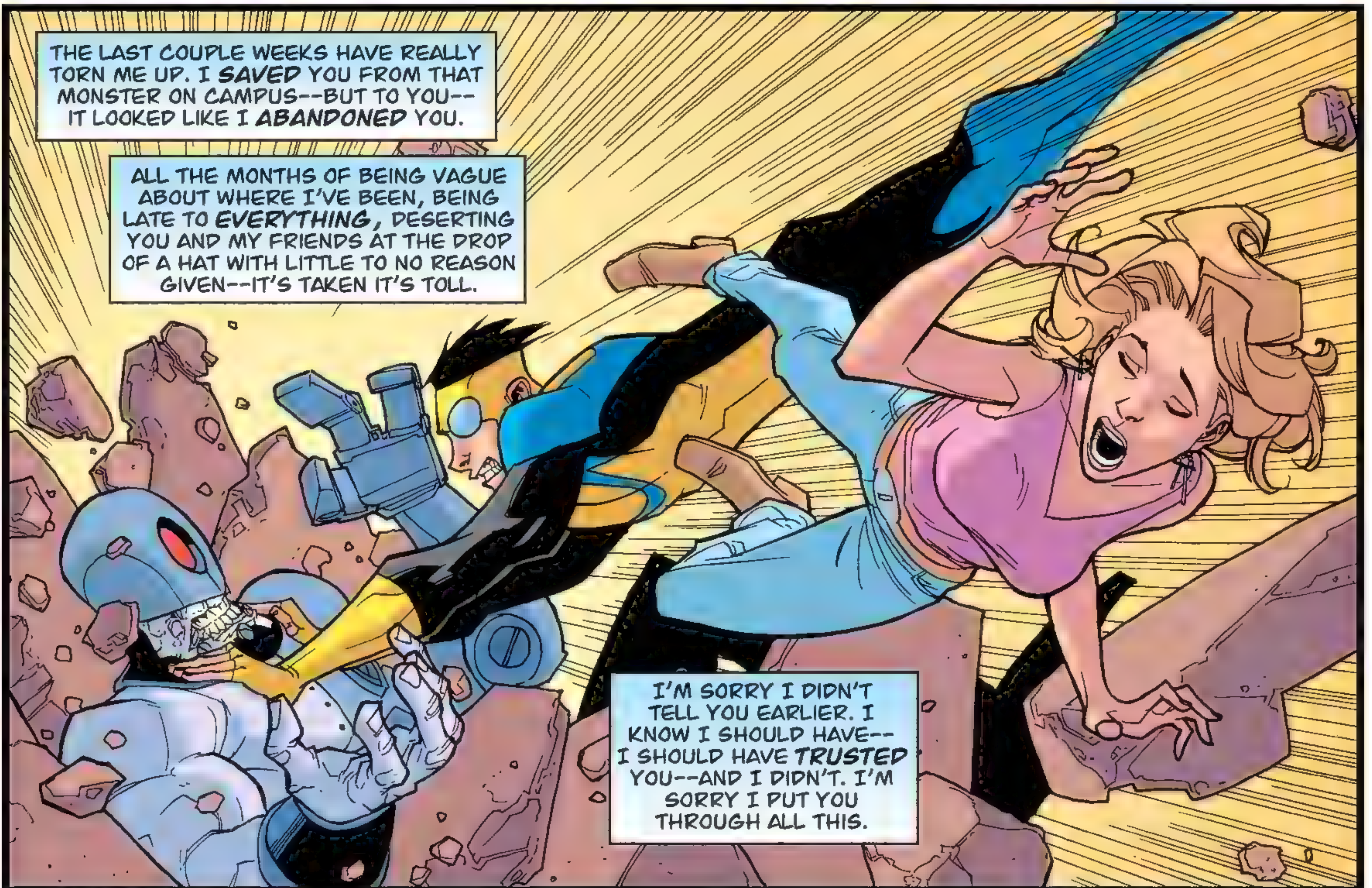
BUT THERE ARE **SOME** WEEKS... WHERE I'M WORKING NON-STOP. MAN, THE WEEK I WENT TO **MARS** ALMOST KILLED ME.



YOU WENT TO **MARS**? WHEN?



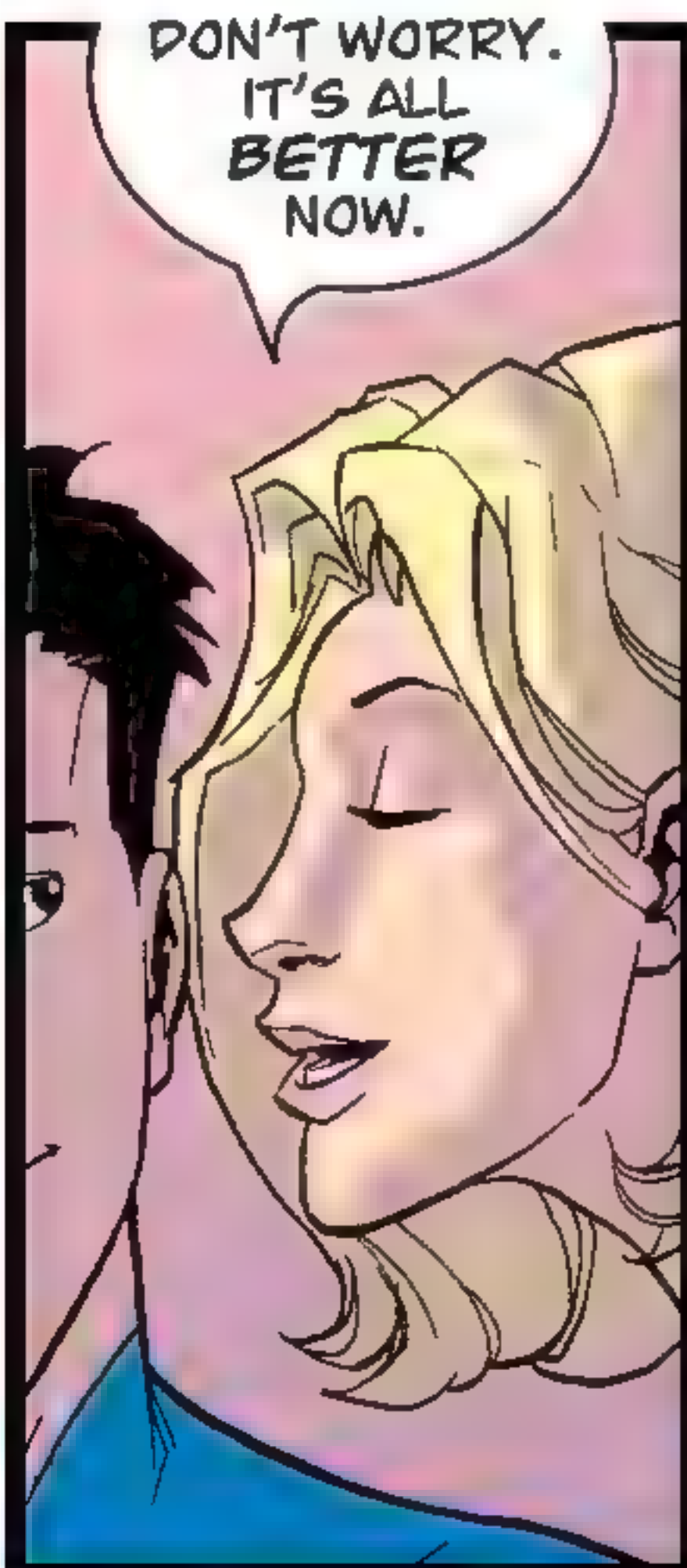
IT WAS LIKE, A WEEK BEFORE I STARTED COLLEGE. NOT LONG AGO. I'LL TELL YOU ALL ABOUT IT LATER, JUST--I WANTED TO APOLOGIZE TO YOU BEFORE I FINISH.



THE LAST COUPLE WEEKS HAVE REALLY TORN ME UP. I **SAVED** YOU FROM THAT MONSTER ON CAMPUS--BUT TO YOU--IT LOOKED LIKE I **ABANDONED** YOU.

ALL THE MONTHS OF BEING VAGUE ABOUT WHERE I'VE BEEN, BEING LATE TO **EVERYTHING**, DESERTING YOU AND MY FRIENDS AT THE DROP OF A HAT WITH LITTLE TO NO REASON GIVEN--IT'S TAKEN ITS TOLL.

I'M SORRY I DIDN'T TELL YOU EARLIER. I KNOW I SHOULD HAVE-- I SHOULD HAVE **TRUSTED** YOU--AND I DIDN'T. I'M SORRY I PUT YOU THROUGH ALL THIS.



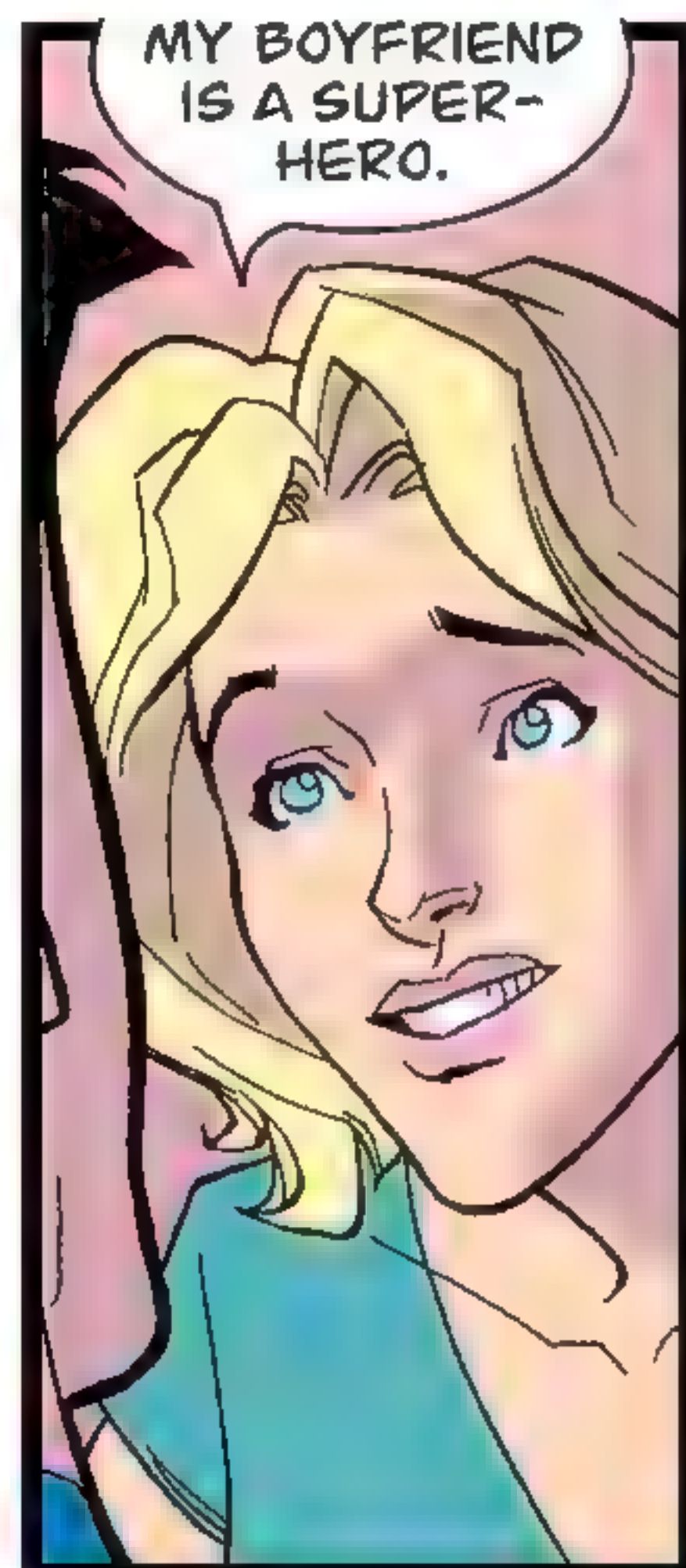
DON'T WORRY. IT'S ALL **BETTER** NOW.



YEAH-- IT **REALLY** IS.



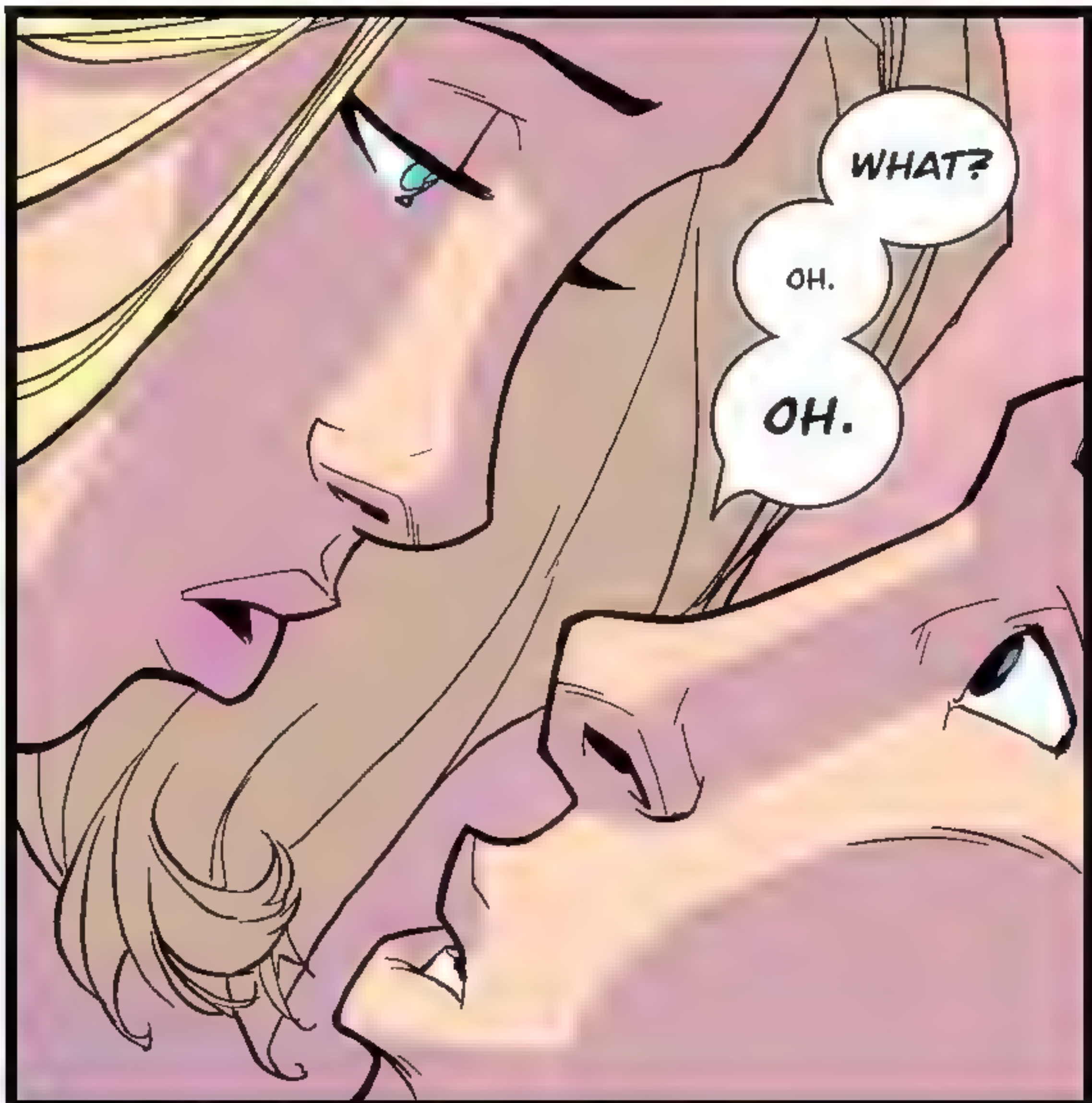
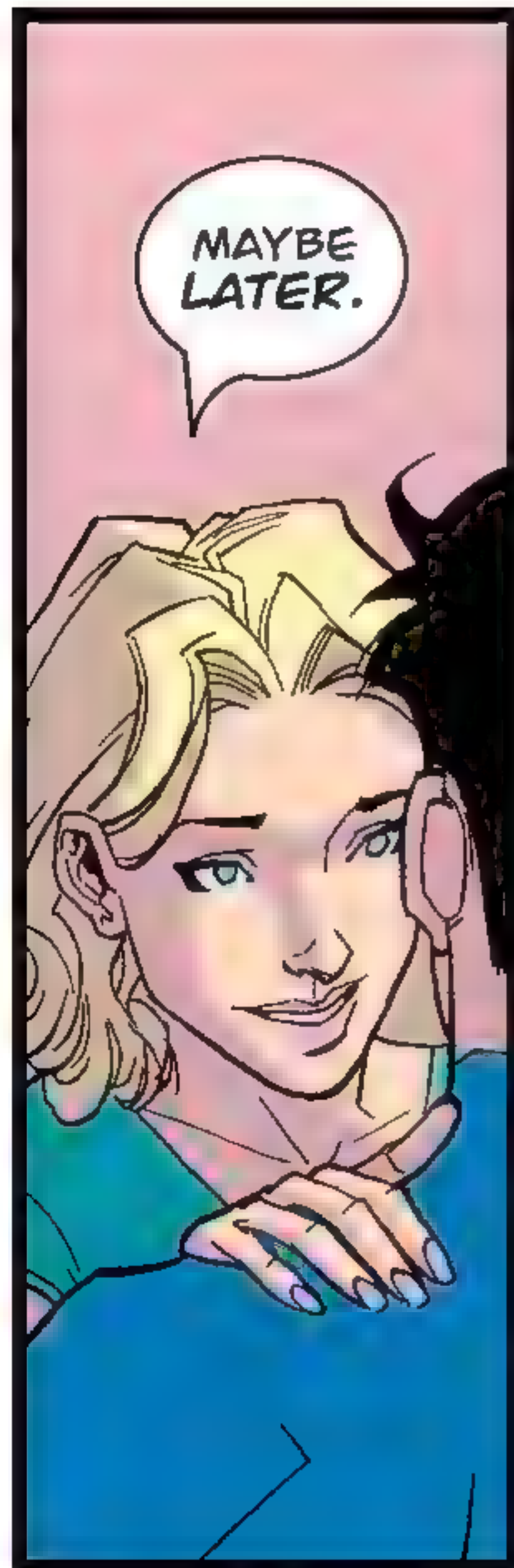
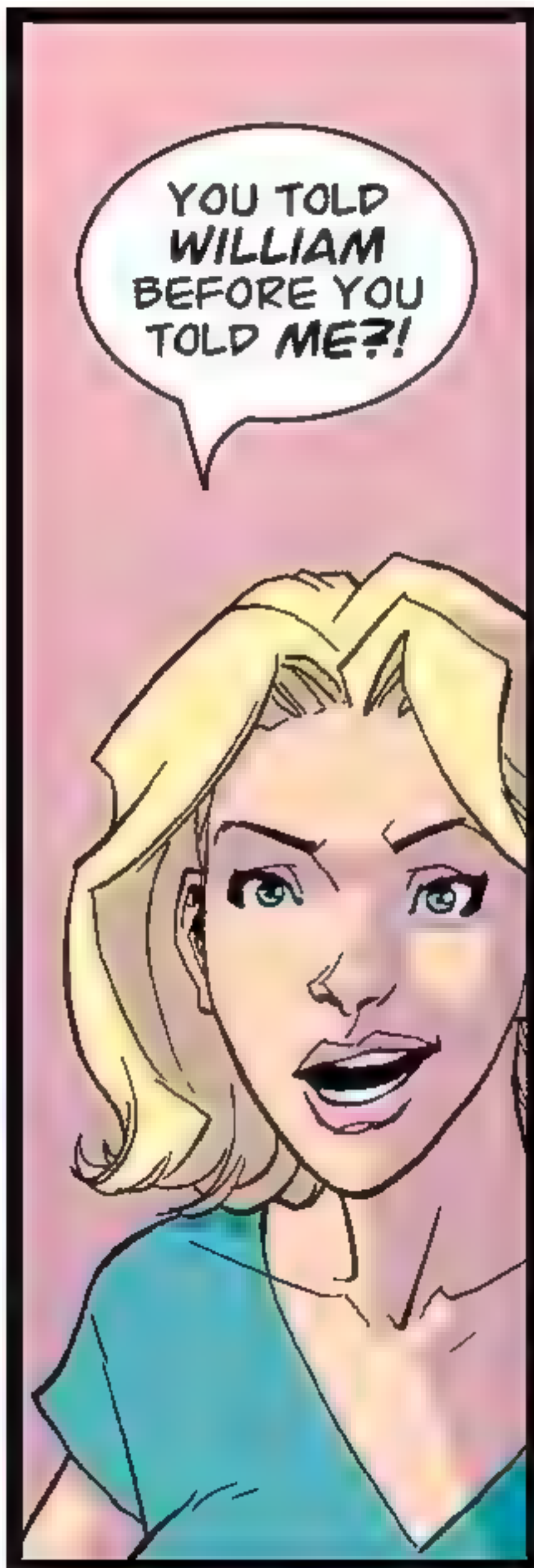
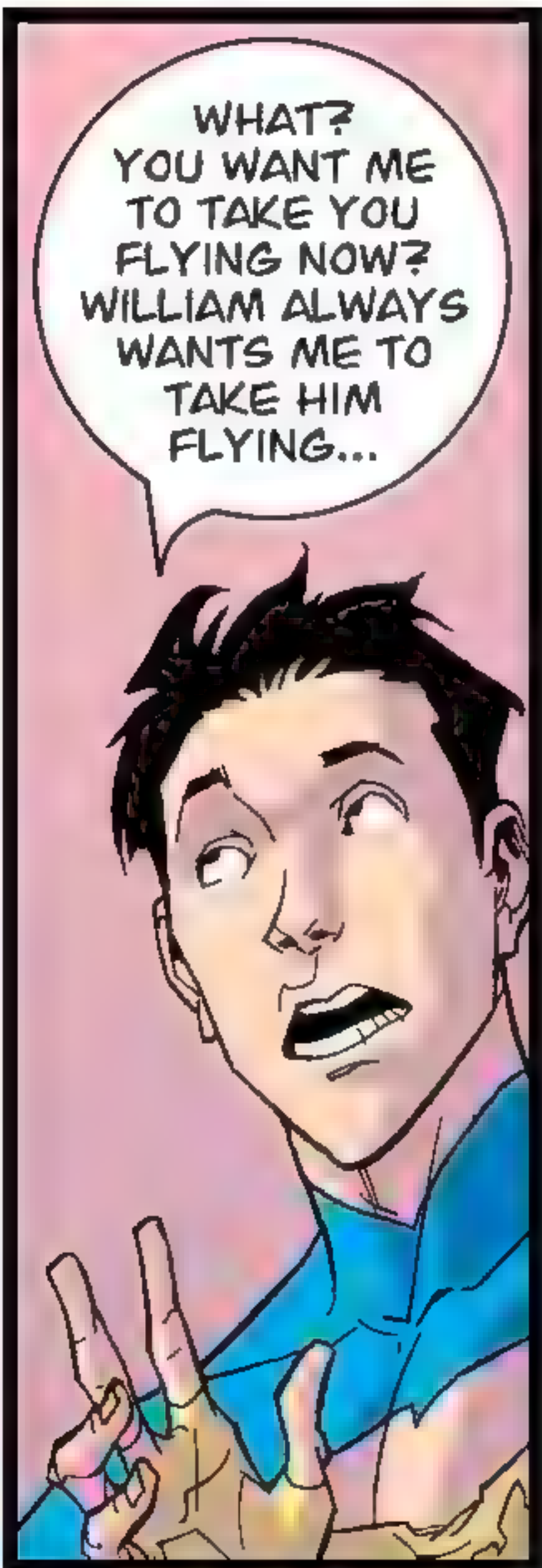
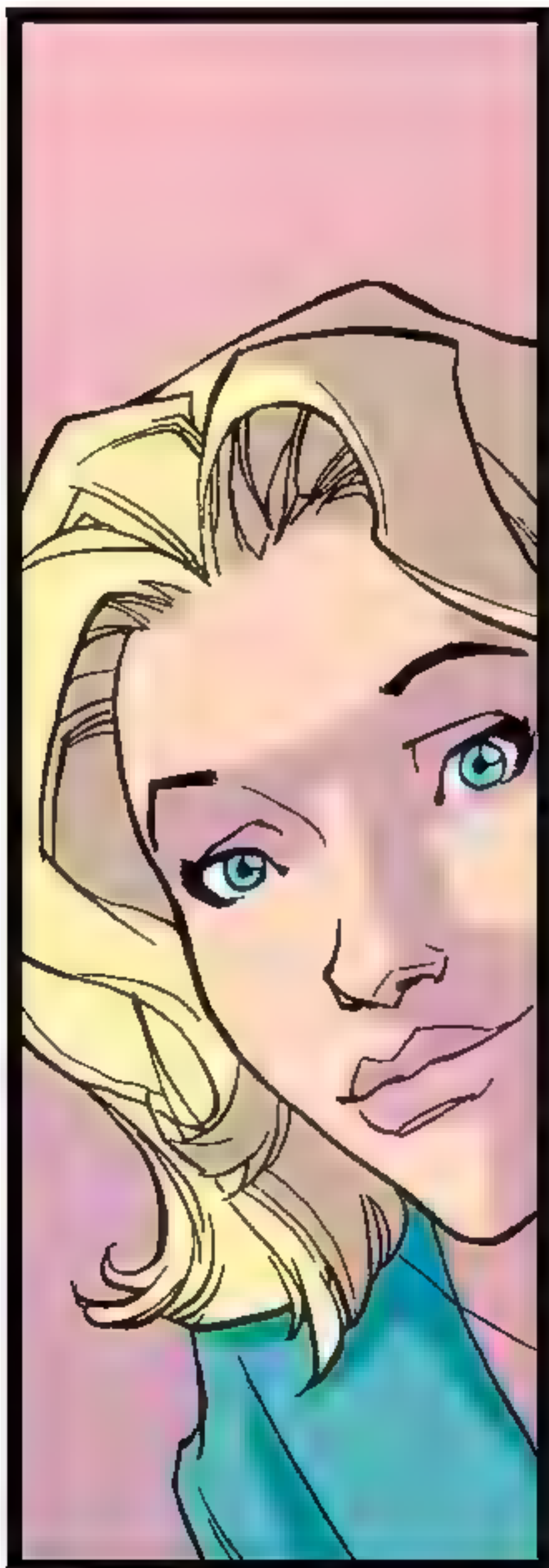
SO THAT'S ME-- SUPERHERO MARK. THAT'S **EVERY-THING**.

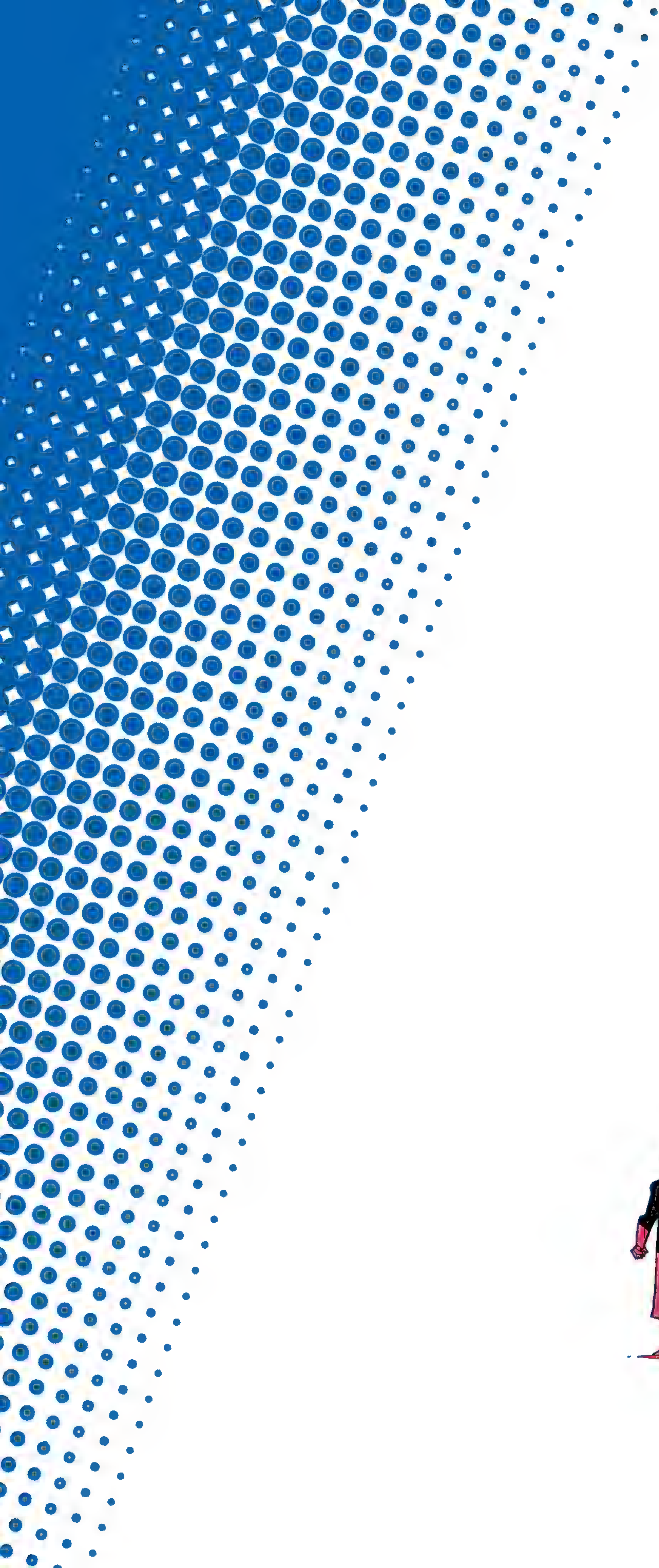


MY BOYFRIEND IS A SUPER-HERO.



YOUR BOY-FRIEND IS A SUPER-HERO.





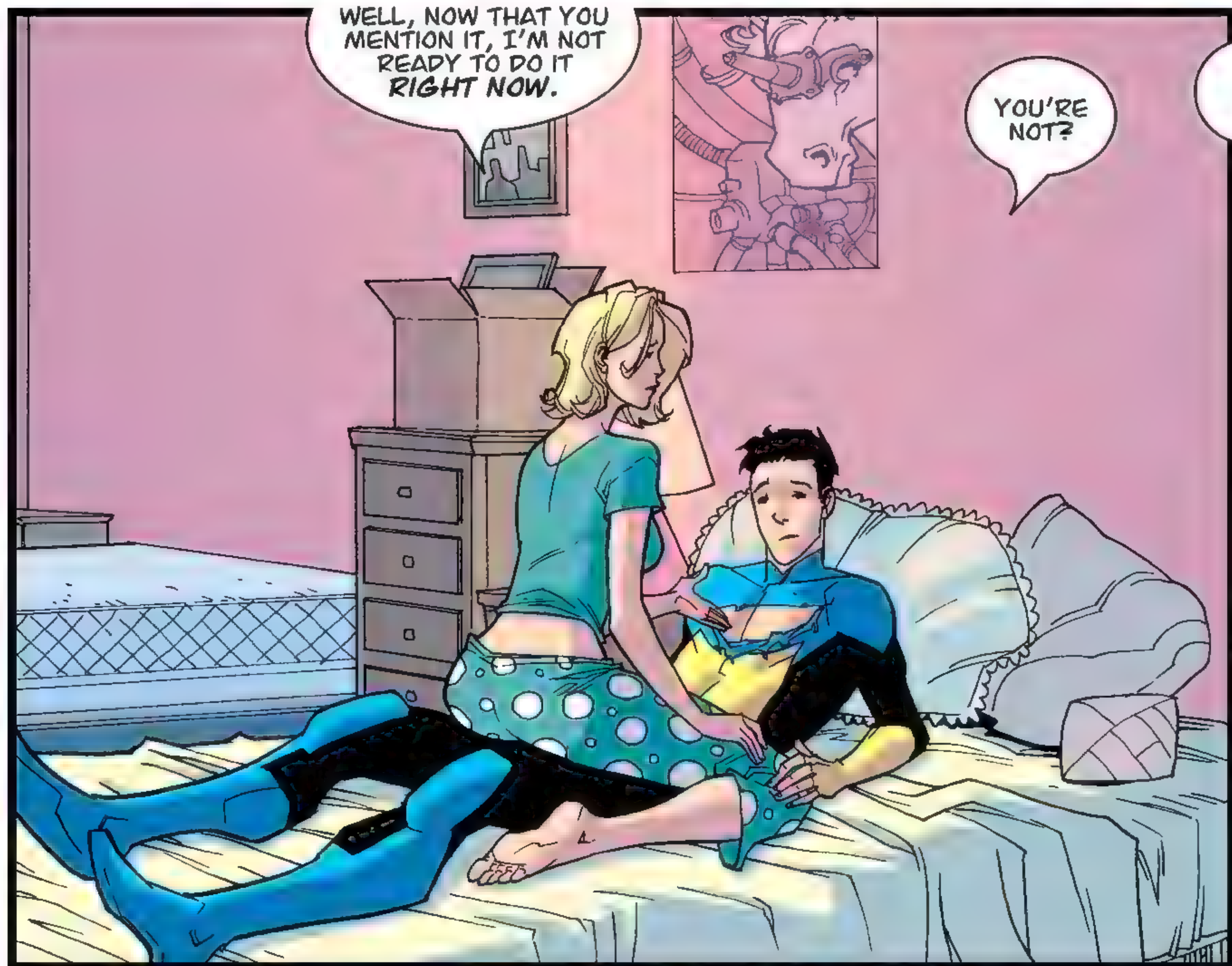
ISSUE TWENTY-THREE





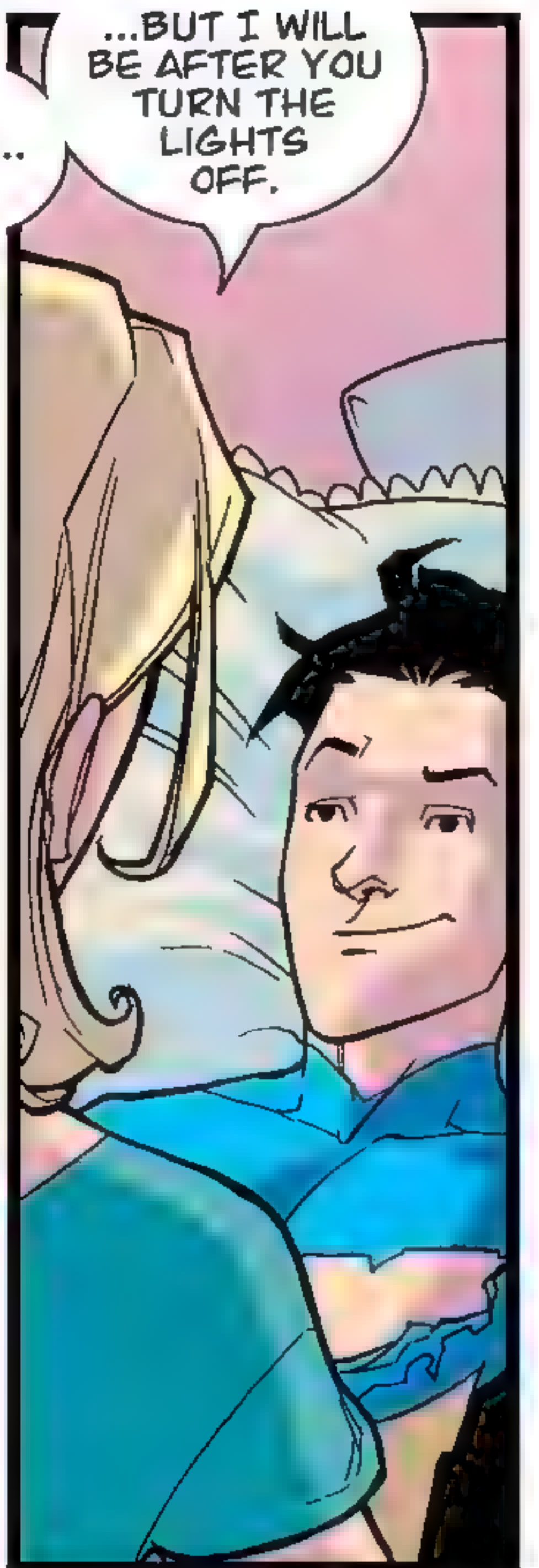
YOU'RE READY FOR THIS? I MEAN--- REALLY READY? I DON'T WANT TO RUSH YOU INTO ANYTHING.

I ONLY WANT TO DO THIS IF YOU WANT TO. DO YOU WANT TO DO THIS RIGHT NOW?



WELL, NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, I'M NOT READY TO DO IT RIGHT NOW.

YOU'RE NOT?



NO...

...BUT I WILL BE AFTER YOU TURN THE LIGHTS OFF.

KLICK.

HOW'D YOU DO THAT?

SUPER-POWERS, BABY.

BORN OF A RACE ENDANGERED, CAST OUT OF THEIR HOMEWORLD LIKE A BAND OF GYPSIES, TESTED AND EXPERIMENTED ON TO INCREASE HIS STRENGTH AND SPEED, UNTIL HE EMERGED A GUARDIAN OF THE SPACEWAYS. IMAGE COMICS PRESENTS: ALLEN THE ALIEN IN:

THIS MESSAGE, THIS MACHINATION!

AND SO, DEAR READER, WE TURN OUR ATTENTIONS ELSEWHERE TO GIVE YOUNG MARK GRAYSON AND AMBER BENNETT SOME PRIVACY.

THIS IS A FAMILY TITLE AFTER ALL.

YES, WE TURN TO EVENTS TRANSPIRING ELSEWHERE, TO BE MORE SPECIFIC, **DEEP SPACE**. TO BE STILL MORE SPECIFIC, DEEP SPACE A FEW MONTHS AGO. TO BE EVEN **STILL MORE SPECIFIC**, DEEP SPACE A FEW MONTHS AGO, ON A DIRECT PATH FROM EARTH TO THE HEART OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS!

ON THIS PATH WE FIND **ALLEN THE ALIEN**, DILIGENT IN HIS MISSION TO DELIVER NEWS TO HIS SUPERIORS. DILIGENT IN BRINGING THEM THE MESSAGE OF HIS DEALINGS ON EARTH!

A MESSAGE THAT GOES SOMETHING LIKE THIS: THERE IS A **VILTRUMITE** ON EARTH WITH NO LOYALTIES TO THE **VILTRUM EMPIRE**. BEYOND THAT THERE IS ANOTHER **VILTRUMITE** WHO HAS ABANDONED HIS POST.*

THESE ACTIONS ARE **UNHEARD OF**--AND NEWS OF THIS MAY WELL BRING THE COALITION THE HOPE IT NEEDS IN THESE DIRE TIMES.

*SEE ISSUE 13, TRUE BELIEVERS.

ROBERT KIRKMAN
WRITER

RYAN OTTLEY
ARTIST

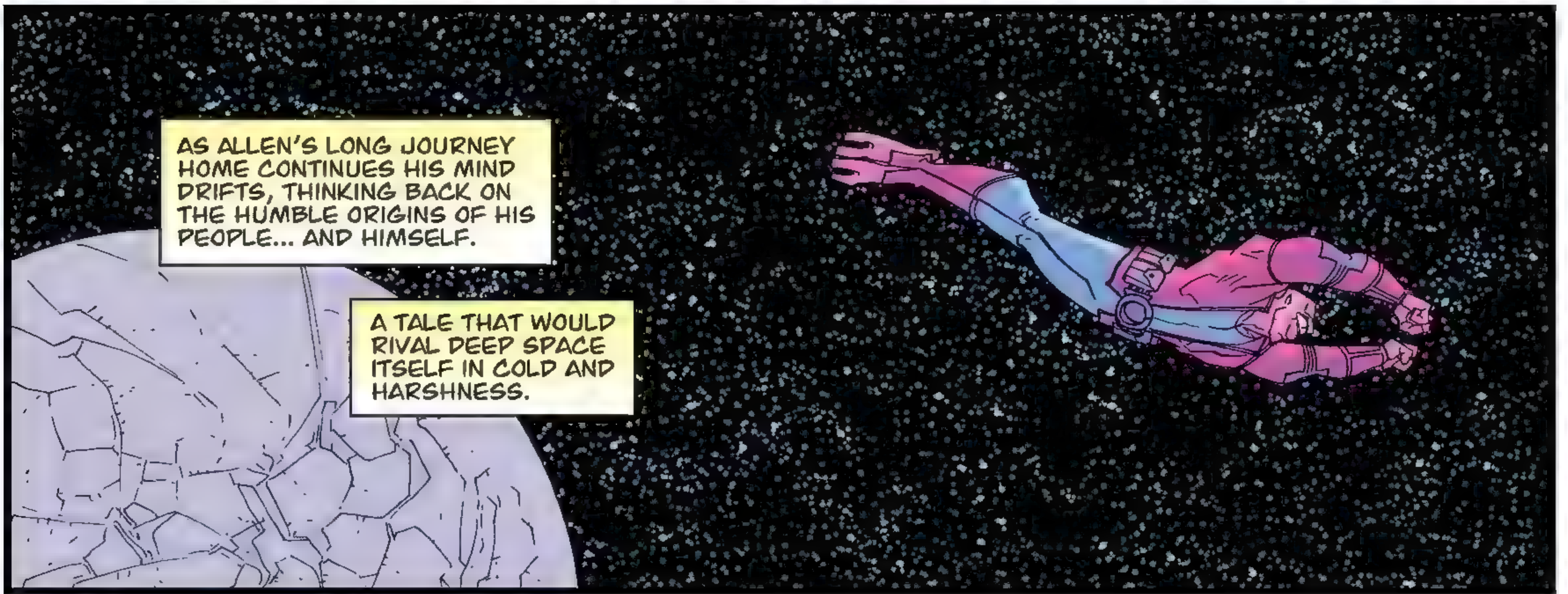
BILL CRABTREE
COLORIST

RUS WOOTON
LETTERER

CORY WALKER
INSPIRATION

ERIC STEPHENSON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ERIK LARSEN
PUBLISHER



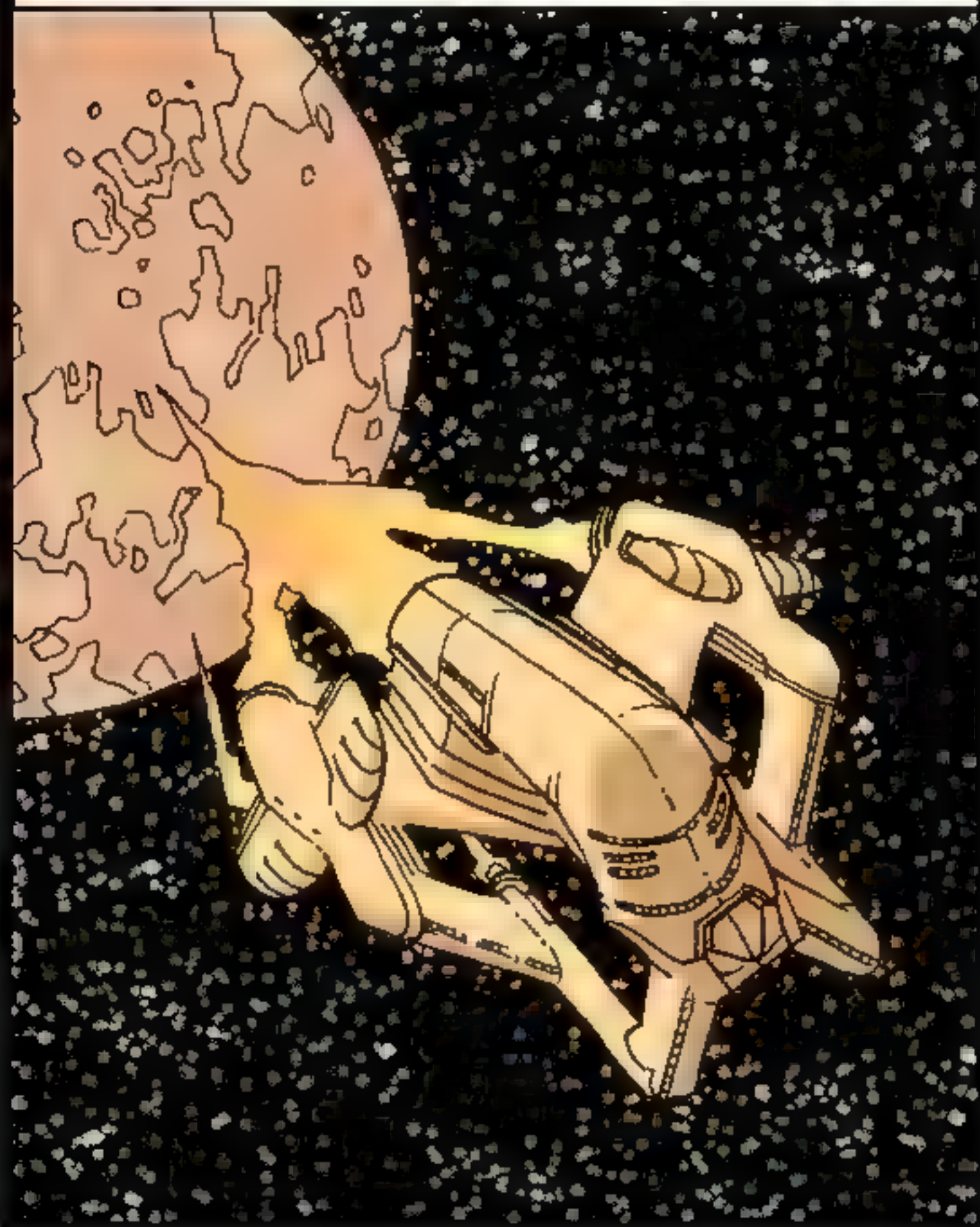
AS ALLEN'S LONG JOURNEY HOME CONTINUES HIS MIND DRIFTS, THINKING BACK ON THE HUMBLE ORIGINS OF HIS PEOPLE... AND HIMSELF.

A TALE THAT WOULD RIVAL DEEP SPACE ITSELF IN COLD AND HARSHNESS.

LIFE ON UNOPA WAS ENDED WHEN THE VILTRUMITES INVADIED. LIKE A PLAGUE OF UNEQUALED POTENCY, THE VILTRUMITES SWEEP ACROSS THE PLANET--CONQUERING IT IN A MATTER OF DAYS.



EVER RESOURCEFUL--THE UNOPANS WERE ABLE TO ESCAPE THEIR PLANET, ABANDONING IT FOR THE STARS--AND THE PROMISE OF A NEW LIFE.



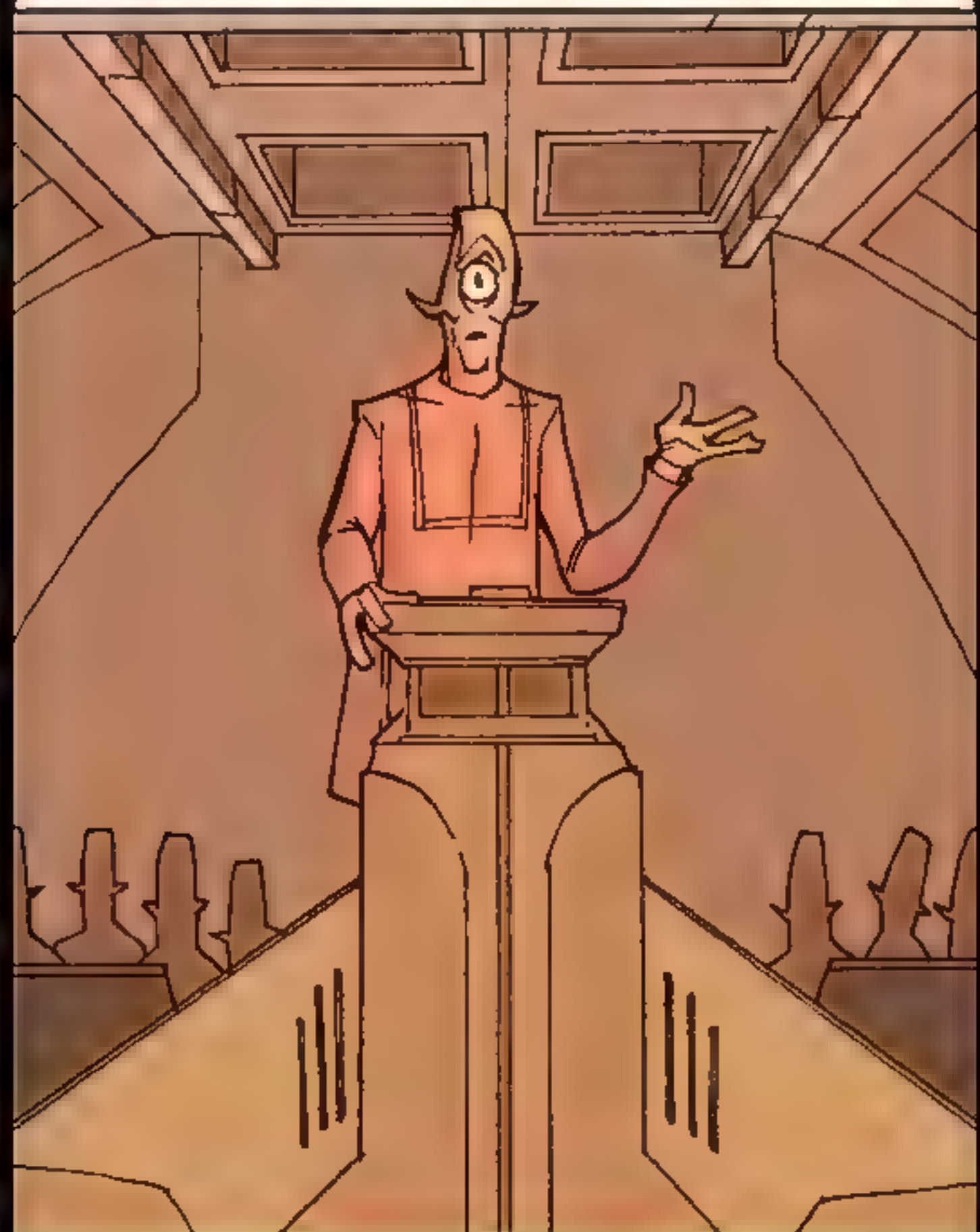
TO ENSURE THEIR RACE'S SURVIVAL, BREEDING CAMPS WERE FORMED ON VARIOUS OUTPOSTS. OFFSPRING WERE PRODUCED IN A FACTORY ENVIRONMENT, RESULTING IN A COMPLETE BREAKDOWN OF FAMILY STRUCTURE AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOR IN UNOPAN SOCIETY.



IMPRESSED WITH THE UNOPANS ABILITY TO ESCAPE AND OVERCOME THE HARDSHIPS OF THE VILTRUMITE INVASION--THE COALITION OF PLANETS INVITED THEM TO JOIN THEIR RANKS.



ONCE THE UNOPANS HAD BEEN INDUCTED INTO THE COALITION OF PLANETS A PLAN WAS BROUGHT BEFORE THE HIGH COUNCIL OF ELDERS.



THE UNOPAN LEADER HAD DEVISED A METHOD OF GENETIC ENHANCEMENT THAT MIGHT ENGINEER A NEW BREED OF UNOPAN, STRONG ENOUGH TO WITHSTAND A VILTRUMITE INVASION.

DESPERATE TO FIND A WAY TO COMBAT THE EVER-EXPANDING VILTRUM EMPIRE, THE PLAN WAS APPROVED IMMEDIATELY.



FOR YEARS THE UNOPAN GOVERNMENT EXPERIMENTED ON UNBORN FETUSES. THE RESULTS WERE A COMPLETE FAILURE.



UNTIL ALLEN. HE WAS THE FIRST AND ONLY SUBJECT TO SURVIVE THE TESTS WITHOUT DISFIGUREMENT AND MENTAL HANDICAPS.

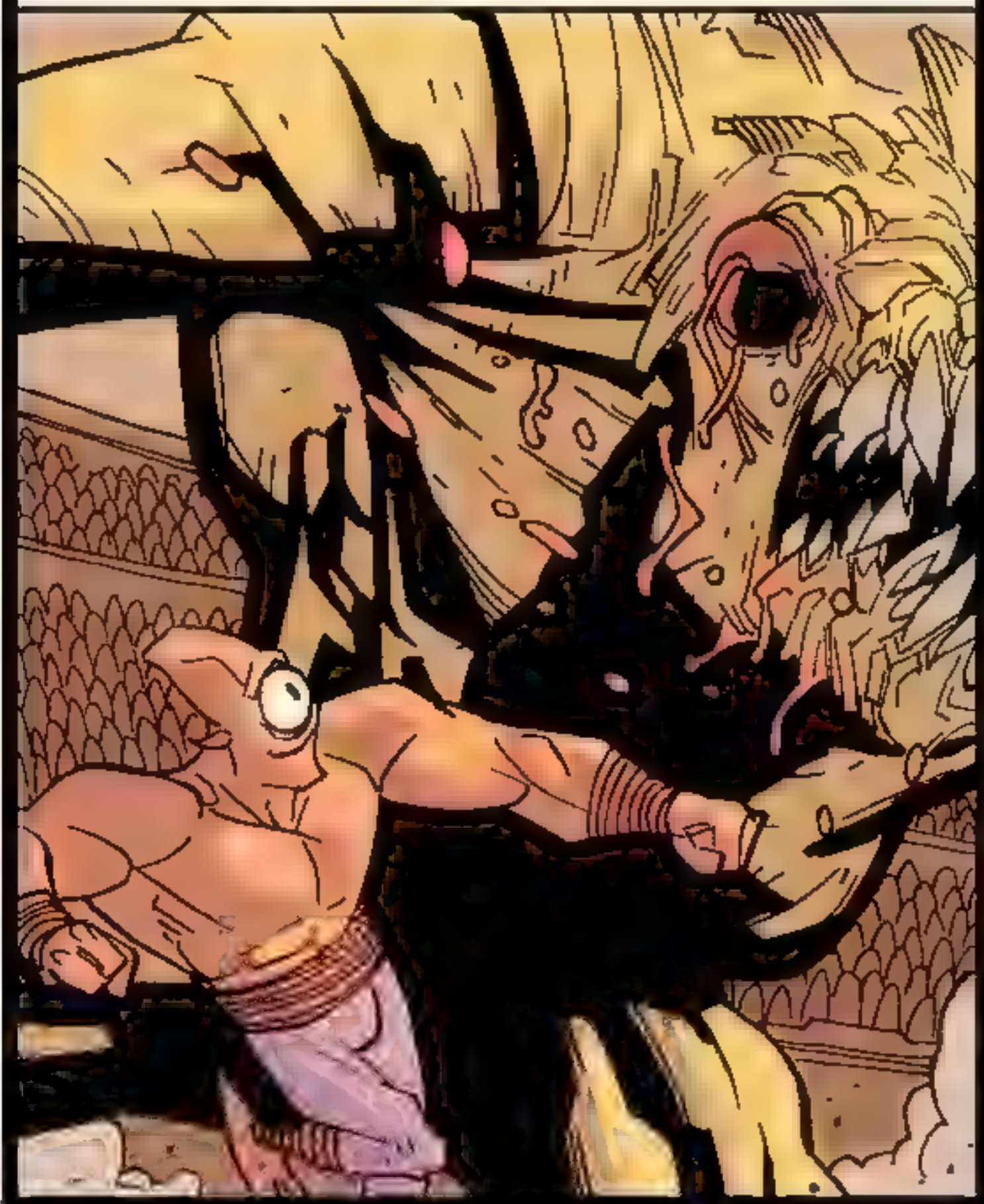


HE WAS THE ONLY SUCCESS.

NEARLY FROM THE DAY HE WAS BORN HE WAS TAUGHT TO BE THE GREATEST FIGHTER THE UNIVERSE HAD EVER SEEN.



FOR A TIME--IT SEEMED HE WAS A COMPLETE SUCCESS. EVEN BEFORE ADULthood AN OPPONENT COULD NOT BE FOUND WHO DIDN'T FALL BEFORE HIS MIGHT.



IMMEDIATELY AFTER ADULthood HAD BEEN REACHED HE WAS SENT ON HIS FIRST MISSION AGAINST THE VILTRUMITES.



IT DID NOT GO WELL. IT TURNED OUT THAT ALTHOUGH ALLEN WAS STRONGER THAN MOST EVERYTHING ELSE IN THE UNIVERSE, HE WAS NOT UP TO VILTRUMITE STANDARDS OF COMBAT.



WITH ALLEN DEFEATED, THE PROGRAM WAS ONCE AGAIN CONSIDERED A FAILURE, AND WAS SHUT DOWN FOR GOOD.



THE PROGRAM WASN'T A COMPLETE LOSS, ALLEN WAS SENT OUT INTO THE COSMOS UNDER THE GUISE OF "CHAMPION EVALUATION OFFICER."



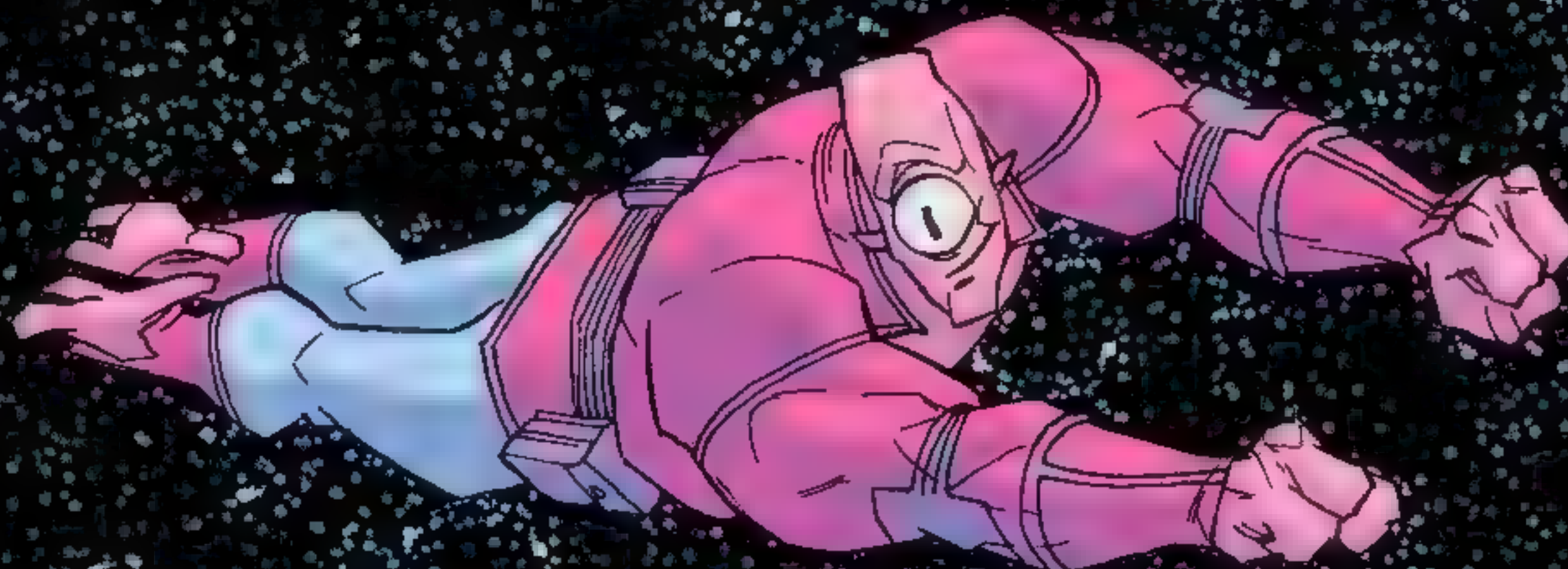
HIS REAL MISSION WAS TO SEARCH FOR BEINGS STRONG ENOUGH TO DEFEAT HIM AND REPORT THEIR EXISTENCE TO THE COALITION.

THE HOPE WAS THAT IF THEY COULD DEFEAT HIM--MAYBE THEY WERE STRONG ENOUGH TO DEFEAT A VILTRUMITE AS WELL.



OF COURSE, DEAR READER,
THE STORY DOES NOT, IN
FACT, END THERE

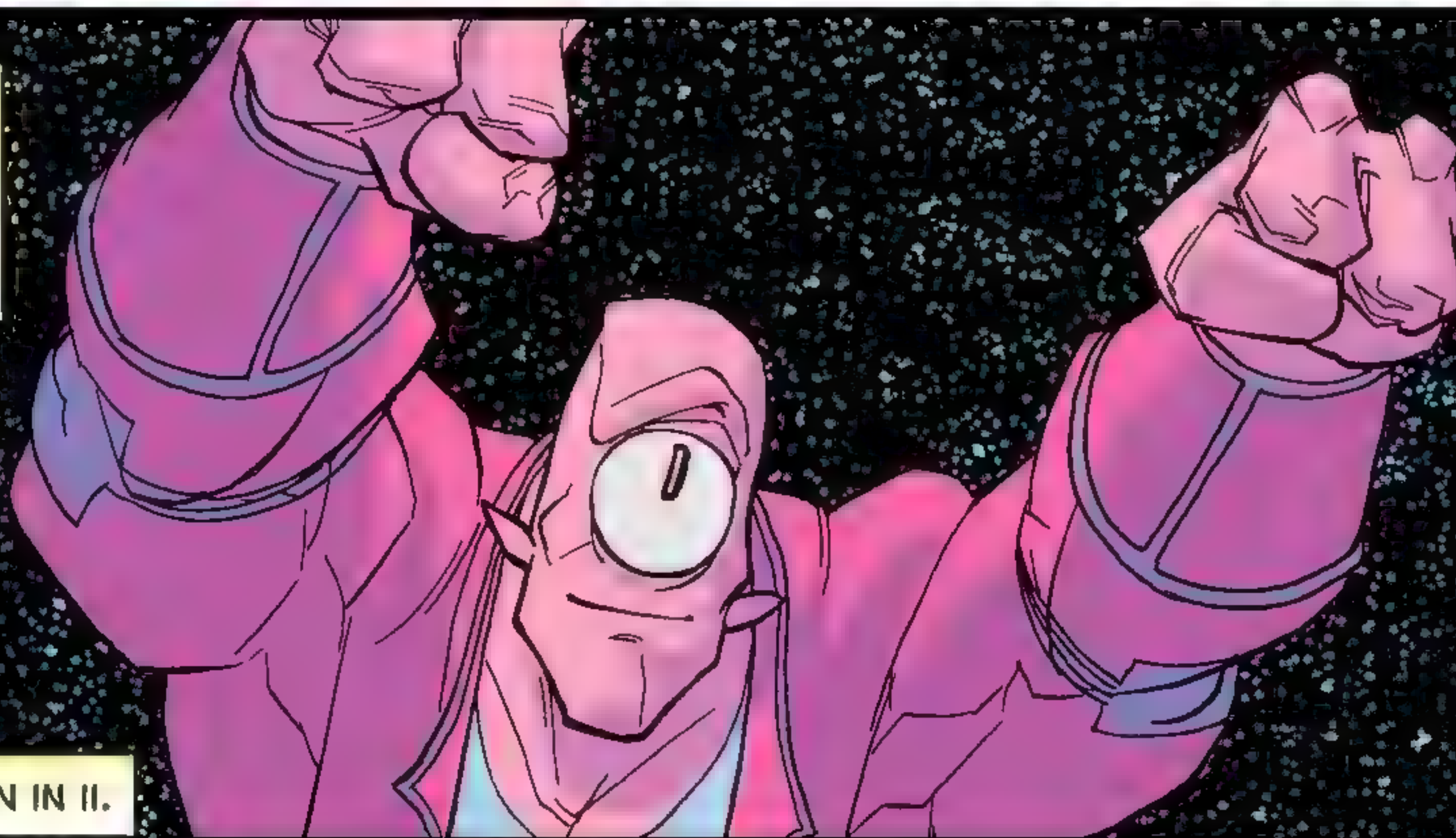
NOT EVEN
CLOSE.



IF I WERE TO CONTINUE I WOULD
TELL YOU OF THE TIMES NOLAN
GRAYSON HAD DEFEATED ALLEN
ON HIS ILL-FATED MISTAKEN
ENCOUNTERS WITH THE PLANET
EARTH.*

HOW DUE TO ALLEN'S
REPORTS, THE COALITION
HAD SCHEDULED HIM
MORE FREQUENT VISITS
TO THE PLANET URATH.

*SEEN BRIEFLY IN ISSUE 2, AND AGAIN IN 11.



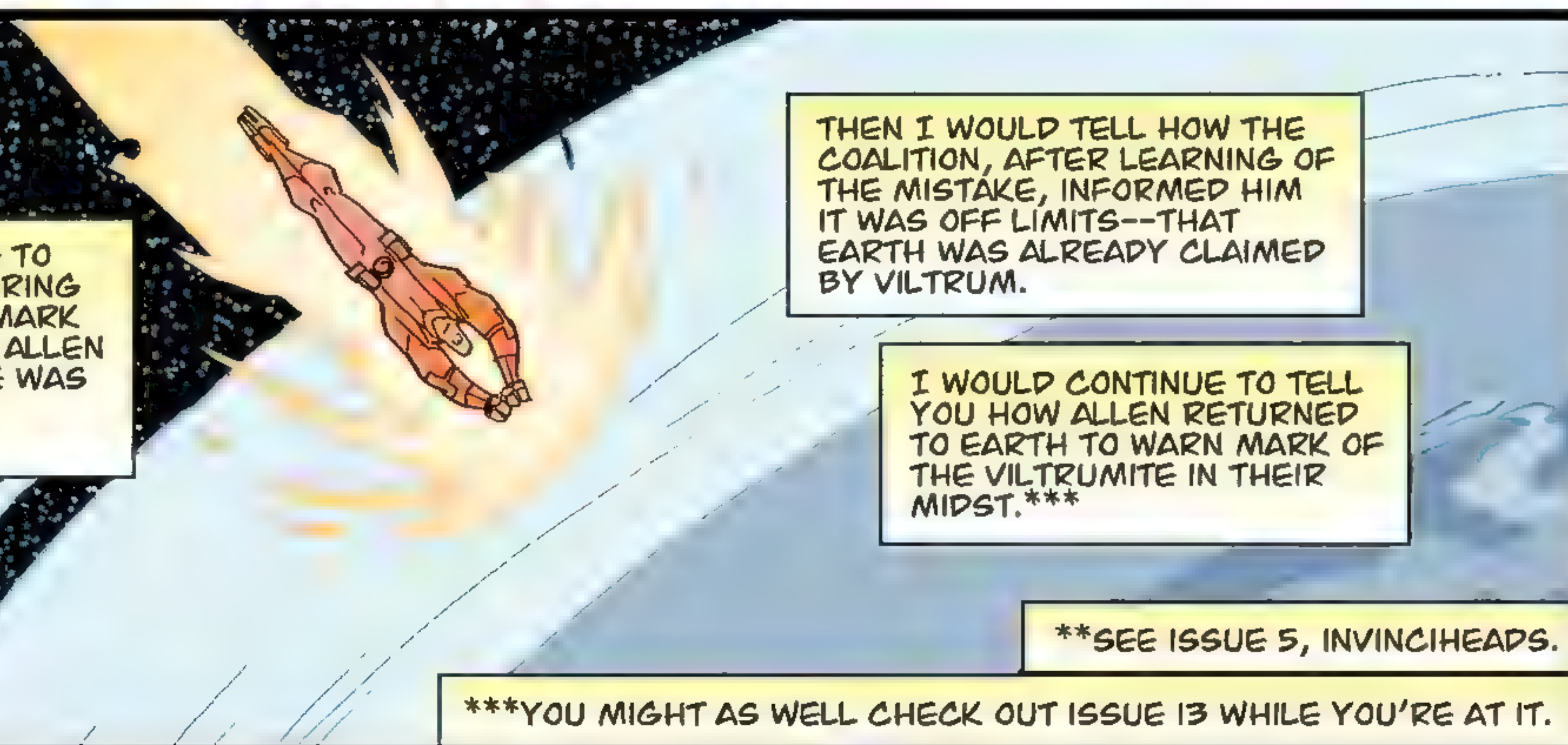
I WOULD EVEN CONTINUE TO
TELL YOU ABOUT HOW DURING
A CONFRONTATION WITH MARK
GRAYSON, NOLAN'S SON. ALLEN
LEARNED THE PLANET HE WAS
REALLY VISITING WAS
EARTH--NOT URATH.**

THEN I WOULD TELL HOW THE
COALITION, AFTER LEARNING OF
THE MISTAKE, INFORMED HIM
IT WAS OFF LIMITS--THAT
EARTH WAS ALREADY CLAIMED
BY VILTRUM.

I WOULD CONTINUE TO TELL
YOU HOW ALLEN RETURNED
TO EARTH TO WARN MARK OF
THE VILTRUMITE IN THEIR
MIDST.***

**SEE ISSUE 5, INVINCIBLEHEADS.

***YOU MIGHT AS WELL CHECK OUT ISSUE 13 WHILE YOU'RE AT IT.



WERE I TO CONTINUE WITH
THIS STORY EVEN FURTHER
I WOULD INFORM YOU OF
HOW ALLEN'S WARNING CAME
TOO LATE. MARK'S FATHER
WAS ALREADY REVEALED
TO BE THAT VILTRUMITE.****

ALL THIS INFORMATION LED TO
ALLEN'S CURRENT MISSIVE, AN
IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO BE
GIVEN DIRECTLY TO THE
COALITION LEADERS.

YES, DEAR READER--I WOULD
LOVE TO TELL YOU ALL OF THIS,
BUT I HAVE NOT THE TIME,
FOR--

****ALSO IN ISSUE 13.



ALLEN THE ALIEN
HAS RETURNED
HOME!



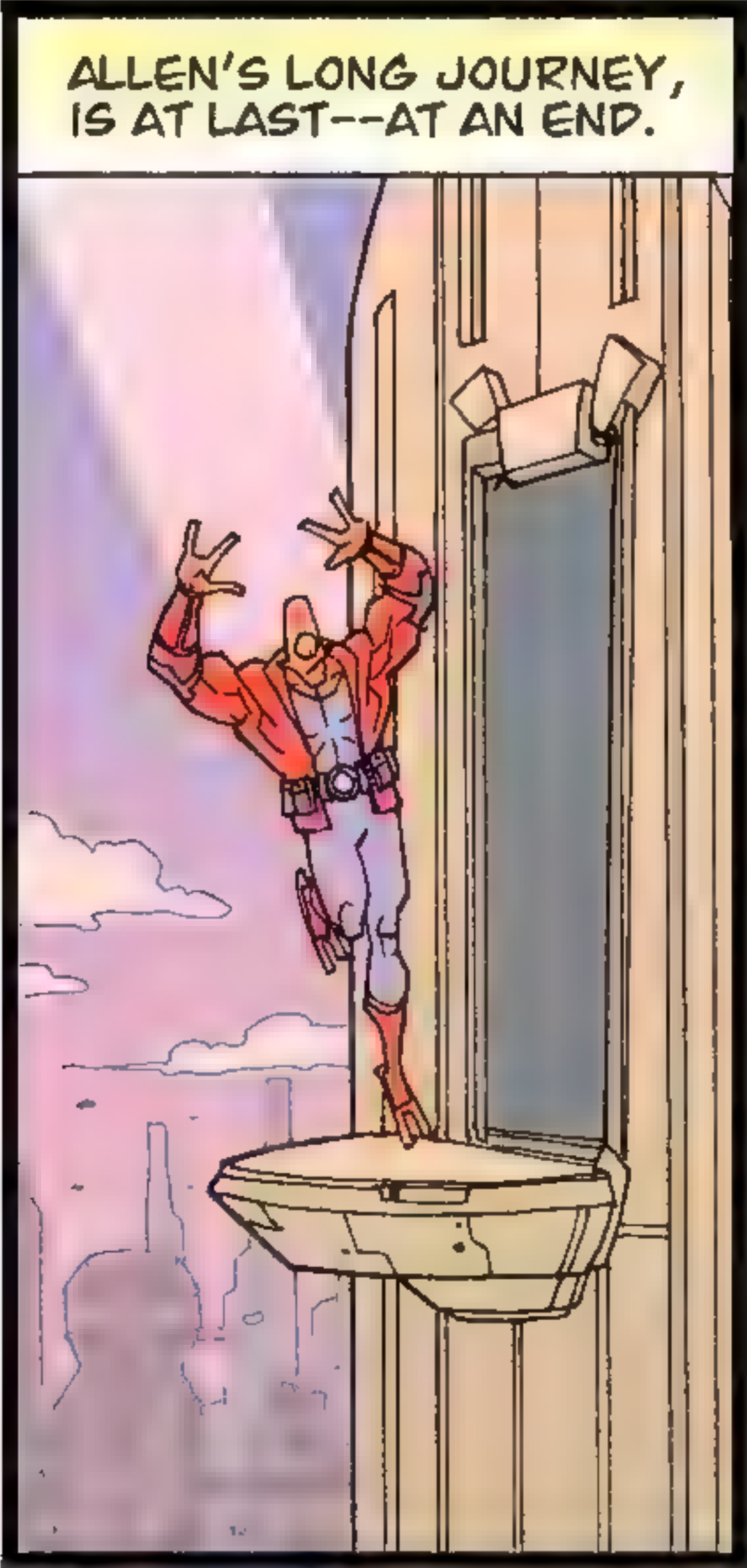


YES, HOME, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE PLANET TALESORIA, THE CAPITAL OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS.

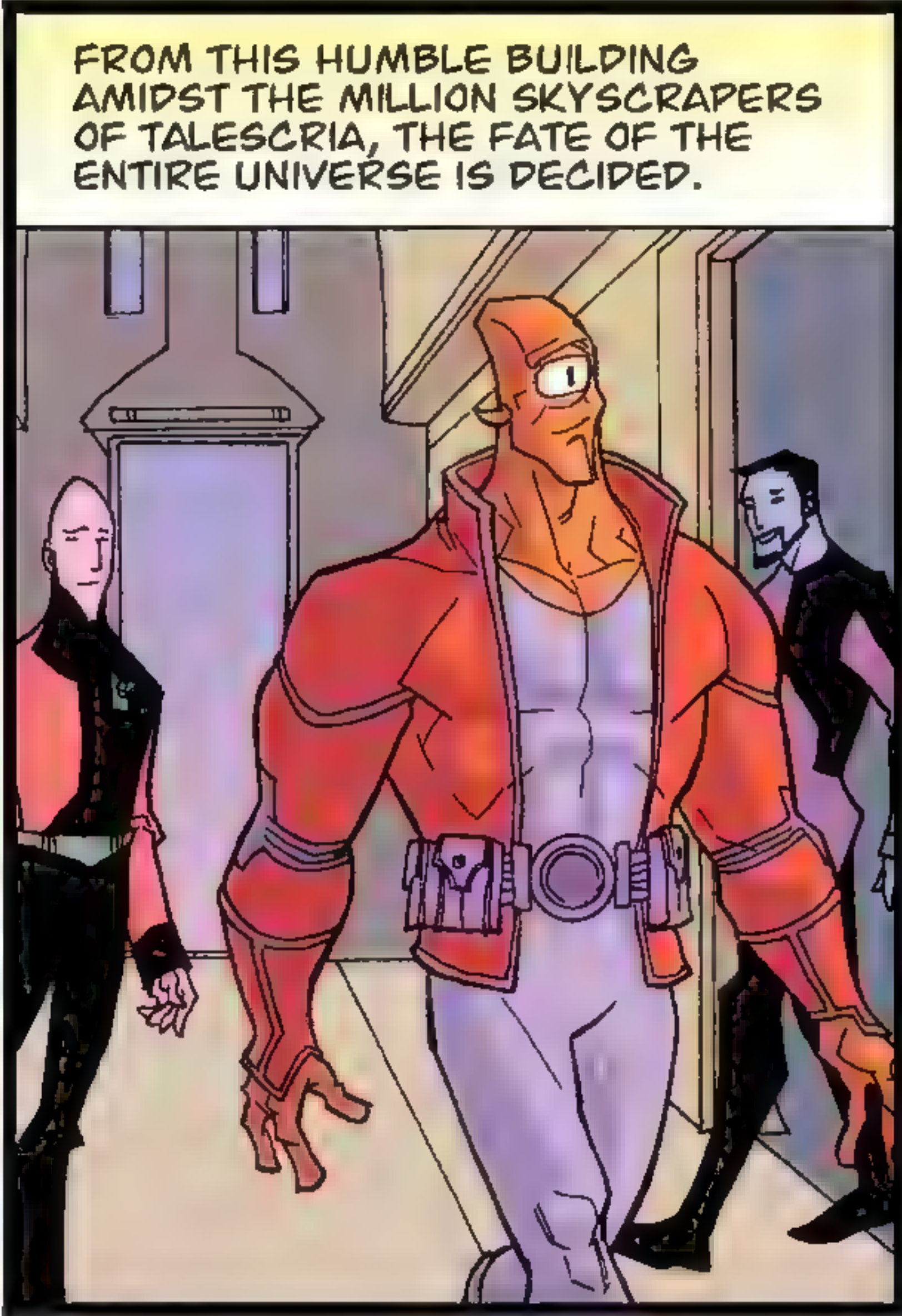
FAR BELOW ALLEN, MILLIONS OF PEOPLE GO ABOUT THEIR DAILY LIVES, UNAWARE OF HIS RETURN.

UNAWARE OF THE NEWS HE CARRIES WITH HIM.

UNAWARE OF THE HOPE IT MAY BRING THEM.



ALLEN'S LONG JOURNEY, IS AT LAST--AT AN END.



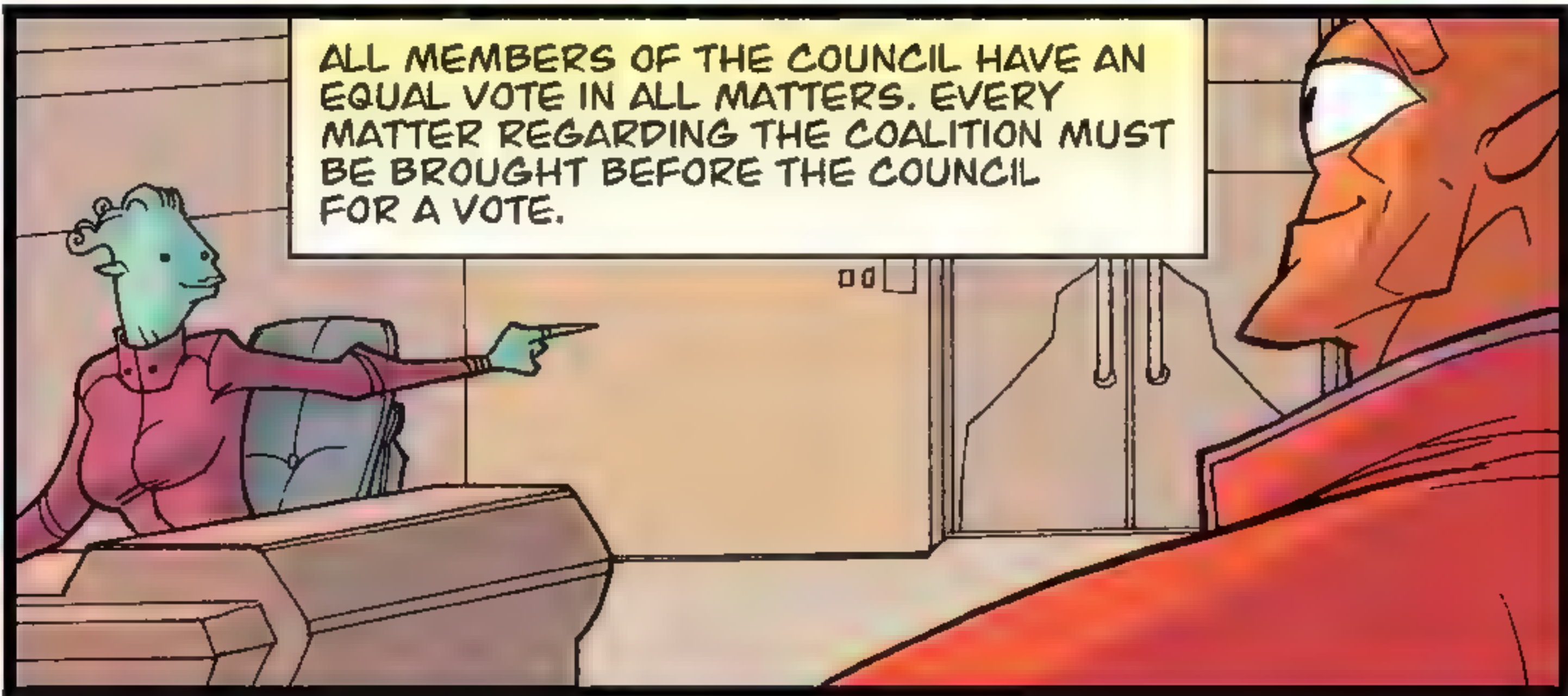
FROM THIS HUMBLE BUILDING AMIDST THE MILLION SKYSCRAPERS OF TALESORIA, THE FATE OF THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE IS DECIDED.



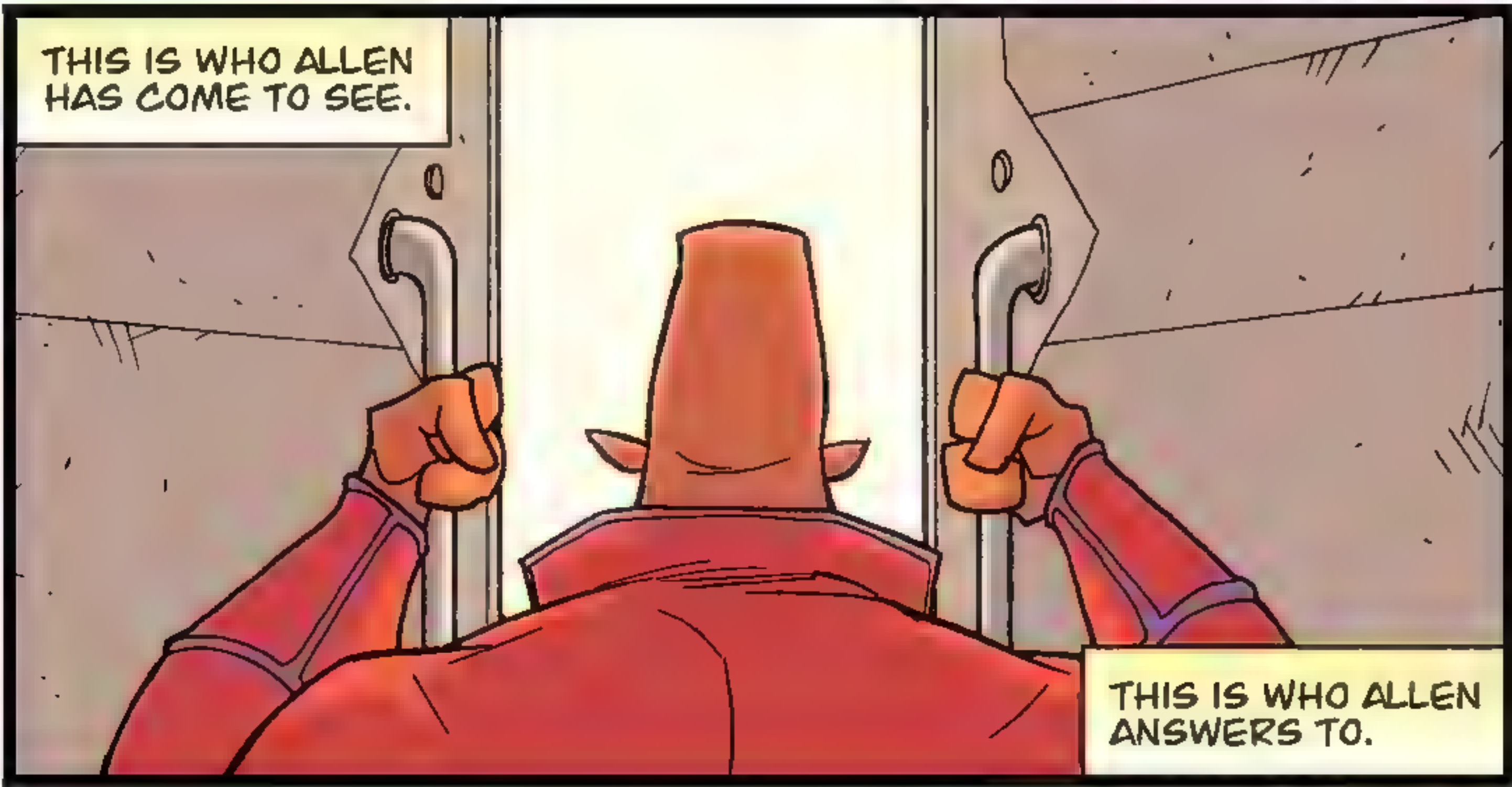
THIS BUILDING HOUSES THE MEETING HALL OF THE HIGH COUNCIL OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS. ALL DECISIONS ON ALL MATTERS ARE DECIDED HERE.



THE HIGH COUNCIL CONSISTS OF ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES FROM ALL THE PLANETS IN THE COALITION.

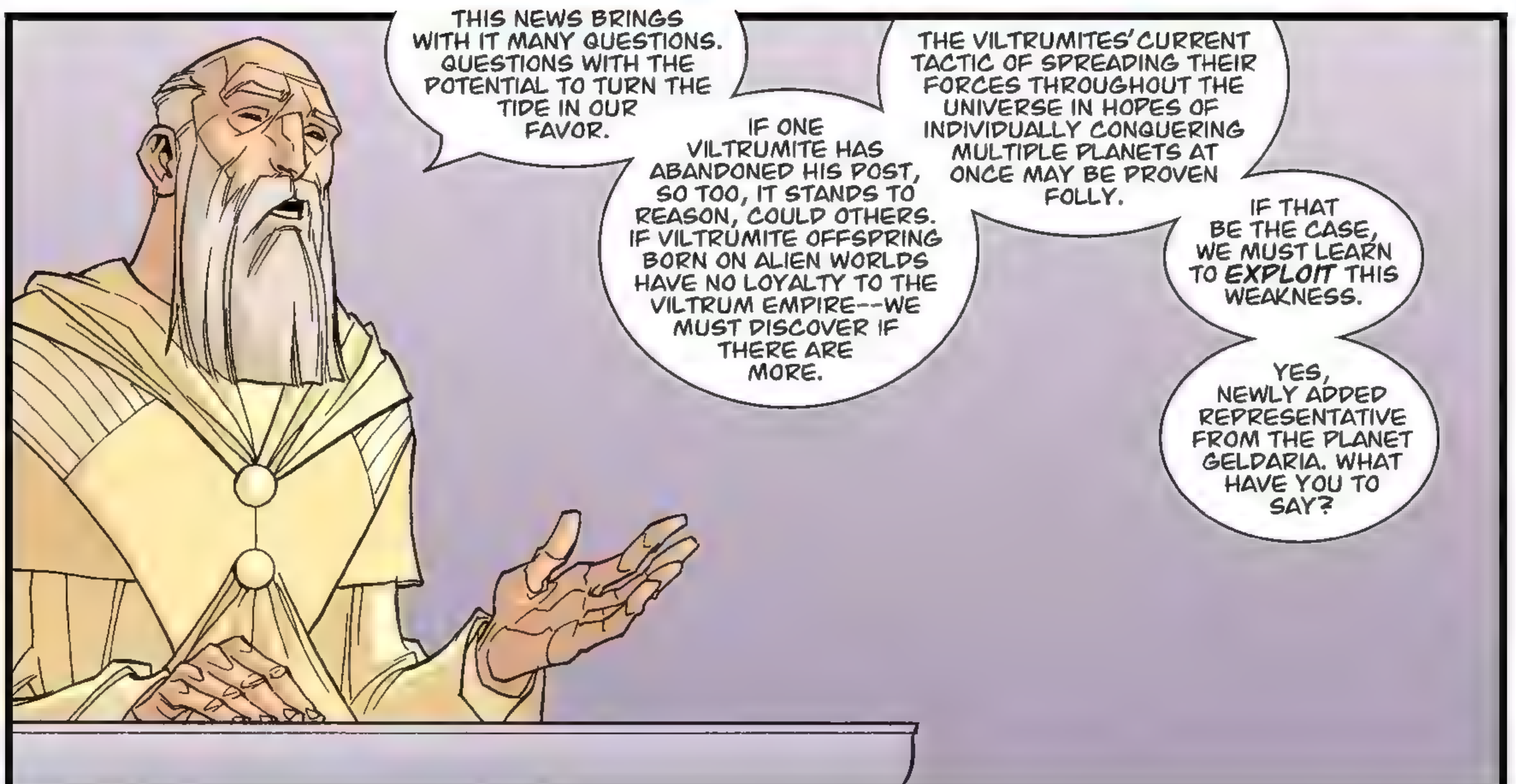
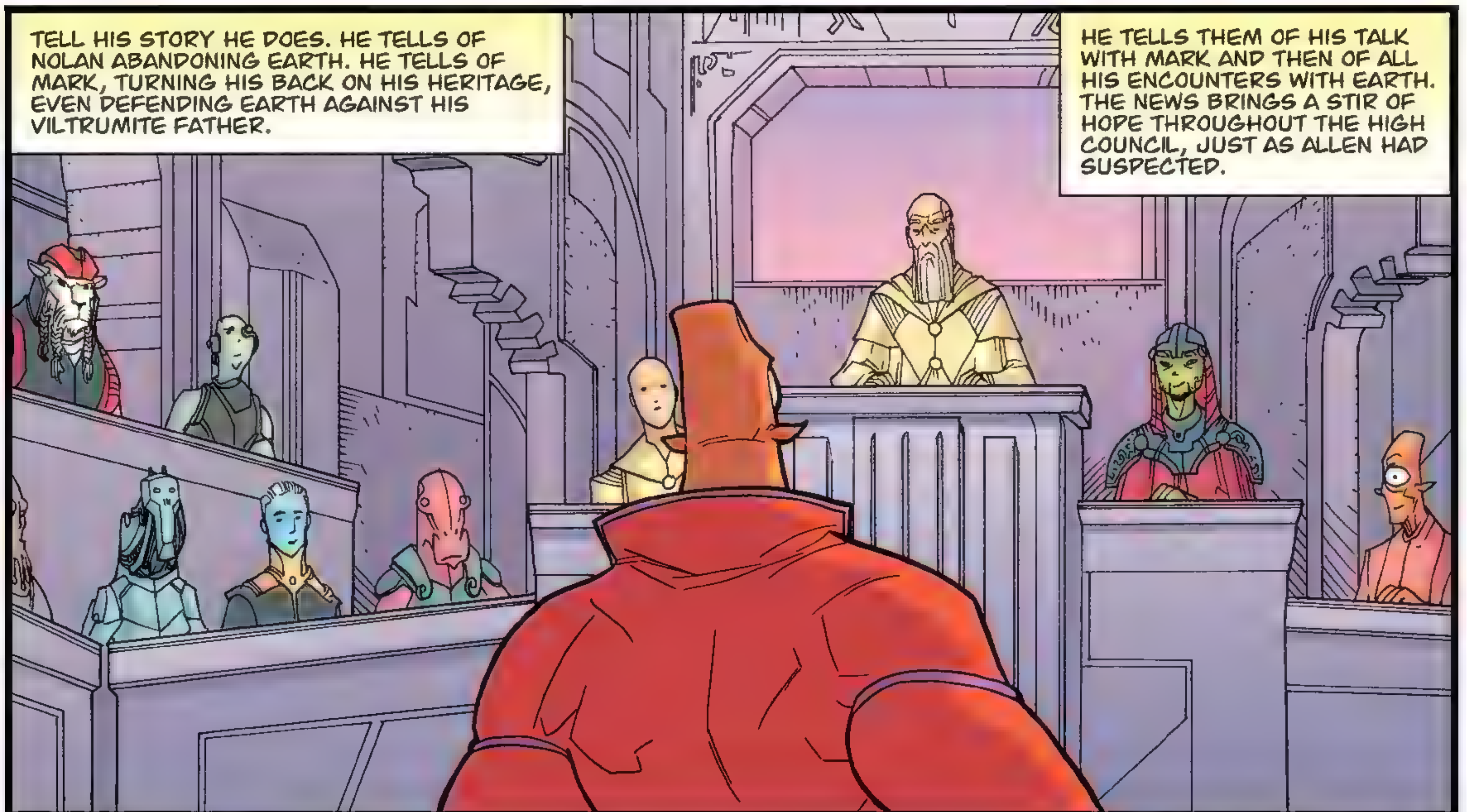
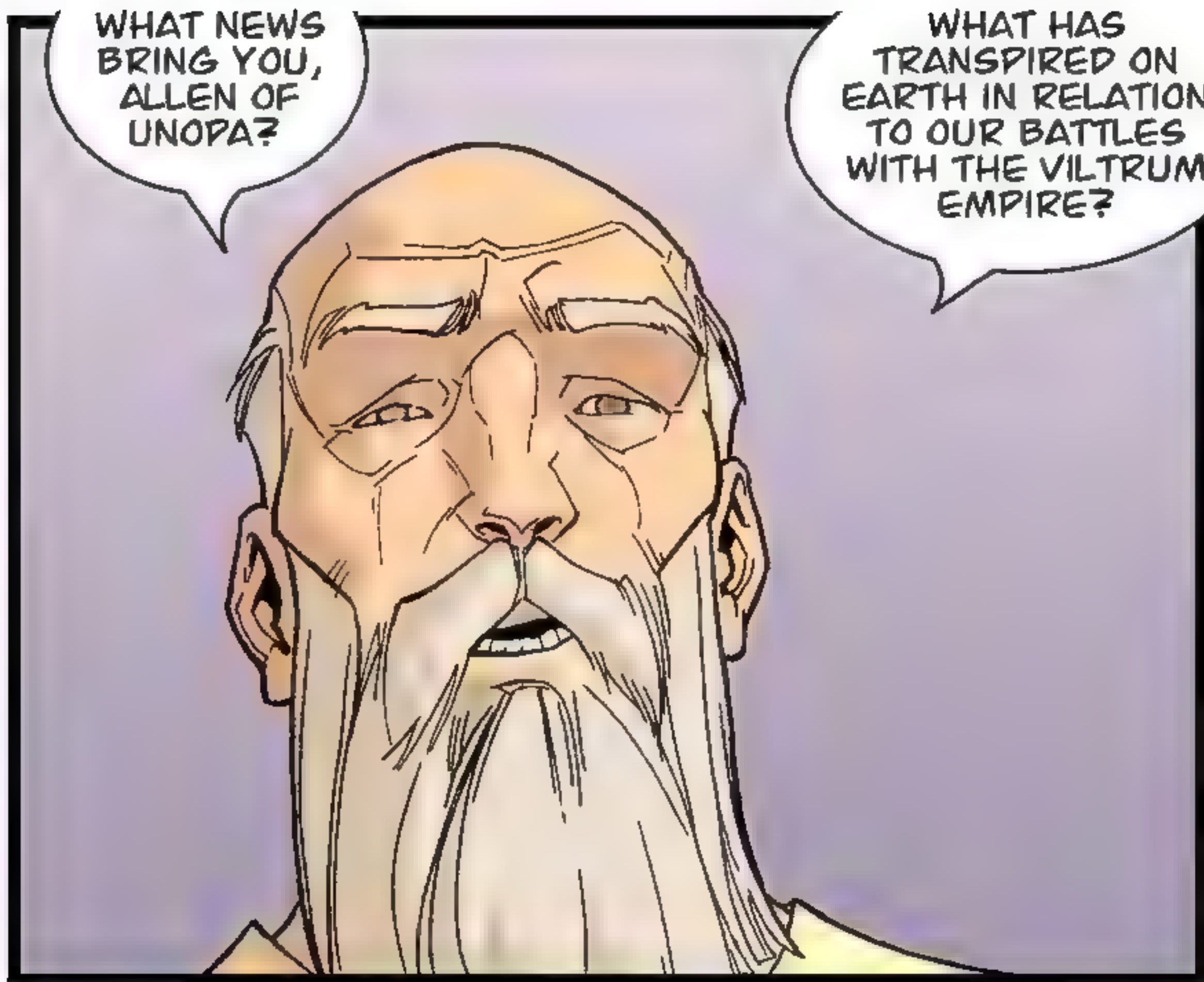


ALL MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL HAVE AN EQUAL VOTE IN ALL MATTERS. EVERY MATTER REGARDING THE COALITION MUST BE BROUGHT BEFORE THE COUNCIL FOR A VOTE.



THIS IS WHO ALLEN HAS COME TO SEE.

THIS IS WHO ALLEN ANSWERS TO.





MY RECENTLY LIBERATED HOME WORLD WAS UNDER ATTACK FROM THE KRESH, AN EMPIRE CHARGED BY THE VILTRUMITES TO OVERTAKE OUR WORLD.

IF THE VILTRUMITES ARE ENLISTING THE AID OF CONQUERED RACES TO SPREAD THEIR EMPIRE, IT IS NOT INCONCEIVABLE THAT THEY MAY ALREADY BE WEAKER THAN WE REALIZE.

YES, THIS IS AN EXCELLENT POINT. OUR KNOWLEDGE ON THE INNER WORKINGS OF THE VILTRUM EMPIRE ARE QUESTIONABLE AT BEST. IT IS TRUE THAT WE DO NOT KNOW THEIR CURRENT STATUS.

FURTHERMORE, WE MUST SEEK OUT THESE ROGUE VILTRUMITES AND ATTEMPT TO SWAY THEM TO OUR CAUSE. THEY WOULD BE VALUABLE ALLIES.

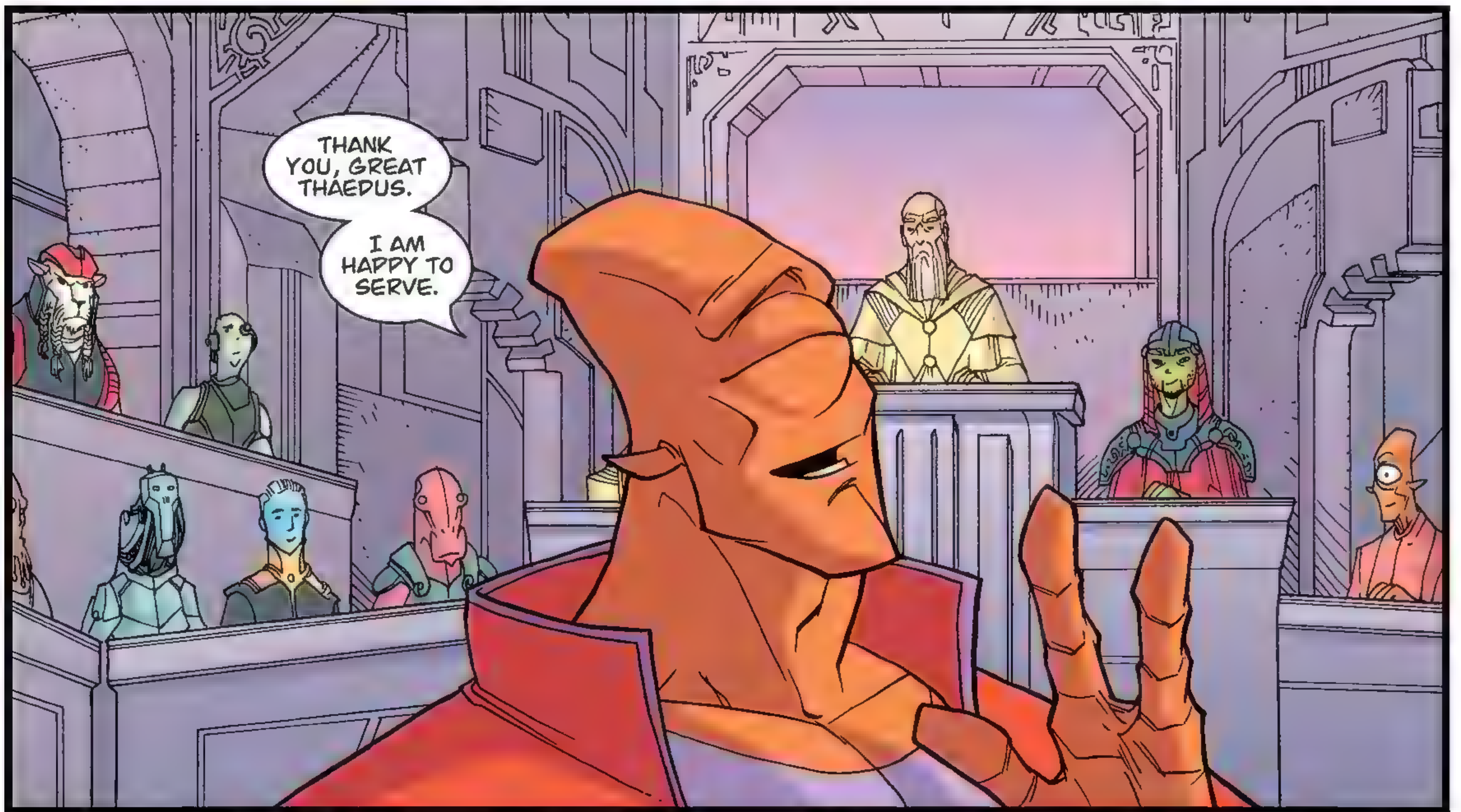
THE ONE CALLED INVINCIBLE. THE OFFSPRING BORN ON EARTH IS SYMPATHETIC TO OUR CAUSE. ANYTHING THAT WILL PREVENT THE EVENTUAL TAKEOVER OF EARTH WILL GAIN HIS ASSISTANCE.

HE HAS ALREADY STATED AS MUCH.*

*ISSUE 13 AGAIN.

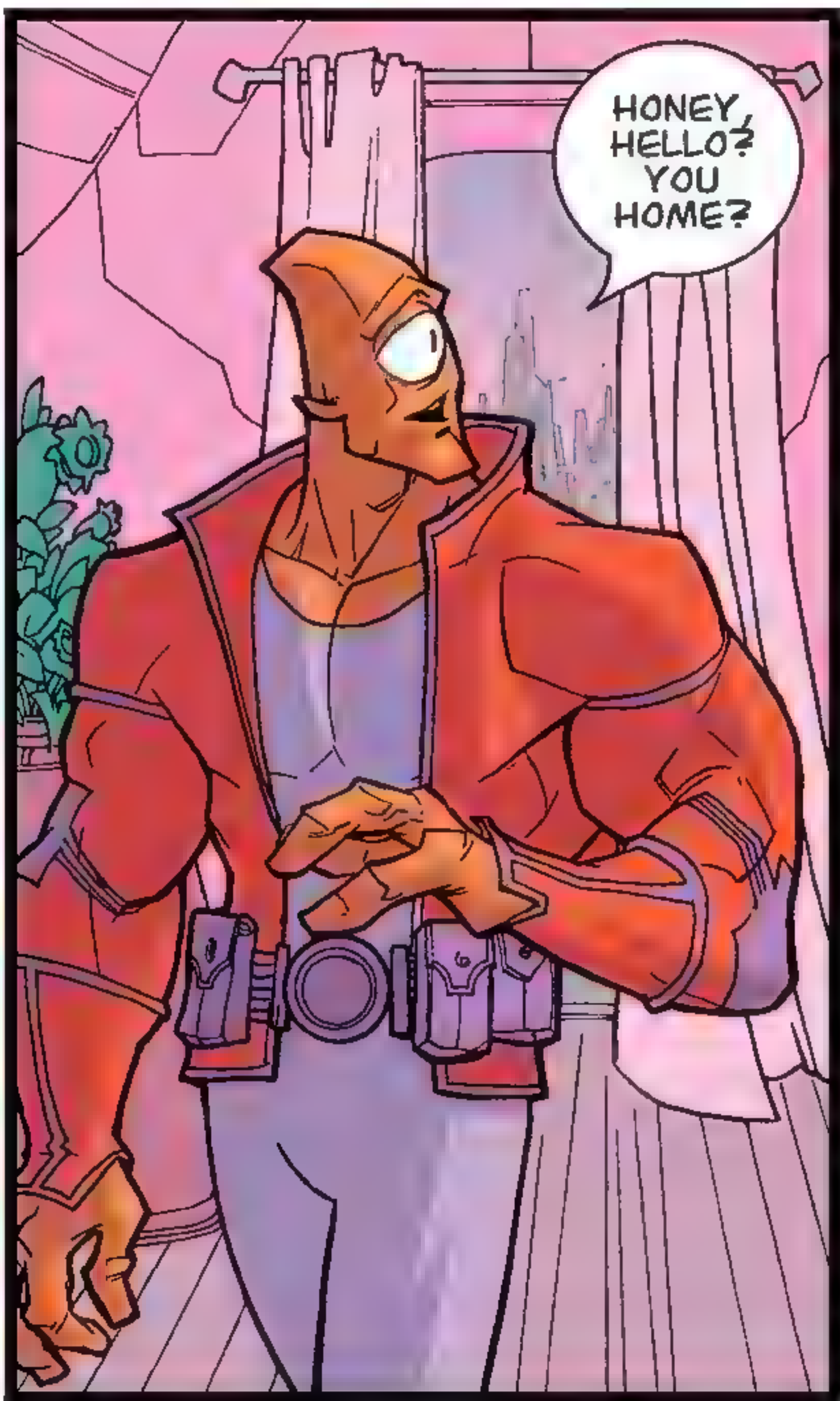
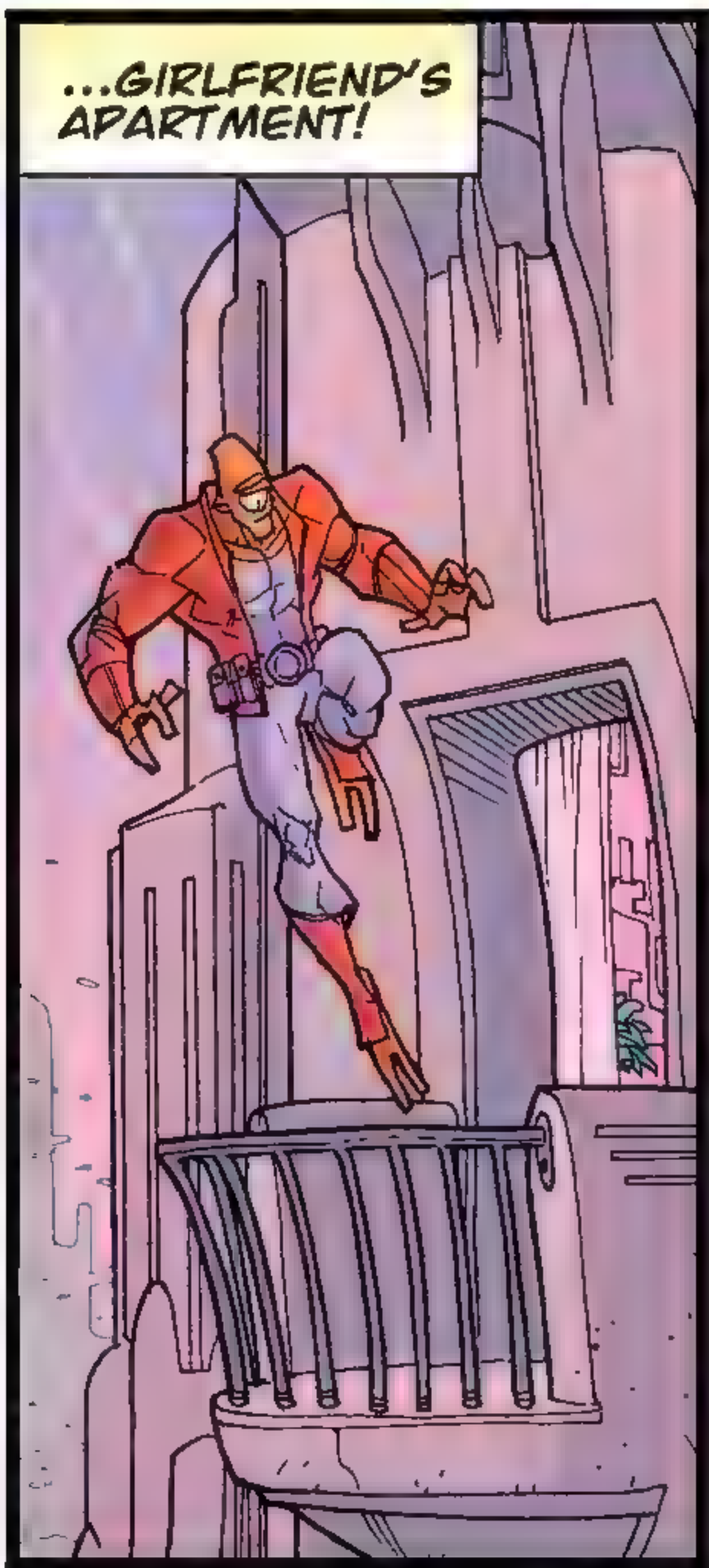
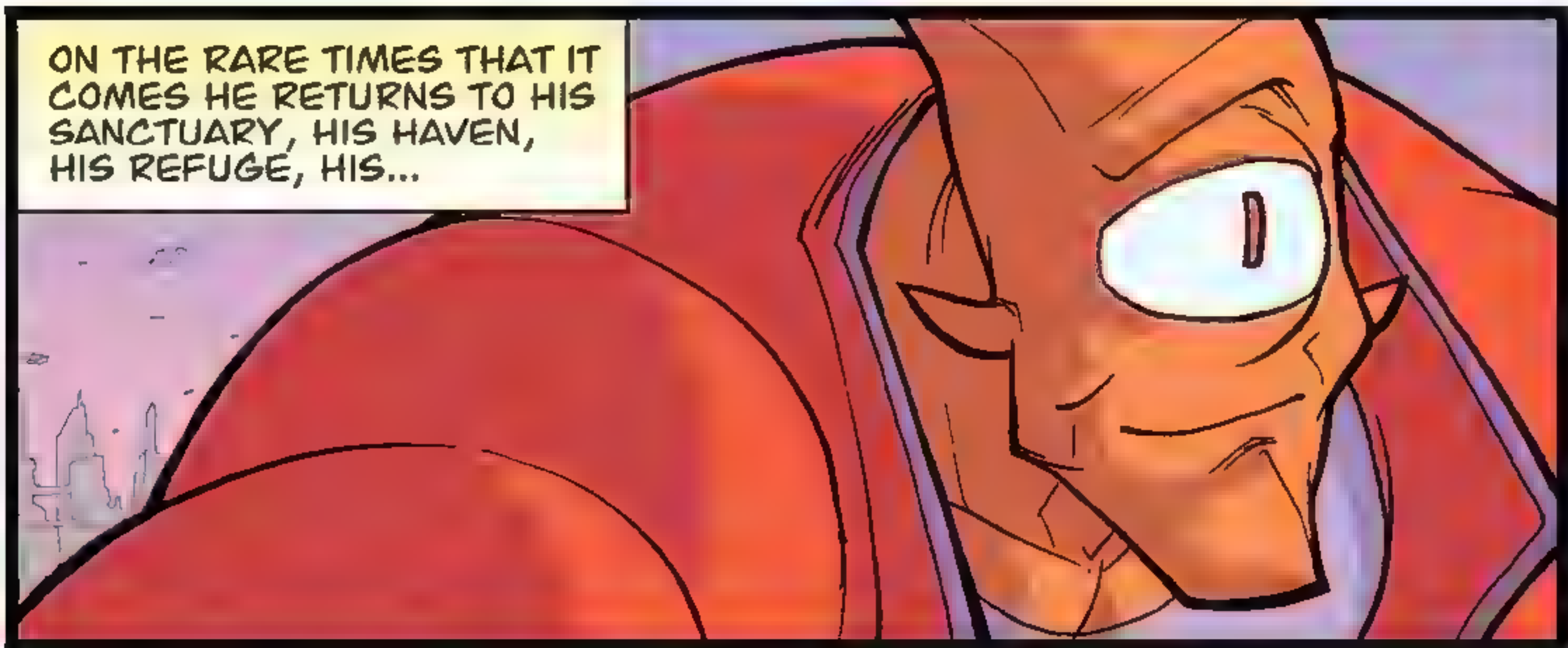
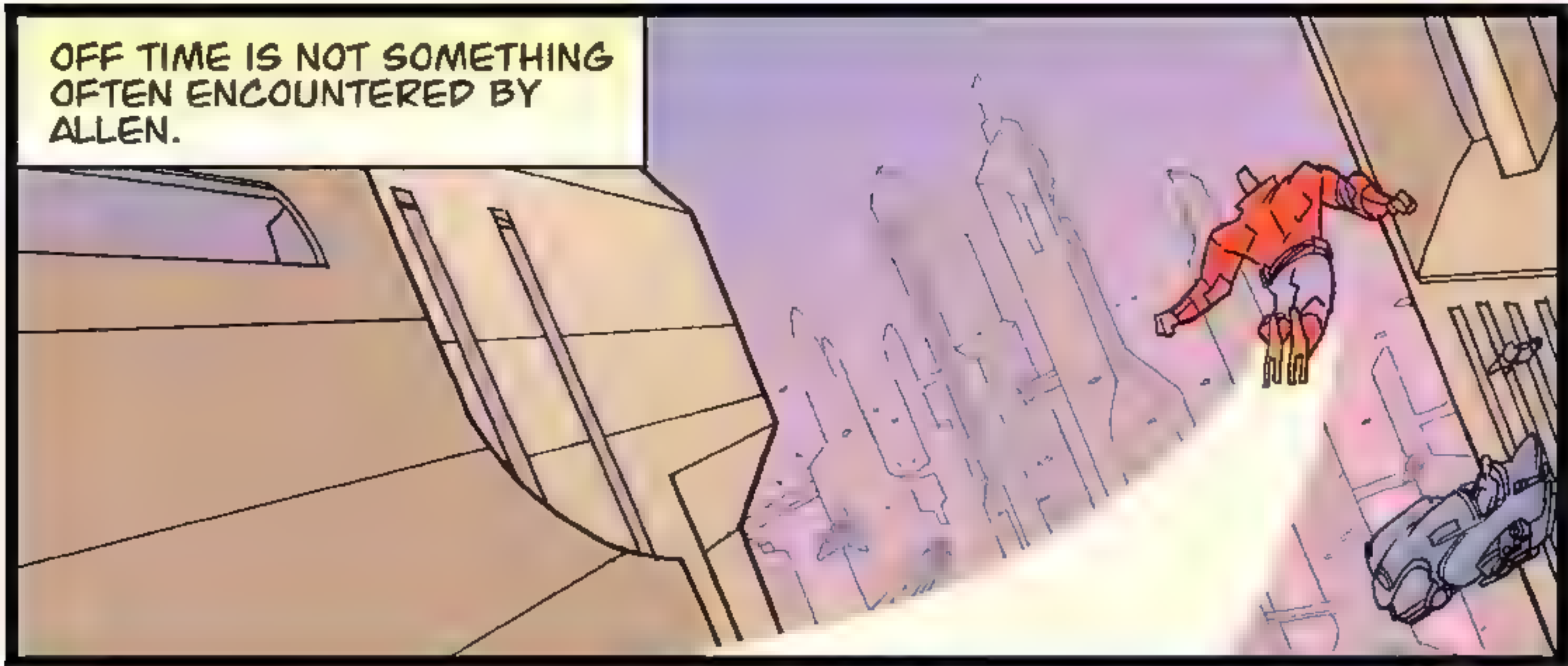
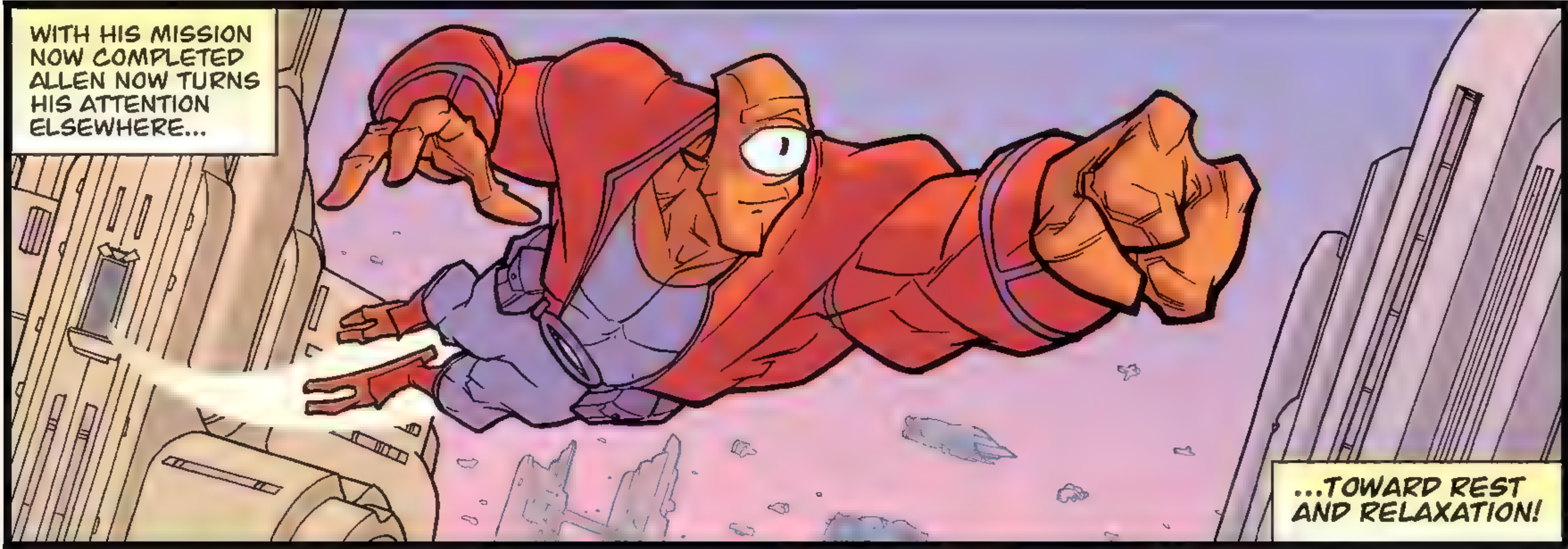
YOU HAVE DONE WELL, ALLEN OF UNOPA. YOU HAVE GIVEN US MUCH TO CONVERSE UPON. YOU HAVE EARNED YOUR LEAVE.

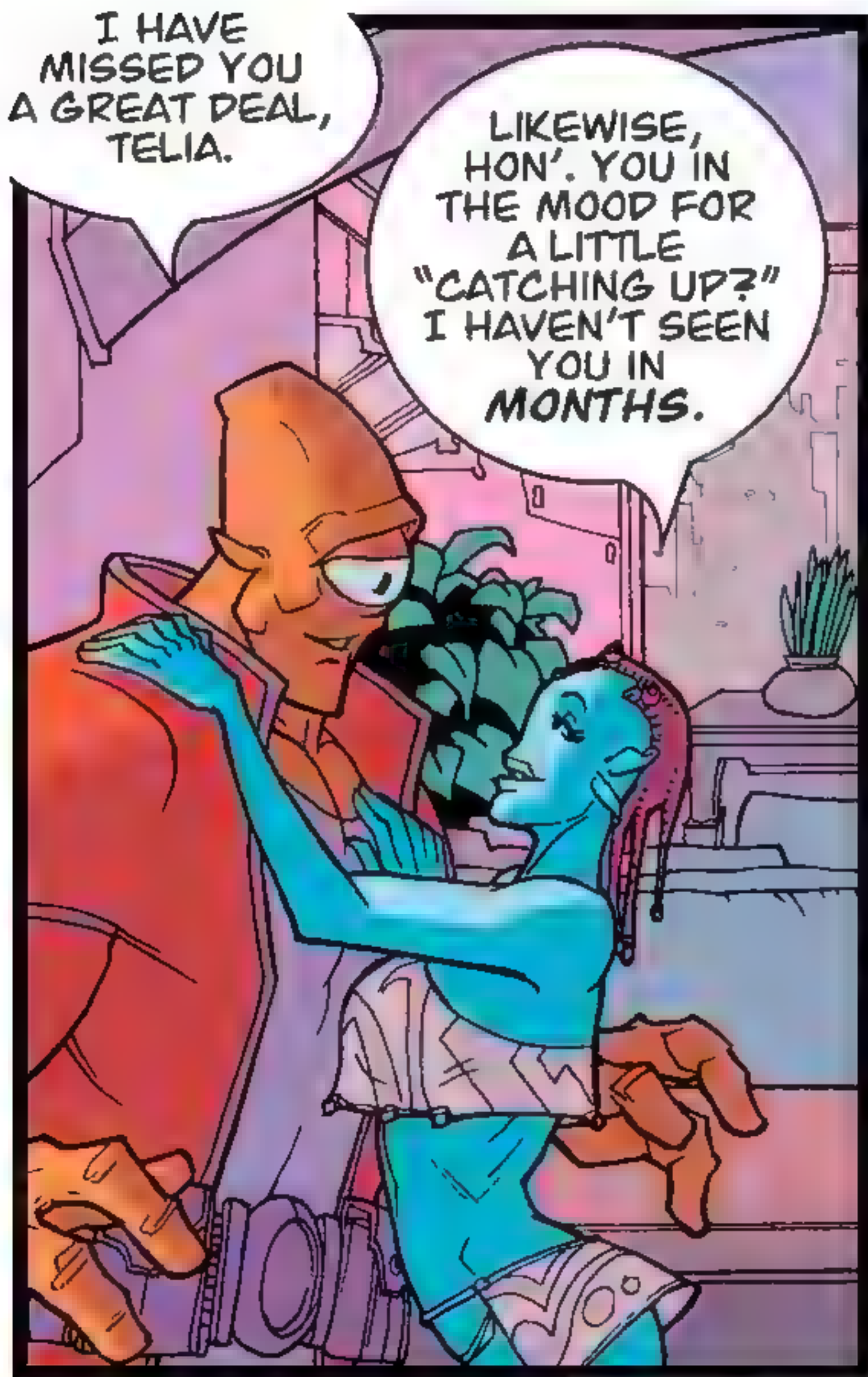
WE WILL CALL ON YOU AGAIN WHEN YOU ARE NEEDED.



THANK YOU, GREAT THAEDUS.

I AM HAPPY TO SERVE.





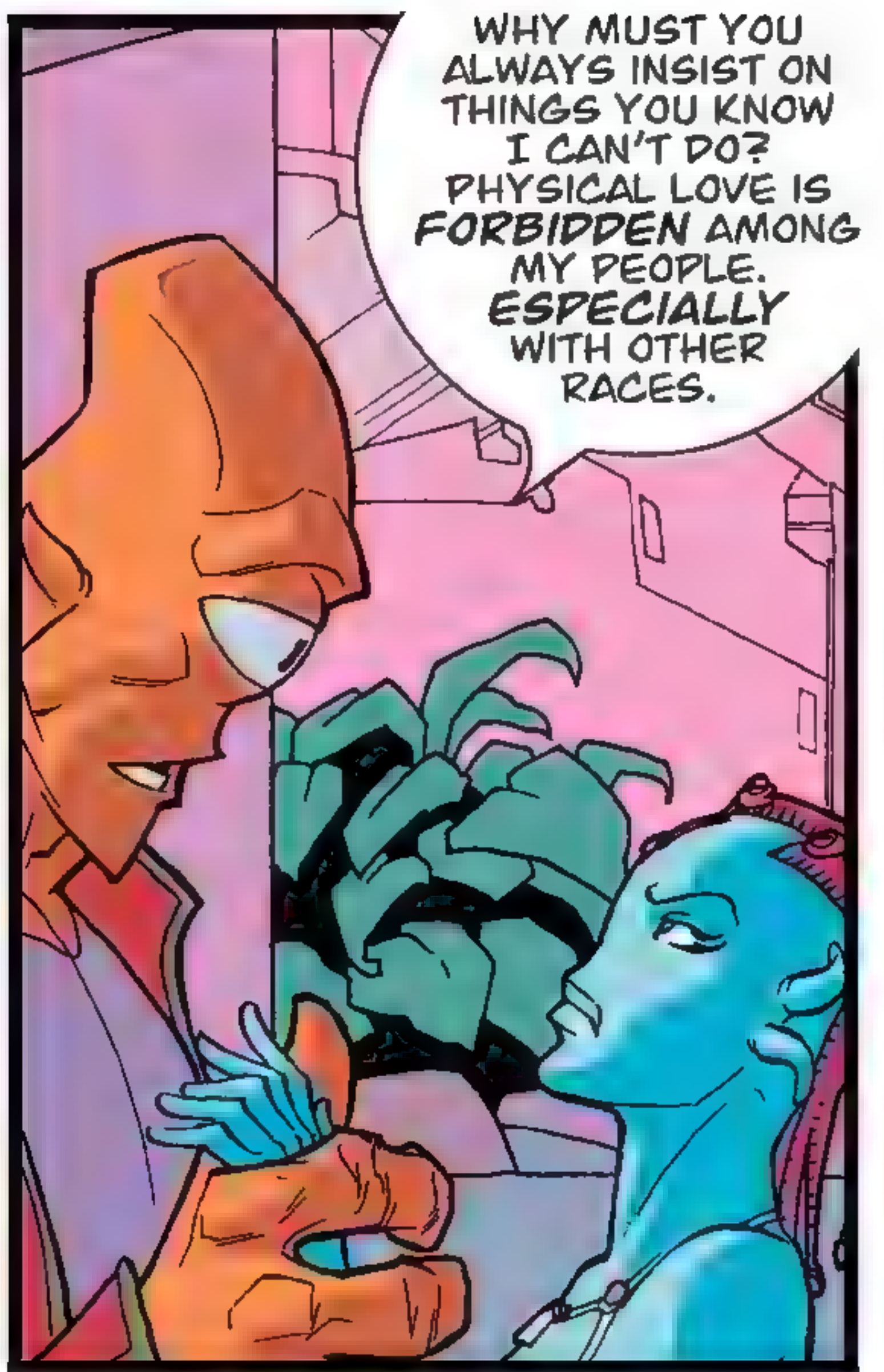
I HAVE MISSED YOU A GREAT DEAL, TELIA.

LIKEWISE, HON'. YOU IN THE MOOD FOR A LITTLE "CATCHING UP?" I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN MONTHS.



TELIA-- PLEASE. YOU KNOW THAT I CAN'T--

WHAT? WHAT CAN'T YOU DO, ALLEN?



WHY MUST YOU ALWAYS INSIST ON THINGS YOU KNOW I CAN'T DO? PHYSICAL LOVE IS FORBIDDEN AMONG MY PEOPLE. ESPECIALLY WITH OTHER RACES.



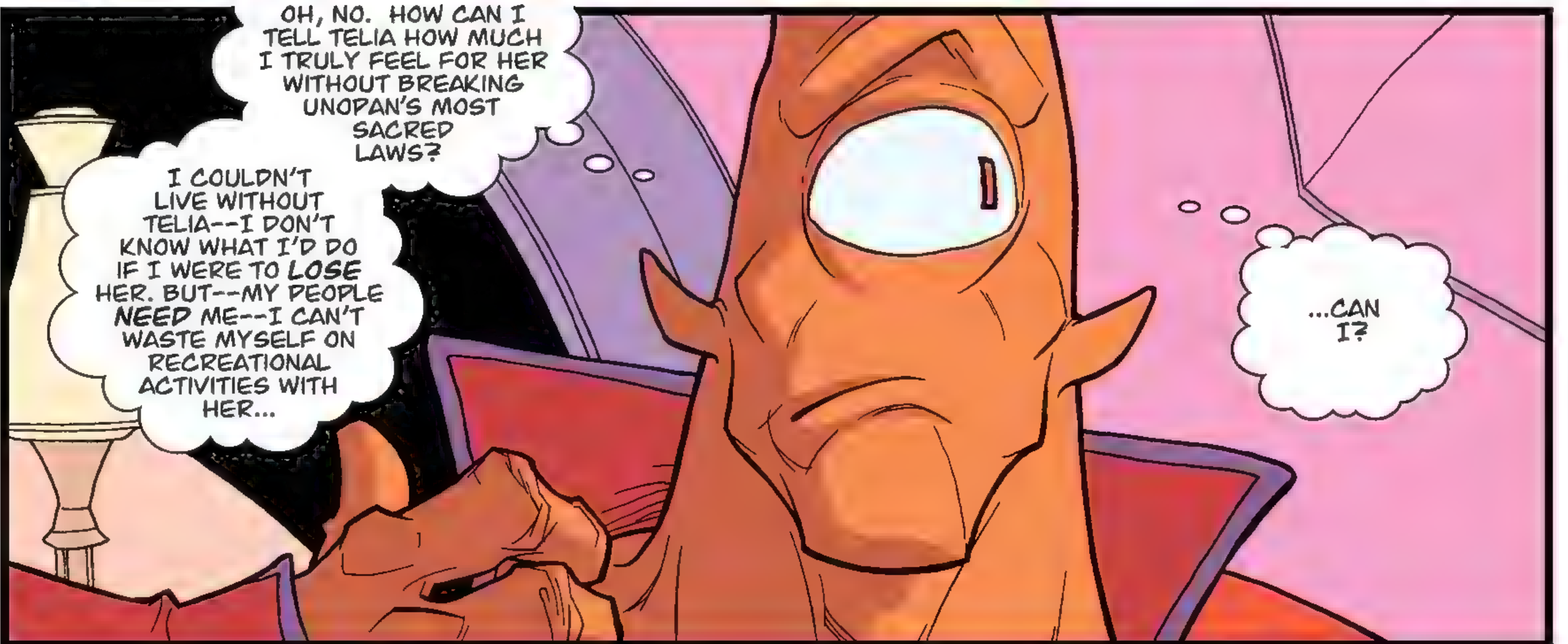
I KNOW ALL ABOUT YOUR RULES, ALLEN. "ENSURING THE SURVIVAL OF YOUR PEOPLE" AND ALL THAT CRAP.

I KNOW YOUR PEOPLE WERE ENDANGERED HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO BUT EVERYONE KNOWS YOU'RE IN NO DANGER OF EXTINCTION NOW.



YOU'VE ALL JUST GROWN ACCUSTOMED TO YOUR BACKWARDS METHODS.

YOUR BREEDING FACTORIES MAY BE MORE EFFICIENT BUT I PROMISE YOU THEY'RE NOT AS FUN.



OH, NO. HOW CAN I TELL TELIA HOW MUCH I TRULY FEEL FOR HER WITHOUT BREAKING UNOPAN'S MOST SACRED LAWS?

I COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT TELIA--I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'D DO IF I WERE TO LOSE HER. BUT--MY PEOPLE NEED ME--I CAN'T WASTE MYSELF ON RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES WITH HER...

...CAN I?



THIS ISN'T EASY FOR ME, YOU KNOW. I LOVE YOU--REALLY--I DO. IT JUST ISN'T NATURAL FOR ME TO.

DON'T FEED ME THAT UNOPAN RHETORIC. YOU KNOW I KNOW YOU DON'T BUY ANY OF THAT CRAP.



BUT IF I'M DISCOVERED-- I COULD BE STRIPPED OF MY TITLE. I'VE GOT A DEPOSIT CYCLE COMING UP. IF MY LEVELS AREN'T ABOVE STANDARD--THEY'LL REALIZE--



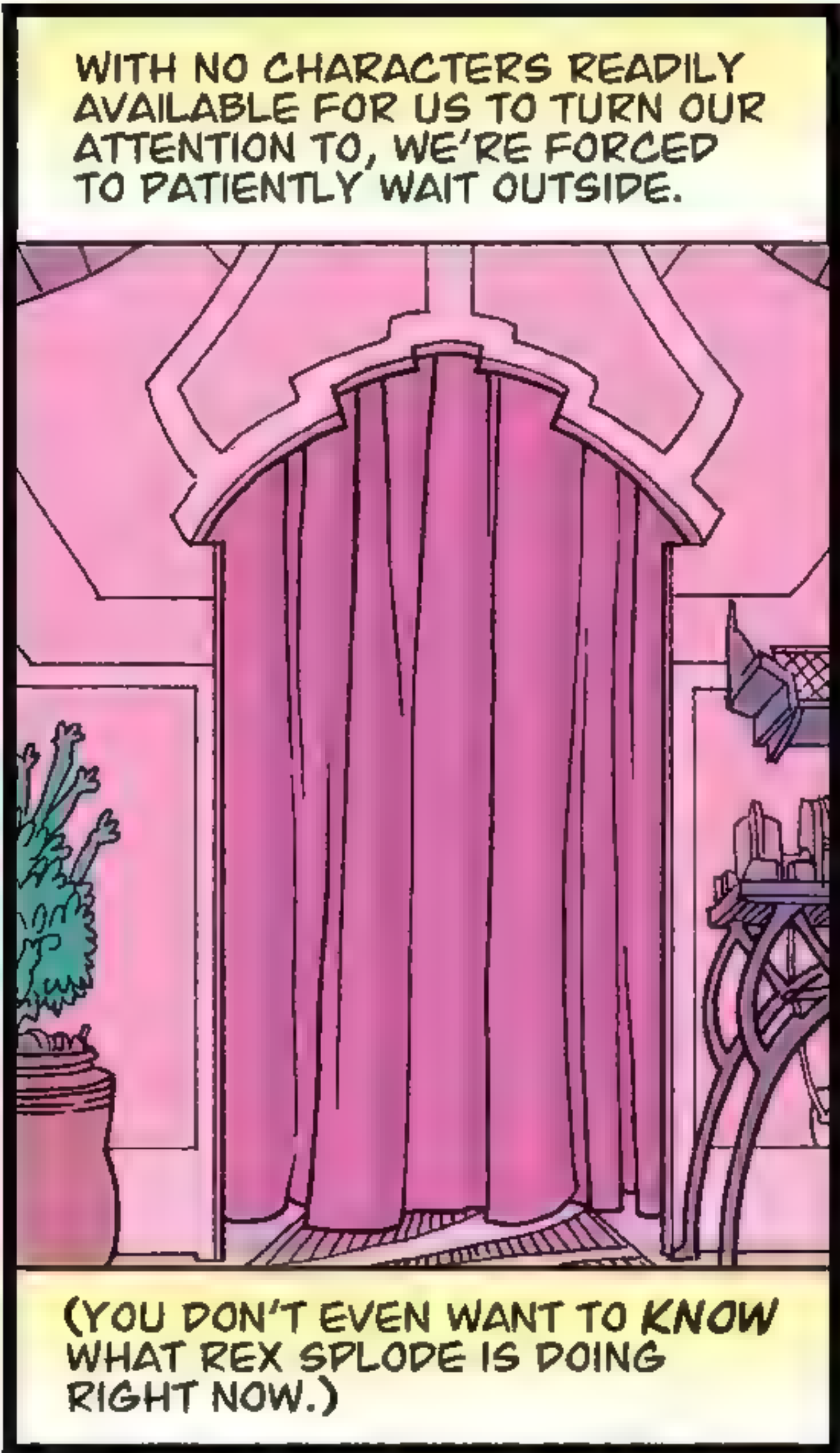
THAT NEVER STOPPED YOU BEFORE. DO YOU REALIZE HOW MANY MONTHS I'VE WAITED FOR THIS?

GET IN HERE.



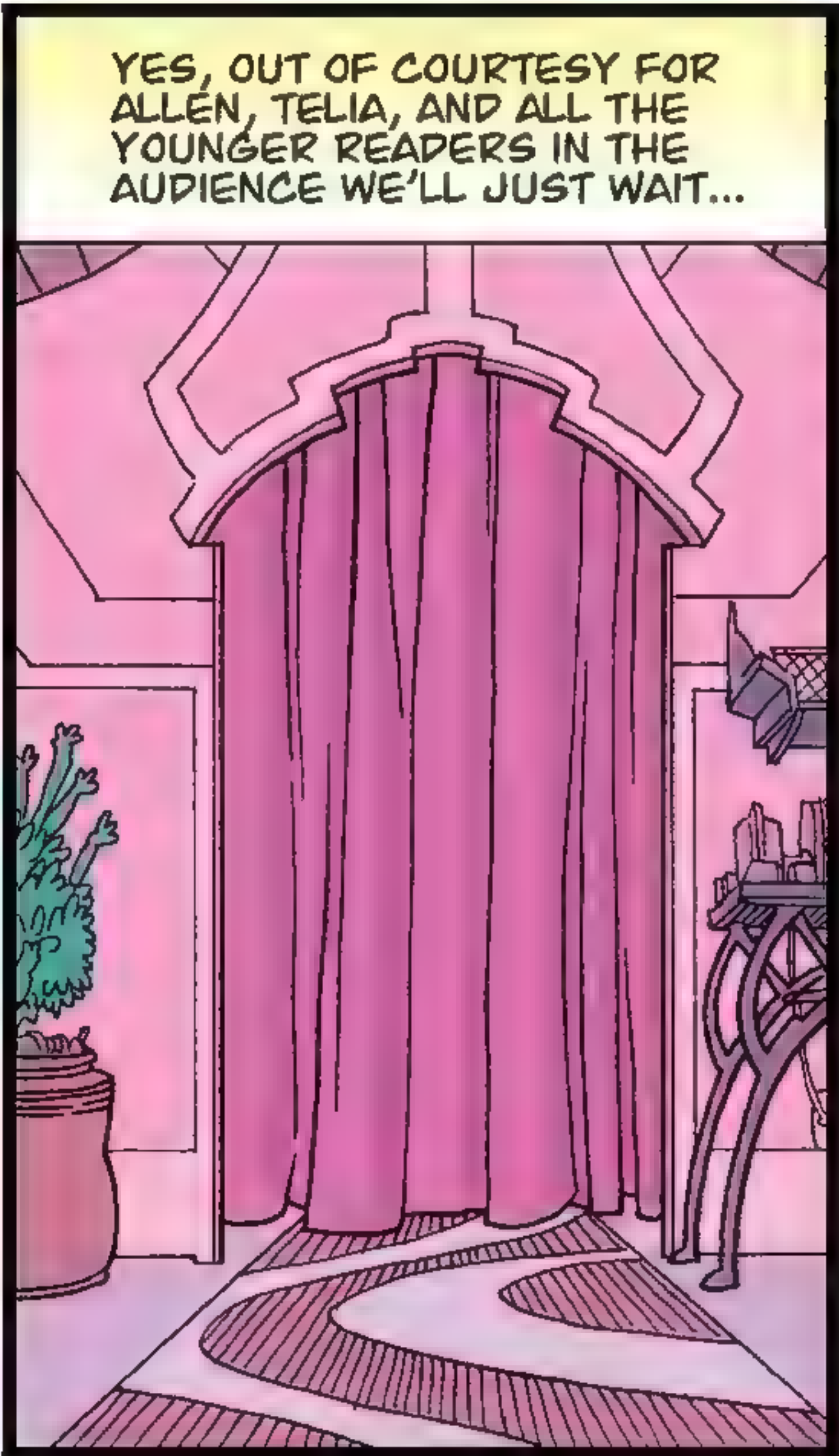
OKAY, OKAY! YOU WIN.

LET'S GO.

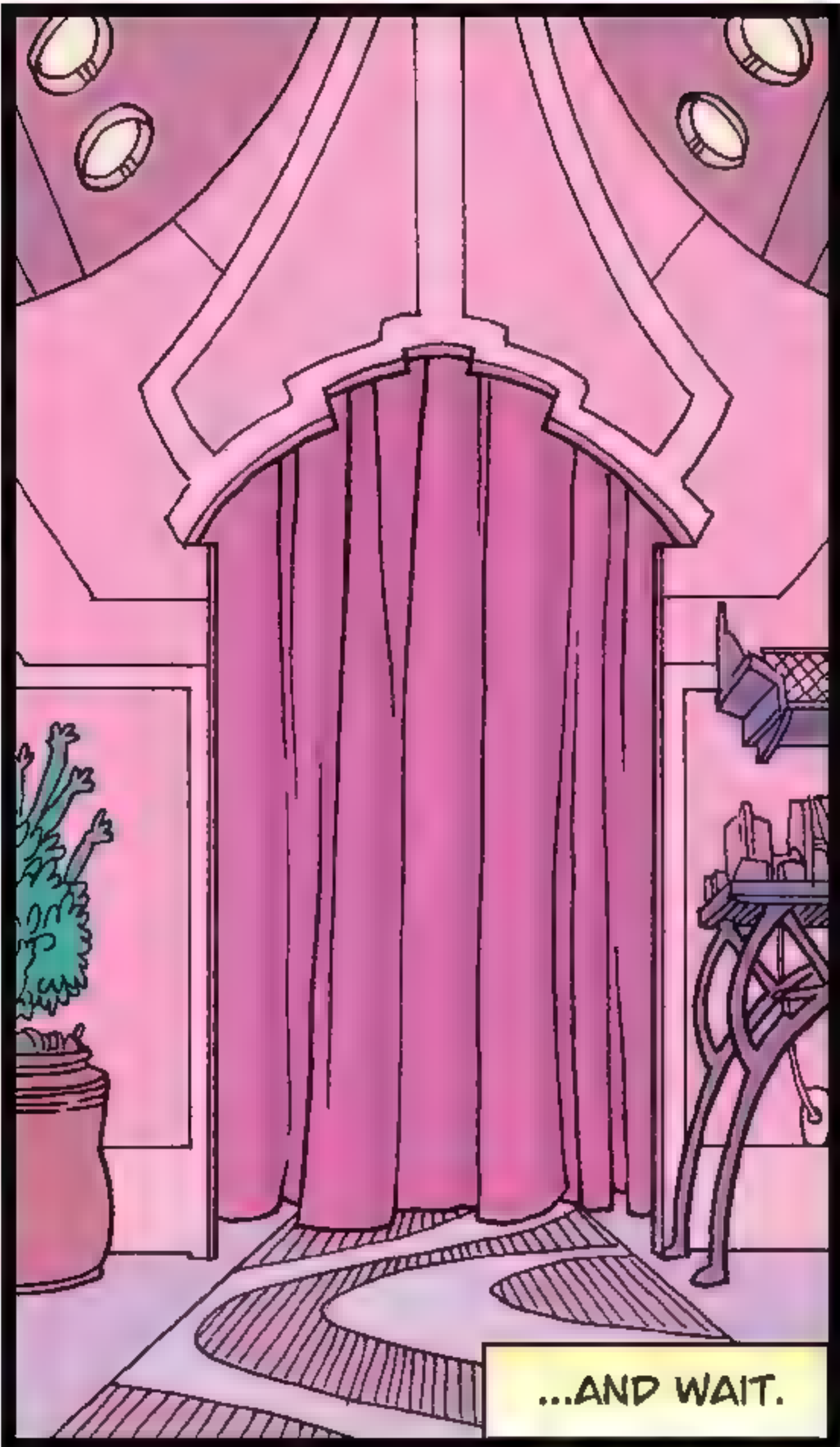


WITH NO CHARACTERS READILY AVAILABLE FOR US TO TURN OUR ATTENTION TO, WE'RE FORCED TO PATIENTLY WAIT OUTSIDE.

(YOU DON'T EVEN WANT TO KNOW WHAT REX SPODE IS DOING RIGHT NOW.)



YES, OUT OF COURTESY FOR ALLEN, TELIA, AND ALL THE YOUNGER READERS IN THE AUDIENCE WE'LL JUST WAIT...



...AND WAIT.

LATER--AFTER THE REUNION HAS COMPLETED ITS CARNAL FESTIVITIES--

OUR ATTENTION REFOCUSSES ON ALLEN, HIGH ABOVE TALESRIA, CAPITAL OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS.

IT HAS BEEN MERE HOURS AND ALLEN AND TELIA NOW FIND THEMSELVES ENJOYING A LATE BREAKFAST AT THEIR FAVORITE DINER.



OH, MAN! I DON'T REALIZE HOW MUCH I MISS FRESH KANZLOK WHILE I'M OUT ON MY MISSIONS UNTIL I GET BACK.

I CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING I MISS MORE.

I CAN THINK OF ONE THING.

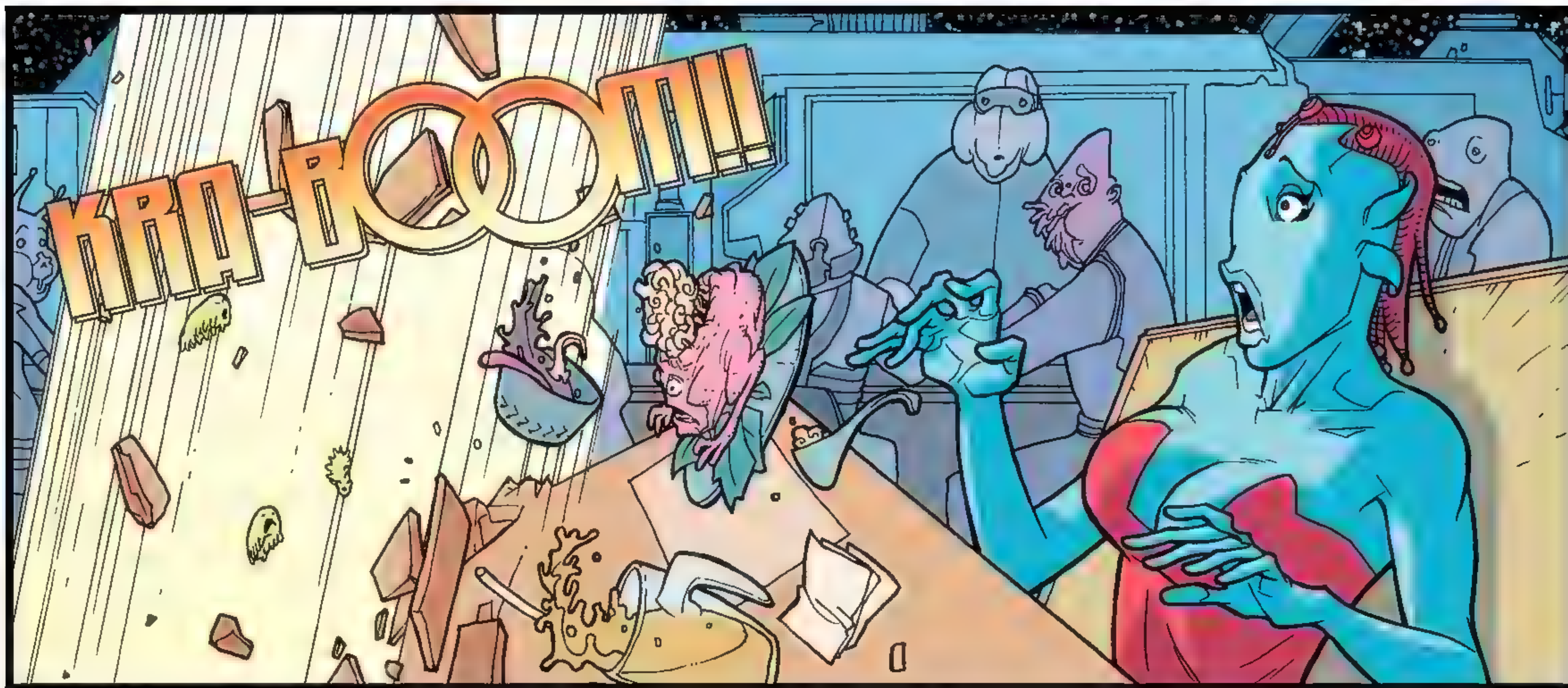
HMM?

YES OF COURSE--THAT... AND YOU. I MEANT **FOOD** SPECIFICALLY. I'M ALWAYS THINKING ABOUT THALMUN BARS AND OTHER SWEETS BUT I NEVER THINK ABOUT KANZLOK UNTIL I GET BACK.

AND PLEASE-- DON'T SPEAK OF OUR--YOU KNOW-- IN PUBLIC. IT'S TOO RISKY.

WHAT? LIKE THERE'S SOME **UNOPAN** SPY SITTING AT THE NEXT BOOTH OVER THAT'S GOING TO SEE YOU CONVERSING WITH ME, PIECE TOGETHER THE MEANING OF OUR HALF FINISHED STATEMENTS AND ARREST YOU ON THE SPOT?

THAT'S RIDICUL--

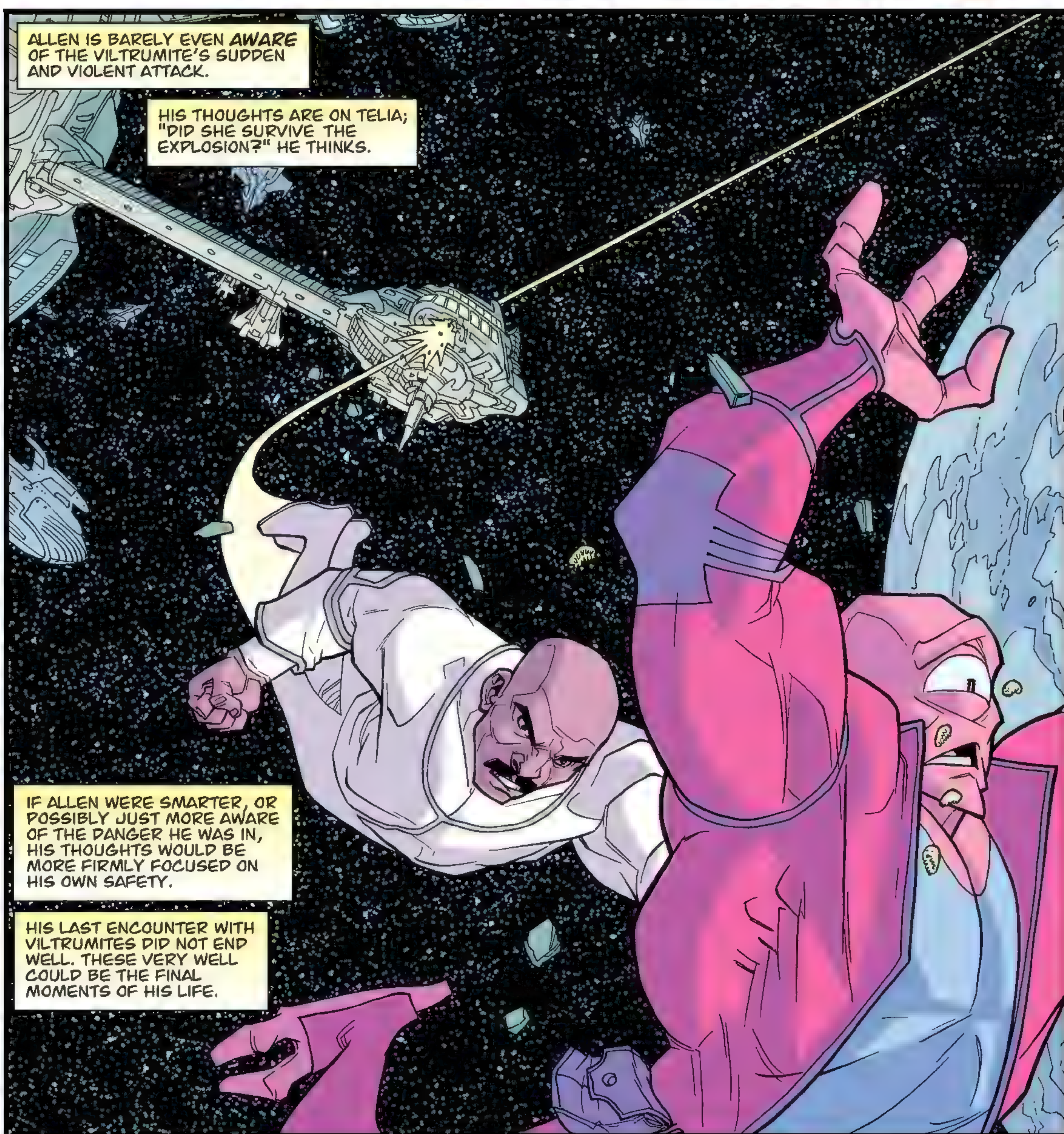


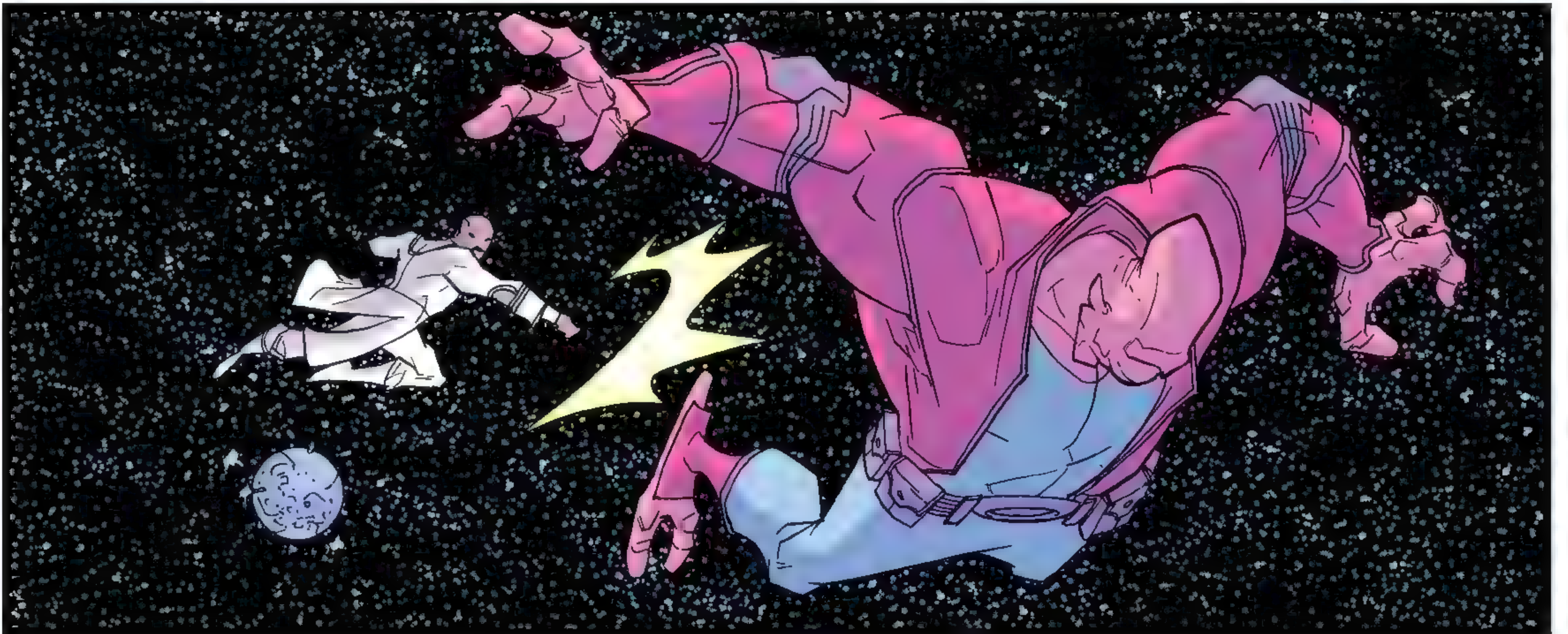
ALLEN IS BARELY EVEN AWARE OF THE VILTRUMITE'S SUDDEN AND VIOLENT ATTACK.

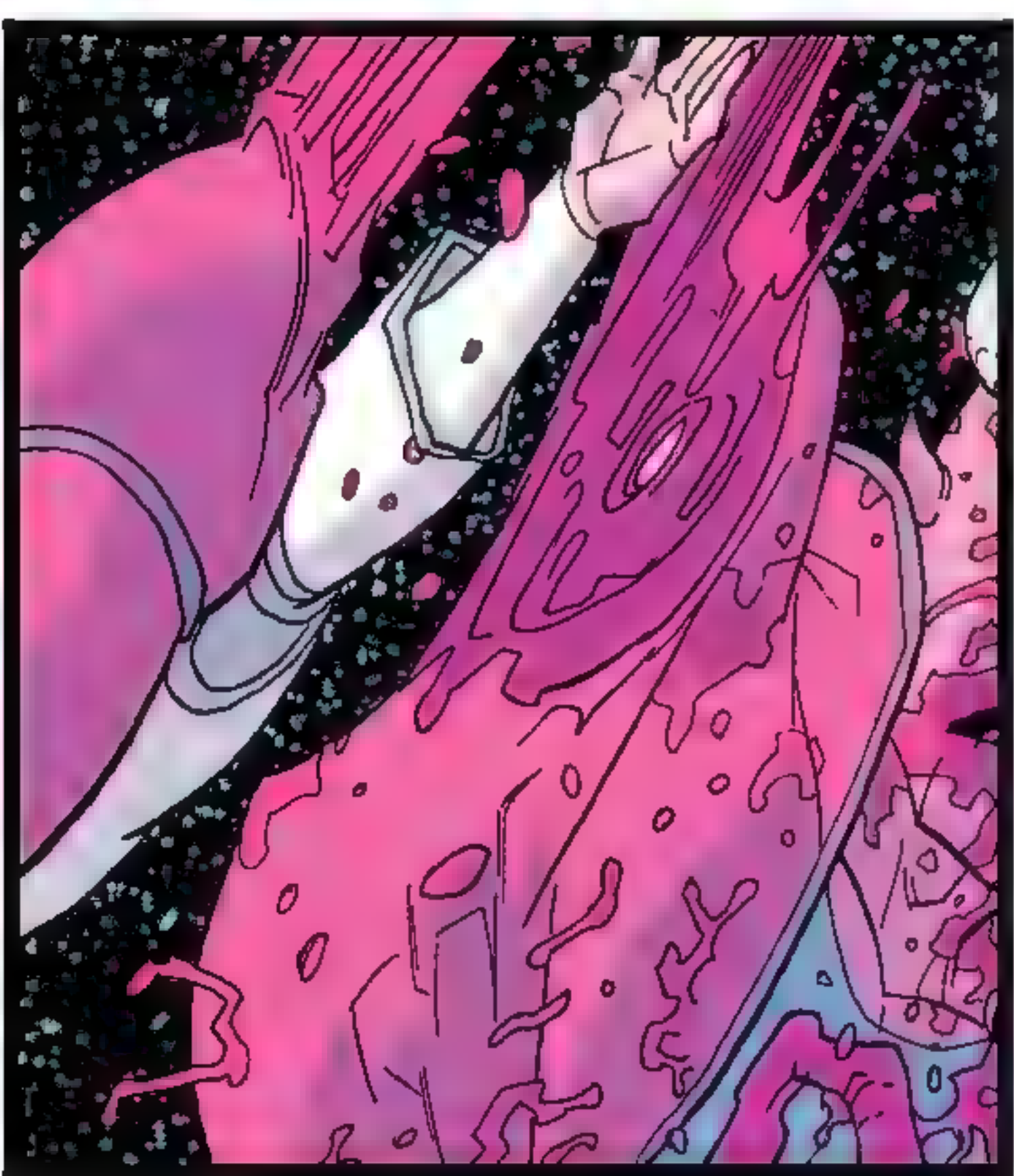
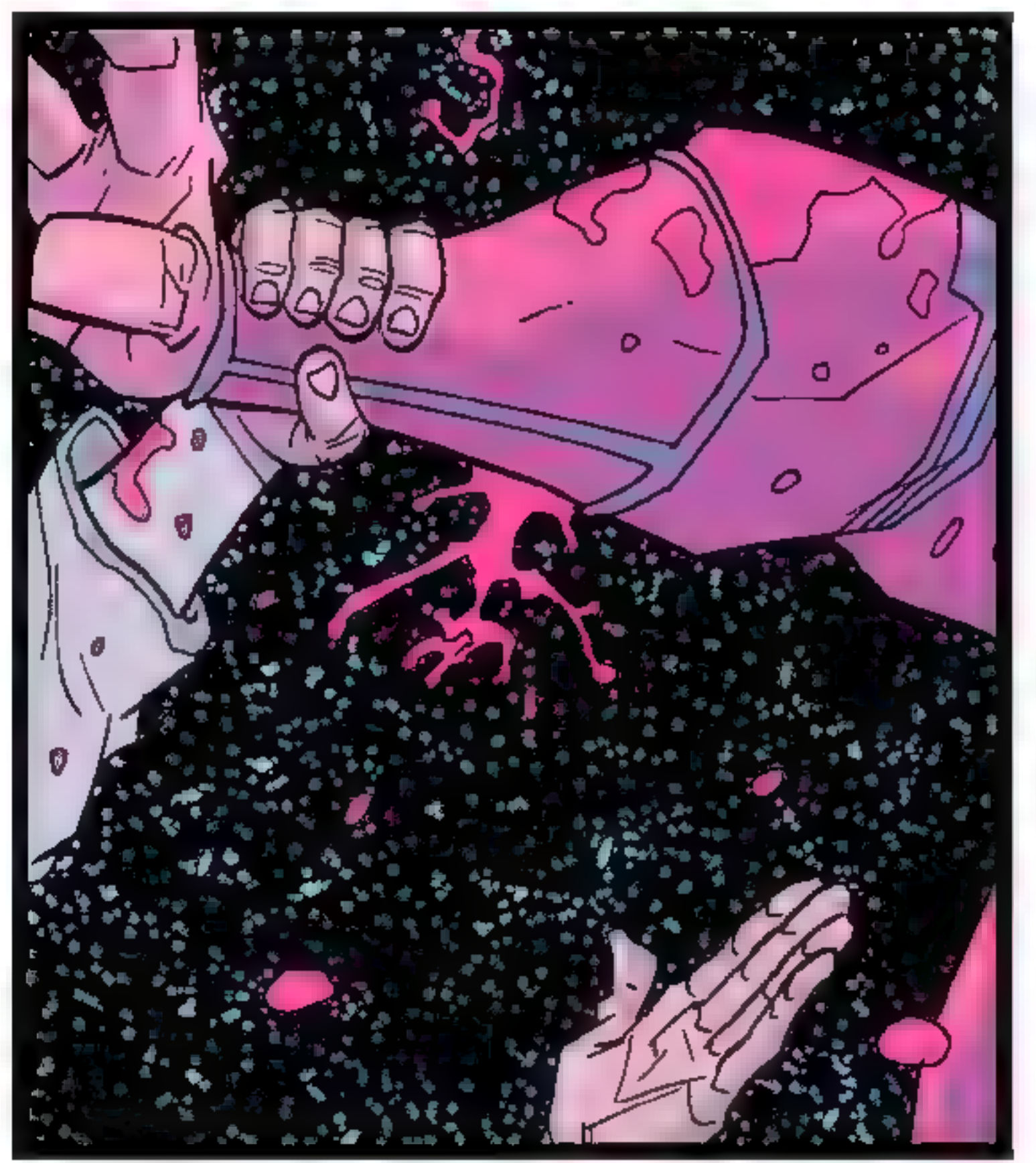
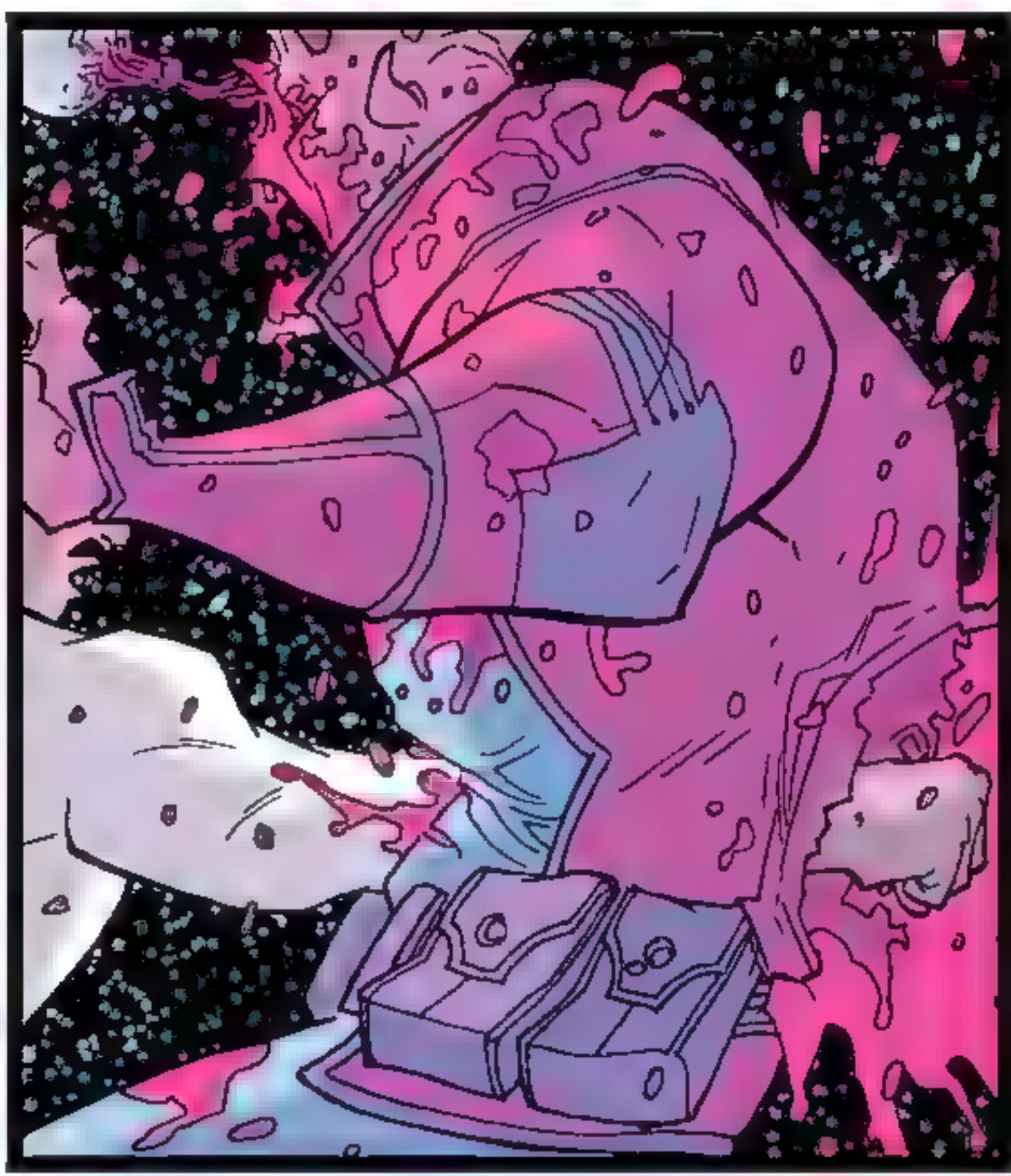
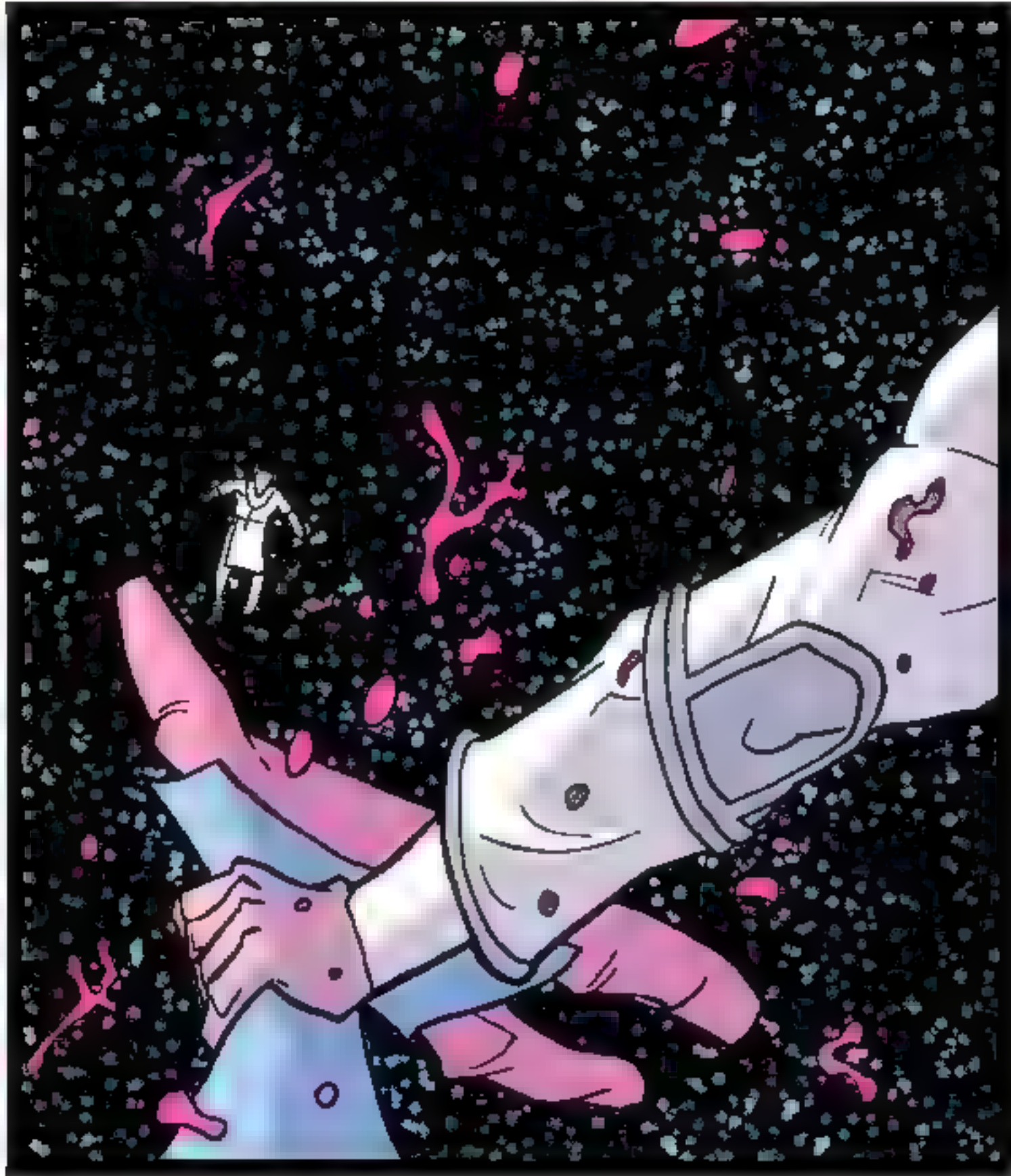
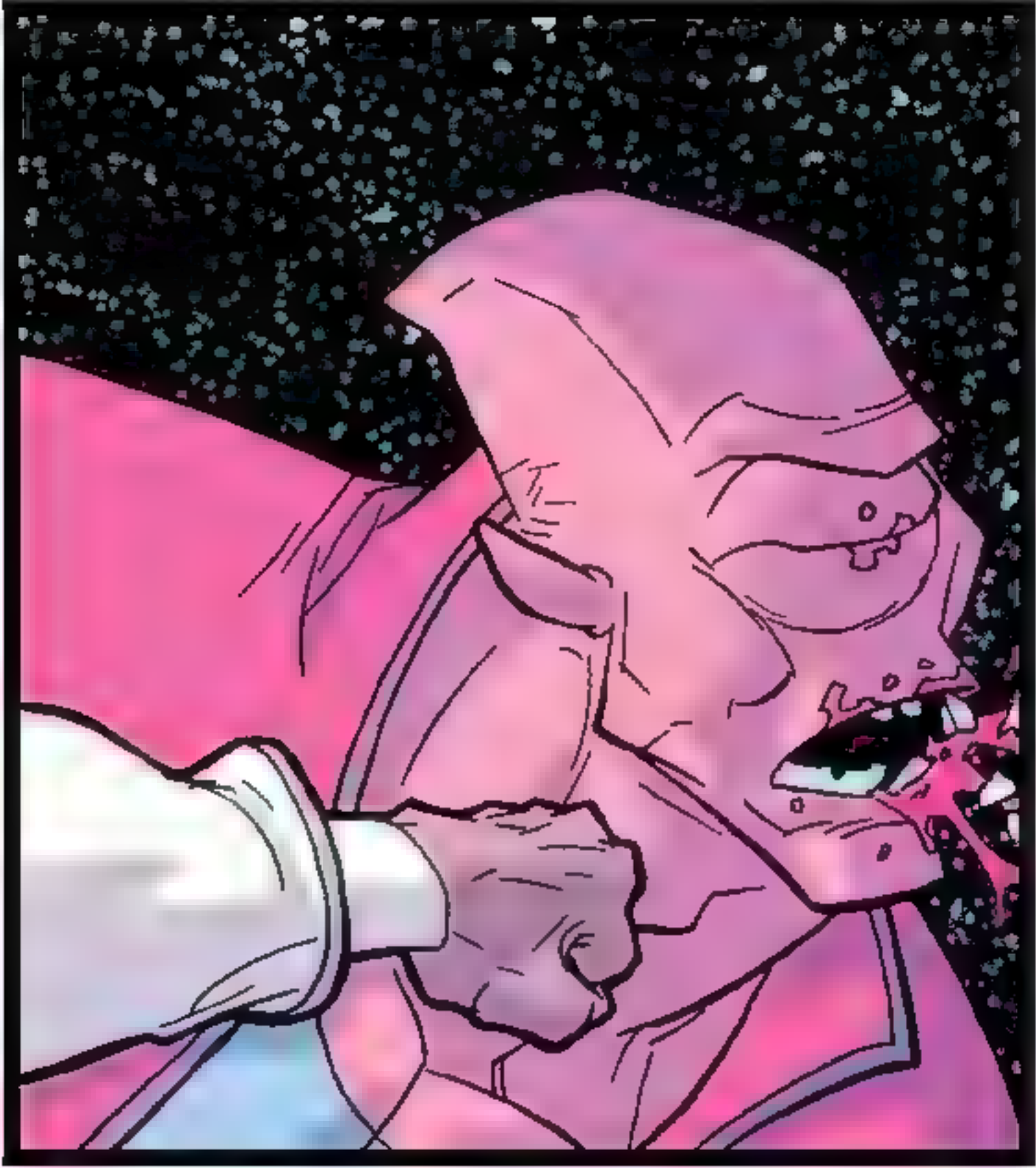
HIS THOUGHTS ARE ON TELIA; "DID SHE SURVIVE THE EXPLOSION?" HE THINKS.

IF ALLEN WERE SMARTER, OR POSSIBLY JUST MORE AWARE OF THE DANGER HE WAS IN, HIS THOUGHTS WOULD BE MORE FIRMLY FOCUSED ON HIS OWN SAFETY.

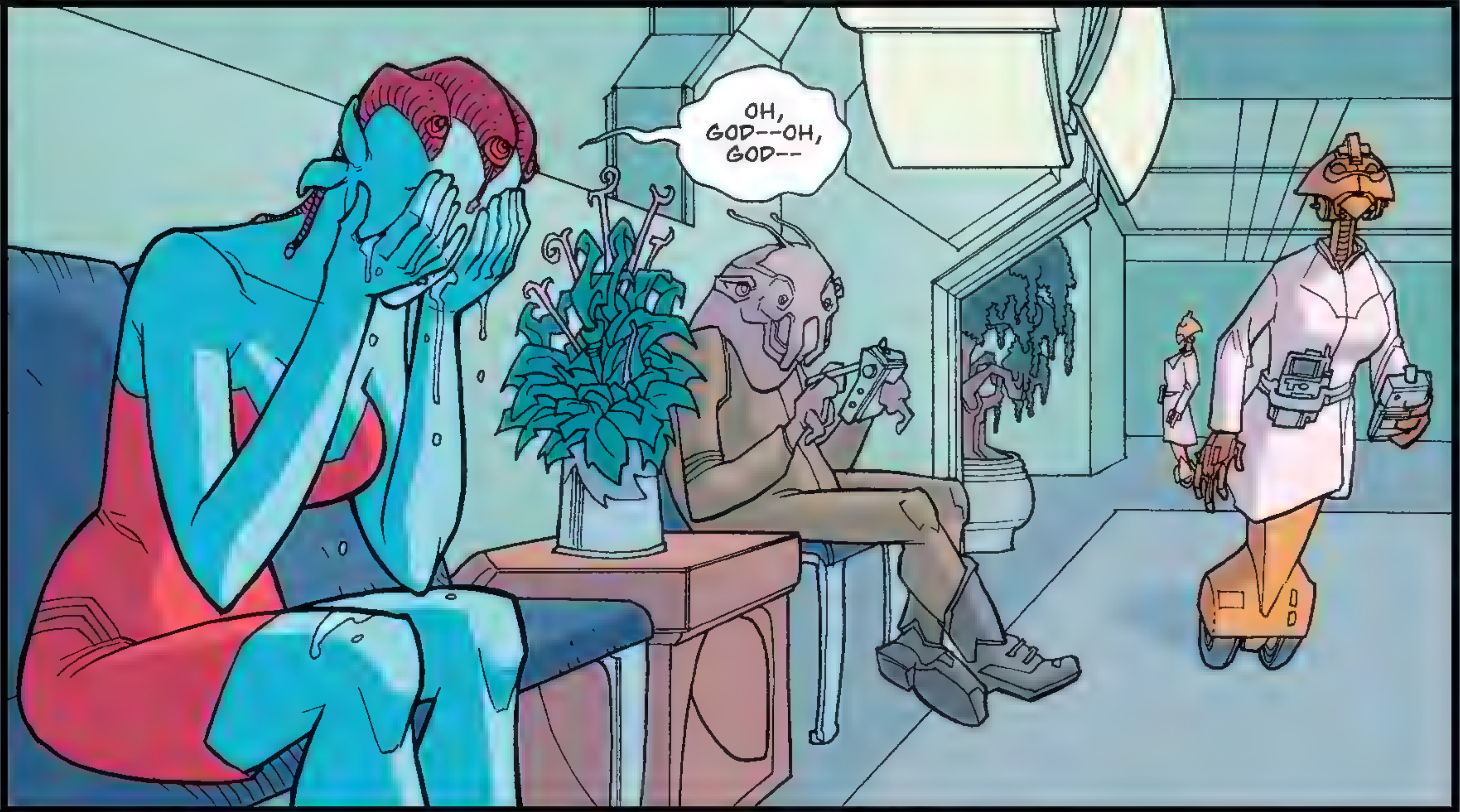
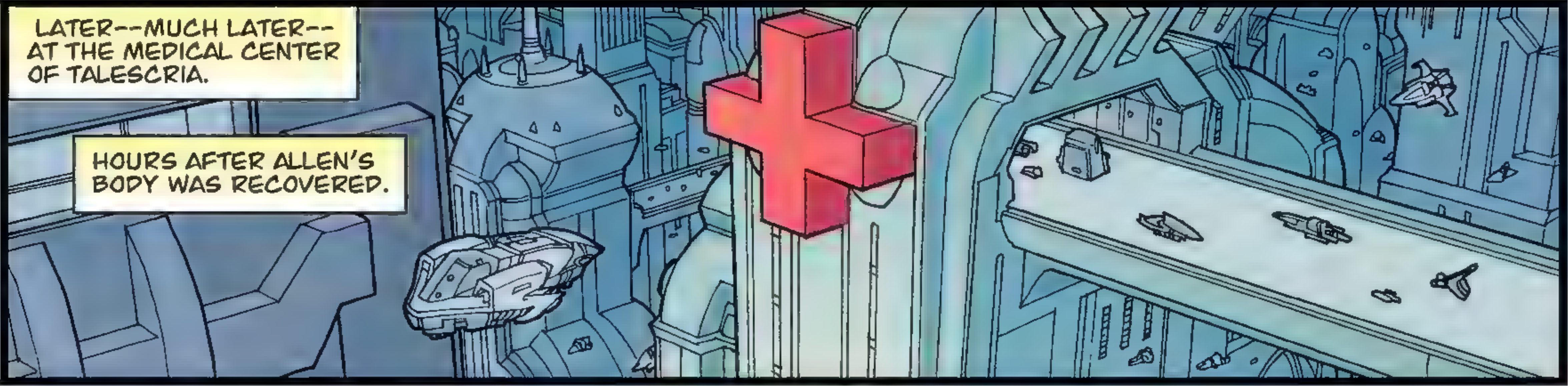
HIS LAST ENCOUNTER WITH VILTRUMITES DID NOT END WELL. THESE VERY WELL COULD BE THE FINAL MOMENTS OF HIS LIFE.







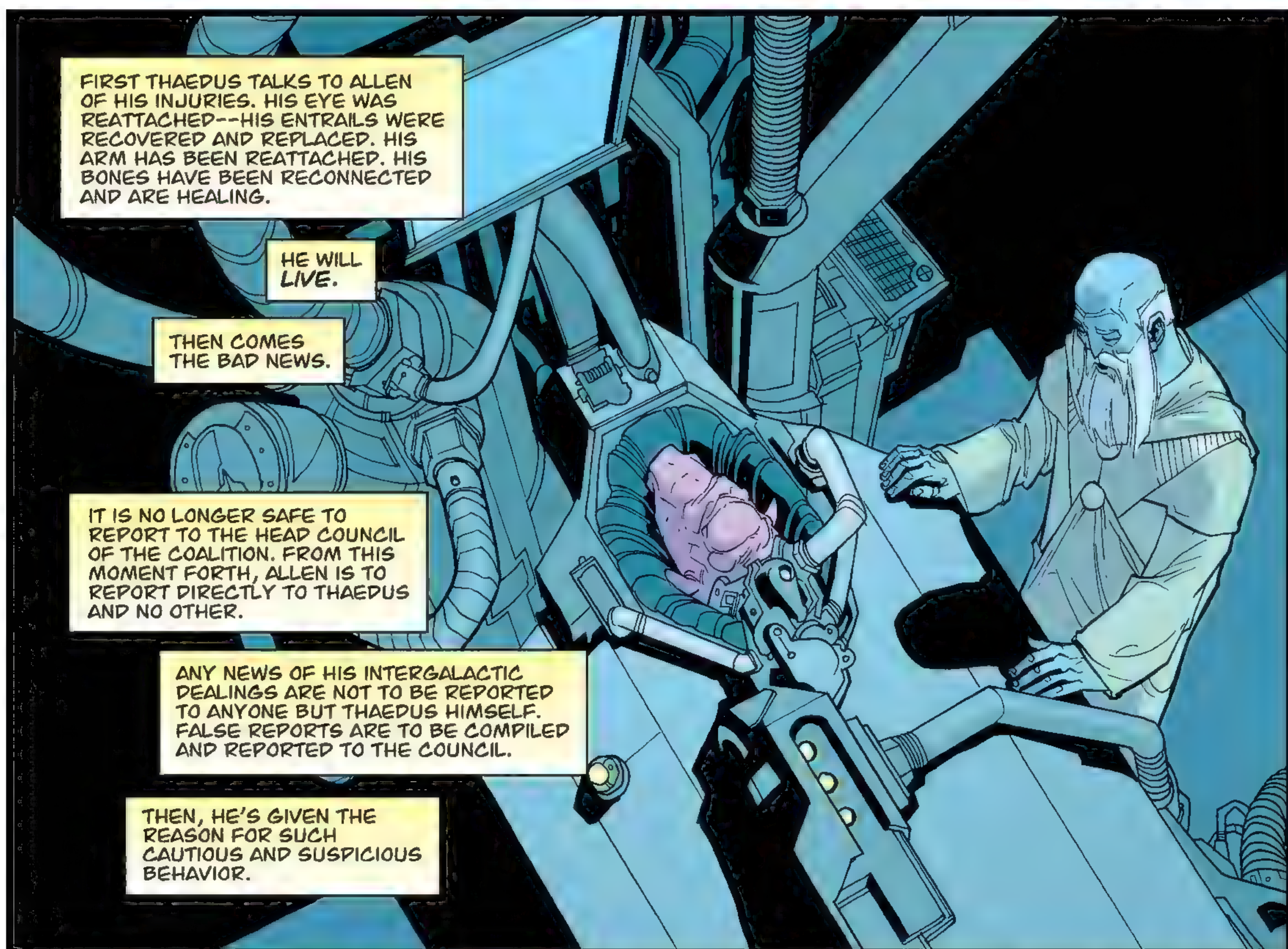






DO NOT ATTEMPT TO MOVE OR REPLY. THOSE FACILITIES WILL BE BEYOND YOUR GRASP FOR SOME TIME--BUT LISTEN.

I KNOW YOU CAN LISTEN.



FIRST THAEDUS TALKS TO ALLEN OF HIS INJURIES. HIS EYE WAS REATTACHED--HIS ENTRAILS WERE RECOVERED AND REPLACED. HIS ARM HAS BEEN REATTACHED. HIS BONES HAVE BEEN RECONNECTED AND ARE HEALING.

HE WILL LIVE.

THEN COMES THE BAD NEWS.

IT IS NO LONGER SAFE TO REPORT TO THE HEAD COUNCIL OF THE COALITION. FROM THIS MOMENT FORTH, ALLEN IS TO REPORT DIRECTLY TO THAEDUS AND NO OTHER.

ANY NEWS OF HIS INTERGALACTIC DEALINGS ARE NOT TO BE REPORTED TO ANYONE BUT THAEDUS HIMSELF. FALSE REPORTS ARE TO BE COMPILED AND REPORTED TO THE COUNCIL.

THEN, HE'S GIVEN THE REASON FOR SUCH CAUTIOUS AND SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOR.



THERE IS A MOLE WITHIN THE HEAD COUNCIL OF THE COALITION.

UNTIL HE IS DISCOVERED AND ELIMINATED-- NO ONE IS SAFE. THE VERY COALITION ITSELF IS IN JEOPARDY.

THIS COULD VERY WELL BE THE BEGINNING OF THE END.



I--I WAS THINKING
MAYBE I COULD
SPEND THE NIGHT
HERE. Y'KNOW, SINCE
YOU DON'T HAVE A
ROOMMATE OR
ANYTHING.

I
JUST--
I WANTED
TO SLEEP
NEXT TO
YOU.



LOOK AT THE CLOCK,
SILLY. YOU **DID**
SLEEP NEXT TO
ME---IT'S ALMOST
MORNING. YOU
NEED TO GET OUT
OF HERE BEFORE
THE SUN COMES
UP AND IT'LL BE
EASIER TO SPOT
YOU. I KNOW
YOU'RE SUPER FAST
AND ALL THAT, BUT
I DON'T WANT TO
RISK IT.



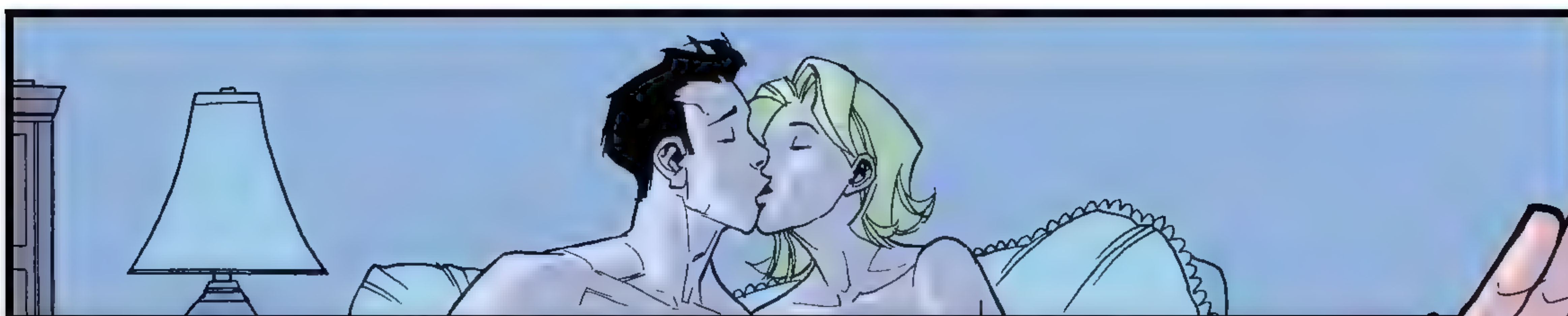
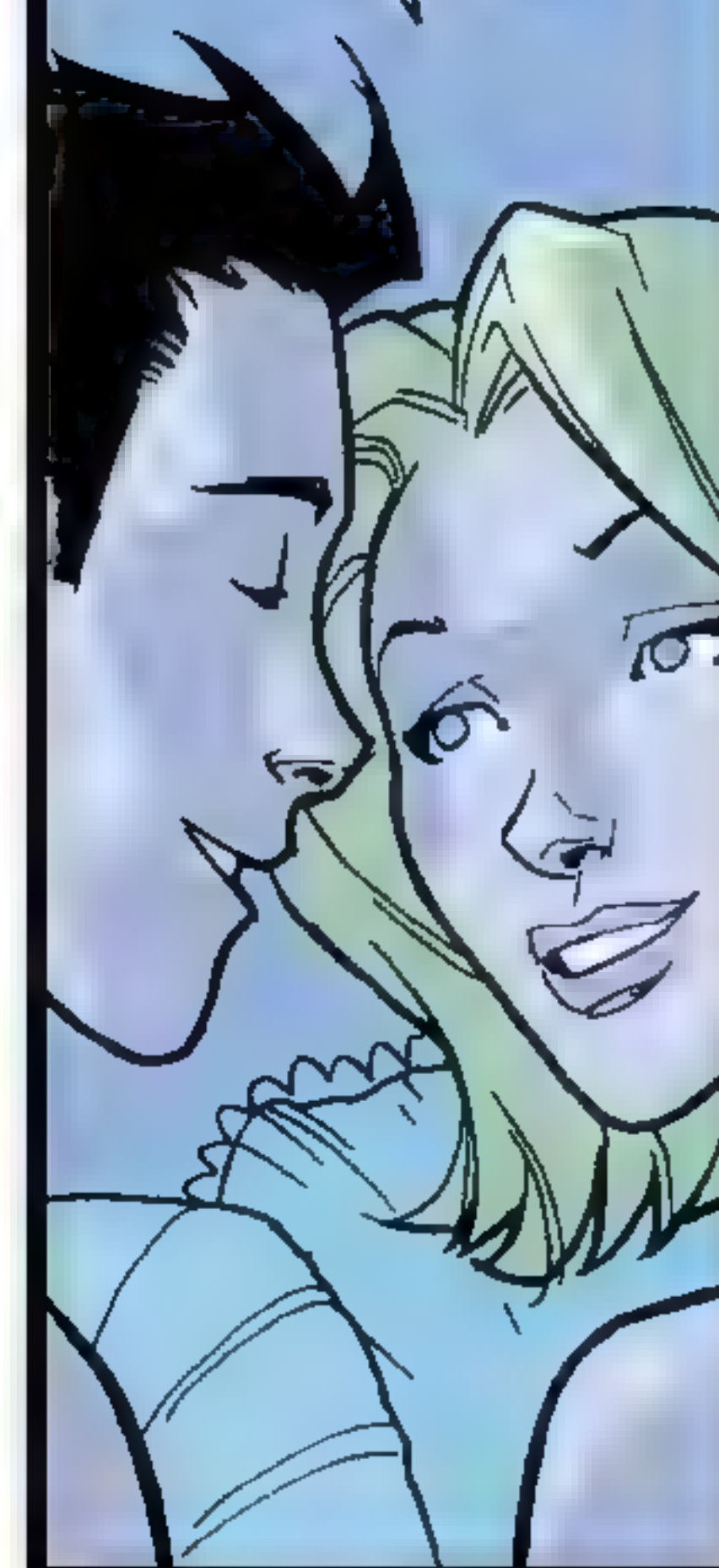
OKAY---SORRY.
JUST, UH... LET
ME GET MY
CLOTHES
ON.

MARK?

YEAH?



LAST
NIGHT WAS
PERFECT.





****SEE ISSUE 5, INVINCIHEADS.**

ISSUE TWENTY-FOUR

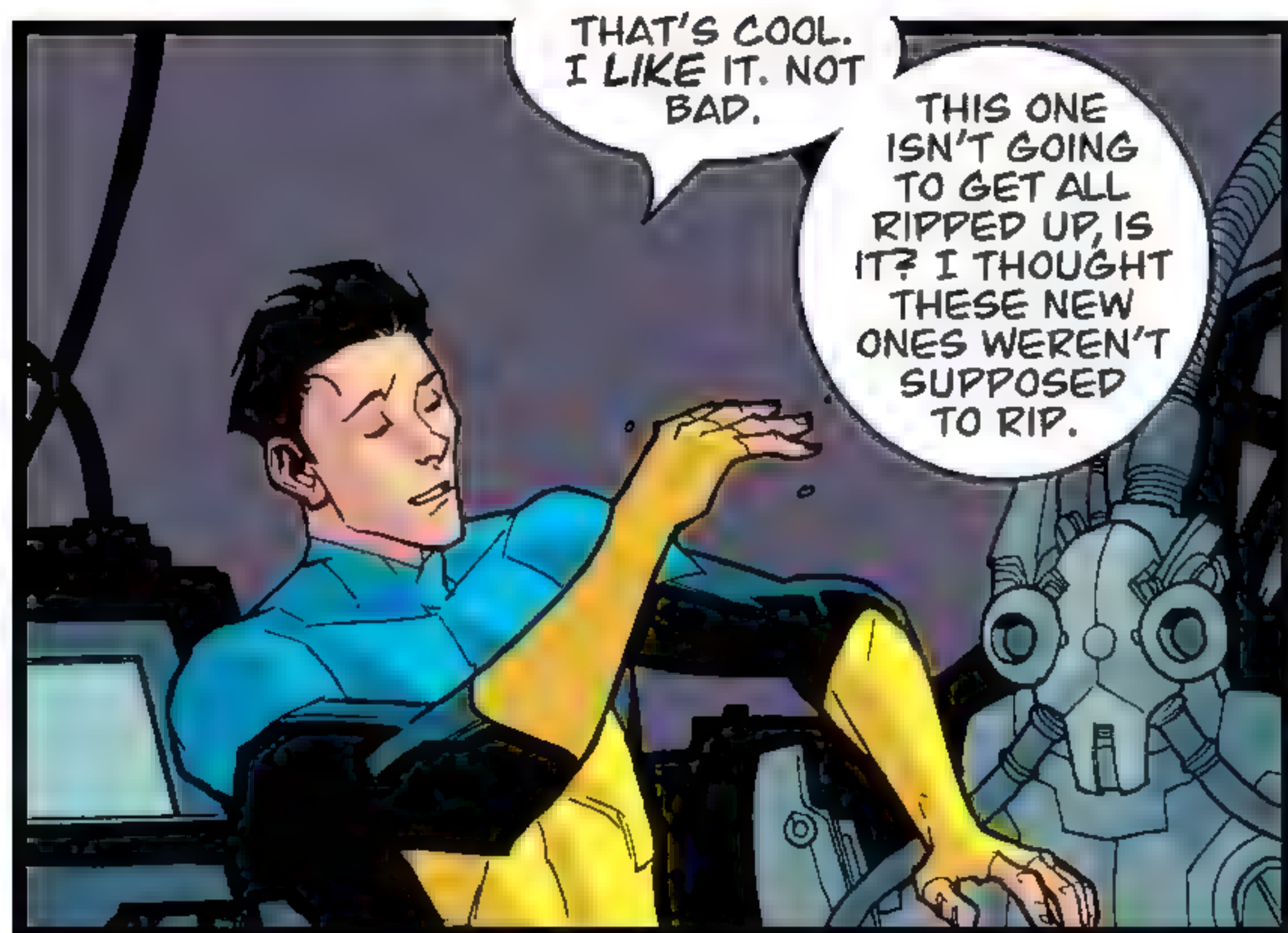




HEY,
UH--YOU
CHANGED
MY
BOOTS?

YEAH, I WANTED TO
SIMPLIFY THE DESIGN
A BIT. SIMPLE IS IN THIS
YEAR, Y'KNOW. THAT
LITTLE SQUARE OF BLACK
CLOTH SHOWING THROUGH
DIDN'T MAKE A WHOLE LOT
OF SENSE--IT WAS KINDA
LIKE SAYING "LOOK, WEAK
SPOT HERE" OR
SOMETHING.

ALSO, IT'S
A LOT EASIER
TO SUPPORT
THE KNEEPAD
NOW THAT
THERE'S A
WHOLE BOOT
UNDER IT.



THAT'S COOL.
I LIKE IT. NOT
BAD.

THIS ONE
ISN'T GOING
TO GET ALL
RIPPED UP, IS
IT? I THOUGHT
THESE NEW
ONES WEREN'T
SUPPOSED TO
RIP.



I DON'T REALLY
KNOW WHAT TO TELL
YOU ON THAT FRONT.
THAT FABRIC WAS
SOLD TO ME AS
UNRIPPABLE--IT WAS
A GOVERNMENT
CLOSEOUT--IT'S
PROBABLY
CRAP.

I MADE THIS
ONE FROM A
DIFFERENT ROLL...
MAYBE THE
OTHER BATCH
WAS BAD.

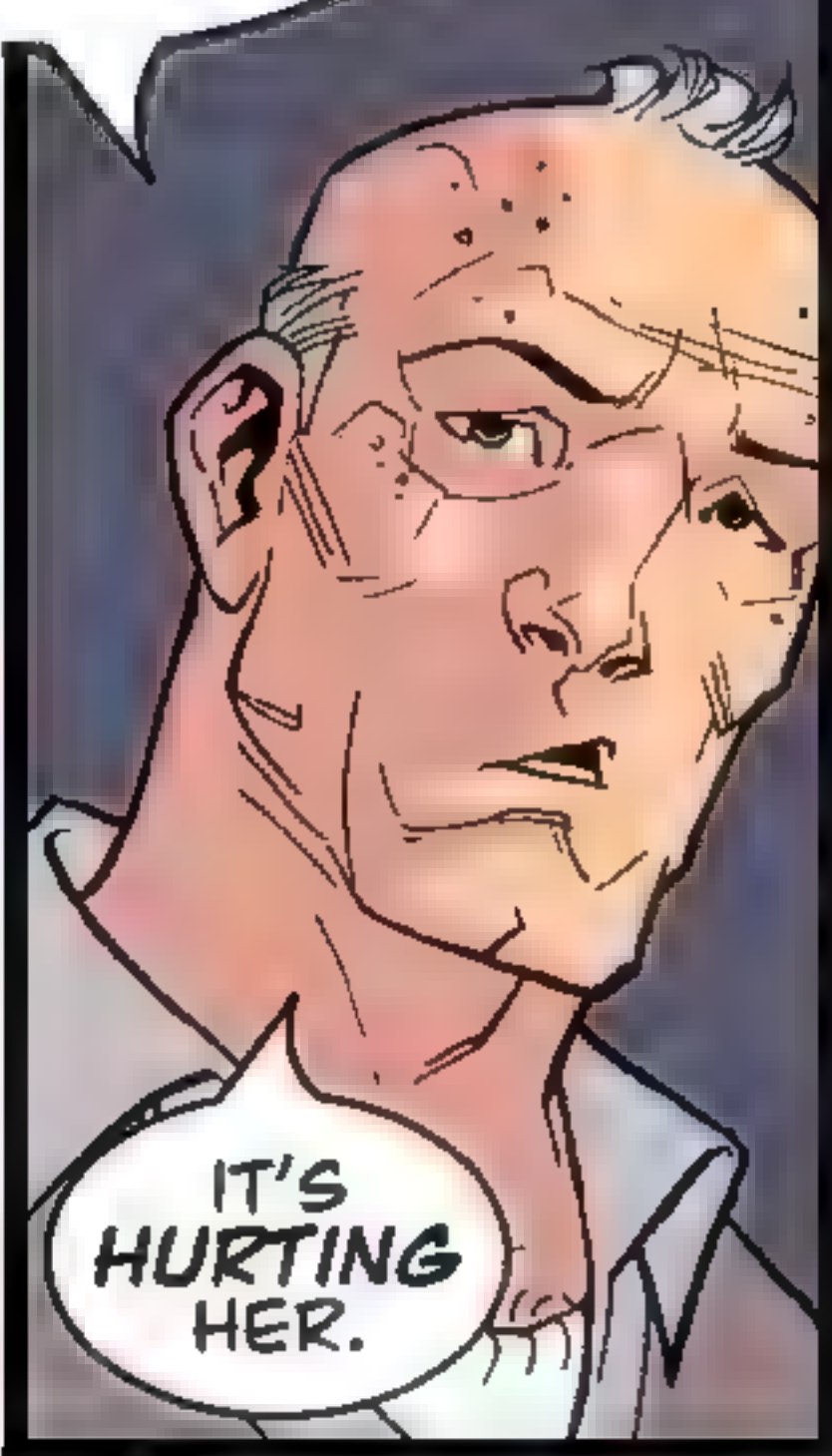
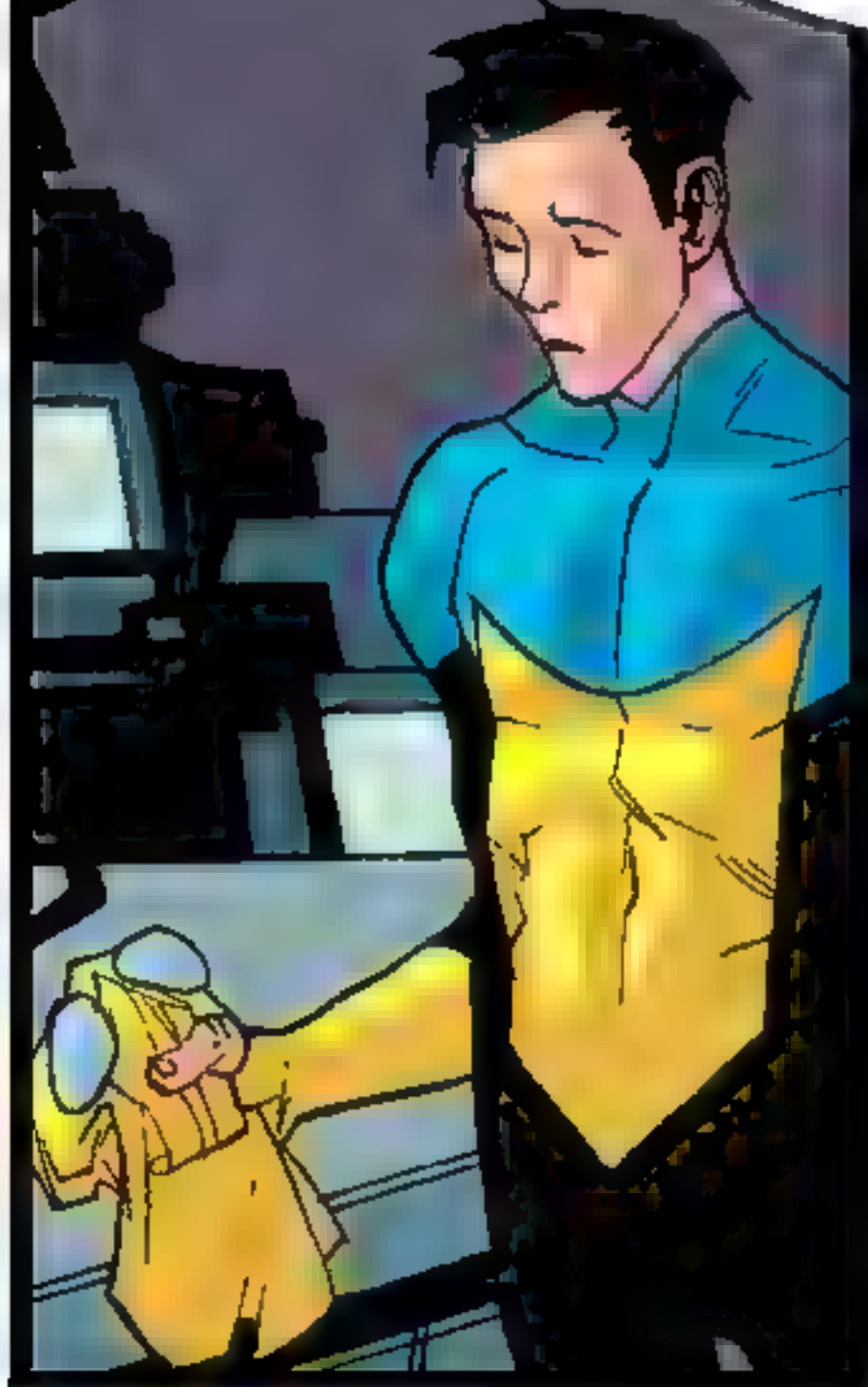


MARK--UM--
WHEN'S THE
LAST TIME YOU
TALKED TO YOUR
MOTHER?

UH...

I DON'T
KNOW, A
WEEK...
TWO?

TRY A MONTH. FOR A NORMAL
COLLEGE KID THAT WOULDN'T
BE A BIG DEAL, YOU'RE
GROWING UP--IT'S GOOD TO
GET AWAY FROM THE NEST--
BUT, SON--SHE KNOWS
YOU CAN COME VISIT
HER IN A SPLIT
SECOND.

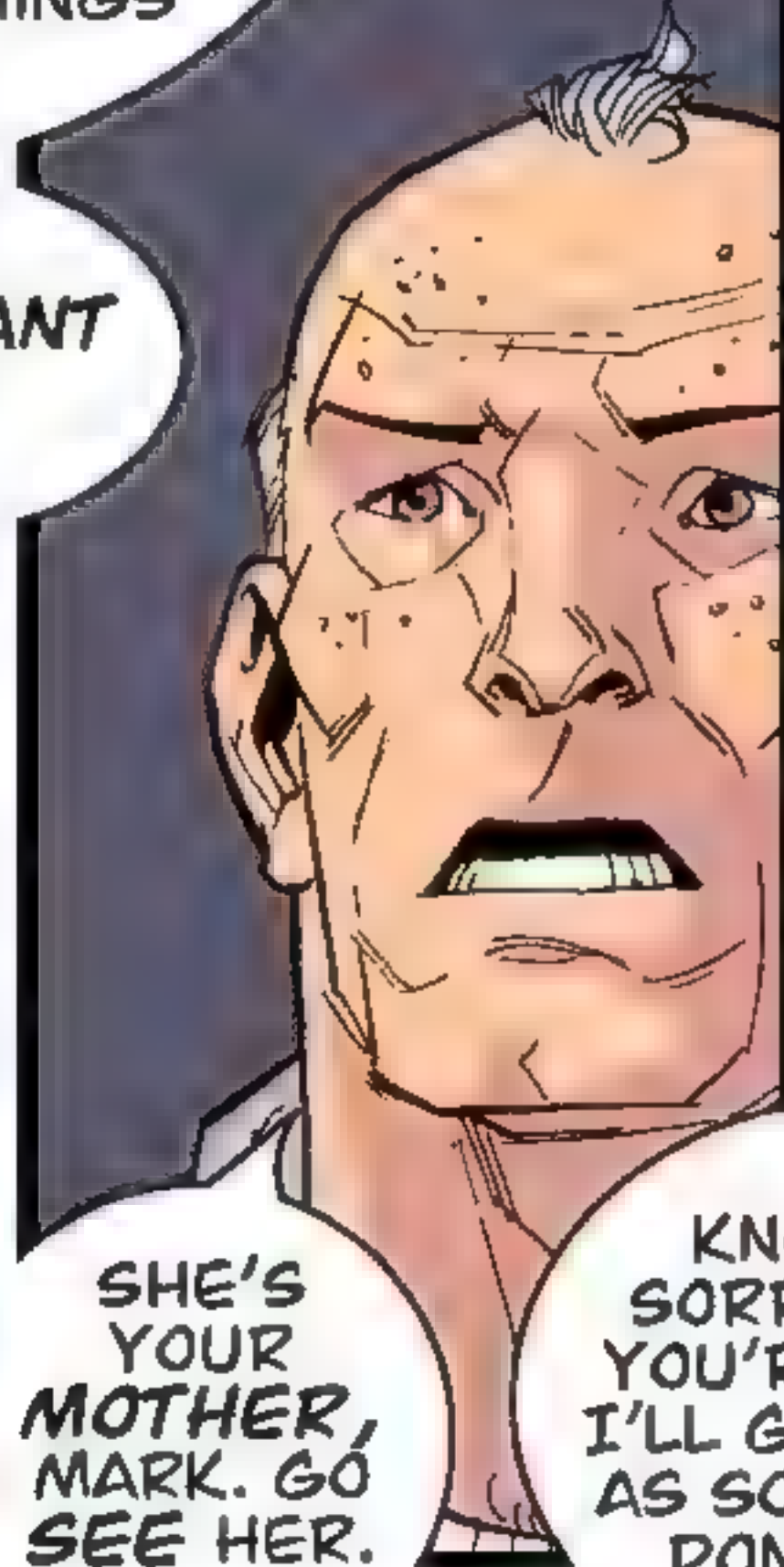


IT'S
HURTING
HER.

I KNOW--I KEEP MEANING TO
SEE HER BUT THEN SOMETHING
COMES UP. AND THAT HOUSE--
IT'S GOT SO MANY MEMORIES.
SINCE I GOT OUT OF IT, I'VE
BEEN ABLE TO PUT THINGS
OUT OF MY
MIND.



I'M
RELUCTANT
TO GO
BACK.



SHE'S
YOUR
MOTHER,
MARK. GO
SEE HER.

I
KNOW. I'M
SORRY, ART--
YOU'RE RIGHT.
I'LL GO SEE HER
AS SOON AS I'M
DONE HERE.

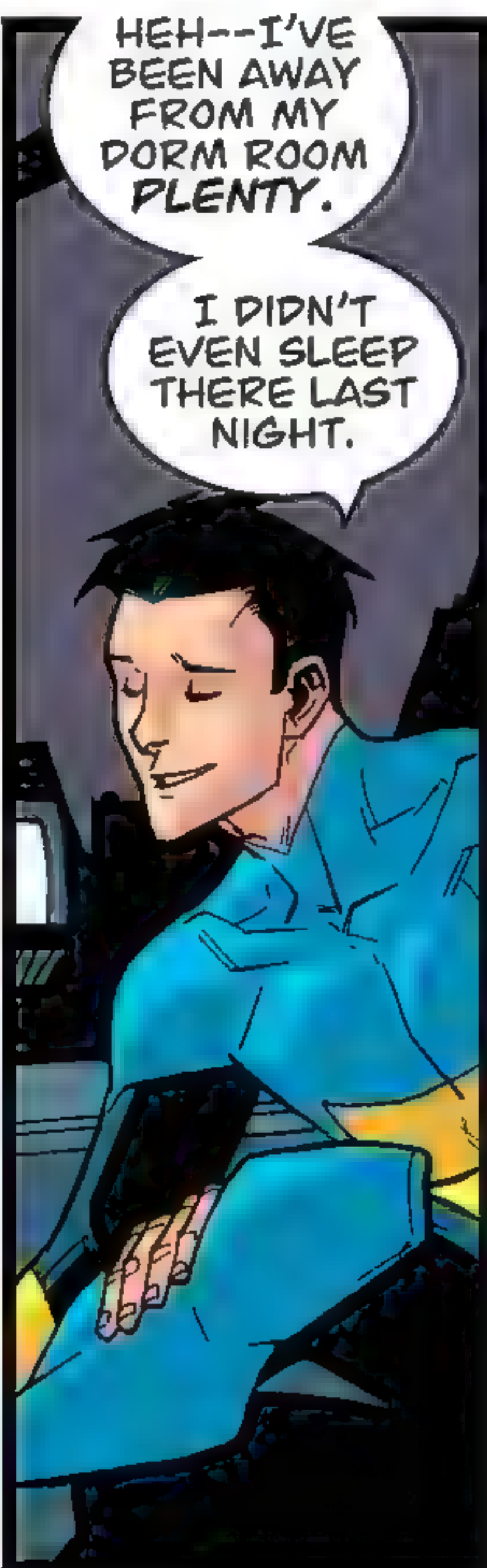


IT'LL DO YOU
GOOD TO GET OUT
OF THAT DORM
ROOM, AWAY FROM
ALL THE PARTIES
AND WHATEVER
ELSE IS GOING
ON THERE.



HEH--I'VE
BEEN AWAY
FROM MY
DORM ROOM
PLENTY.

I DIDN'T
EVEN SLEEP
THERE LAST
NIGHT.

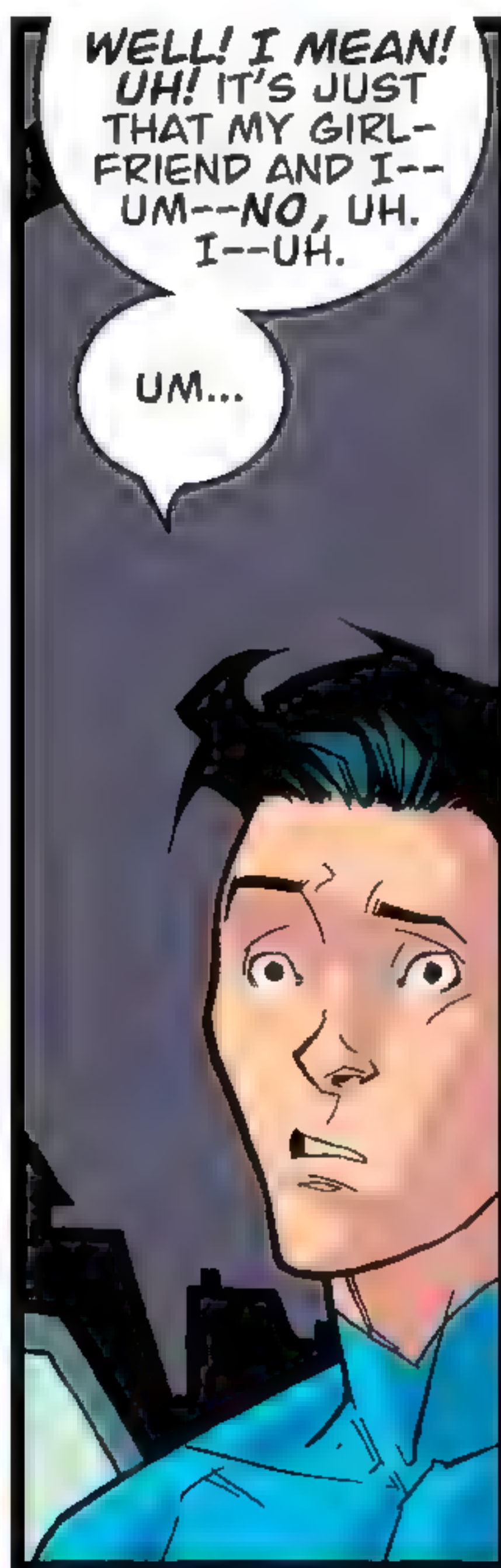


OH?

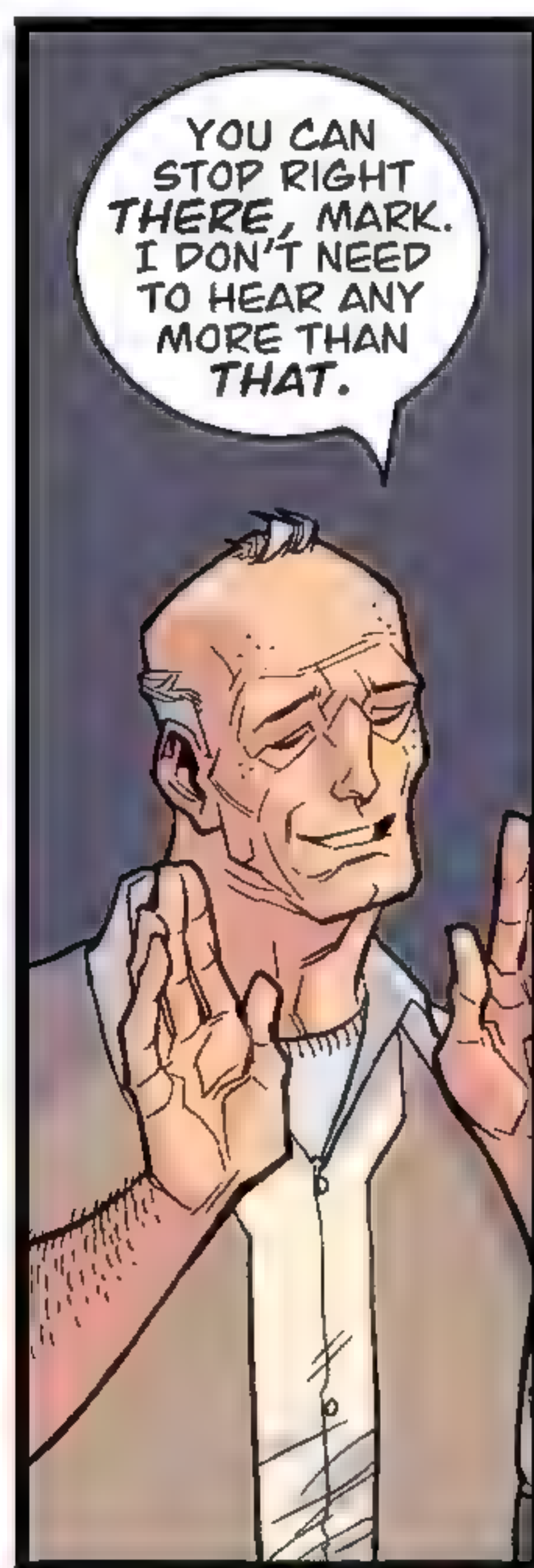


WELL! I MEAN!
UH! IT'S JUST
THAT MY GIRL-
FRIEND AND I--
UM--NO, UH.
I--UH.

UM...



YOU CAN
STOP RIGHT
THERE, MARK.
I DON'T NEED
TO HEAR ANY
MORE THAN
THAT.



YOU'RE AT A GOOD
AGE FOR THAT--JUST
BE CAREFUL. YOU SEEM
HAPPY. IT'S A GOOD
LOOK FOR YOU--A
WELCOME
CHANGE.

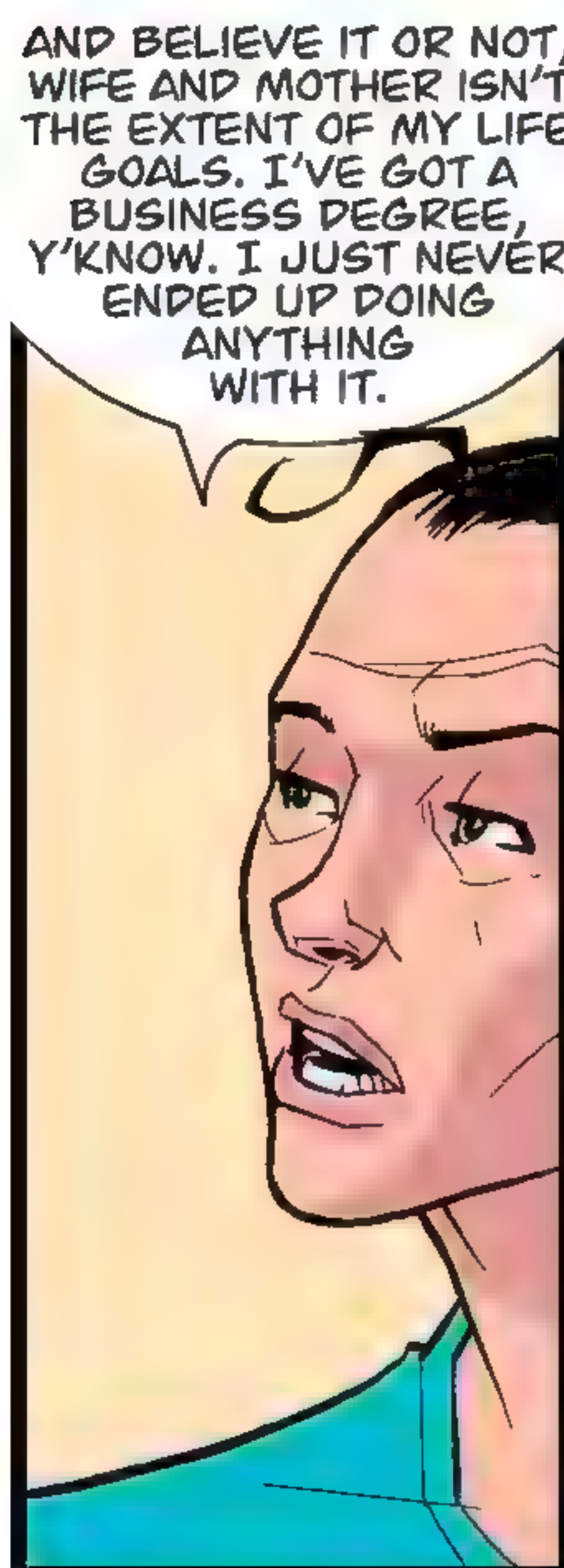
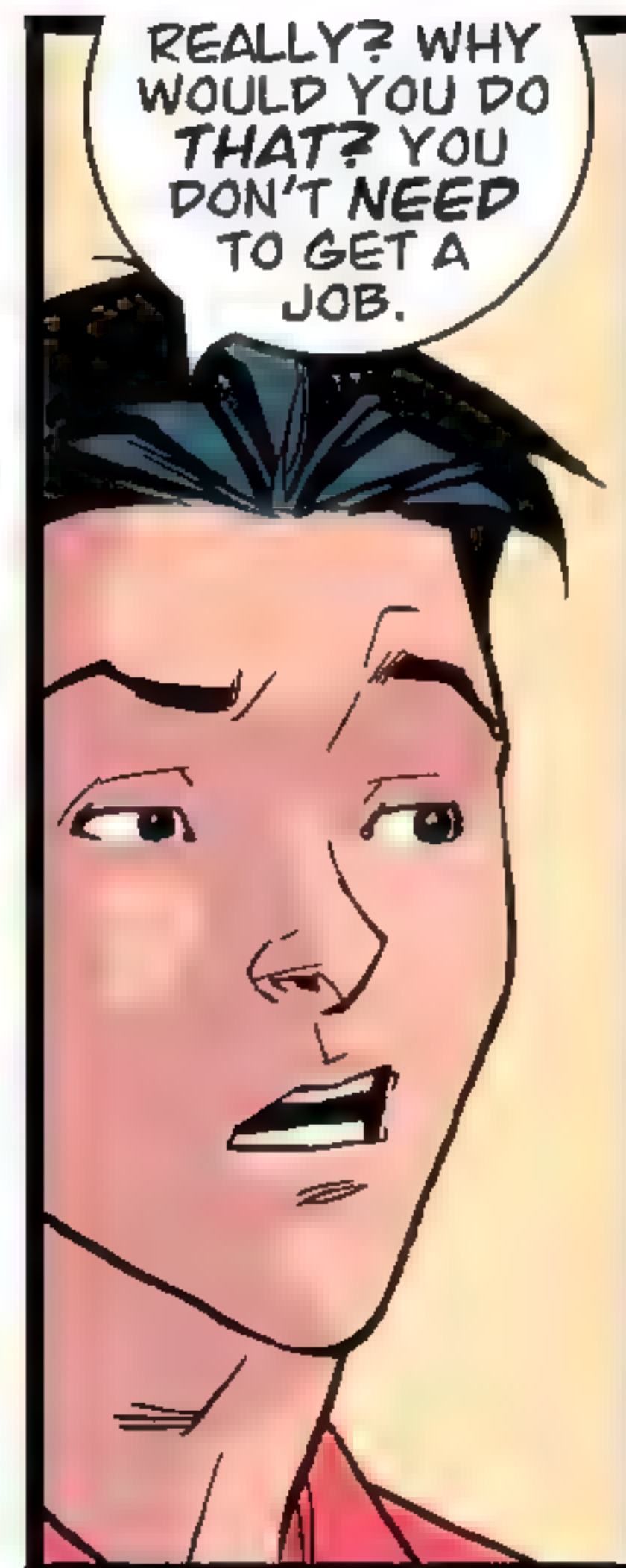
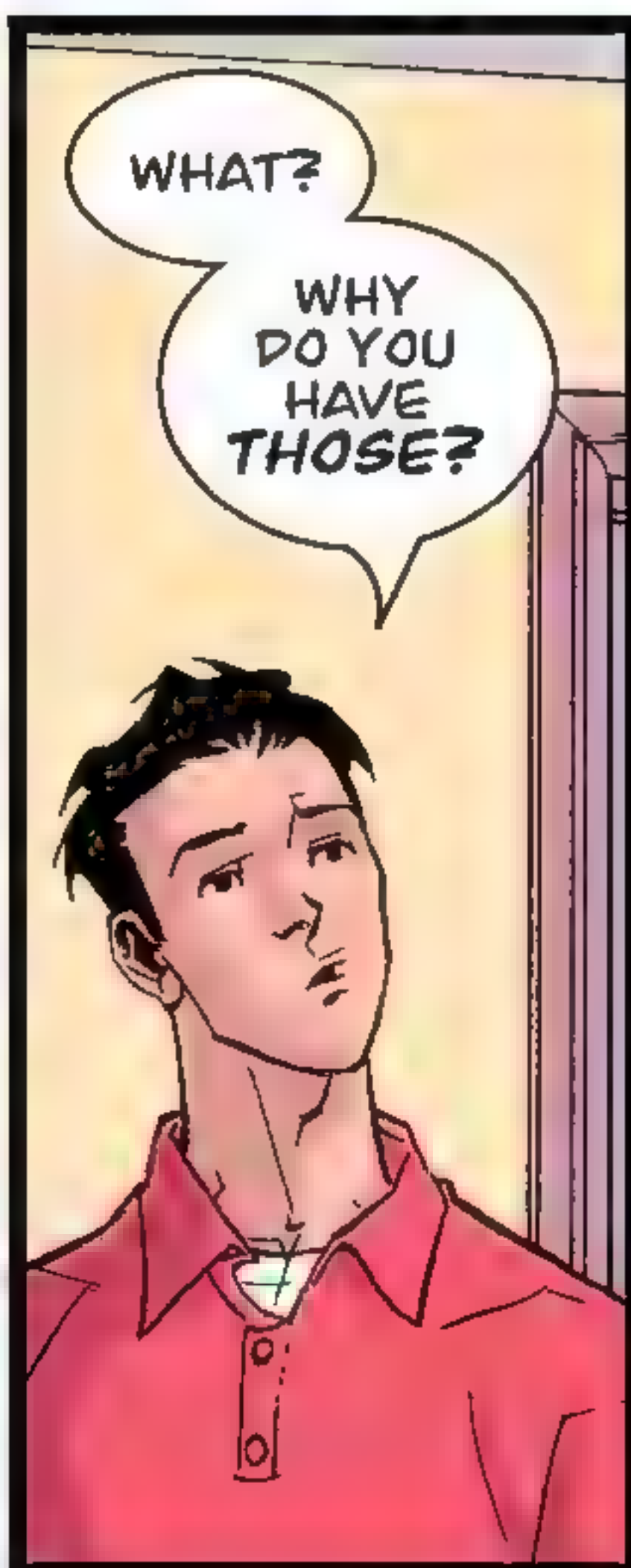
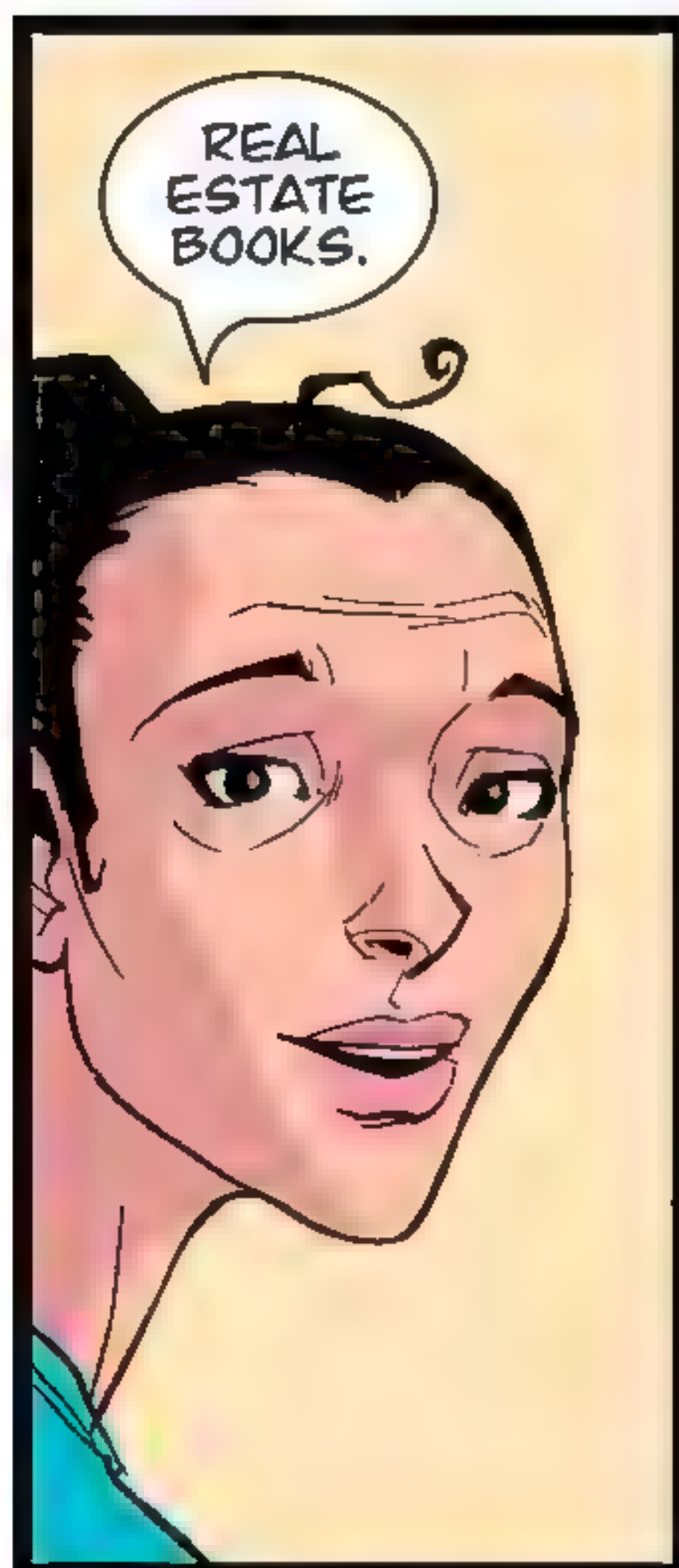
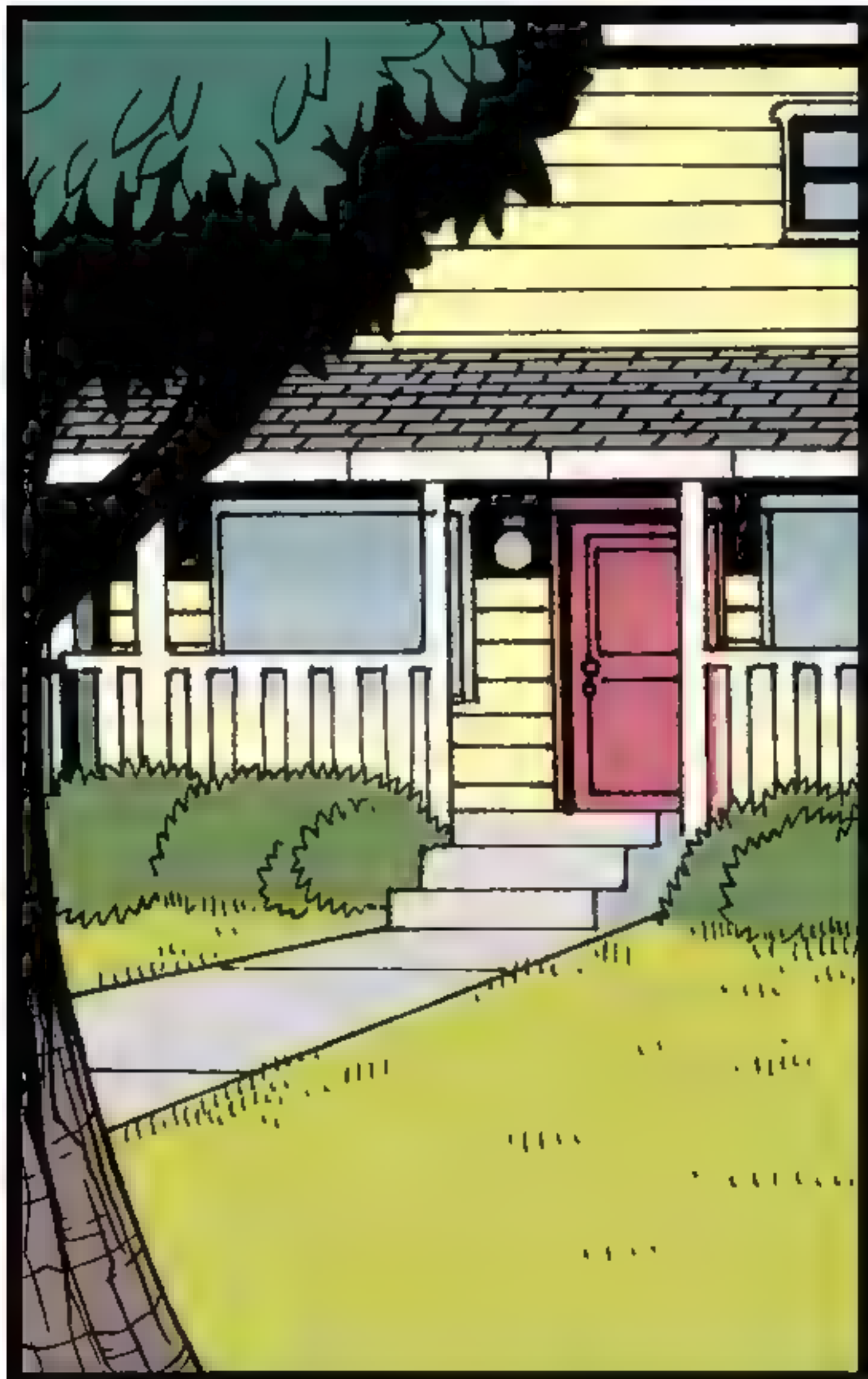
HAPPY?

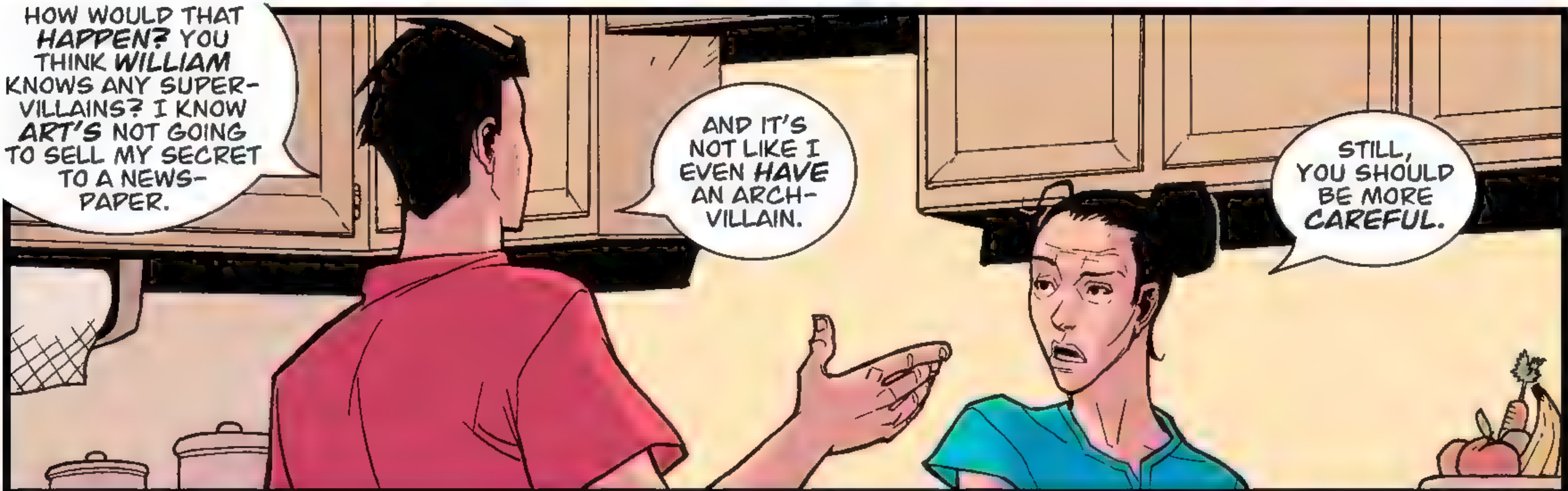
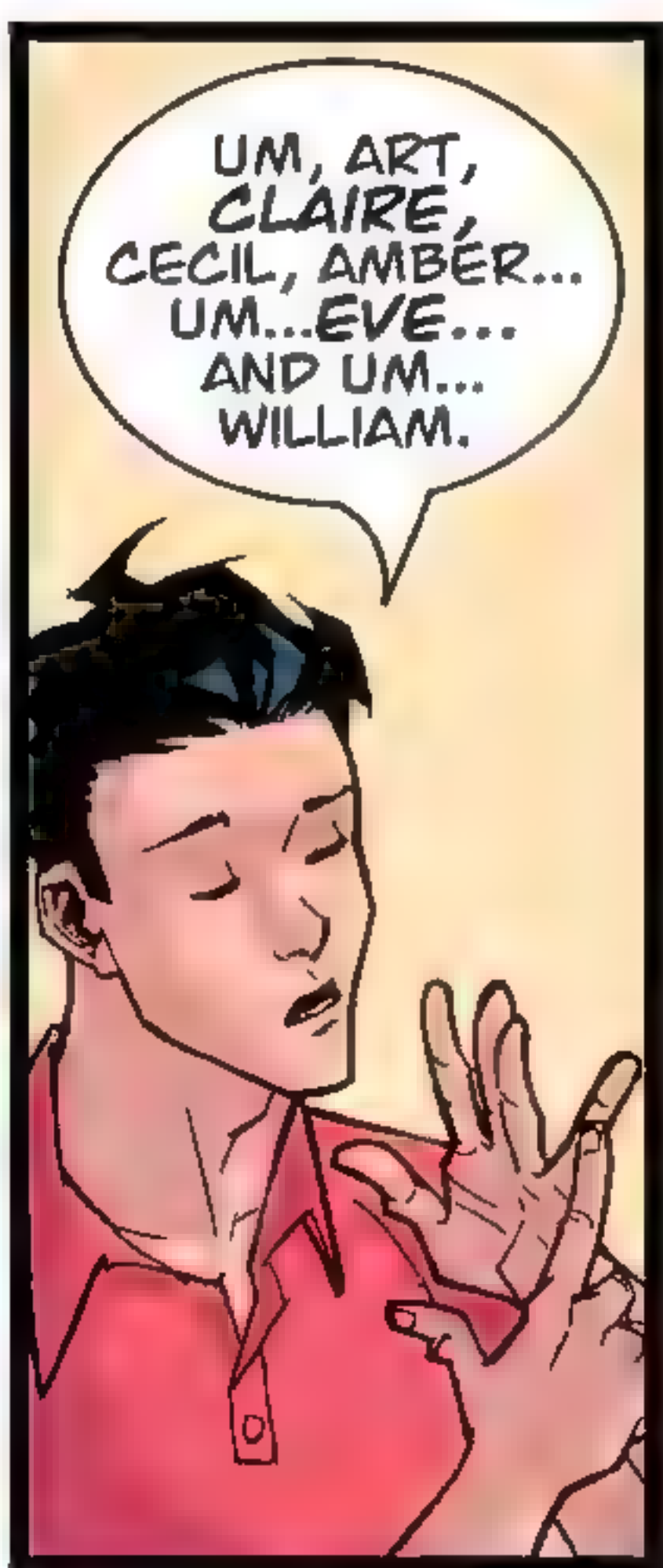
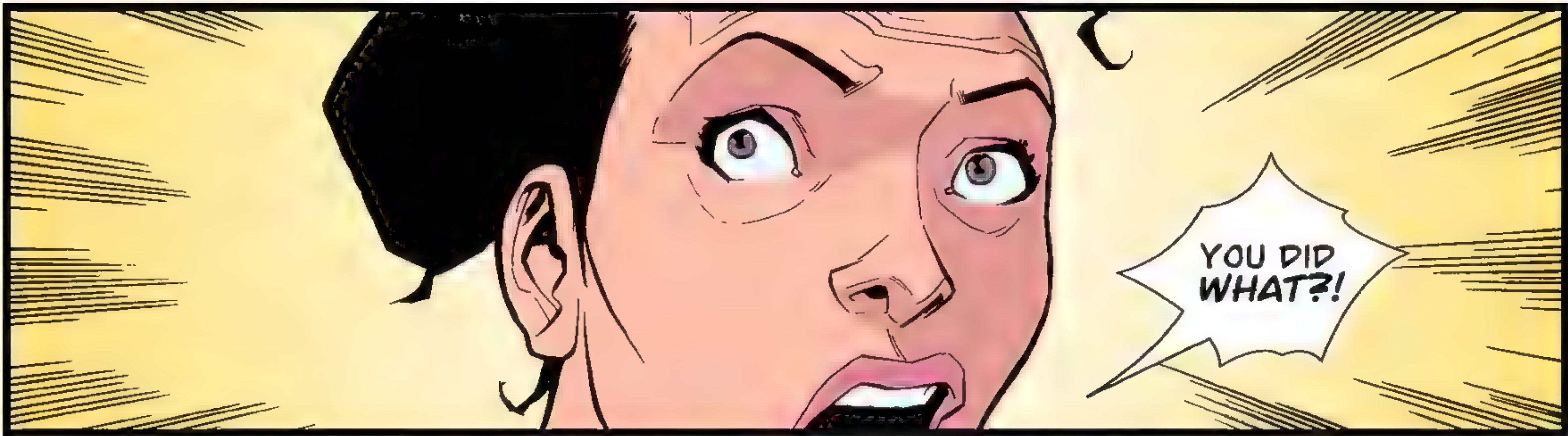


YEAH...

I
GUESS
I AM.





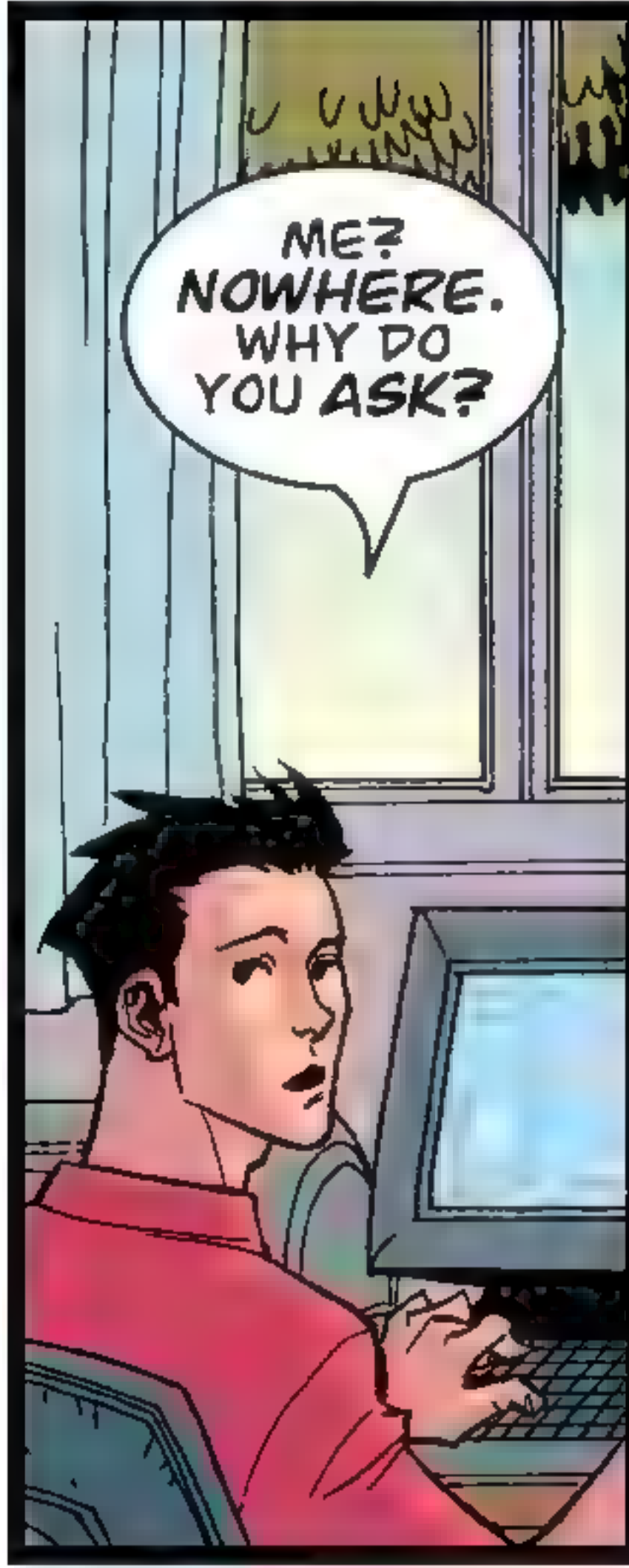




"I'VE GOT PLANS ALREADY, SORRY." SHE DOESN'T HAVE ANY PLANS, STUPID SL--



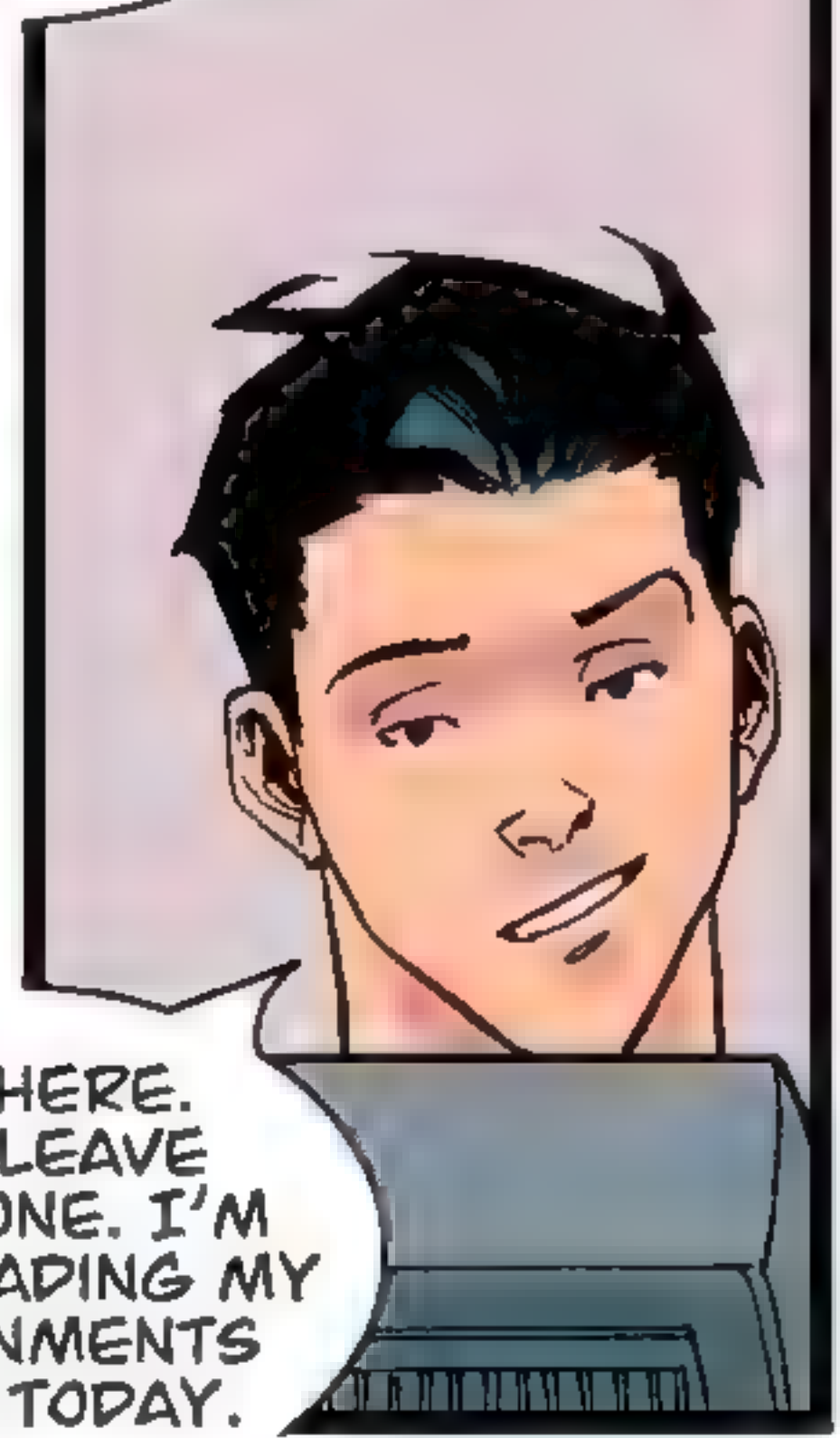
OH, AND WHERE THE HELL HAVE YOU BEEN?!



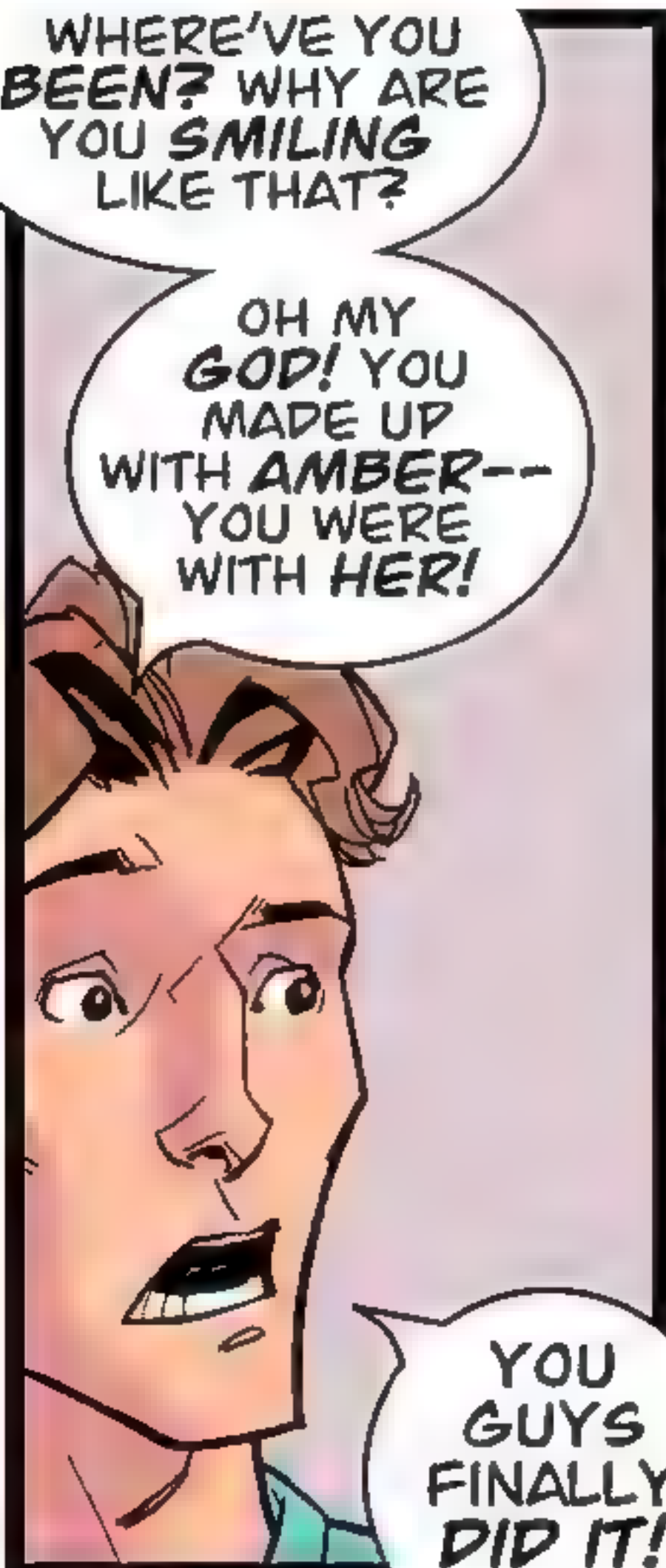
ME? NOWHERE. WHY DO YOU ASK?



I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU OR RICK SINCE WE SAW THAT MOVIE LAST NIGHT. I THOUGHT YOU TWO MIGHT HAVE ELOPED. WHERE'VE YOU BEEN?



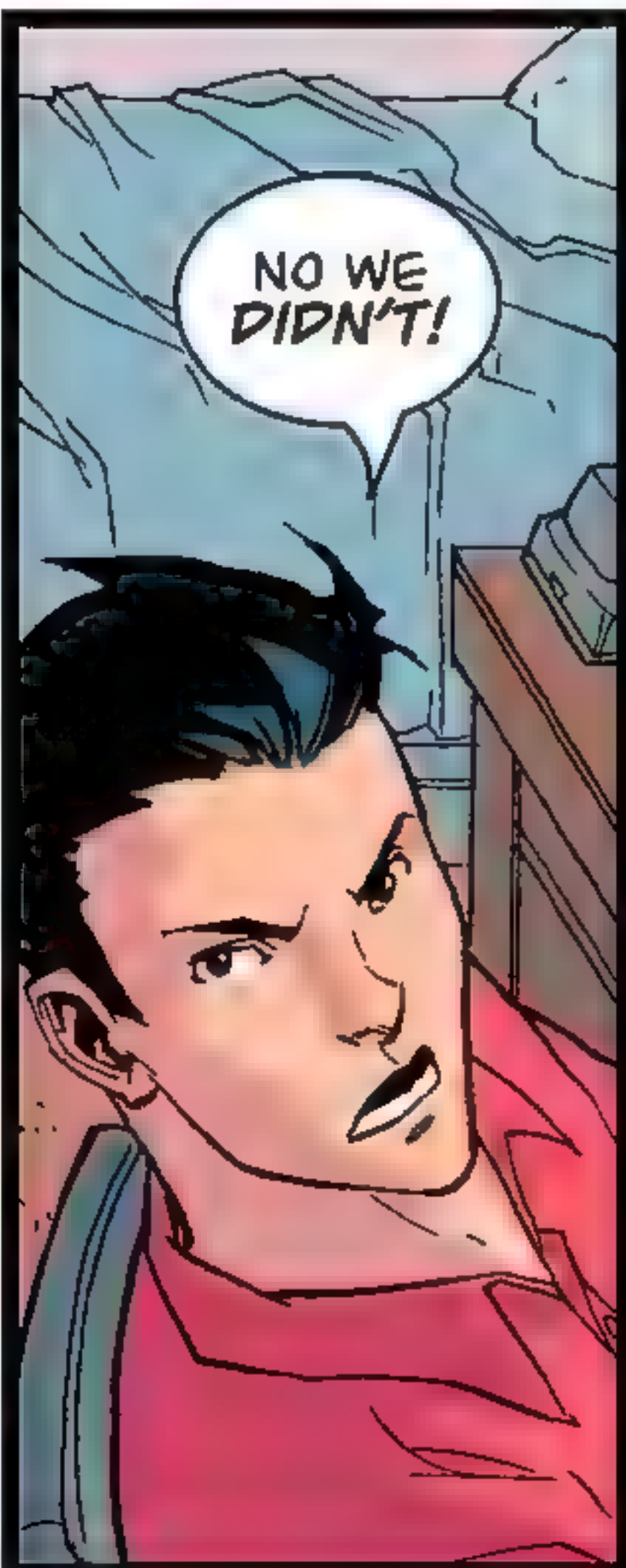
NOWHERE. NOW LEAVE ME ALONE. I'M DOWNLOADING MY ASSIGNMENTS FROM TODAY.



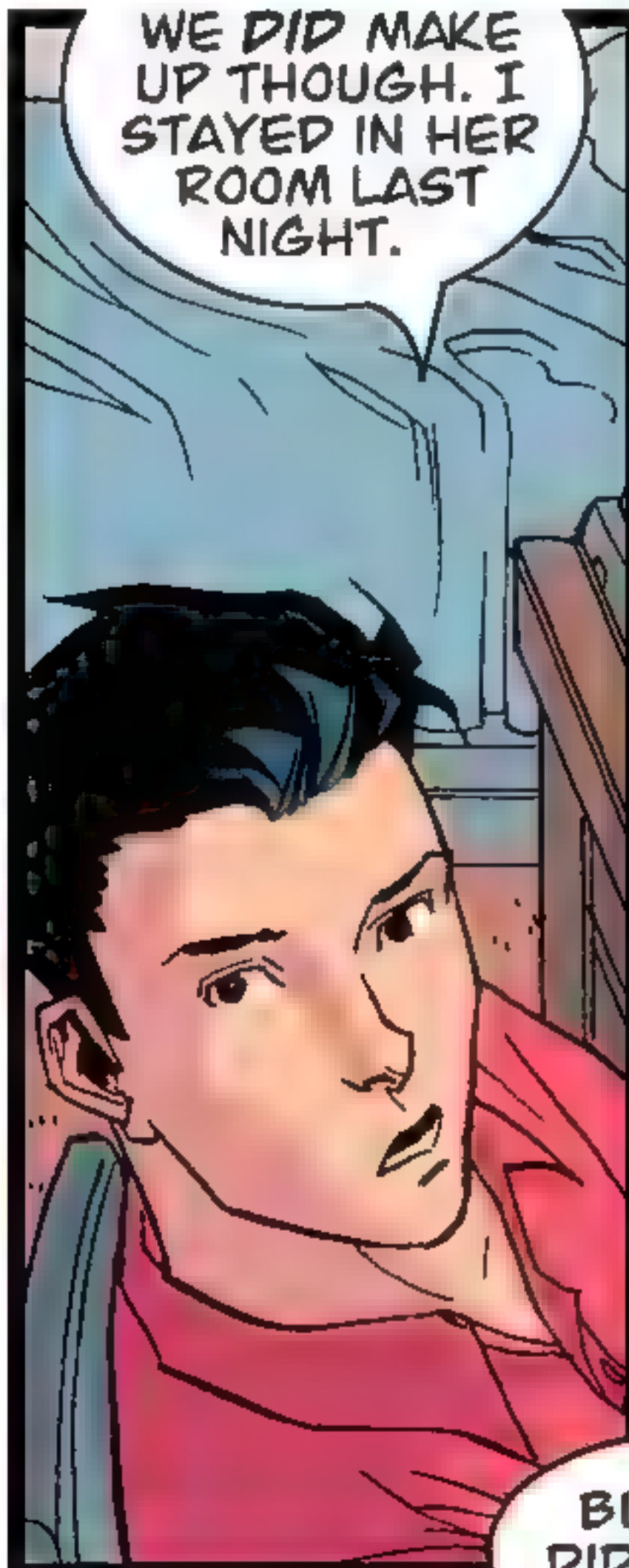
WHERE'VE YOU BEEN? WHY ARE YOU SMILING LIKE THAT?

OH MY GOD! YOU MADE UP WITH AMBER-- YOU WERE WITH HER!

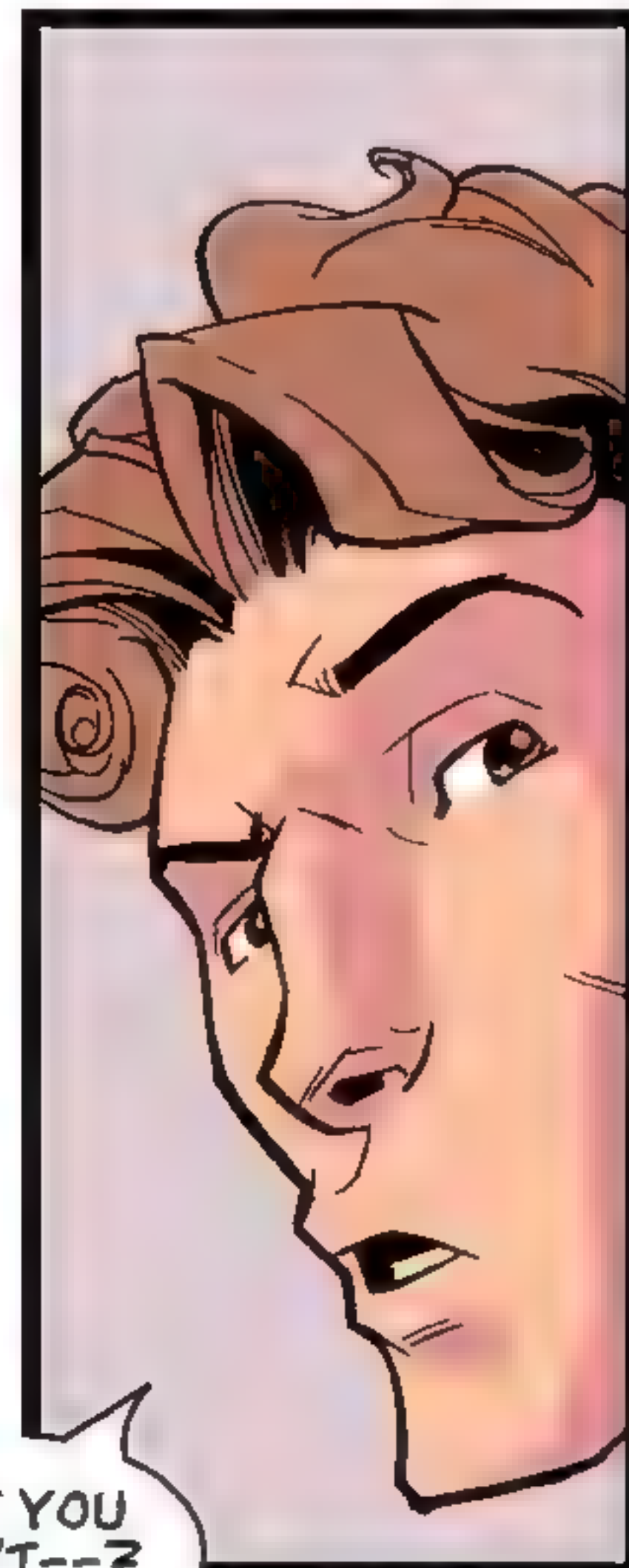
YOU GUYS FINALLY DID IT!



NO WE DIDN'T!



WE DID MAKE UP THOUGH. I STAYED IN HER ROOM LAST NIGHT.



BUT YOU DIDN'T--?



NO, WE DIDN'T-- HOLD ON.

WE NEED YOU, KID.

I'M ON MY WAY.



WHAT WAS THAT?

NO TIME.

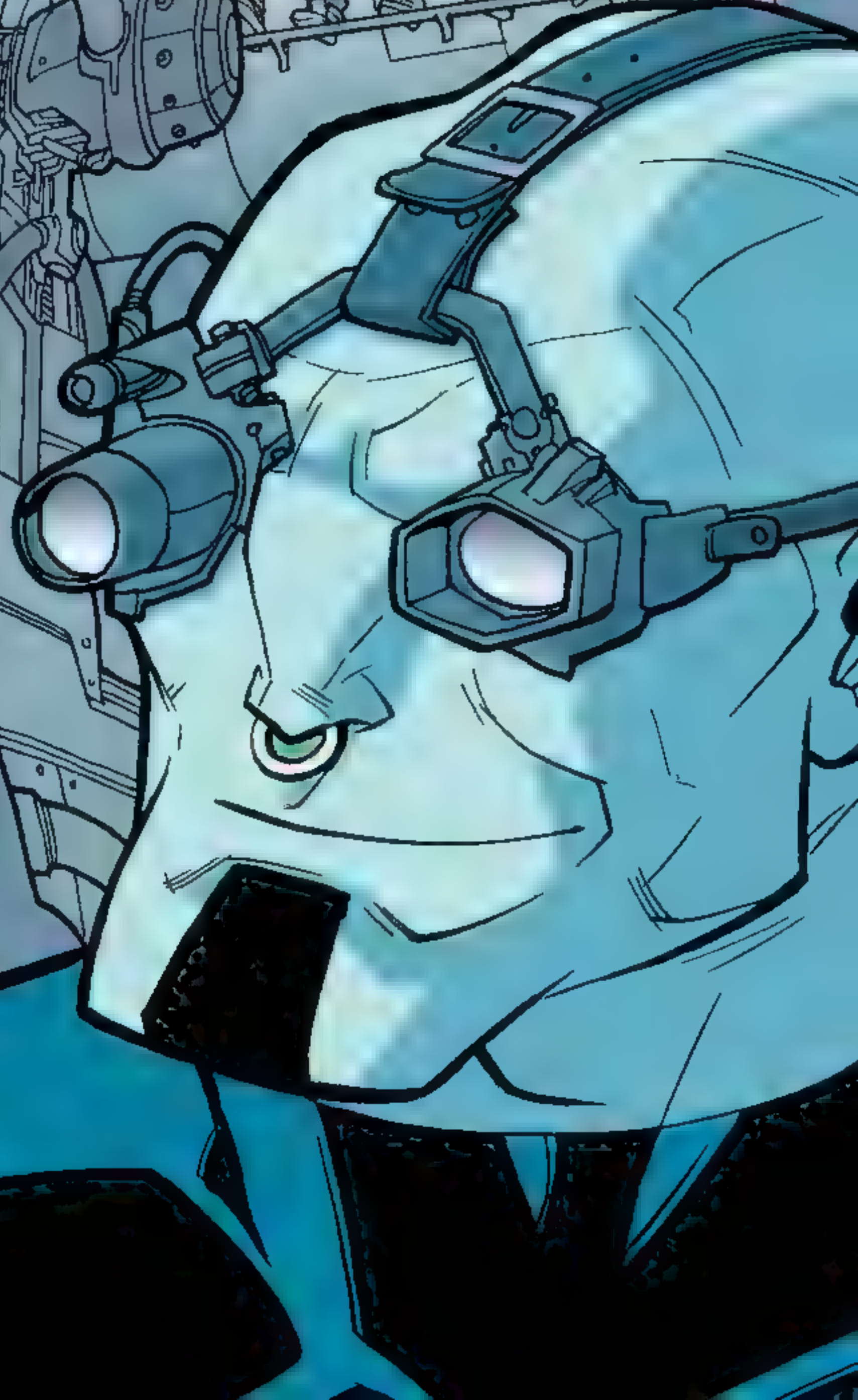


FINE, GO. NO, DON'T EVEN SAY GOOD-BYE.



TIME
TO MAKE
THE
DONUTS.

I THINK
I SPEAK ON
BEHALF OF BOTH
OF US WHEN I
SAY IT HAS BEEN
AN HONOR TO WORK
ON SUCH A PROJECT
WITH YOU,
**ANGSTROM
LEVY.**



YES, THIS IS AN UNDERTAKING THAT RANKS AMONG OUR **HIGHEST** ACHIEVEMENTS--AND I THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO FURTHER OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE MULTI-VERSE.

TO THINK--IN MERE MOMENTS WE'LL DOWNLOAD THE MEMORIES OF THOUSANDS OF YOUR DOPPELGANGERS FROM OTHER DIMENSIONS IN ORDER TO GIVE YOU THE ABILITY TO SHIFT FROM ONE DIMENSION TO THE NEXT WITH THE FULL KNOWLEDGE OF WHERE YOU'RE GOING.

WE MAY VERY WELL BE CHANGING THE COURSE OF HUMAN HISTORY ACROSS THE MULTI-VERSE.

WE'RE READY WHEN YOU ARE.

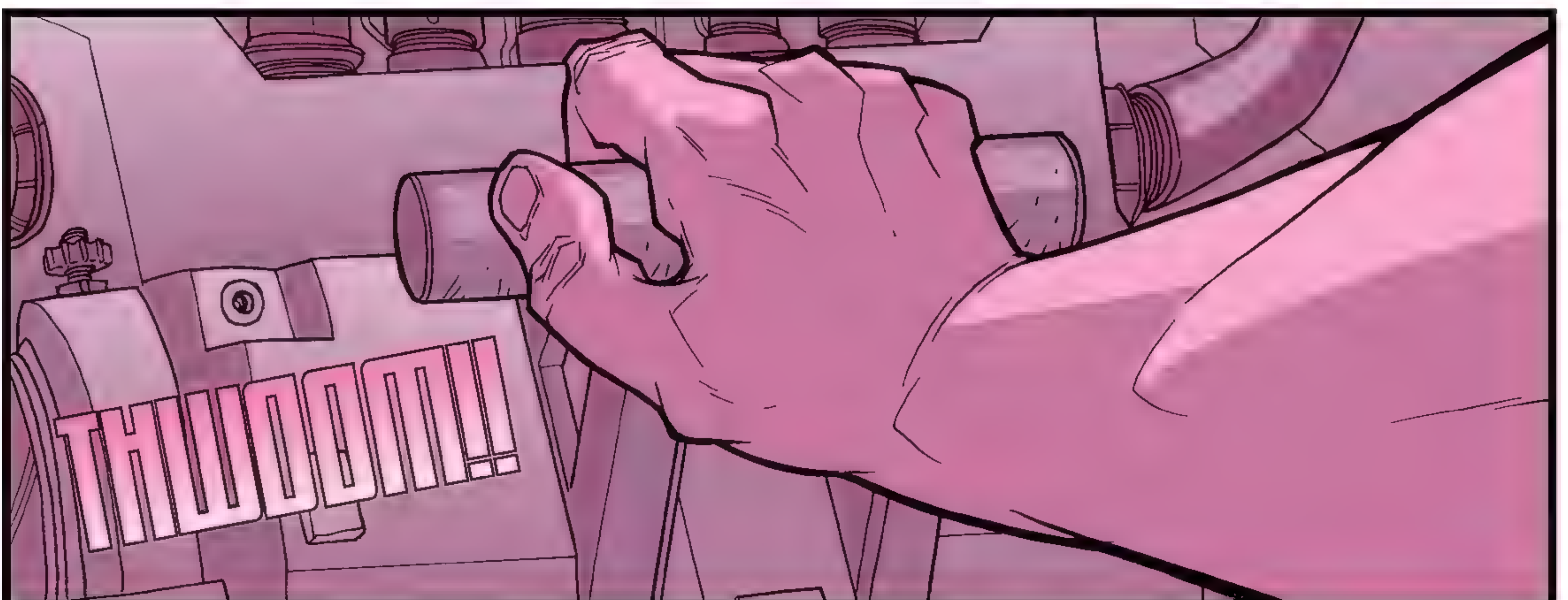
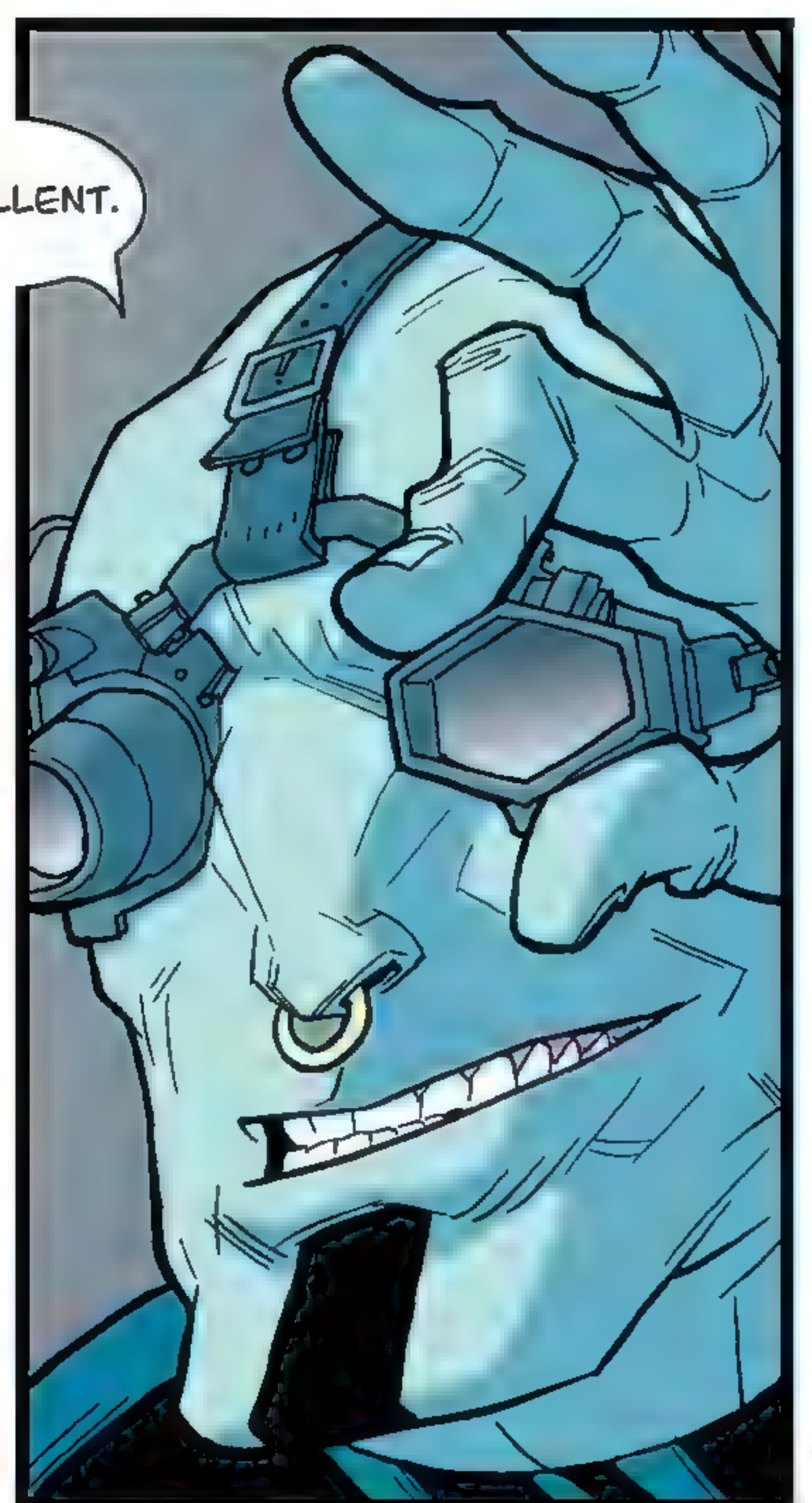
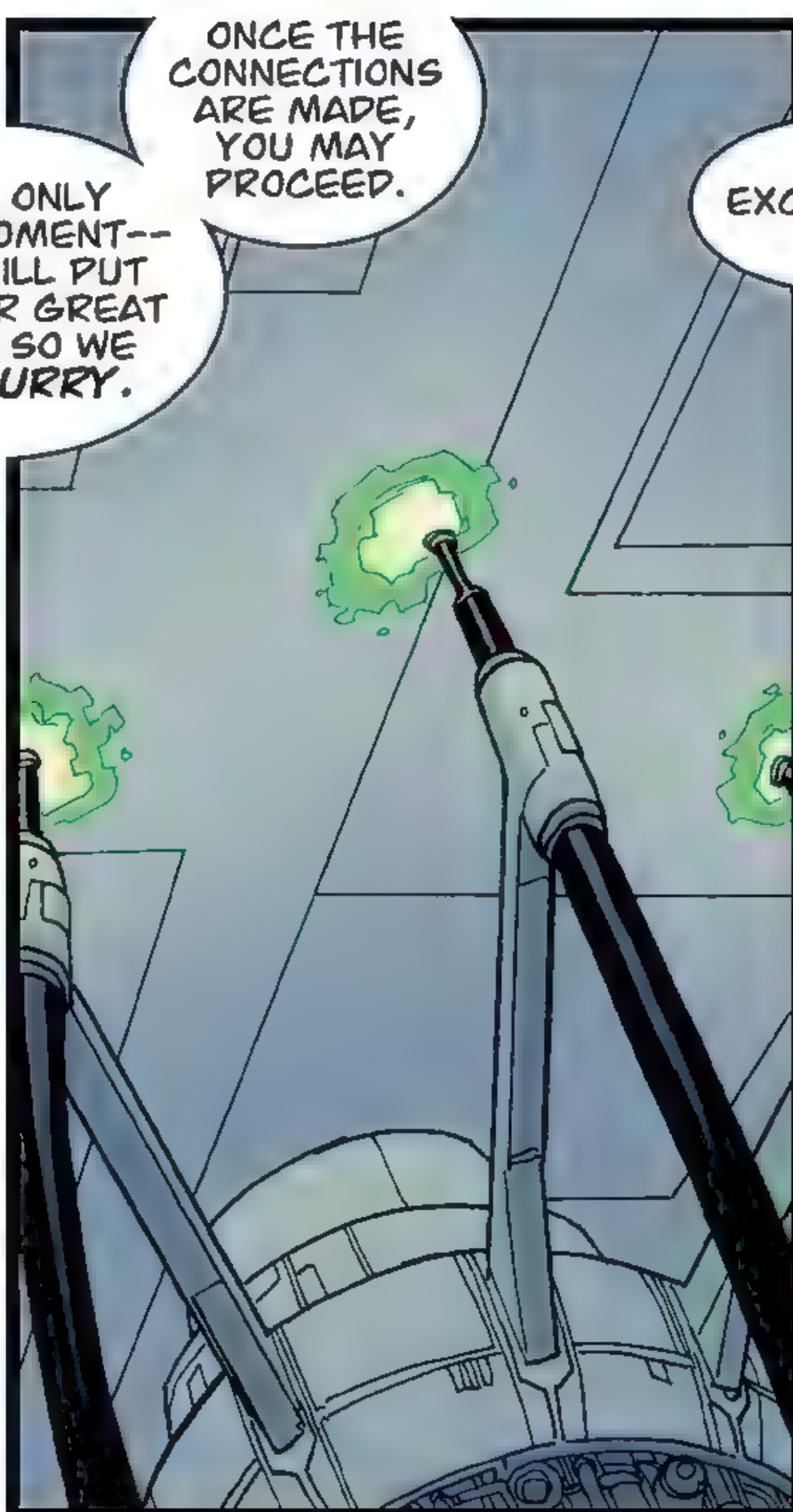
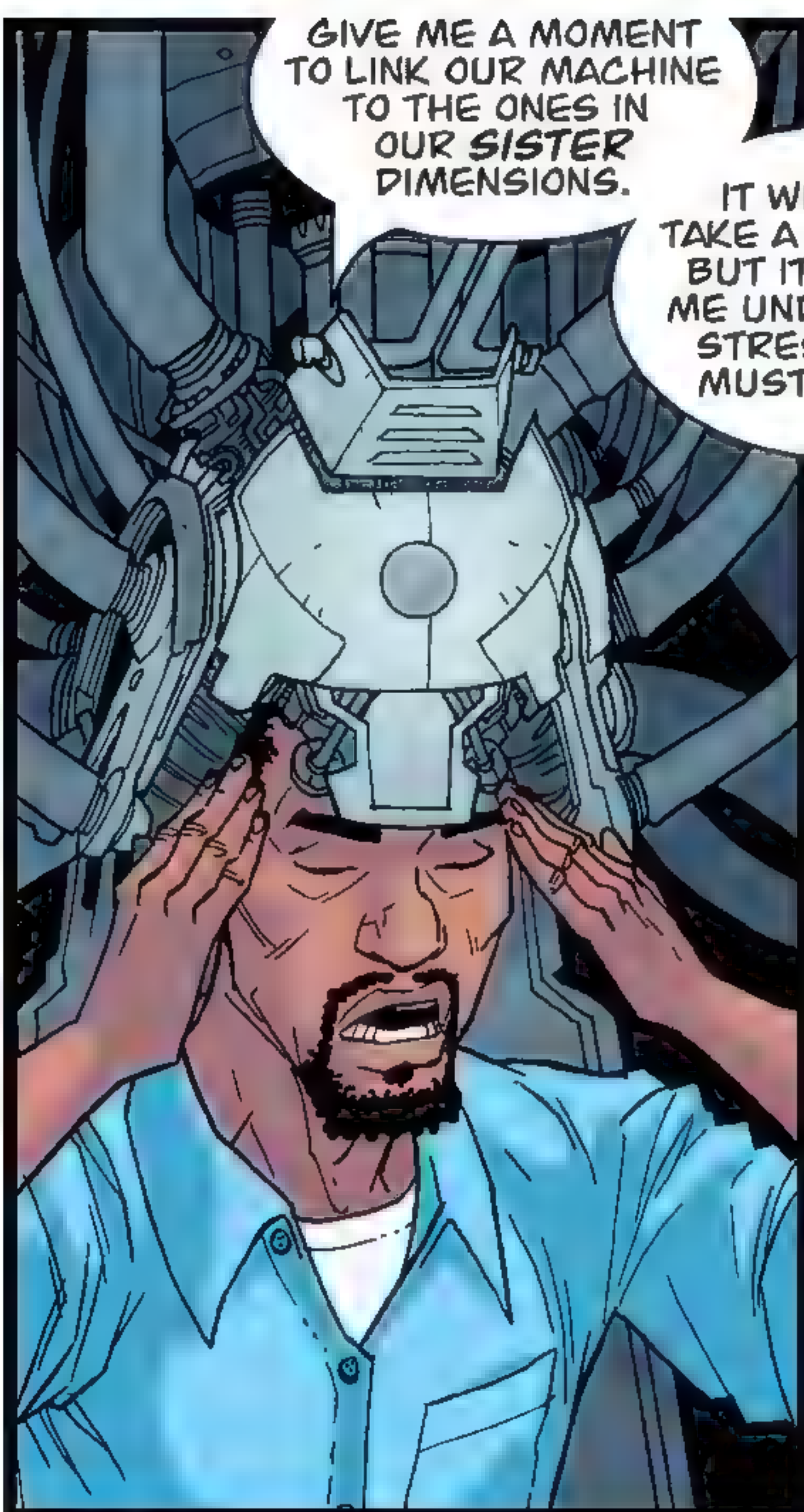


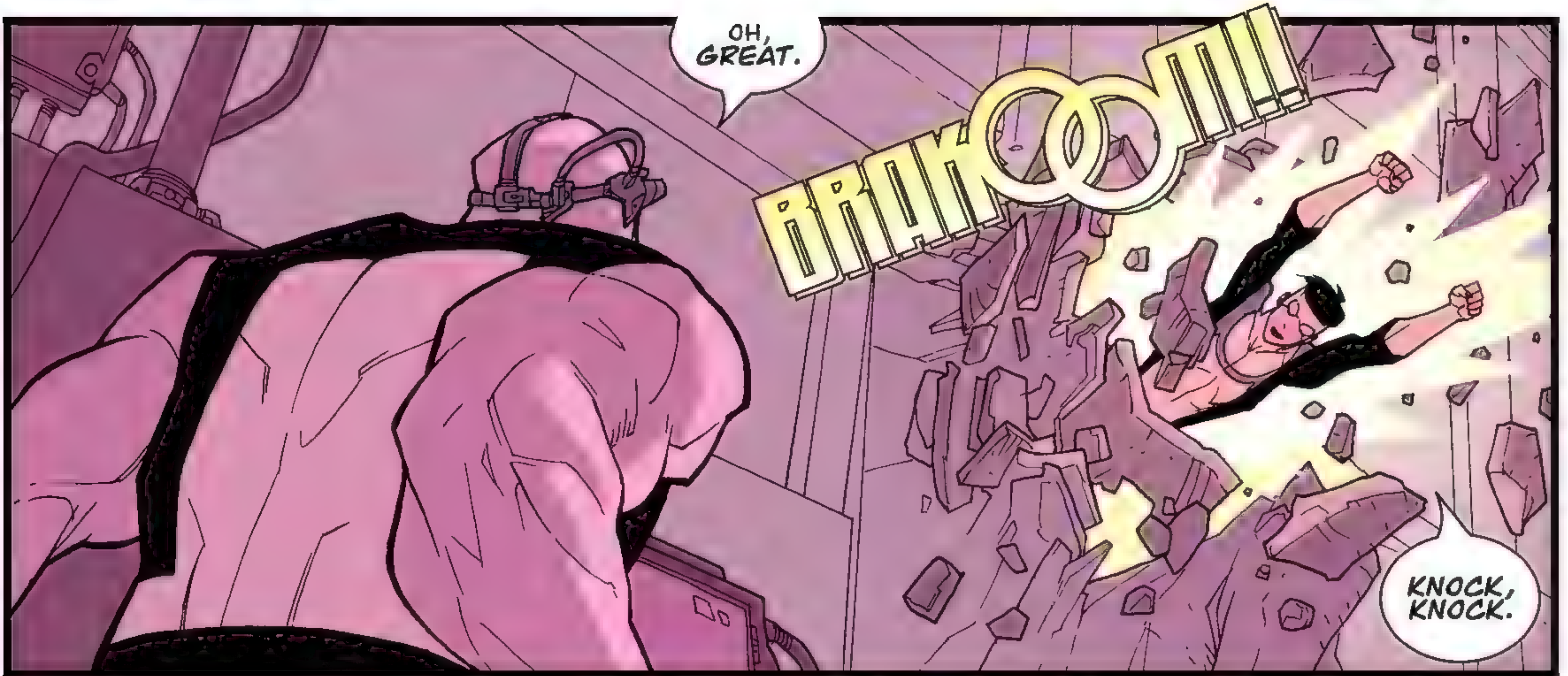
GIVE ME A MOMENT TO LINK OUR MACHINE TO THE ONES IN OUR **SISTER** DIMENSIONS.

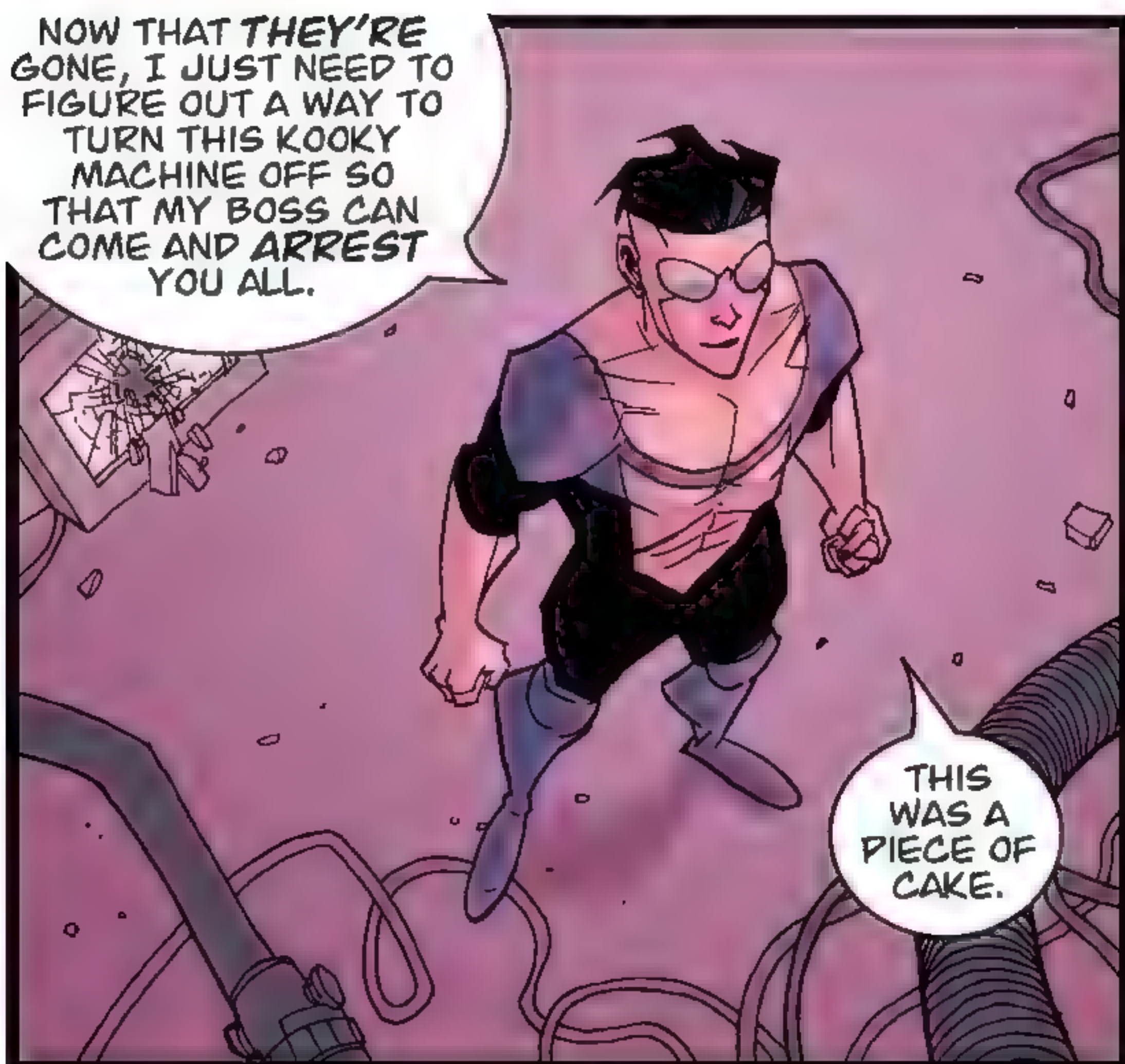
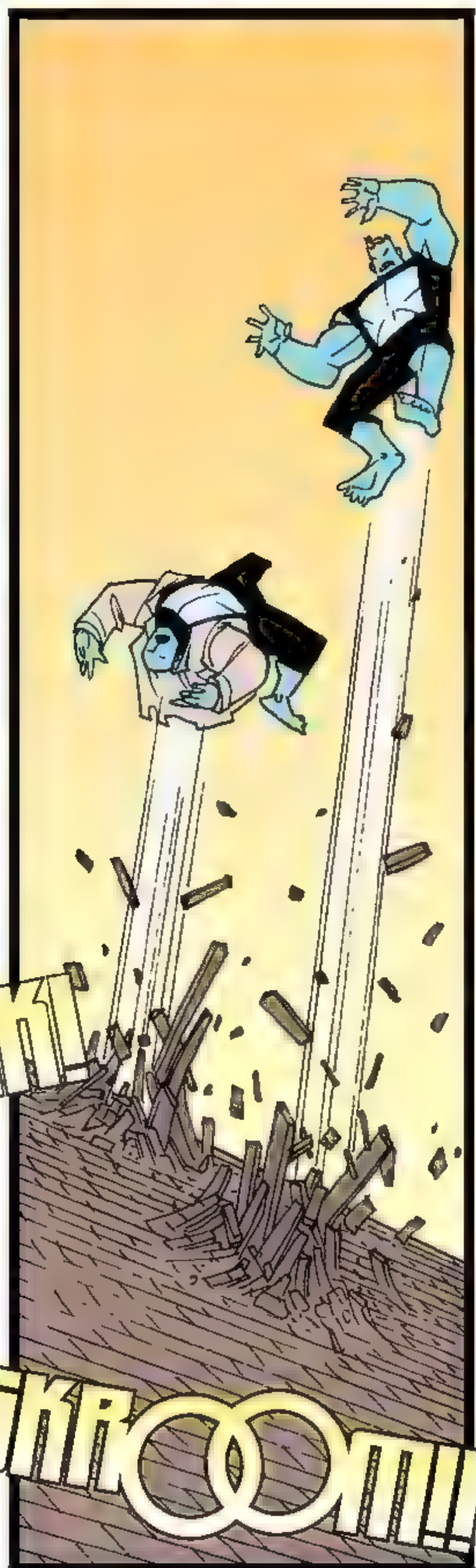
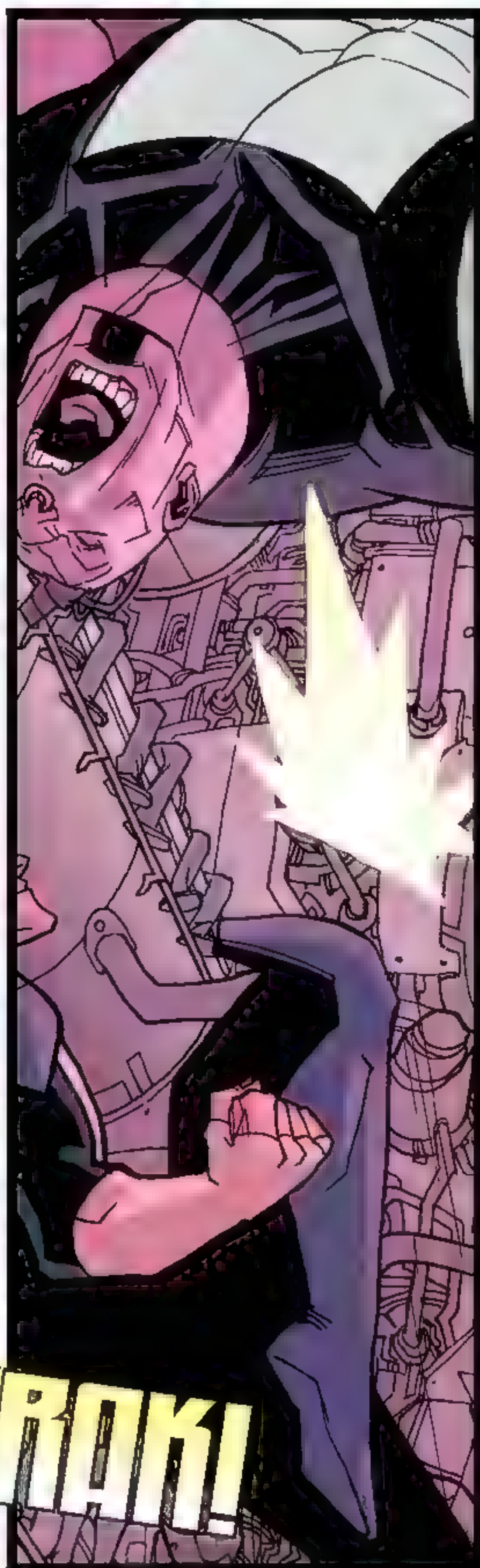
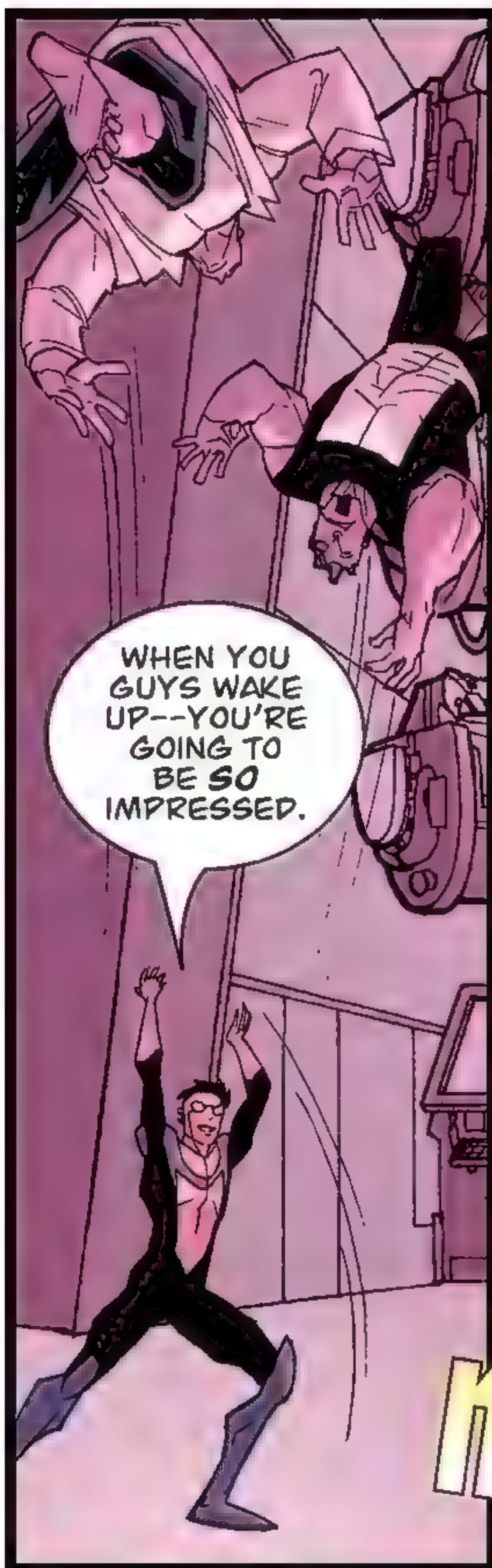
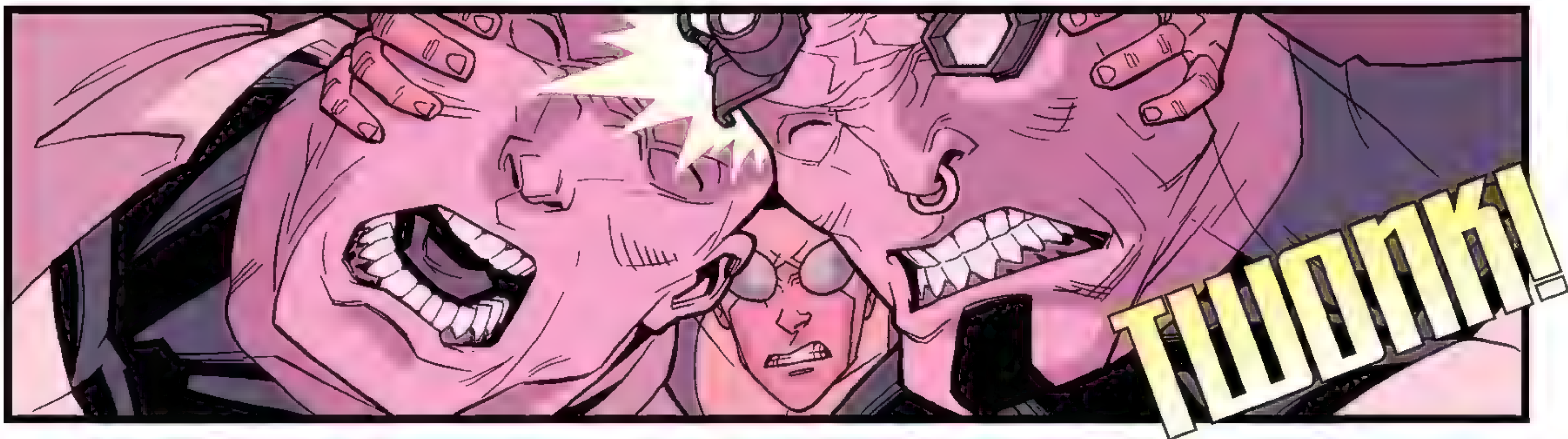
IT WILL ONLY TAKE A MOMENT-- BUT IT WILL PUT ME UNDER GREAT STRESS SO WE MUST HURRY.

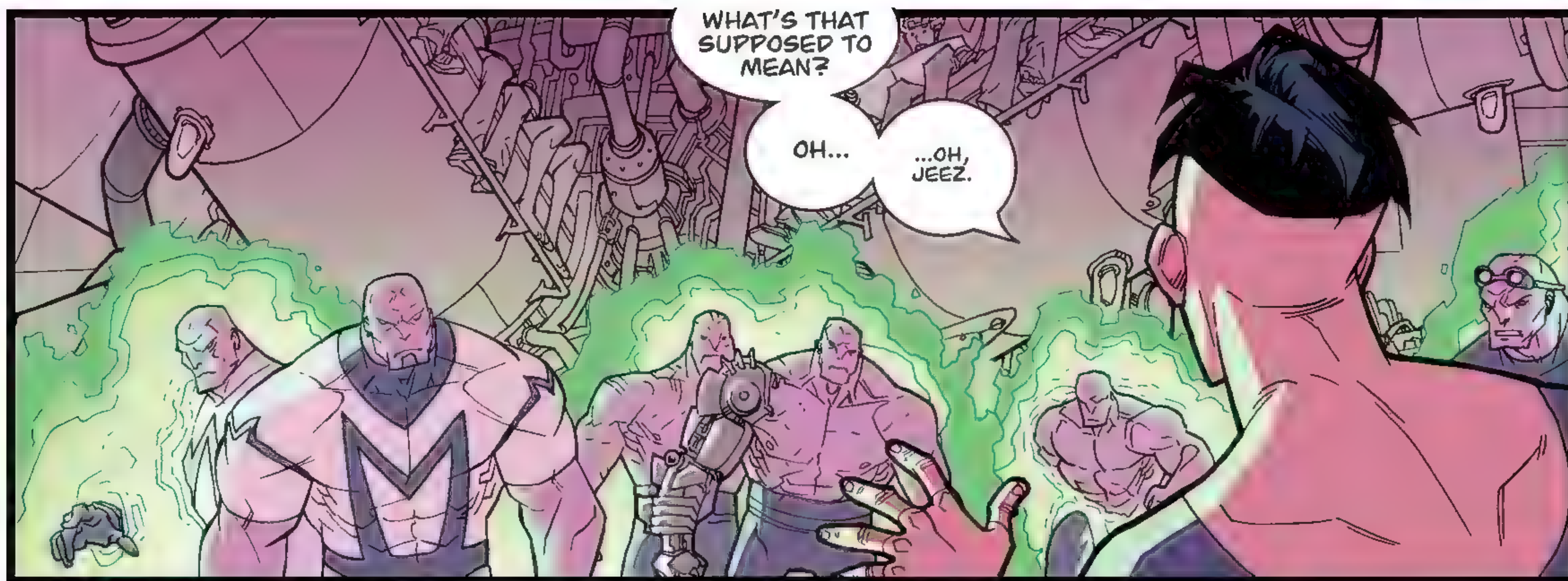
ONCE THE CONNECTIONS ARE MADE, YOU MAY PROCEED.

EXCELLENT.











STAY
BACK!



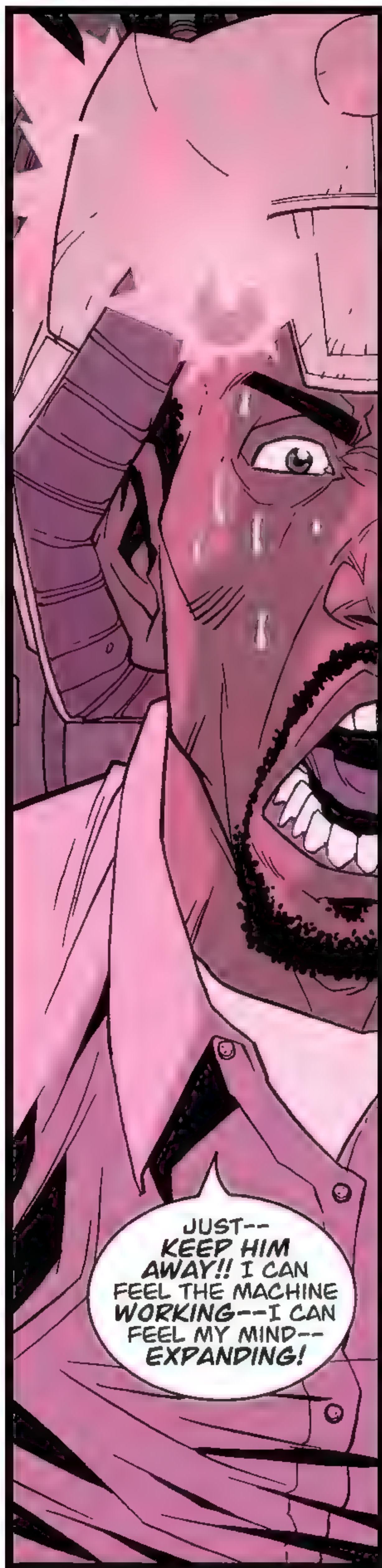
THAT WAS AN
IMPRESSIVE
PUNCH. IT'S A
GOOD THING
HE WASN'T
ALONE.

GOOD
FOR US, I
MEAN.



YOU'RE
NOT GETTING
AWAY THAT
EASY!!

WE'RE
NOT DONE
WITH YOU
BY A LONG
SHOT!



JUST--
KEEP HIM
AWAY!! I CAN
FEEL THE MACHINE
WORKING--I CAN
FEEL MY MIND--
EXPANDING!

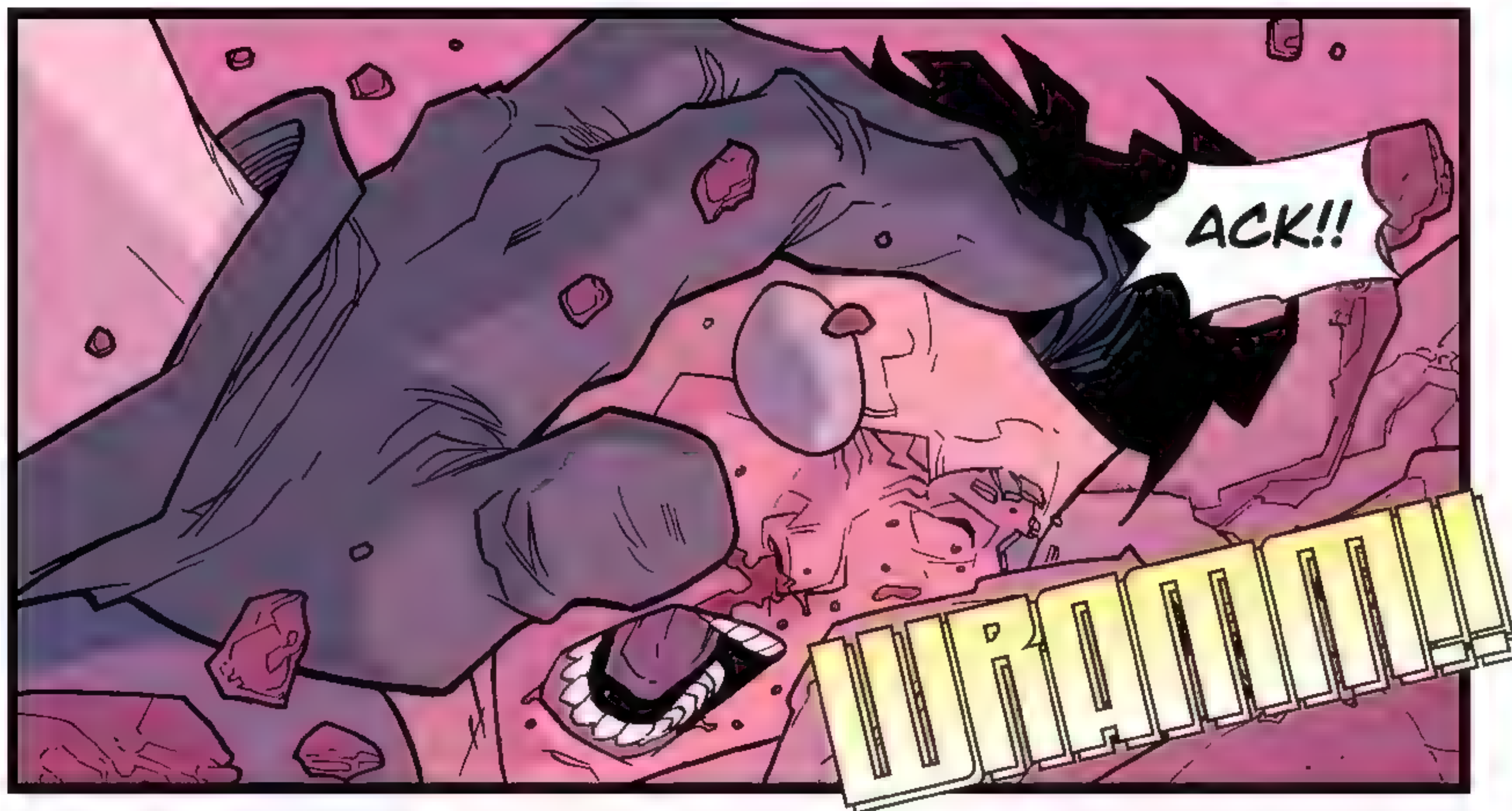


WE AIM
TO PLEASE,
BOSS!

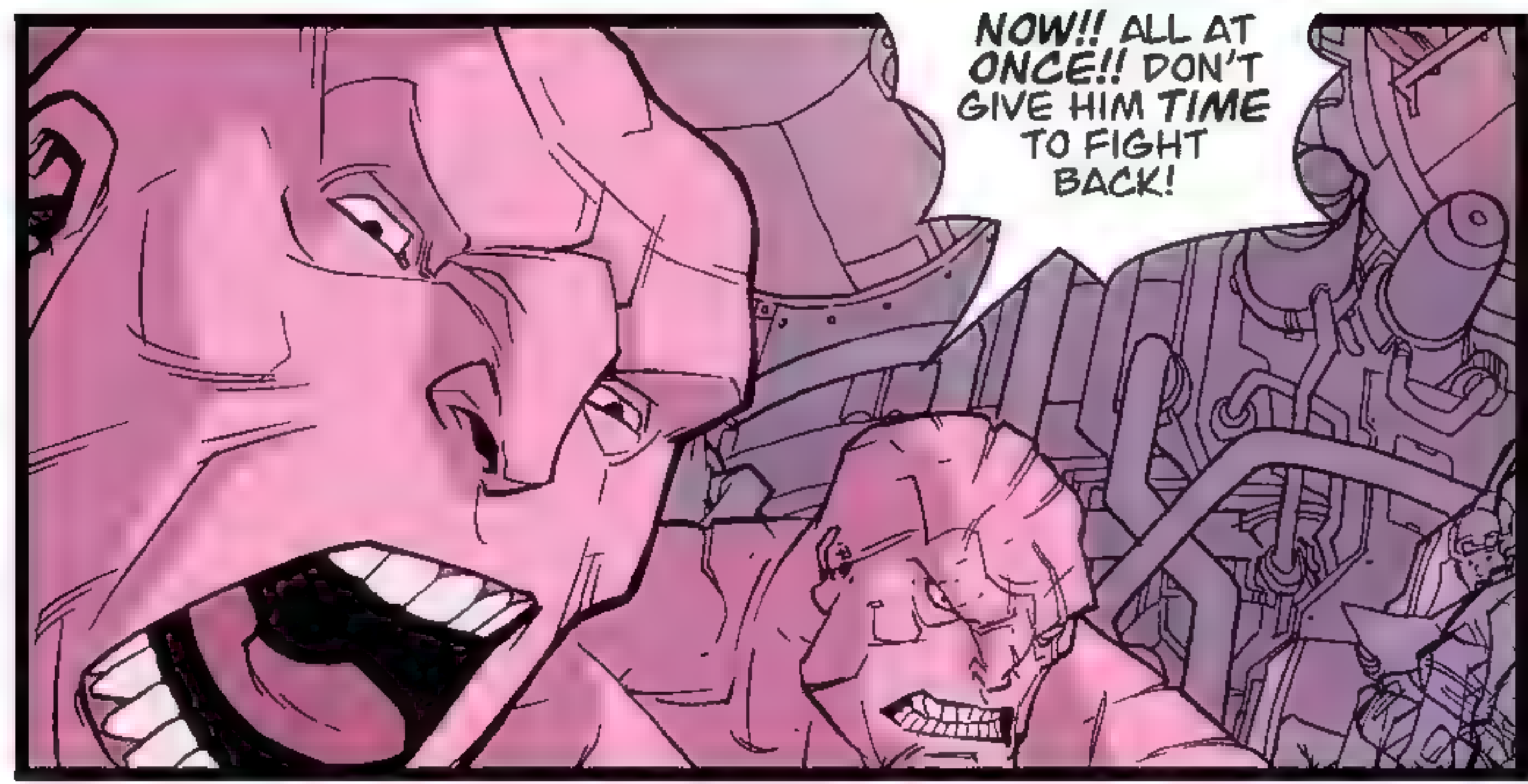
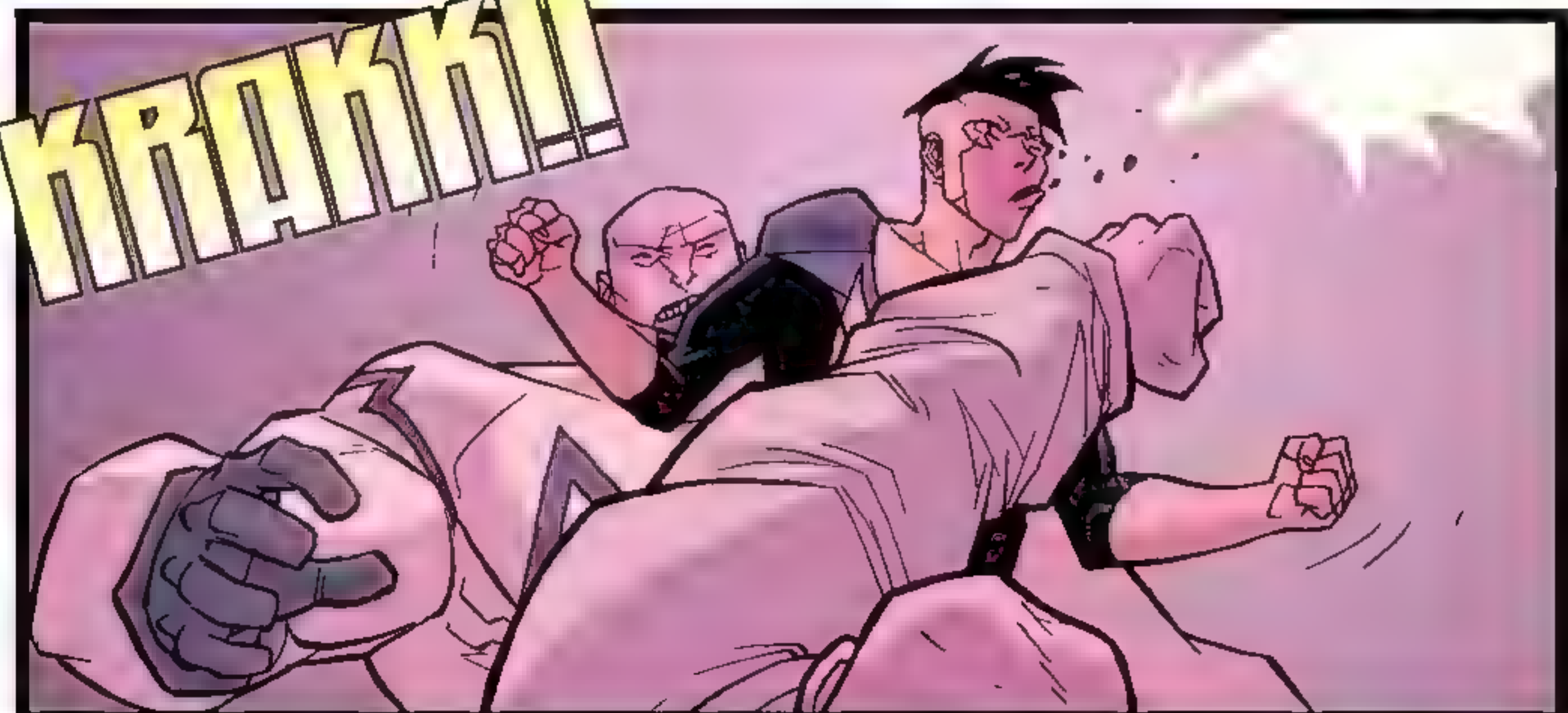
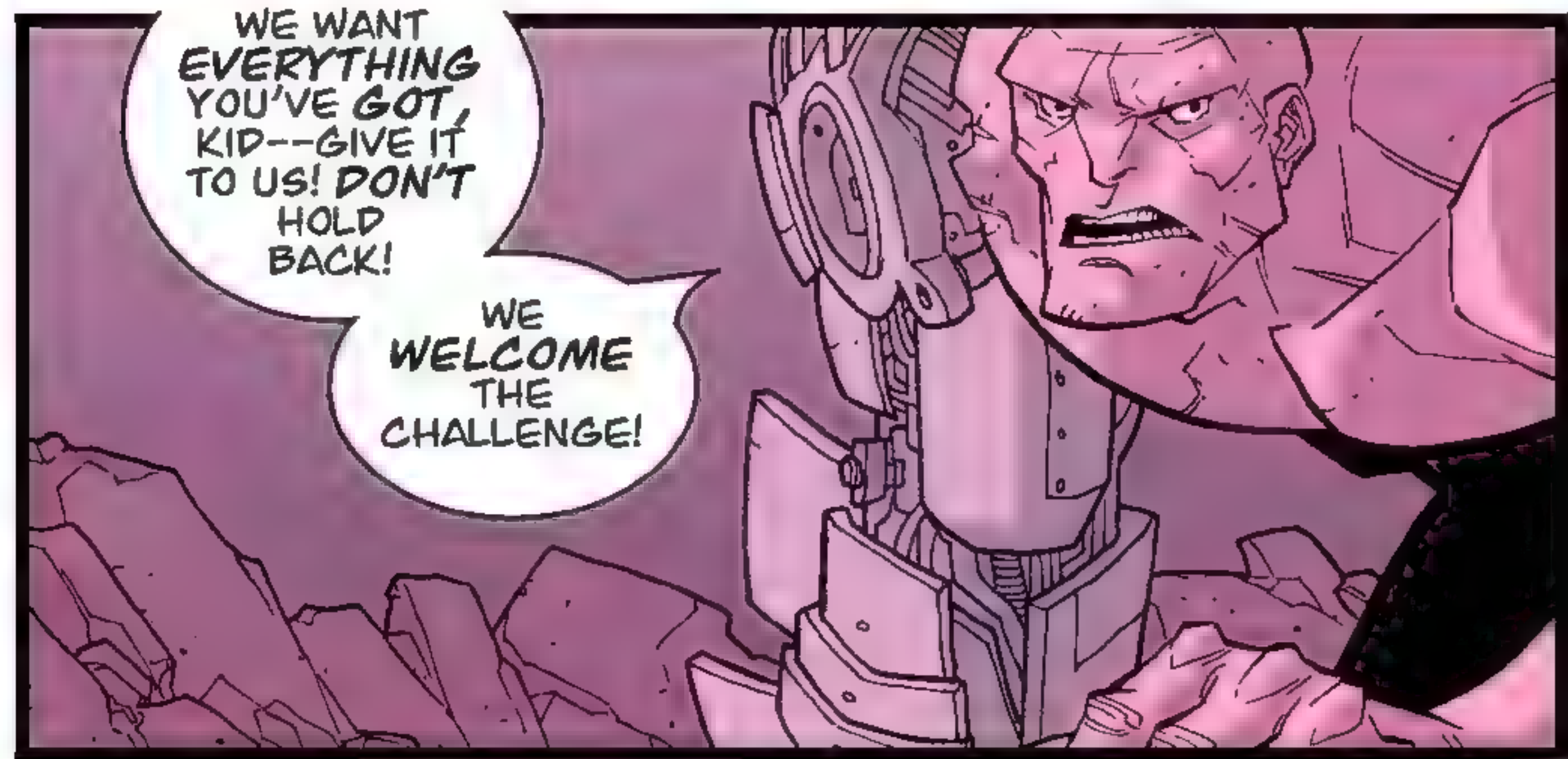
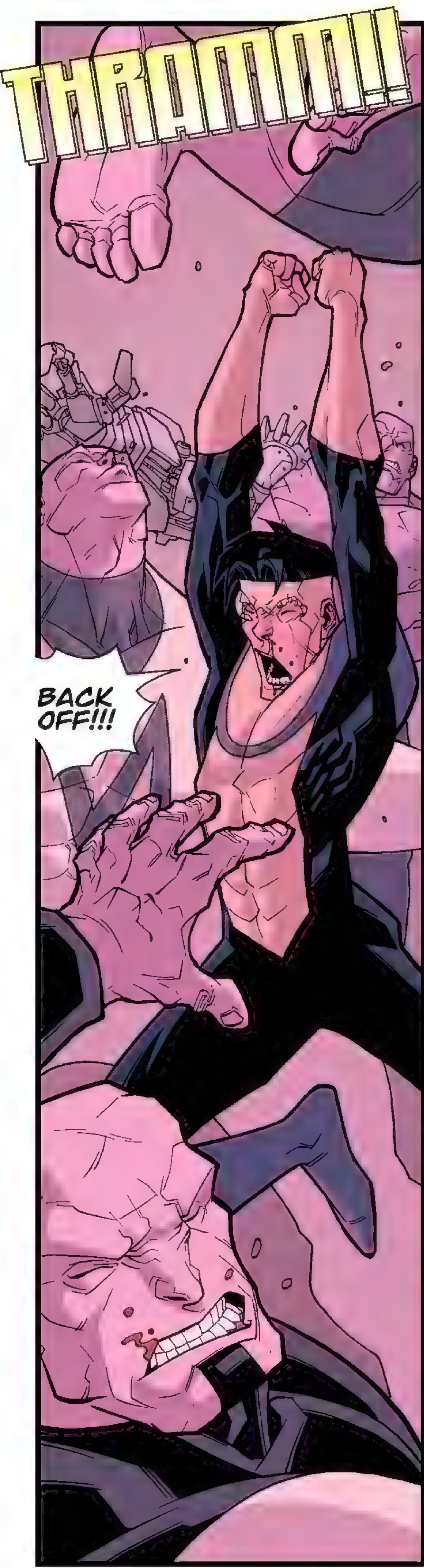


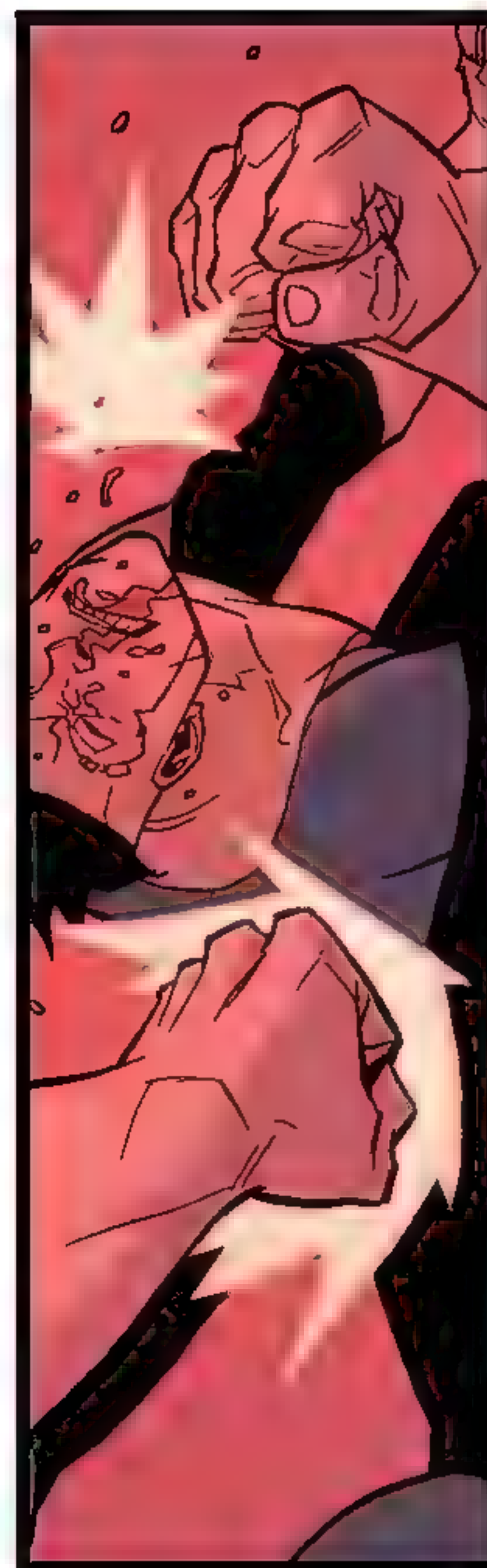
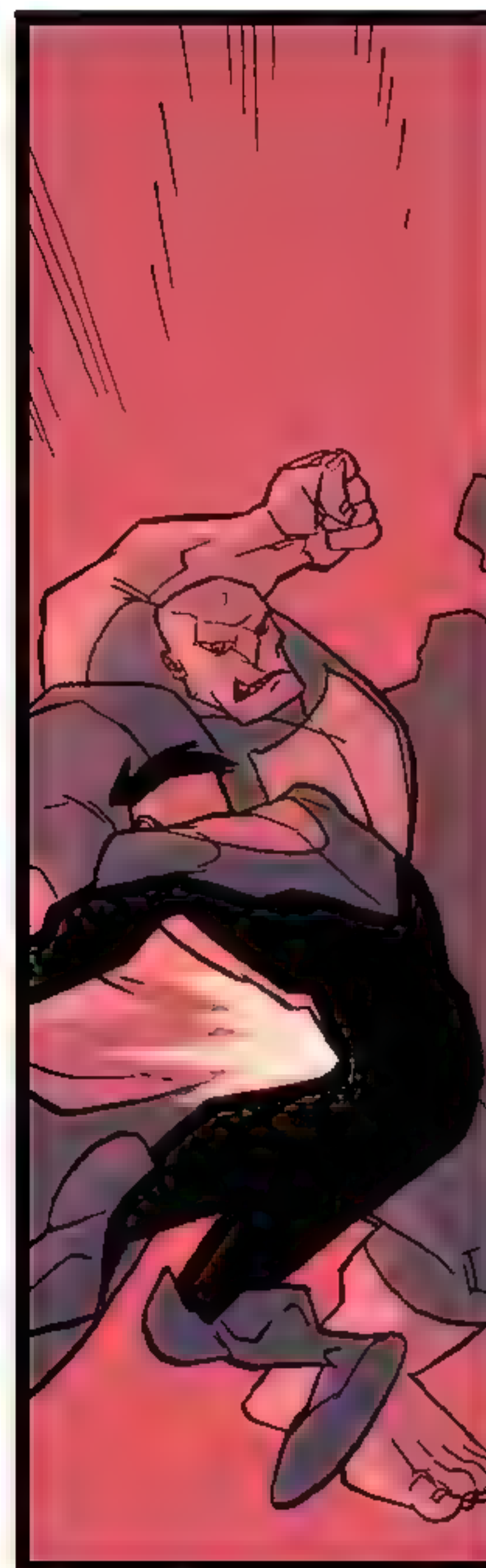
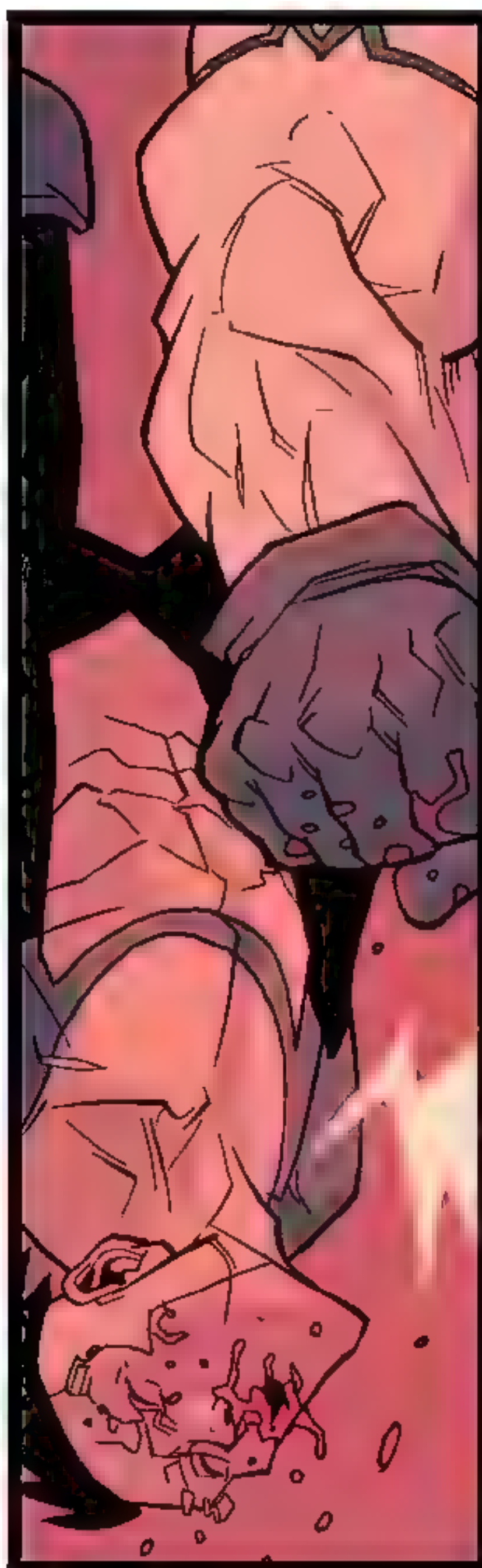
SAVE
SOME FOR
US!

JUST
BECAUSE WE
DON'T KNOW
WHO HE IS
DOESN'T MEAN
WE DON'T WANT
TO HURT
HIM!



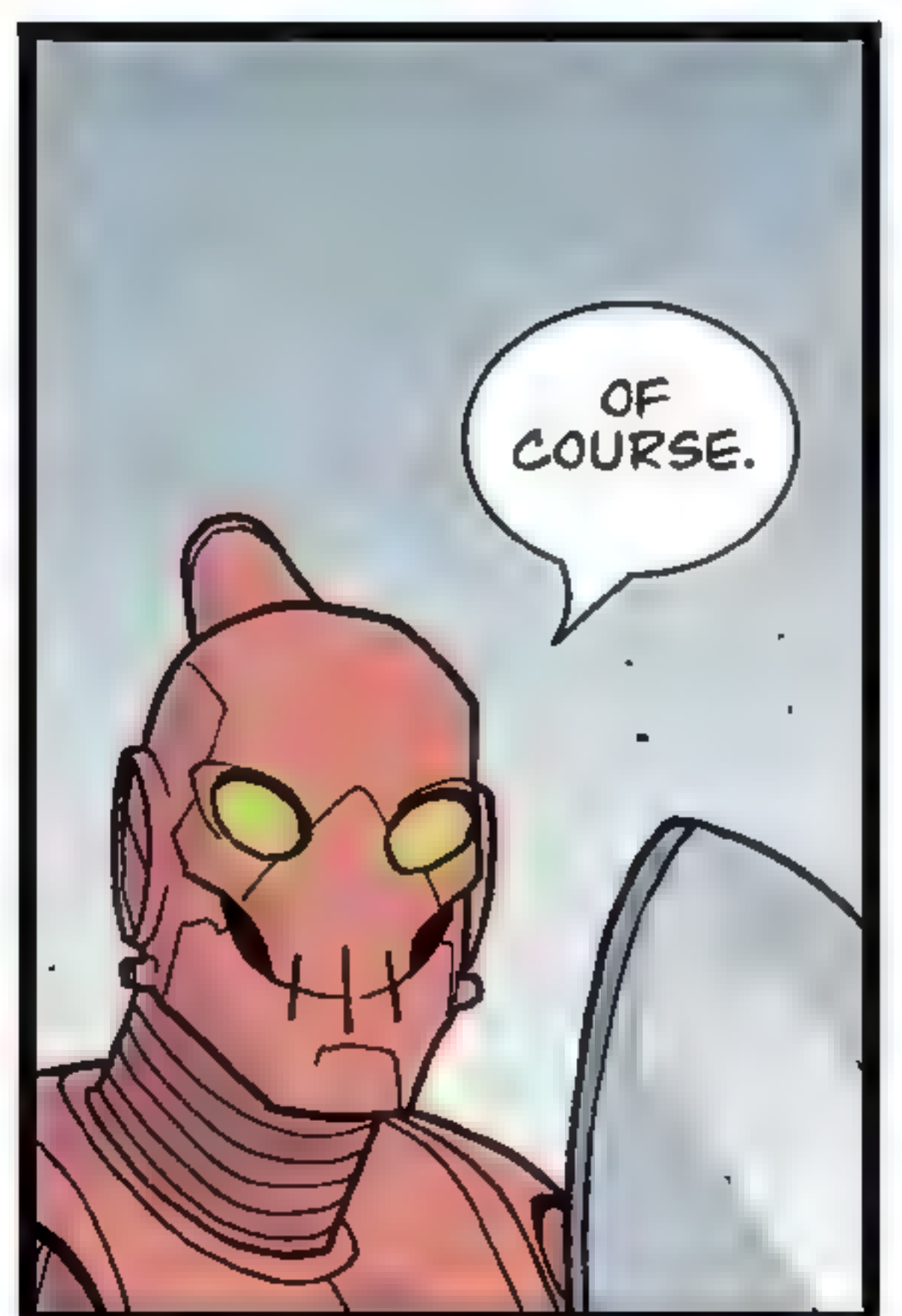
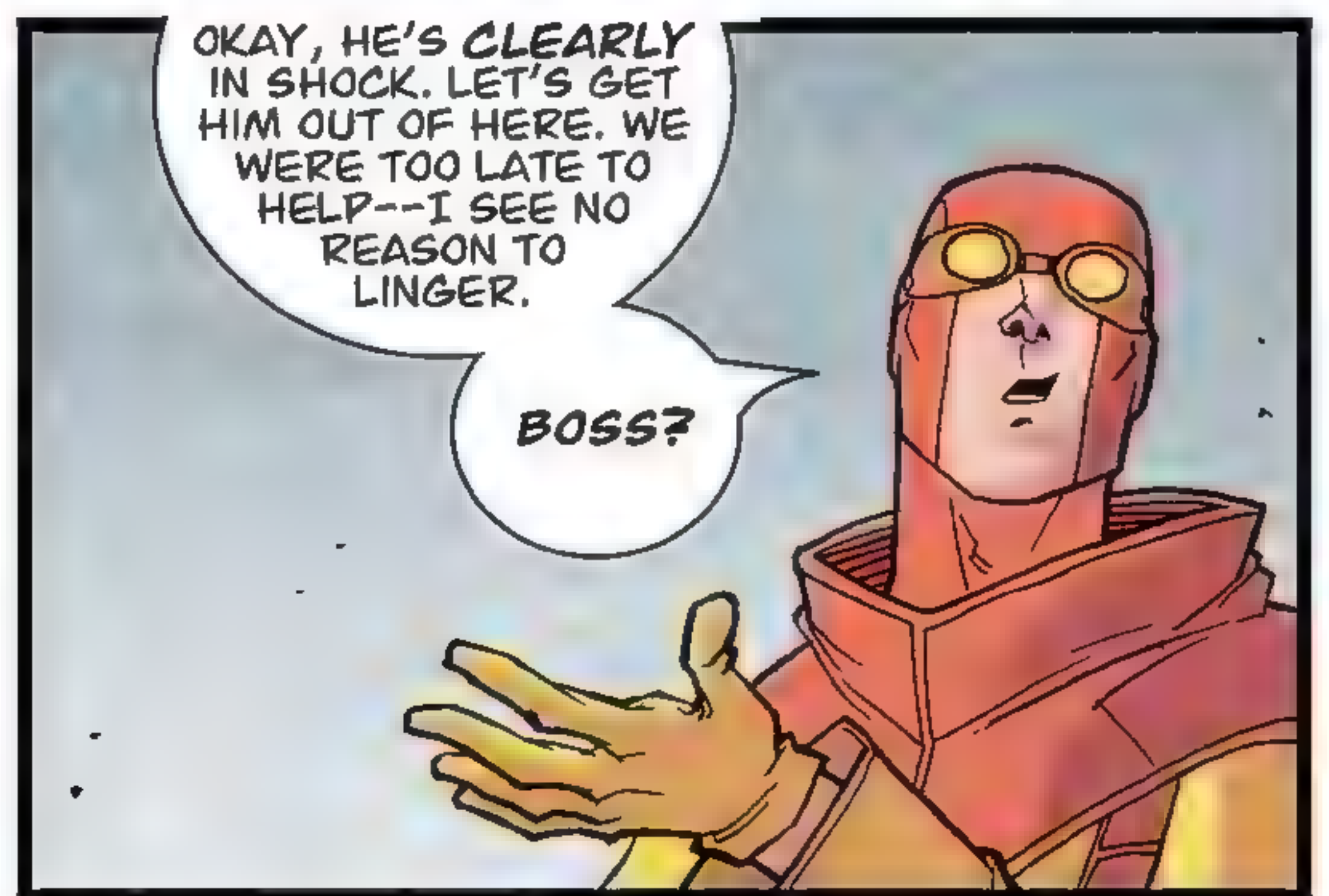
ACK!!

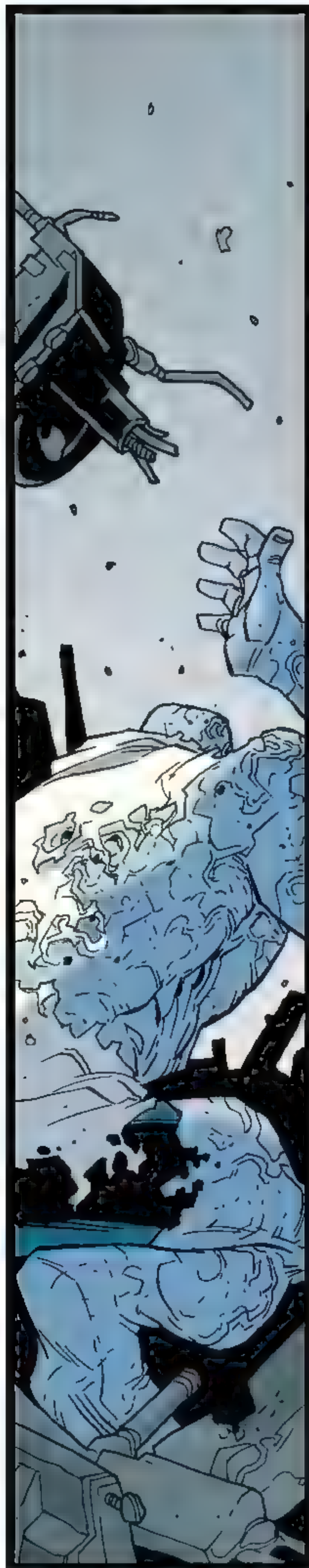
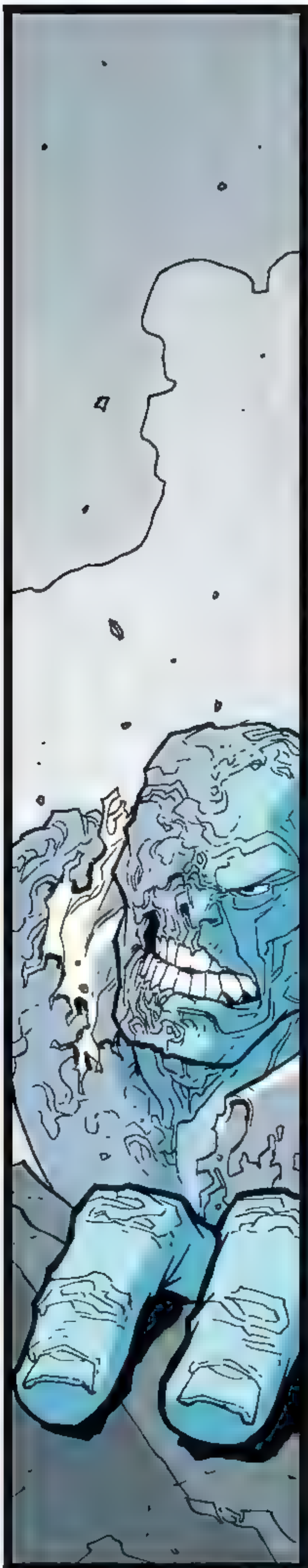
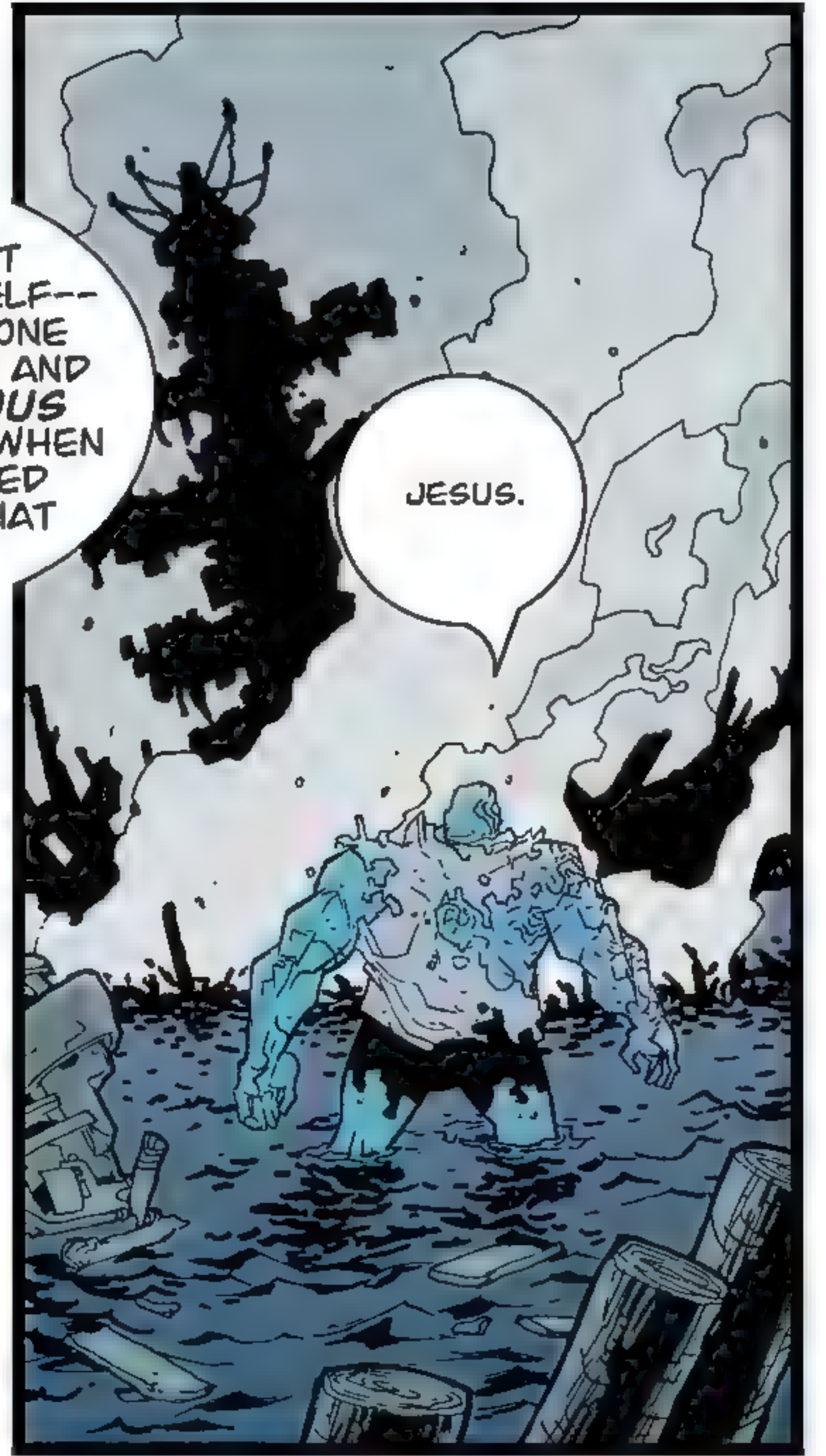
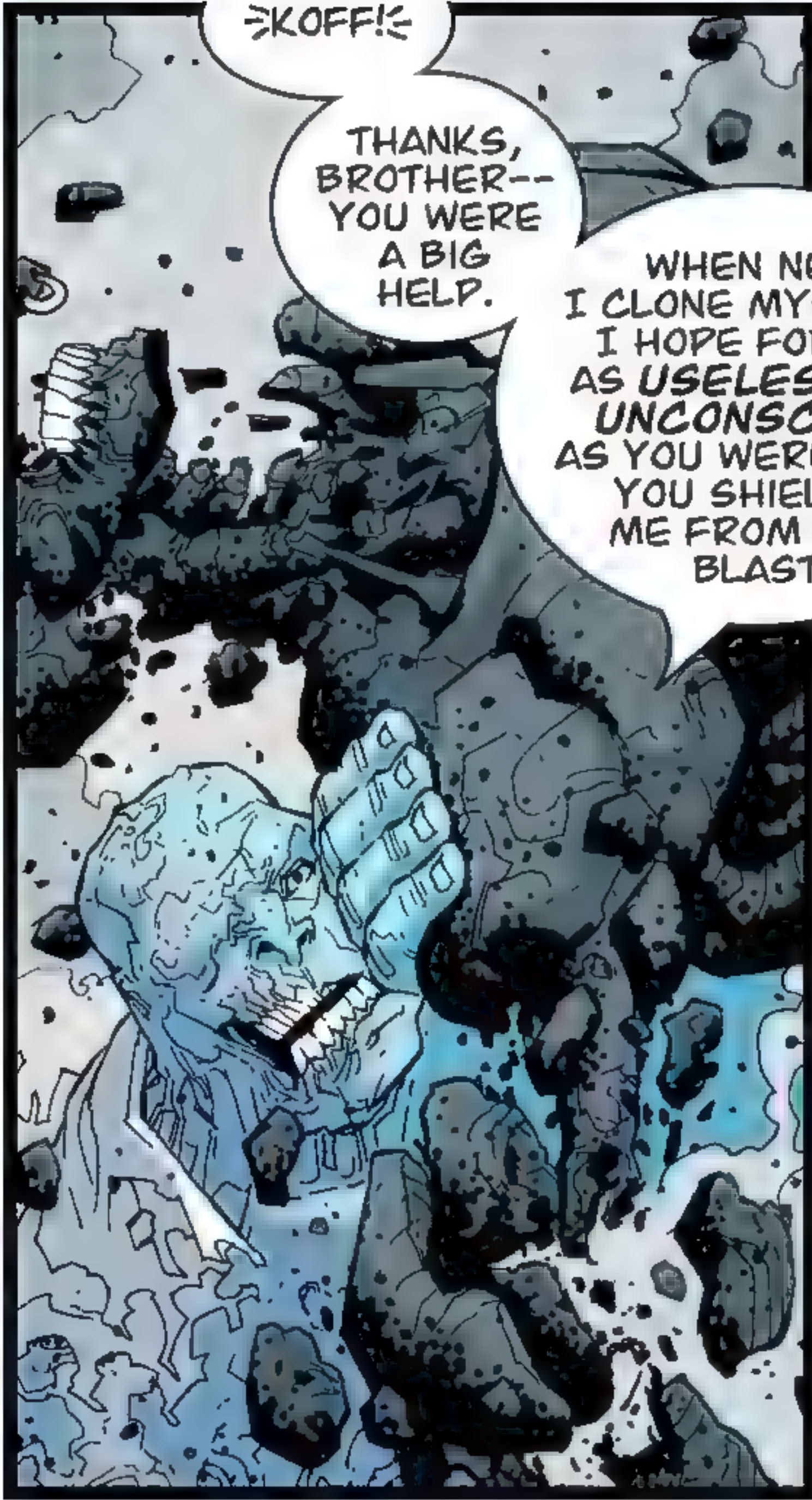


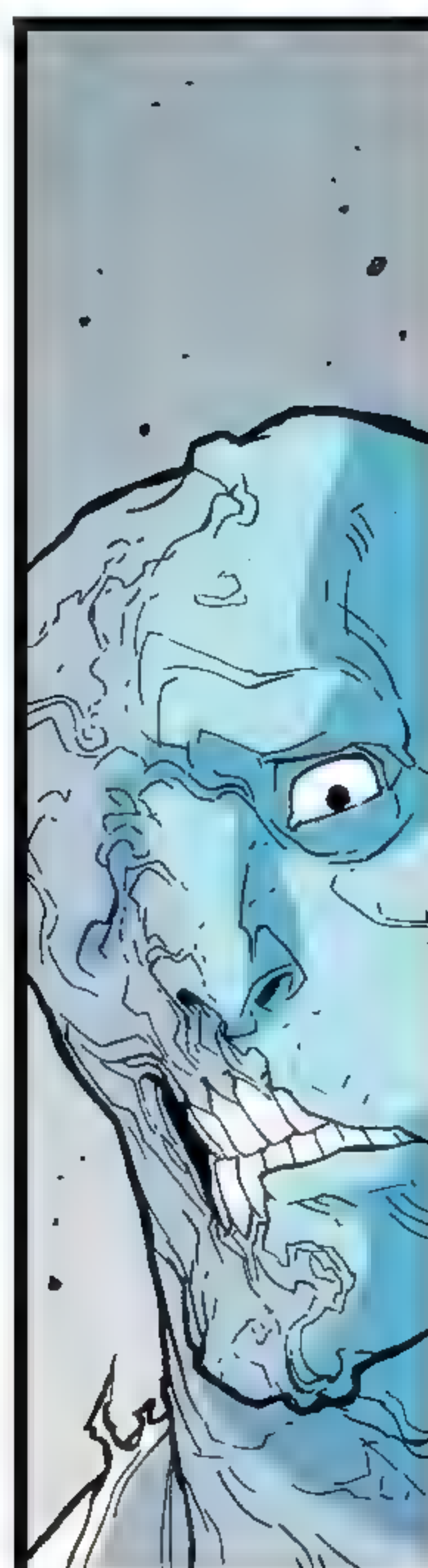
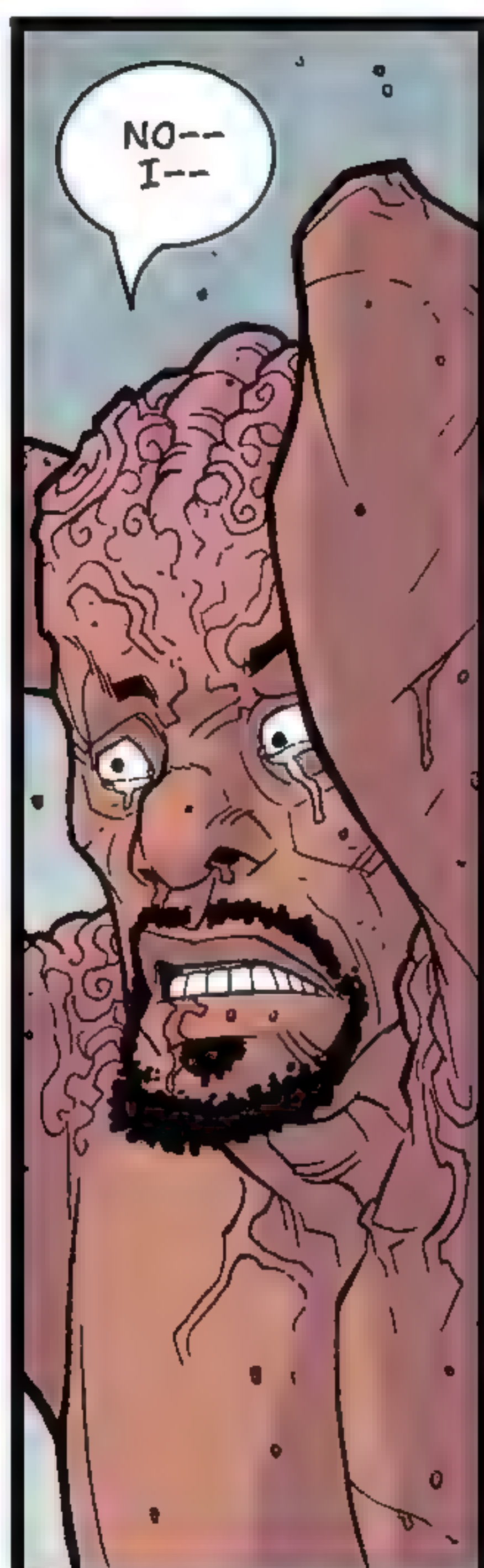
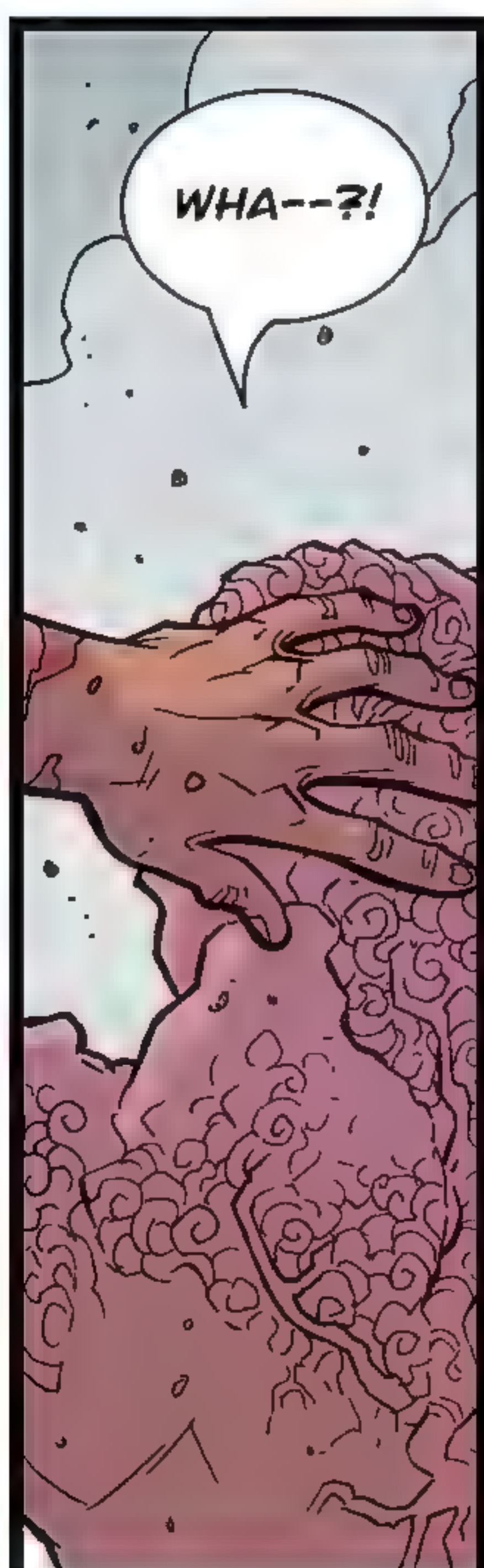


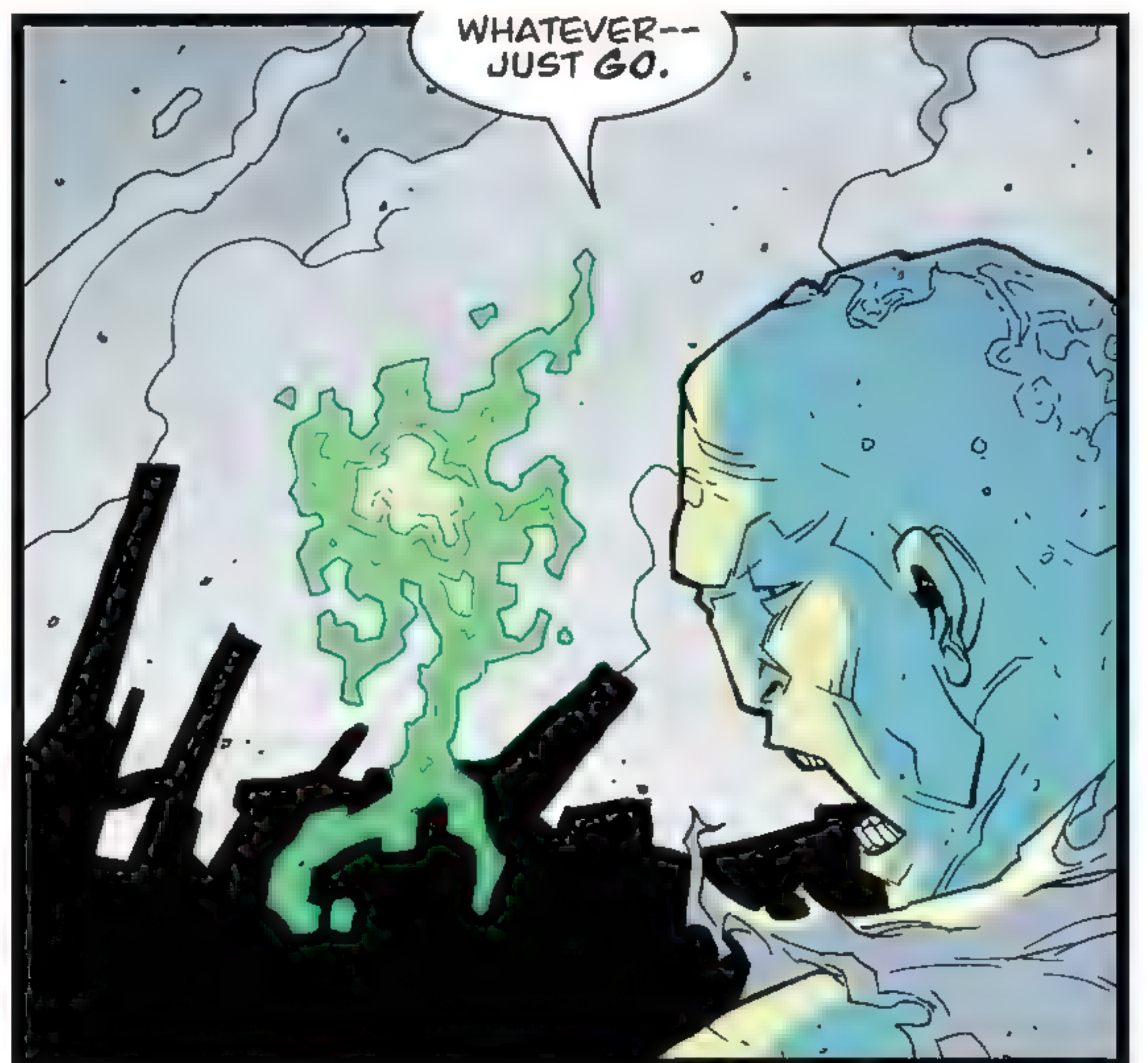
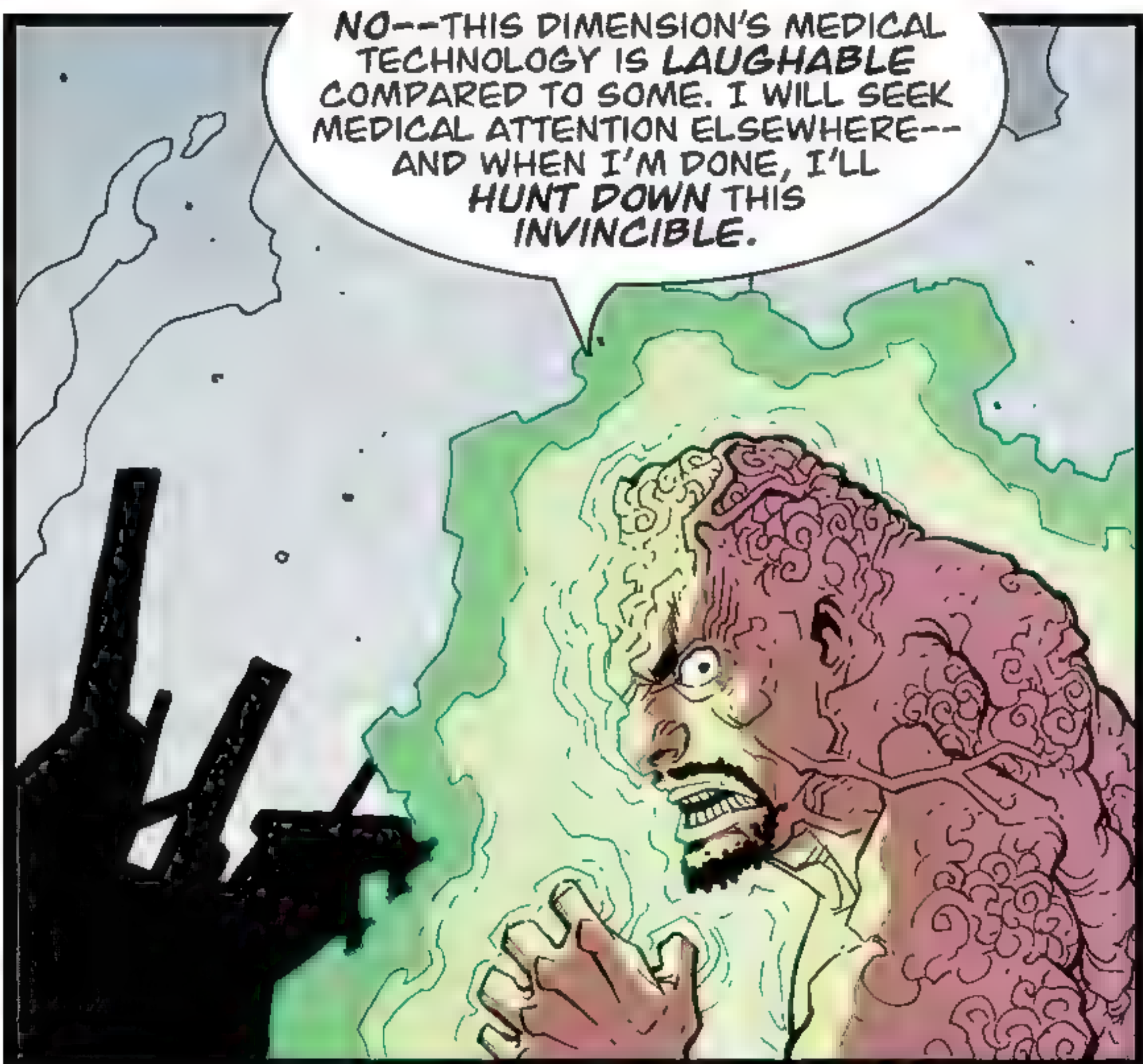
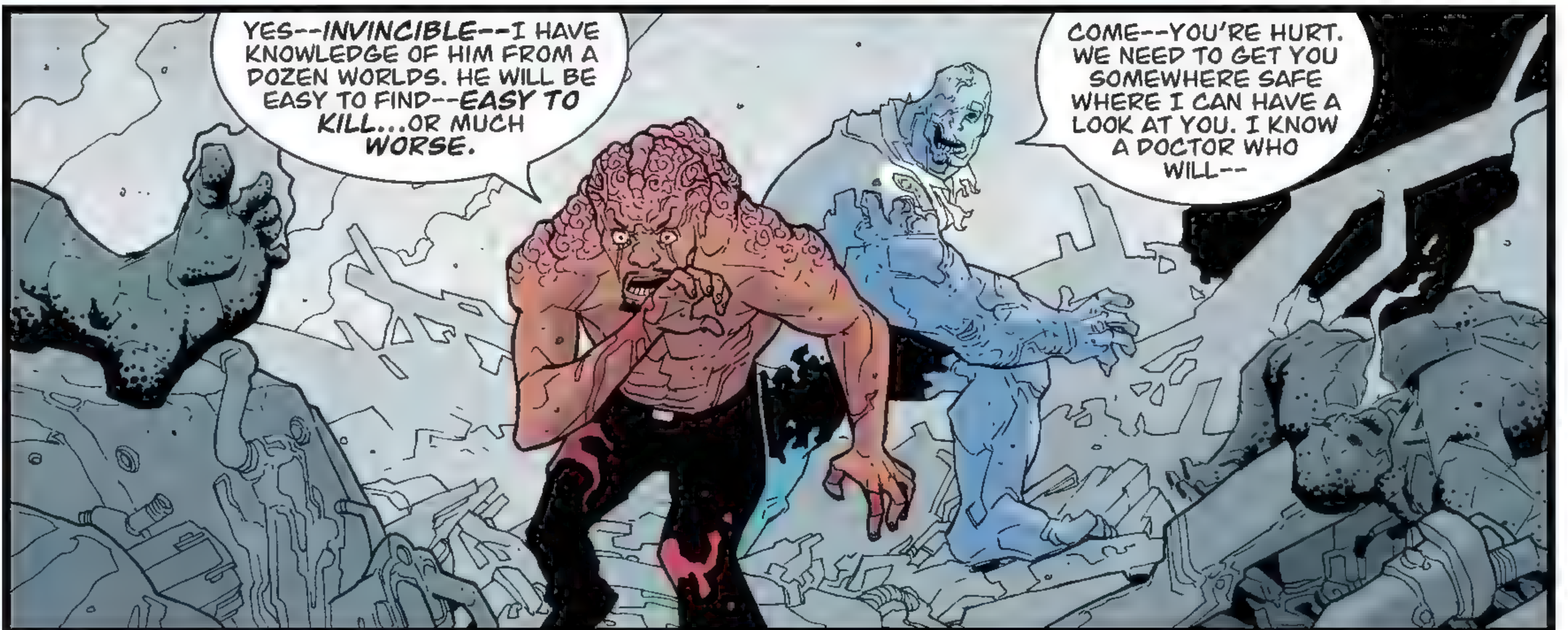
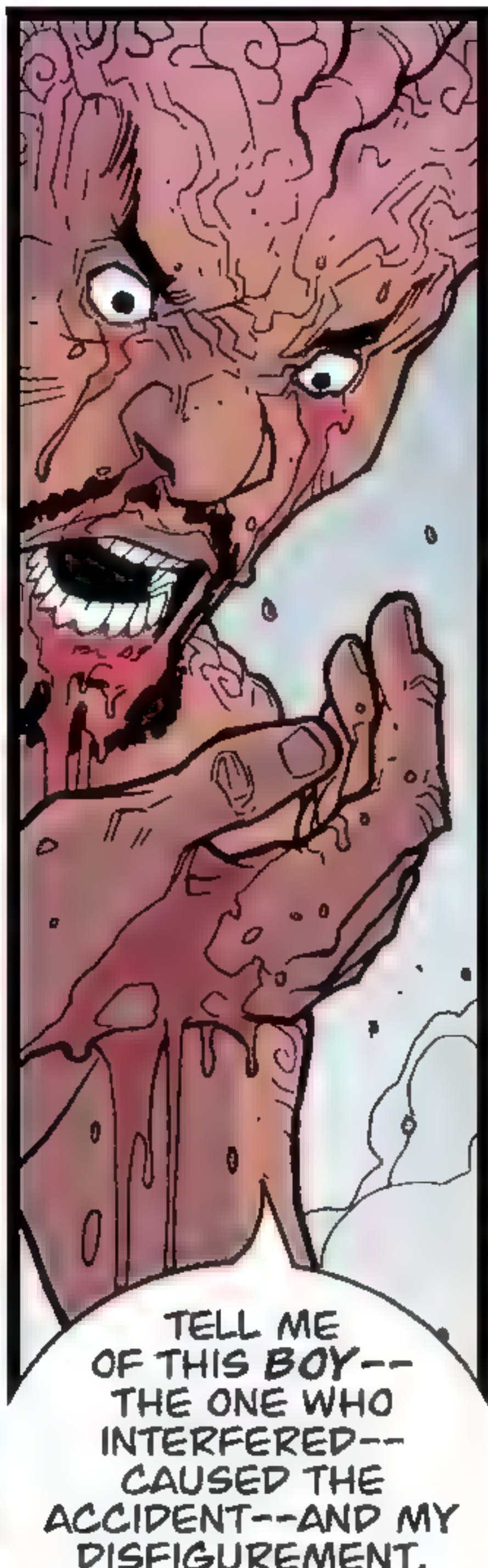












DON'T EVEN
THINK ABOUT
TAKING ME WITH
YOU. IT'S NOT
LIKE I NEED
ANY MEDICAL
ATTENTION OR
ANYTHING.

DON'T
WORRY
ABOUT
ME.

JERK.





ORIGINS

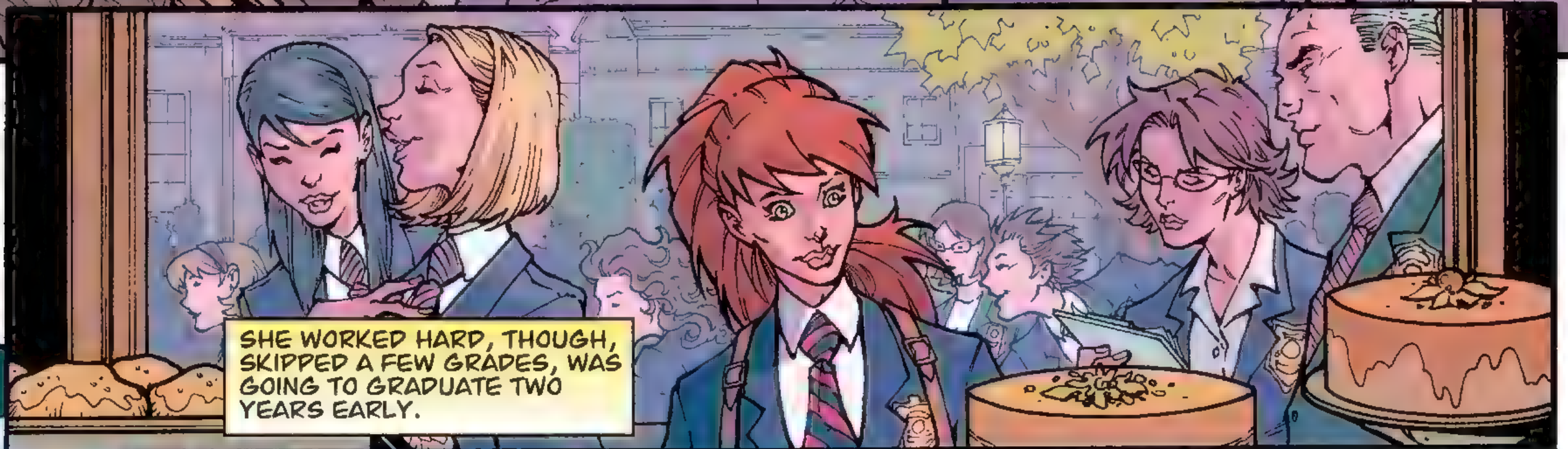
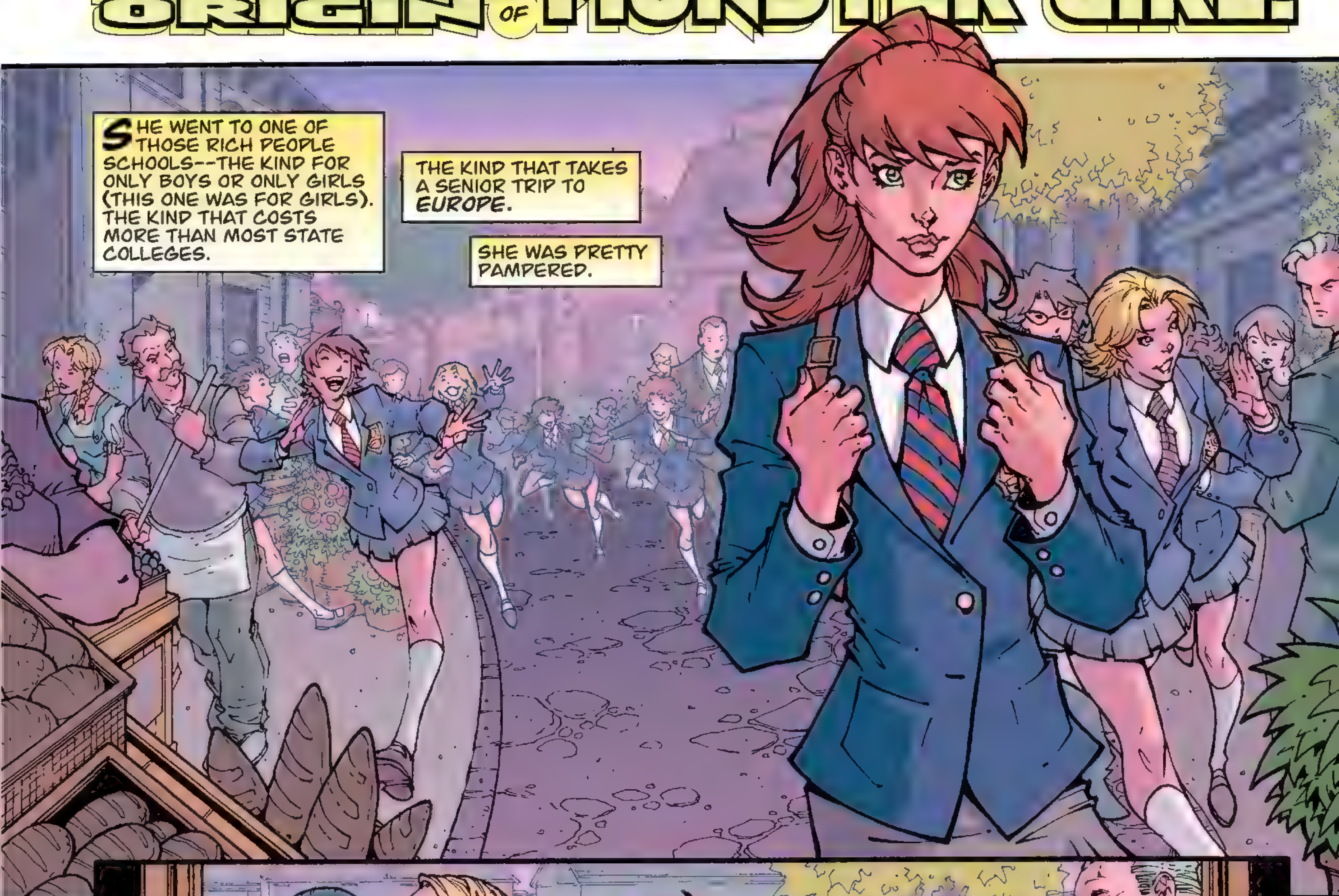


AT LONG LAST THE SECRET ORIGIN OF MONSTER GIRL!

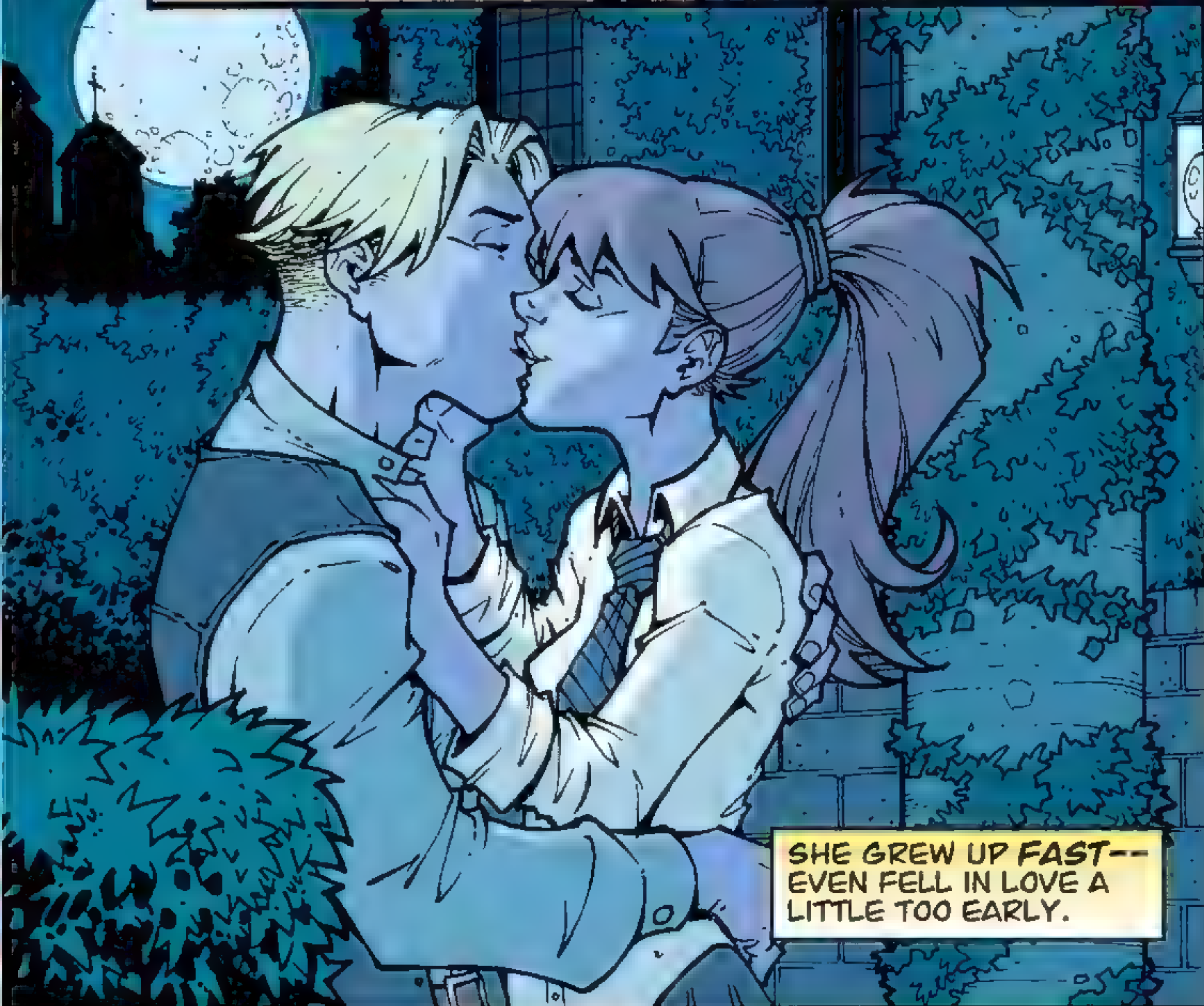
SHE WENT TO ONE OF THOSE RICH PEOPLE SCHOOLS--THE KIND FOR ONLY BOYS OR ONLY GIRLS (THIS ONE WAS FOR GIRLS). THE KIND THAT COSTS MORE THAN MOST STATE COLLEGES.

THE KIND THAT TAKES A SENIOR TRIP TO EUROPE.

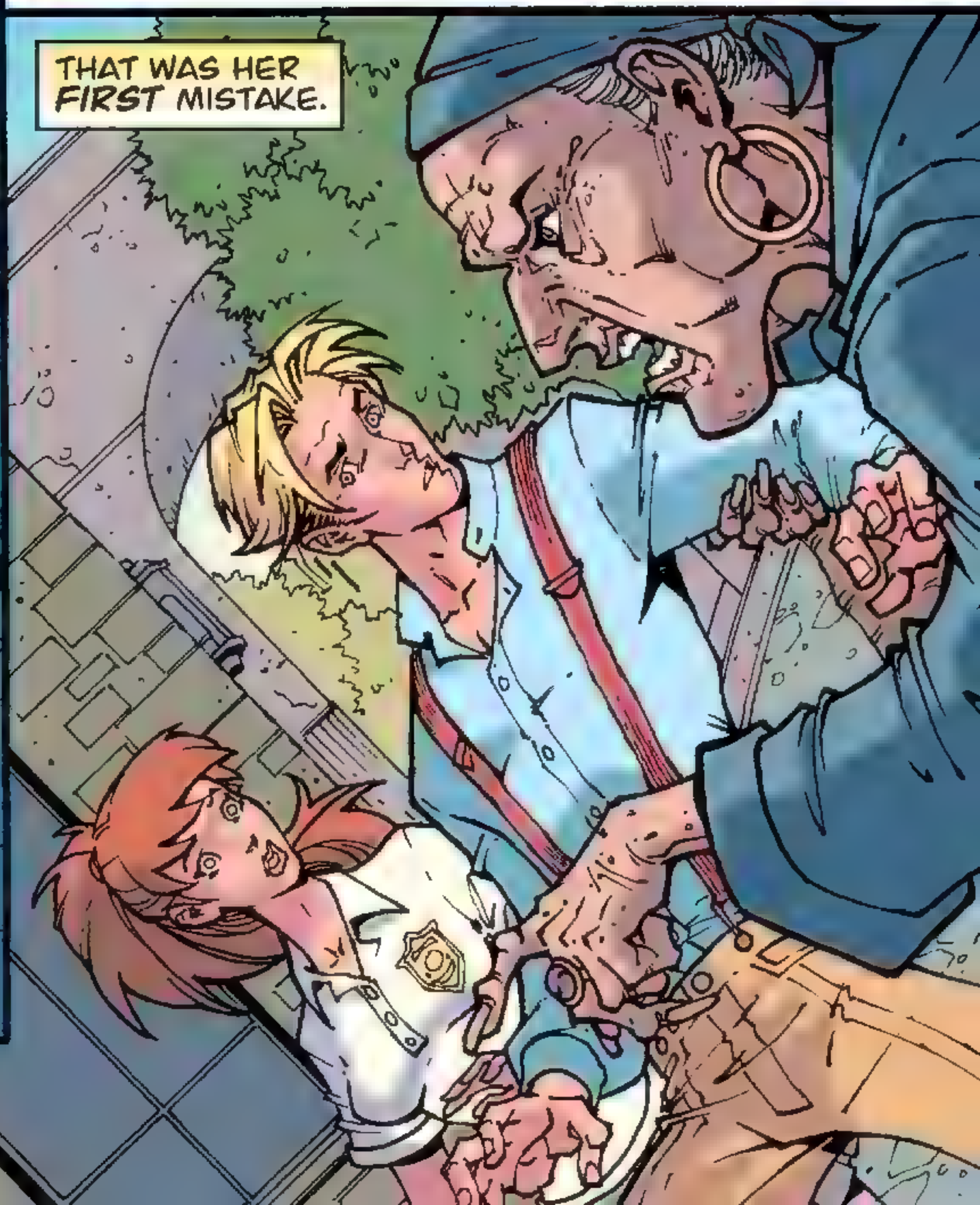
SHE WAS PRETTY PAMPERED.



SHE WORKED HARD, THOUGH, SKIPPED A FEW GRADES, WAS GOING TO GRADUATE TWO YEARS EARLY.

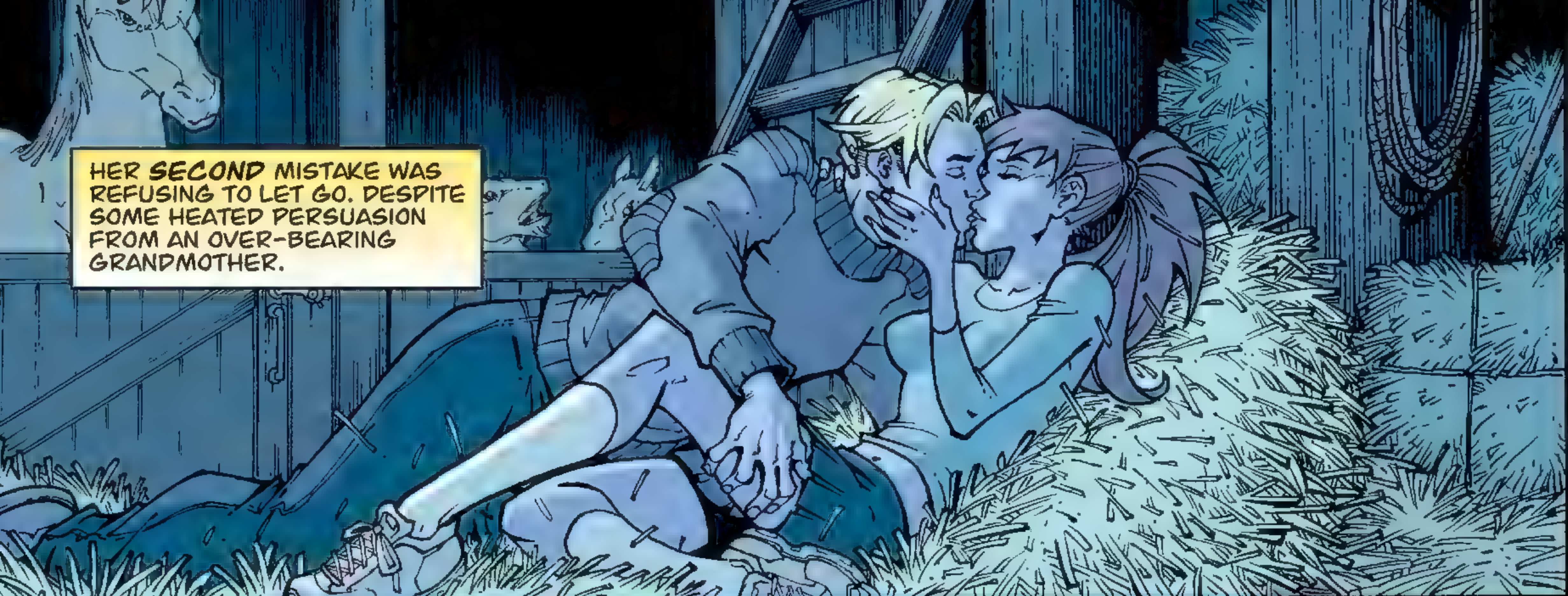


SHE GREW UP FAST--EVEN FELL IN LOVE A LITTLE TOO EARLY.

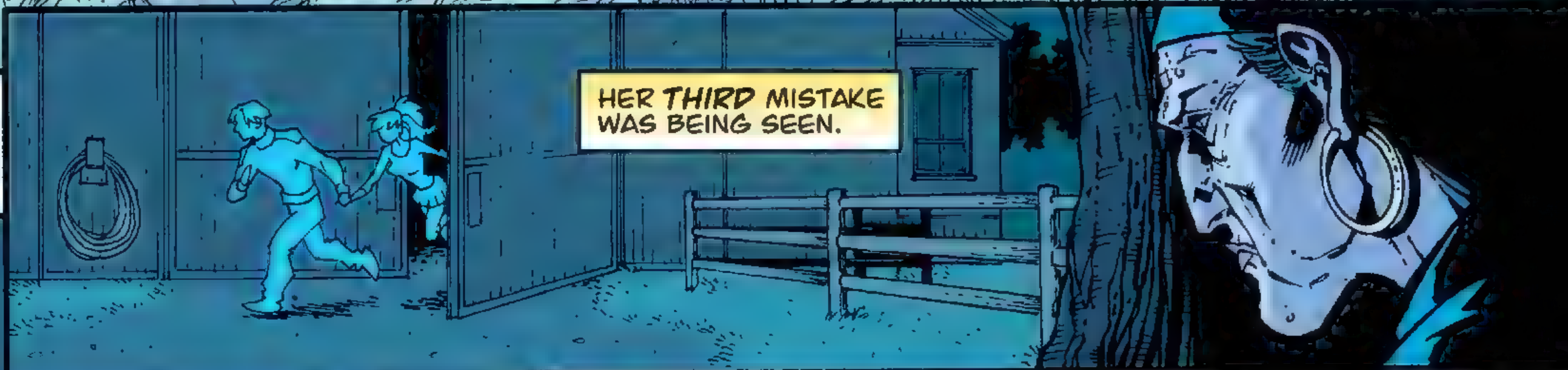


THAT WAS HER FIRST MISTAKE.

HER **SECOND** MISTAKE WAS REFUSING TO LET GO. DESPITE SOME HEATED PERSUASION FROM AN OVER-BEARING GRANDMOTHER.



HER **THIRD** MISTAKE WAS BEING SEEN.



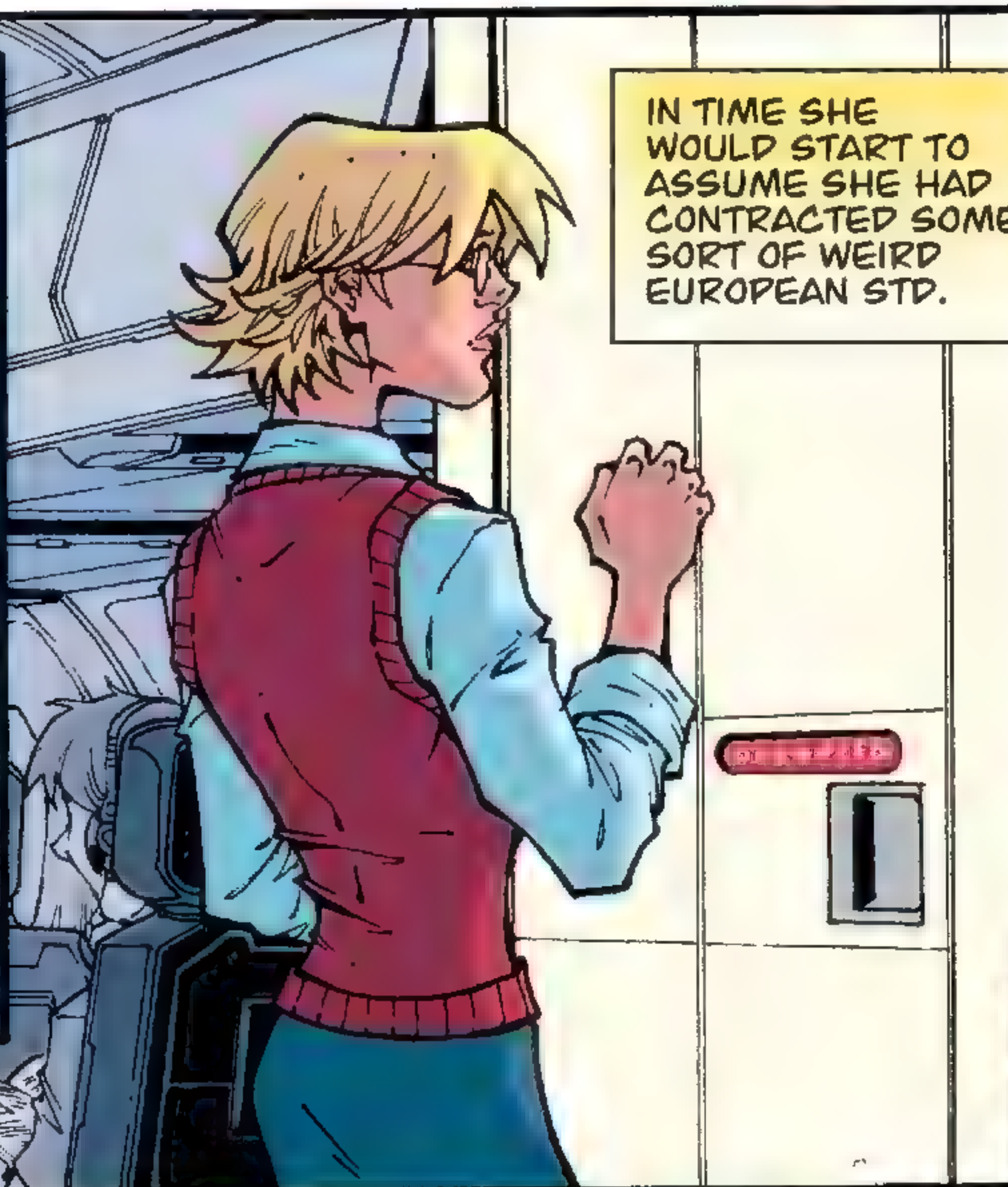
THE LOVE OF HER LIFE'S GRANDMOTHER WAS A PRACTITIONER OF ARCAINE MAGIC. SPELLS, INCANTATIONS, HEXES...

...CURSES.

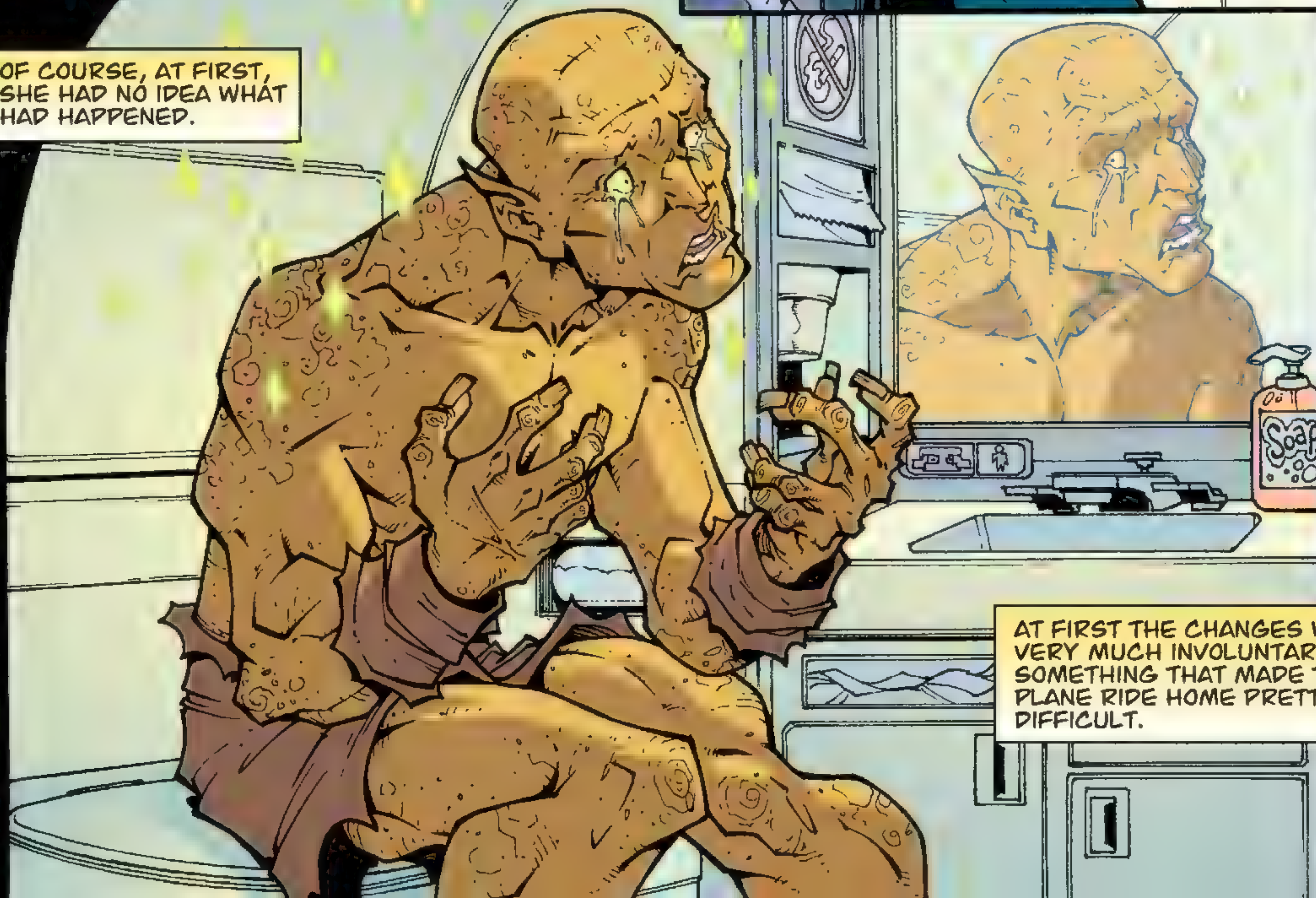
SHE WOULD NEVER KNOW EXACTLY WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO HER.



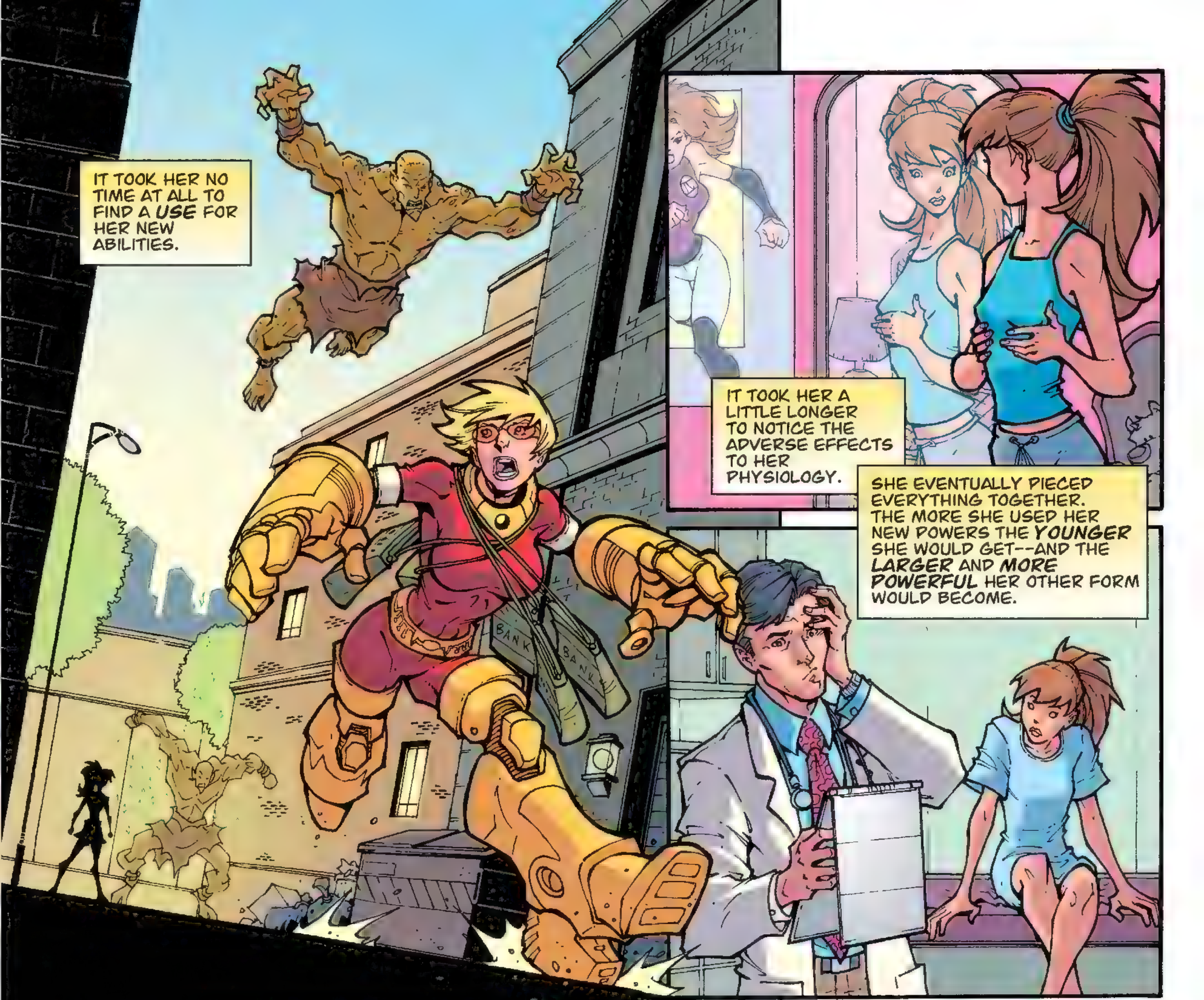
IN TIME SHE WOULD START TO ASSUME SHE HAD CONTRACTED SOME SORT OF WEIRD EUROPEAN STD.



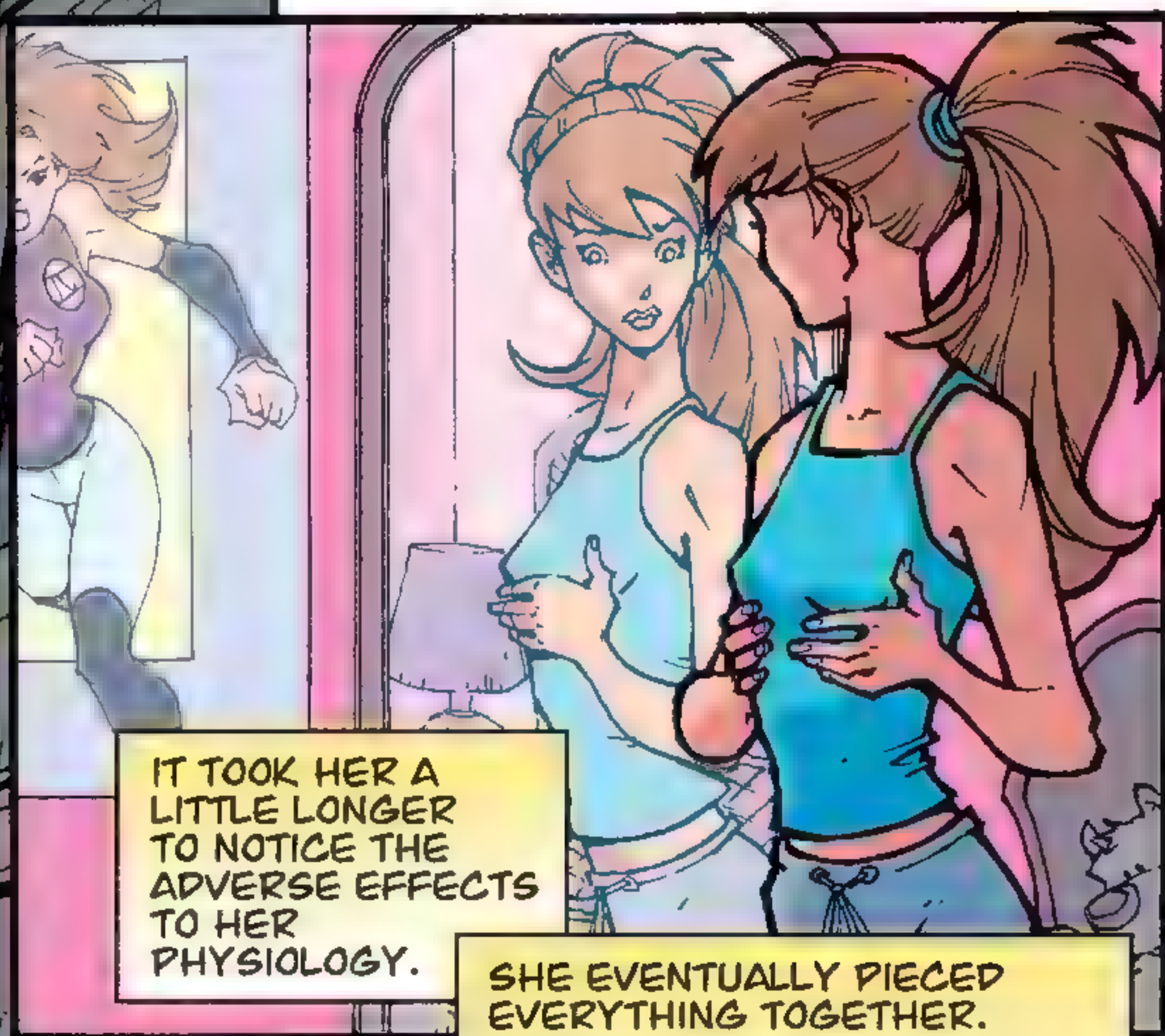
OF COURSE, AT FIRST, SHE HAD NO IDEA WHAT HAD HAPPENED.



AT FIRST THE CHANGES WERE VERY MUCH INVOLUNTARY. SOMETHING THAT MADE THE PLANE RIDE HOME PRETTY DIFFICULT.

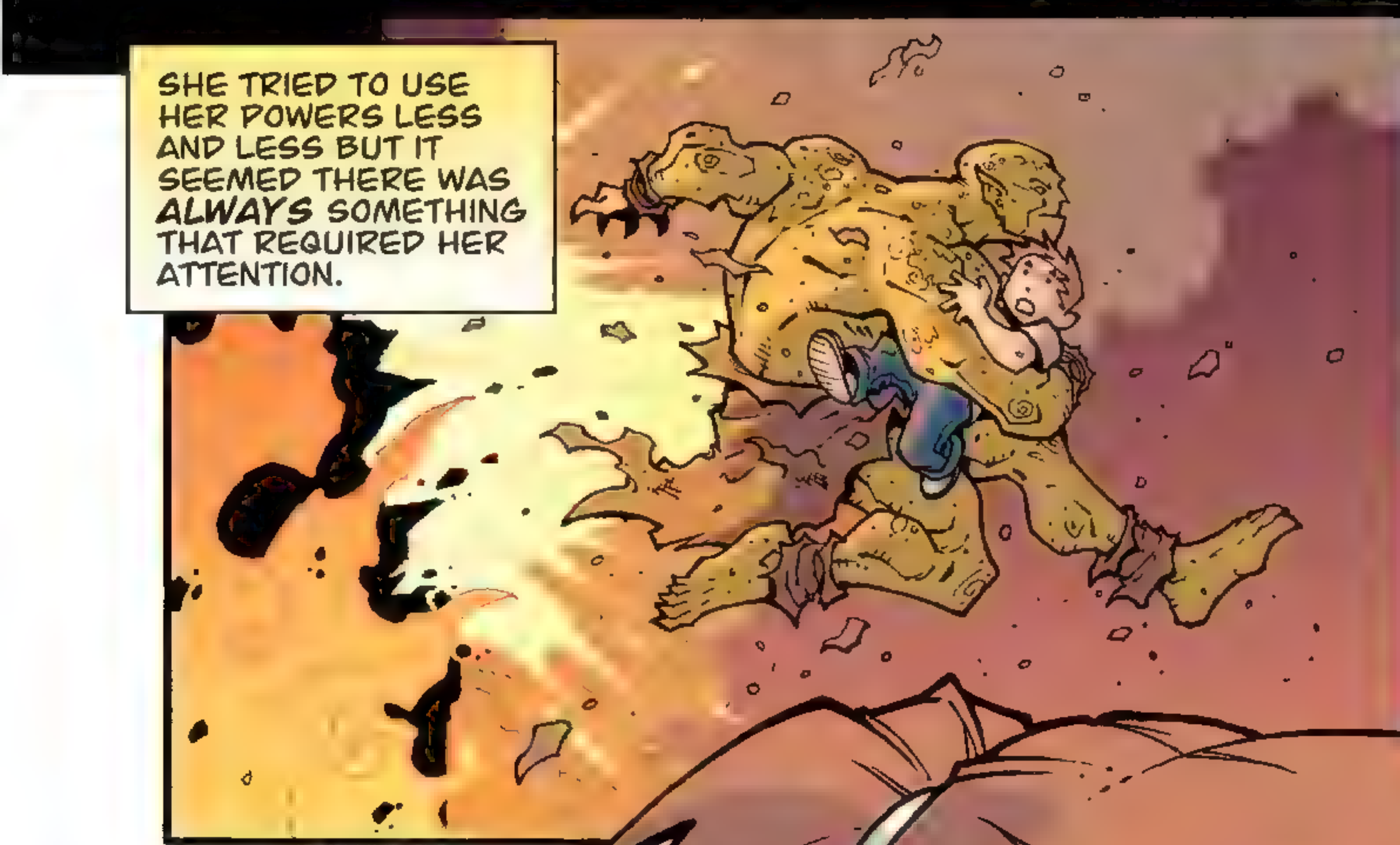


IT TOOK HER NO TIME AT ALL TO FIND A USE FOR HER NEW ABILITIES.

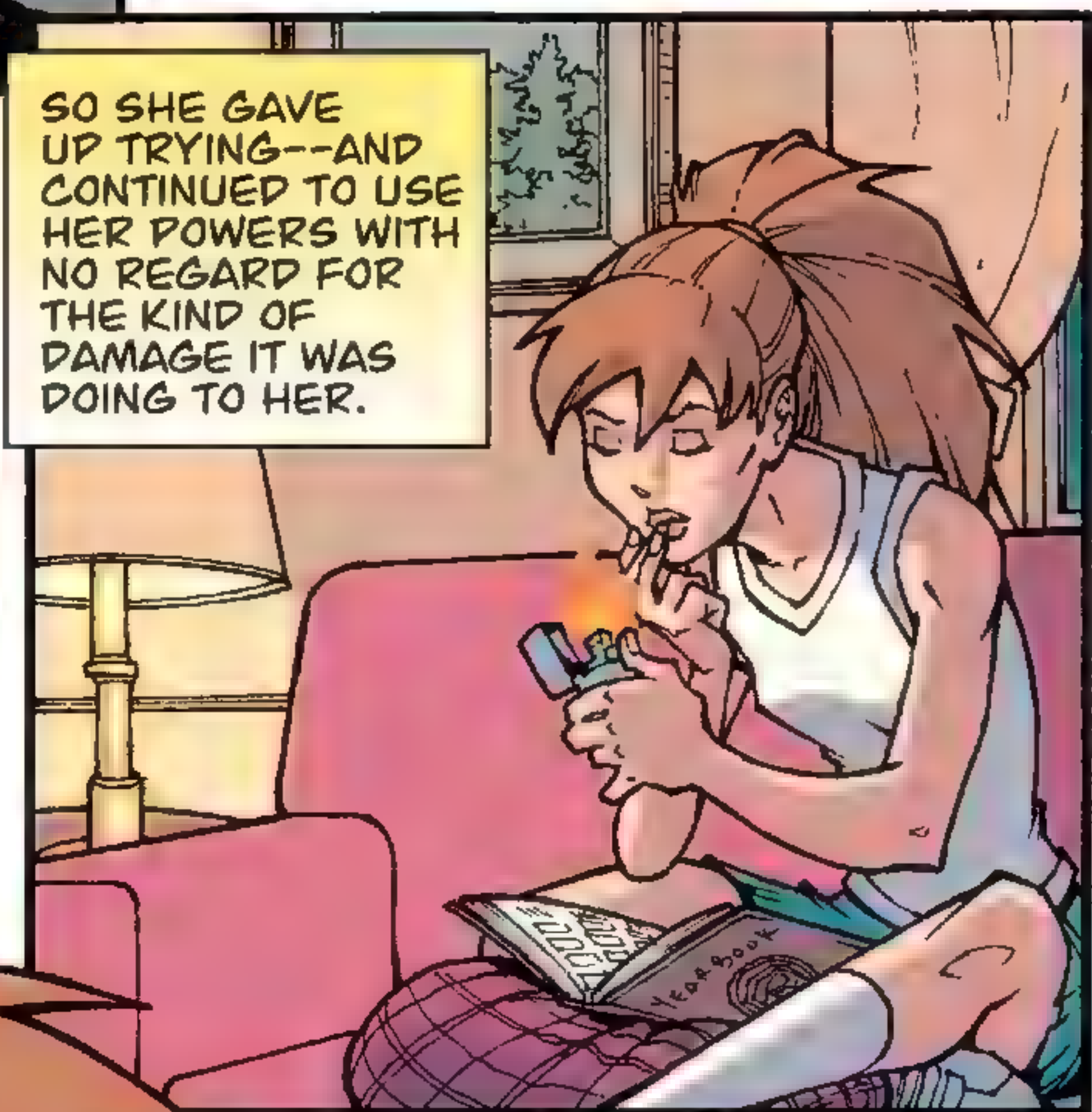


IT TOOK HER A LITTLE LONGER TO NOTICE THE ADVERSE EFFECTS TO HER PHYSIOLOGY.


SHE EVENTUALLY PIECED EVERYTHING TOGETHER. THE MORE SHE USED HER NEW POWERS THE YOUNGER SHE WOULD GET--AND THE LARGER AND MORE POWERFUL HER OTHER FORM WOULD BECOME.



SHE TRIED TO USE HER POWERS LESS AND LESS BUT IT SEEMED THERE WAS ALWAYS SOMETHING THAT REQUIRED HER ATTENTION.



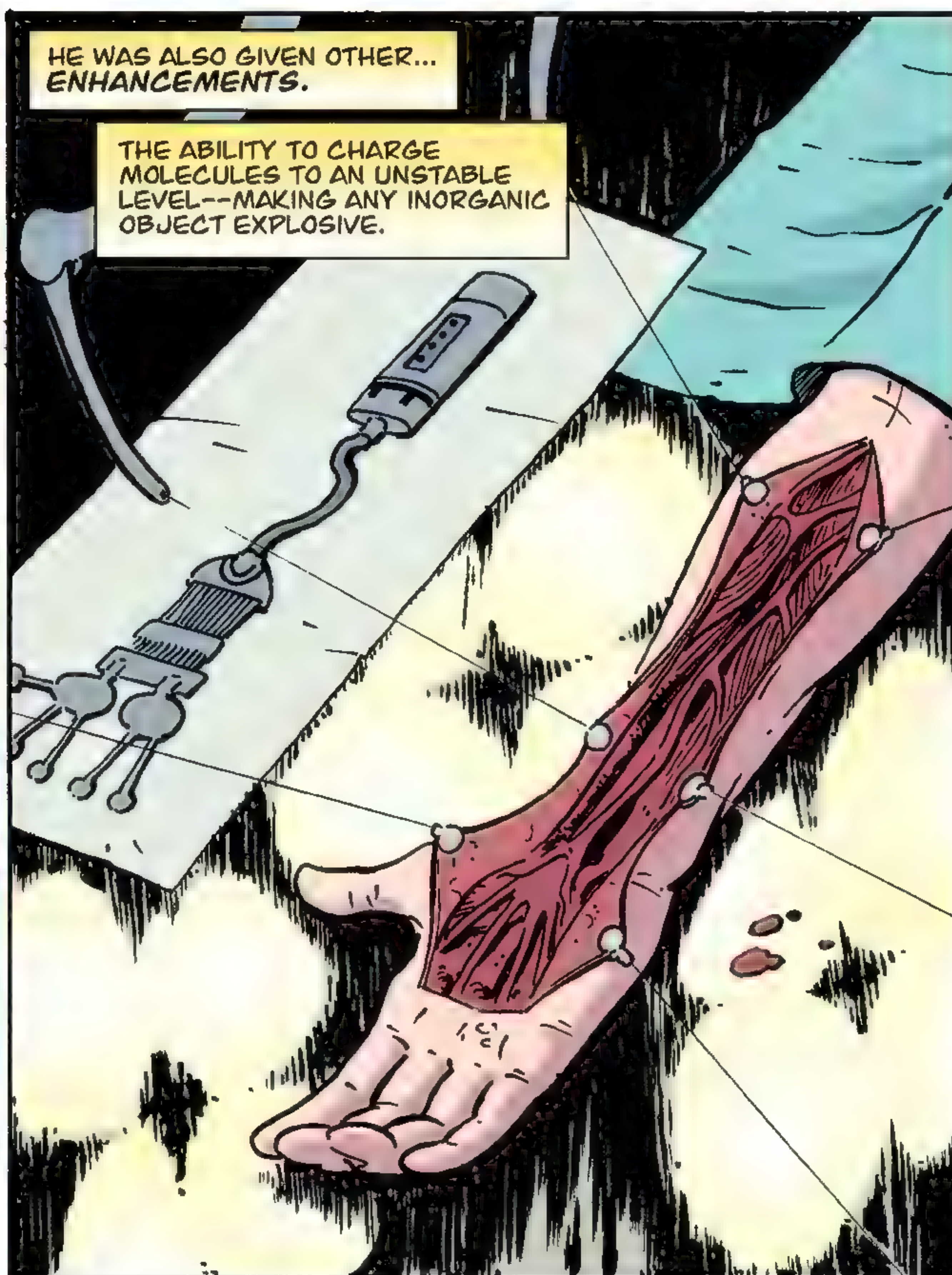
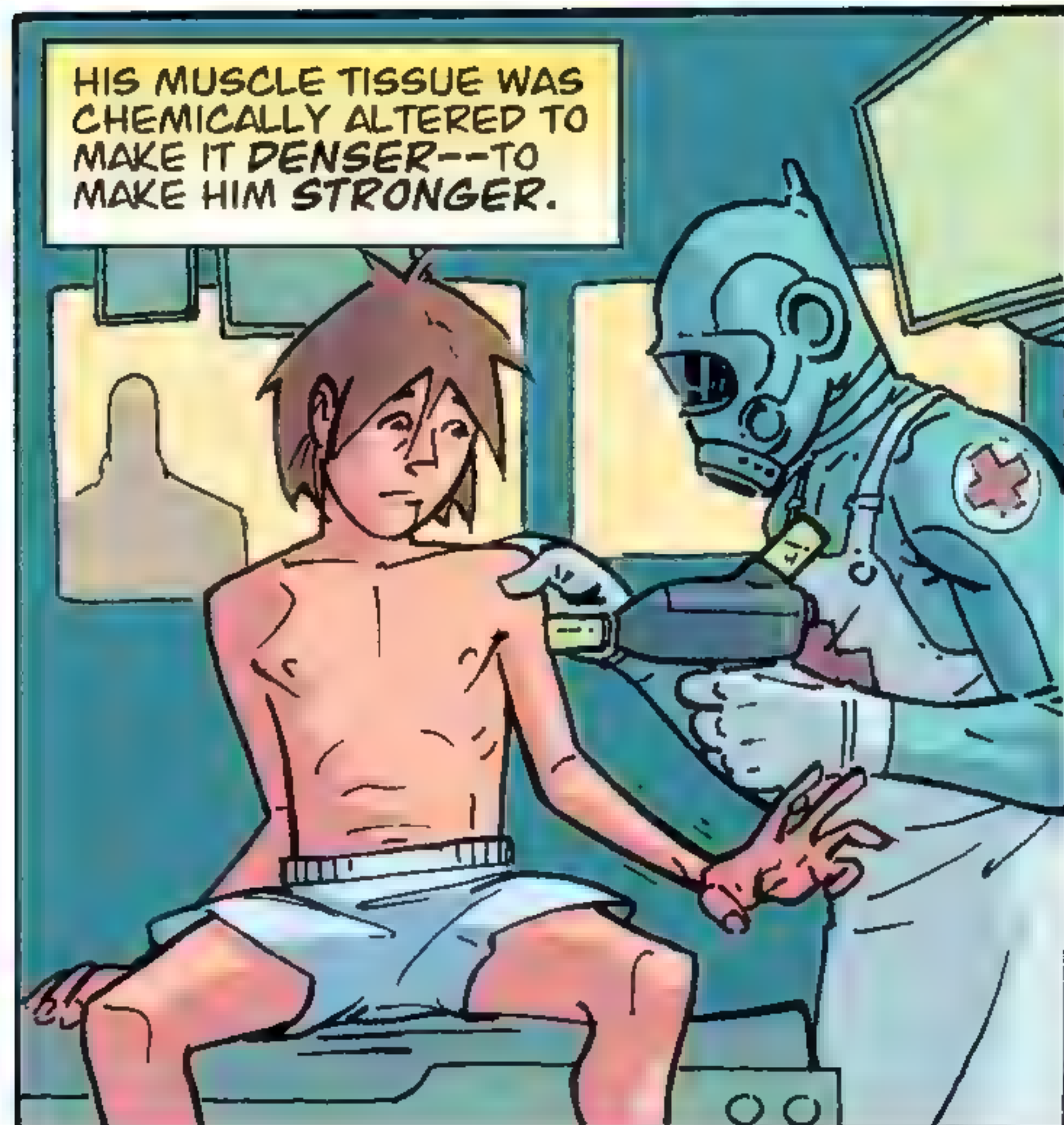
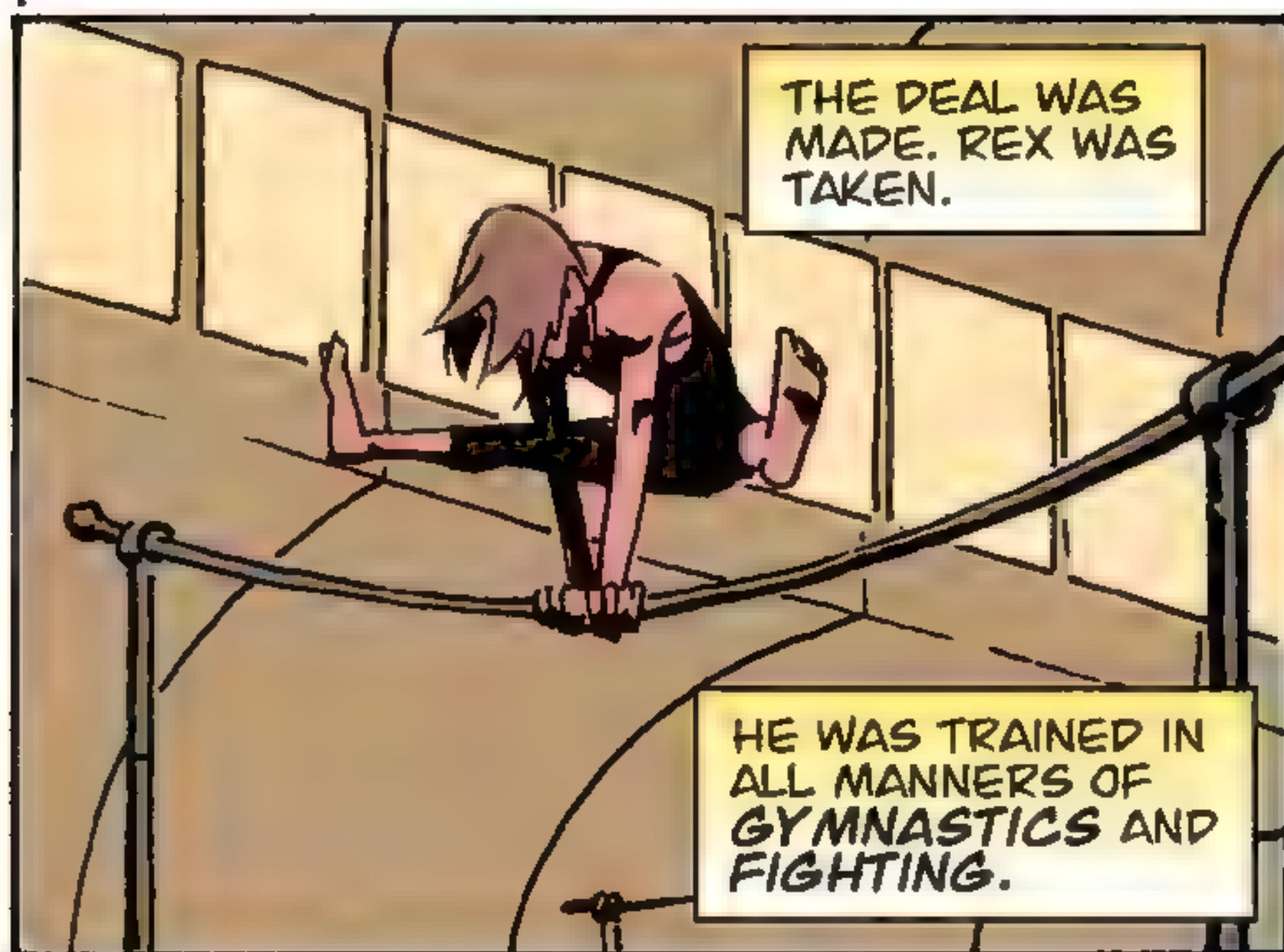
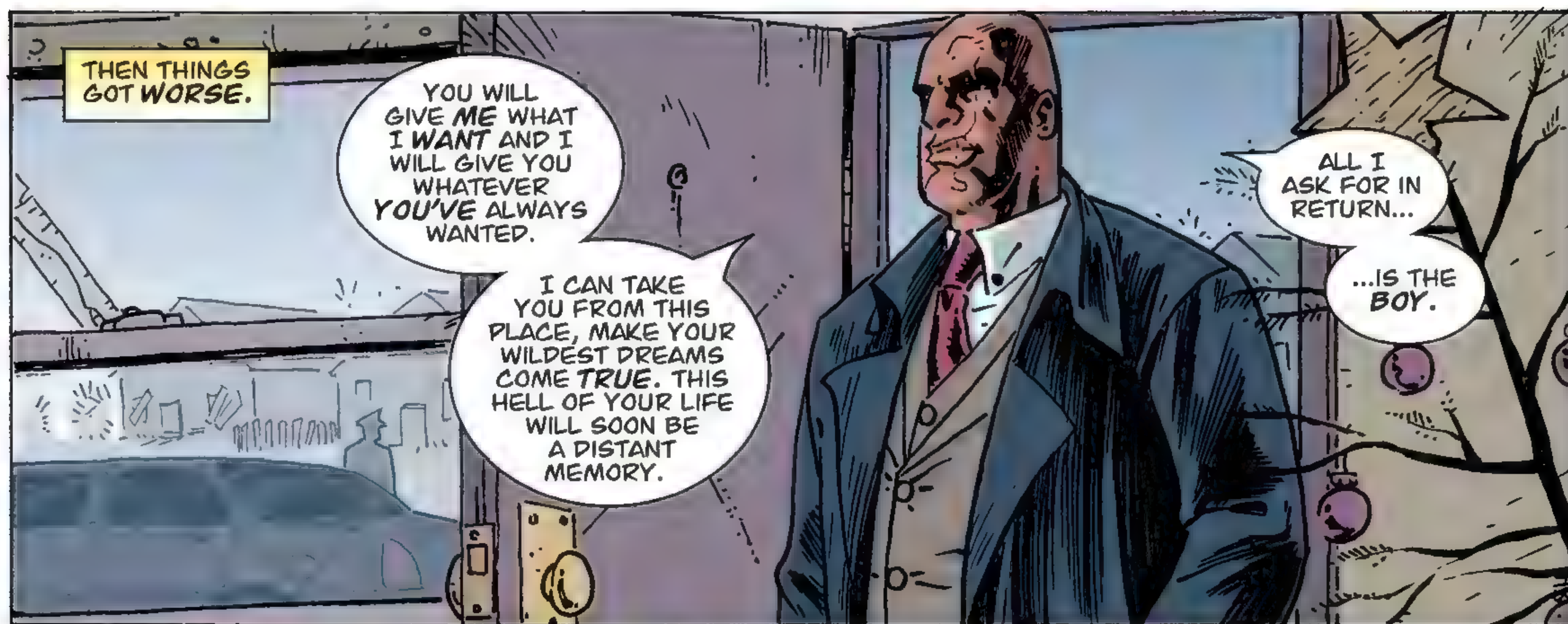
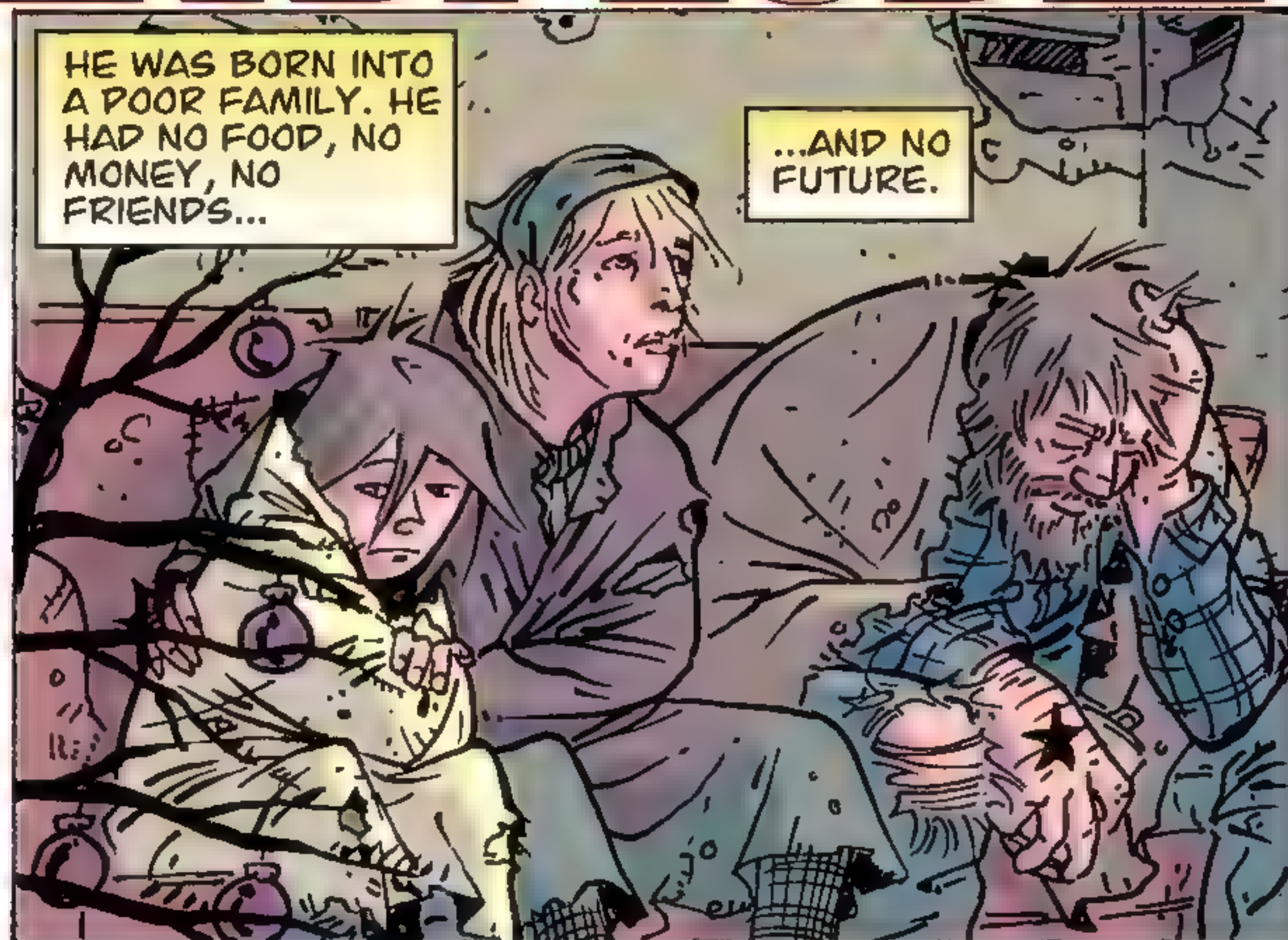
SO SHE GAVE UP TRYING--AND CONTINUED TO USE HER POWERS WITH NO REGARD FOR THE KIND OF DAMAGE IT WAS DOING TO HER.

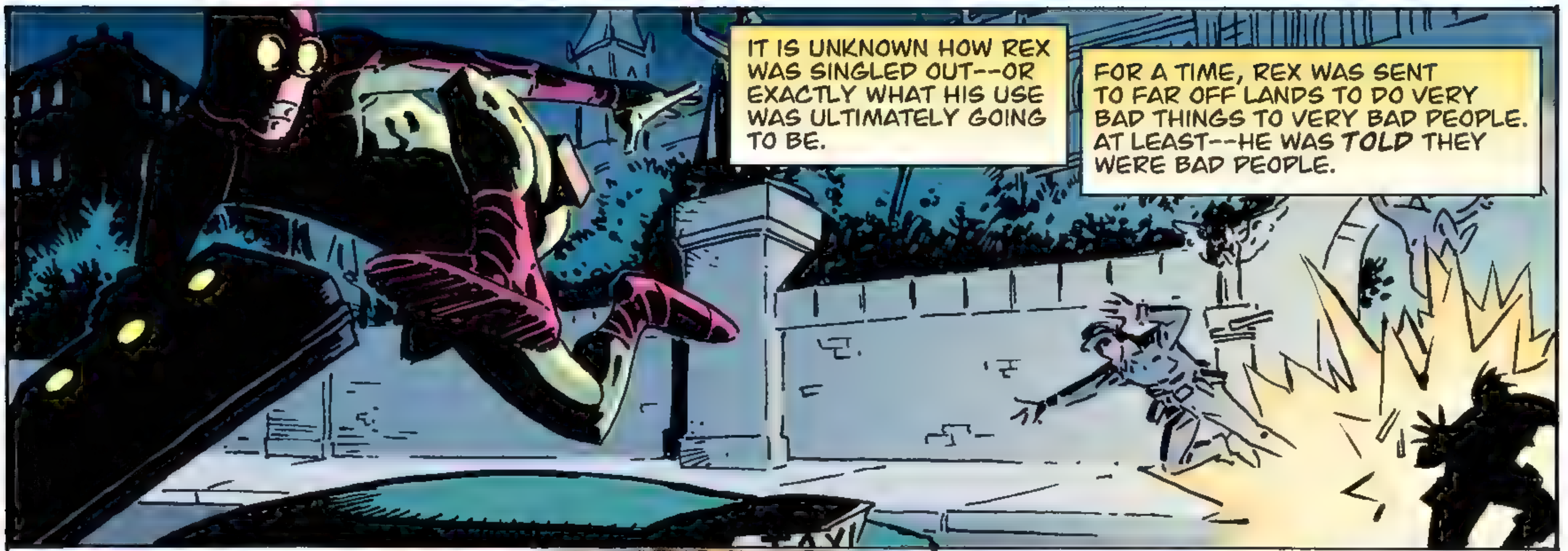


REMEMBER, SHE WAS A PAMPERED LITTLE RICH GIRL.

THEY DON'T USUALLY DEAL WITH THESE KINDS OF THINGS VERY WELL.

AT LONG LAST... THE SECRET ORIGIN OF REX SPLODE!





IT IS UNKNOWN HOW REX WAS SINGLED OUT--OR EXACTLY WHAT HIS USE WAS ULTIMATELY GOING TO BE.

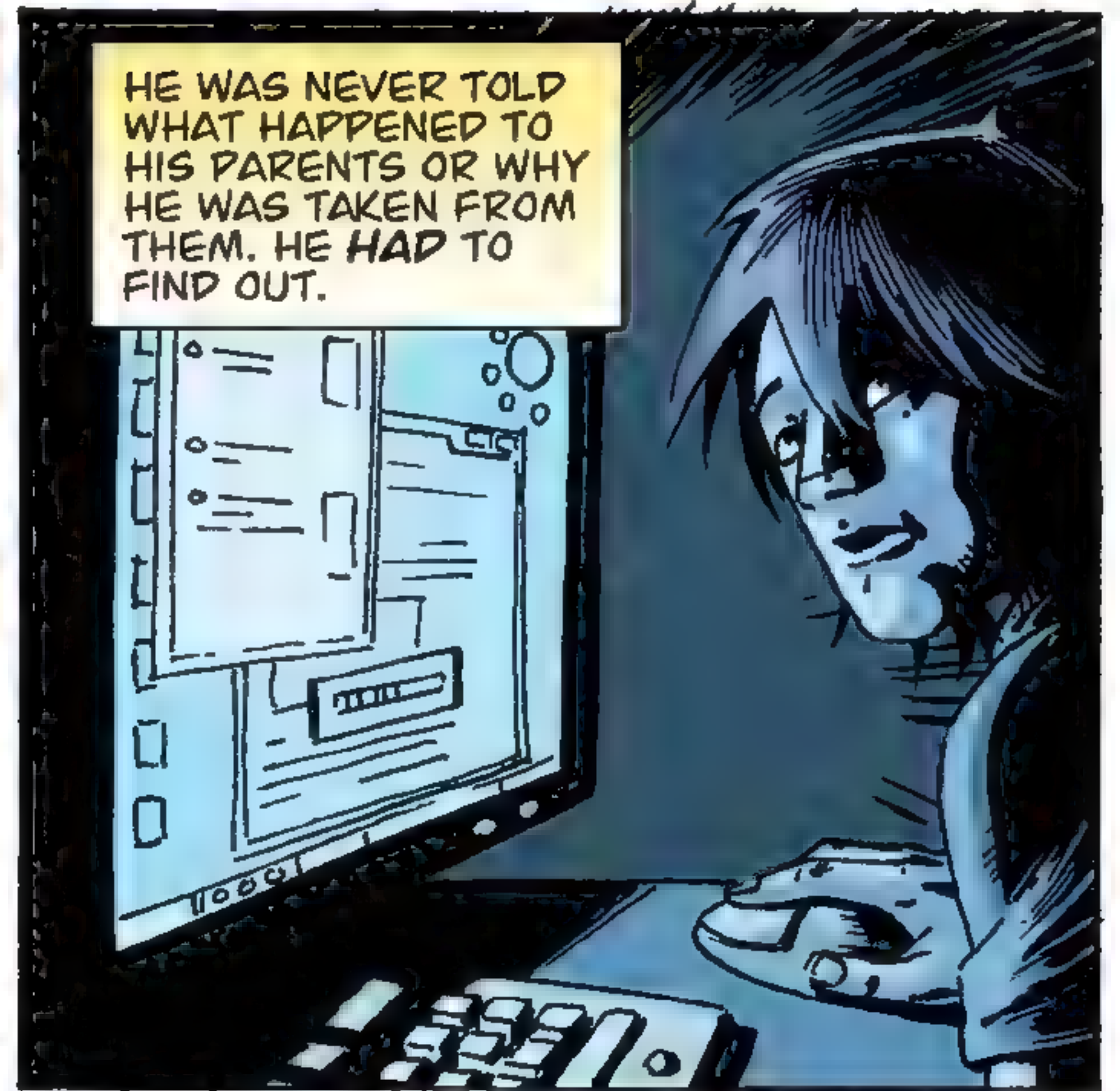
FOR A TIME, REX WAS SENT TO FAR OFF LANDS TO DO VERY BAD THINGS TO VERY BAD PEOPLE. AT LEAST--HE WAS TOLD THEY WERE BAD PEOPLE.



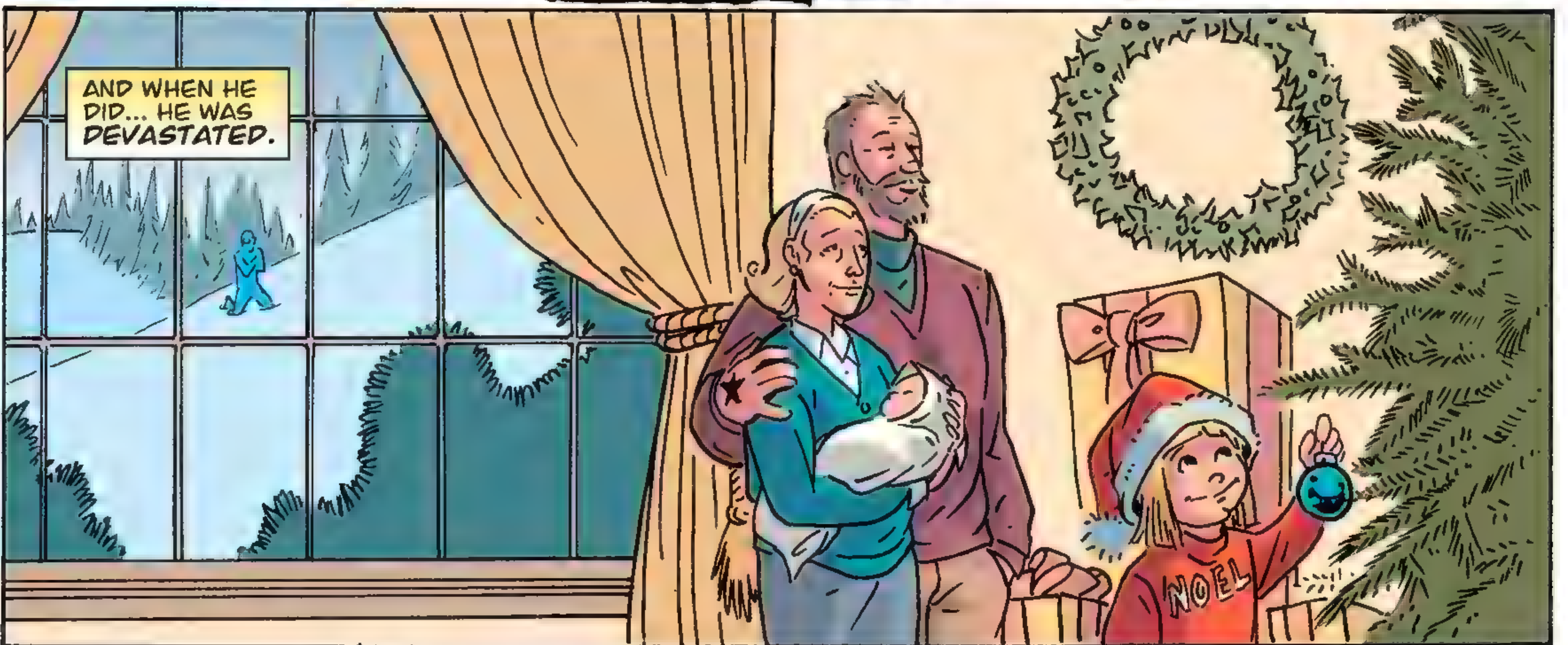
FOR A TIME HE WAS LOYAL. VERY LOYAL.



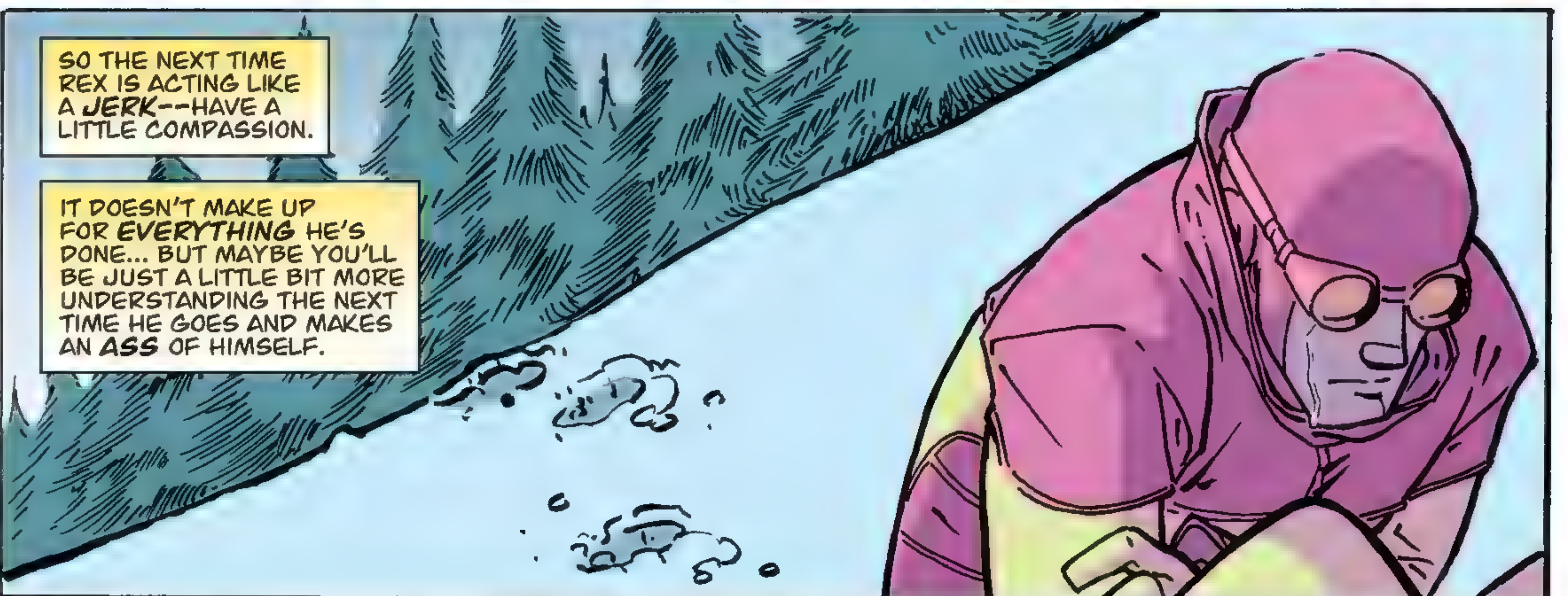
UNTIL HE ESCAPED.



HE WAS NEVER TOLD WHAT HAPPENED TO HIS PARENTS OR WHY HE WAS TAKEN FROM THEM. HE HAD TO FIND OUT.



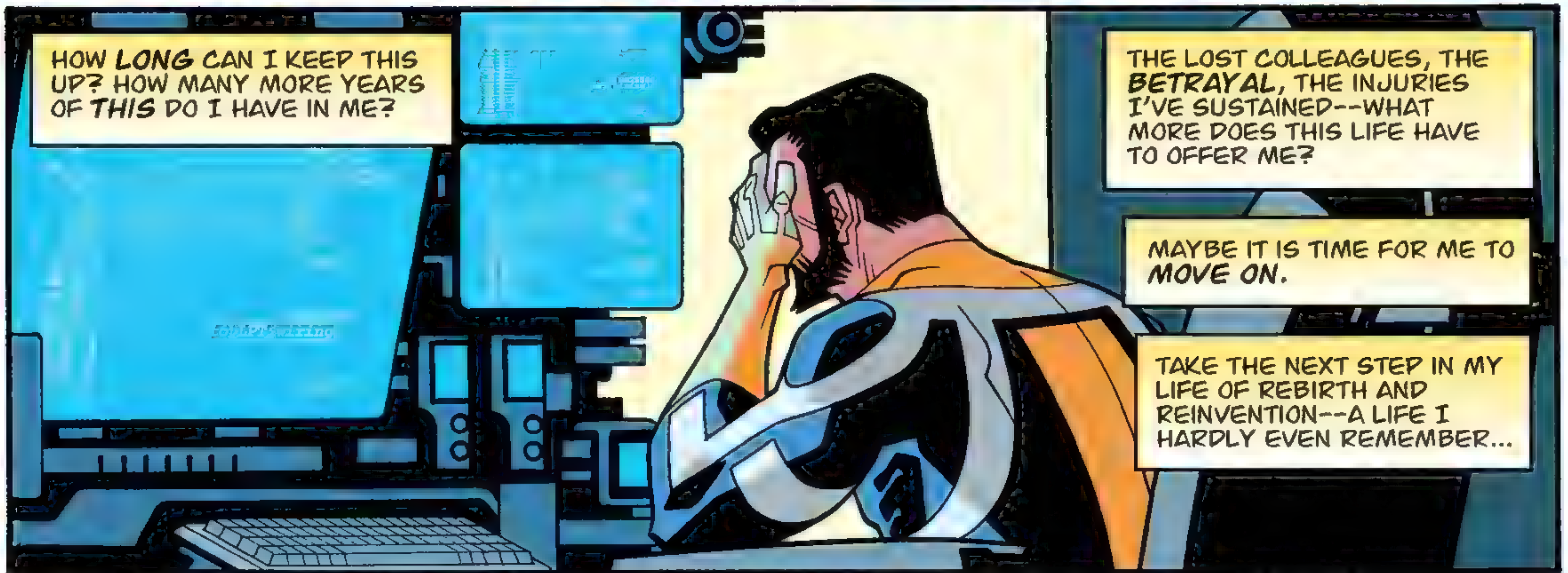
AND WHEN HE DID... HE WAS DEVASTATED.



SO THE NEXT TIME REX IS ACTING LIKE A JERK--HAVE A LITTLE COMPASSION.

IT DOESN'T MAKE UP FOR EVERYTHING HE'S DONE... BUT MAYBE YOU'LL BE JUST A LITTLE BIT MORE UNDERSTANDING THE NEXT TIME HE GOES AND MAKES AN ASS OF HIMSELF.

AT LONG LAST--THE SECRET OF THE IMMORTAL!



HOW LONG CAN I KEEP THIS UP? HOW MANY MORE YEARS OF THIS DO I HAVE IN ME?

THE LOST COLLEAGUES, THE BETRAYAL, THE INJURIES I'VE SUSTAINED--WHAT MORE DOES THIS LIFE HAVE TO OFFER ME?

MAYBE IT IS TIME FOR ME TO MOVE ON.

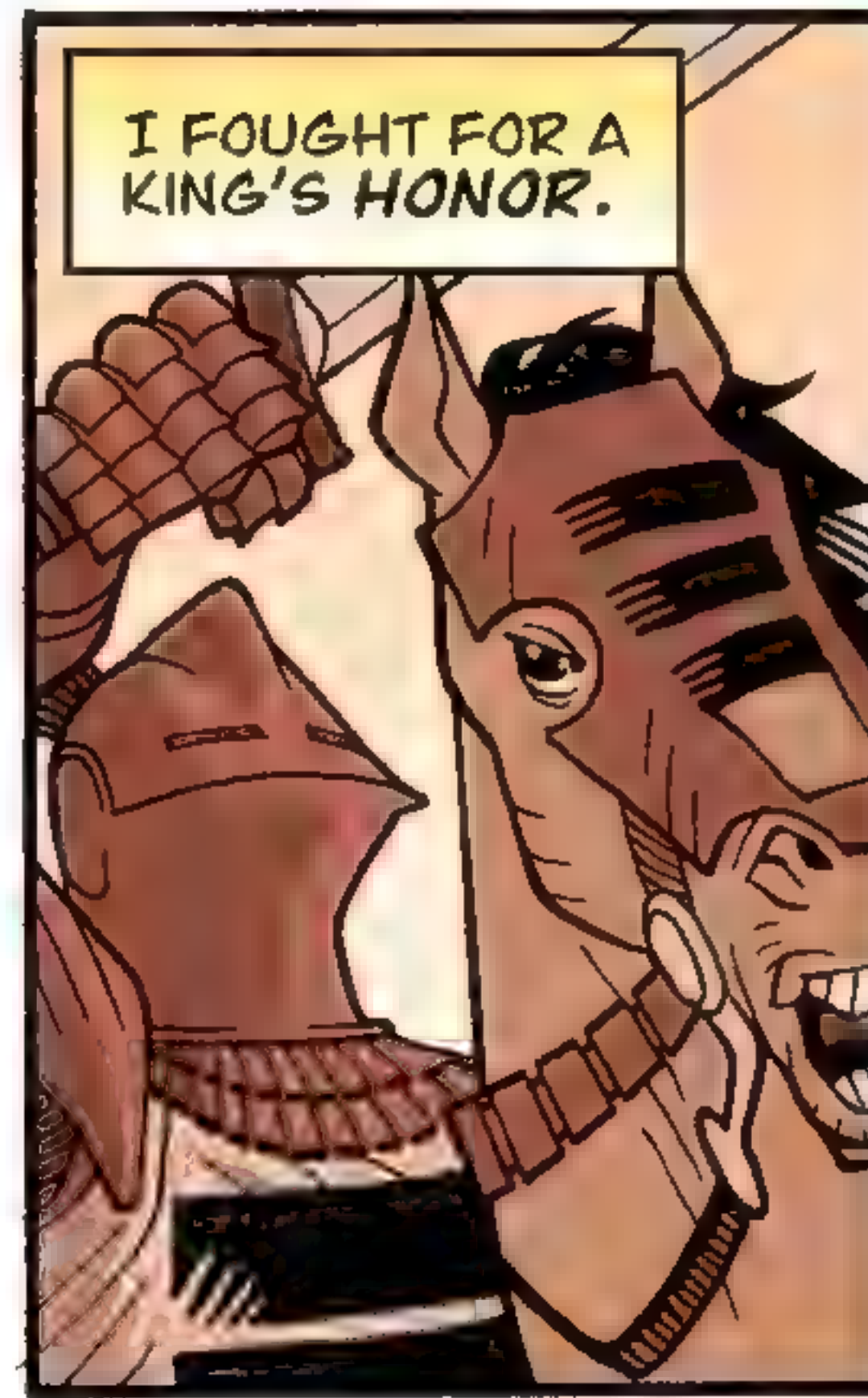
TAKE THE NEXT STEP IN MY LIFE OF REBIRTH AND REINVENTION--A LIFE I HARDLY EVEN REMEMBER...



I REMEMBER AN ACCIDENT--LONG AGO.



THEN YEARS OF WANDERING--BUT MY MEMORY IS SO CHOPPY.



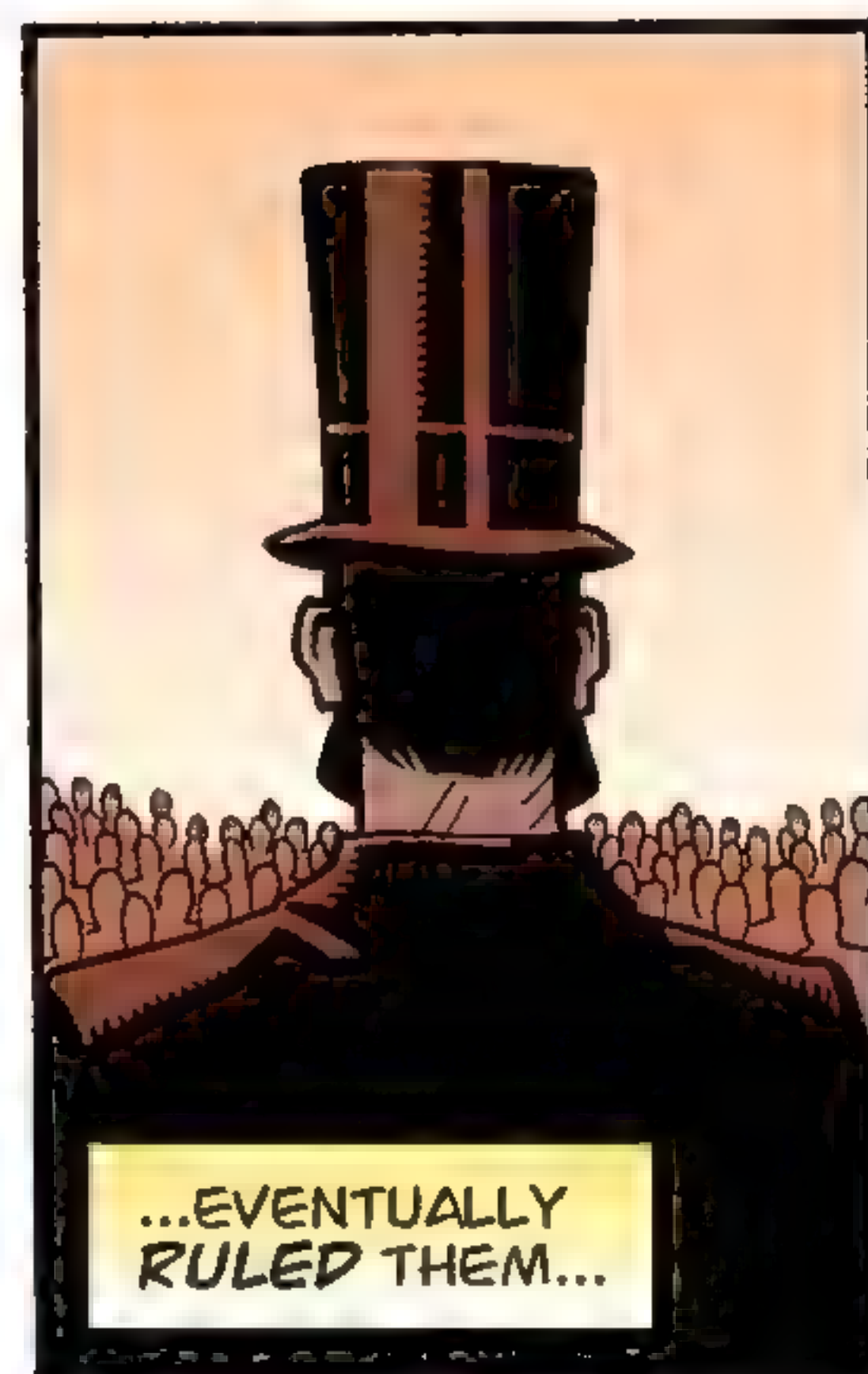
I FOUGHT FOR A KING'S HONOR.



I DISCOVERED NEW LANDS.



I DEFENDED THEM...



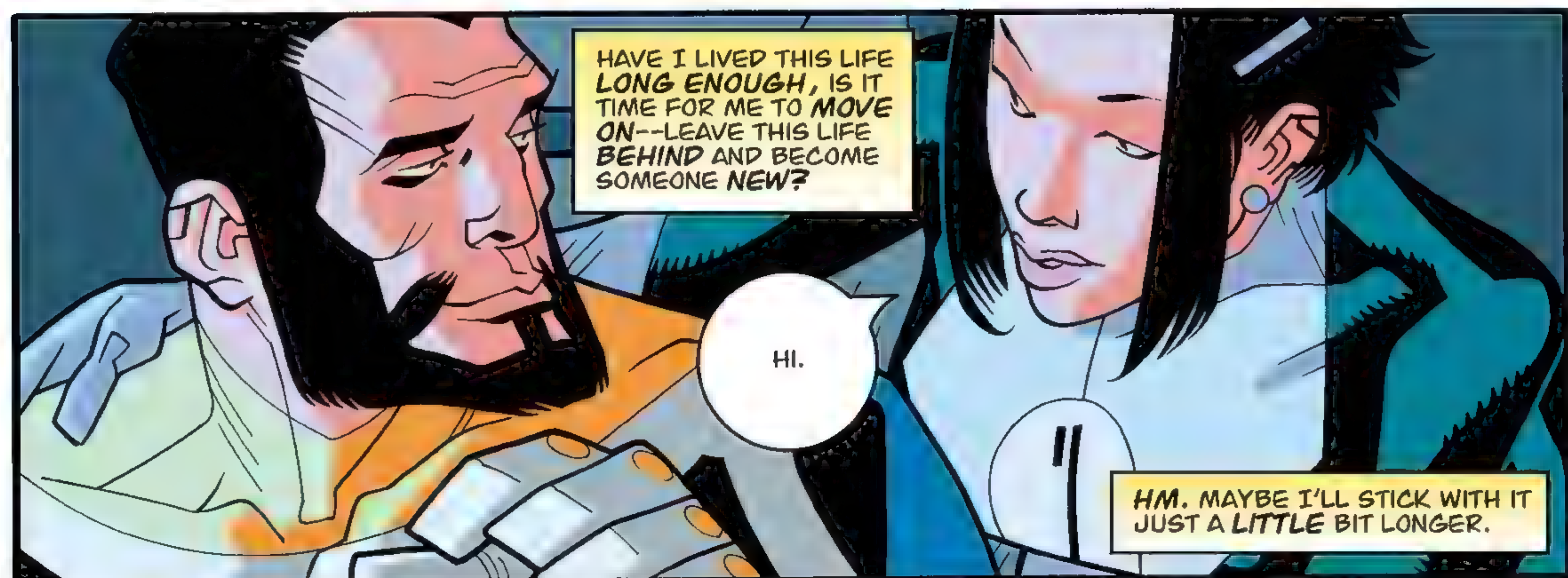
...EVENTUALLY RULED THEM...



...AND THEN DEFENDED THEM AGAIN.



UNTIL EVENTUALLY DEFENDING THEM IN ANOTHER WAY ENTIRELY.

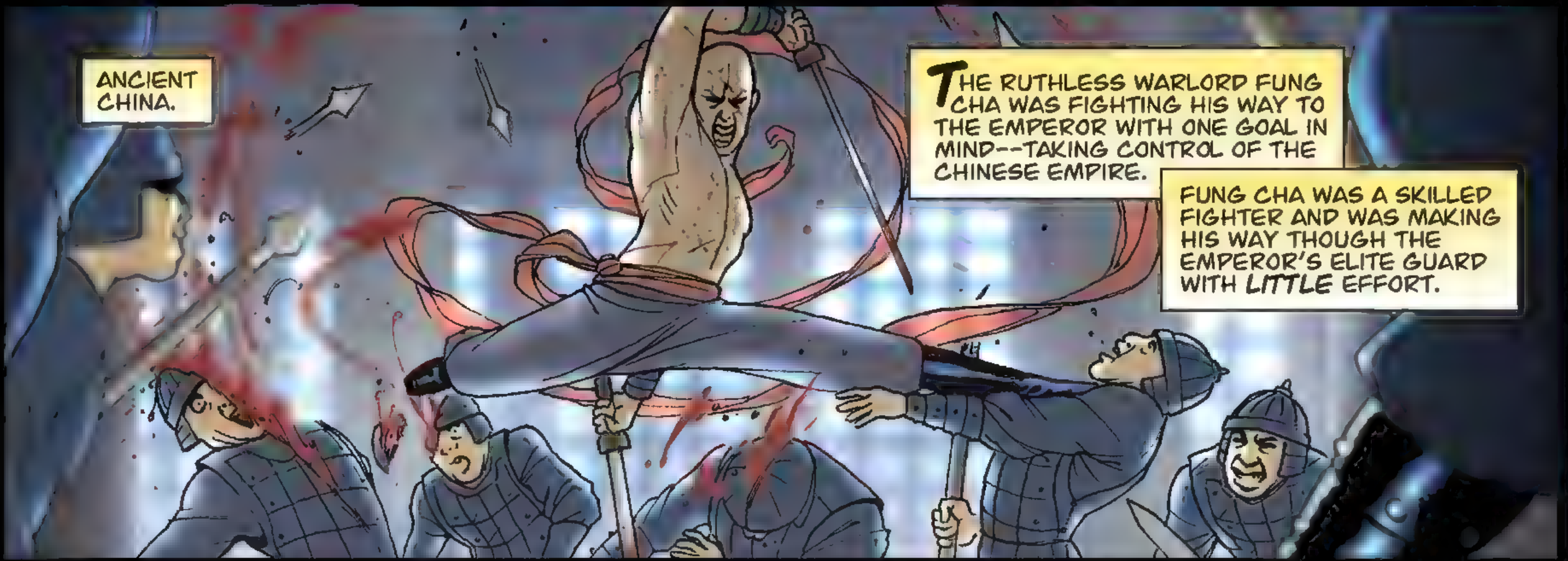


HAVE I LIVED THIS LIFE LONG ENOUGH, IS IT TIME FOR ME TO MOVE ON--LEAVE THIS LIFE BEHIND AND BECOME SOMEONE NEW?

HI.

HM. MAYBE I'LL STICK WITH IT JUST A LITTLE BIT LONGER.

AT LONG LAST... THE SECRET OF DUPLI-KATE!



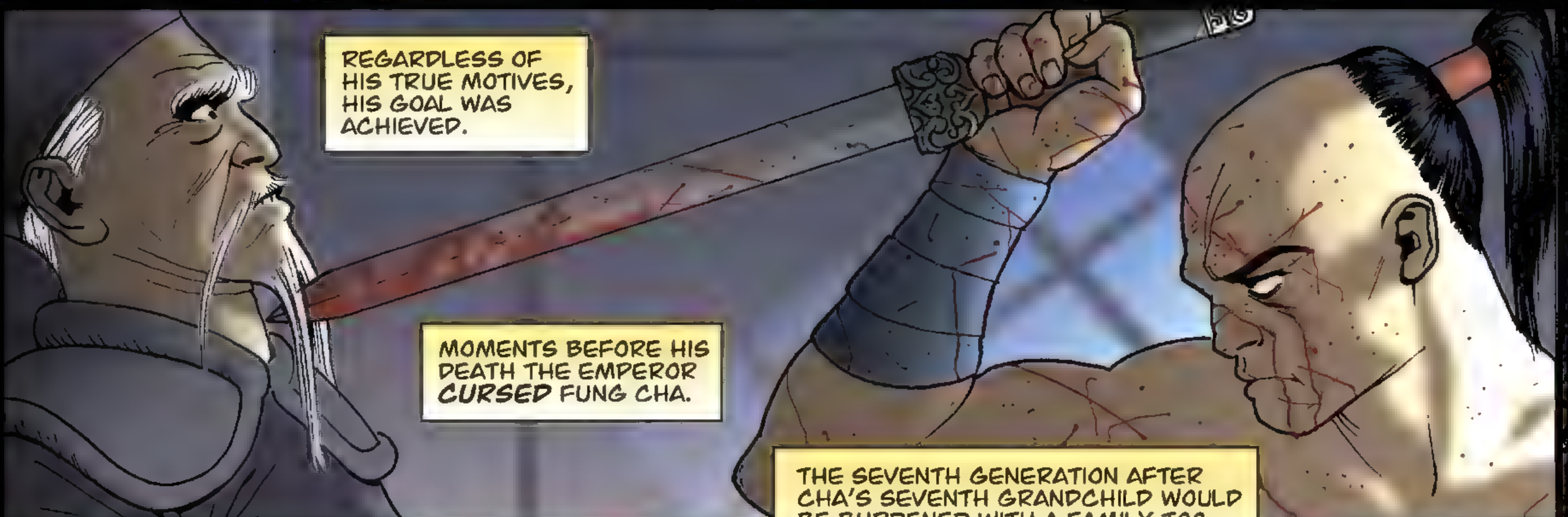
ANCIENT CHINA.

THE RUTHLESS WARLORD FUNG CHA WAS FIGHTING HIS WAY TO THE EMPEROR WITH ONE GOAL IN MIND--TAKING CONTROL OF THE CHINESE EMPIRE.

FUNG CHA WAS A SKILLED FIGHTER AND WAS MAKING HIS WAY THROUGH THE EMPEROR'S ELITE GUARD WITH LITTLE EFFORT.



SOME WOULD SAY CHA WAS A FREEDOM FIGHTER, SAVING THE WORLD FROM THIS EVIL EMPEROR. OTHERS WOULD CLAIM CHA WAS LITTLE MORE THAN A POWER HUNGRY MADMAN.



REGARDLESS OF HIS TRUE MOTIVES, HIS GOAL WAS ACHIEVED.

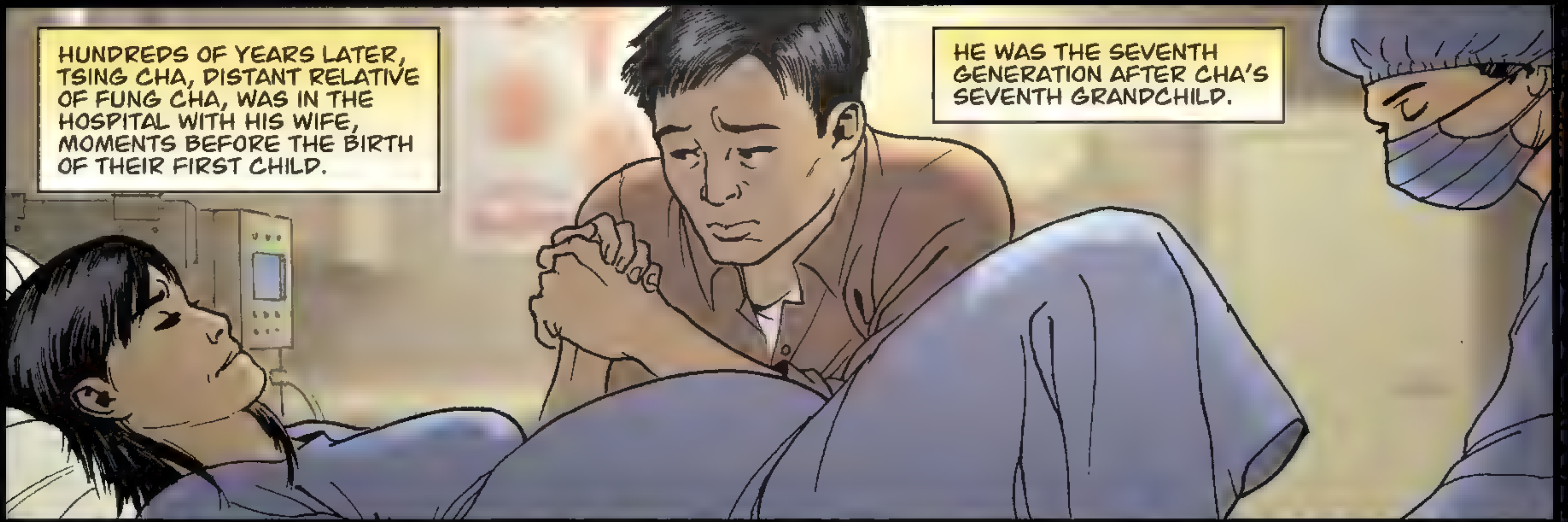
MOMENTS BEFORE HIS DEATH THE EMPEROR CURSED FUNG CHA.

THE SEVENTH GENERATION AFTER CHA'S SEVENTH GRANDCHILD WOULD BE BURDENED WITH A FAMILY TOO LARGE FOR HIM TO CARE FOR... AND IT WOULD DRIVE HIM MAD.



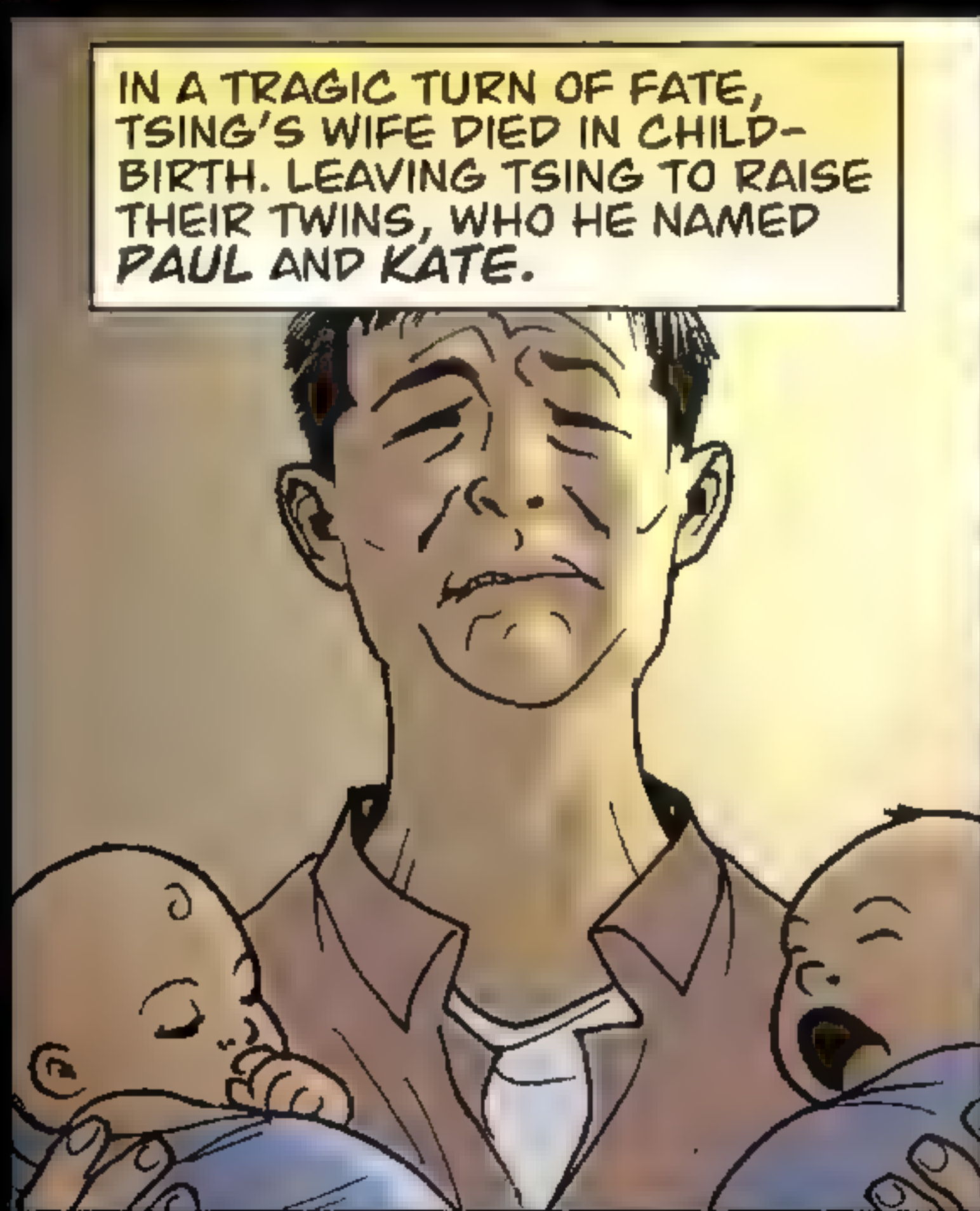
AS FAR AS CURSES GO...

...FUNG CHA GOT OFF LIGHT.



HUNDREDS OF YEARS LATER, TSING CHA, DISTANT RELATIVE OF FUNG CHA, WAS IN THE HOSPITAL WITH HIS WIFE, MOMENTS BEFORE THE BIRTH OF THEIR FIRST CHILD.

HE WAS THE SEVENTH GENERATION AFTER CHA'S SEVENTH GRANDCHILD.



IN A TRAGIC TURN OF FATE, TSING'S WIFE DIED IN CHILD-BIRTH. LEAVING TSING TO RAISE THEIR TWINS, WHO HE NAMED PAUL AND KATE.



TSING NEVER TOOK A NEW WIFE, AND FOR A TIME IT APPEARED THE CURSE WOULD GO UNFULFILLED.



BUT THE EMPEROR'S RAGE WOULD NOT BE DENIED.

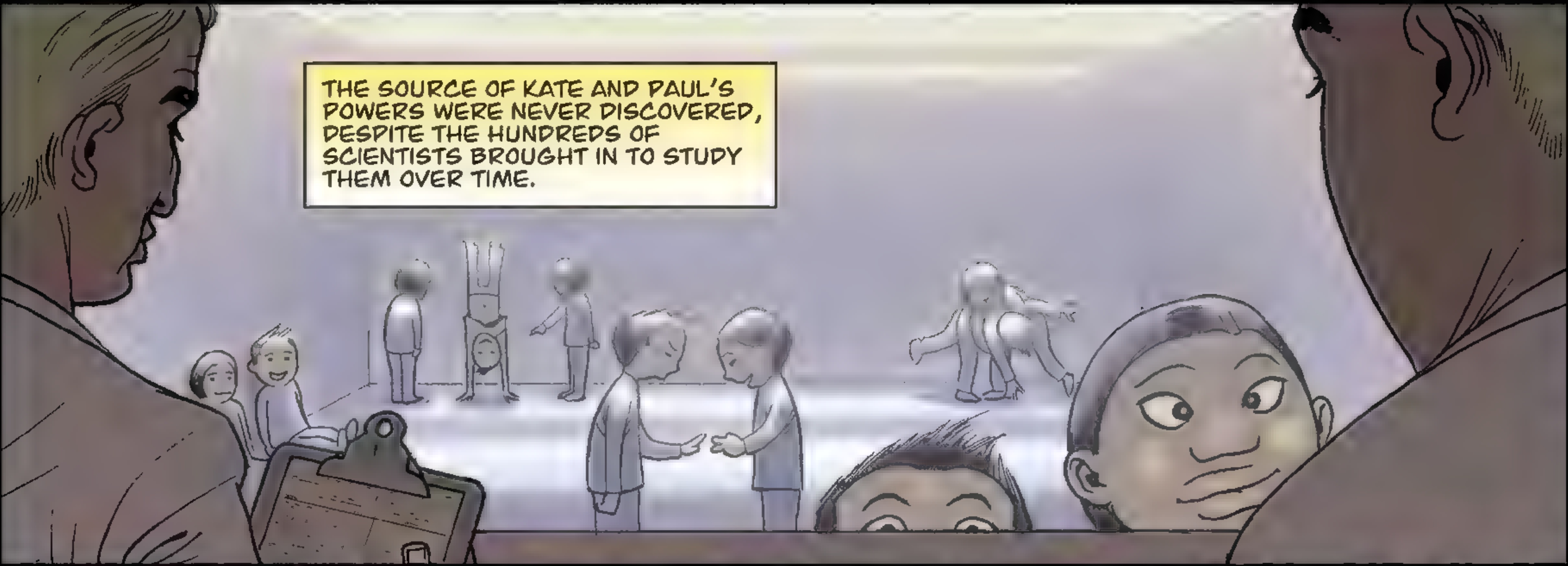


PAUL AND KATE WERE MULTIPLYING.

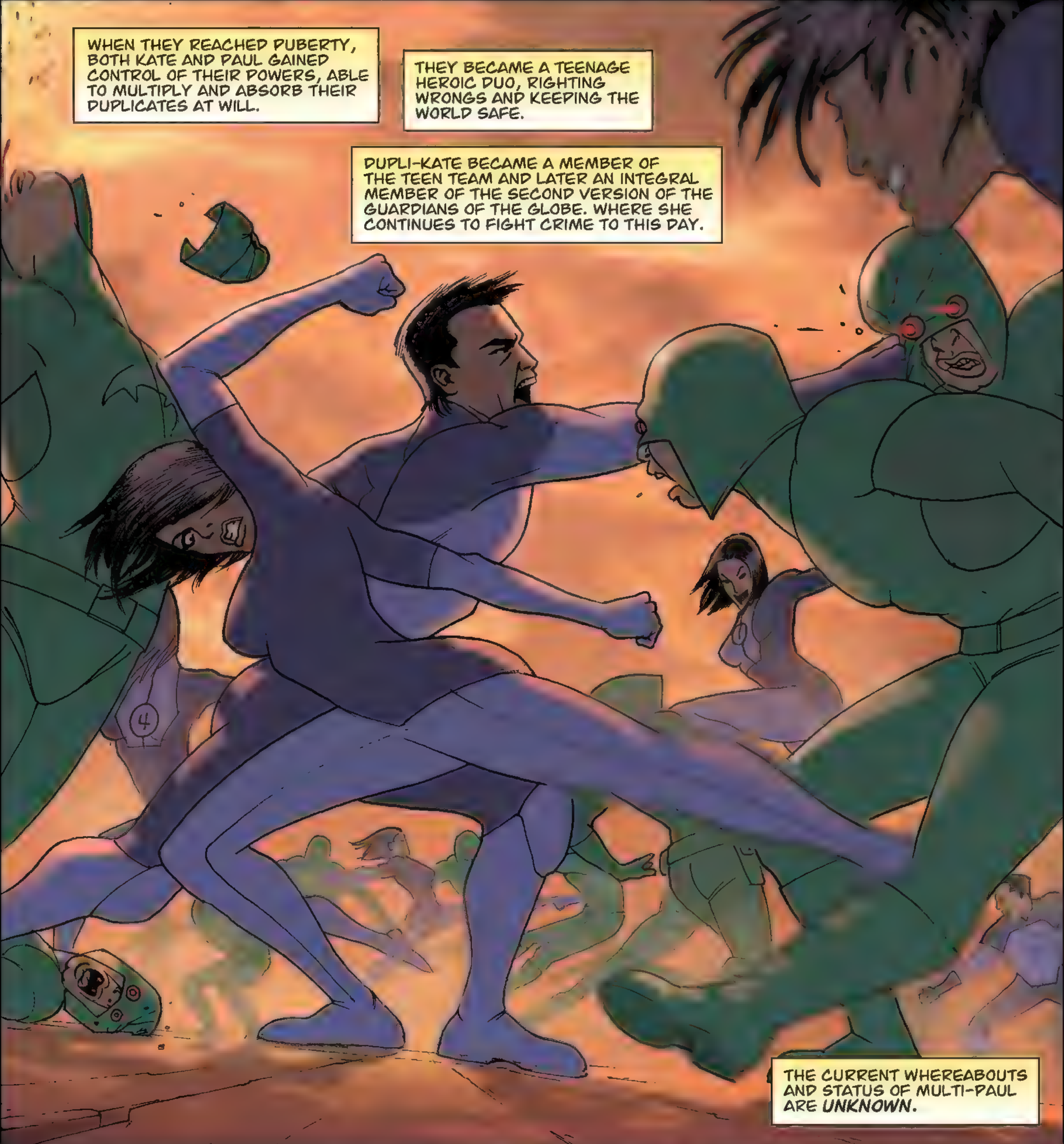
IN THE COMING WEEKS THINGS WOULD ONLY GET WORSE--UNTIL TSING LOST HIS MIND UNDER THE CONTINUALLY INCREASING PRESSURE.



TSING WAS CARTED OFF TO THE ASYLUM AND THE HUNDREDS OF KATES AND PAULS BECAME WARDS OF THE STATE.



THE SOURCE OF KATE AND PAUL'S POWERS WERE NEVER DISCOVERED, DESPITE THE HUNDREDS OF SCIENTISTS BROUGHT IN TO STUDY THEM OVER TIME.



WHEN THEY REACHED PUBERTY, BOTH KATE AND PAUL GAINED CONTROL OF THEIR POWERS, ABLE TO MULTIPLY AND ABSORB THEIR DUPLICATES AT WILL.

THEY BECAME A TEENAGE HEROIC DUO, RIGHTING WRONGS AND KEEPING THE WORLD SAFE.

DUPLI-KATE BECAME A MEMBER OF THE TEEN TEAM AND LATER AN INTEGRAL MEMBER OF THE SECOND VERSION OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE. WHERE SHE CONTINUES TO FIGHT CRIME TO THIS DAY.

THE CURRENT WHEREABOUTS AND STATUS OF MULTI-PAUL ARE UNKNOWN.

AT LONG LAST--THE SECRET ORIGIN OF ATOM EVE!

THE STORY STARTED OUT ON A RATHER SAD NOTE-- BUT HEY, YOU HAVE TO START SOMEWHERE.

I--I'M SORRY, HONEY--I'M SO SORRY.

OH, ADAM!

ERICKSON, SIR--I'M SORRY--THERE WAS JUST NOTHING I COULD DO FOR HER. THE BABY DIED IN CHILDBIRTH--IT WAS OUT OF MY HANDS.

YOU ARE OUT OF LINE, DOCTOR BRANDYWORTH--THIS WAS OUR PROJECT--YOU SHOULD HAVE CONSULTED ME BEFORE YOU CHOSE A CIVILIAN HOSPITAL.

DOCTOR RODGERS, LISTEN TO ME--THERE WASN'T ENOUGH TIME TO GET THE TEST SUBJECT TO THE BASE--THE BABY WAS COMING.

AND NOW IT'S DEAD. THAT'S MILLIONS OF TAX DOLLARS DOWN THE DRAIN, BRANDYWORTH. IF YOU MAKE IT TO TOMORROW WITHOUT LOSING YOUR JOB OVER THIS, I'LL BE SURPRISED.

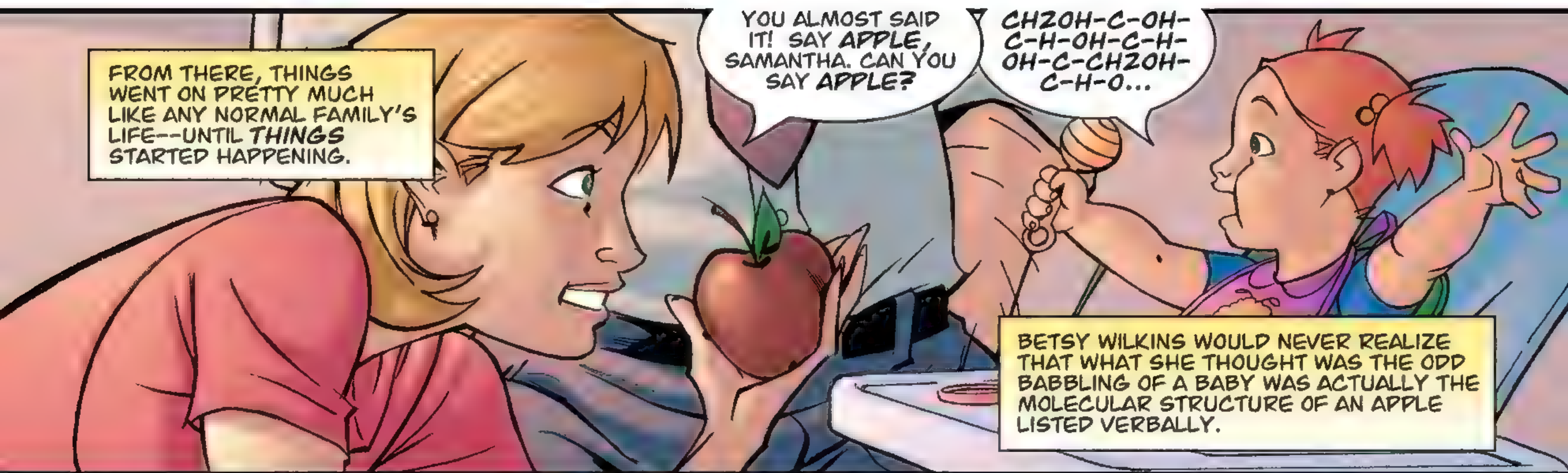
ADAM AND BETSY WILKINS? I HAVE YOUR BABY RIGHT HERE. IT WAS TOUCH AND GO FOR A WHILE BUT THE DOCTORS WERE ABLE TO SAVE HER.

BUT-- BUT WE WERE TOLD--

ADAM, SHUSH! PLEASE--JUST ACCEPT THE MIRACLE.

OUR BABY IS ALIVE...

OUR SAMANTHA EVE WILKINS.



FROM THERE, THINGS WENT ON PRETTY MUCH LIKE ANY NORMAL FAMILY'S LIFE--UNTIL THINGS STARTED HAPPENING.

YOU ALMOST SAID IT! SAY APPLE, SAMANTHA. CAN YOU SAY APPLE?

CH2OH-C-OH-C-H-OH-C-H-OH-C-CH2OH-C-H-O...

BETSY WILKINS WOULD NEVER REALIZE THAT WHAT SHE THOUGHT WAS THE ODD BABBLING OF A BABY WAS ACTUALLY THE MOLECULAR STRUCTURE OF AN APPLE LISTED VERBALLY.

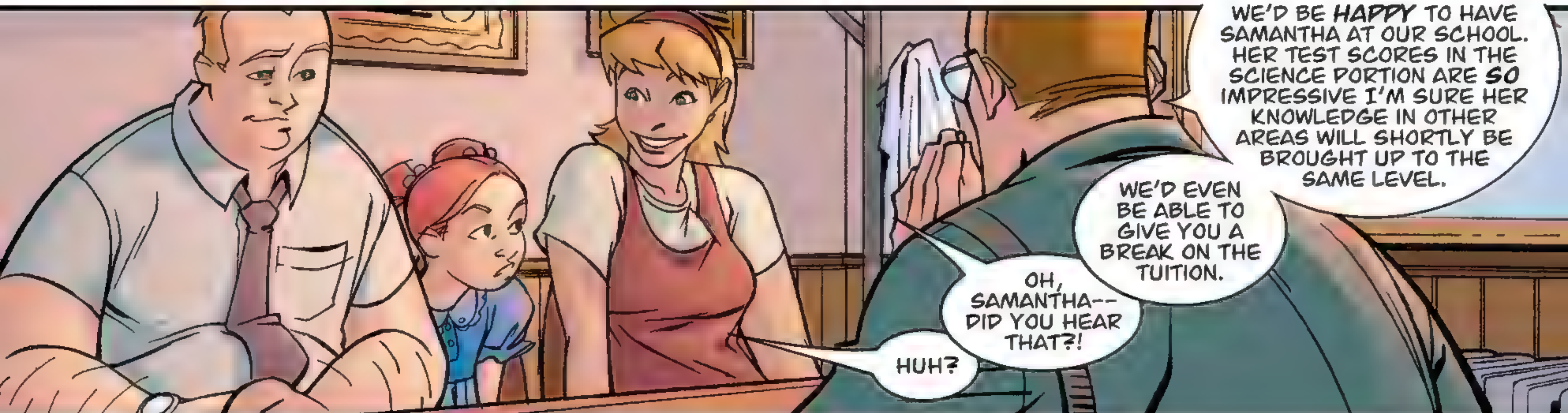


KEEP PLAYING, SAMANTHA-- I JUST HOPE YOUR PARENTS DON'T COME HOME EARLY TO SEE THAT YOU'RE STILL UP.

I'LL PUT YOU TO BED AS SOON AS I FIGURE OUT WHY MERCURY IS A LIQUID EVEN THOUGH IT'S SURROUNDED BY SOLIDS ON THE PERIODIC TABLE.

BECAUSE ITS VALENCE SHELL IS $5d^{10} 6s^2$, WHICH, UM...MAKES THE TWO OUTERMOST ELECTRONS IN A SPHERICALLY SYMMETRIC, ENERGETICALLY STABLE QUANTUM STATE.

6S ELECTRONS ARE ESPECIALLY INERT, AND THEREFORE DON'T OFTEN FORM CHEMICAL BONDS. MERCURY ISN'T LIKELY TO GIVE UP ITS OUTER ELECTRONS, AND SO IT INTERACTS WITH OTHER ATOMS WEAKLY AT BEST. SO IT'S--A, UM...LIQUID AT ROOM TEMPERATURE.



WE'D BE HAPPY TO HAVE SAMANTHA AT OUR SCHOOL. HER TEST SCORES IN THE SCIENCE PORTION ARE SO IMPRESSIVE I'M SURE HER KNOWLEDGE IN OTHER AREAS WILL SHORTLY BE BROUGHT UP TO THE SAME LEVEL.

WE'D EVEN BE ABLE TO GIVE YOU A BREAK ON THE TUITION.

OH, SAMANTHA-- DID YOU HEAR THAT?!

HUH?



I COULDN'T DO IT, DAD!! I WAS JUST GOOD AT THE SCIENCE STUFF--I'M GLAD THEY KICKED ME OUT!

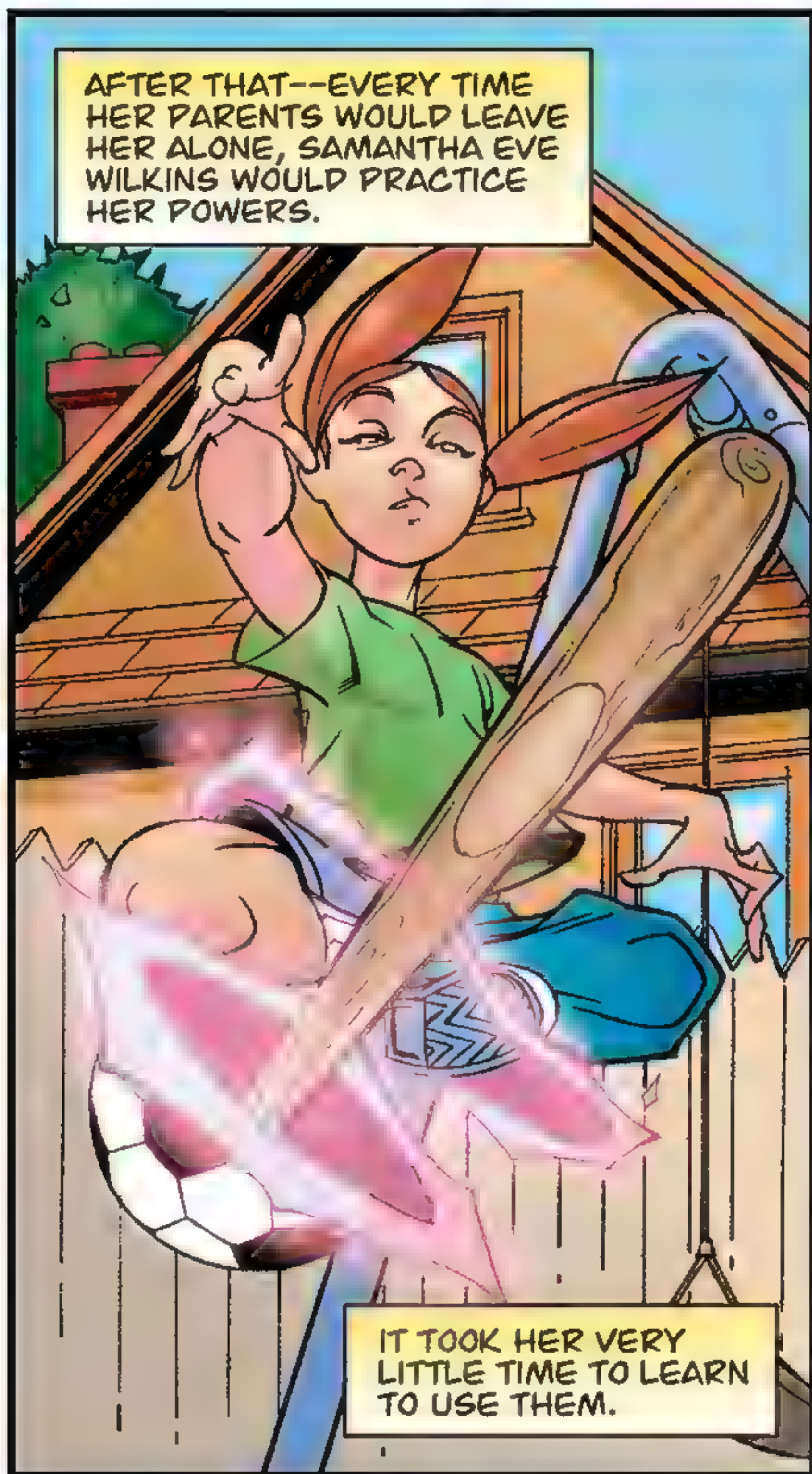
I'LL NOT HAVE SHOUTING AT MY TABLE! FINISH YOUR DINNER IN YOUR ROOM!



I DON'T WANT CHICKEN-- I WANT--



...A CHEESE-BUGER?!



AFTER THAT--EVERY TIME HER PARENTS WOULD LEAVE HER ALONE, SAMANTHA EVE WILKINS WOULD PRACTICE HER POWERS.

IT TOOK HER VERY LITTLE TIME TO LEARN TO USE THEM.

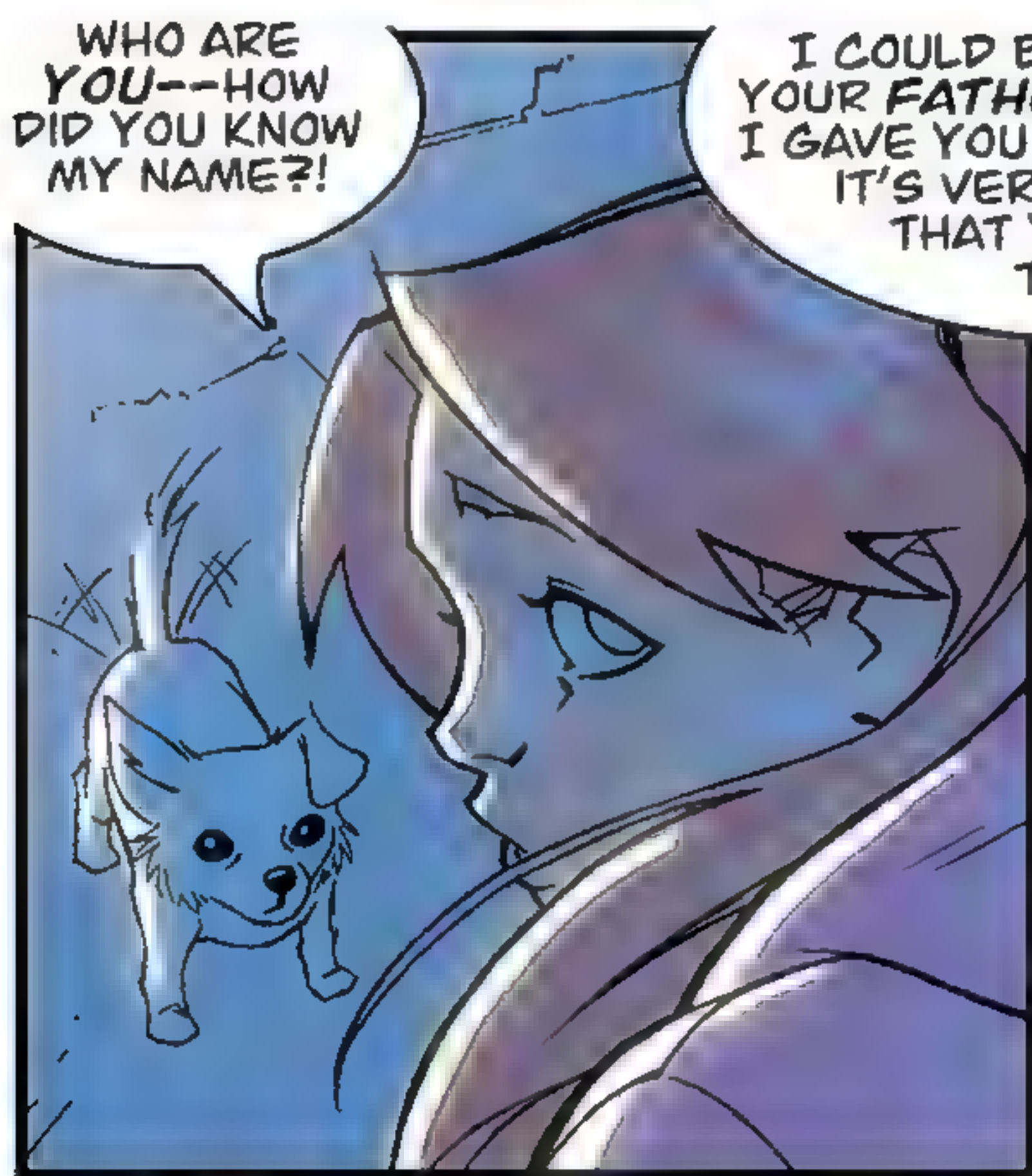


SOON SHE WAS PUTTING THEM TO GOOD USE.

THERE, THERE, DOGGY. THEY WON'T BE TAKING YOU TO EXPERIMENT ON NOW. YOU'RE SAFE, NOW.

YOU'RE ALL SAFE.

MISS WILKINS...



WHO ARE YOU--HOW DID YOU KNOW MY NAME?!

I COULD BE CONSIDERED YOUR FATHER--IN A SENSE. I GAVE YOU YOUR POWERS--IT'S VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU LISTEN TO ME.



YOU WERE THE SUBJECT OF IN UTERO EXPERIMENTS--FUNDED BY THE GOVERNMENT. THEY WERE GOING TO TURN YOU INTO A WEAPON--BUT I COULDN'T ALLOW THAT.

WHAT YOU'RE DOING IS VERY DANGEROUS. I STAGED YOUR DEATH--REPLACED YOU WITH A BABY WHO HAD DIED DURING BIRTH--SO YOU COULD HAVE A LIFE WITH THE WILKINS FAMILY--BUT YOU HAVE TO STAY A SECRET!

IF THEY LEARN OF YOUR POWERS BEING USED--THEY'LL KNOW YOU LIVED--THEY WON'T STOP UNTIL THEY RECOVER YOU.



YOU MUST STOP THIS AT ONCE! STOP USING YOUR POWERS FOR ANYTHING--FOREVER-- THEY MUST NOT DISCOVER YOU SURVIVED.

IF THEY FIND YOU--THEY WILL TAKE YOU--YOU'LL BE NOTHING MORE THAN A WEAPON--YOUR LIFE AS YOU KNOW IT--WILL END!

OBVIOUSLY--SHE FOUND A WAY TO AVOID ALL THIS, BUT THAT'S A STORY FOR ANOTHER TIME.



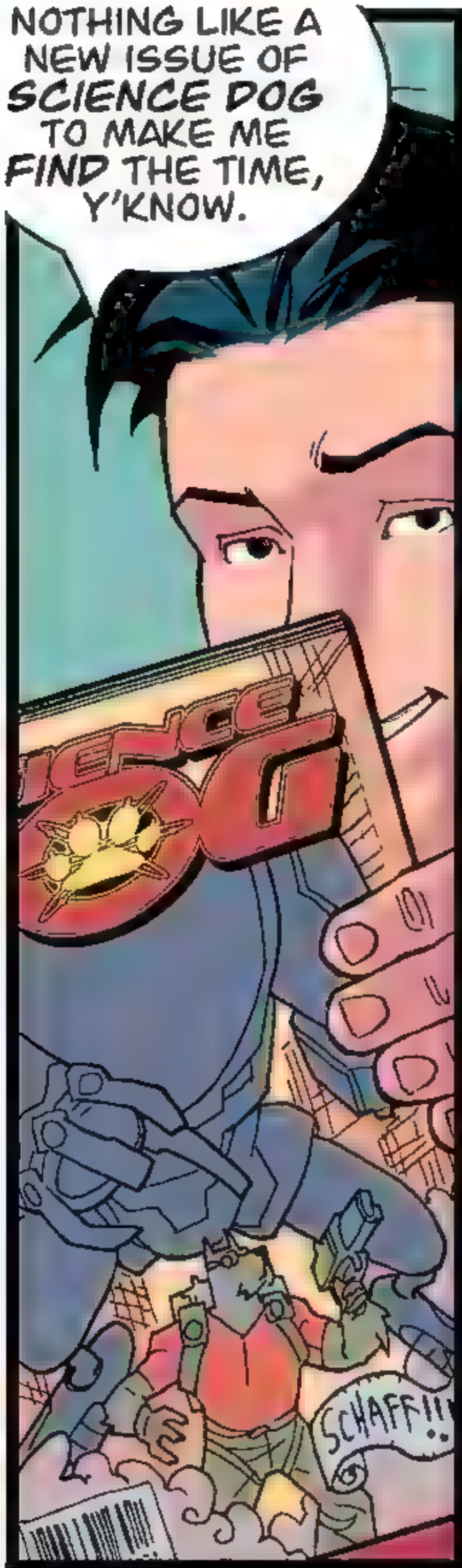
ISSUE TWENTY-FIVE





HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN HERE FOR A LONG TIME-- YOU USED TO COME IN HERE EVERY WEEK. MARK, RIGHT?

OH--HEY. YEAH--I'M AT UPSTATE UNIVERSITY NOW. I LIVE UP THERE. IT'S TOUGH FOR ME TO FIND TIME TO GET DOWN HERE.



NOTHING LIKE A NEW ISSUE OF SCIENCE DOG TO MAKE ME FIND THE TIME, Y'KNOW.



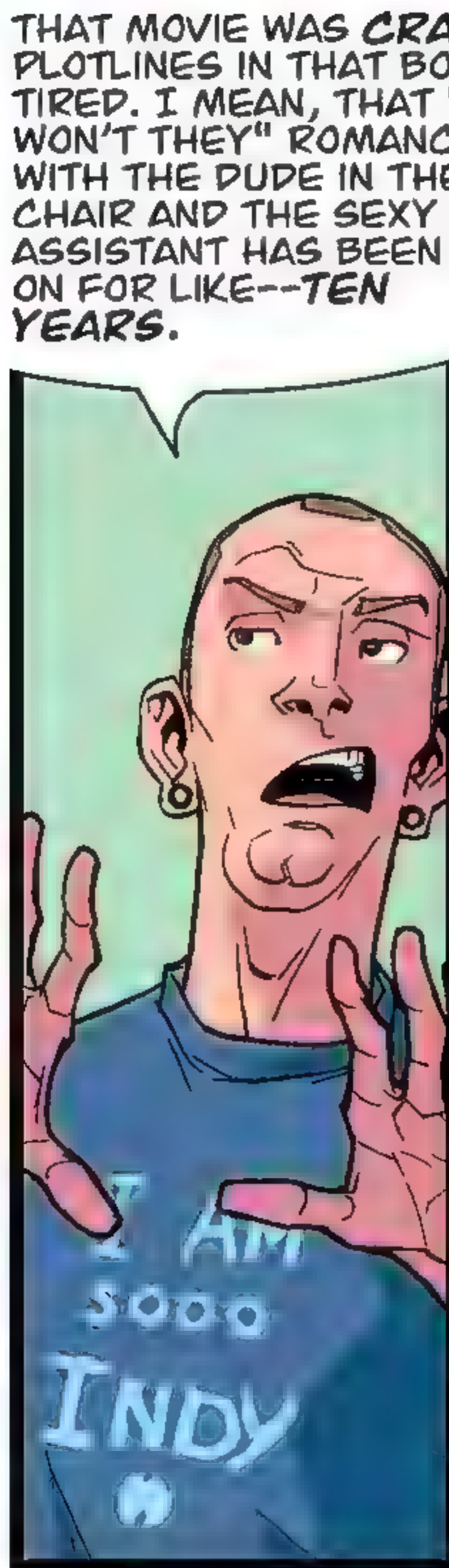
YOU STILL READ THAT BOOK? MAN-- WE GET LIKE TWO COPIES FOR THE SHELF NOW--AND WE'VE ONLY GOT THREE FOLDER CUSTOMERS.

THAT BOOK IS SO RETRO.



WELL--IT'S STILL CAPTION COMICS' HIGHEST SELLER, AND THEY'RE STILL TALKING ABOUT DOING A SEQUEL TO THE MOVIE EVEN THOUGH IT'S BEEN A FEW YEARS SINCE THE LAST ONE.

NOT TO MENTION THE FACT THAT IT'S A GREAT BOOK.



THAT MOVIE WAS CRAP--AND THE PLOT LINES IN THAT BOOK ARE JUST TIRED. I MEAN, THAT "WILL THEY OR WON'T THEY" ROMANCE STUFF WITH THE DUDE IN THE WHEEL-CHAIR AND THE SEXY LAB ASSISTANT HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR LIKE--TEN YEARS.



AND EVERY ISSUE IT'S LIKE-- THEY ALMOST KISS OR SOMETHING.

"EVERY ISSUE?"

YEAH--I'M UH--I'M ONE OF THE FOLDER CUSTOMERS. I DON'T WANT TO BREAK UP MY RUN.

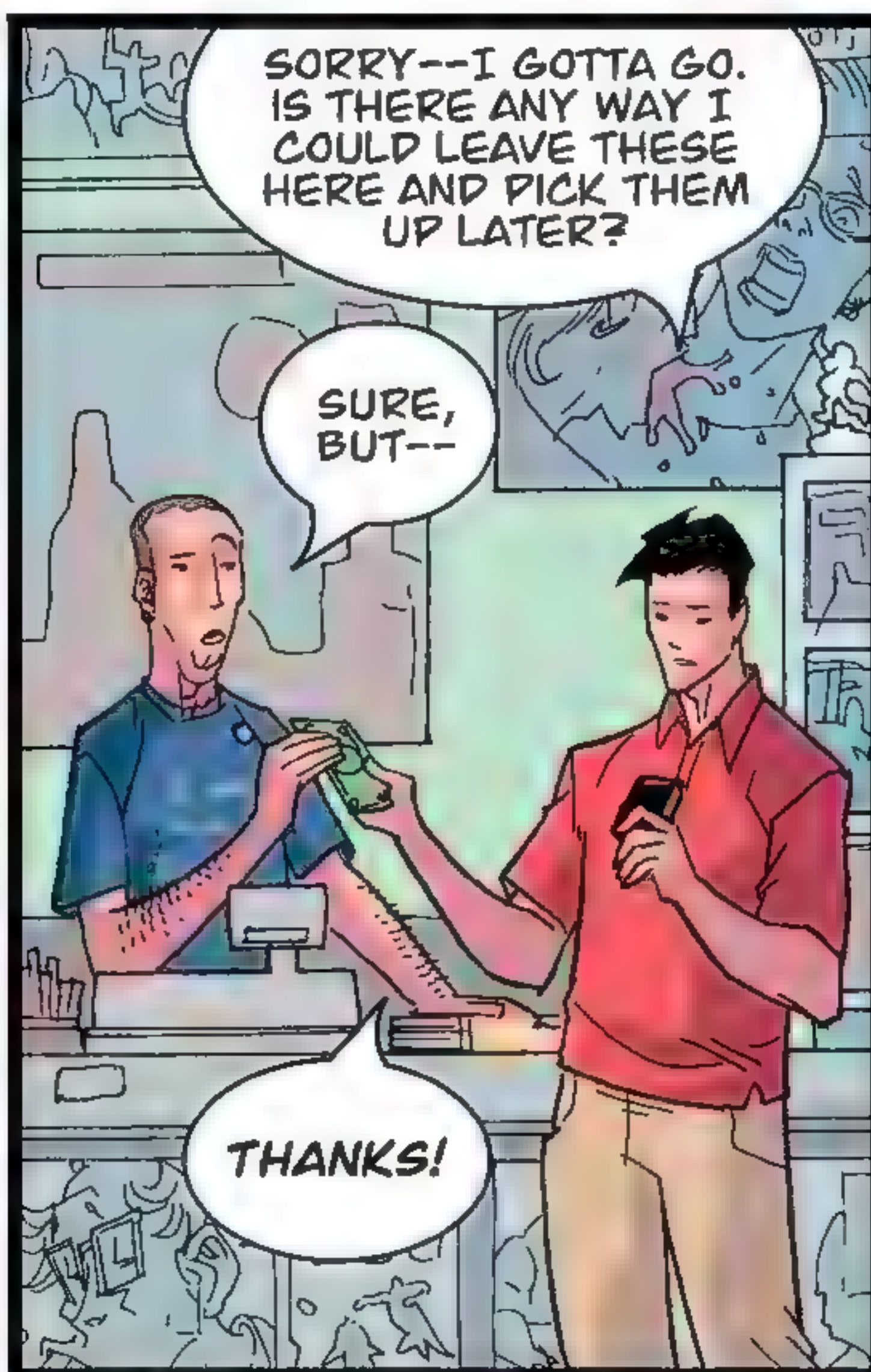


THE BOOK'S STILL CRAP, THOUGH.

RIGHT-- SURE, MAN.

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!

OH, HOLD ON.



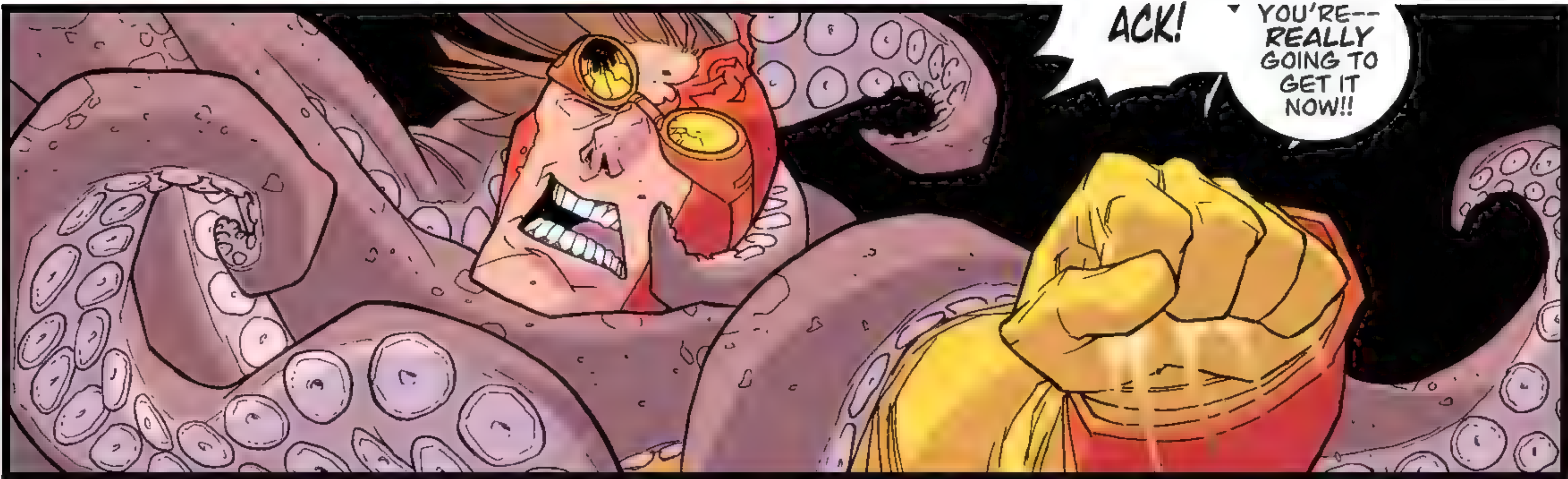
SORRY--I GOTTA GO. IS THERE ANY WAY I COULD LEAVE THESE HERE AND PICK THEM UP LATER?

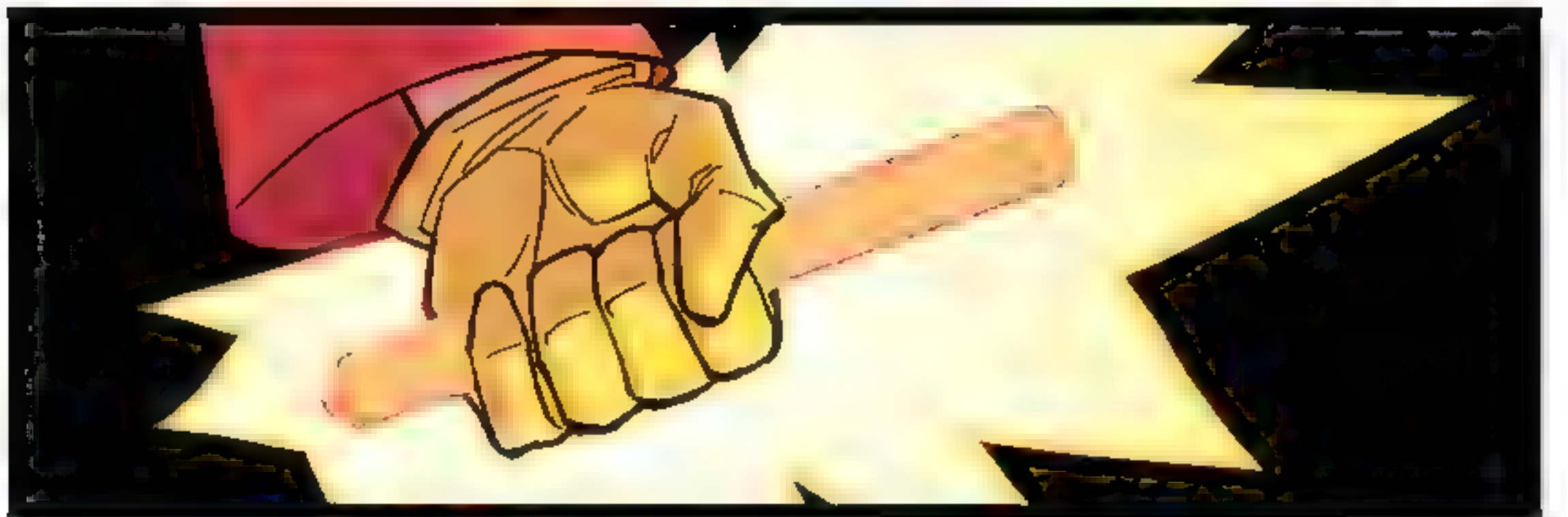
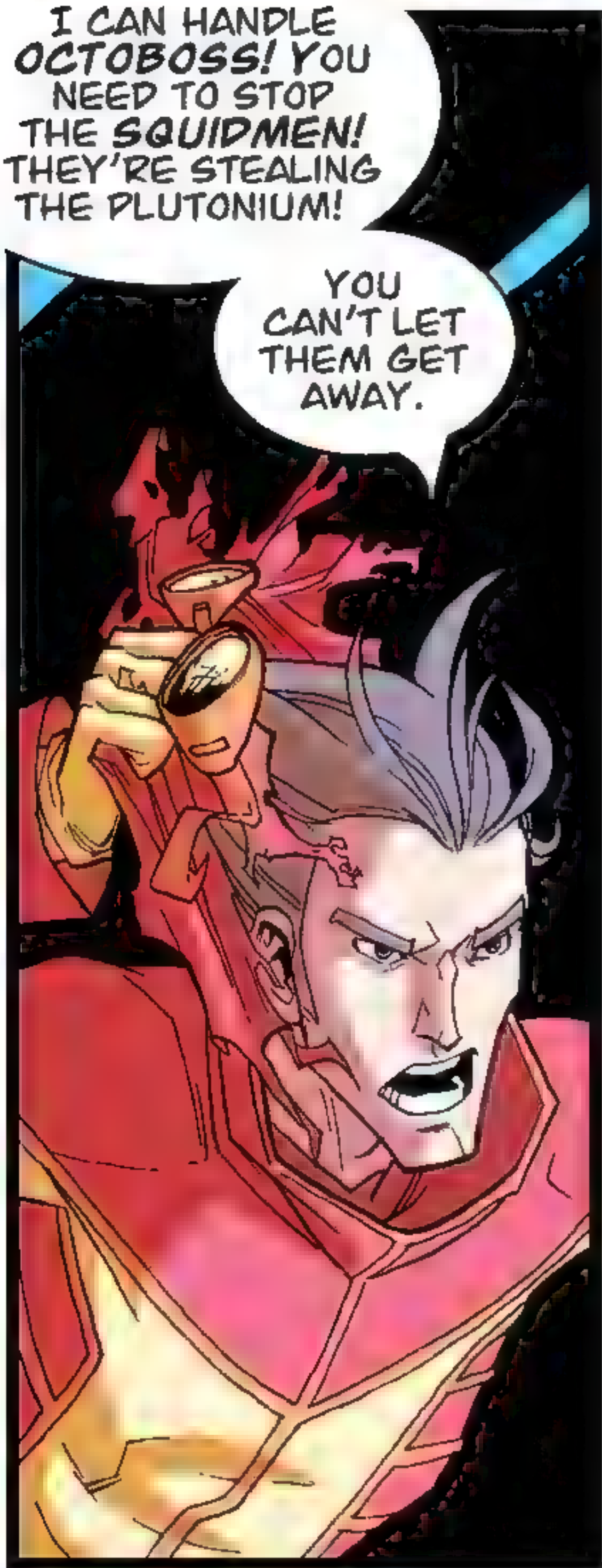
SURE, BUT--

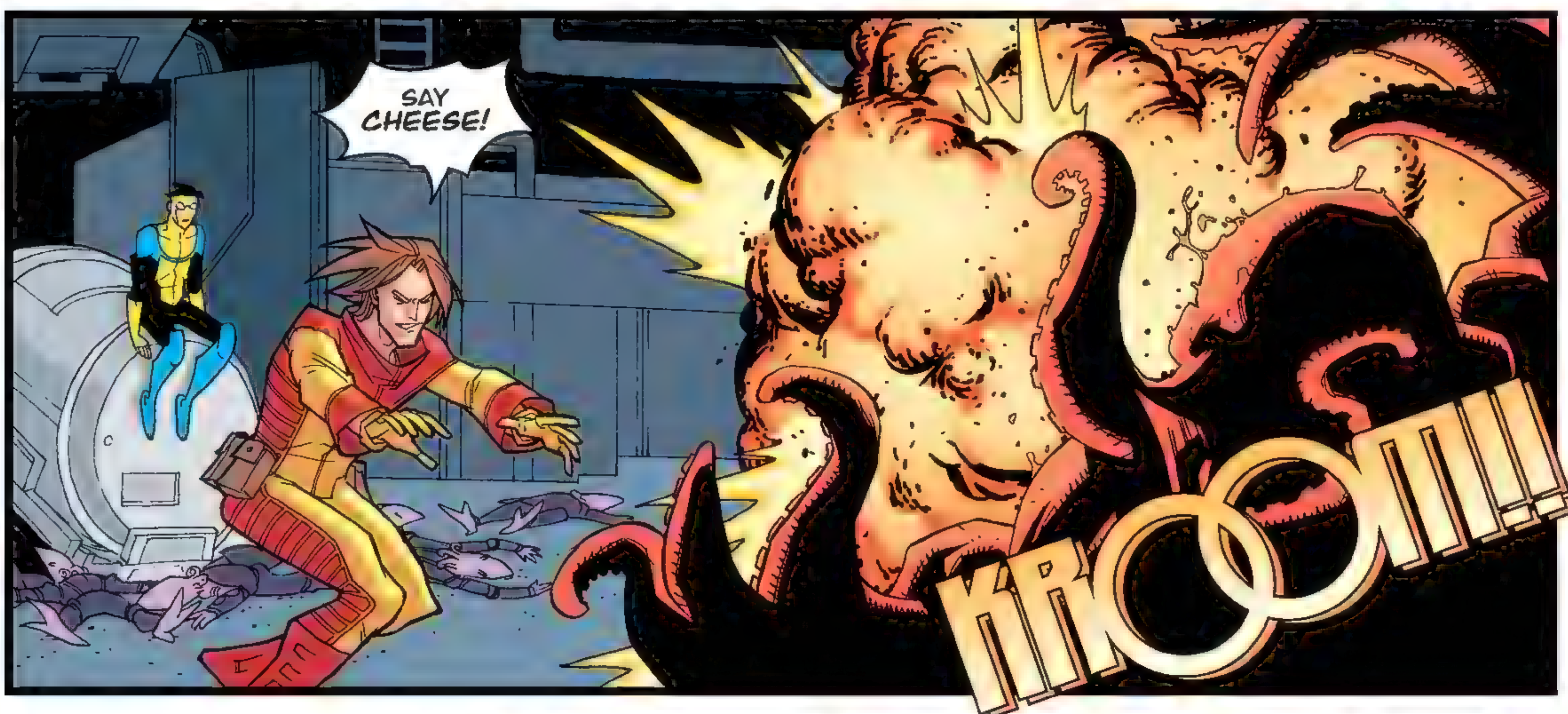
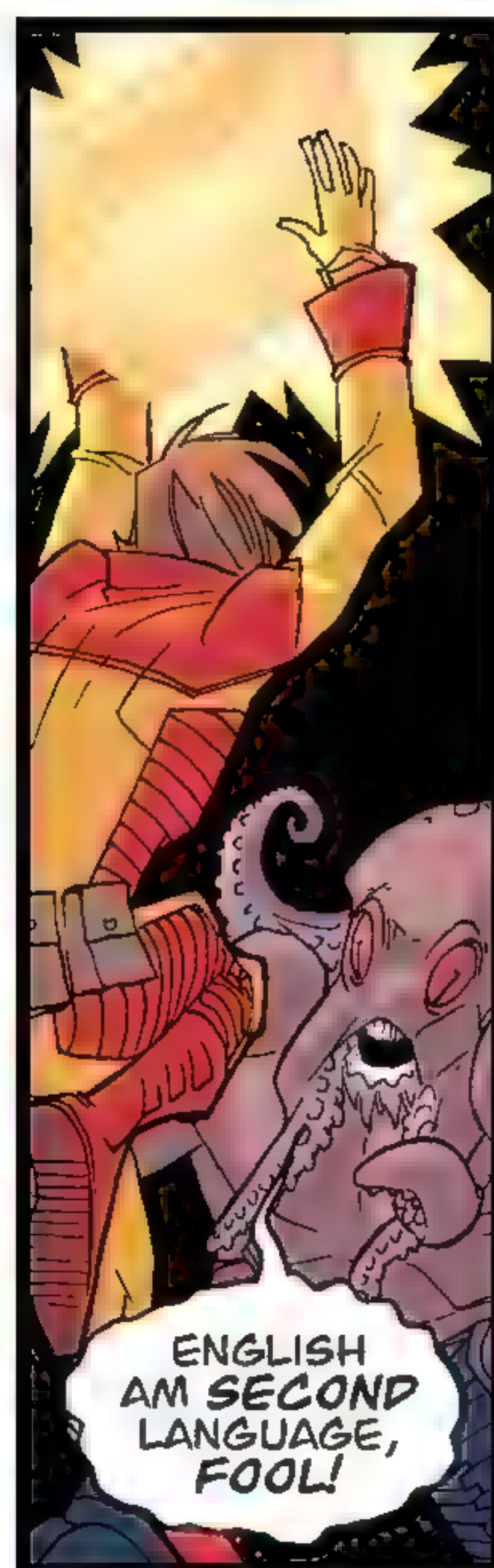
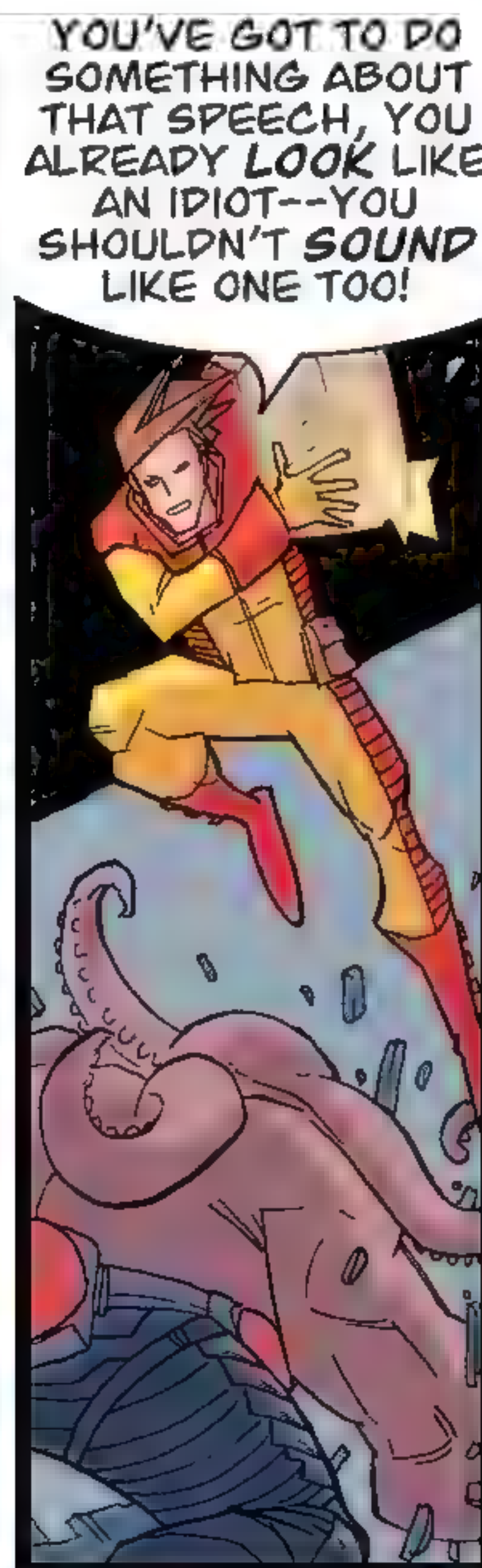
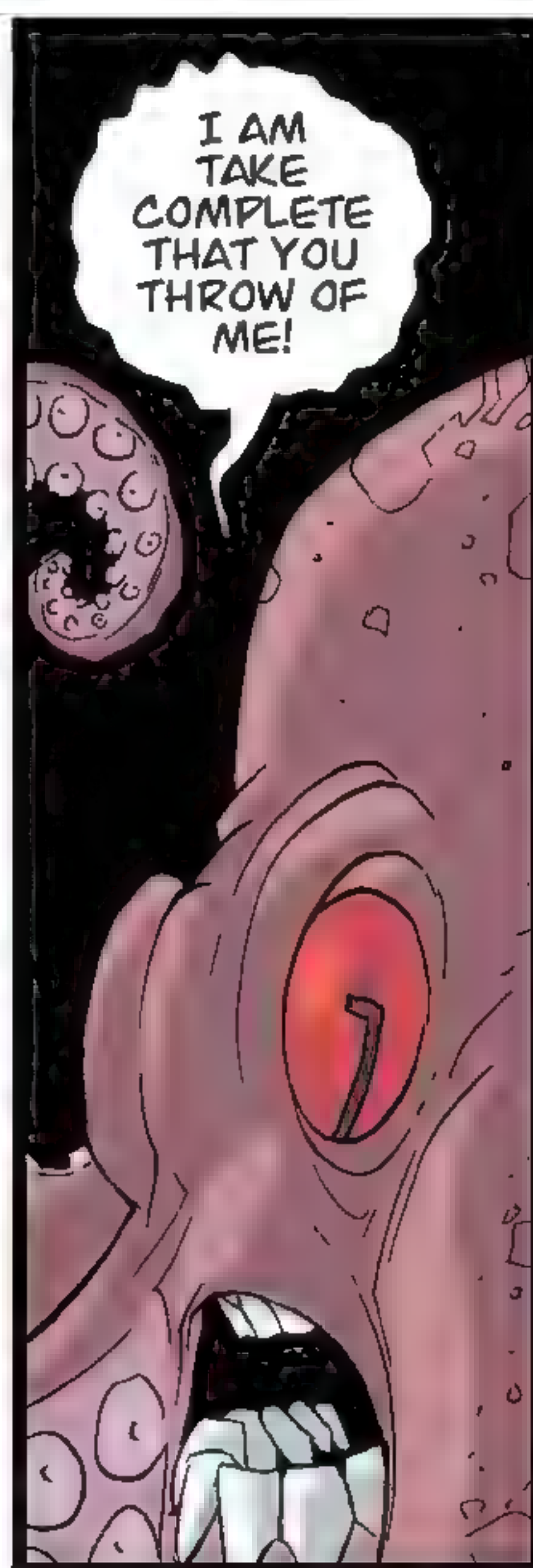
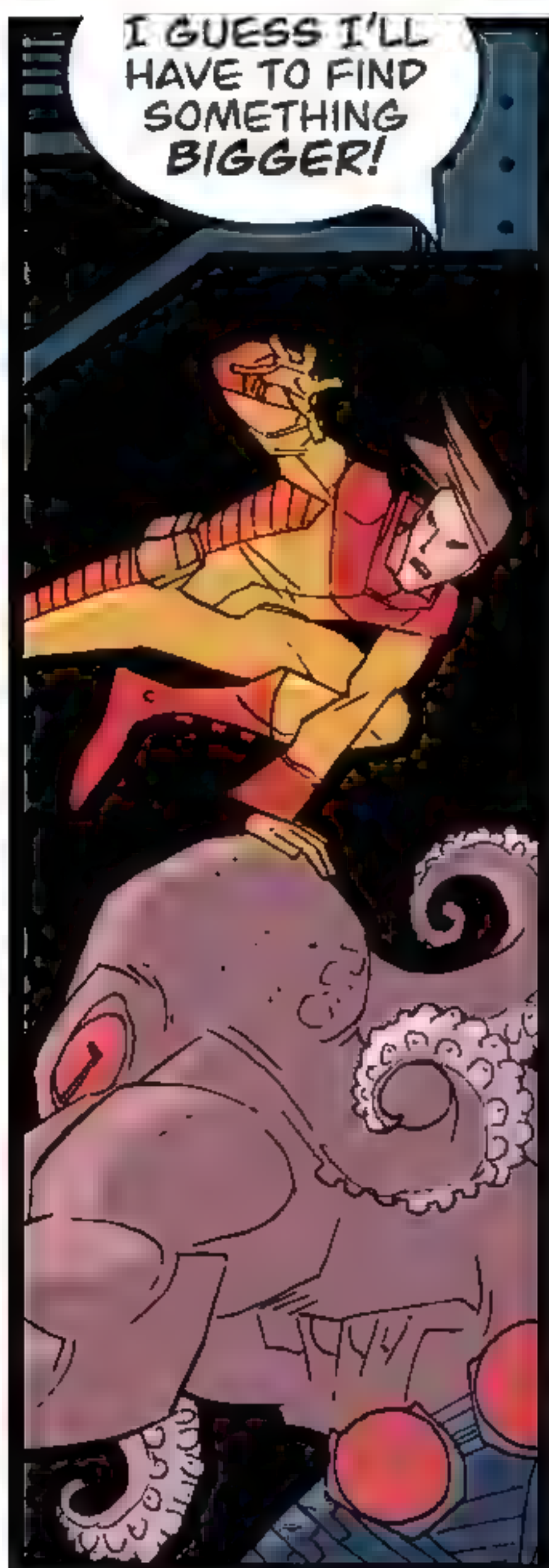
THANKS!

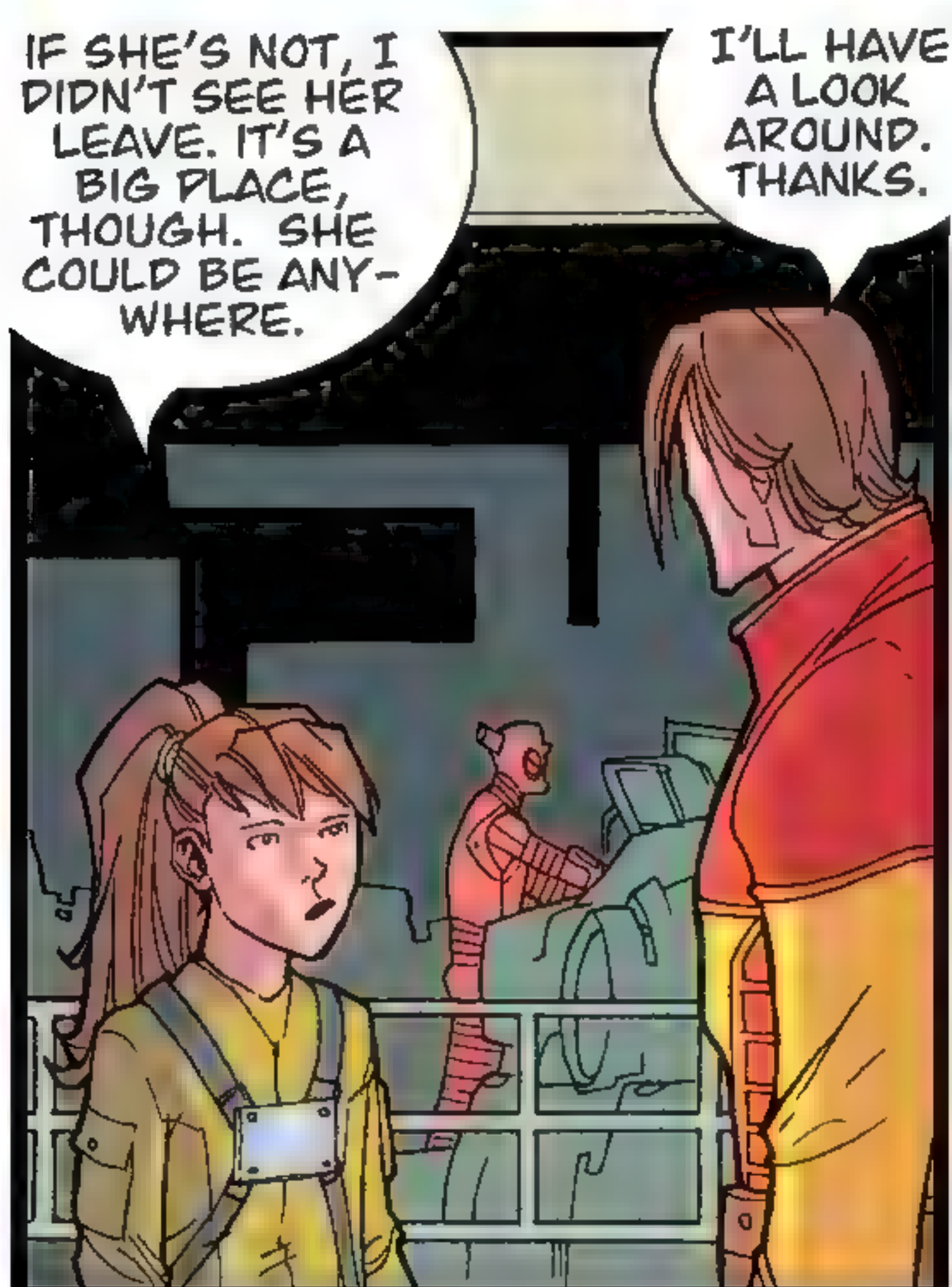
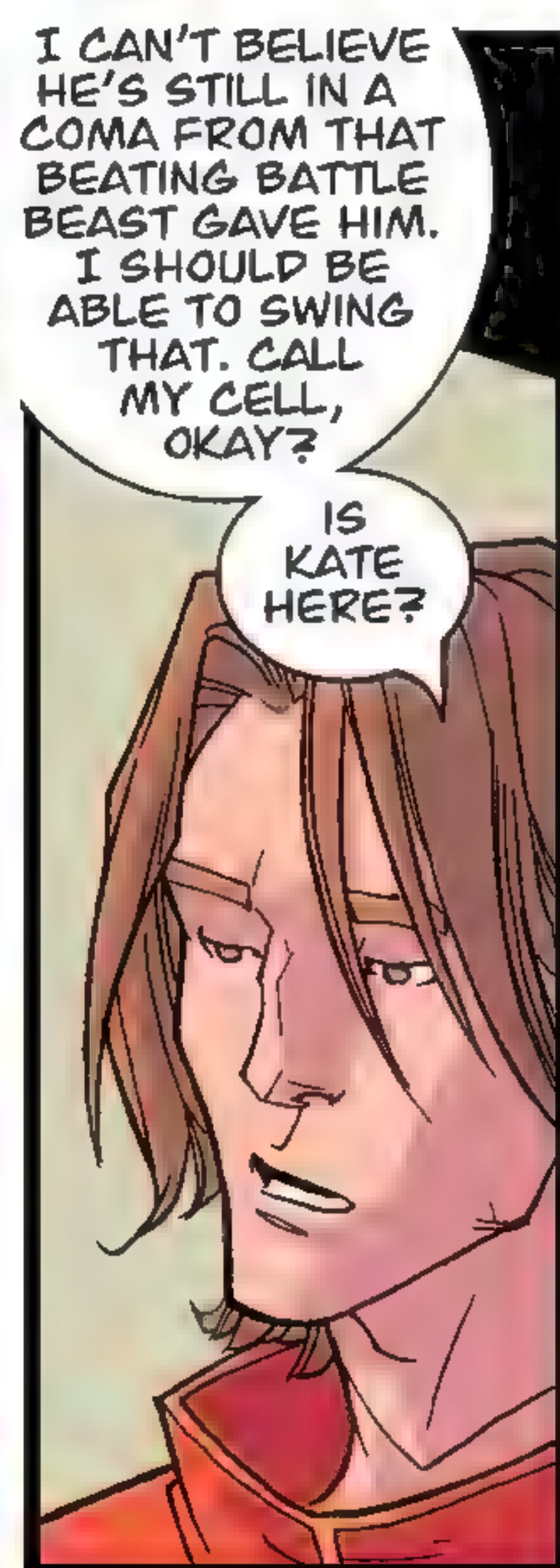
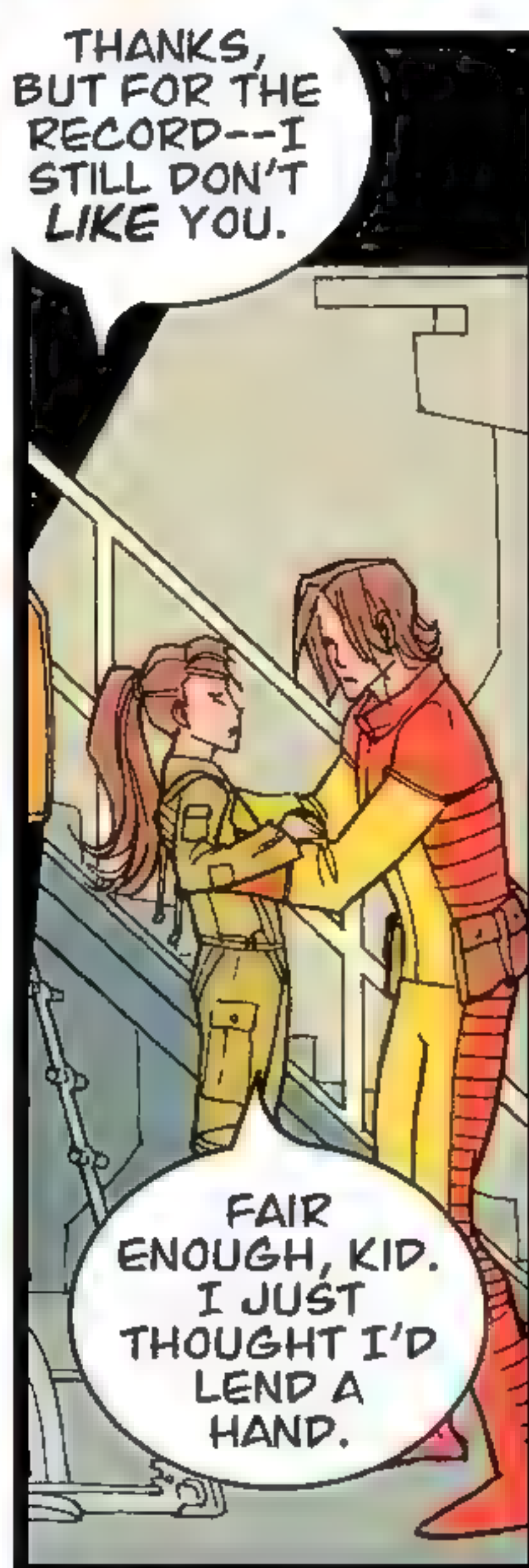
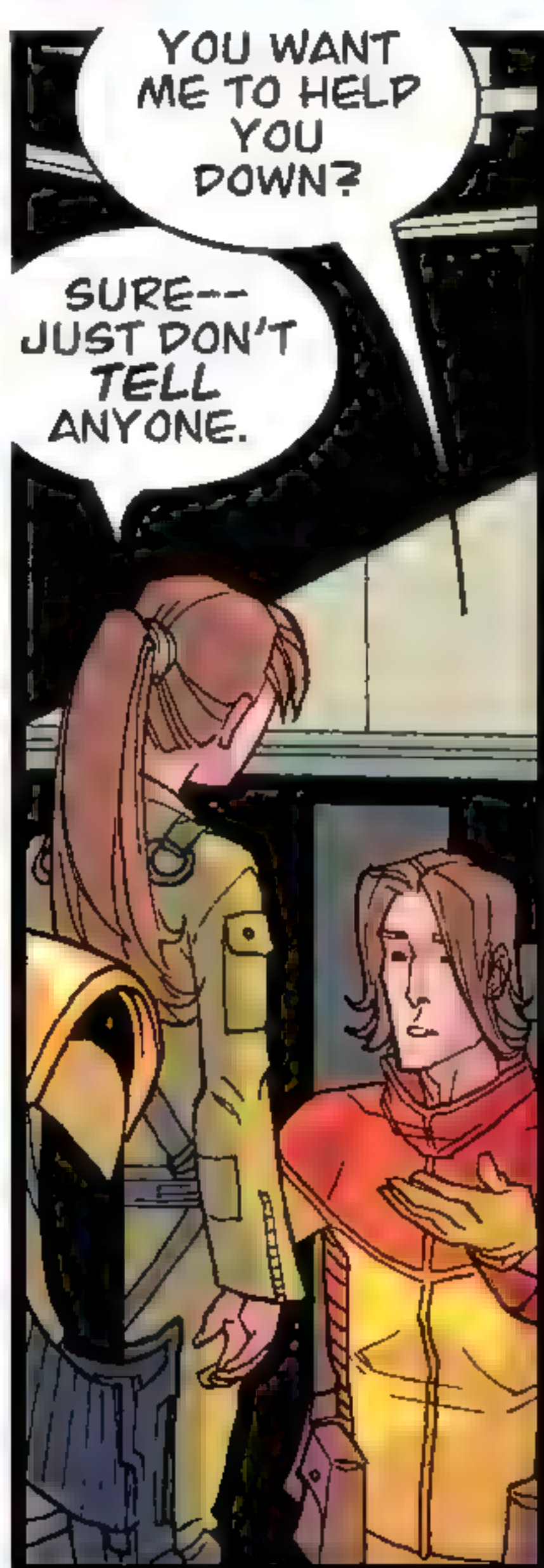
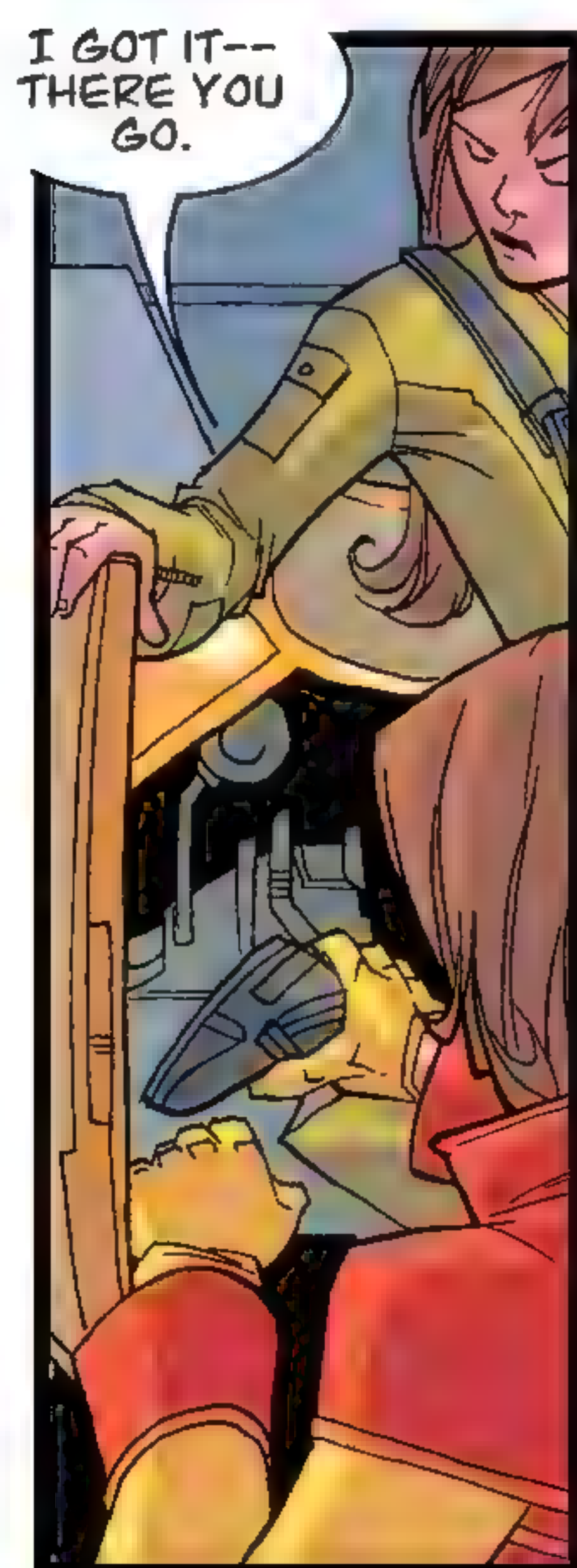
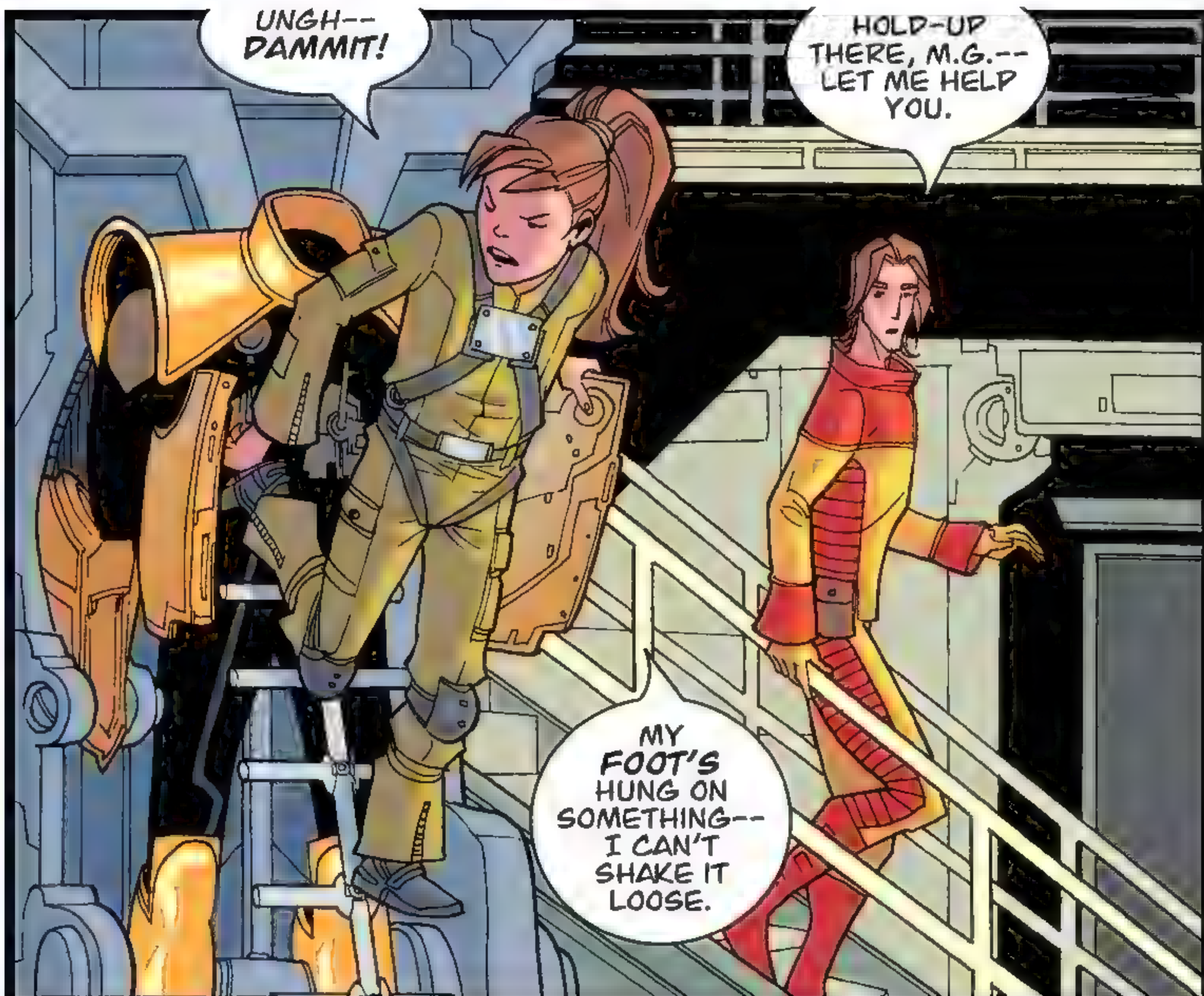


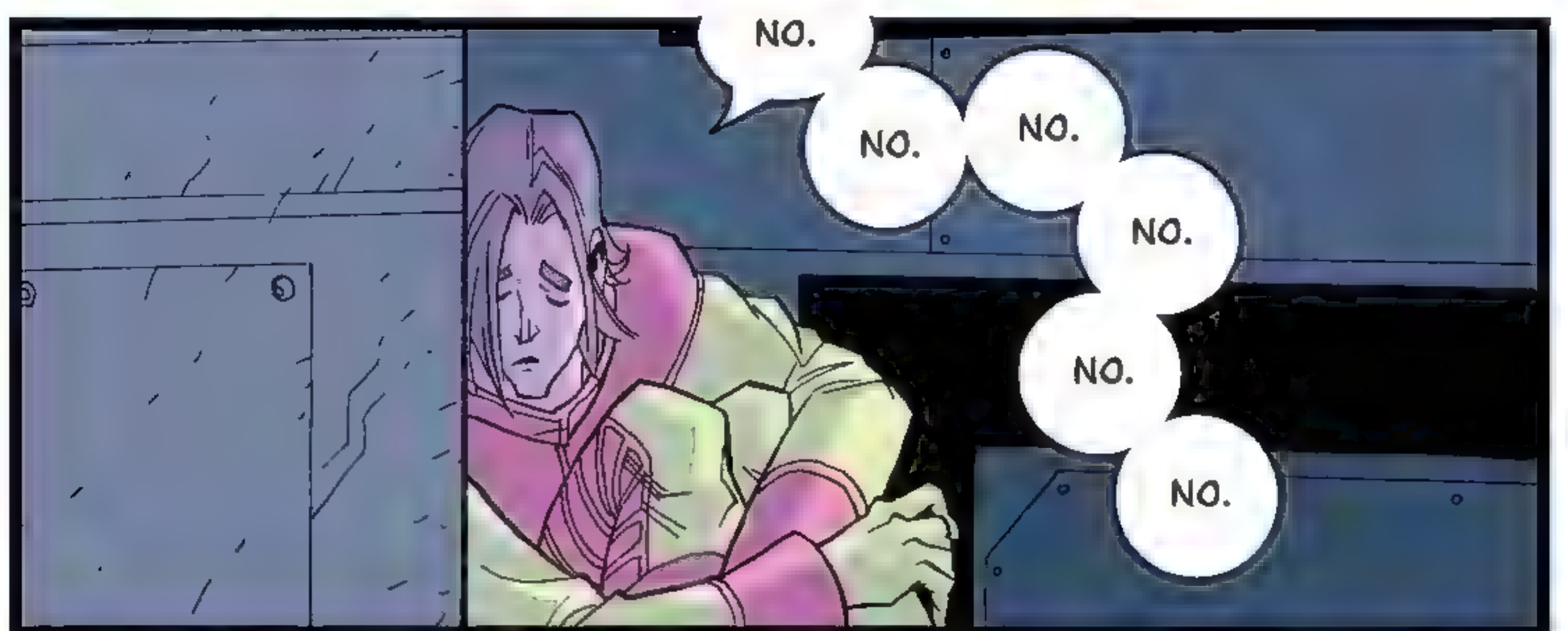
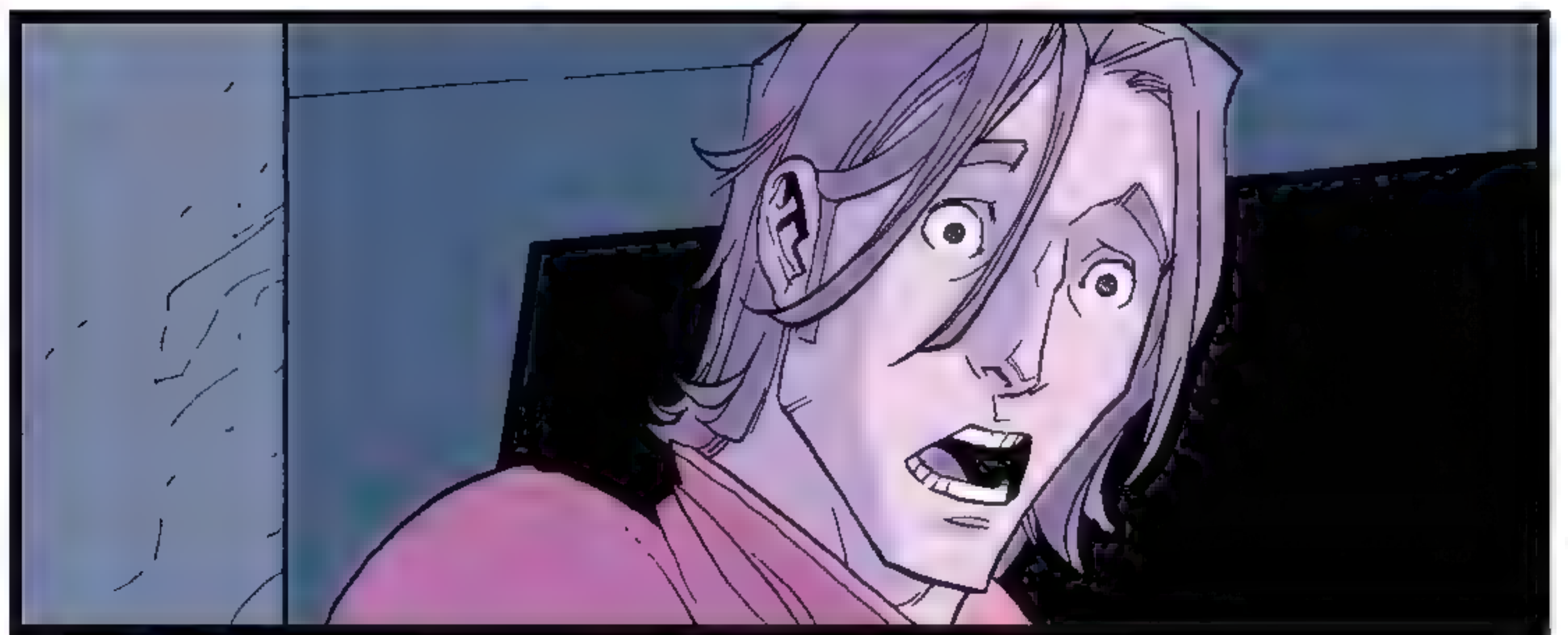
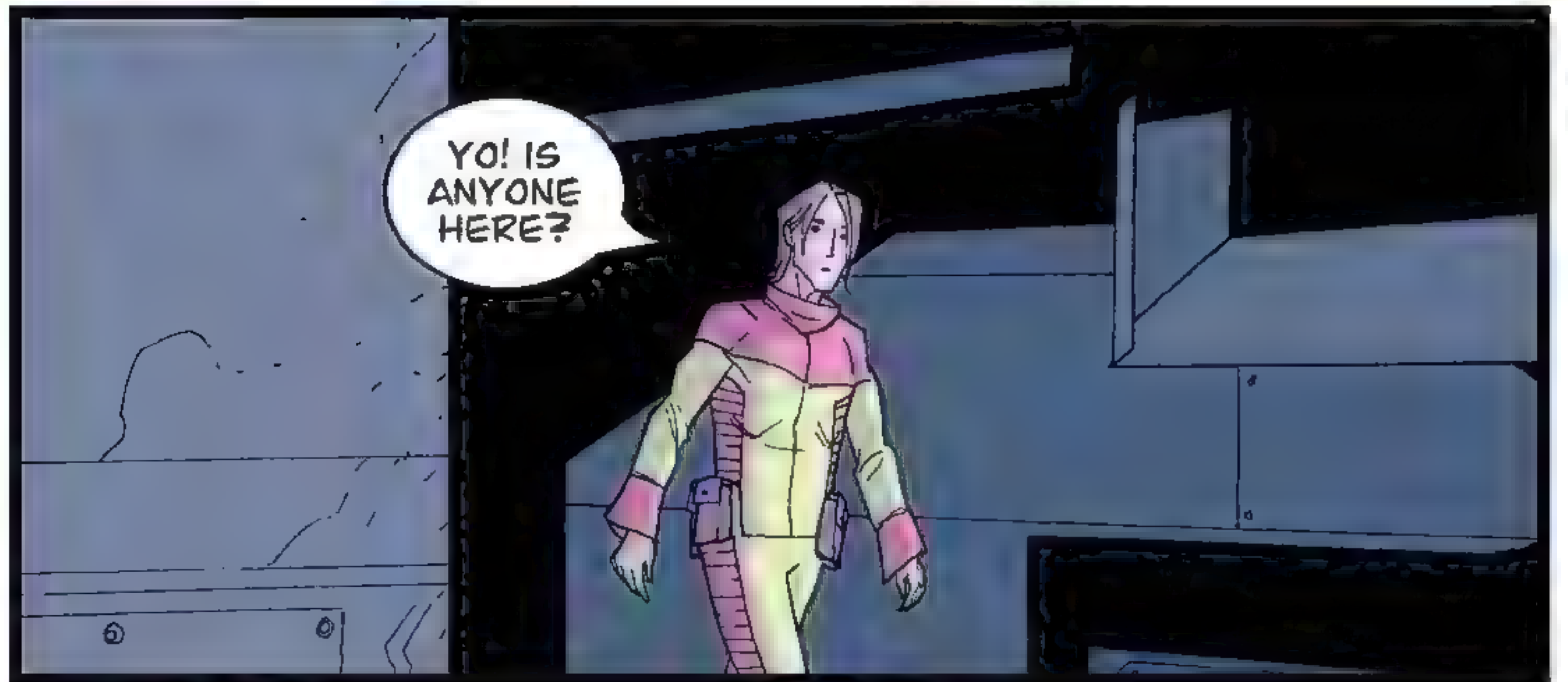
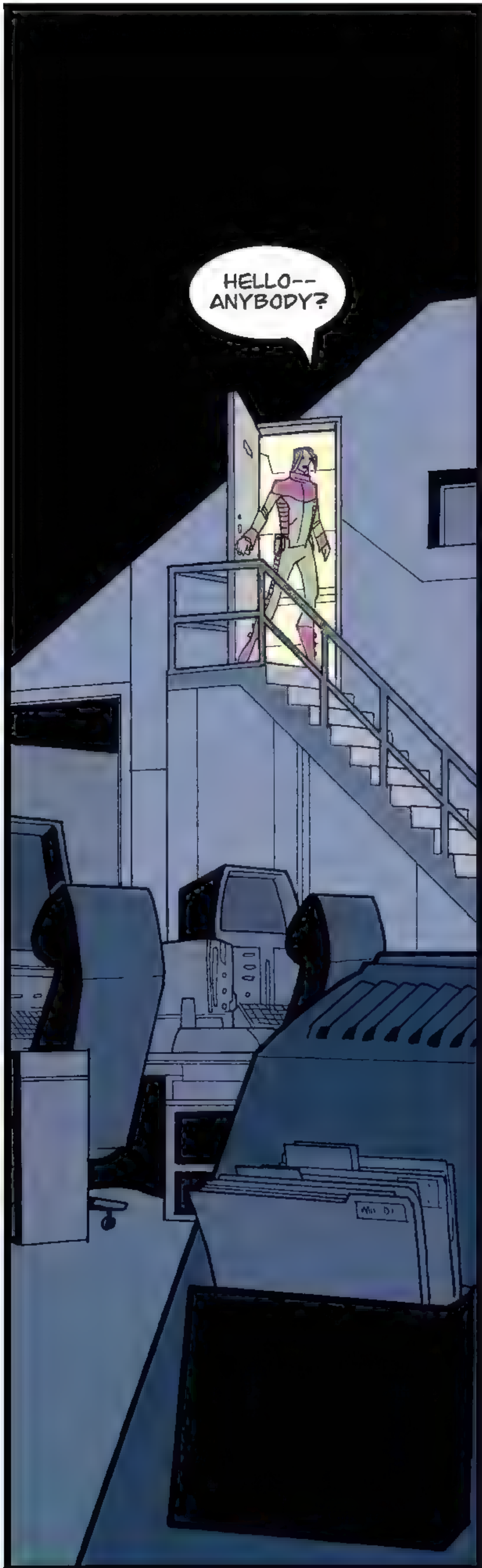
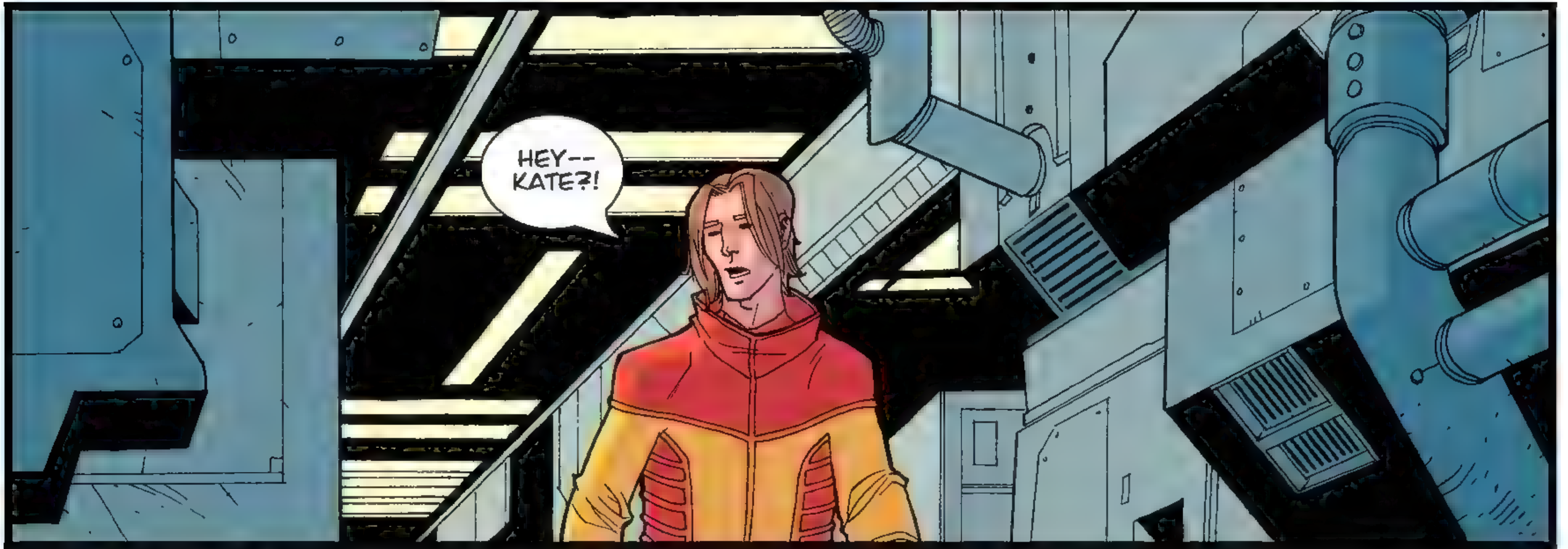
--CAN'T YOU JUST LEAVE THEM IN YOUR CAR?

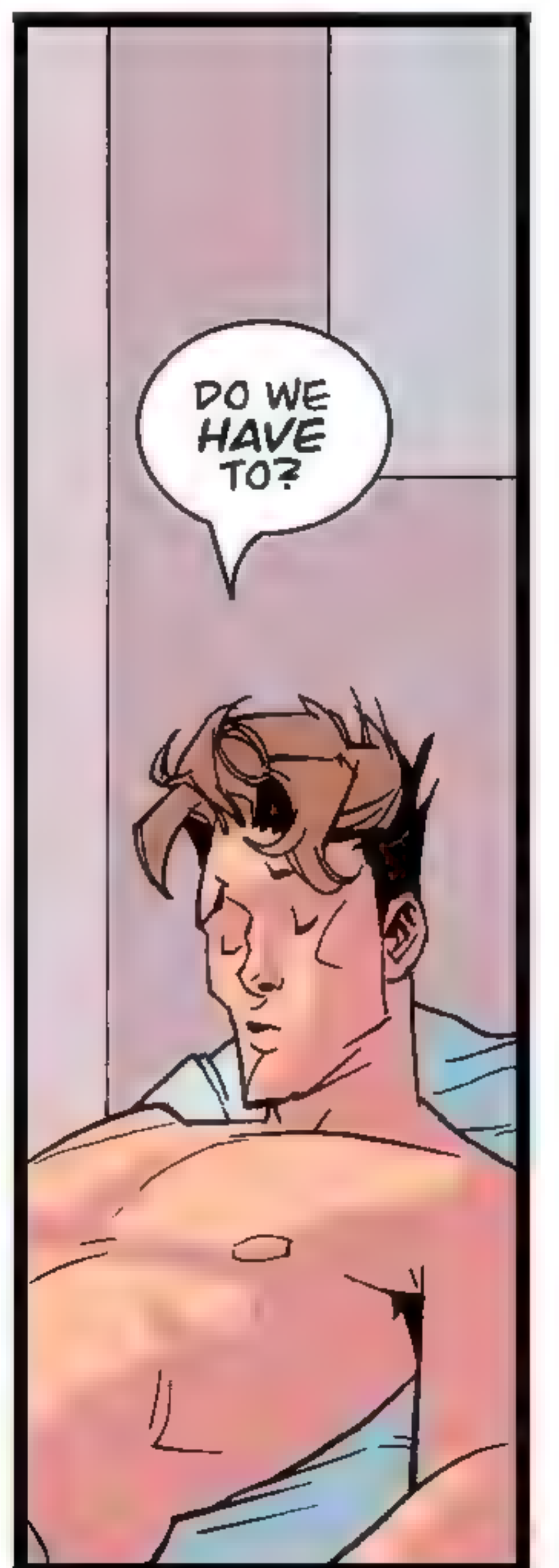
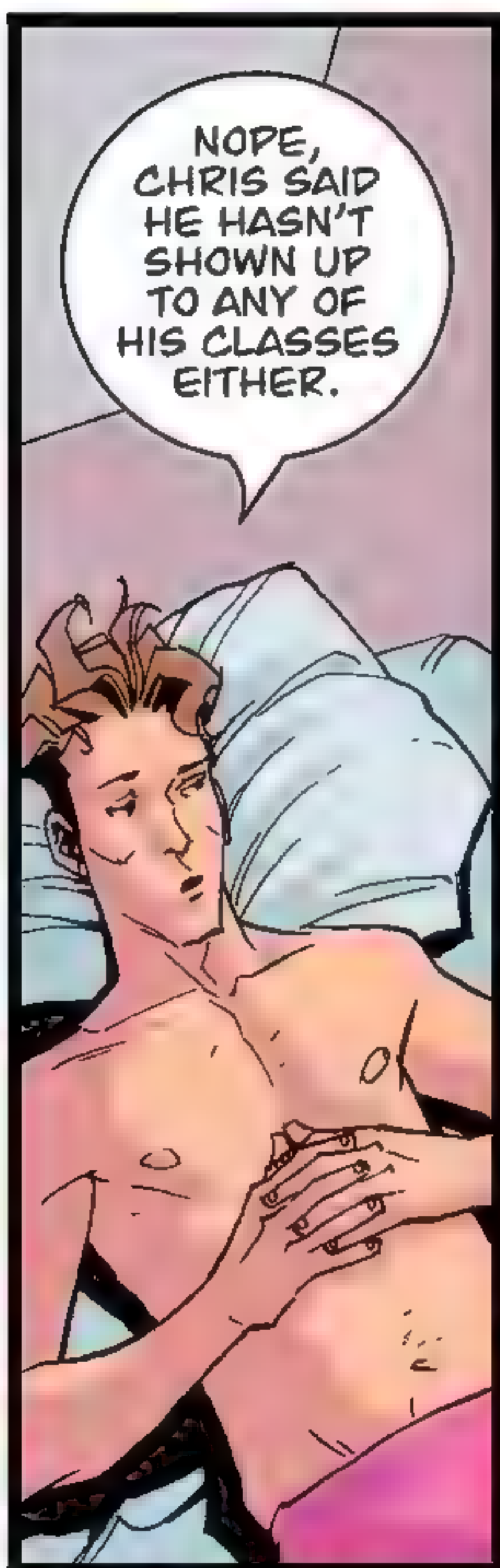
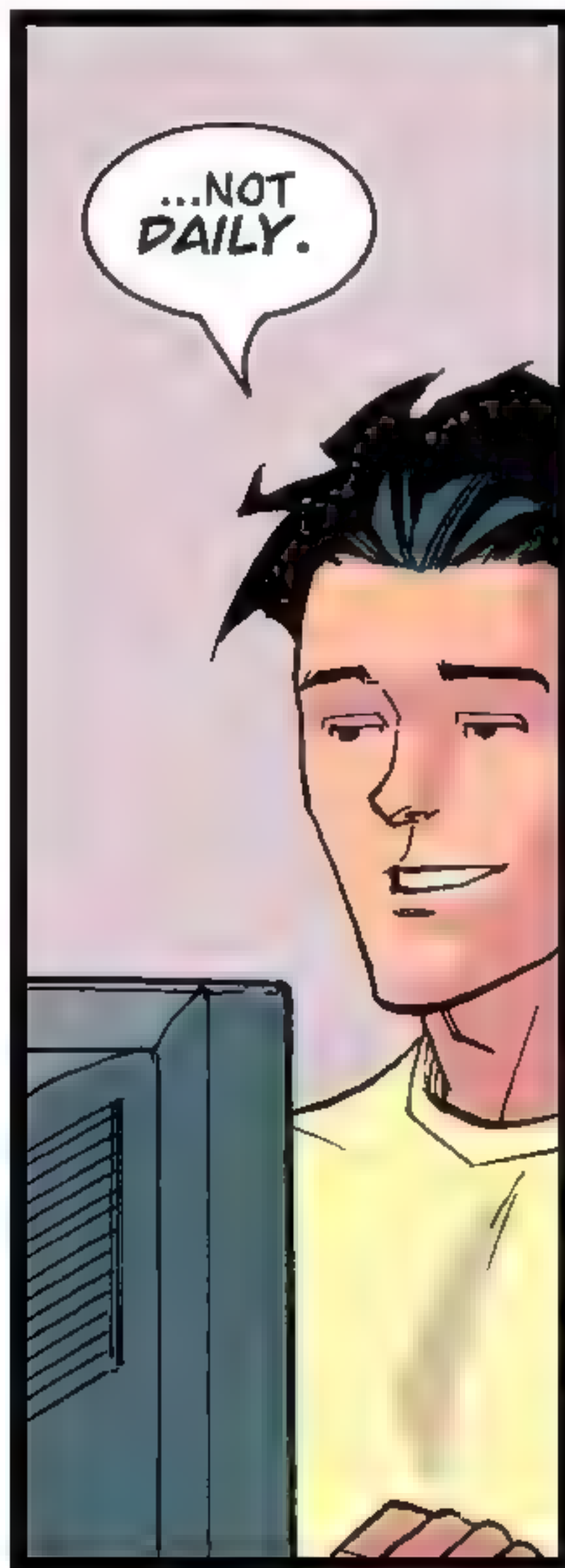
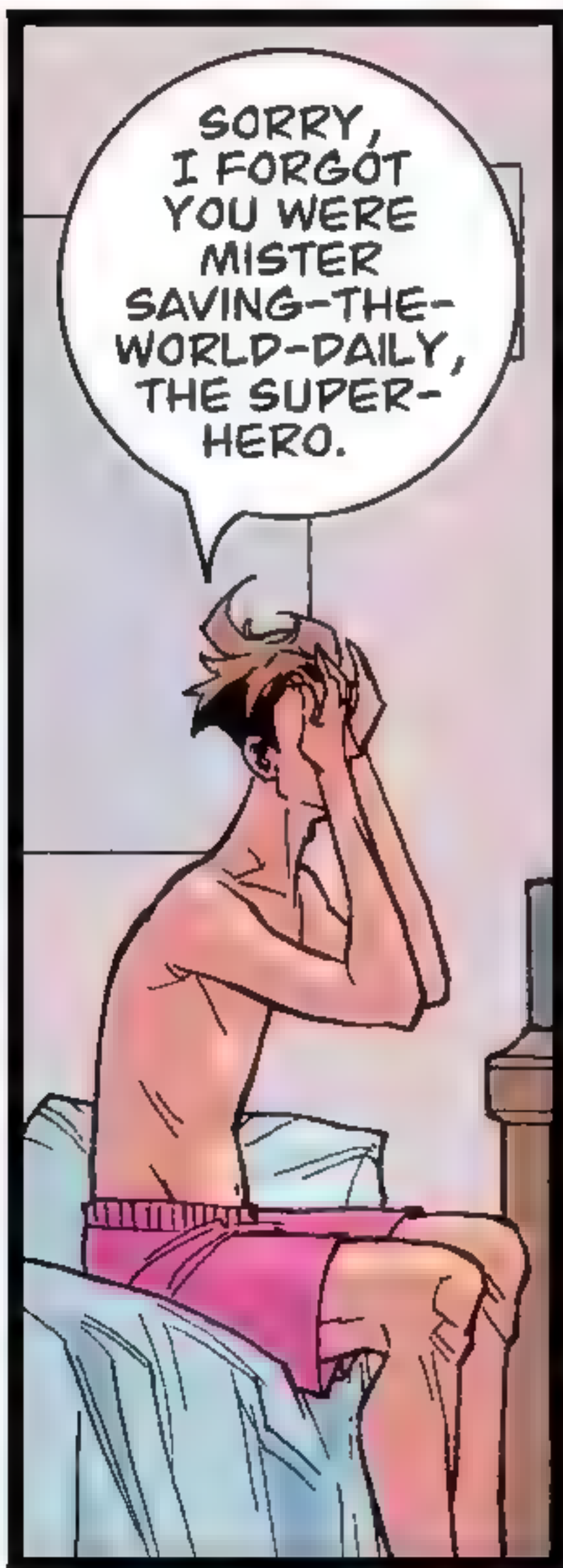
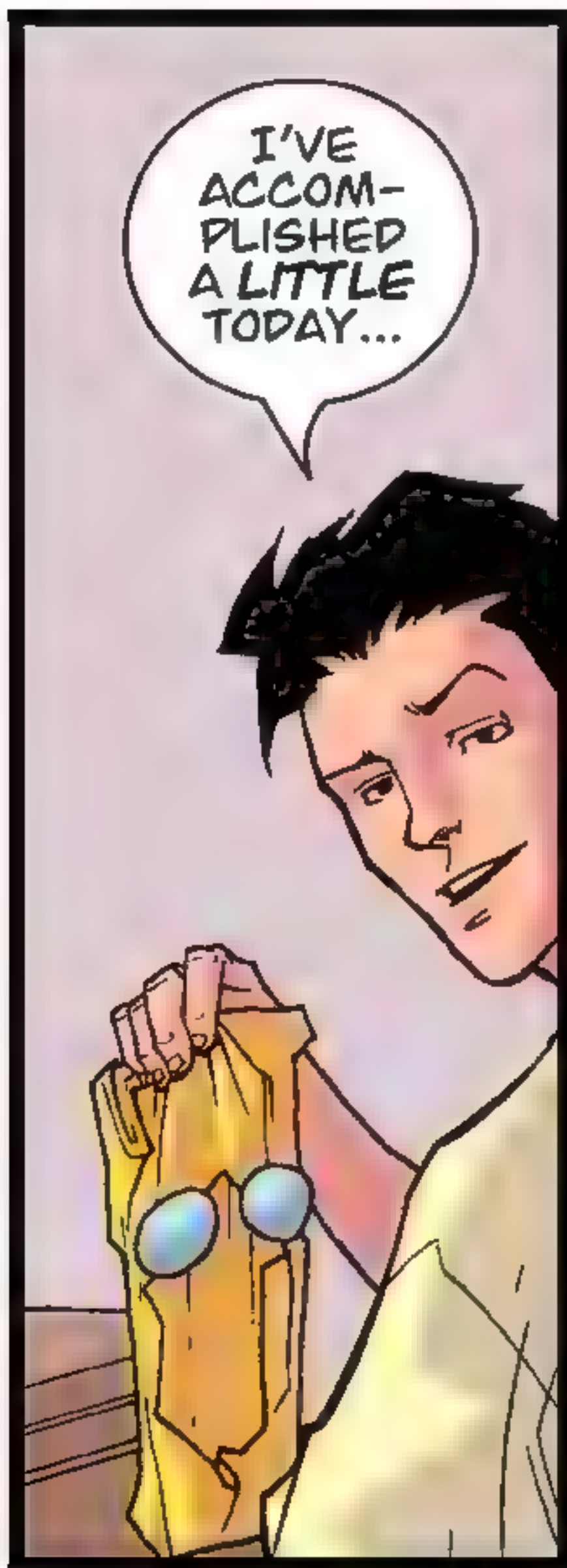
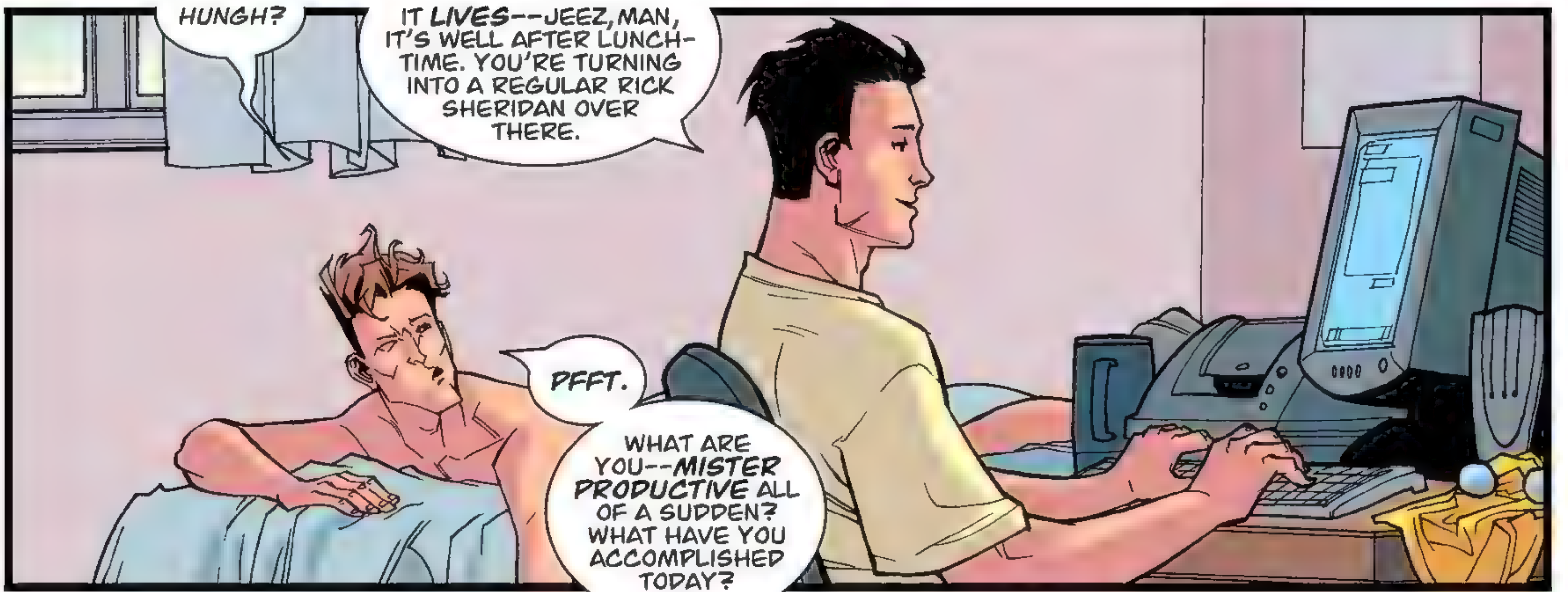


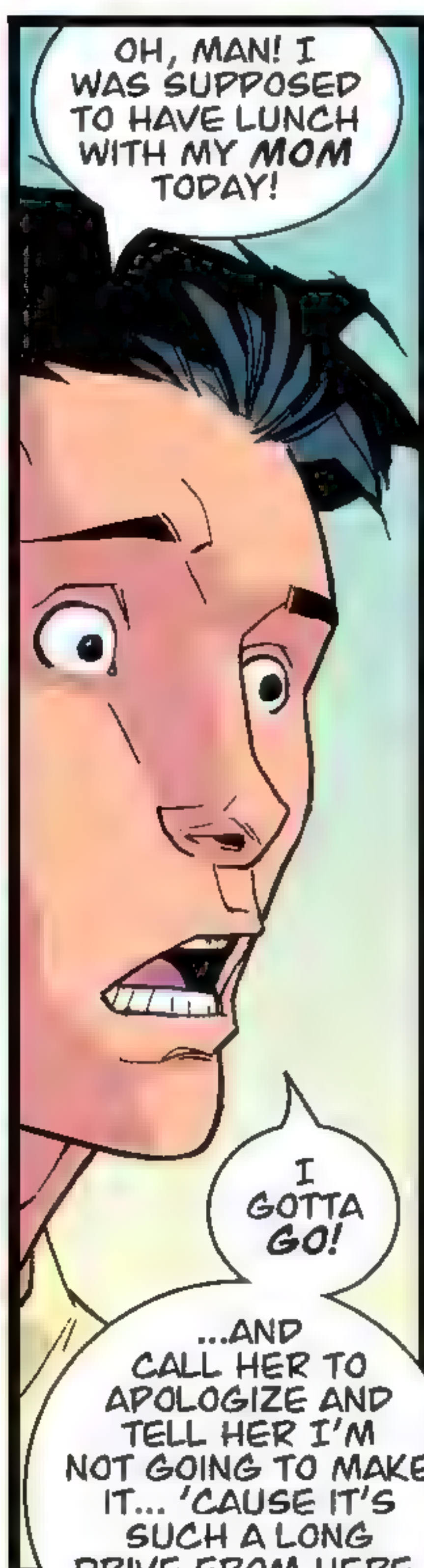
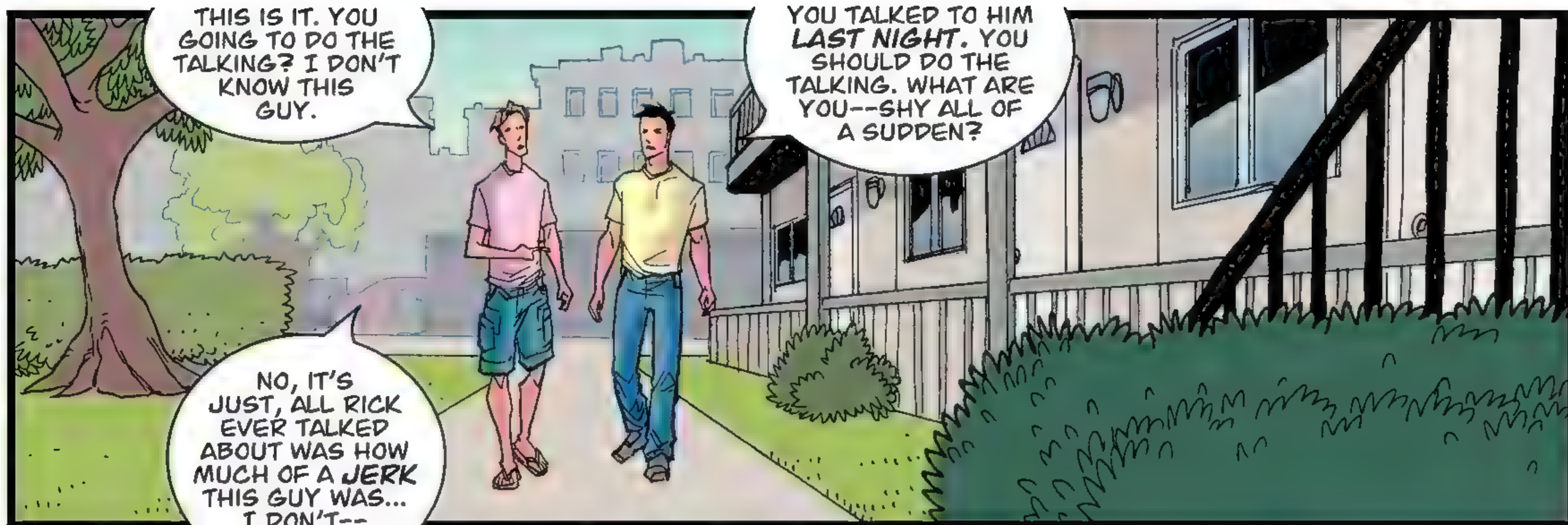


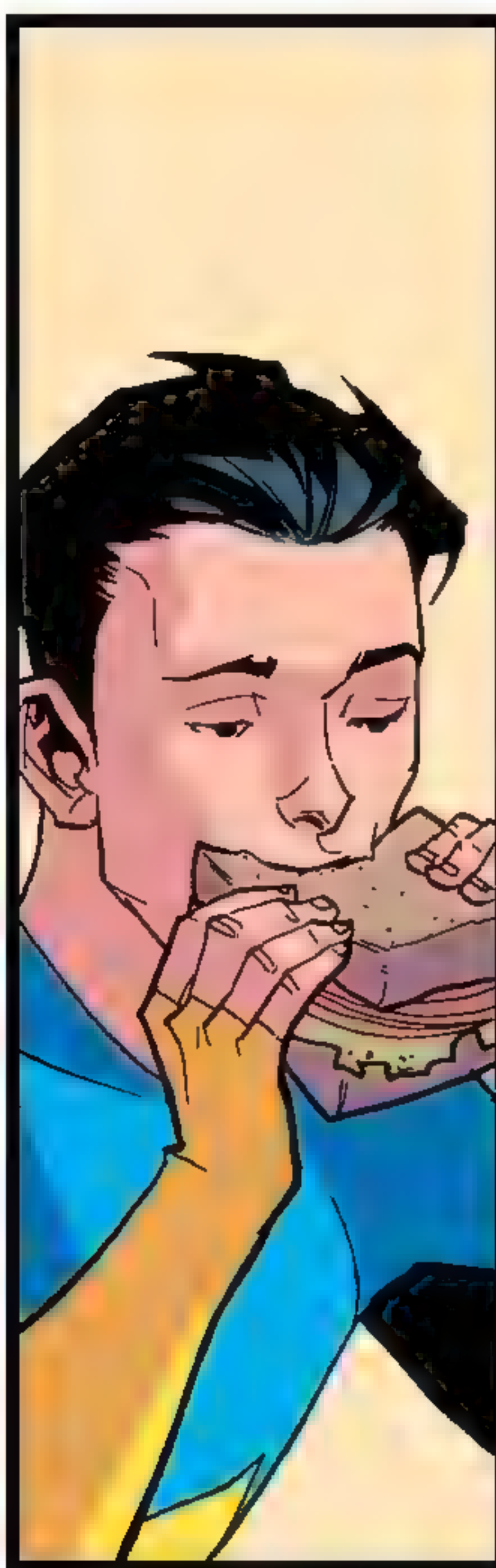
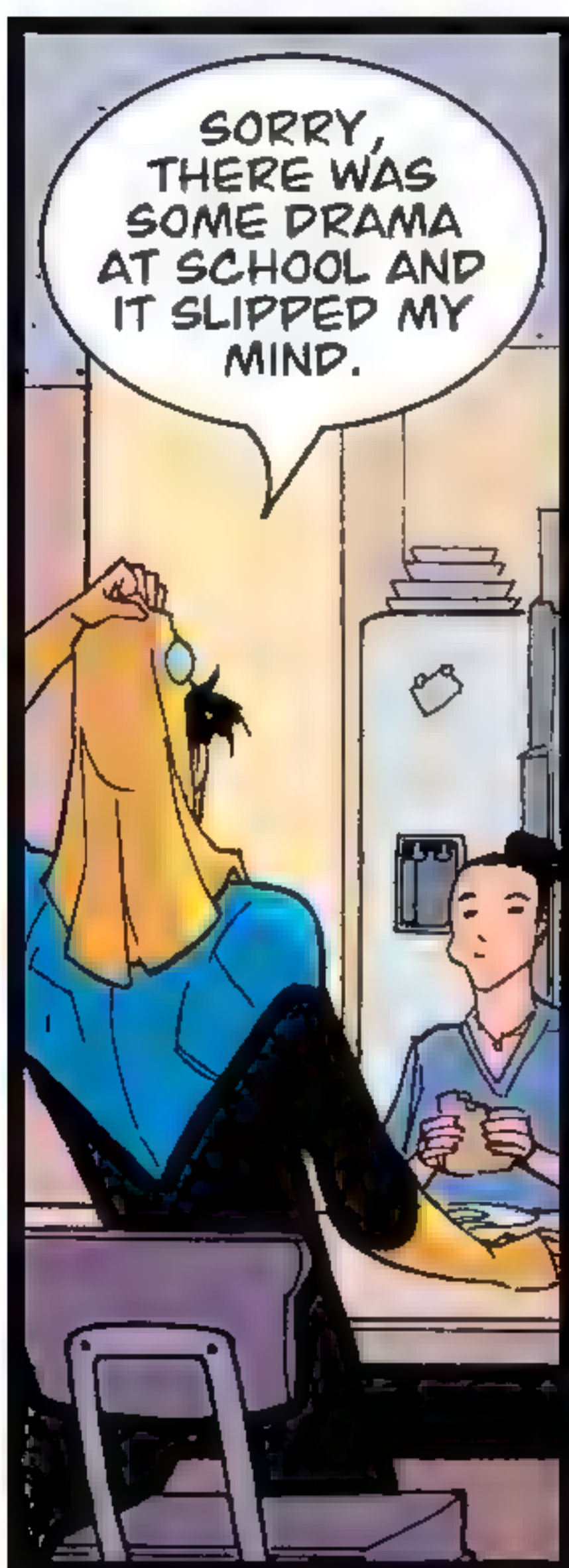










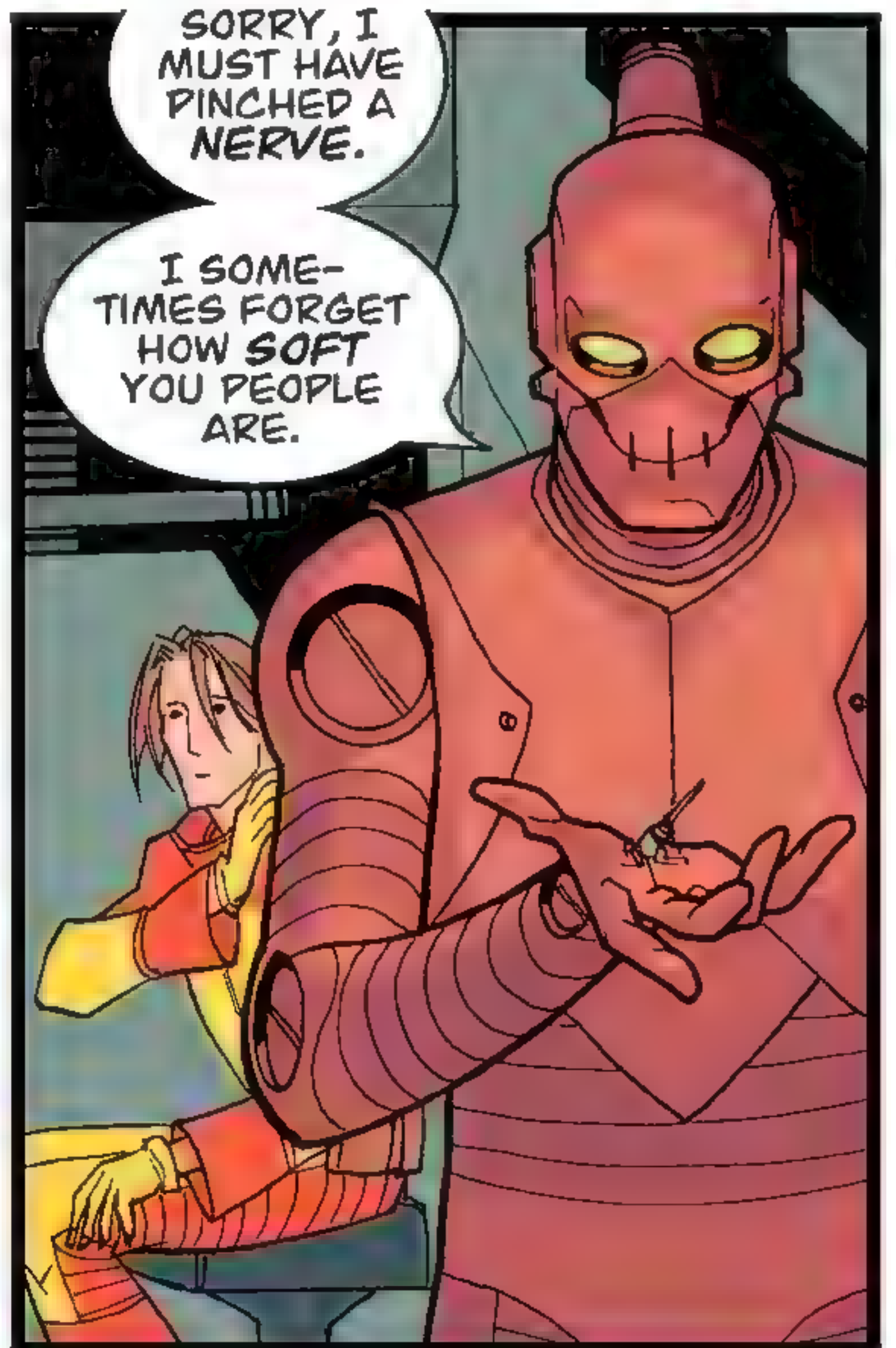
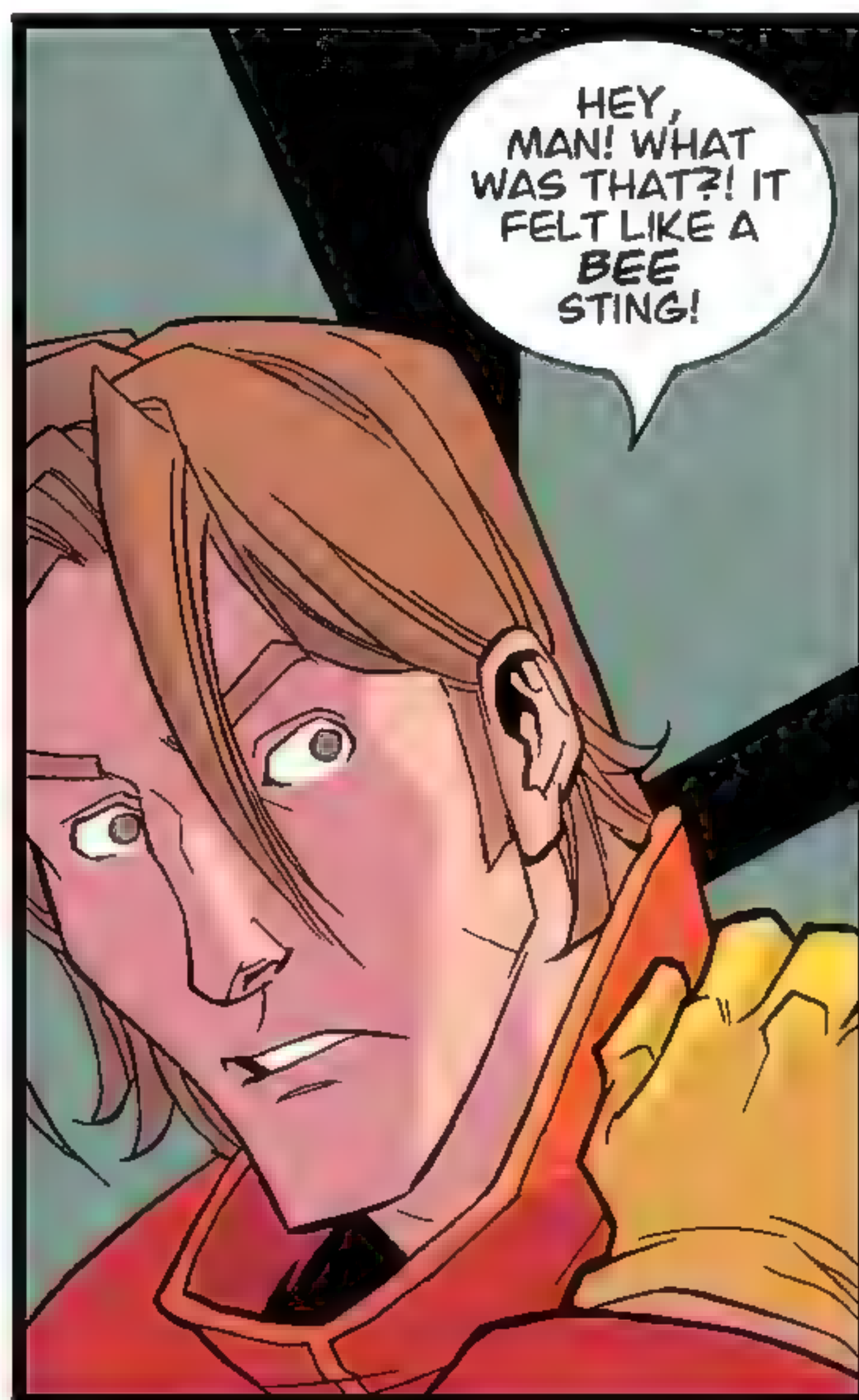
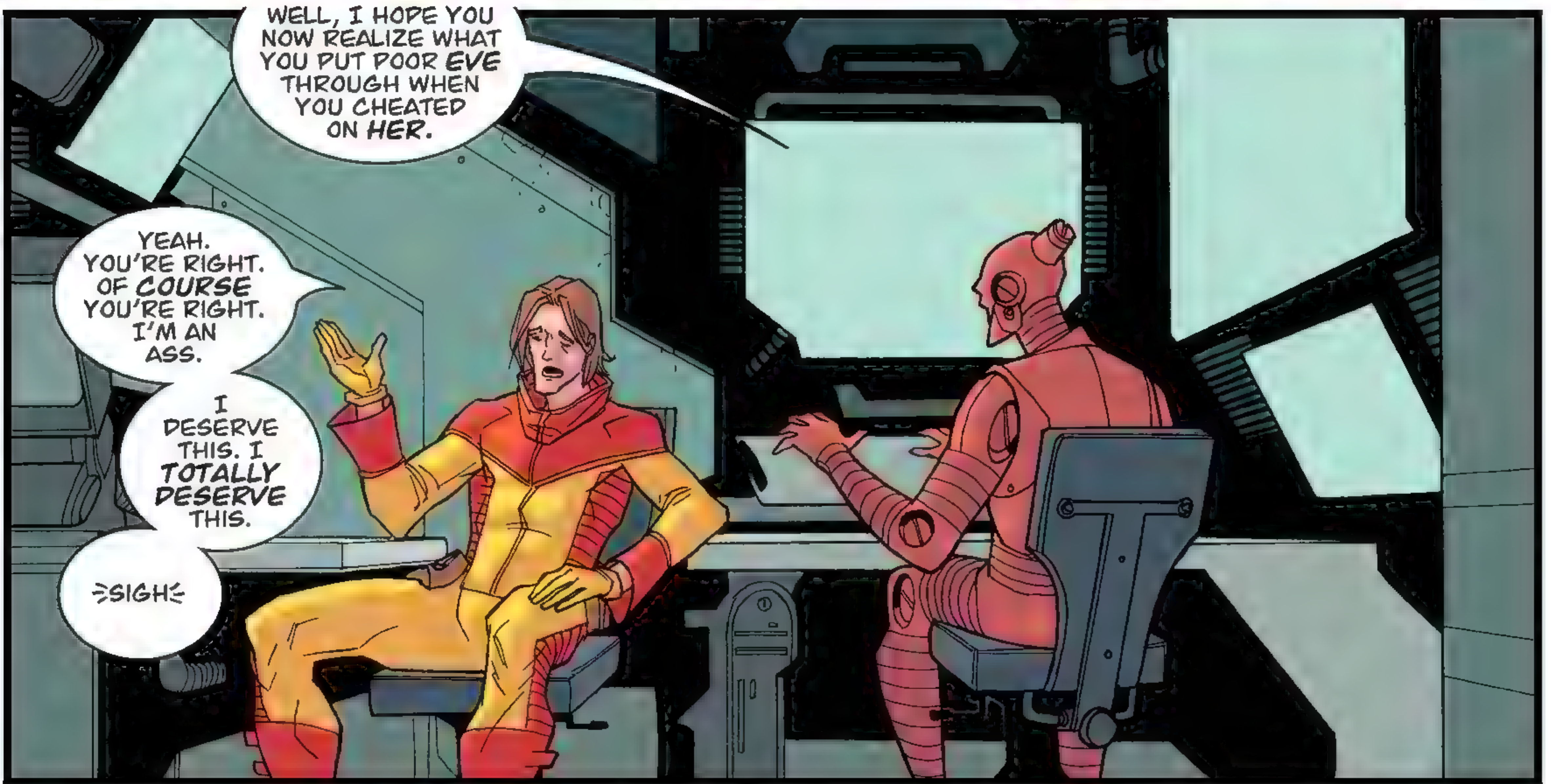


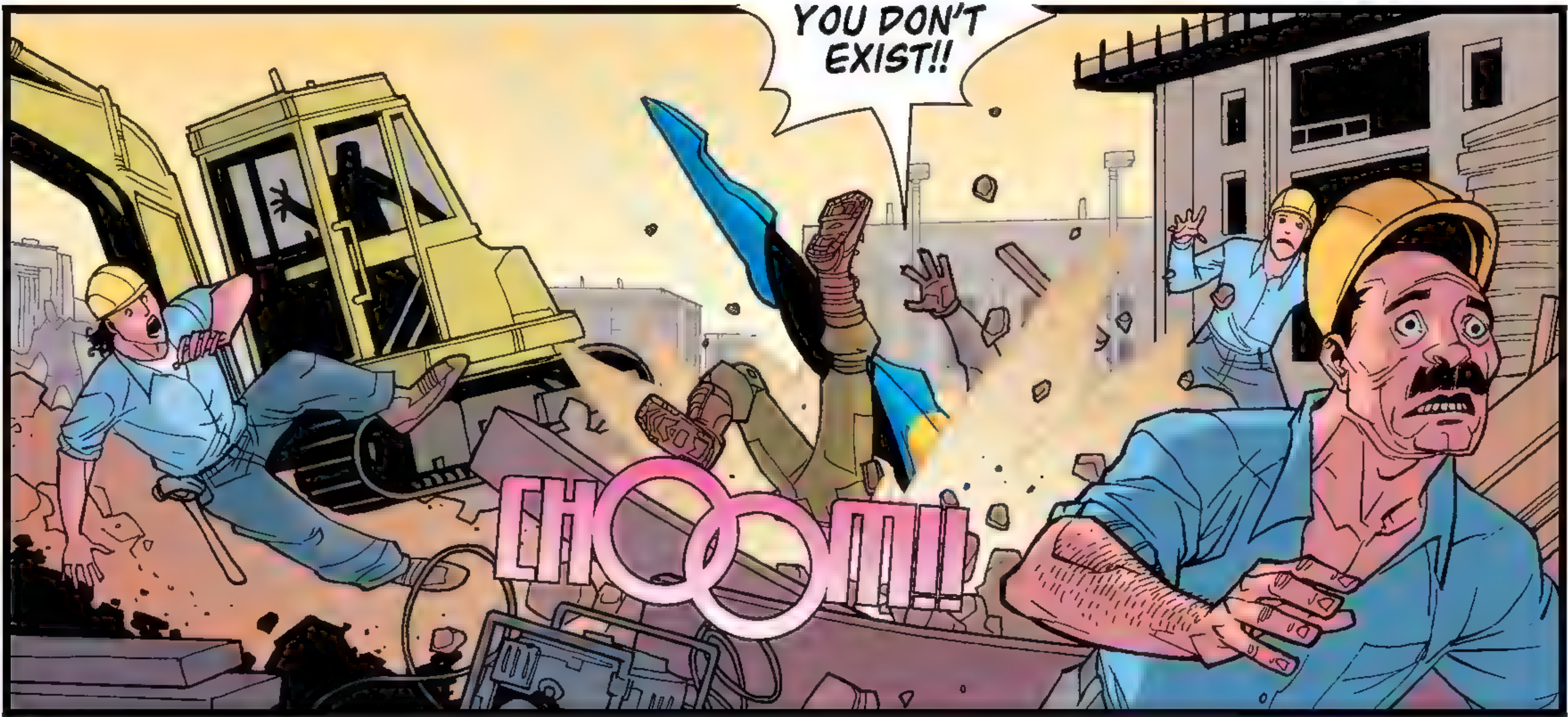


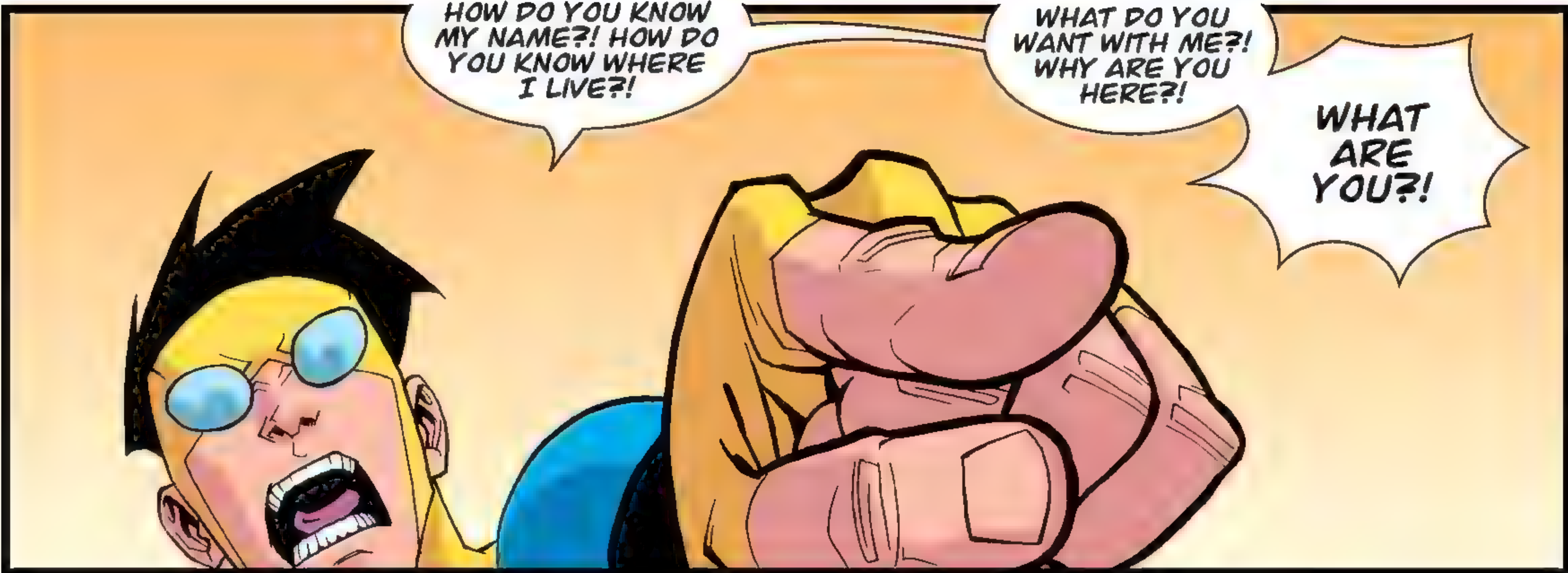
MARK!!

GET IN
HERE!!!











OKAY--IS THIS BETTER?

NOW--TALK TO ME. WHAT IS GOING ON?



WE HAVE WATCHED YOU FROM AFAR--WE HAVE THE ABILITY TO SPY ON OTHER PLANETS--TO WITNESS THE EVENTS THAT OCCUR THERE.

AFTER A WHILE--WE FOCUSED ON YOU. WE MONITORED YOUR EVERY ACTION. WE WITNESSED YOUR LIFE IN AND OUT OF COSTUME.

EVENTUALLY, WE LEARNED OF YOUR LOVE FOR THE CHARACTER SCIENCE DOG. WE THOUGHT IT WAS AN IMAGE YOU WOULD FIND NON-THREATENING.



NON-THREATENING?!

YOU'RE A SIX-FOOT TALKING CARTOON CHARACTER!!

WERE YOU EXPECTING A HUG?

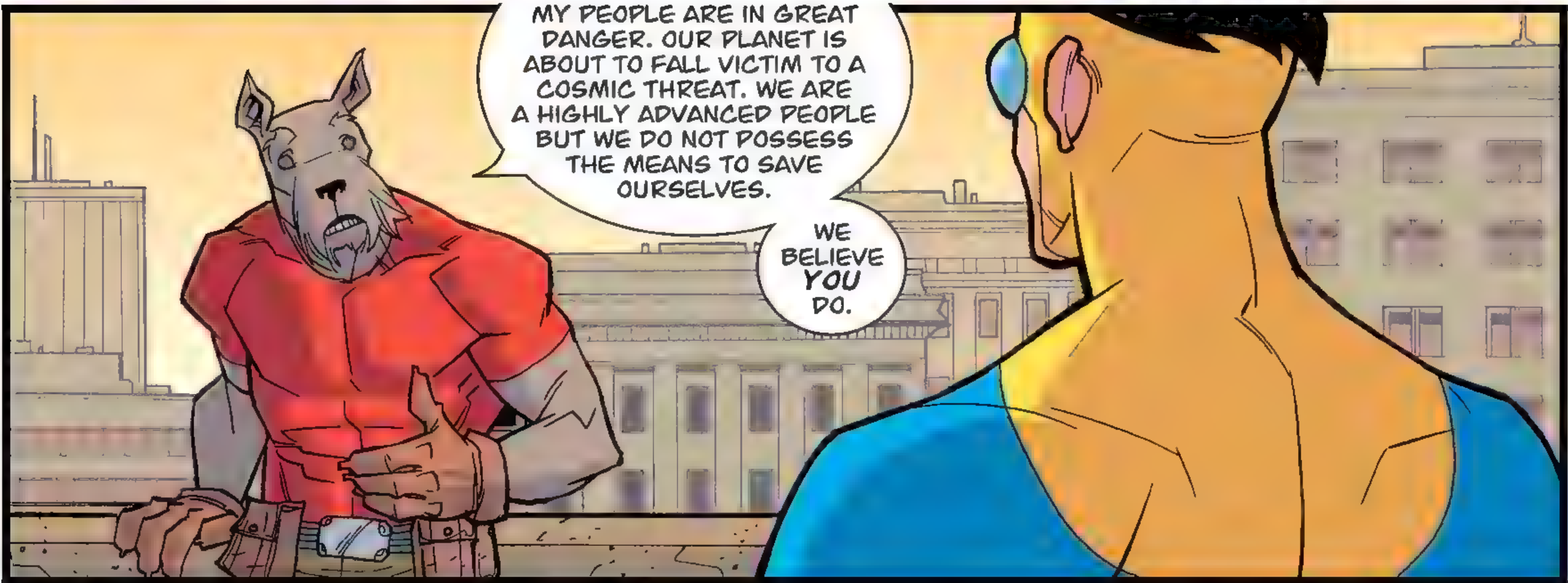


WE ARE NOT FULLY AWARE OF YOUR CUSTOMS AND BEHAVIOR. WE WERE NOT SURE HOW YOU WOULD REACT.



FINE--WHAT-EVER. I DON'T QUITE UNDERSTAND THAT PART BUT WHATEVER.

WHAT ABOUT SPYING ON ME? WHY WERE YOU DOING THAT? WHY DID YOU NEED TO CONTACT ME? WHY ARE YOU EVEN HERE?!



MY PEOPLE ARE IN GREAT DANGER. OUR PLANET IS ABOUT TO FALL VICTIM TO A COSMIC THREAT. WE ARE A HIGHLY ADVANCED PEOPLE BUT WE DO NOT POSSESS THE MEANS TO SAVE OURSELVES.

WE BELIEVE YOU DO.

OKAY, THAT PART, AT LEAST, MAKES SENSE.

JUST WANT TO LET YOU KNOW I'M LISTENING IN, KID.

WE'RE AIMING A SATELLITE AT YOU RIGHT NOW--SEE IF YOU CAN GET HIM TO TAKE OFF THE MASK SO WE CAN GET A SHOT OF HIM.

THEN WE CAN COMPARE IT TO KNOWN ALIEN RACES IN OUR DATA-BASE.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN--OUR ENTIRE CIVILIZATION COULD BE WIPE OUT--OR SAVED--

--BY YOU.

IF I CAN HELP--I WILL. I WOULD NEVER ALLOW ANYTHING TO DIE IF I COULD PREVENT IT.

BUT SHOW ME--WHAT DO YOU LOOK LIKE NORMALLY--HOW ARE YOU MASKING YOUR IDENTITY SO PERFECTLY?

THIS IS A SYNTHETIC EXOSKELETON SHELL--IT IS ALSO WHAT PROTECTED ME FROM YOUR ATTACK.

WE CAN PROGRAM THESE TO TAKE ANY SHAPE--REPLICATE ANY SUBSTANCE.

OUR RESEARCH INDICATED THAT YOUR PEOPLE DO NOT RESPOND WELL TO SPECIES WITH BIOLOGY DISSIMILAR TO YOUR OWN.

WELL--I'VE SEEN A FEW MORE ALIENS THAN MOST HUMANS HAVE--

--OH, AND I'M NOT EXACTLY HUMAN MYSELF.

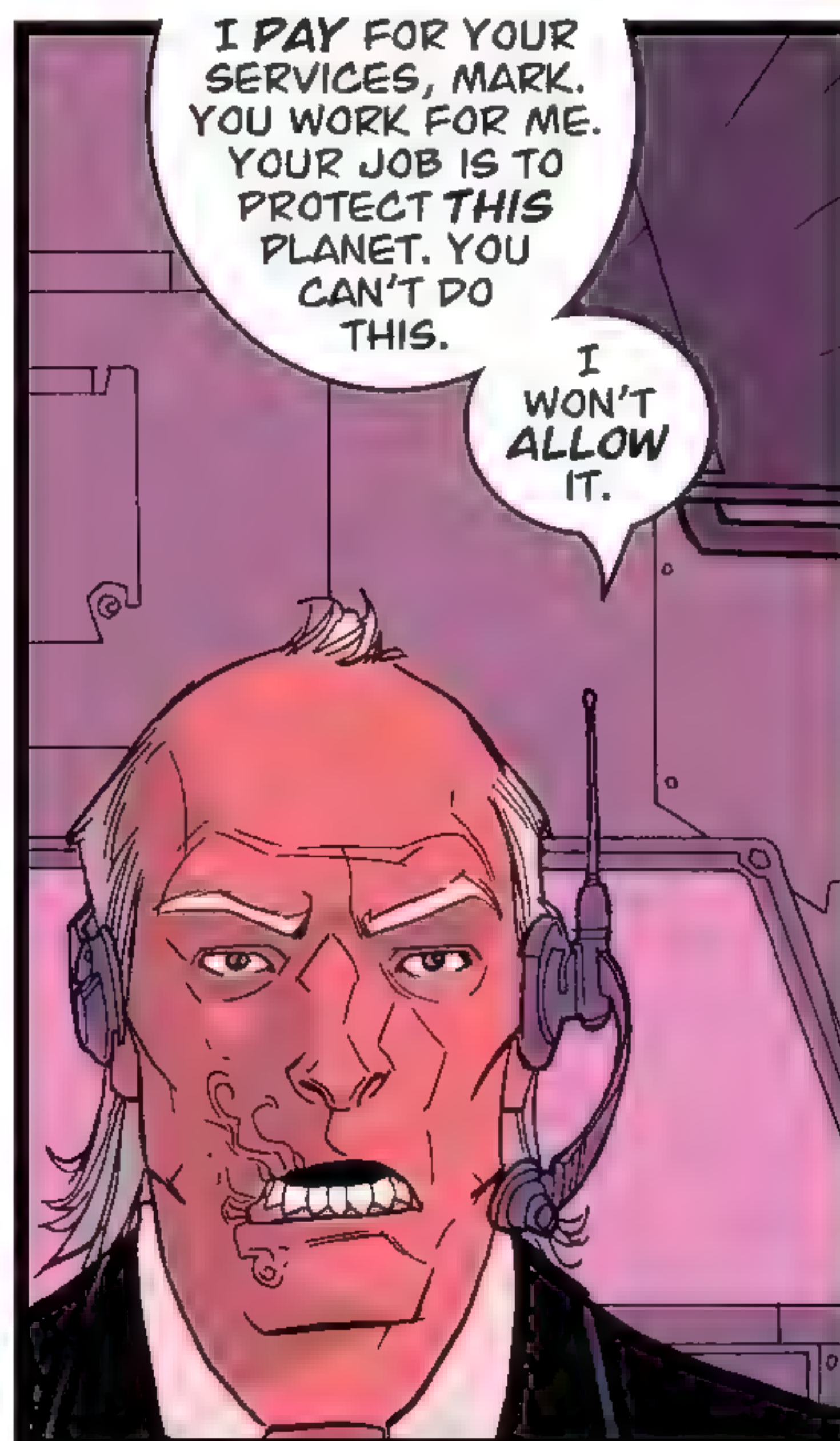
YES, WE OBSERVED YOUR ABILITIES TO BE SUBSTANTIALLY **MORE** THAN THOSE OF OTHER BEINGS ON THIS PLANET. THAT IS WHY WE SINGLED YOU OUT.

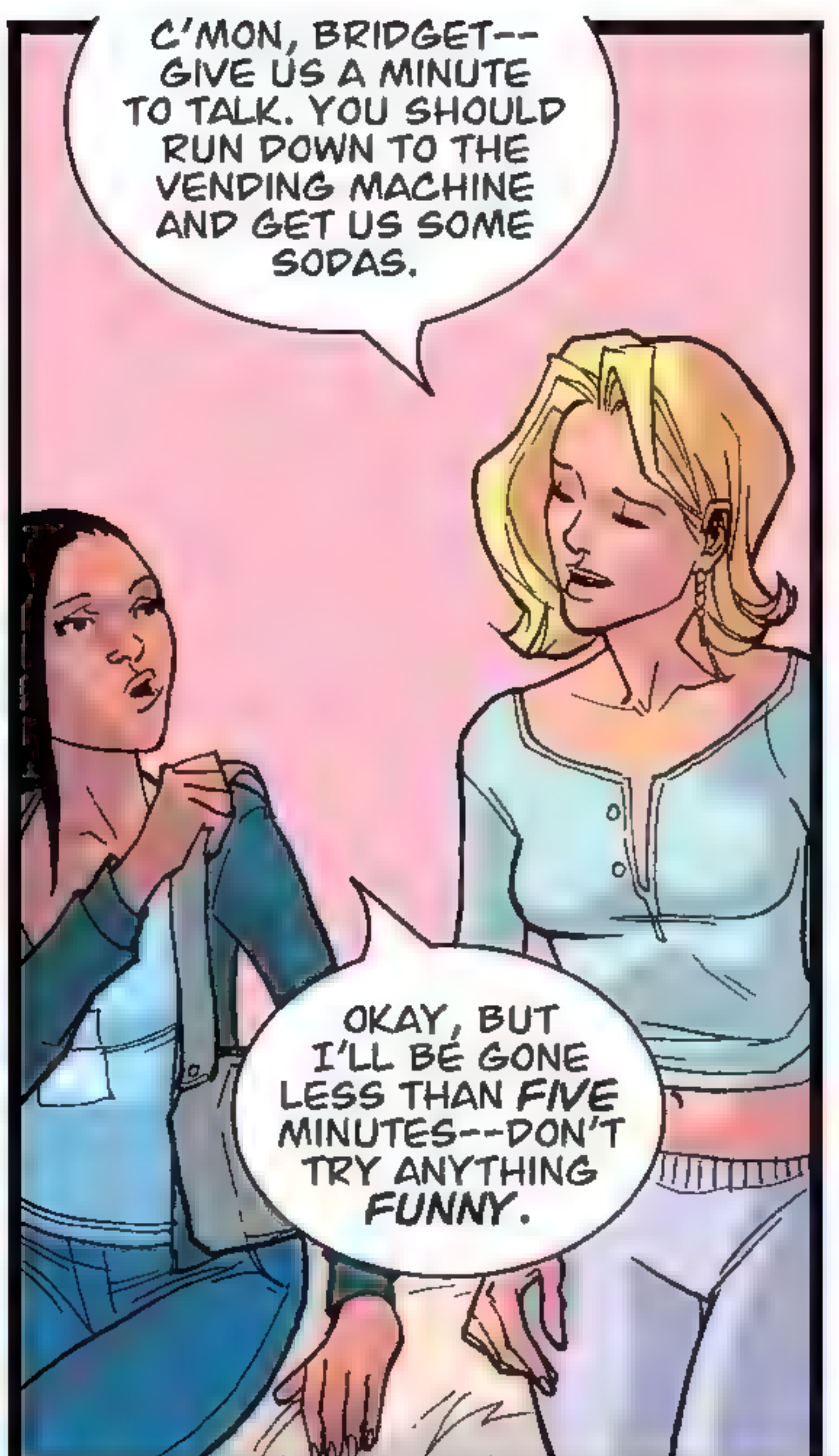
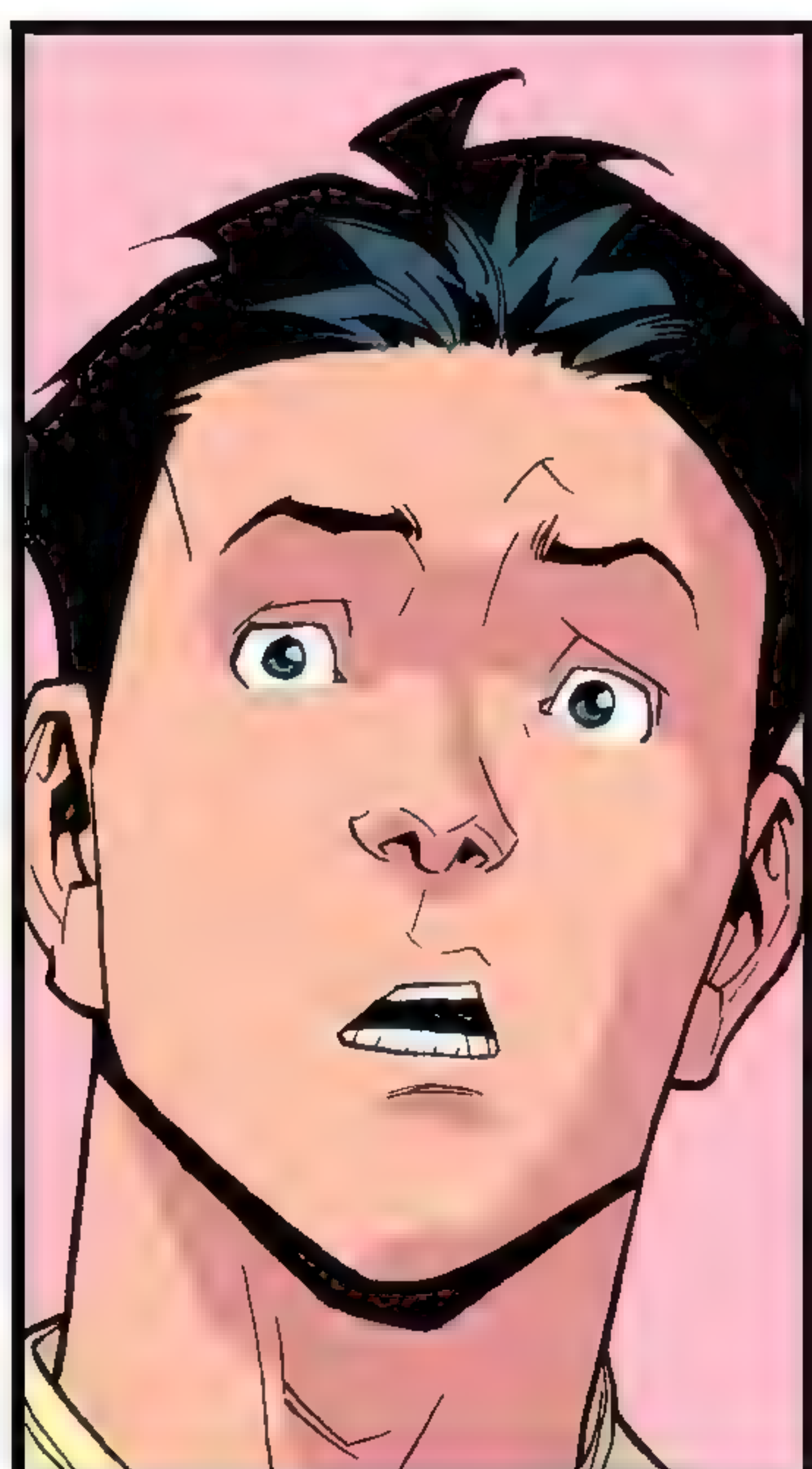
WILL YOU HELP US, MARK GRAYSON OF EARTH?

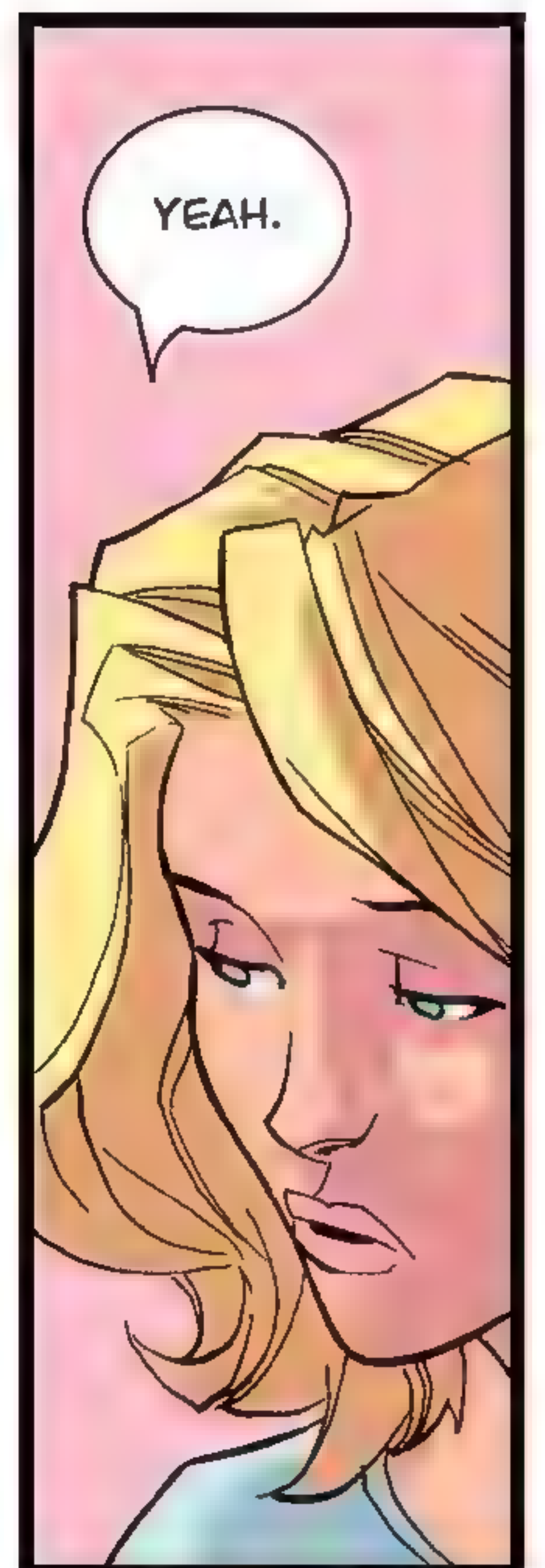
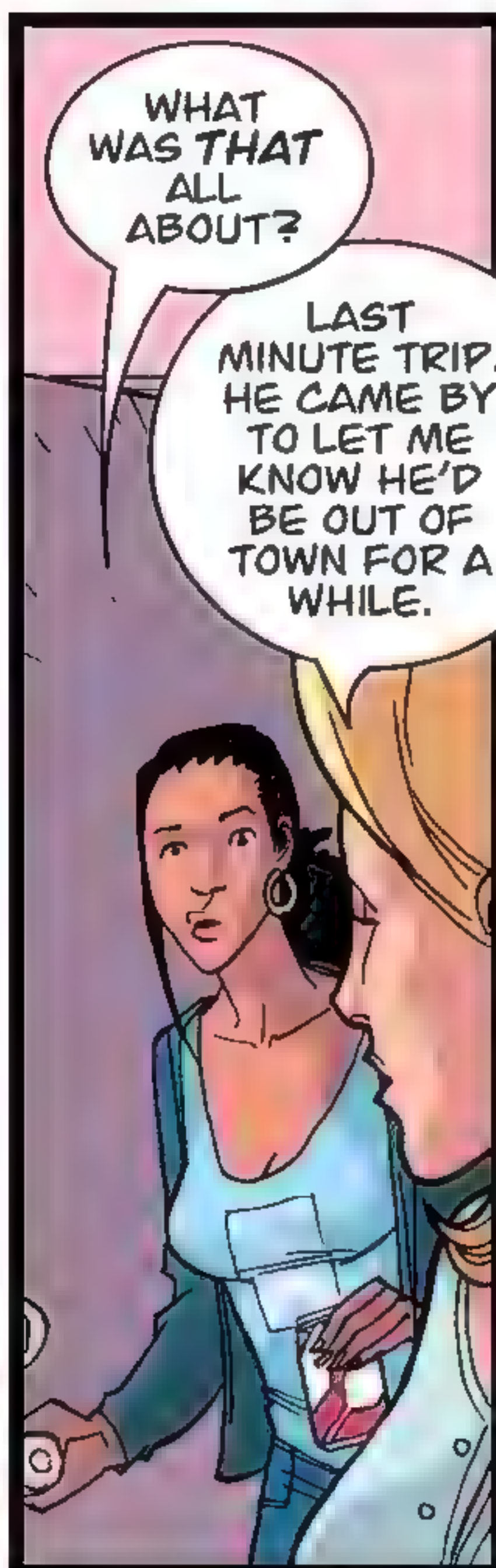
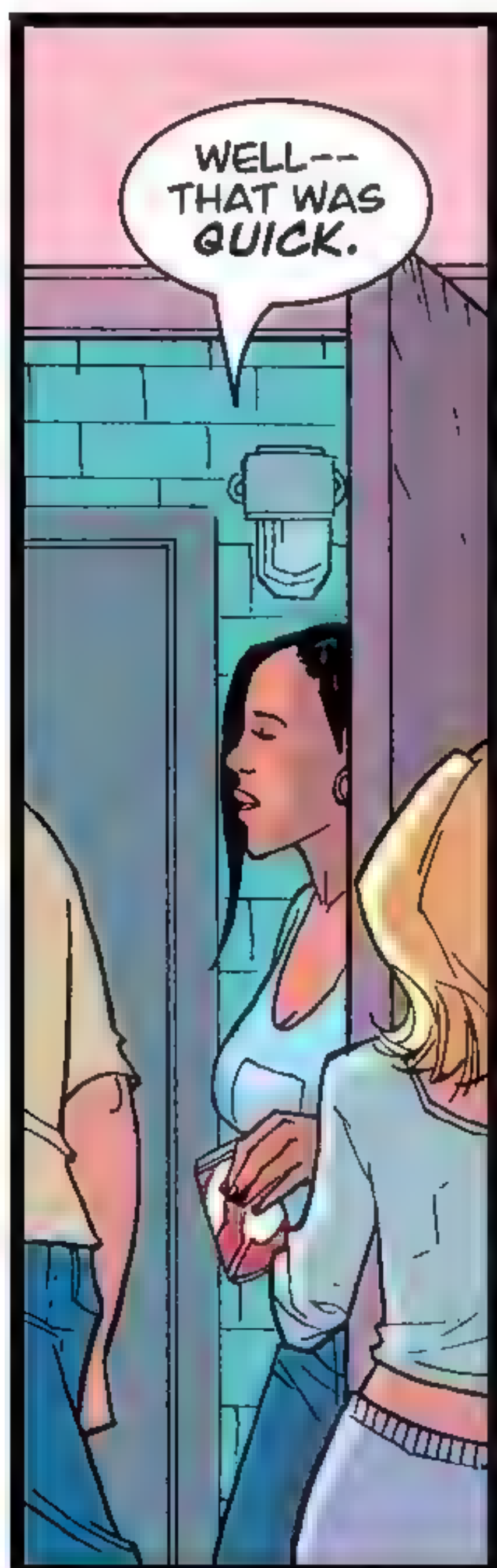
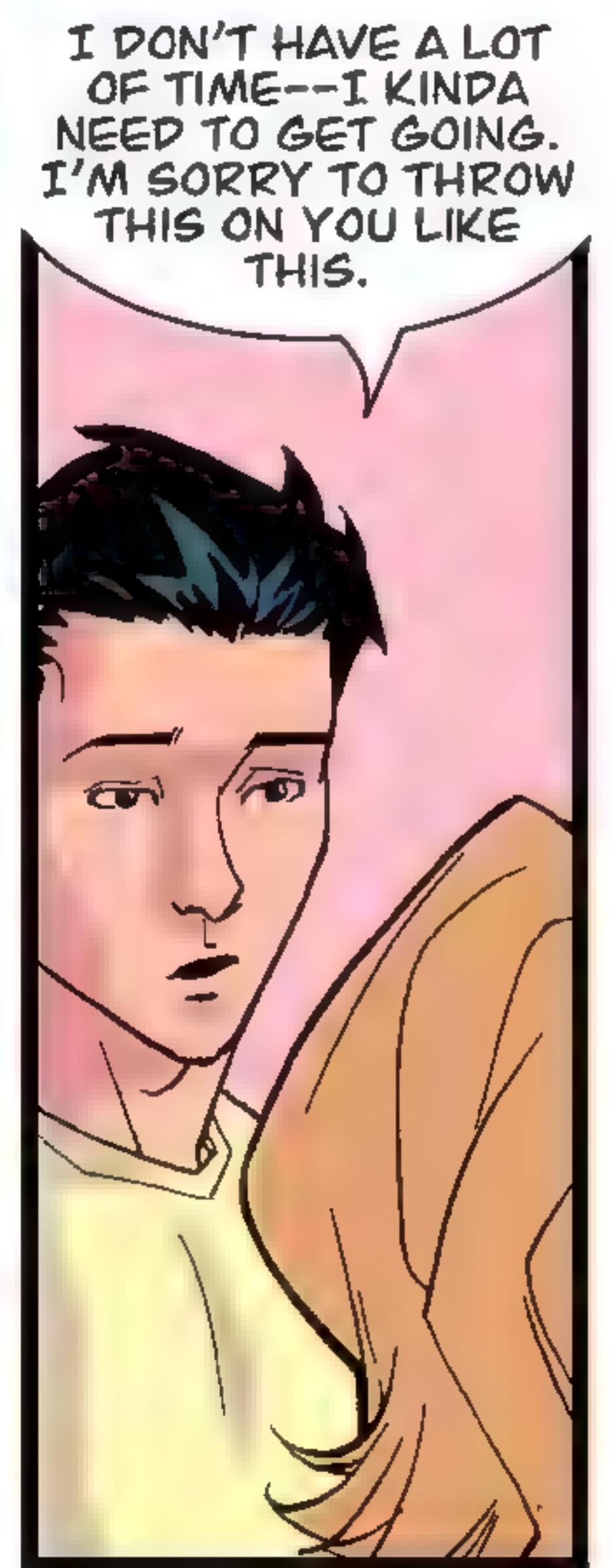
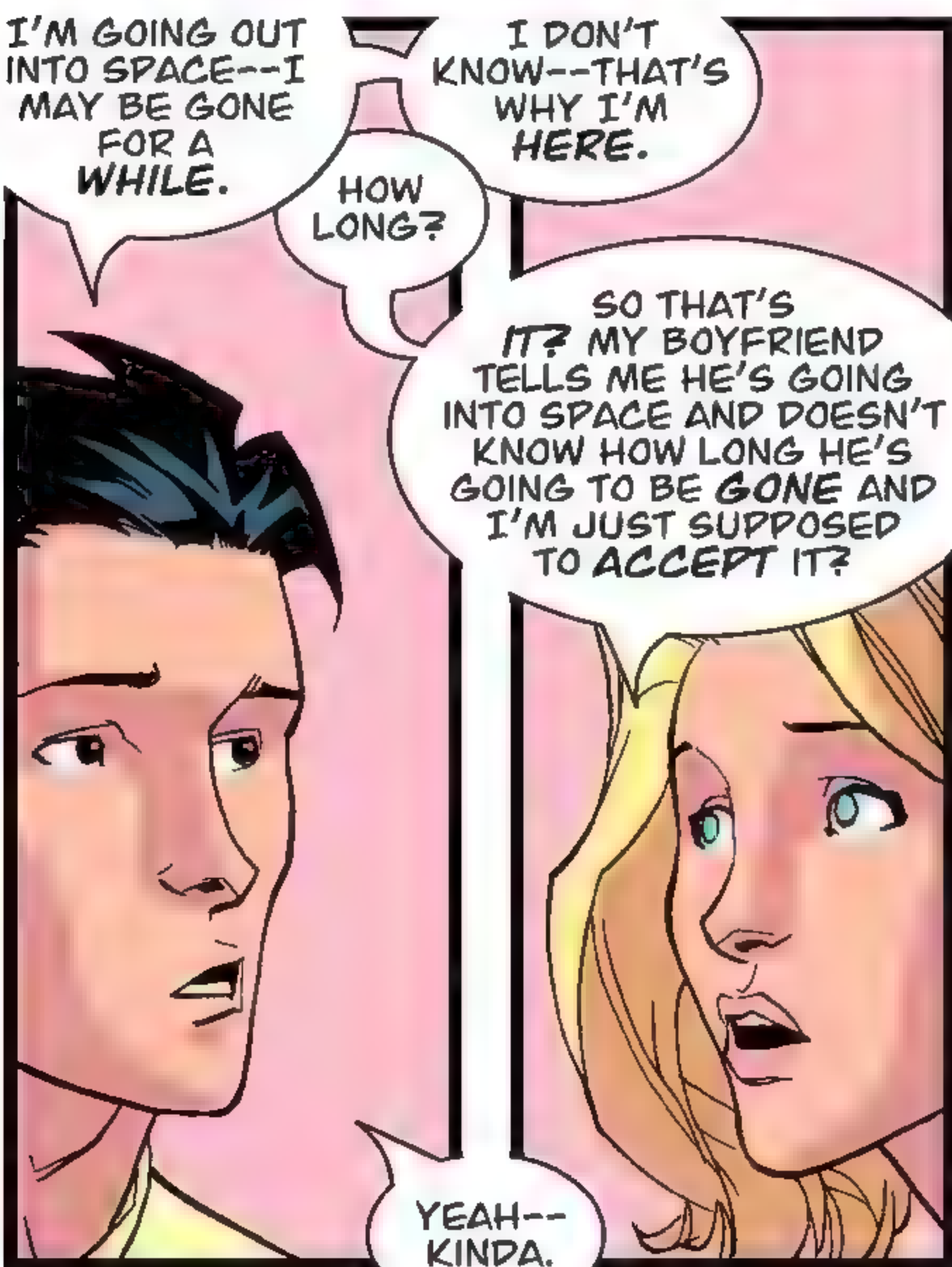
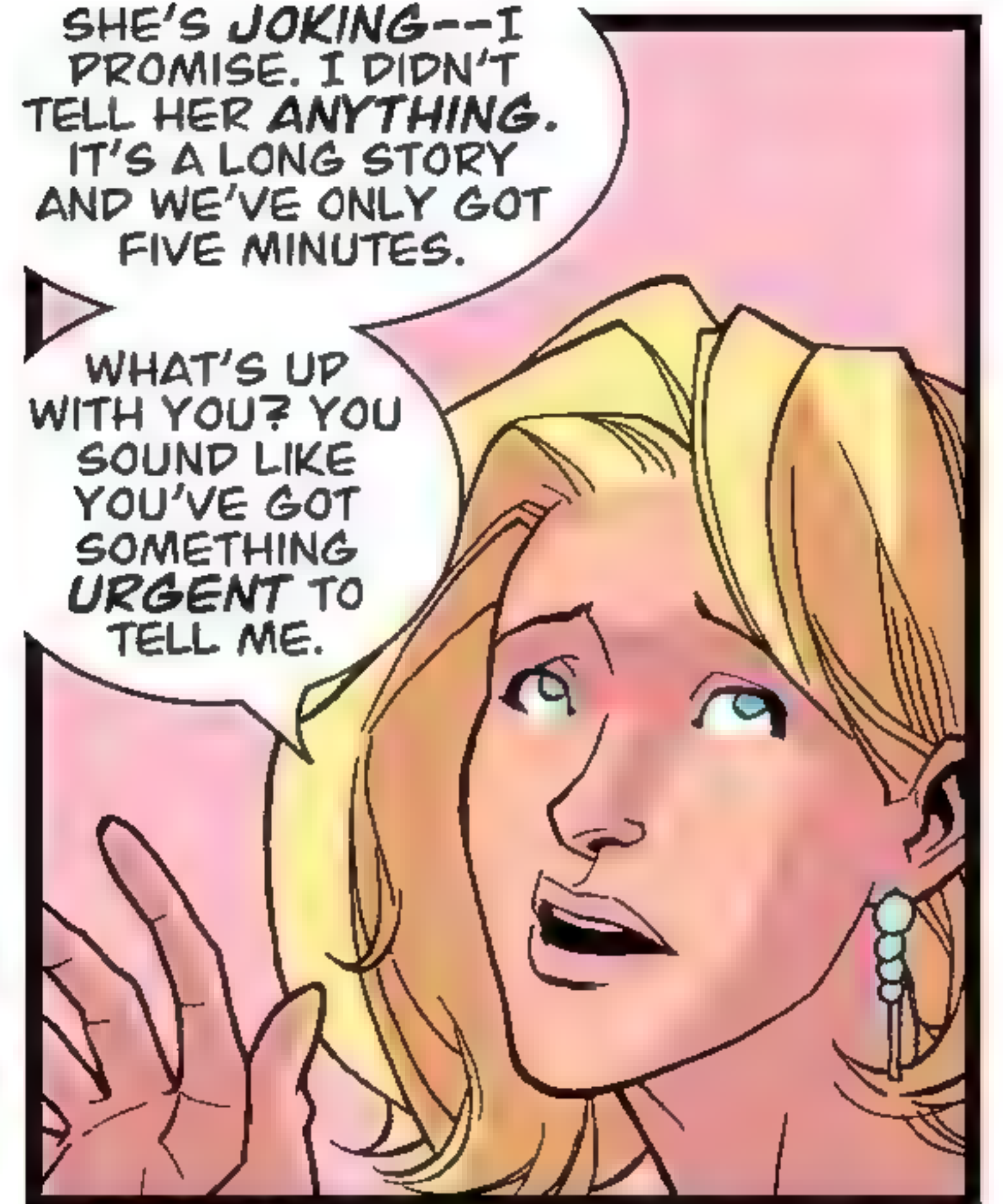
OF COURSE I WILL. BUT I NEED TO EXPLAIN TO MY MOTHER WHAT'S GOING ON AND TELL PEOPLE WHERE I'LL BE. WILL YOU GIVE ME SOME TIME TO DO THAT?

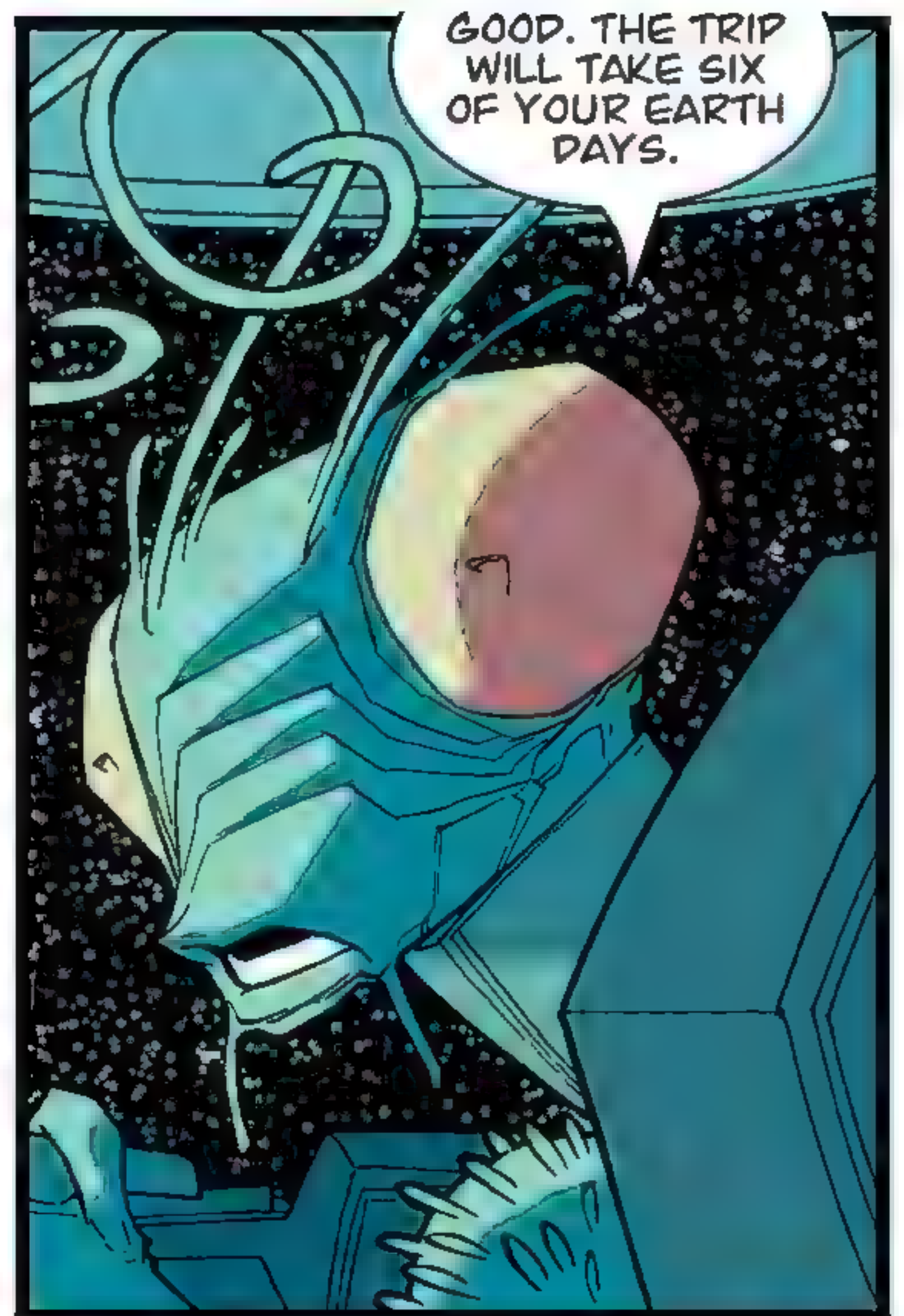
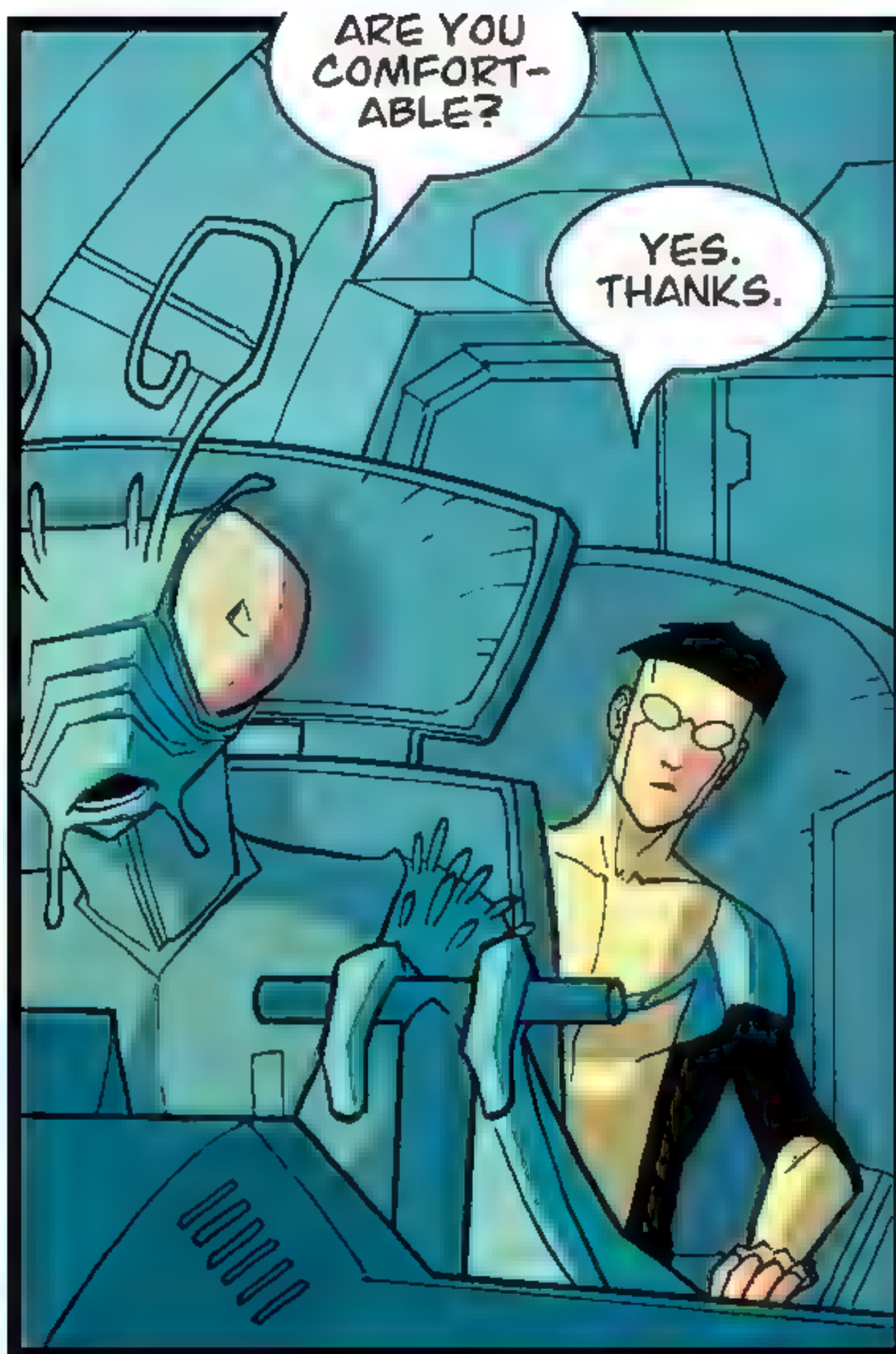
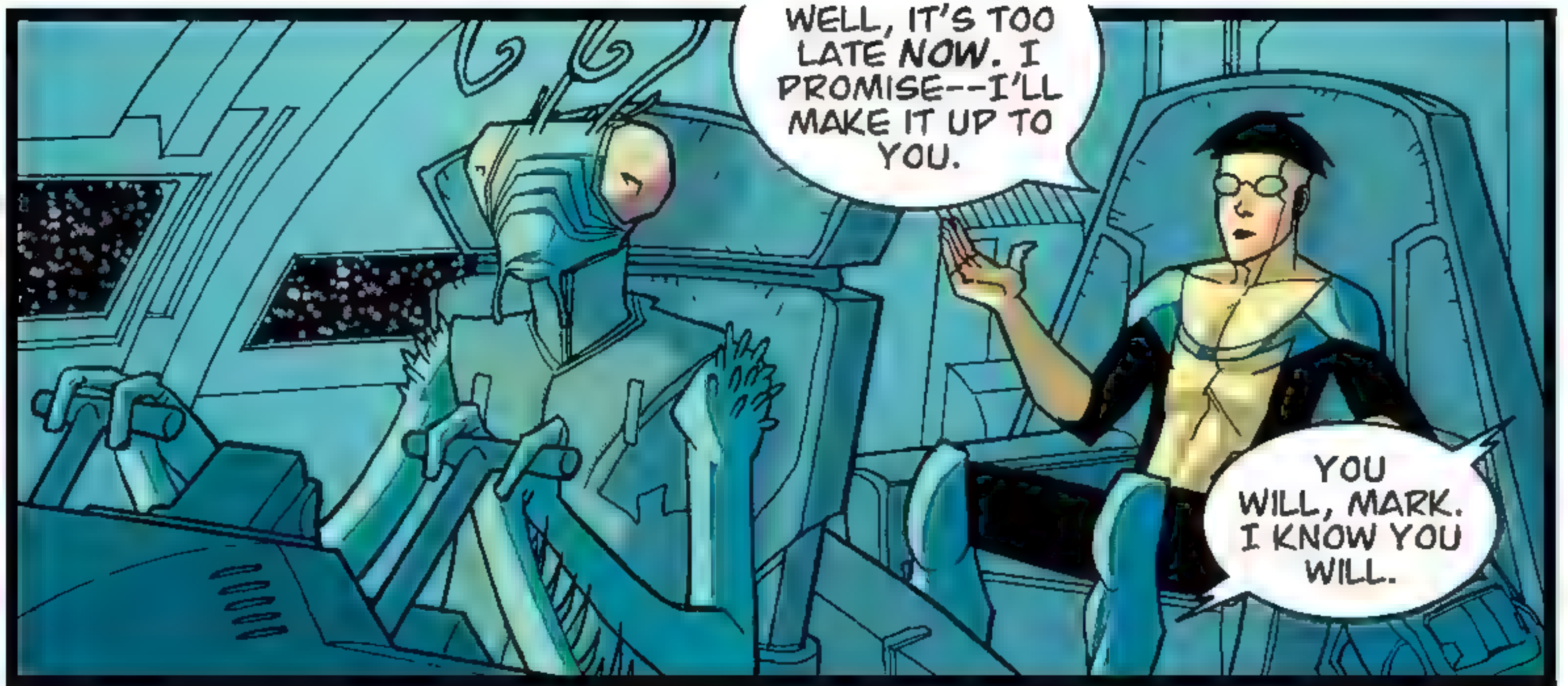
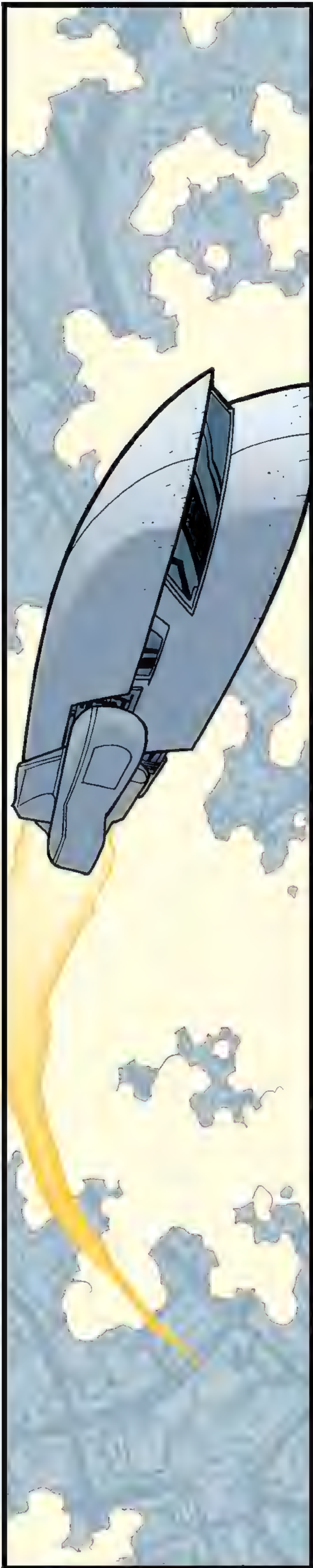
I CAN MEET YOU BACK HERE IN--TWENTY MINUTES OR SO?

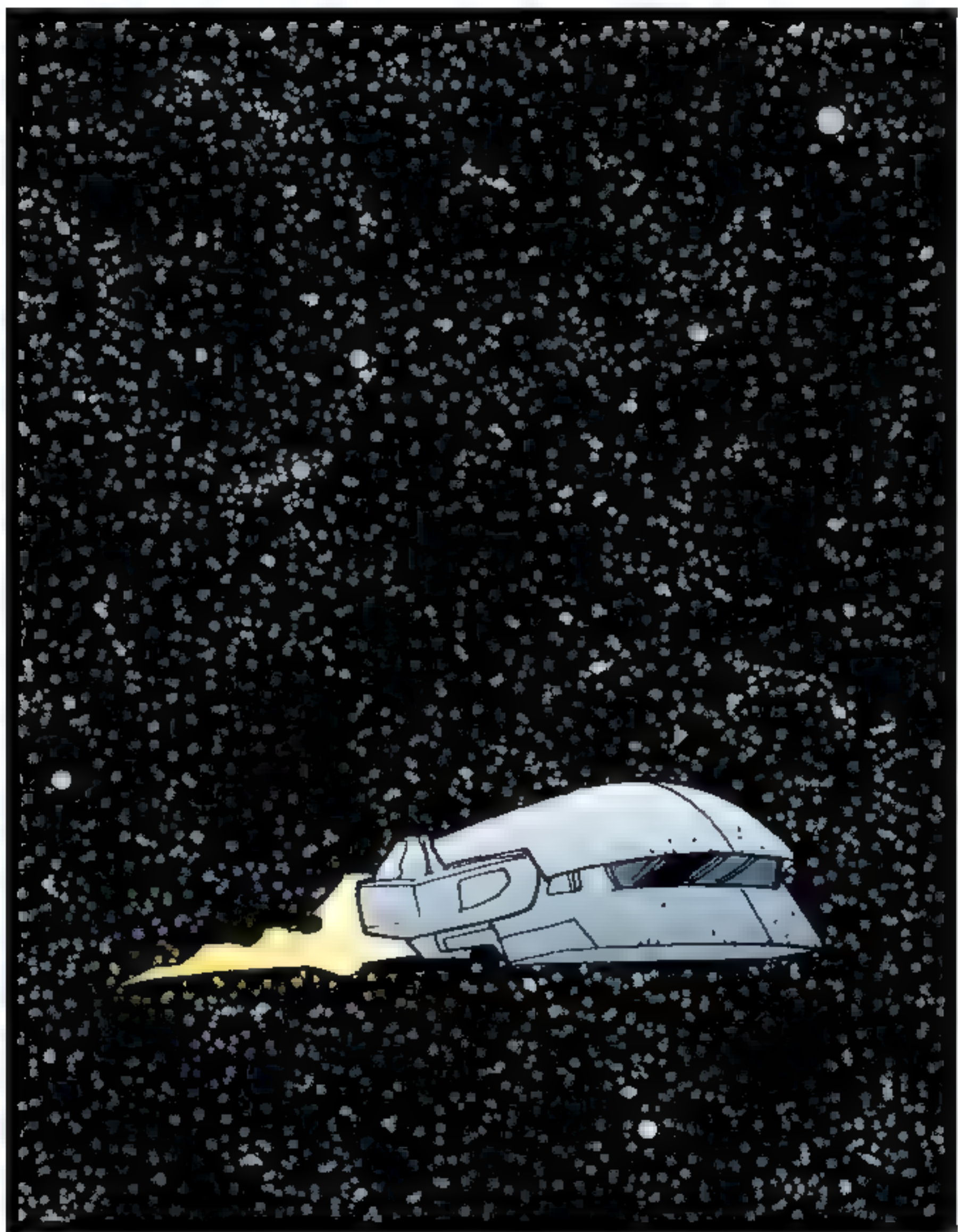
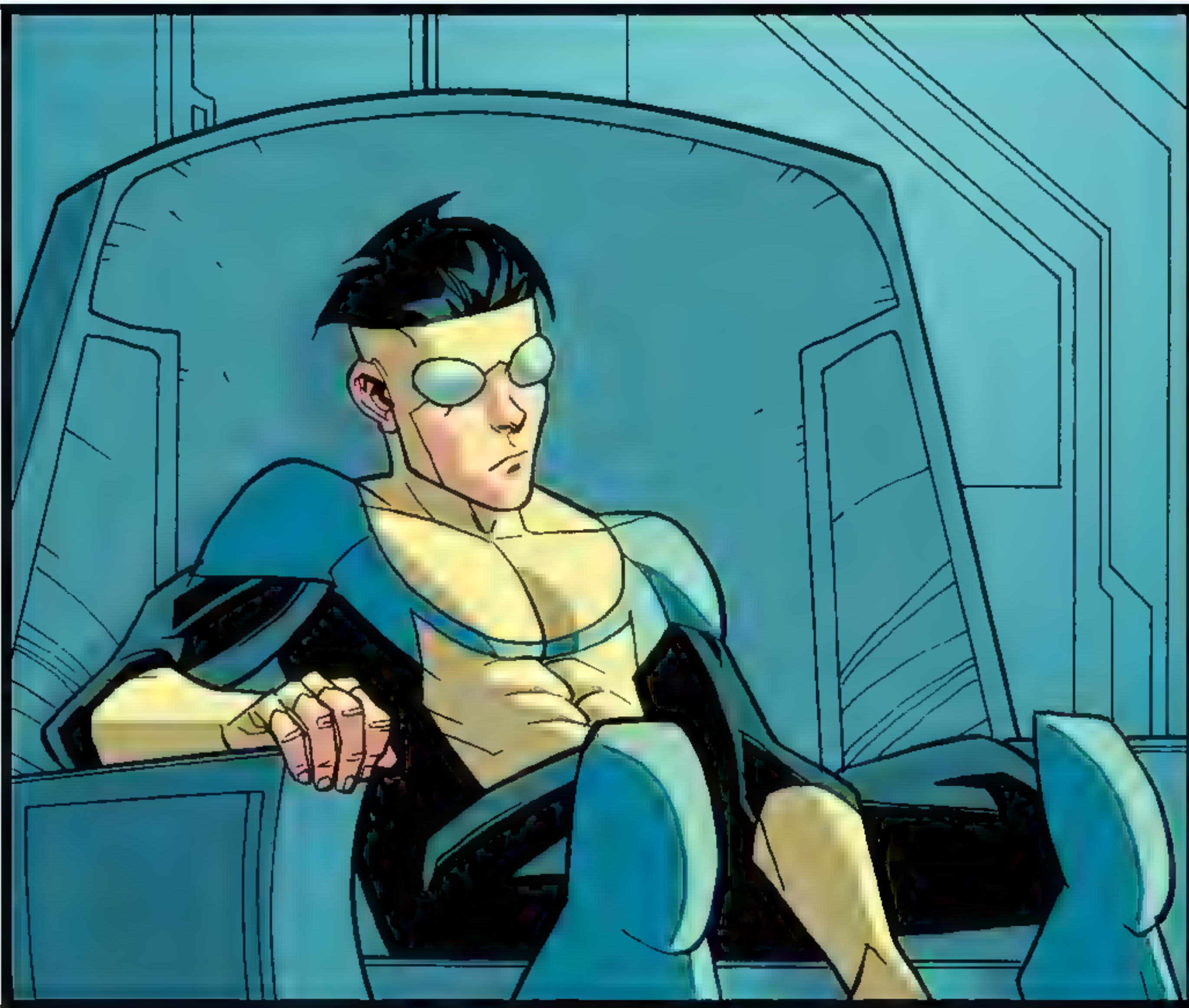
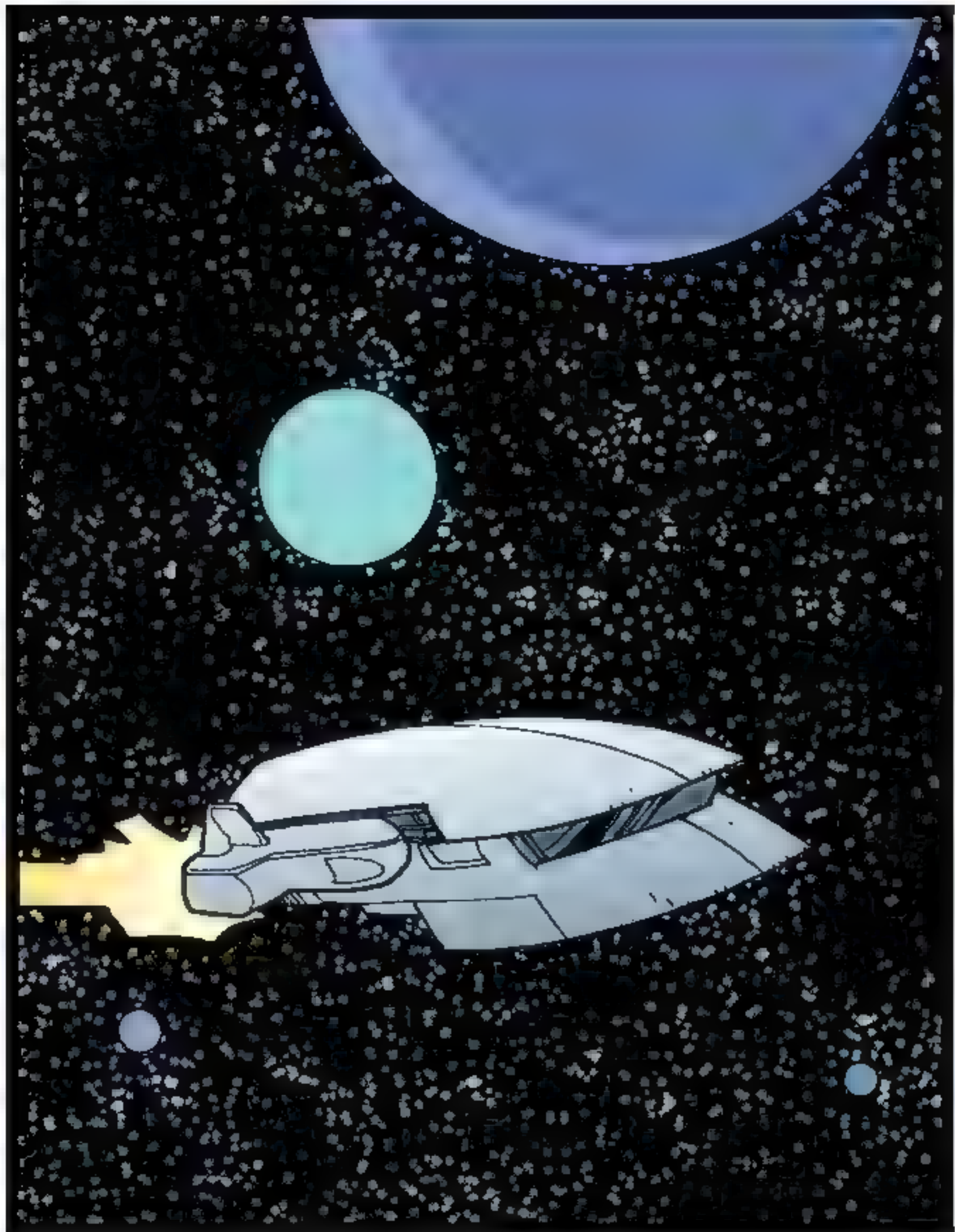
THAT IS ACCEPT-ABLE.

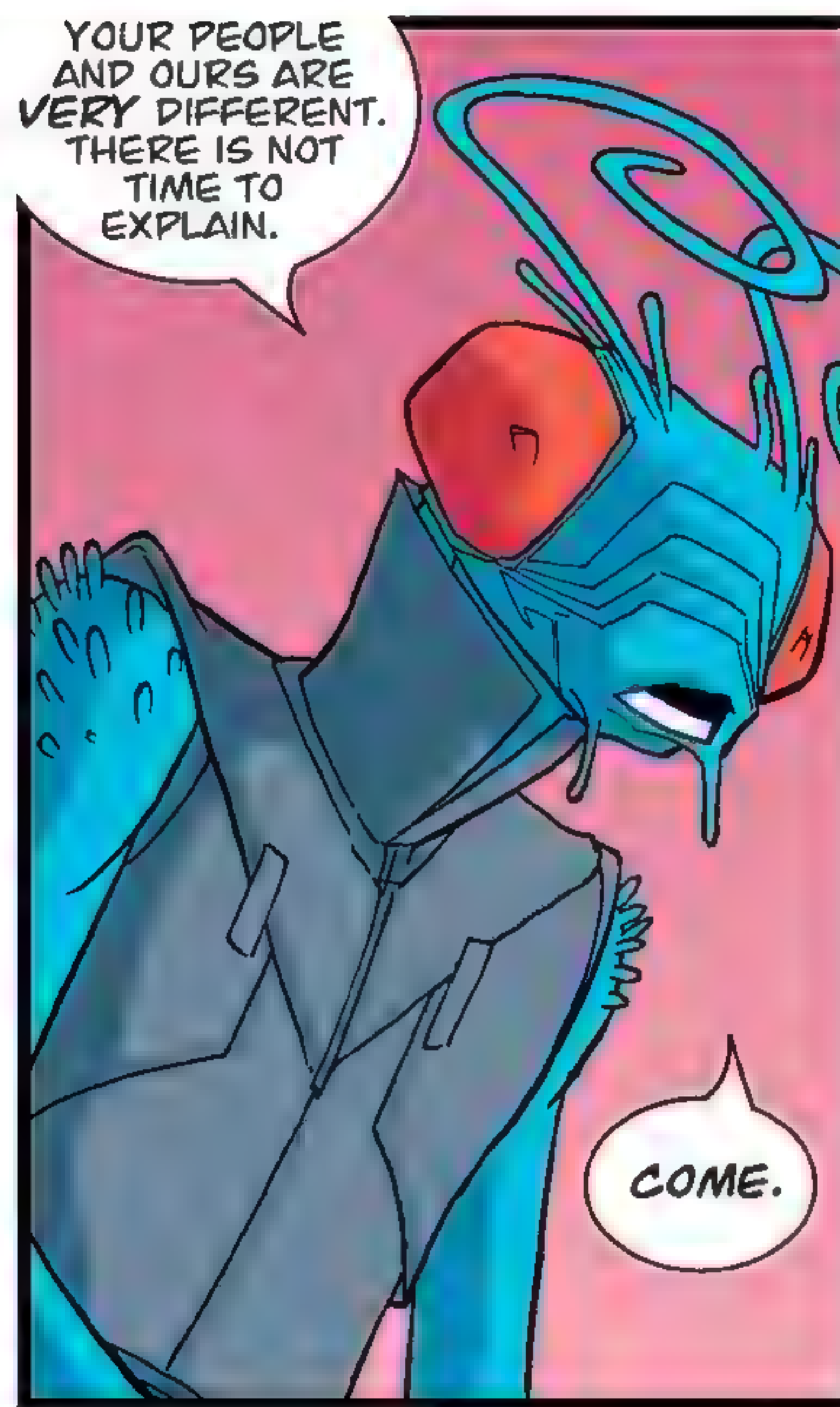
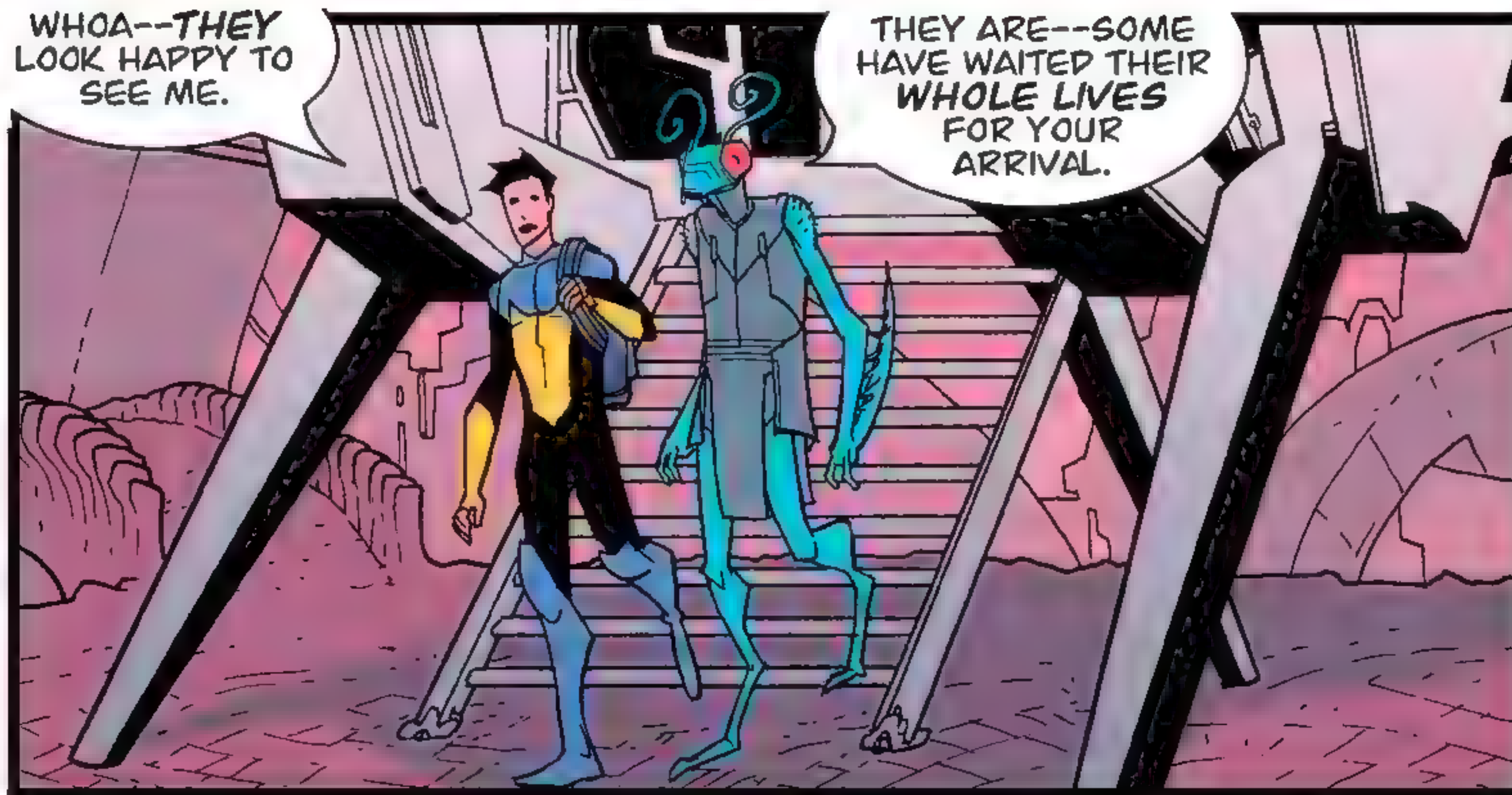
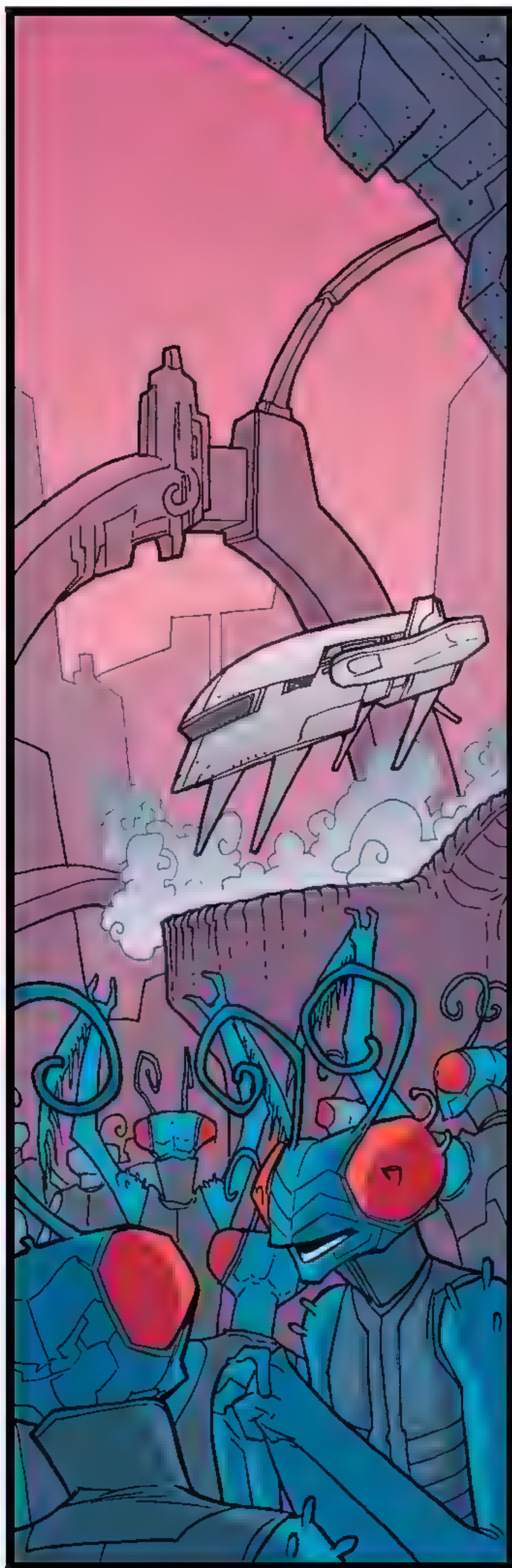
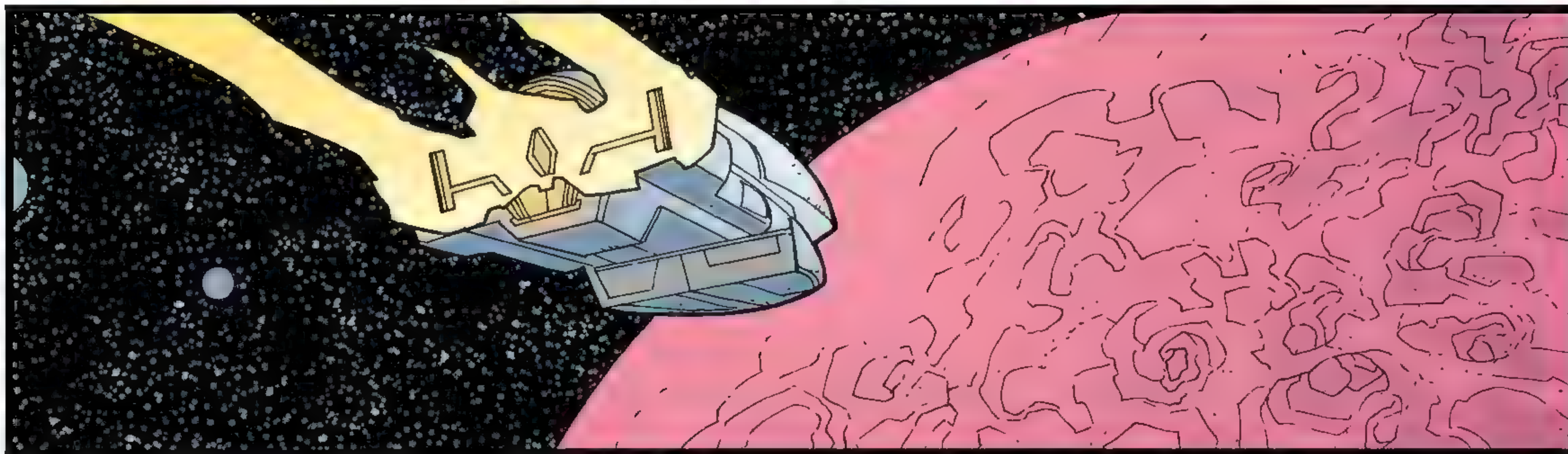


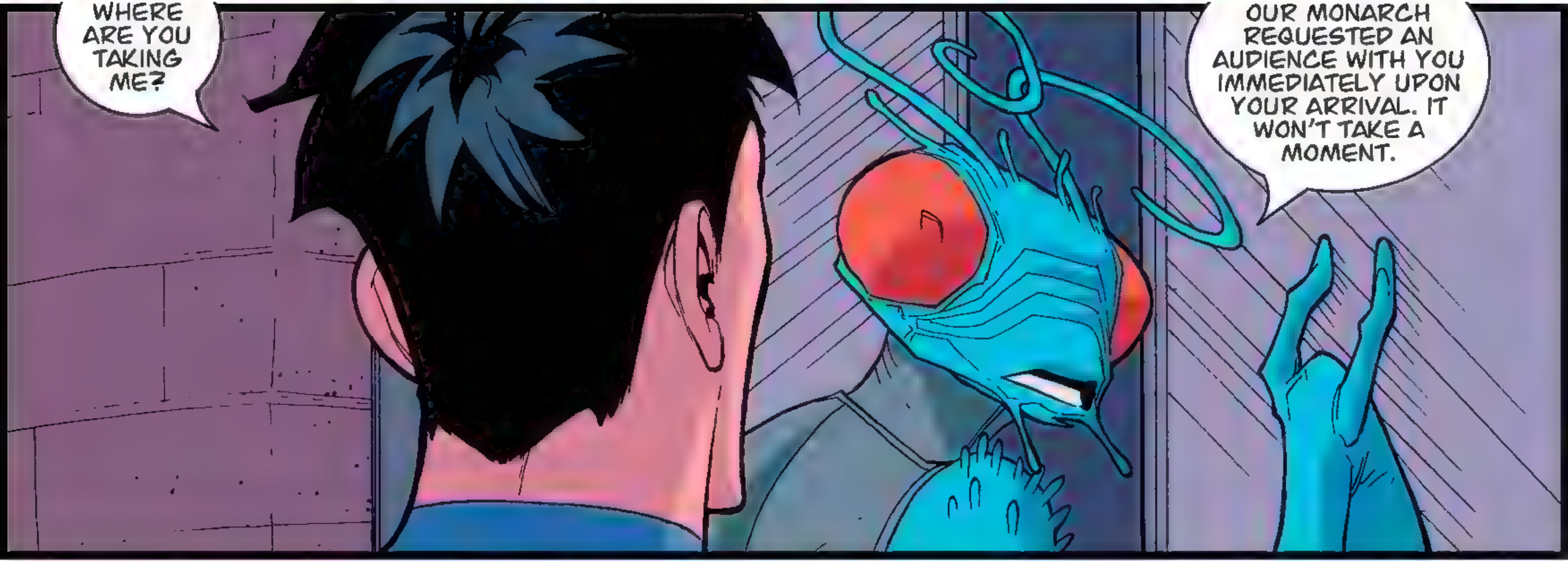
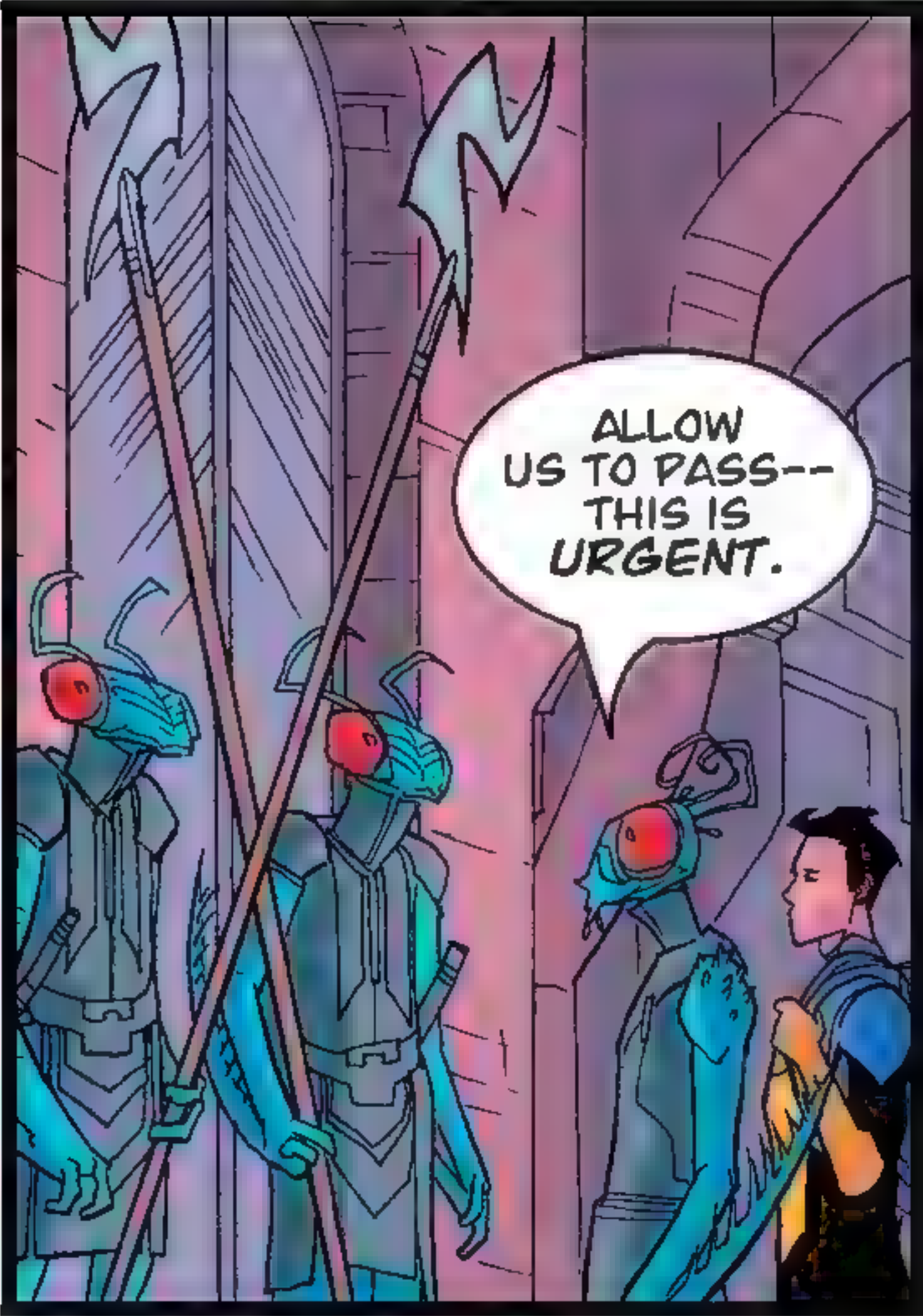
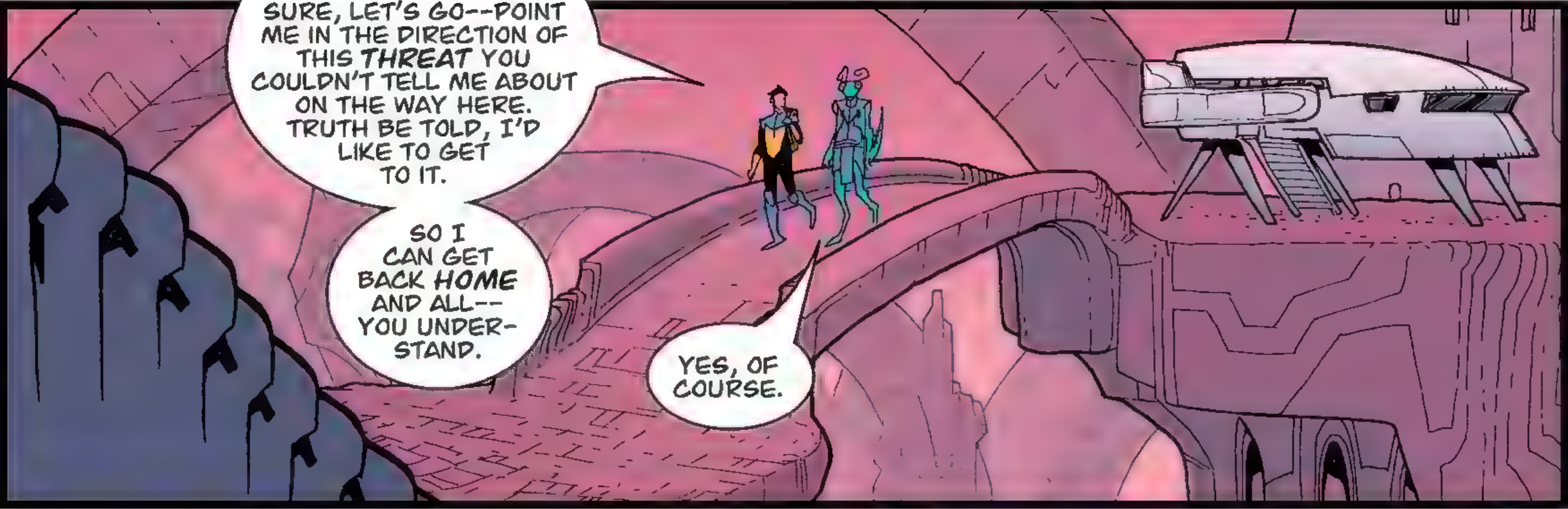








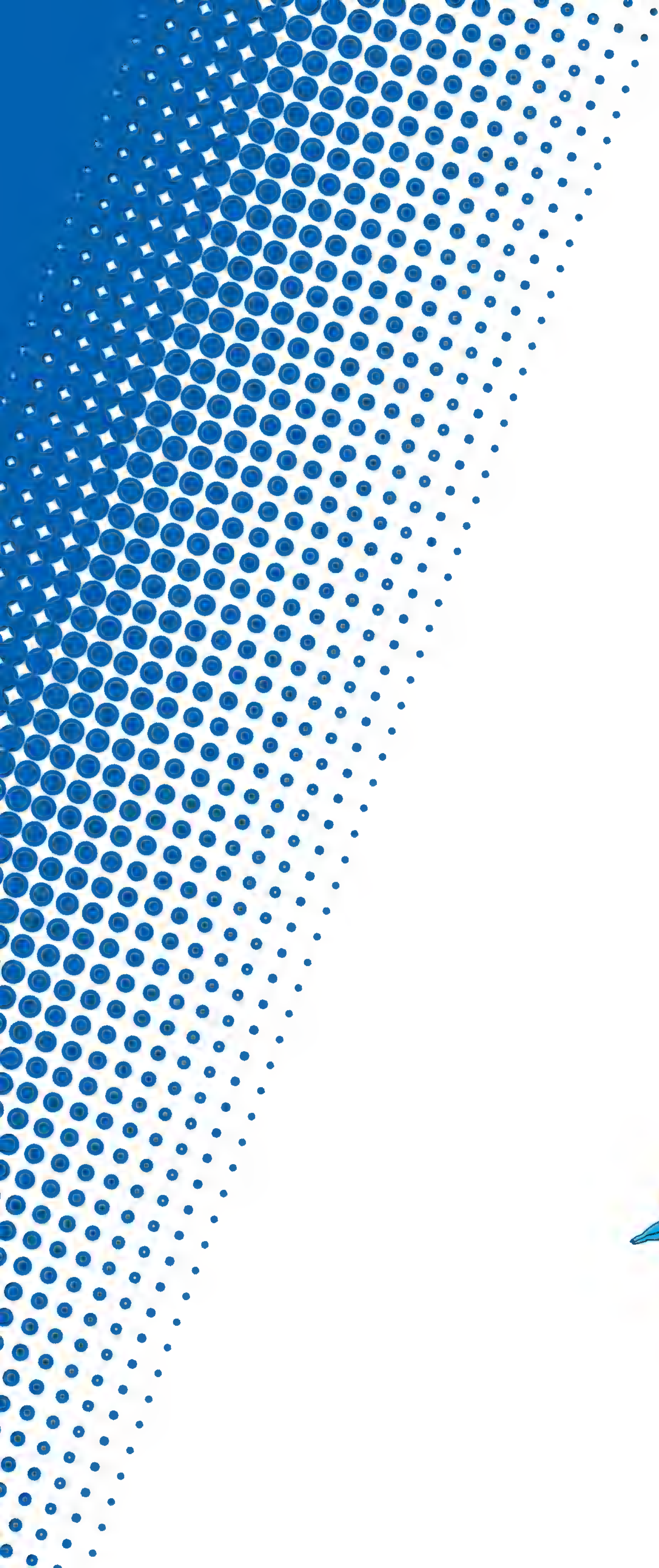






HELLO,
SON. IT'S
BEEN A
WHILE.

YOU'RE
LOOKING
WELL.

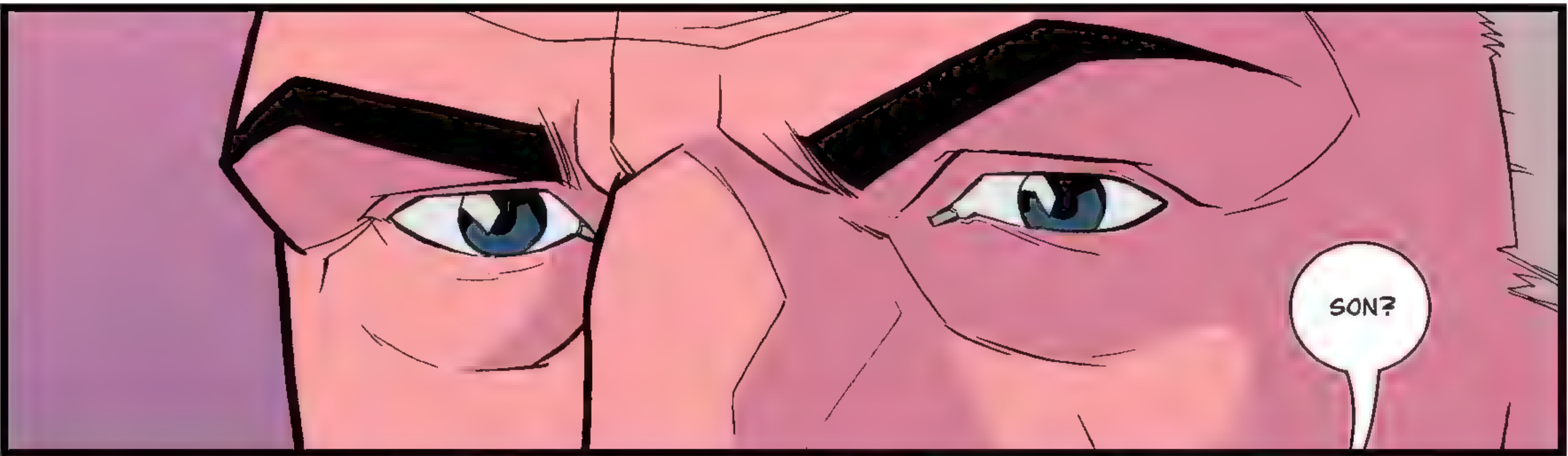
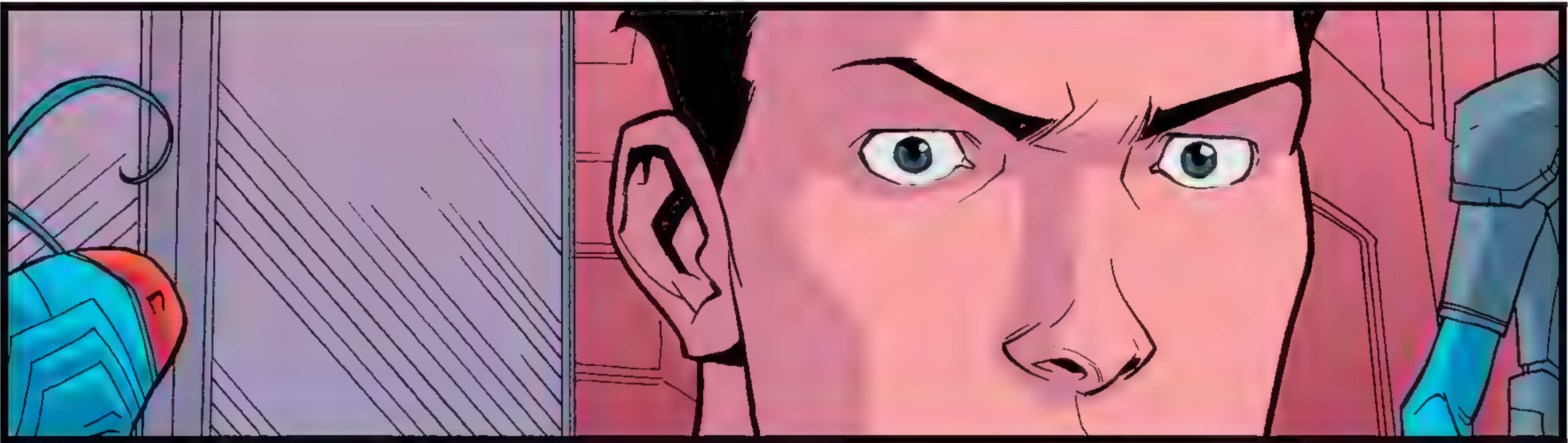
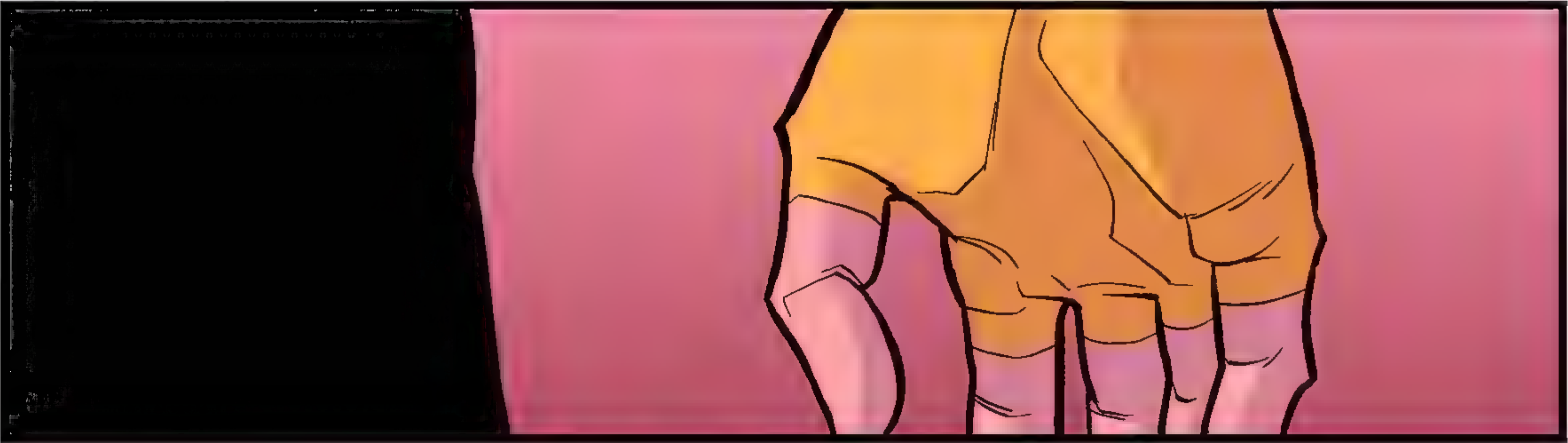


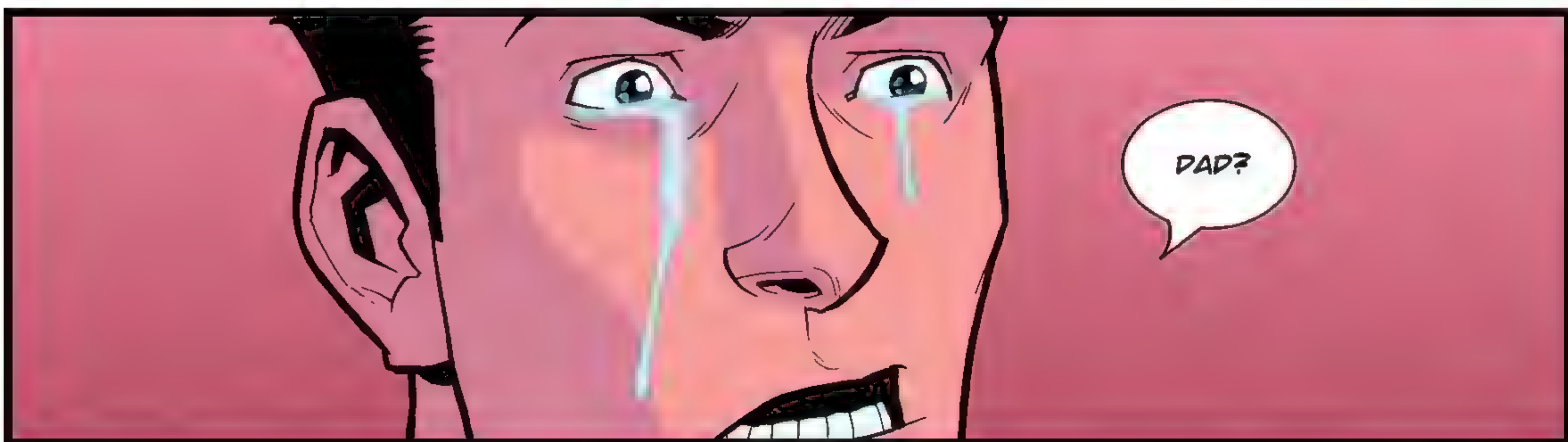
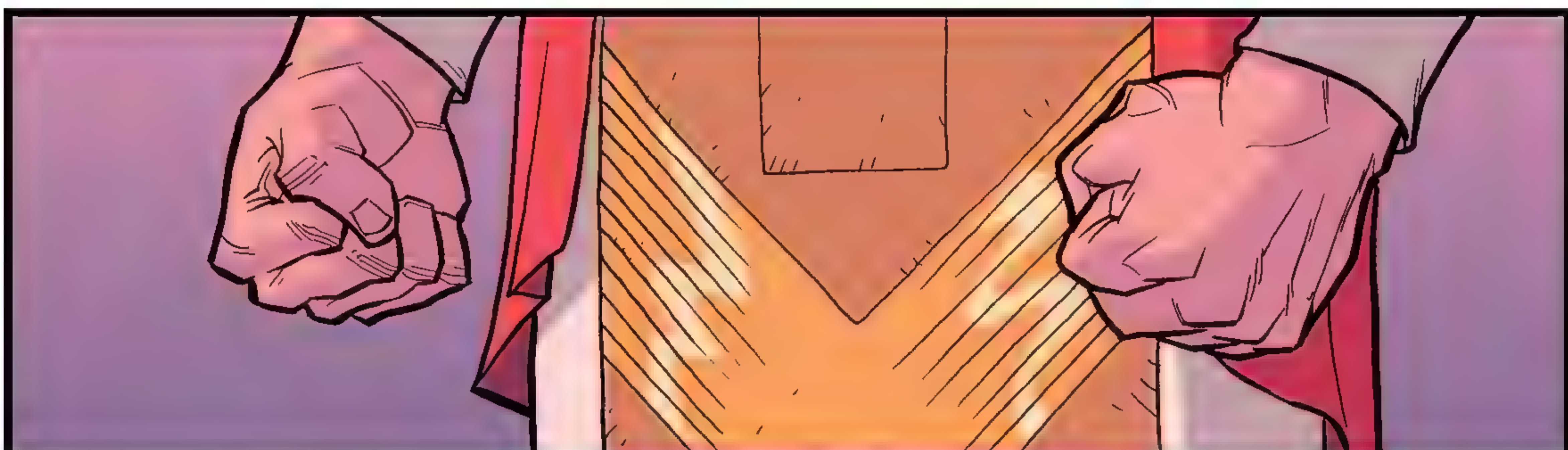
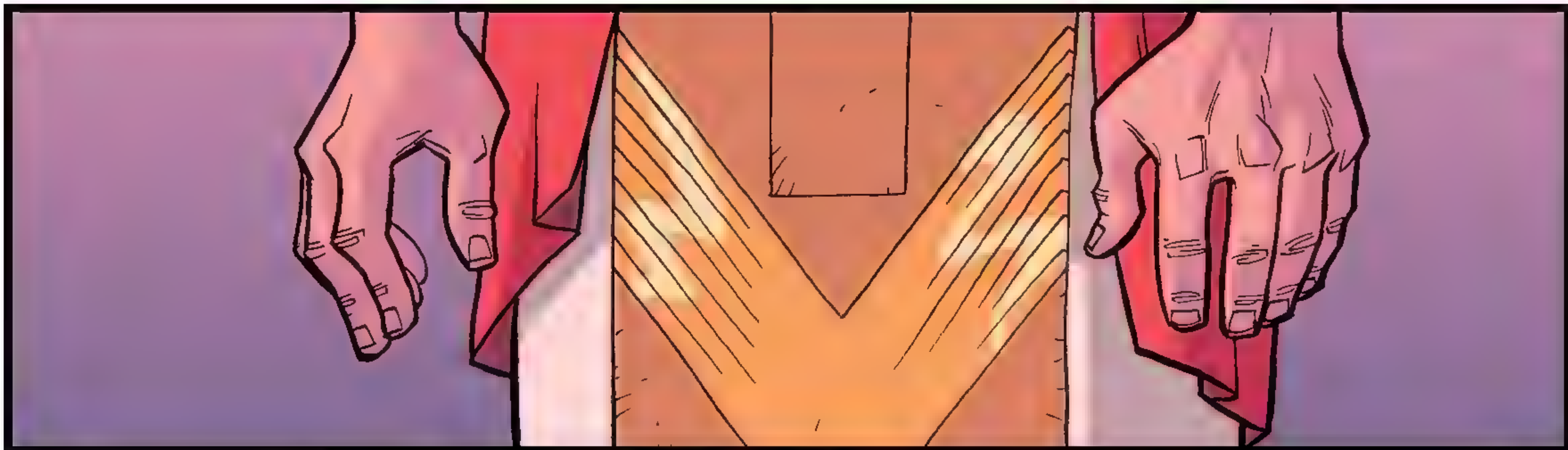
ISSUE TWENTY-SIX



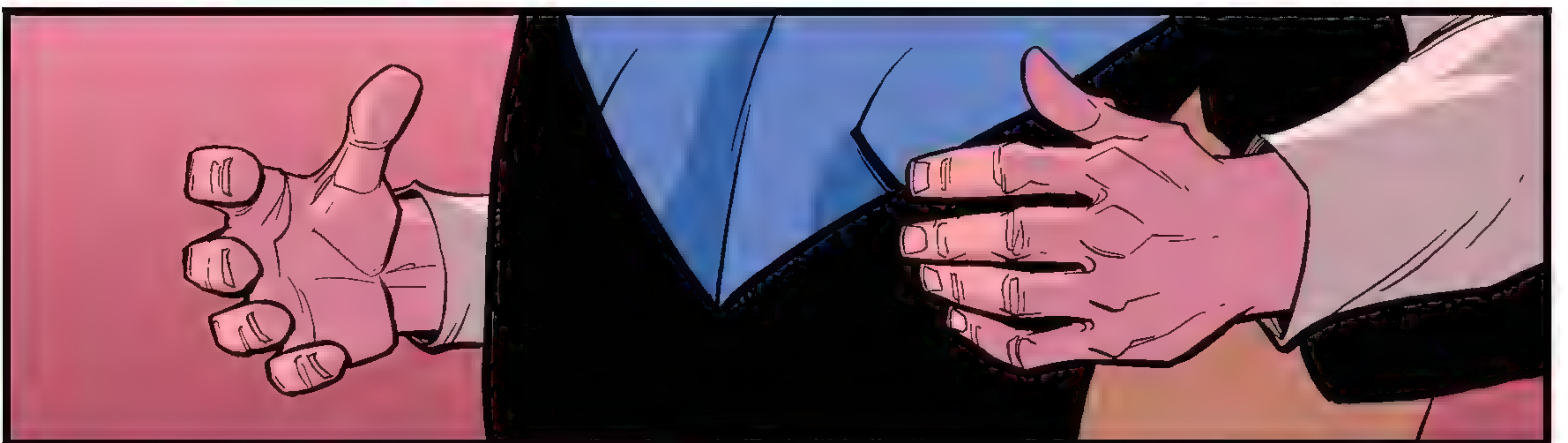
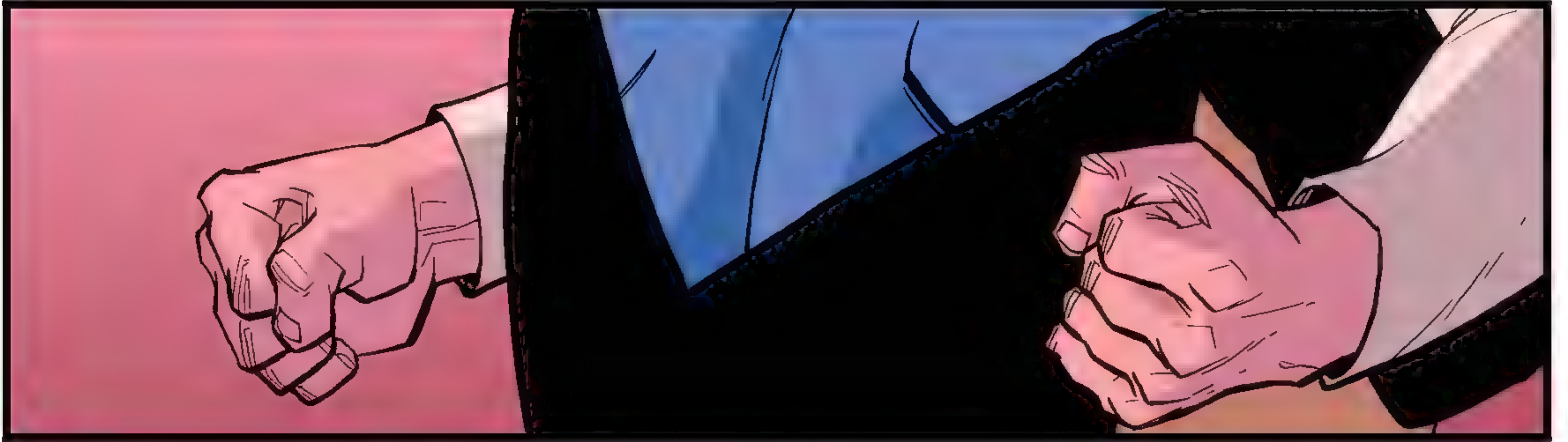
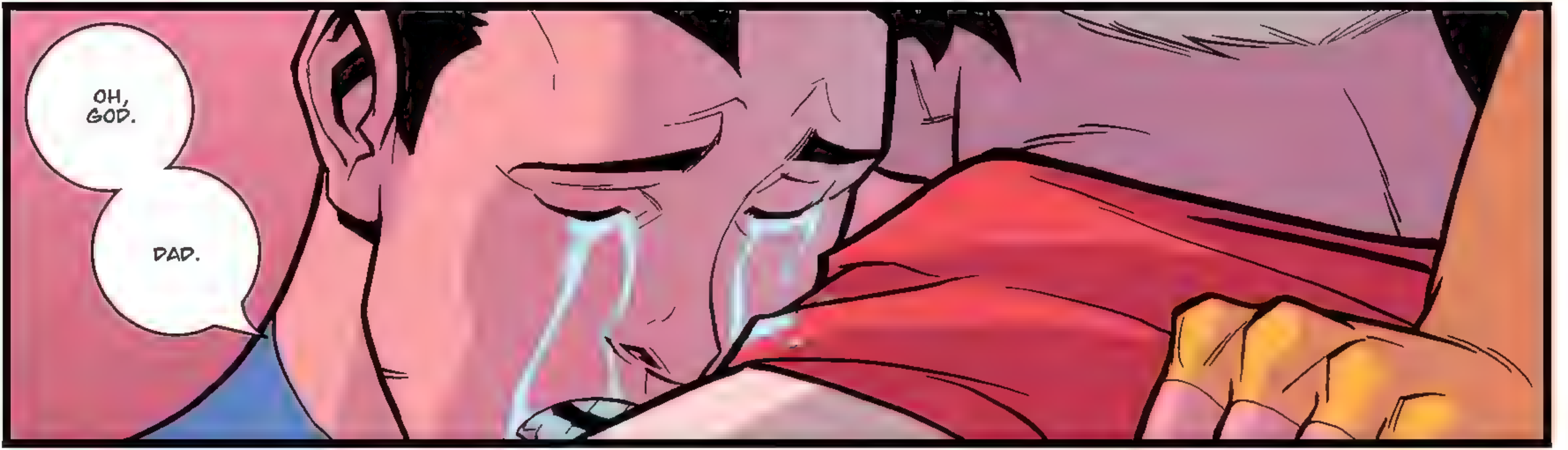


DAD?

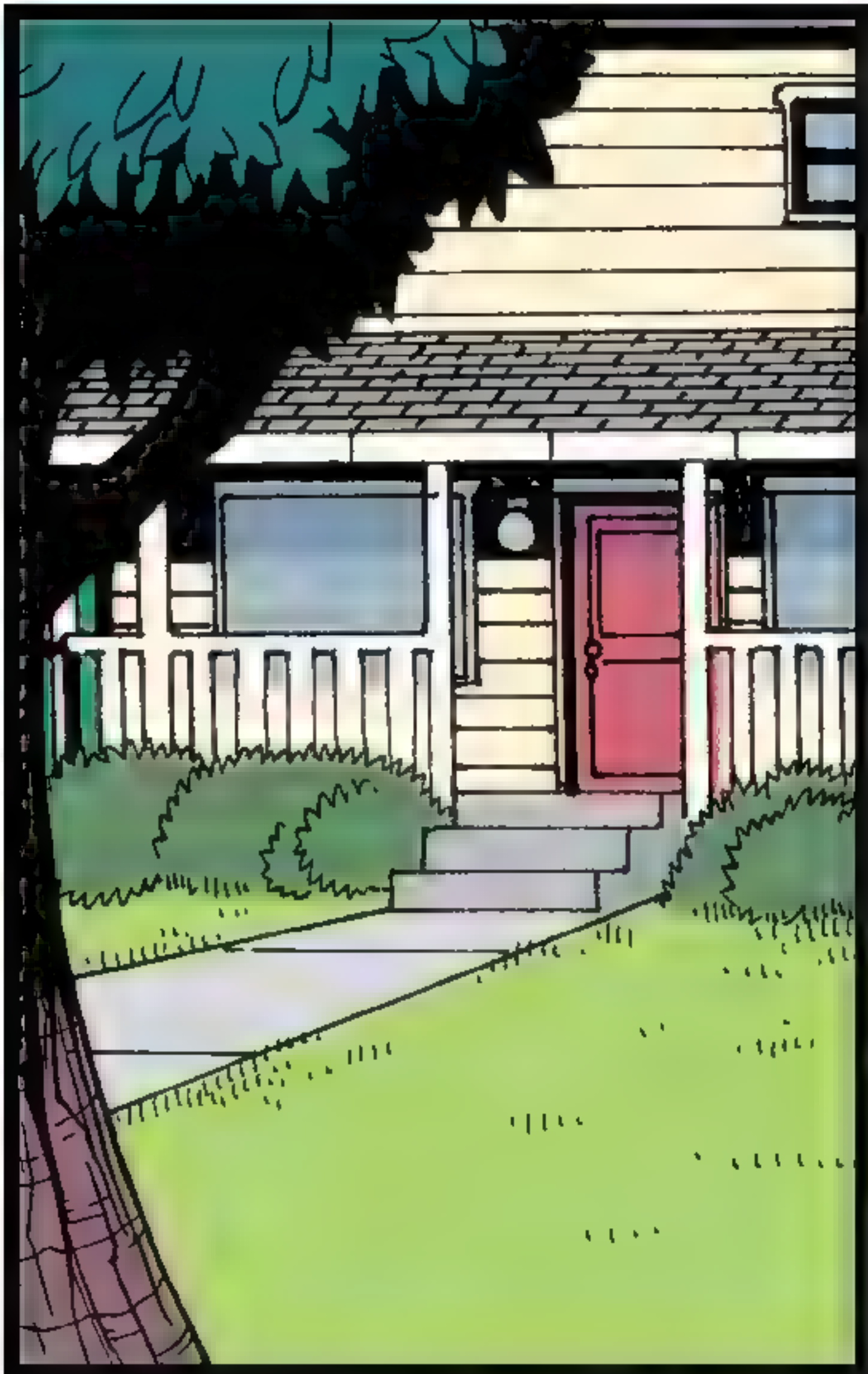












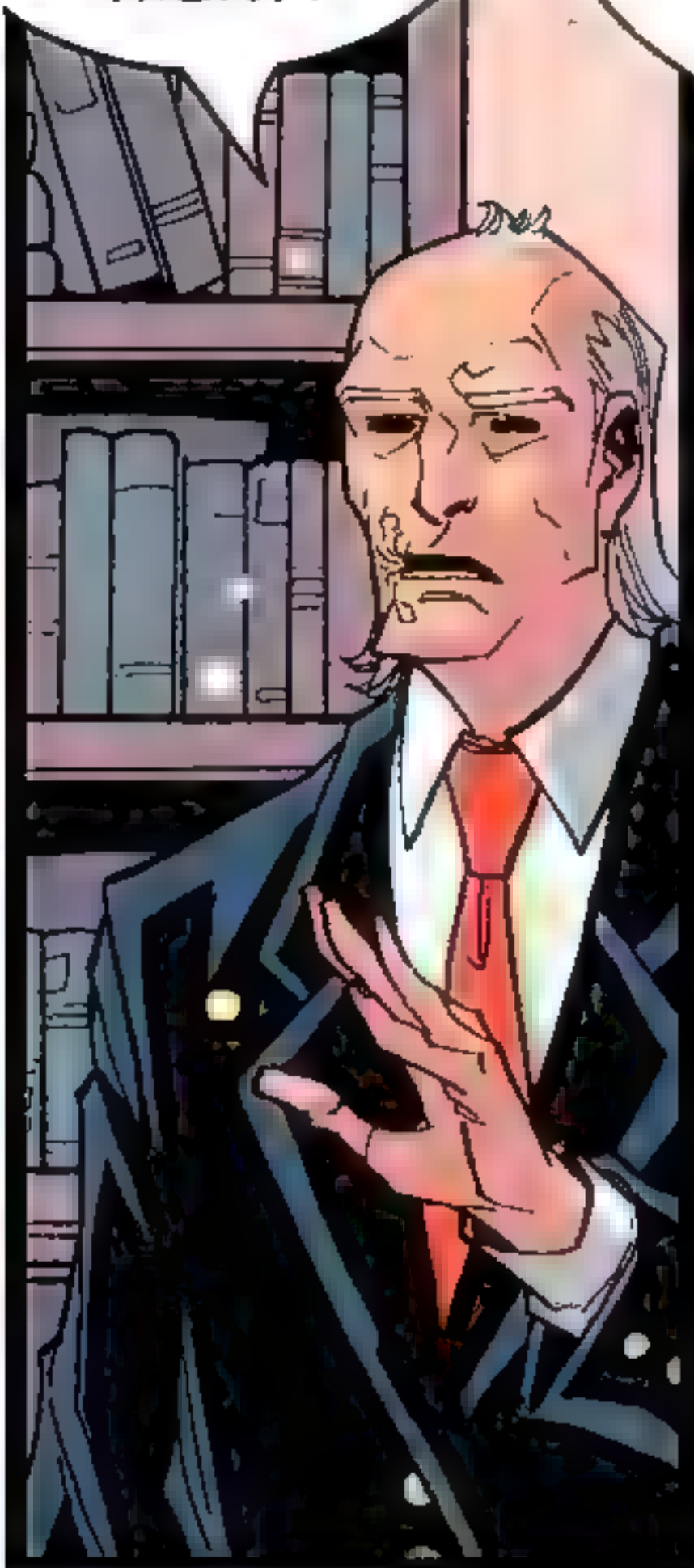
OKAY--I THINK THAT'S EVERYTHING. I CAN DO A LITTLE STUDYING AT RED LIGHTS ON THE WAY--AND I'LL HAVE TWENTY MINUTES ONCE I GET THERE TO LOOK OVER THINGS ONE LAST TIME BEFORE THE EXAM STARTS.

YOU'RE GOING TO PASS, DEBBIE. DON'T WORRY--YOU'RE GOING TO PASS.



GREETINGS FROM THE US GOVERNMENT.

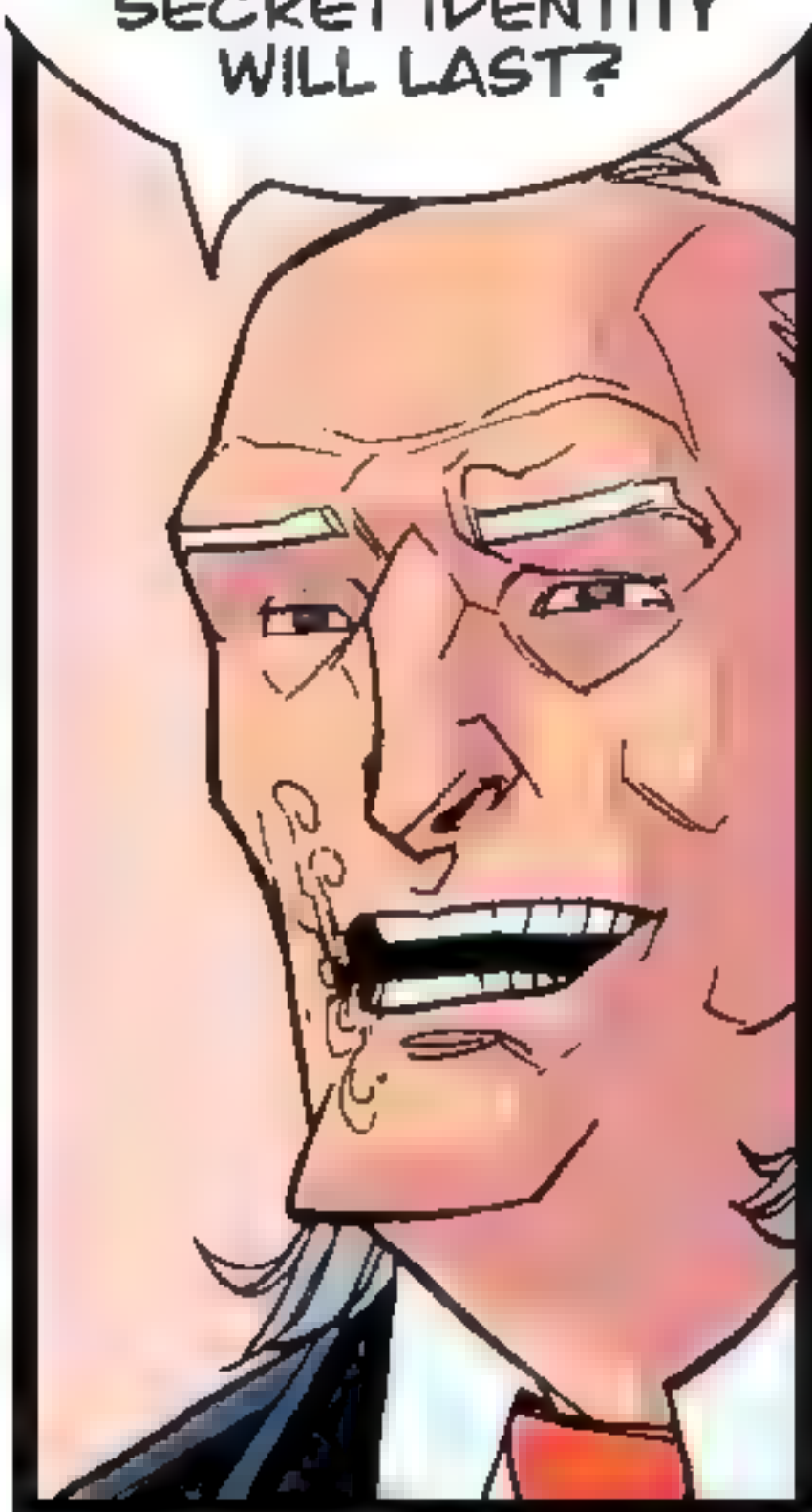
MISTER STEPMAN! HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU NOT TO TELEPORT DIRECTLY INTO THE HOUSE?



YOU'RE GOING TO GIVE SOMEONE A HEART ATTACK.



MISS GRAYSON. HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU TO CALL ME CECIL? BESIDES, IF I START TELEPORTING INTO THE FRONT LAWN, HOW LONG DO YOU THINK YOUR SON'S SECRET IDENTITY WILL LAST?



I WOULD STILL PREFER YOU USED THE BACK YARD OR GARAGE OR SOMETHING.



WHAT IS IT YOU'RE HERE FOR? MARK IS STILL IN SPACE, ISN'T HE?

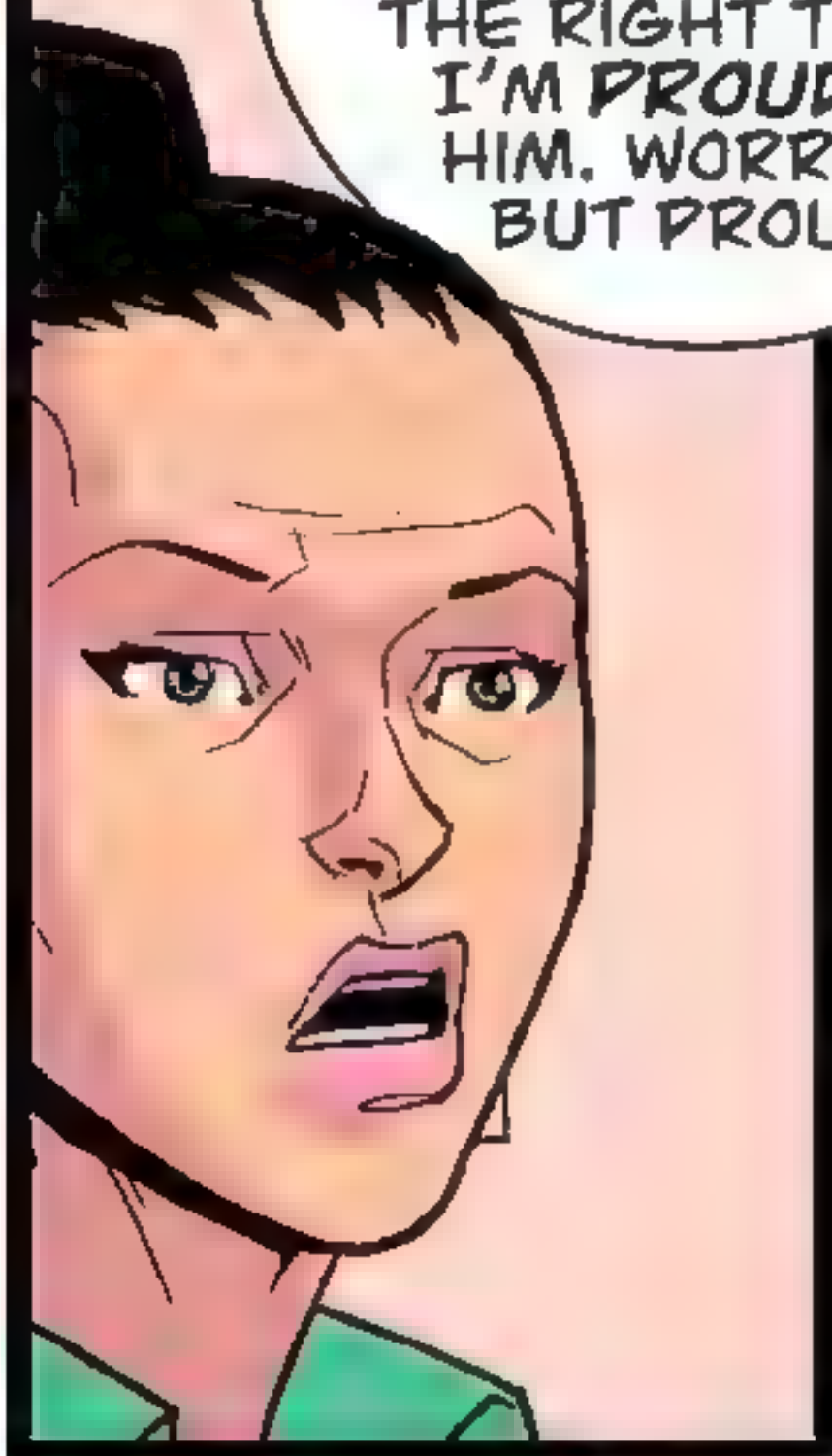
SO YOU DID GET MY MESSAGE. I'VE BEEN VERY BUSY THIS PAST WEEK AND I JUST WANTED TO APOLOGIZE FOR NOT CONTACTING YOU IN PERSON BEFORE.

AND TO APOLOGIZE FOR ALLOWING MARK TO VENTURE OUT INTO THE UNKNOWN LIKE HE HAS. I TRIED TO STOP HIM, I ASSURE YOU.



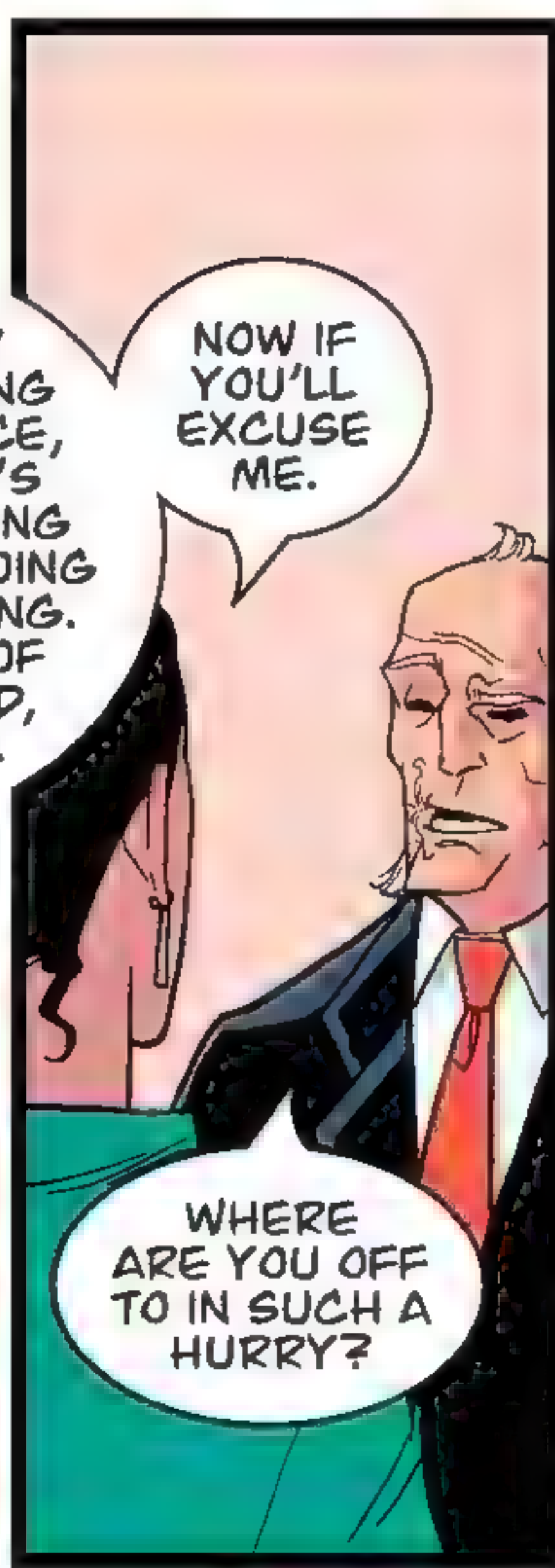
THE MAN WHO DELIVERED THE MESSAGE, DONALD--I THINK, WAS VERY KIND.

AND AS FAR AS MARK GOING OUT INTO SPACE, HE THINKS IT'S THE RIGHT THING AND SO HE'S DOING THE RIGHT THING. I'M PROUD OF HIM. WORRIED, BUT PROUD.



NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME.

WHERE ARE YOU OFF TO IN SUCH A HURRY?



I'VE GOT THE FINAL EXAM FOR MY REAL ESTATE CLASS TODAY. I THOUGHT YOU GOVERNMENT TYPES KNEW EVERYTHING.

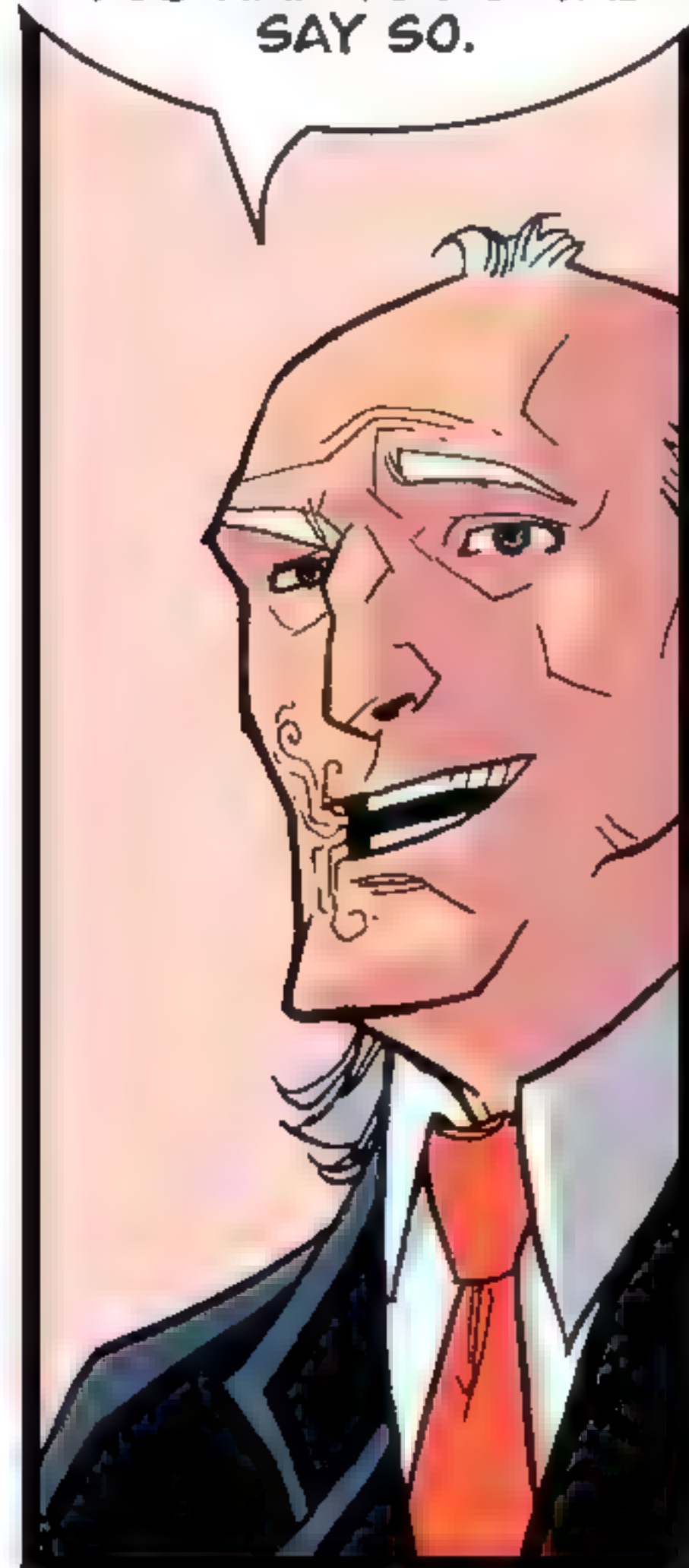
REAL ESTATE--AREN'T WE PAYING YOU ENOUGH?

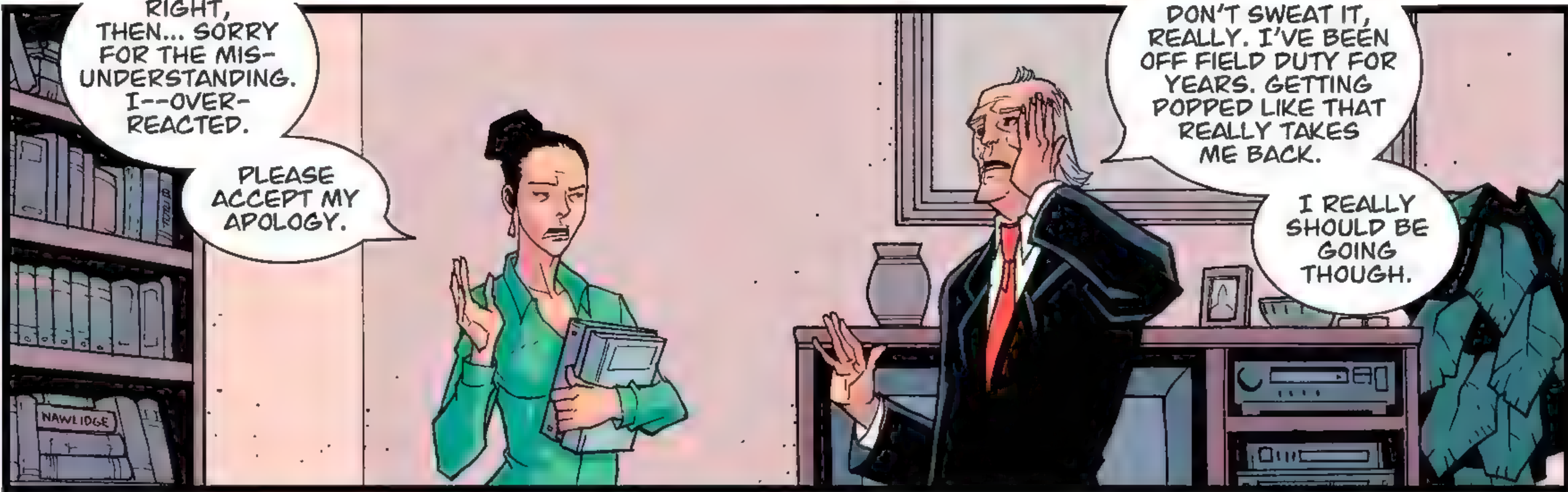
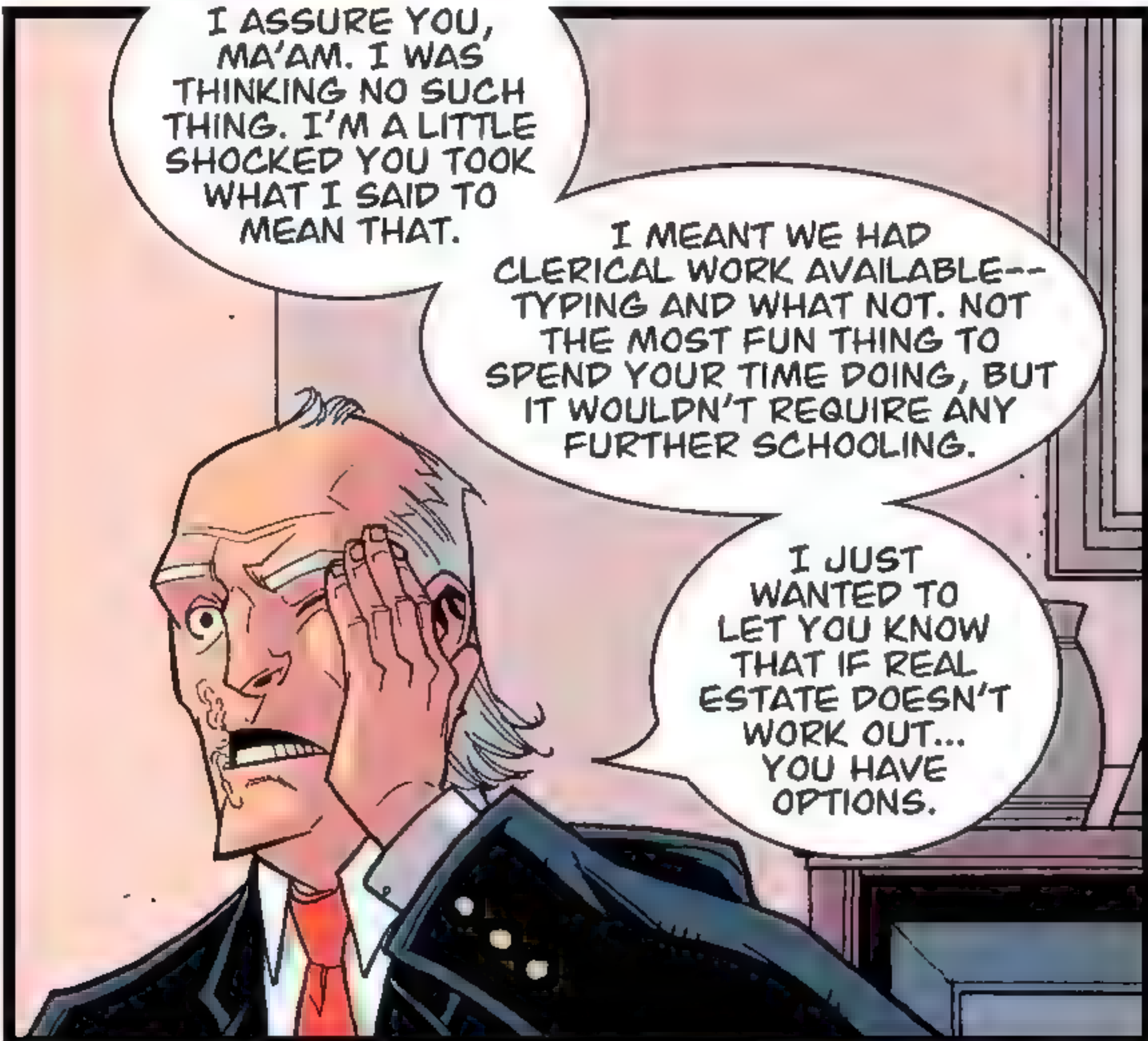


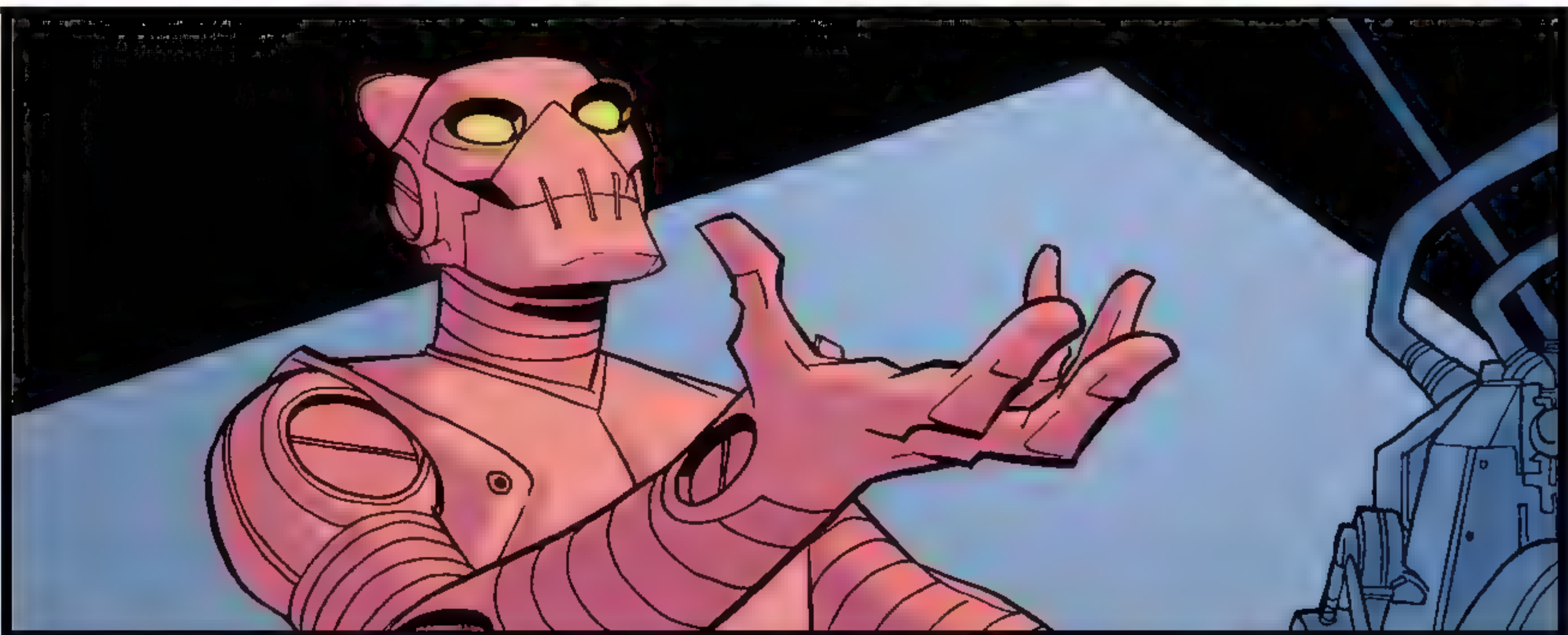
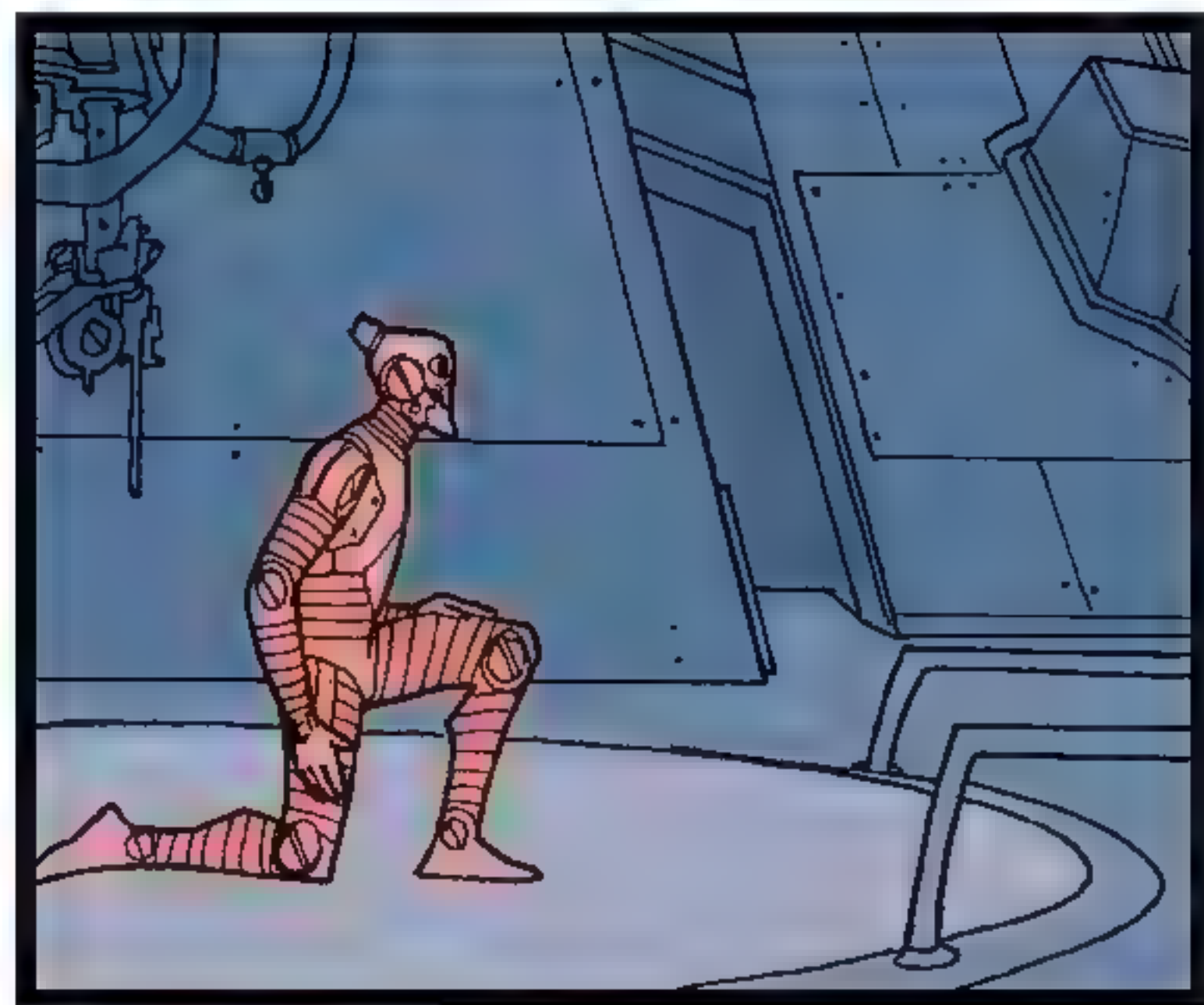
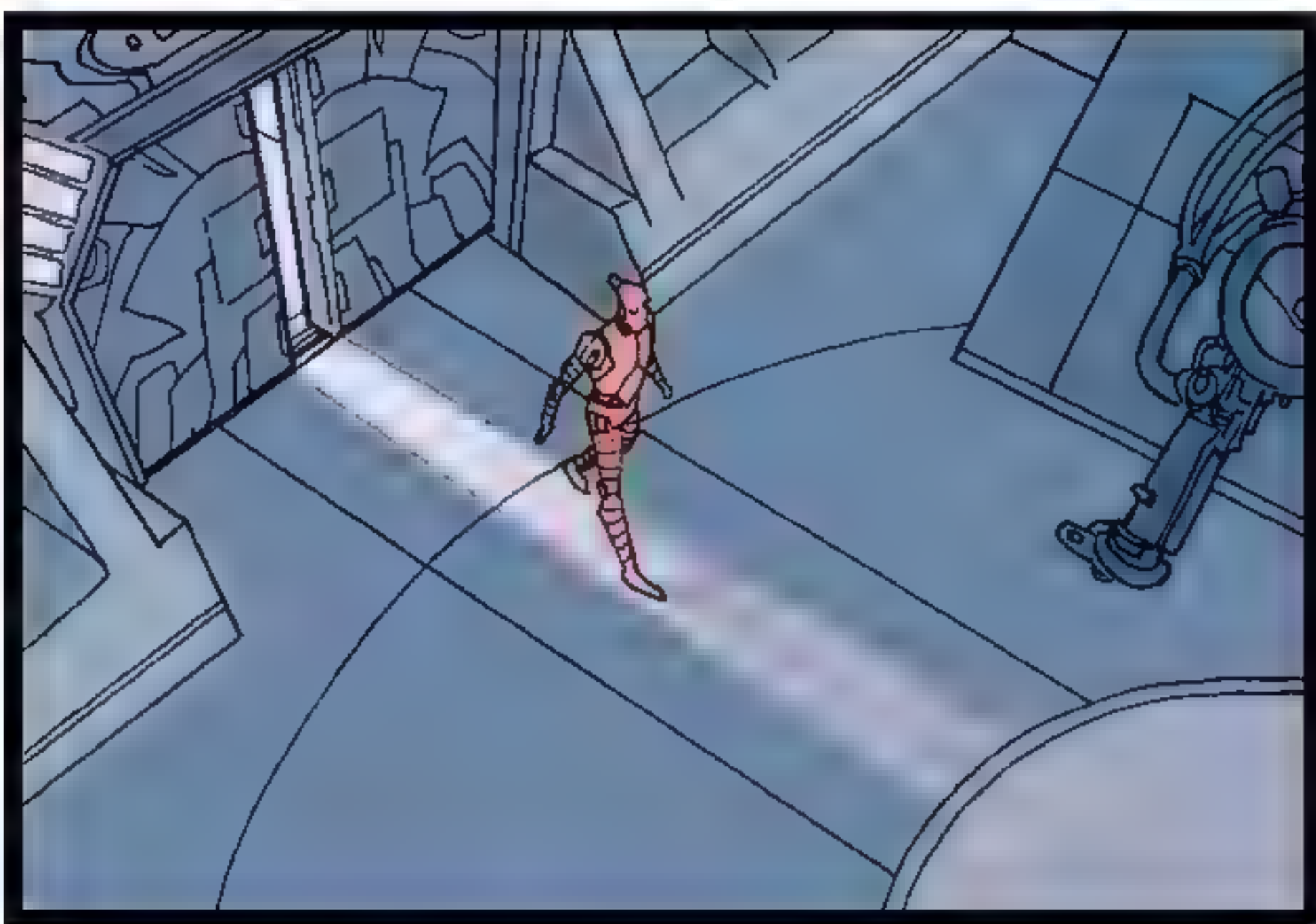
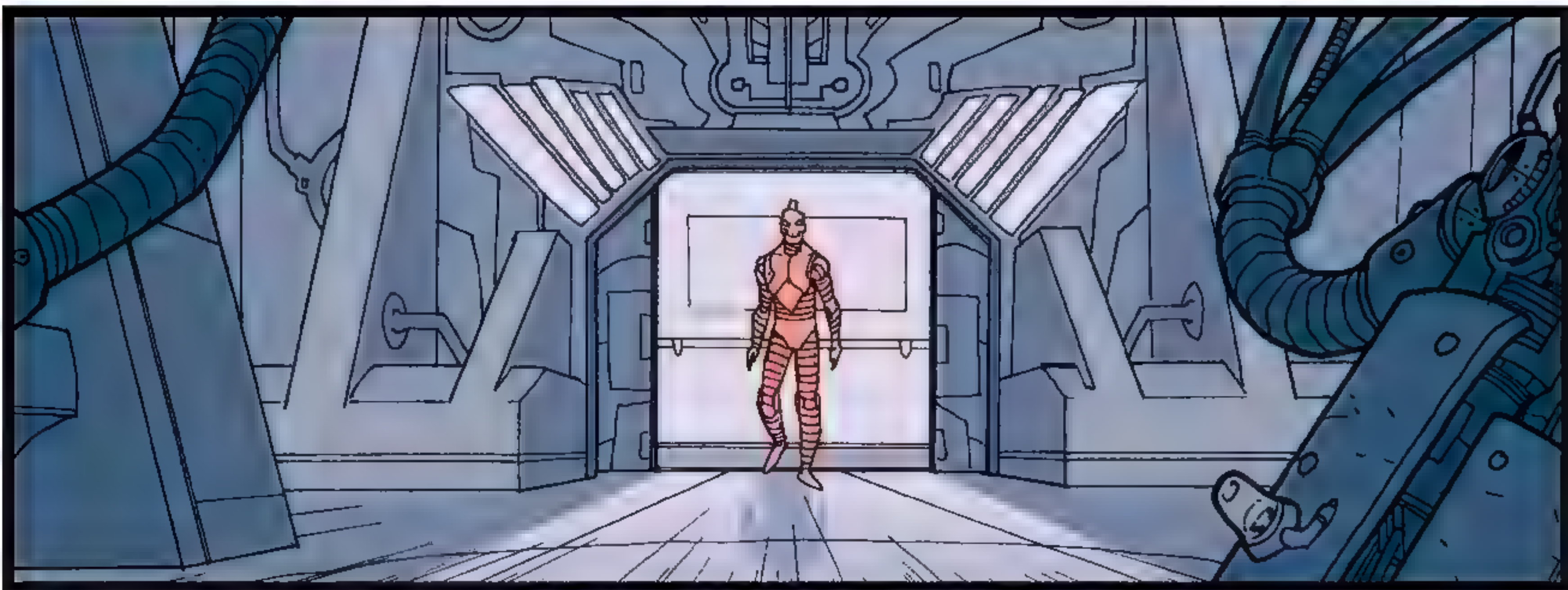
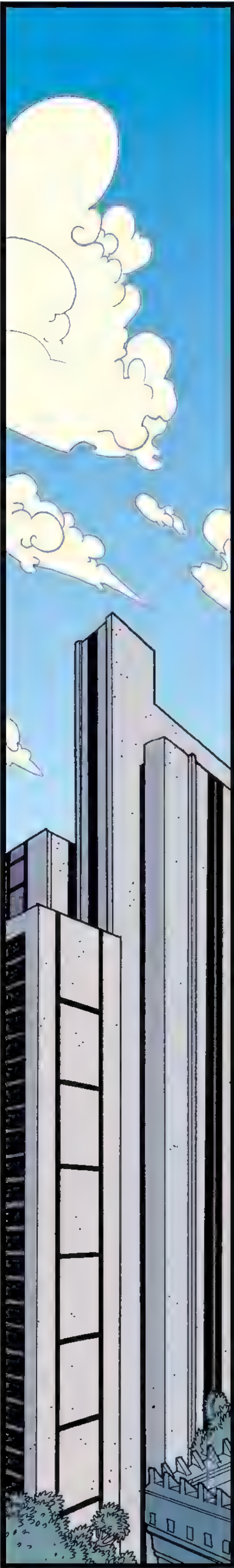
THAT'S NOT IT AT ALL. I JUST NEED SOMETHING TO DO WITH MY TIME. SOMETHING TO KEEP ME BUSY.

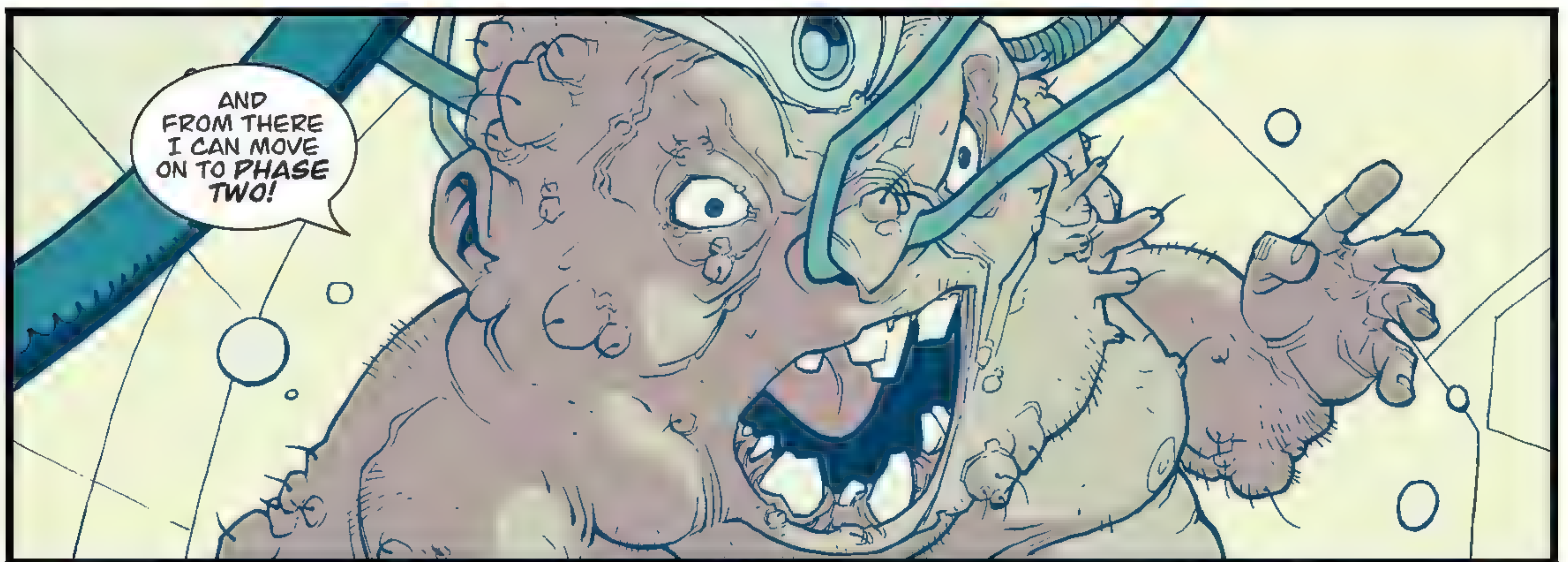
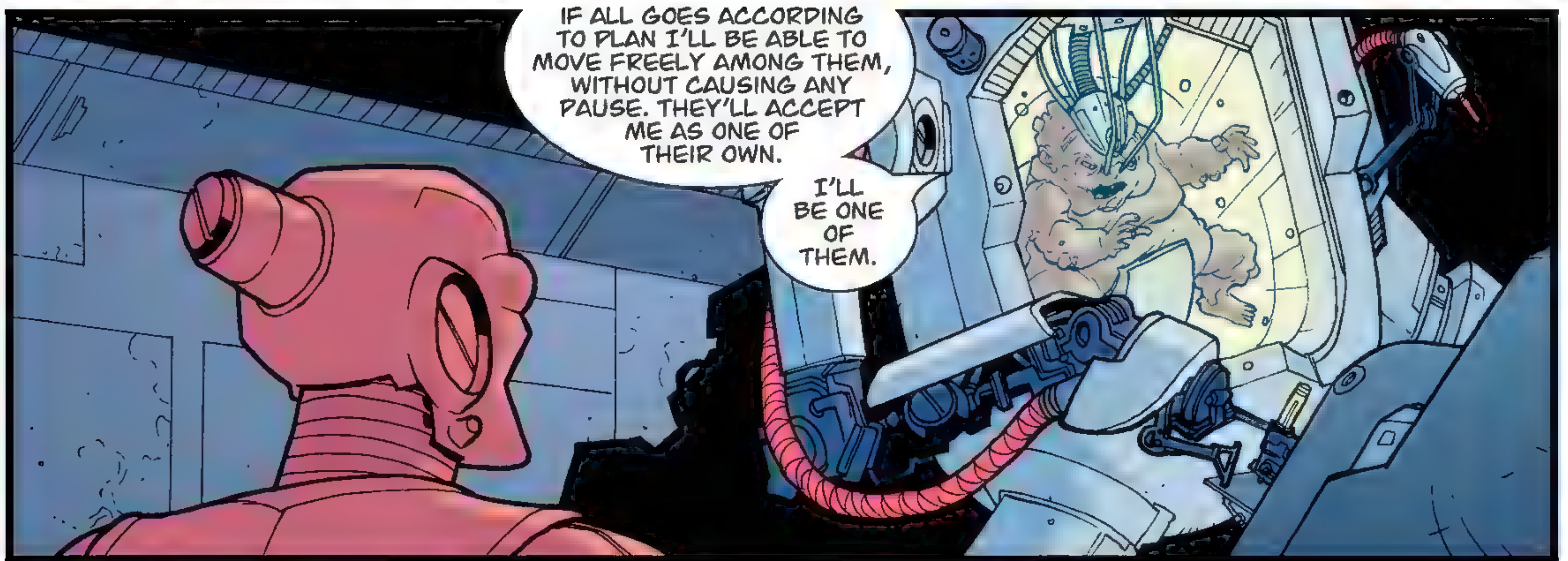
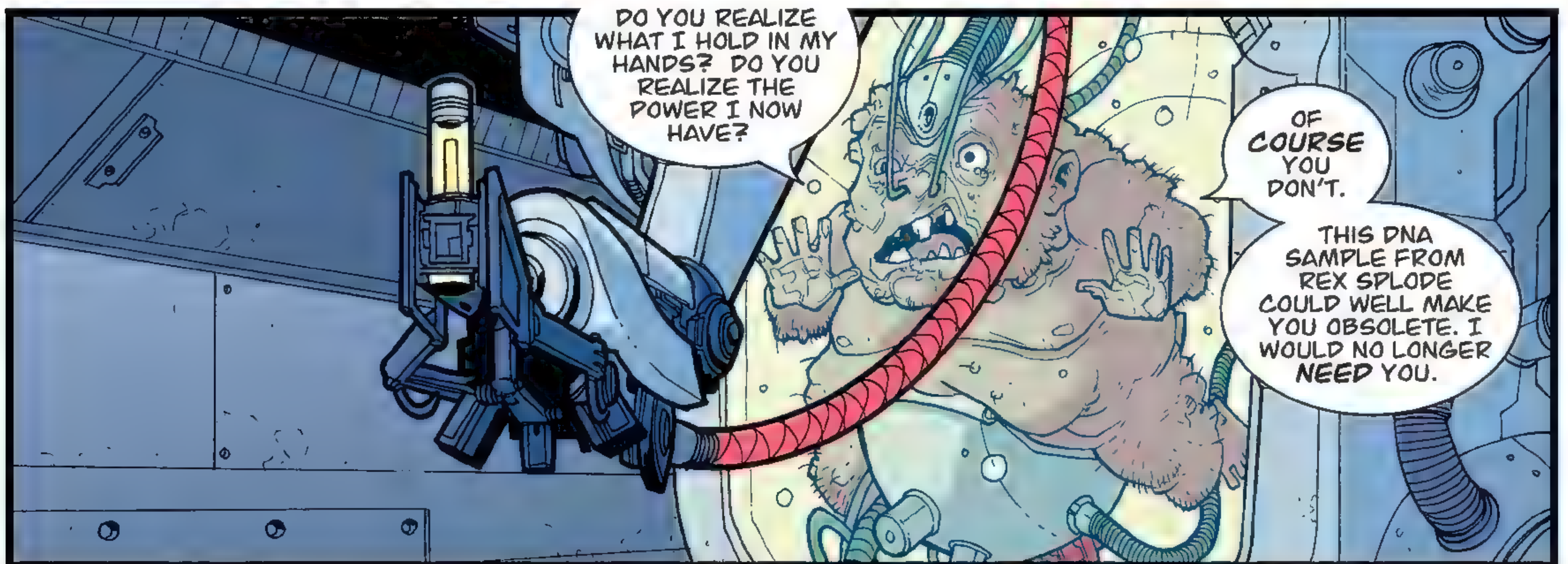
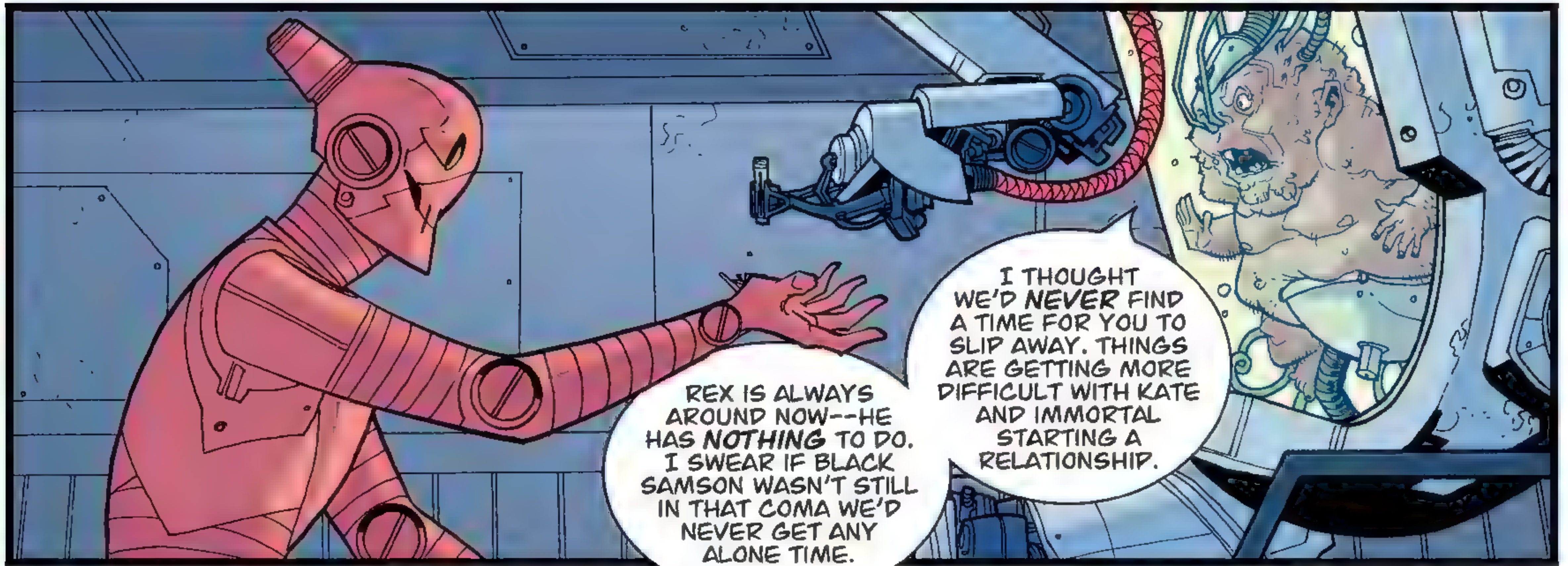


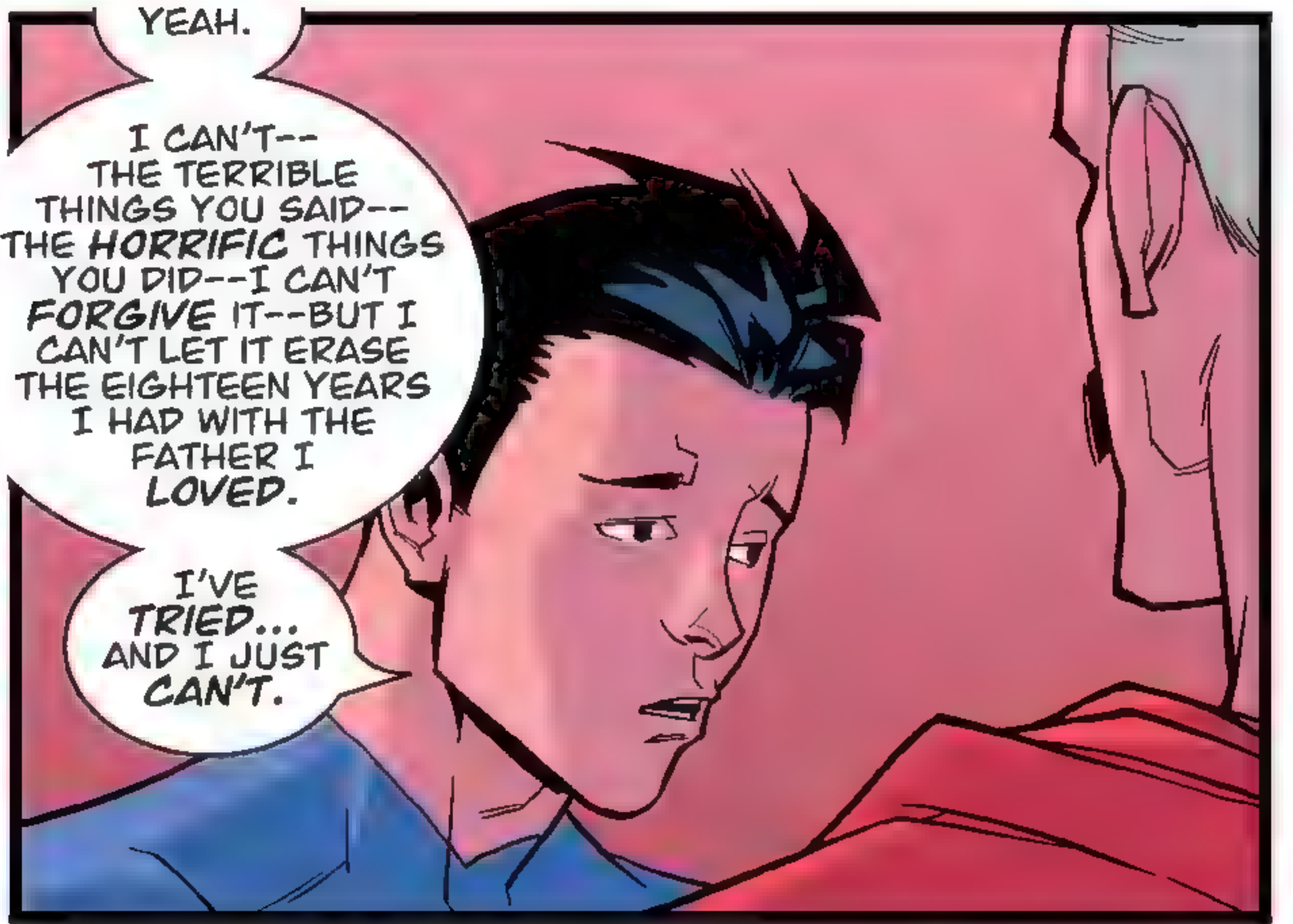
WHY, MISS GRAYSON--IF YOU WANTED TO DO SOMETHING TO EARN THAT MONEY--ALL YOU HAD TO DO WAS SAY SO.











I LIVED AS A VILTRUMITE FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS BEFORE I CAME TO EARTH--BUT WHAT LITTLE TIME I SPENT THERE--CHANGED ME.

I WAS READY TO KILL YOU WHEN YOU DEFIED ME. I WOULD HAVE. THOSE ARE THE WAYS OF THE VILTRUMITE.

YOU WERE WEAK. YOU DESERVED TO DIE.

BUT WHEN IT BECAME CLEAR THAT I **WOULD** HAVE TO KILL YOU--THAT YOU **WOULD NOT** JOIN ME--WHEN IT BECAME CLEAR THAT I WOULD HAVE NO OTHER OPTION...

...I COULDN'T DO IT.

I HAD TWO CHOICES. I COULD KILL YOU AND ENSLAVE EARTH AS I WAS MEANT TO. OR I COULD LEAVE EARTH--AND LEAVE YOU.

I CHOSE TO LEAVE.



IT WAS NOT A DECISION
MADE LIGHTLY. I DECIDED
TO TURN MY BACK ON MY
VILTRUMITE HERITAGE.

MY OFFENSE WOULD
HAVE BEEN NO GREATER
HAD I LISTENED TO YOU
AND CEASED OUR FIGHT
INSTANTLY.

I WAS A FUGITIVE FROM
MY OWN PEOPLE. IT WOULD
ONLY BE A MATTER OF TIME
BEFORE THEY LEARNED OF
MY TREACHERY.

I CHOSE TO HIDE RATHER
THAN TURN MYSELF IN. IF I
COULD CONQUER A SIMILAR
WORLD MAYBE THEY WOULD
LESSEN MY PUNISHMENT.

SO I SET OUT
TO FIND SUCH
A WORLD.

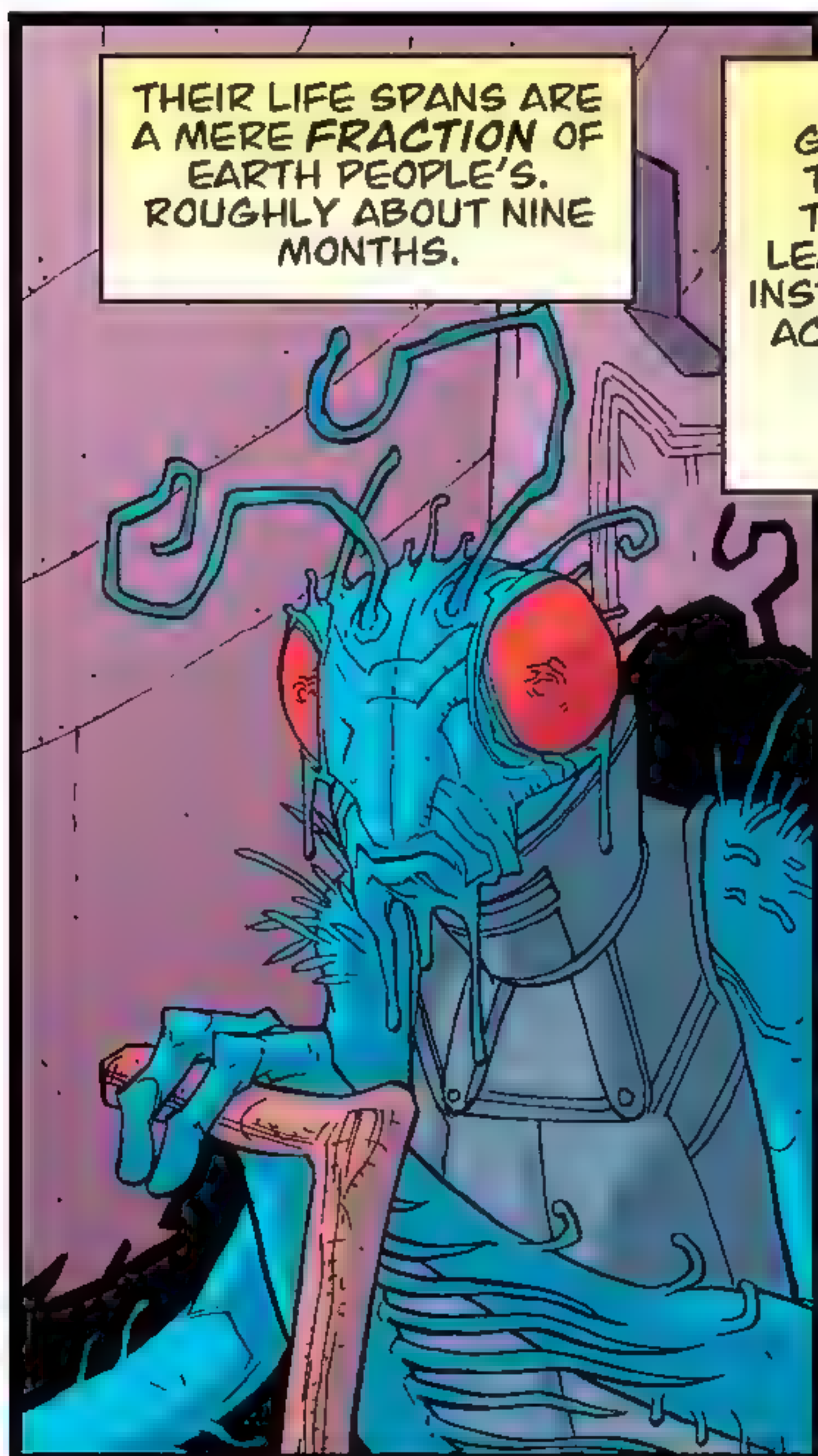
WHETHER THROUGH SOME KIND
OF COSMIC DESTINY OR MERE
LUCK I'LL NEVER KNOW, BUT I
FOUND THIS WORLD WITHIN A
WEEK OF LEAVING EARTH.



THEY ARE A PEOPLE
VASTLY DIFFERENT
THAN THOSE OF EARTH.
THOUGH THEIR
TECHNOLOGY AND
ADVANCEMENT AS A
SPECIES ARE VERY
SIMILAR.

IN SOME WAYS THEY ARE
LESS ADVANCED, IN OTHER
WAYS, THEY ARE MORE
ADVANCED.

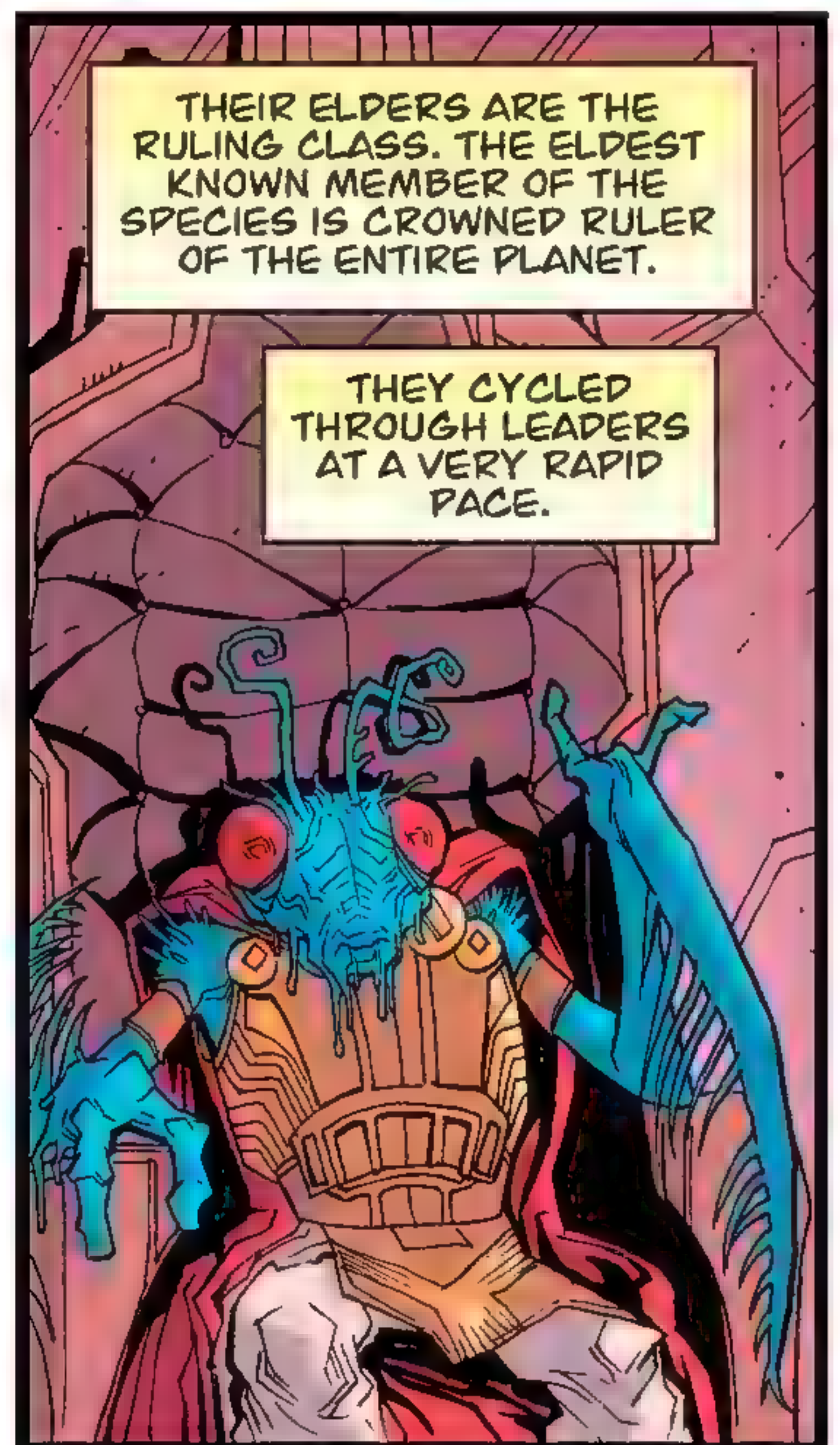
I DECIDED
ON THIS WORLD
ALMOST
INSTANTLY.



THEIR LIFE SPANS ARE
A MERE FRACTION OF
EARTH PEOPLE'S.
ROUGHLY ABOUT NINE
MONTHS.



BECAUSE OF THIS
GENETIC HANDICAP--
THEY HAVE EVOLVED
TO THE POINT WHERE
LEARNING IS AN ALMOST
INSTANTANEOUS PROCESS
ACHIEVED DURING THE
ACTION THEY ARE
ATTEMPTING
TO LEARN.



THEIR ELDERS ARE THE
RULING CLASS. THE ELDEST
KNOWN MEMBER OF THE
SPECIES IS CROWNED RULER
OF THE ENTIRE PLANET.

THEY CYCLED
THROUGH LEADERS
AT A VERY RAPID
PACE.

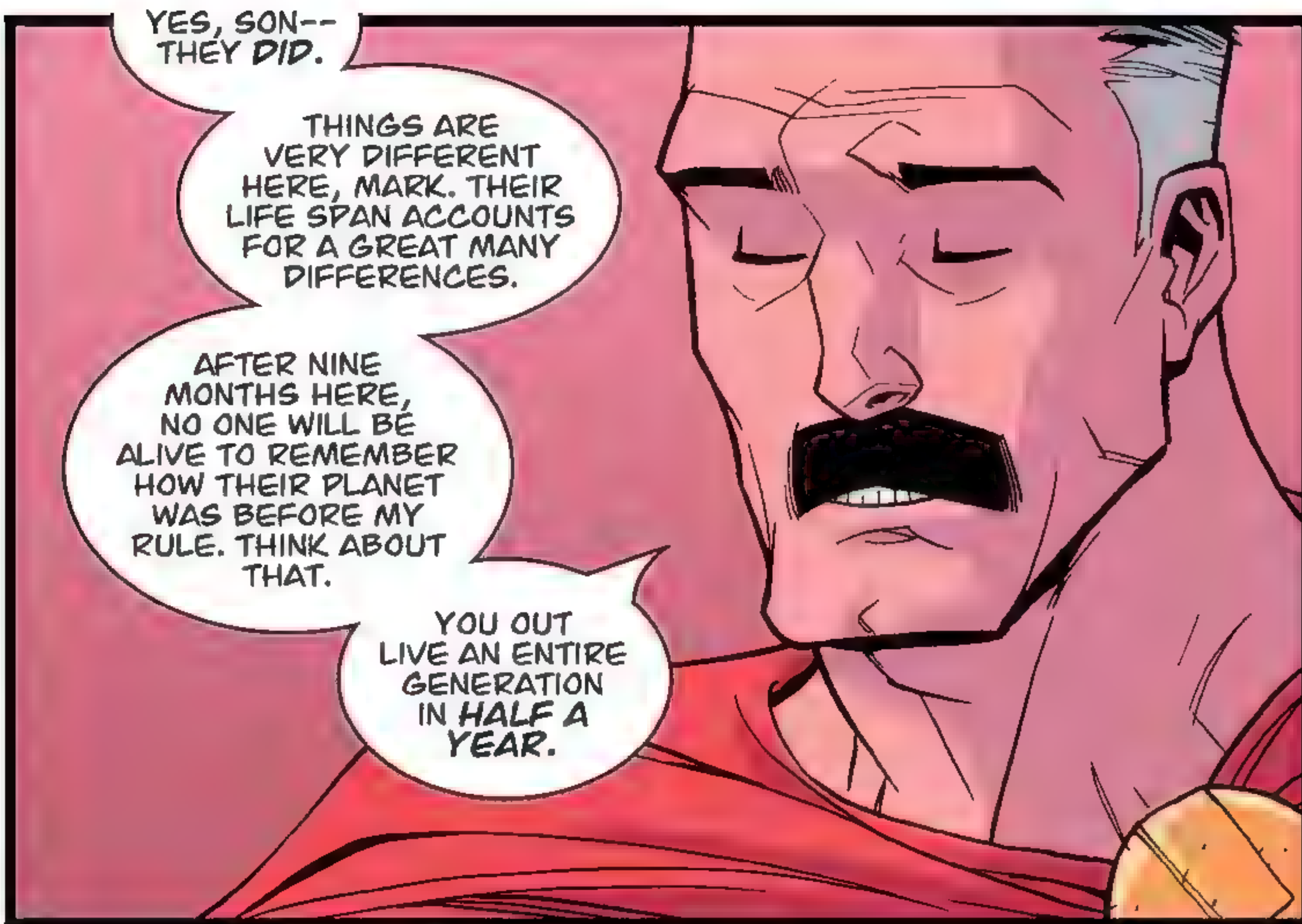


NEEDLESS TO SAY IT WAS
INCREDIBLY EASY TO ASSUME
CONTROL OF THIS PLANET.
ONCE THEY LEARNED HOW OLD
I WAS--I WAS ELECTED RULER
ALMOST IMMEDIATELY.

THINGS MOVE
VERY FAST
HERE.



THEY JUST HANDED
THE WHOLE PLANET
OVER TO YOU? NO
QUESTIONS
ASKED?



YES, SON--
THEY DID.

THINGS ARE
VERY DIFFERENT
HERE, MARK. THEIR
LIFE SPAN ACCOUNTS
FOR A GREAT MANY
DIFFERENCES.

AFTER NINE
MONTHS HERE,
NO ONE WILL BE
ALIVE TO REMEMBER
HOW THEIR PLANET
WAS BEFORE MY
RULE. THINK ABOUT
THAT.

YOU OUT
LIVE AN ENTIRE
GENERATION
IN HALF A
YEAR.

I SUPPOSE YOU'RE
RIGHT. I CAN SEE
HOW THAT WOULD
MAKE A TAKEOVER
EASIER TO
ACCEPT.

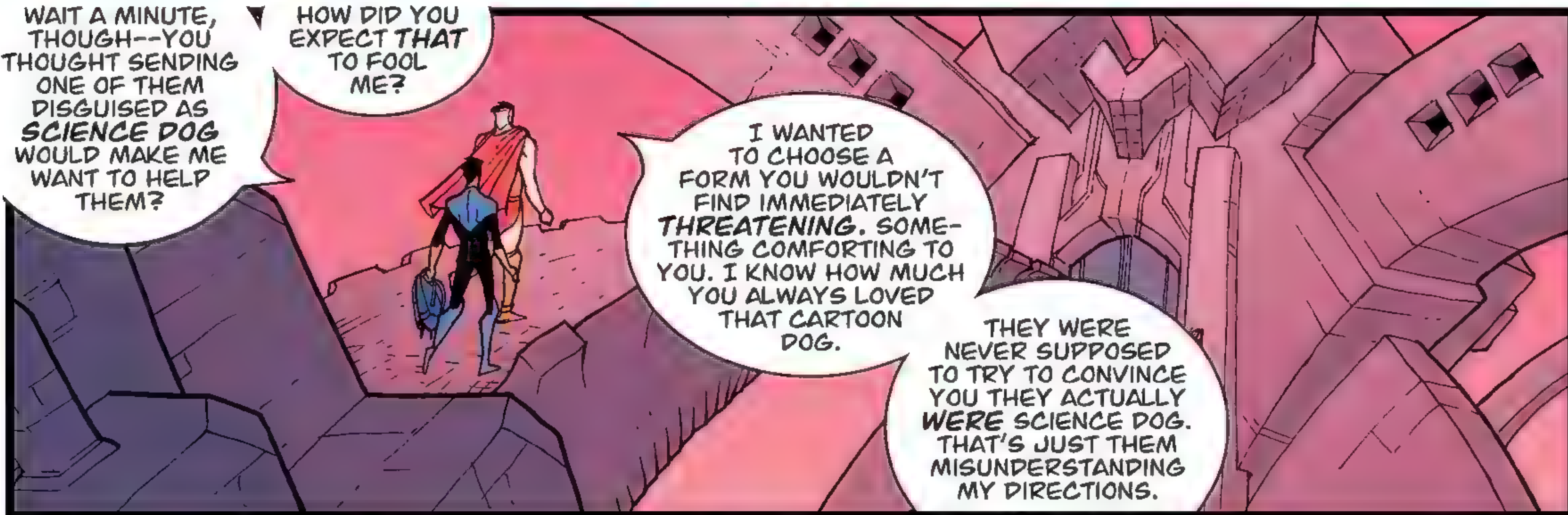


COME.
THERE
IS STILL
MUCH TO
DISCUSS.



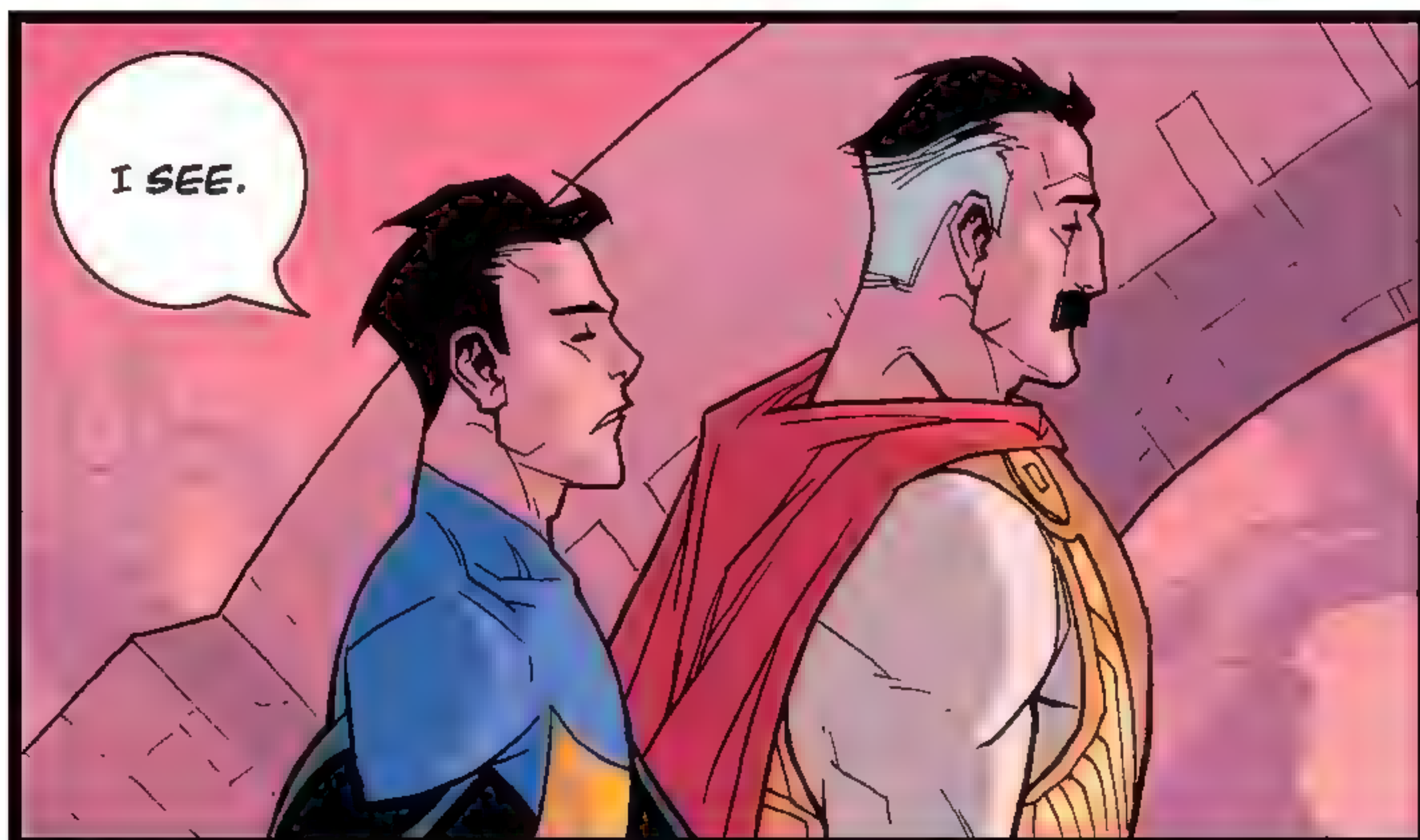
WAIT A MINUTE,
THOUGH--YOU
THOUGHT SENDING
ONE OF THEM
DISGUISED AS
SCIENCE DOG
WOULD MAKE ME
WANT TO HELP
THEM?

HOW DID YOU
EXPECT THAT
TO FOOL
ME?

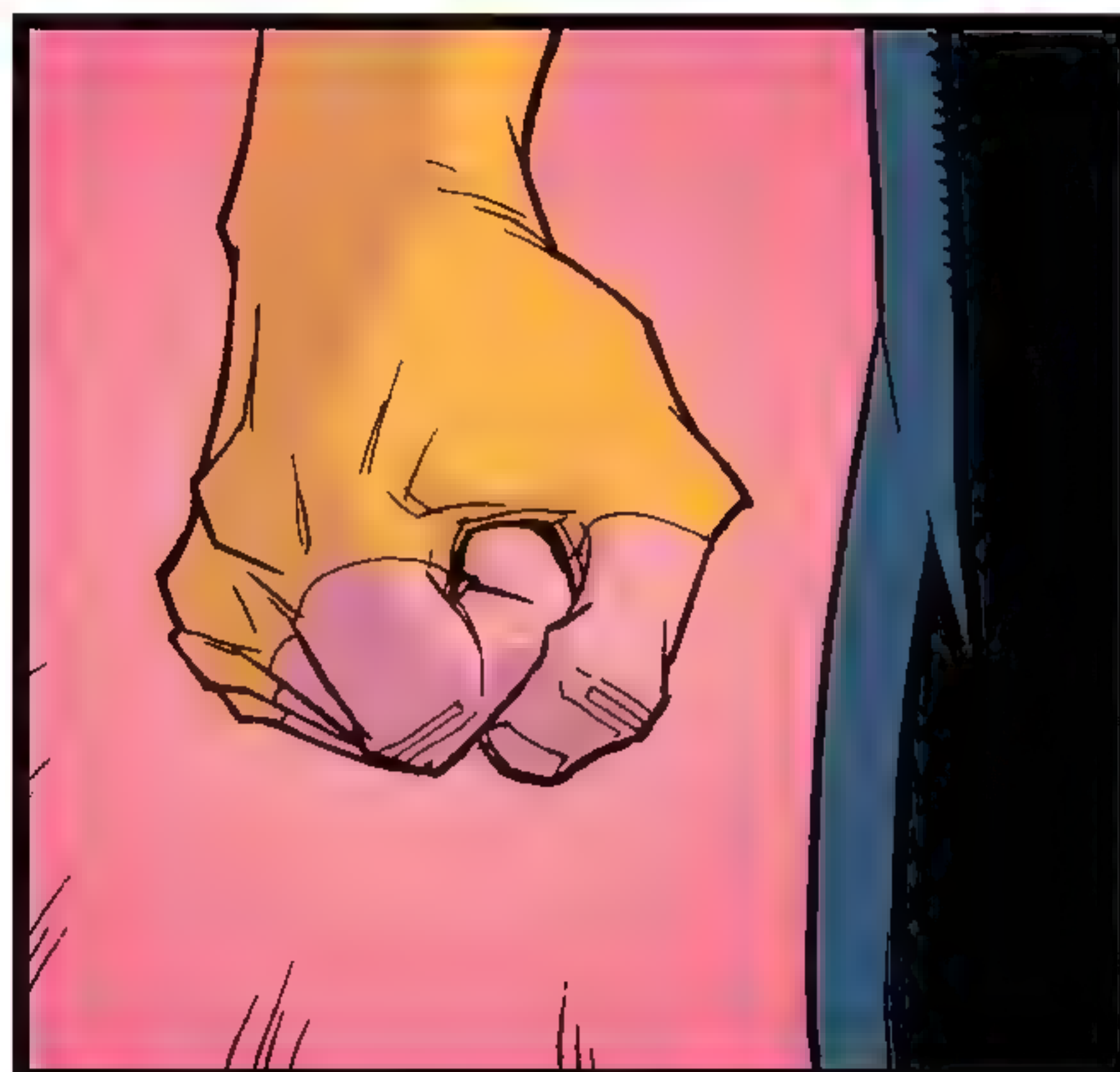


I WANTED
TO CHOOSE A
FORM YOU WOULDN'T
FIND IMMEDIATELY
THREATENING. SOME-
THING COMFORTING TO
YOU. I KNOW HOW MUCH
YOU ALWAYS LOVED
THAT **CARTOON**
DOG.

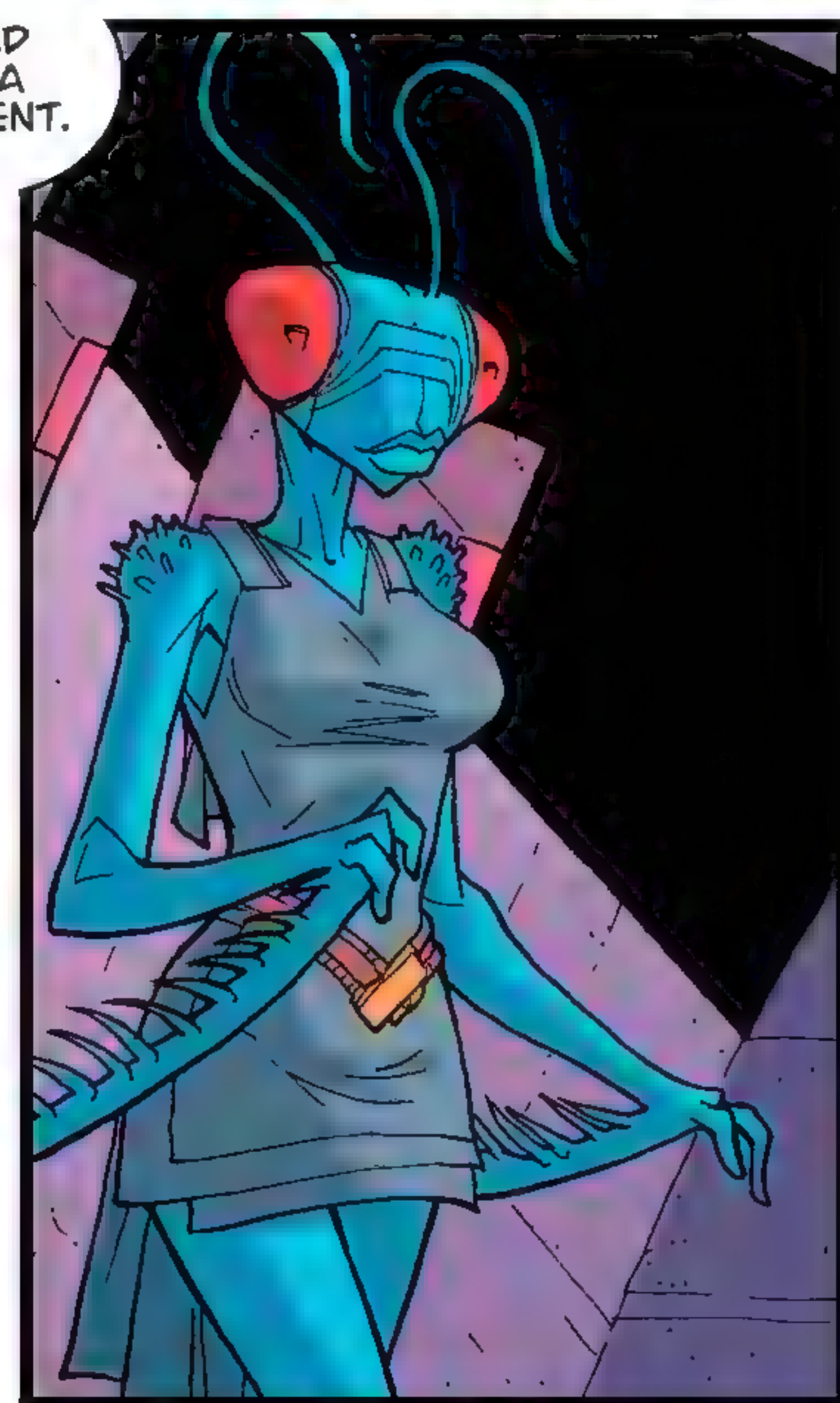
THEY WERE
NEVER SUPPOSED
TO TRY TO CONVINCE
YOU THEY ACTUALLY
WERE **SCIENCE DOG**.
THAT'S JUST THEM
MISUNDERSTANDING
MY DIRECTIONS.

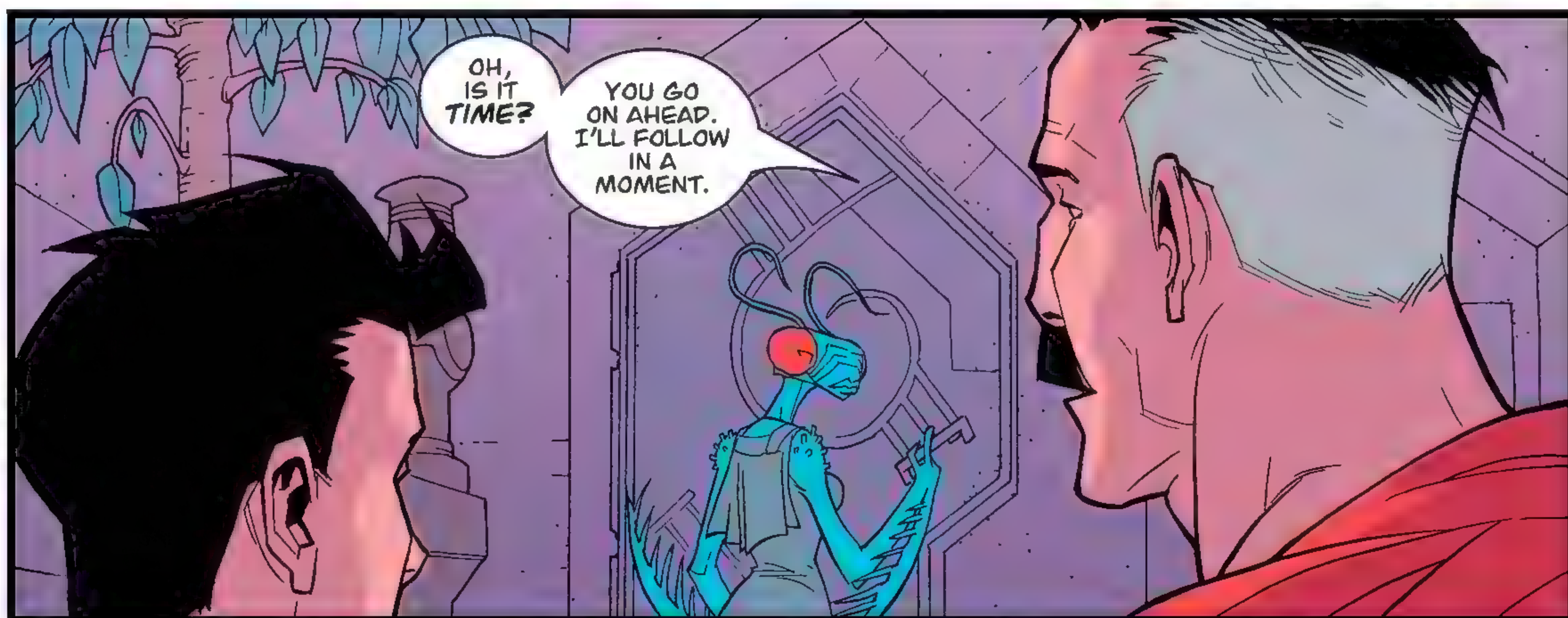
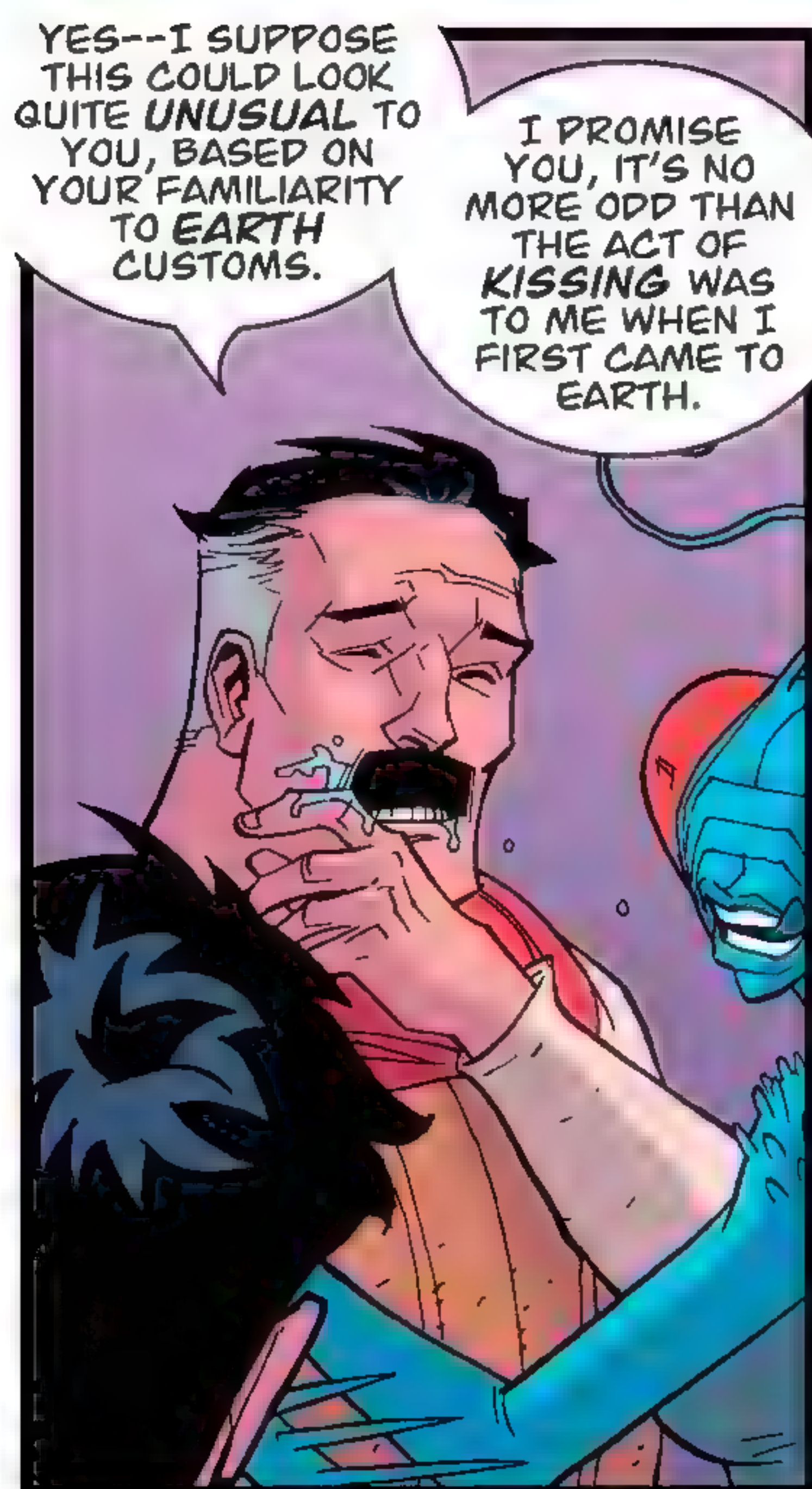


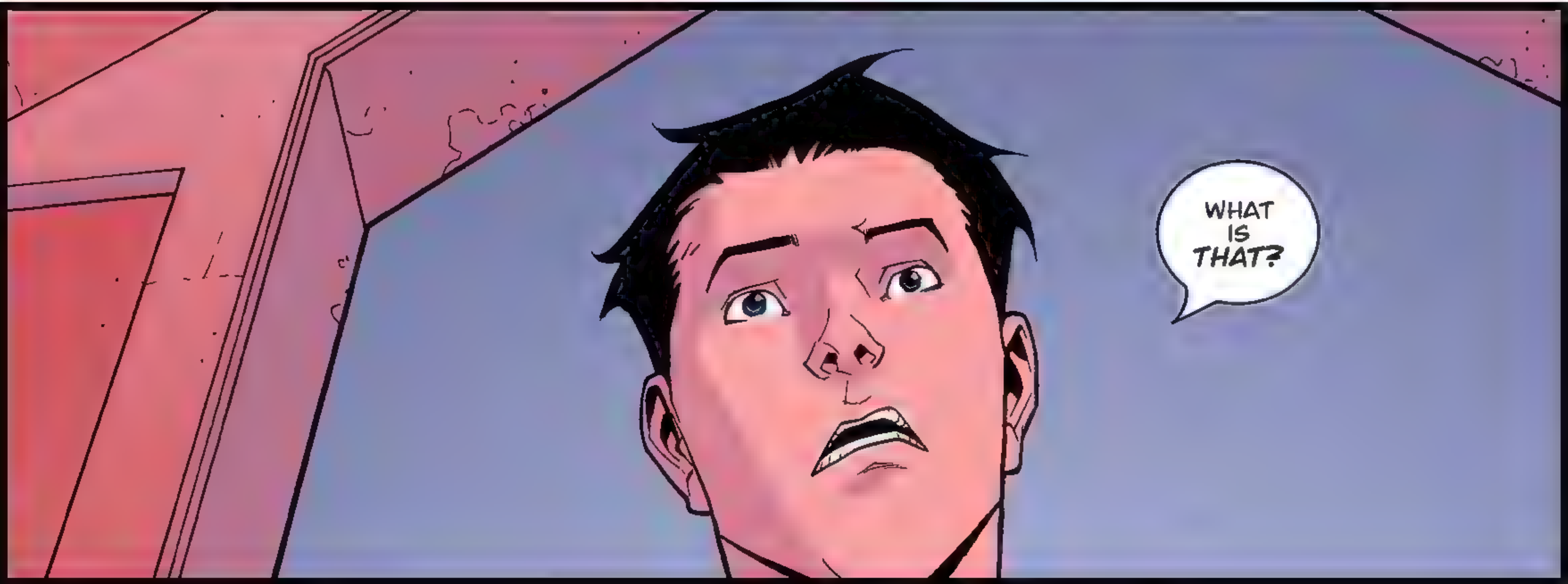
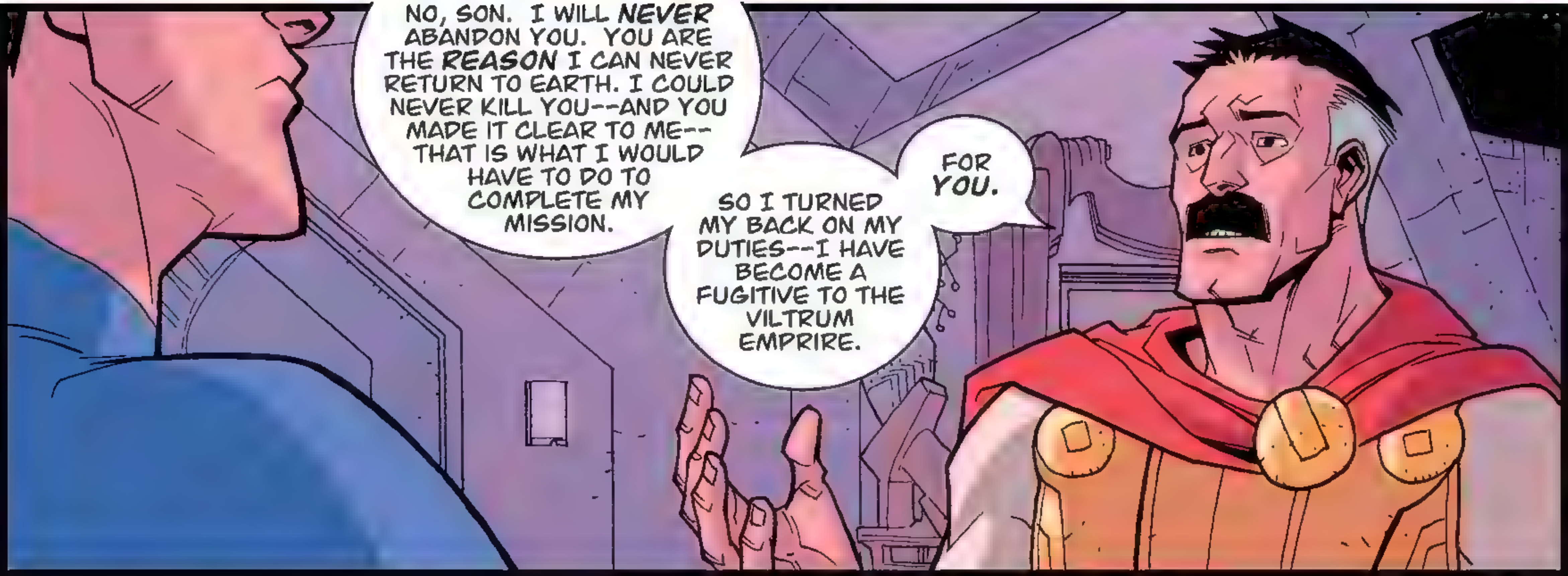
I SEE.







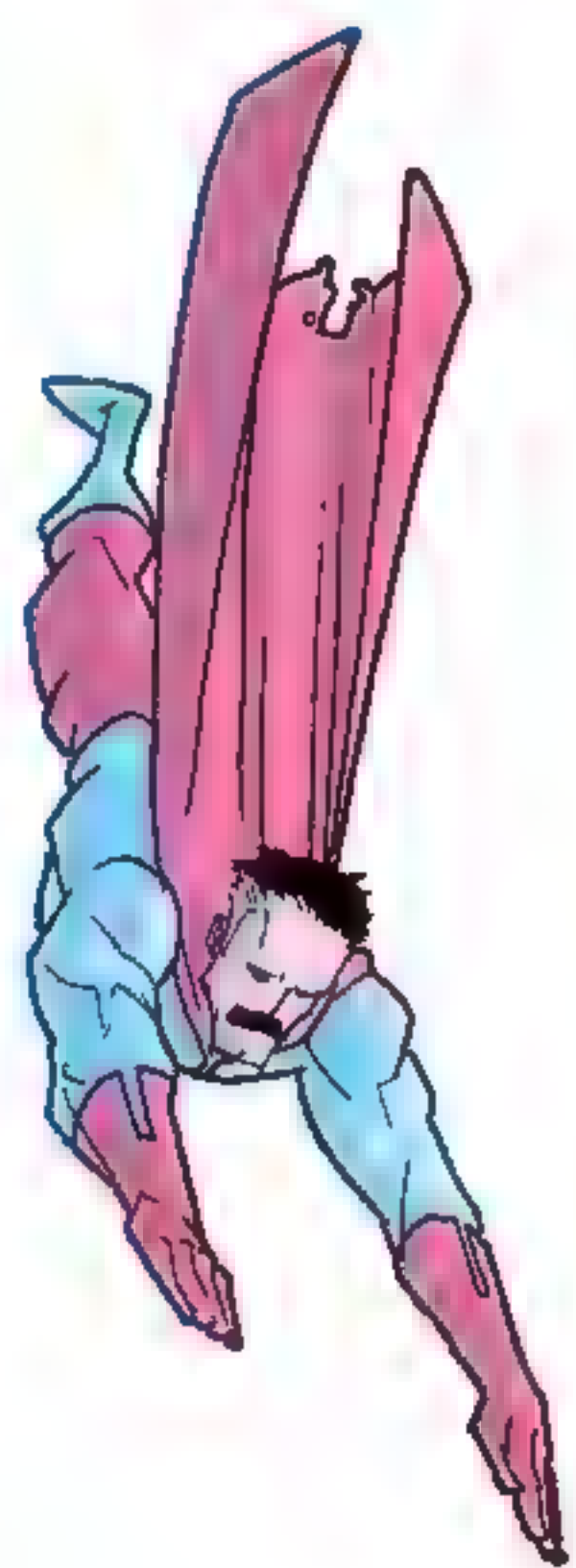
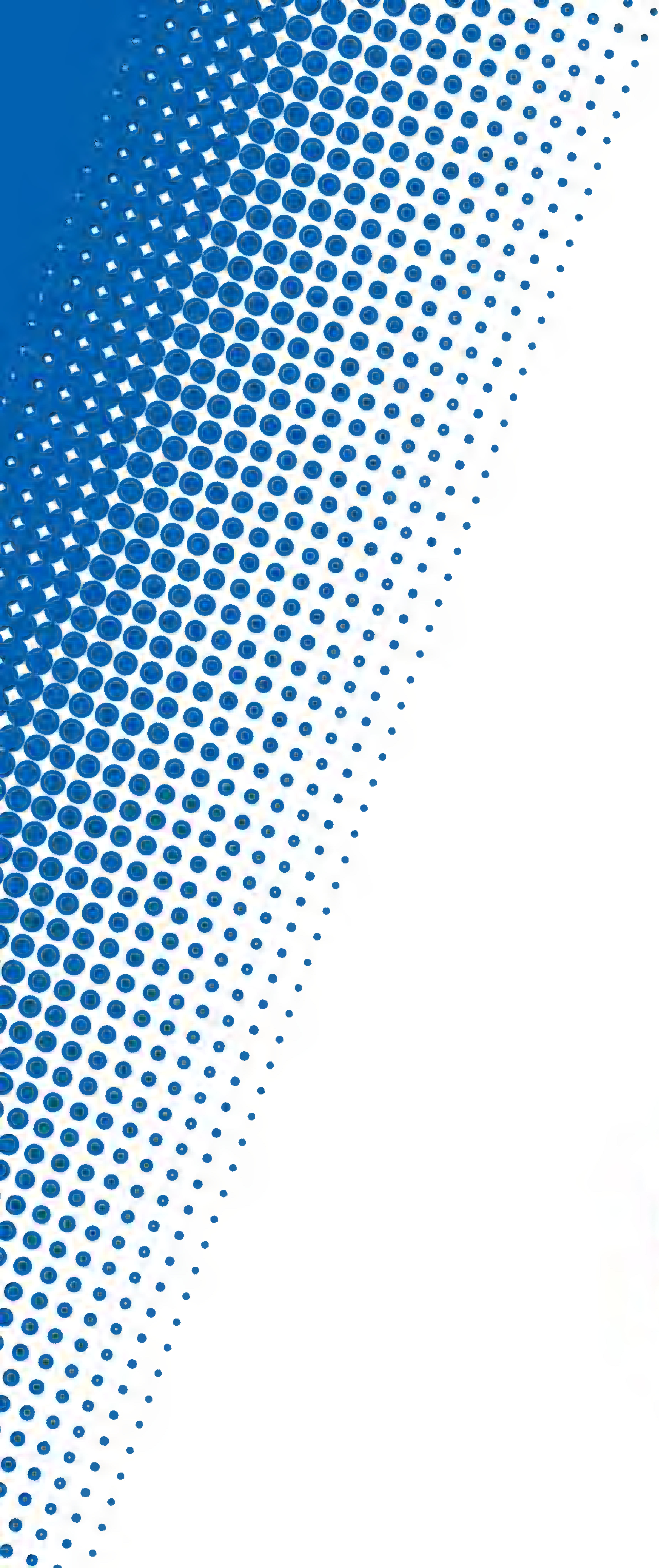






THAT...

...IS YOUR
LITTLE
BROTHER.



ISSUE TWENTY-SEVEN



MEANWHILE,
BACK ON EARTH.

BEHOLD
THE MIGHT OF
OMNIPOTUS,
THE WORLD
SHAPER, AND
BEHOLD THE
END OF ALL
THINGS!

TREMBLE
BEFORE MY
UNLIMITED
POWER!





BOY--
DID YOU PICK
THE WRONG
UNIVERSE!

THIS IS
GOING TO
COST A
FORTUNE.

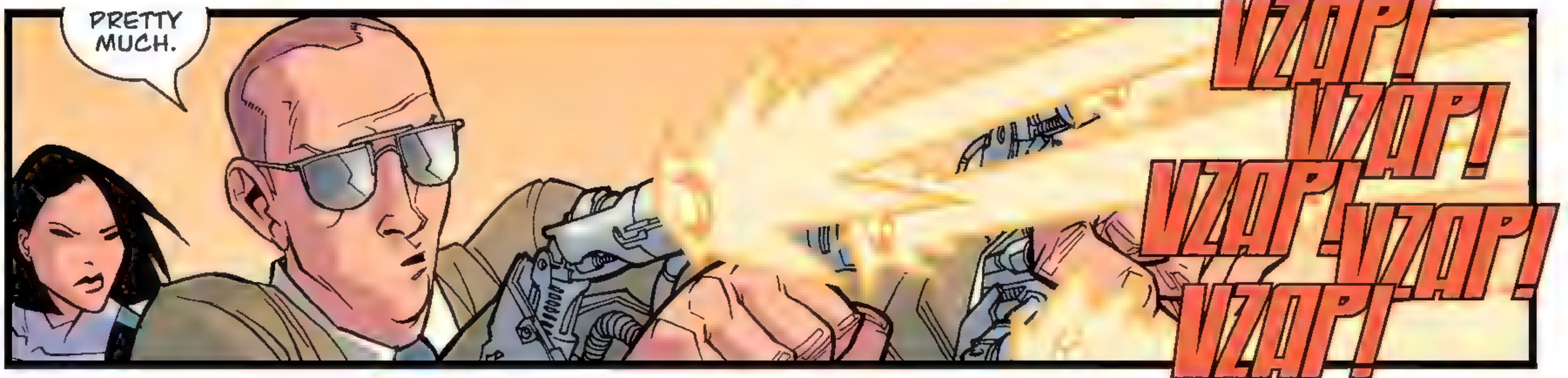
WILL YOU
JUST SHUT
UP? THIS IS
IMPORTANT.

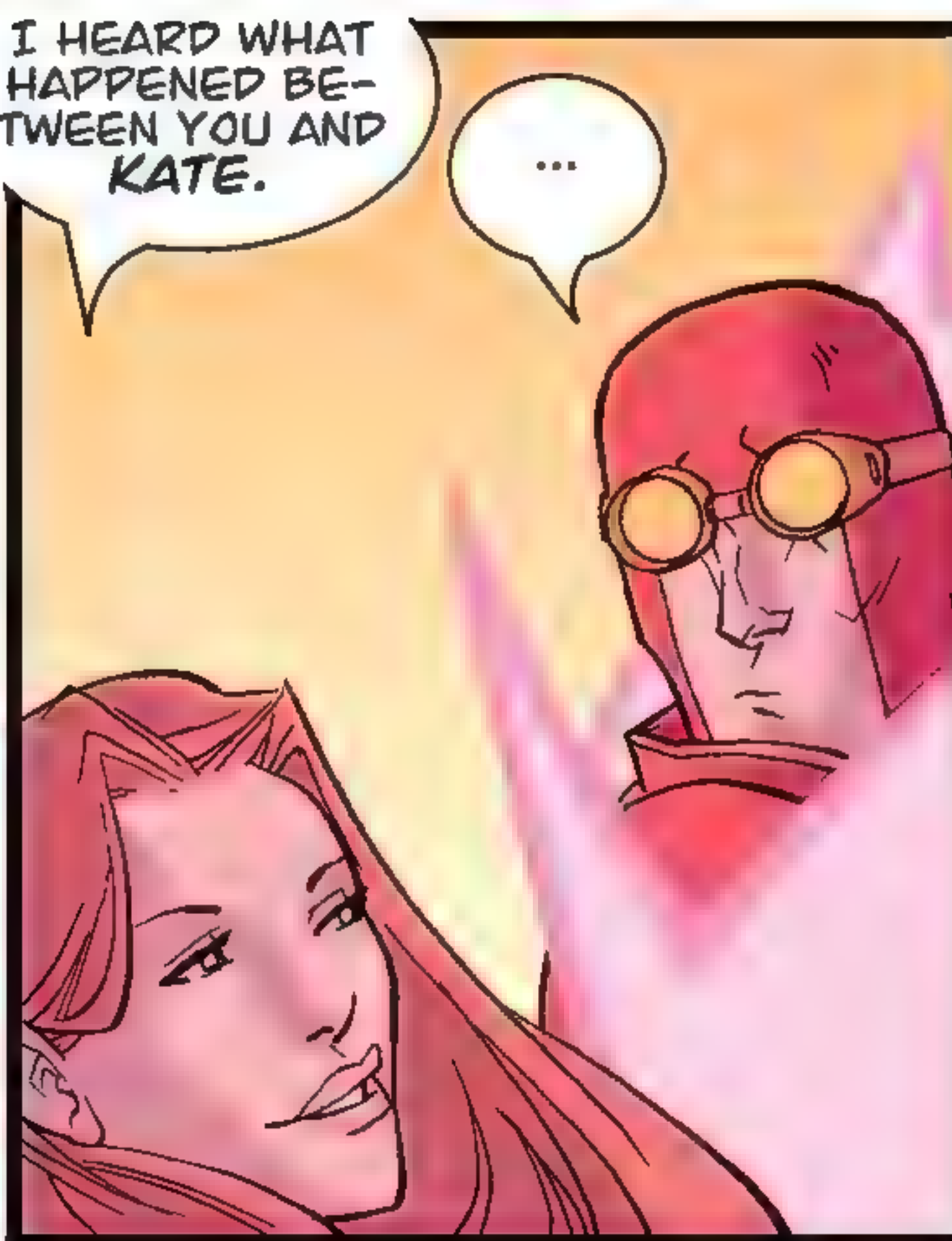
NOW GET
ON THAT PAD--
YOU'RE GOING
TOO!

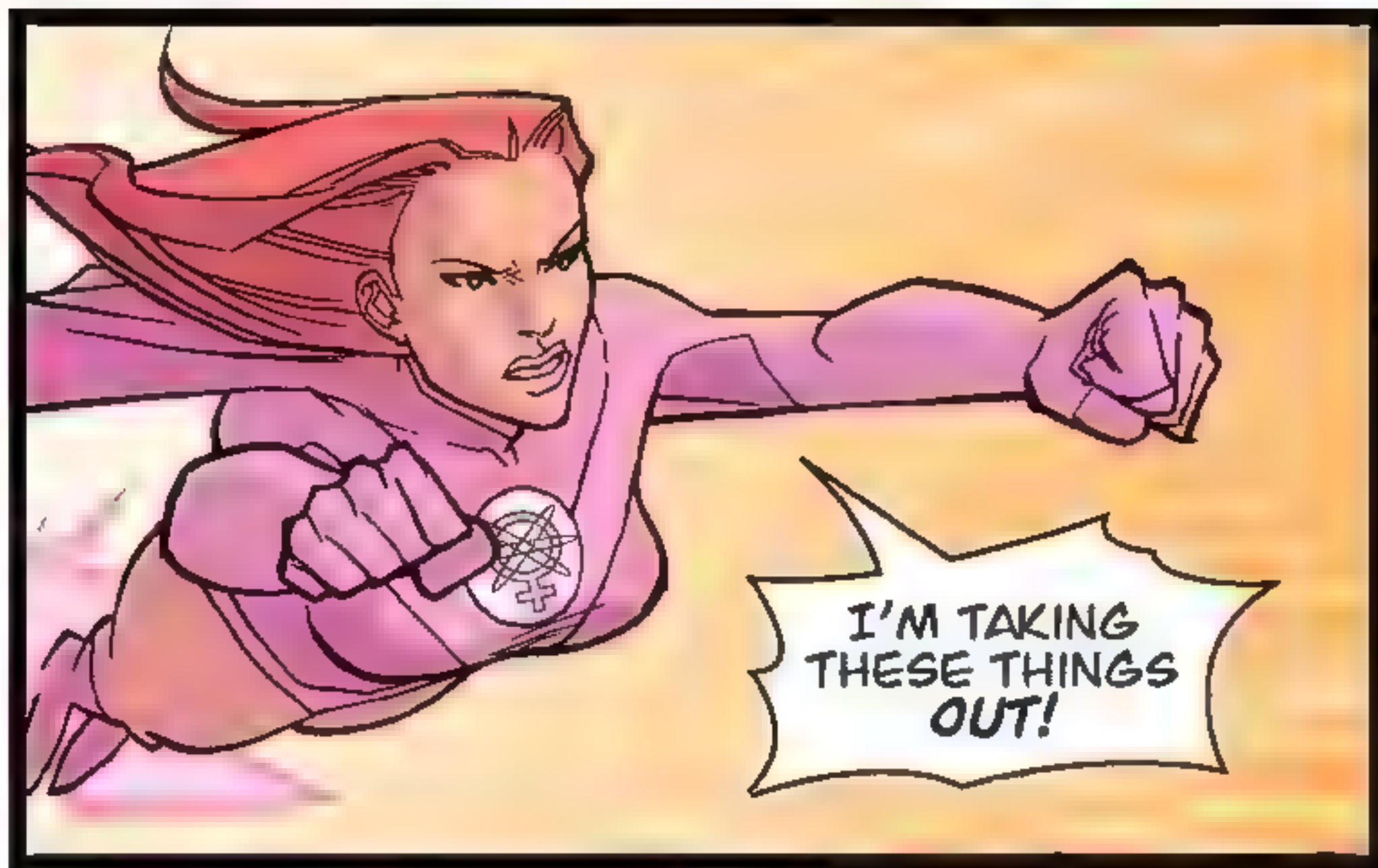
SURE THING,
BOSS--YOU
KNOW ME,
ALWAYS HAPPY
TO HELP!

IT TAKES A
LOT FOR ME
TO GET MY HANDS
DIRTY THESE DAYS--
I GUESS IF BRIT
CAN COME OUT OF
RETIREMENT
SO CAN I!

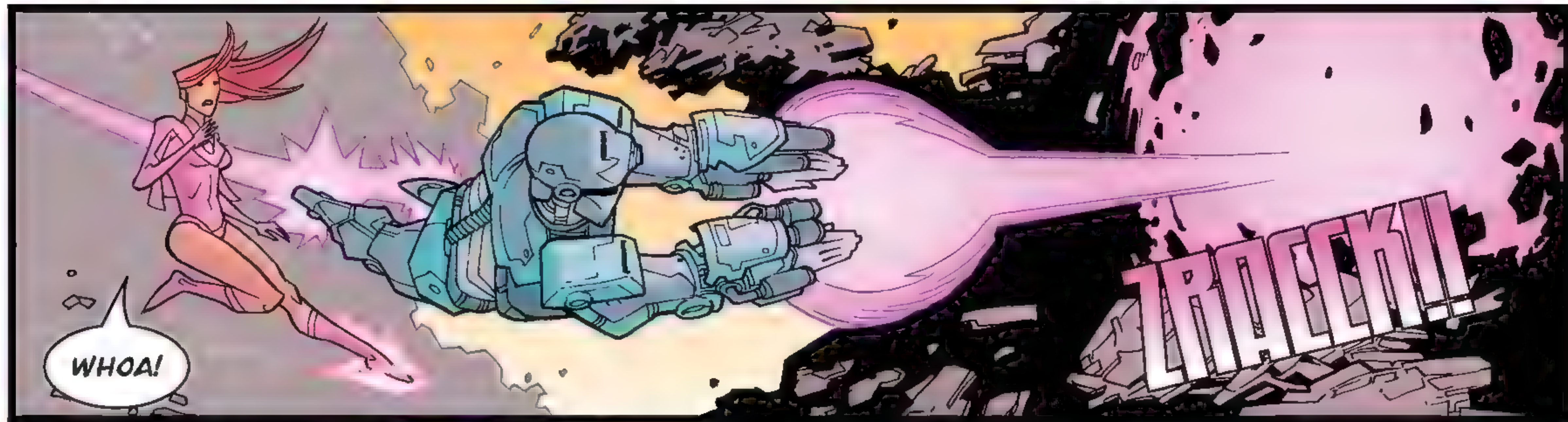
DONALD!!
YOU'RE A
ROBOT?!







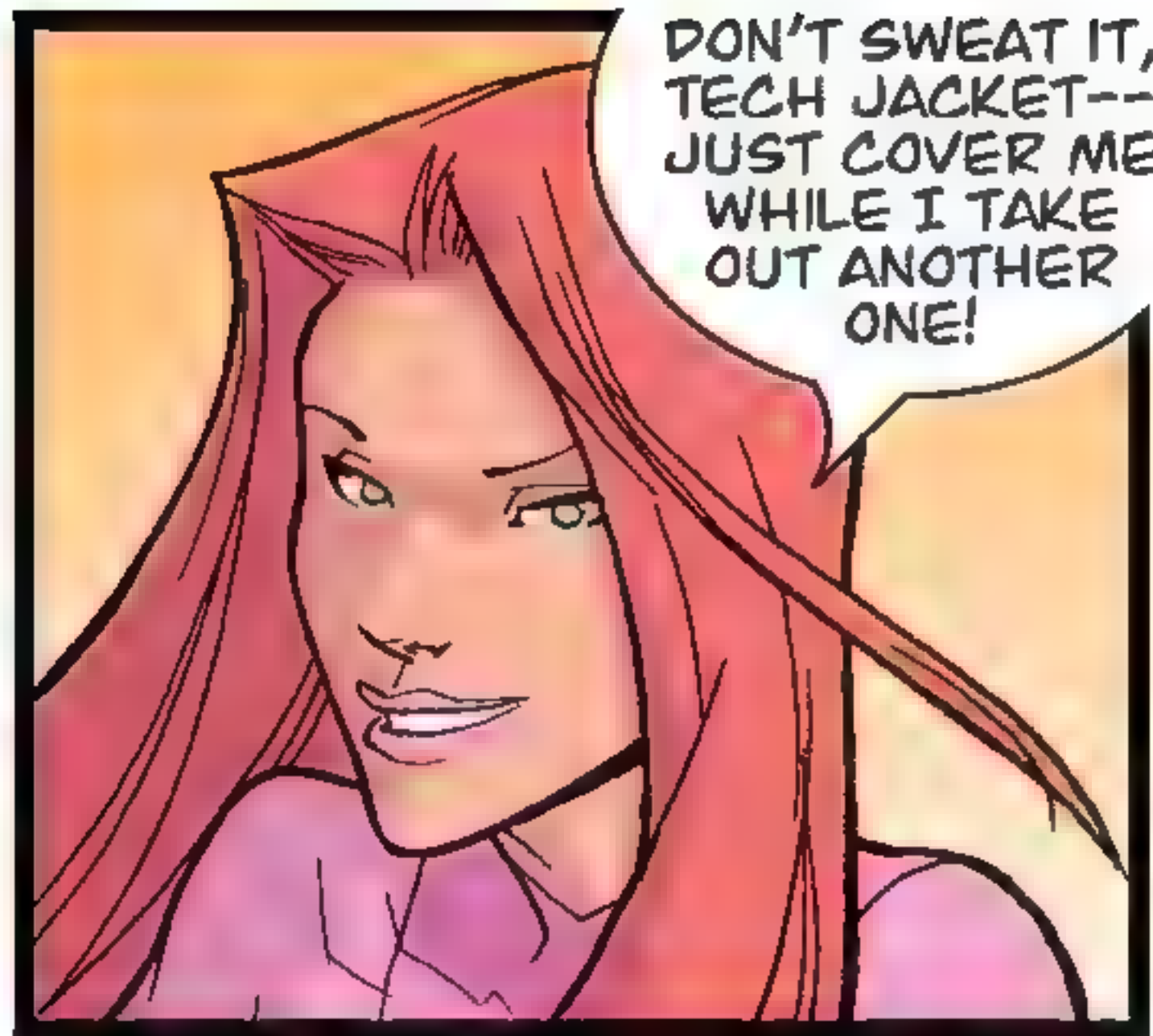
I'M TAKING THESE THINGS OUT!



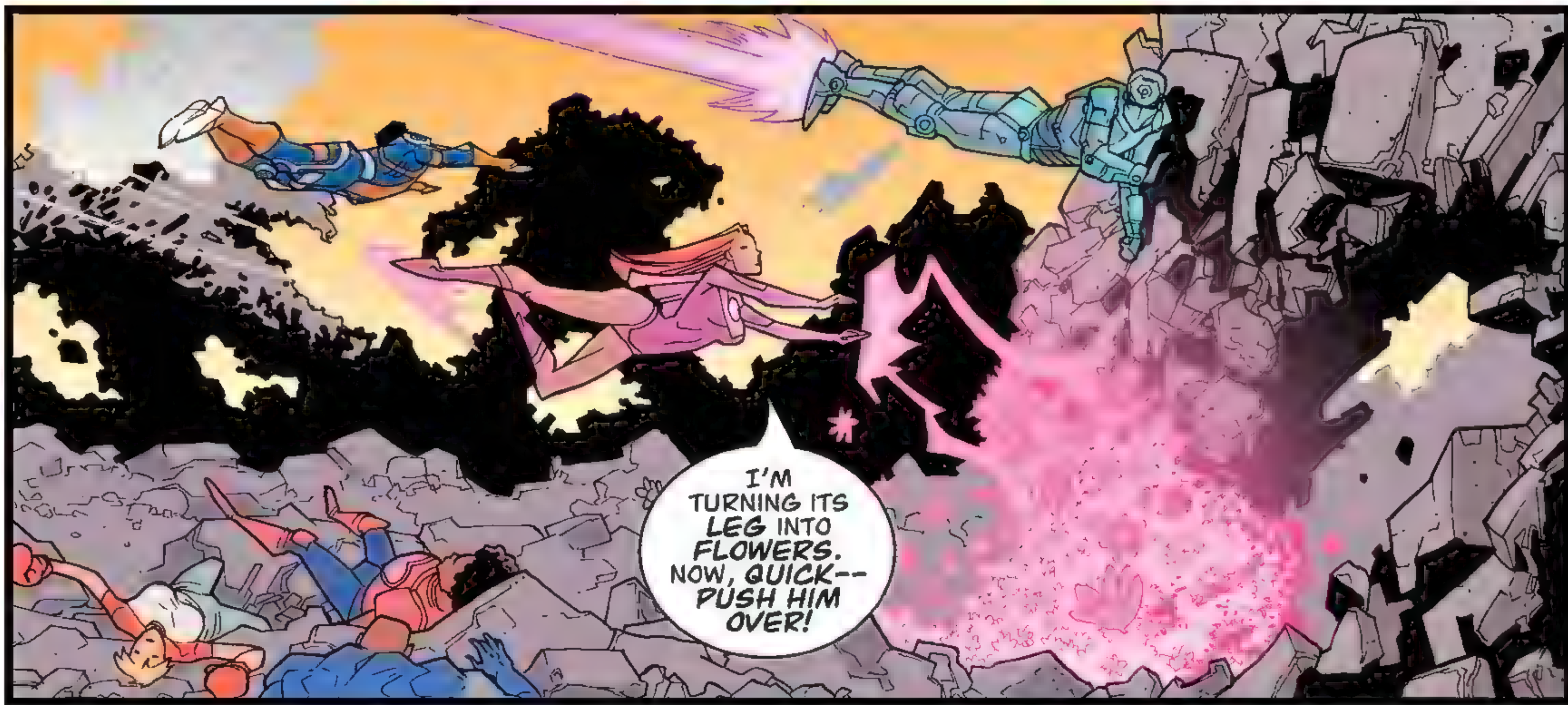
WHOA!



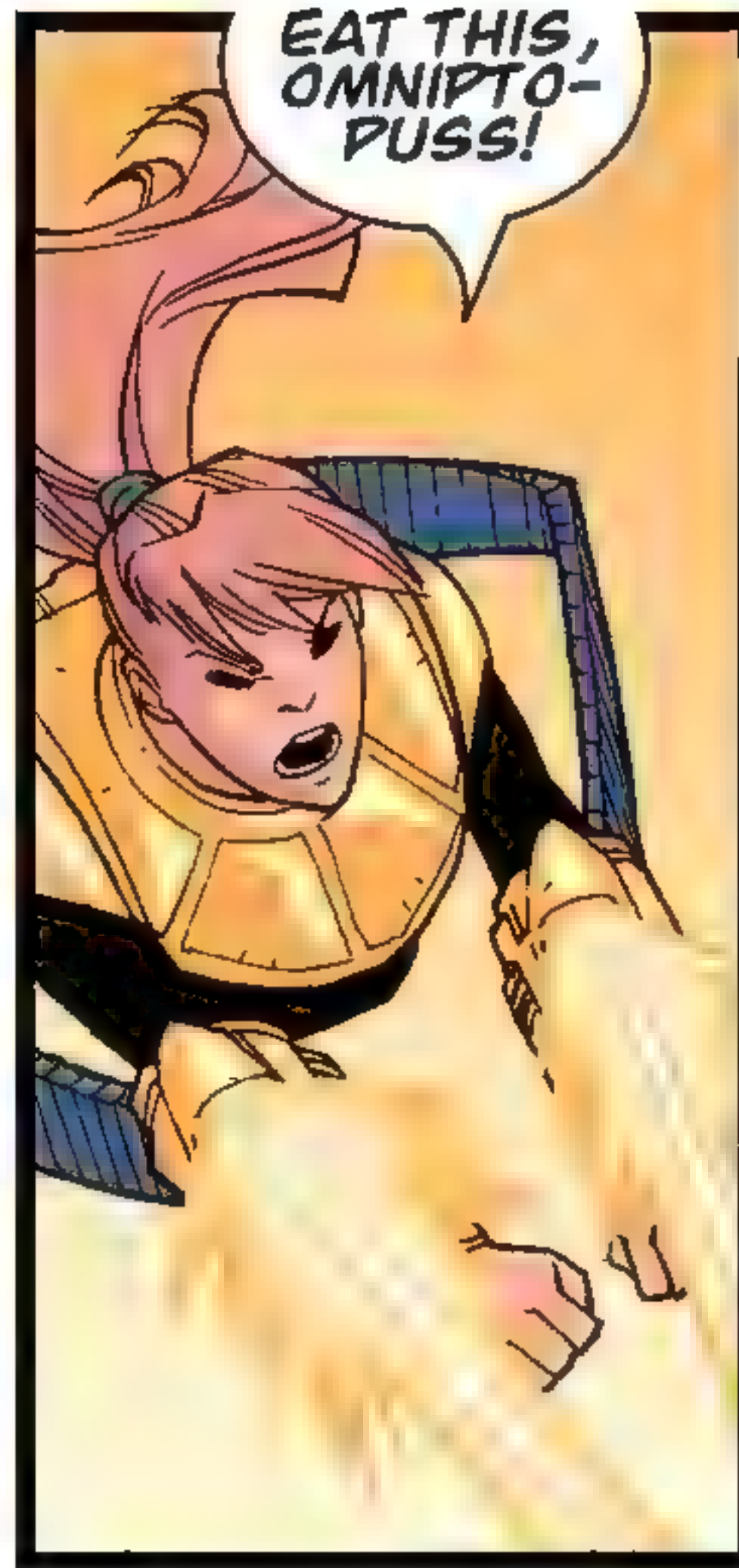
SORRY ABOUT CUTTING YOU OFF LIKE THAT--I'M STILL A LITTLE NEW TO ALL THIS. I PROMISE.



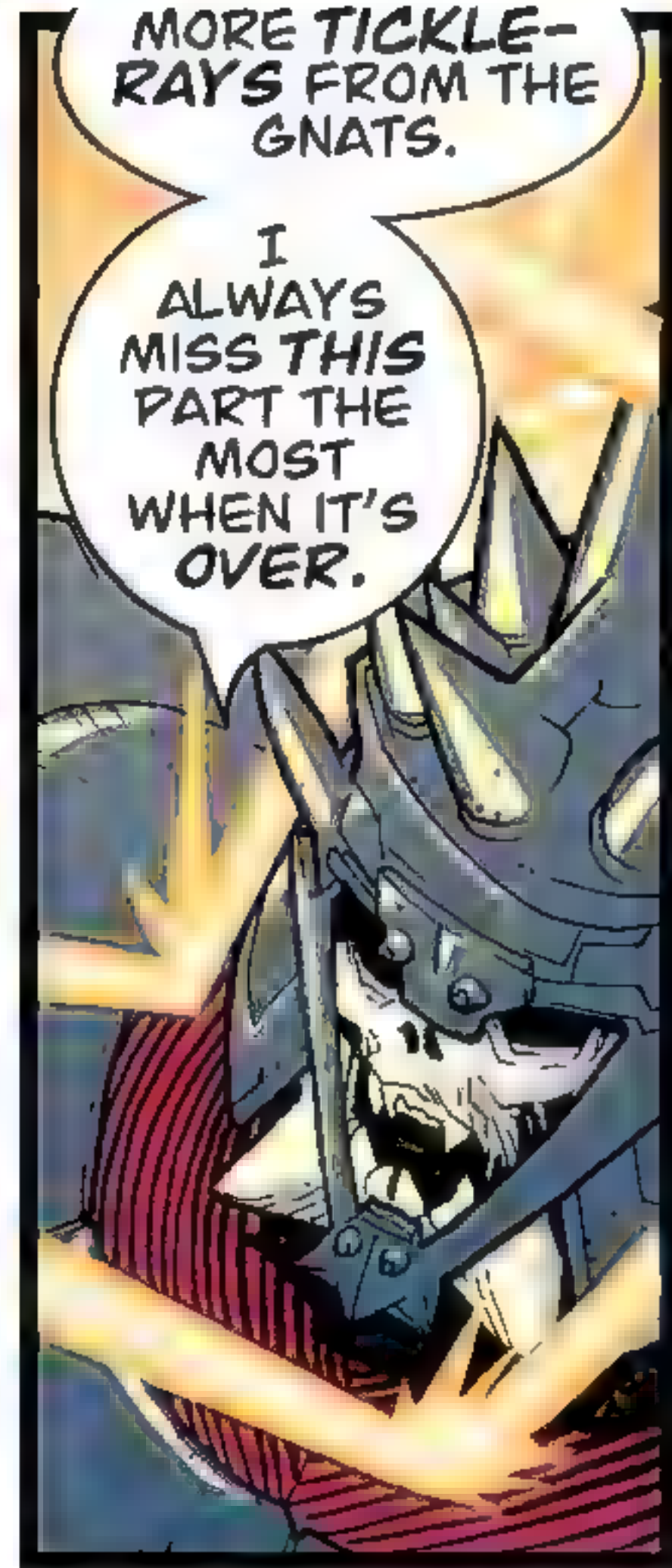
DON'T SWEAT IT, TECH JACKET--JUST COVER ME WHILE I TAKE OUT ANOTHER ONE!



I'M TURNING ITS LEGS INTO FLOWERS. NOW, QUICK--PUSH HIM OVER!

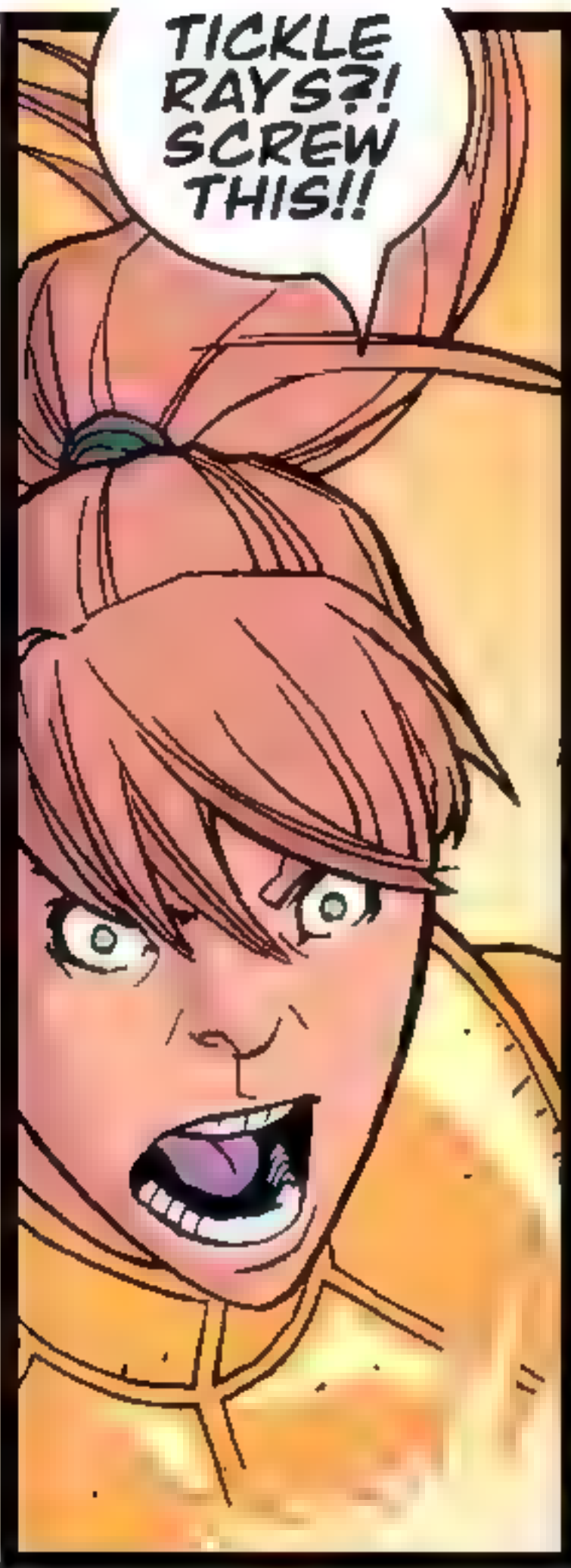


EAT THIS, OMNIPTOPUSS!



MORE TICKLE-RAYS FROM THE GNATS.

I ALWAYS MISS THIS PART THE MOST WHEN IT'S OVER.

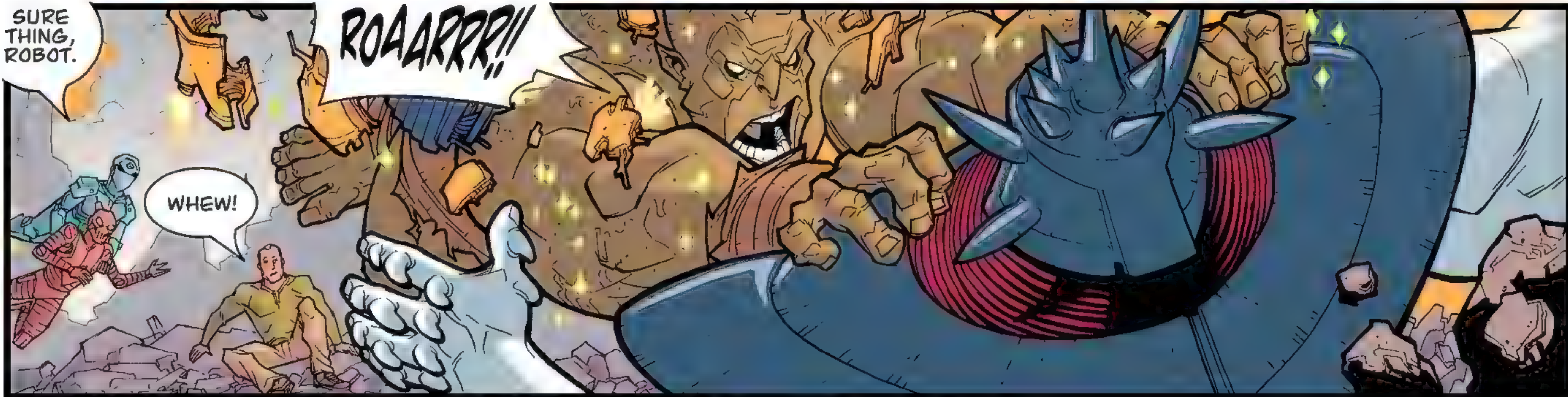


TICKLE RAYS?! SCREW THIS!!



TECH JACKET! WE NEED TO DO THIS NOW! THE DISTRACTION IS NOT WORKING.

IT'S NOW OR NEVER--COME GET ME!



SURE THING, ROBOT.

ROAARRR!!

WHEW!



YOU'VE GOT THE WARP-KEY?

IT'S RIGHT HERE. BUILT BASED ON THE DESIGN YOU HELPED STEAL FROM HIS WARP-VESSEL. IT JUST NEEDS A POWER SUPPLY.

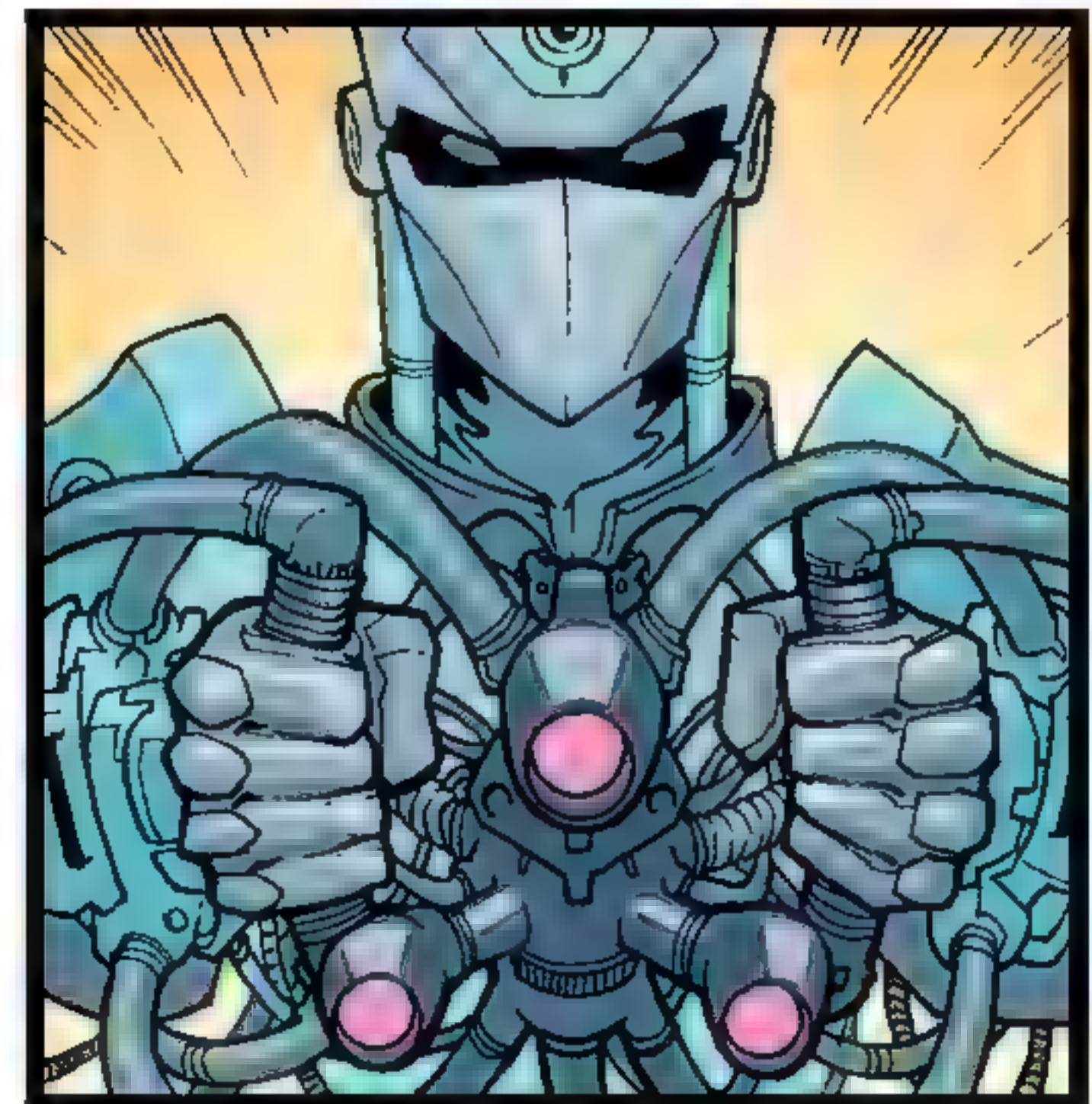
ARE YOU SURE YOU CAN POWER IT?



I'M OUR ONLY HOPE--I'LL HAVE TO.

VERY TRUE.

HERE GOES NOTHING.



MY RESTORATION IS NEARLY COMPLETE--YOU'D BE WISE TO SURRENDER.



SORRY, PAL. THAT'S JUST NOT AN OPTION!

WZORRRIP!

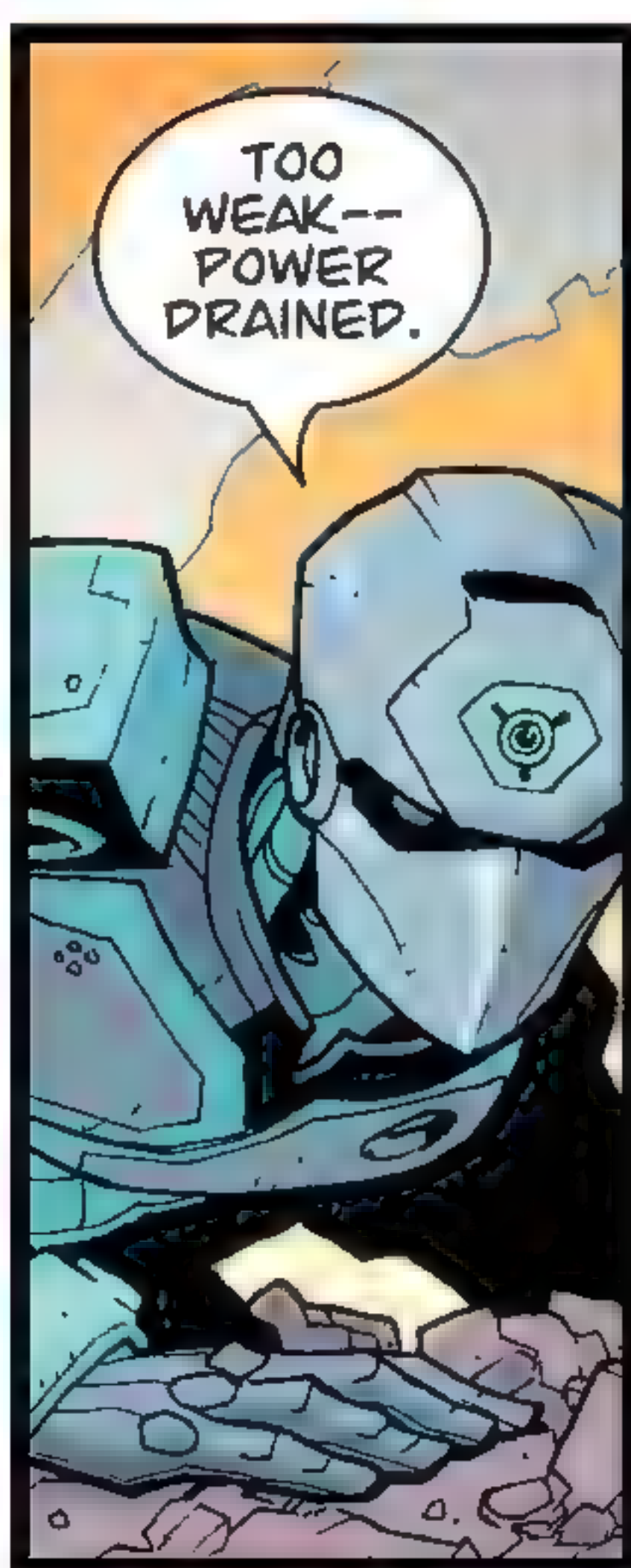


AH--I HAVE UNDERESTIMATED YOU! YOU WERE ABLE TO RECONSTRUCT THE WARP KEY THAT BROUGHT ME HERE.

YOU HAVE OPENED A PORTAL TO MY UNIVERSE--THE ONE I DRAINED AND DESTROYED!



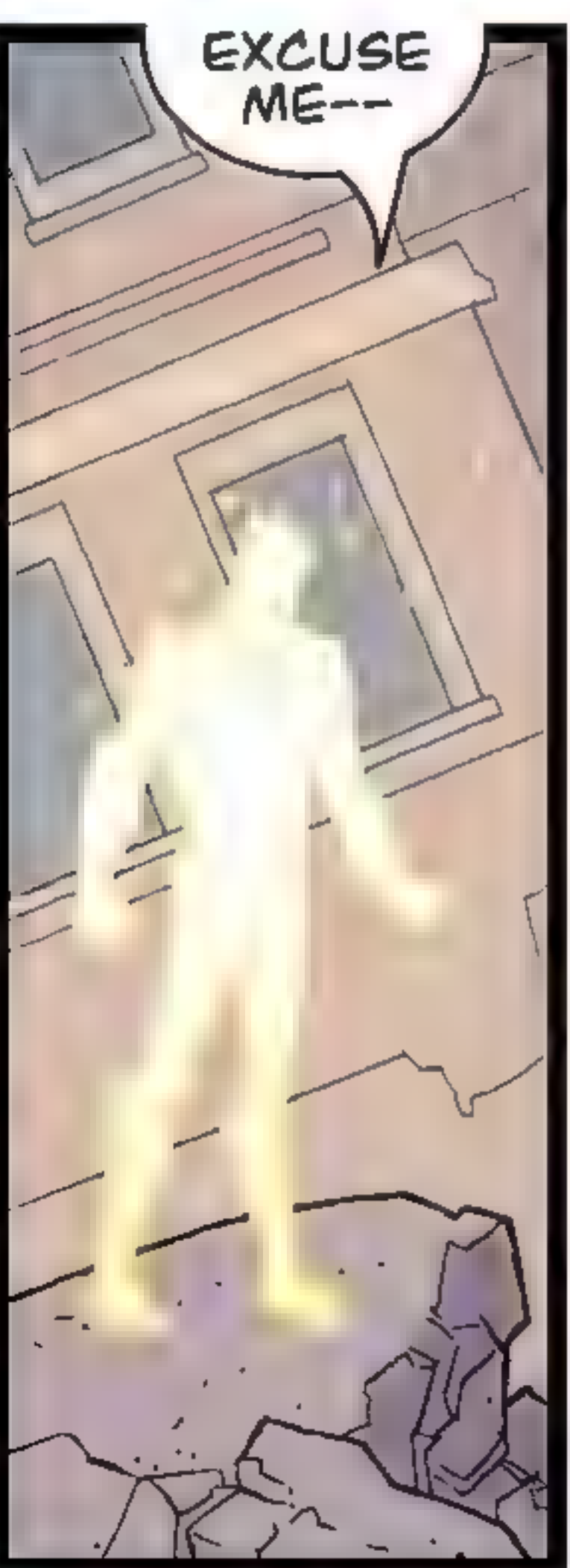
IT MATTERS NOT!



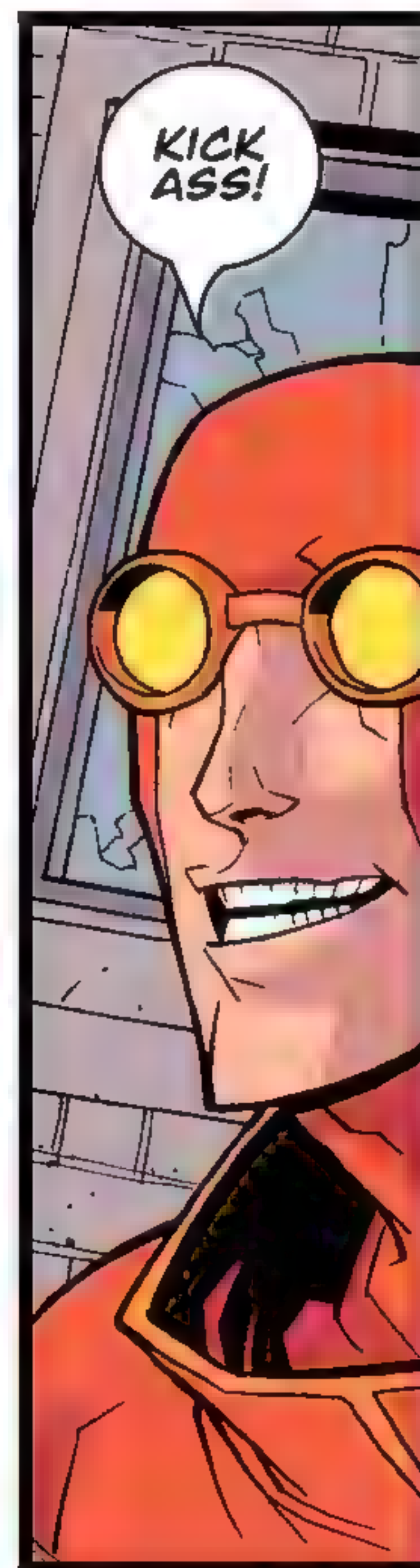
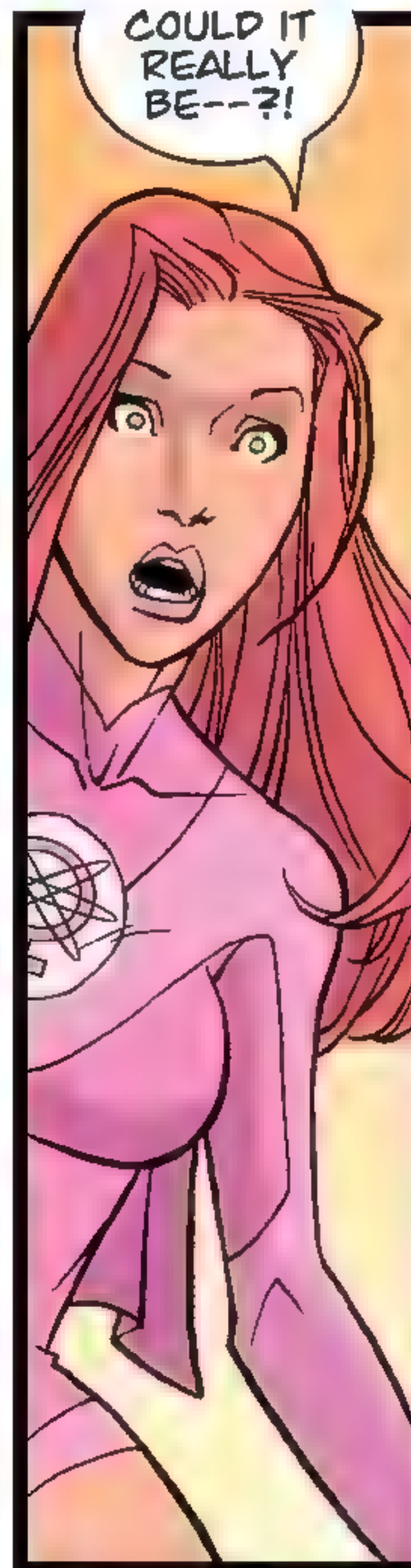
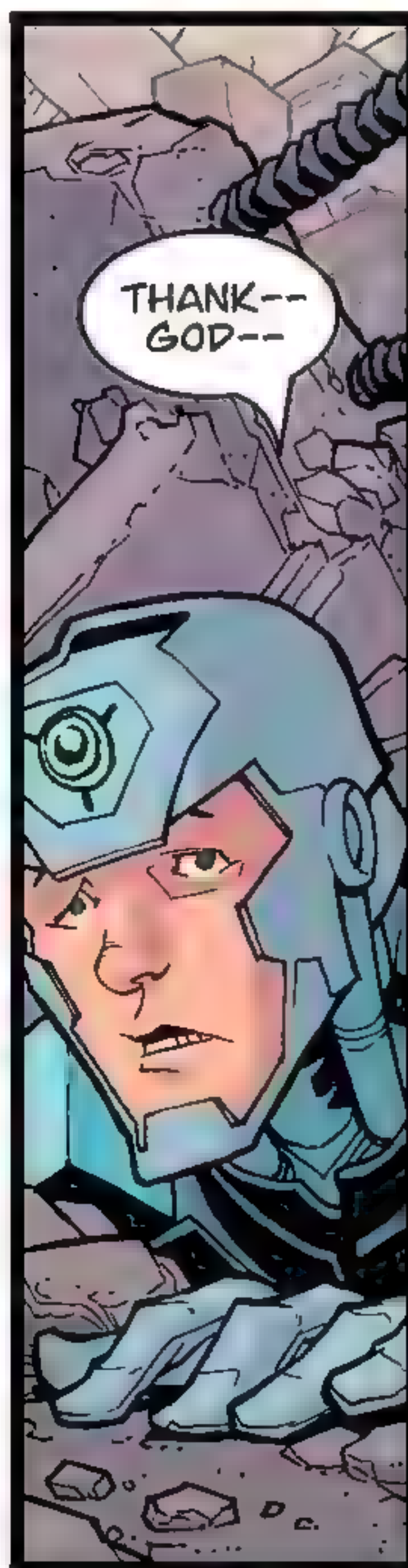
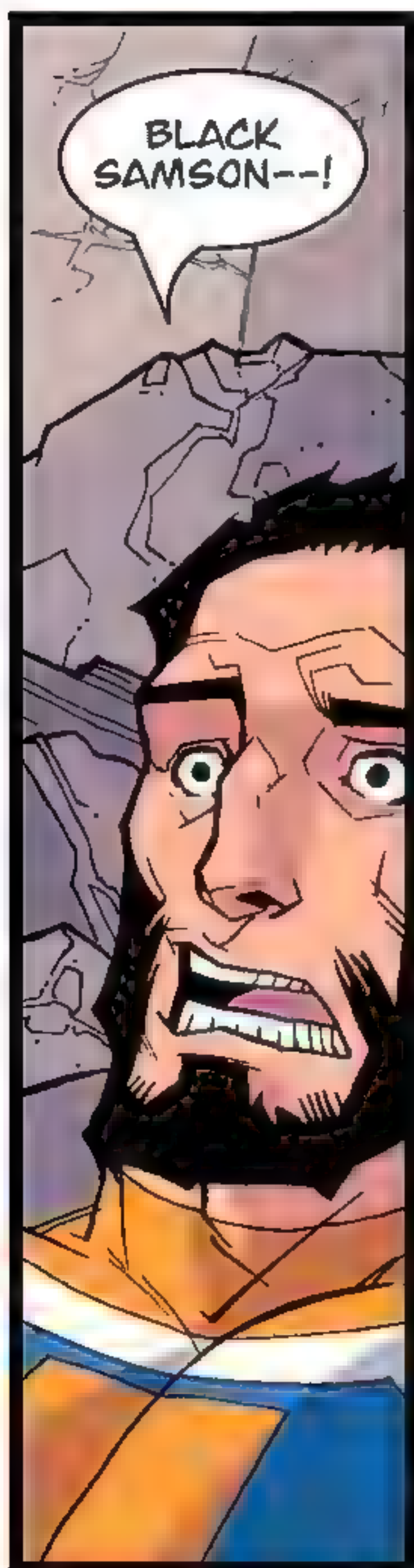
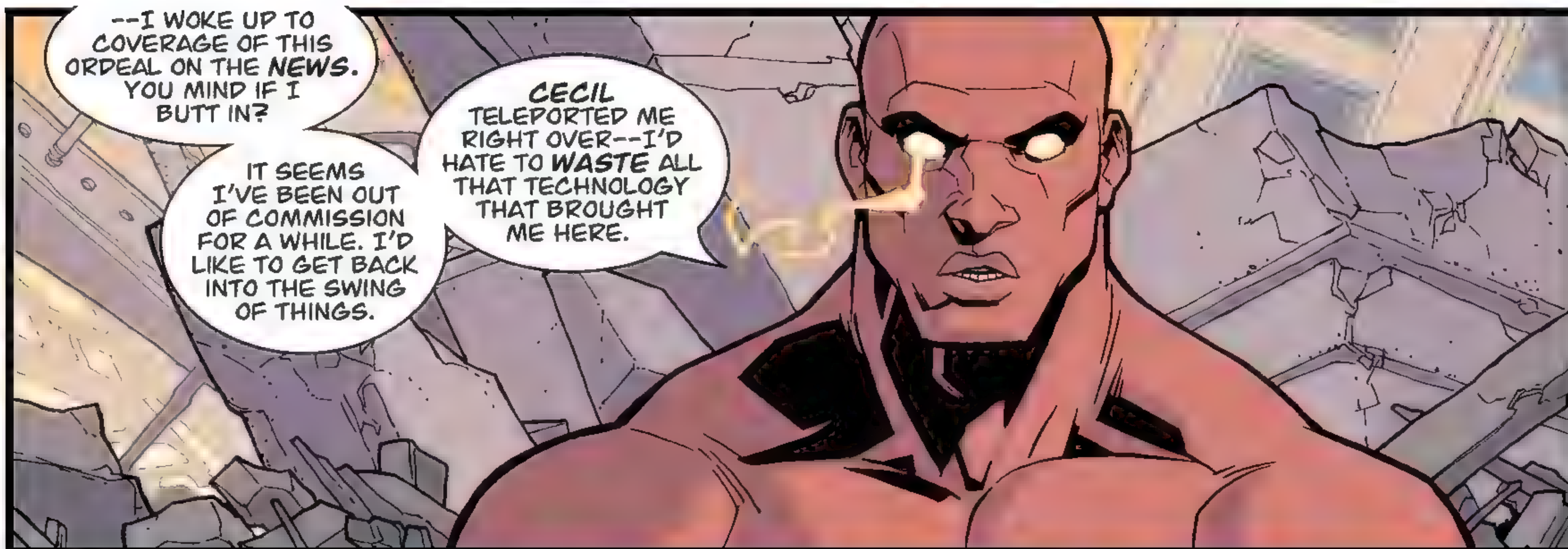
TOO WEAK--POWER DRAINED.

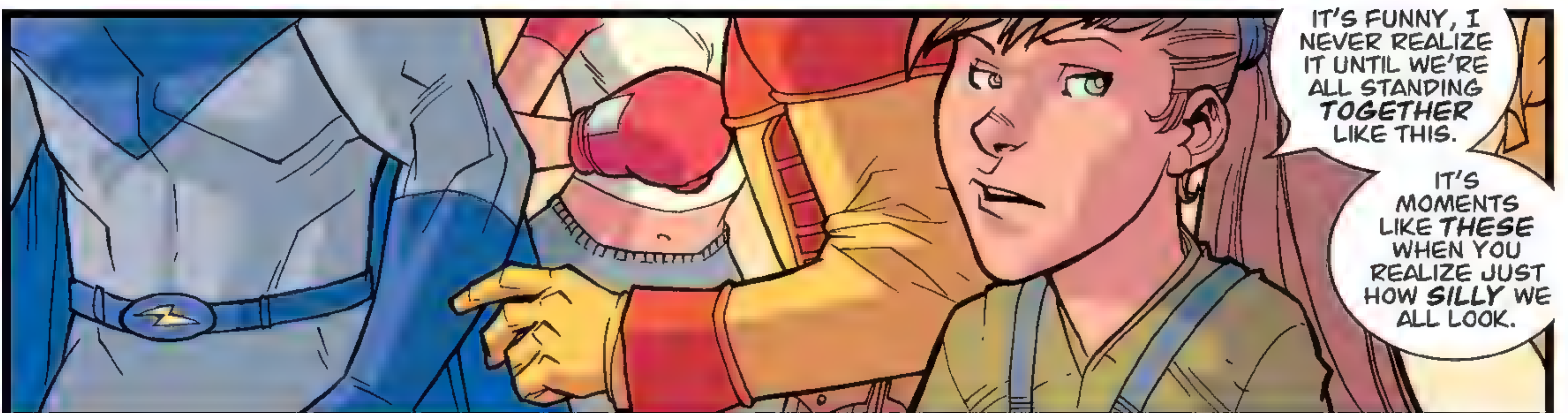
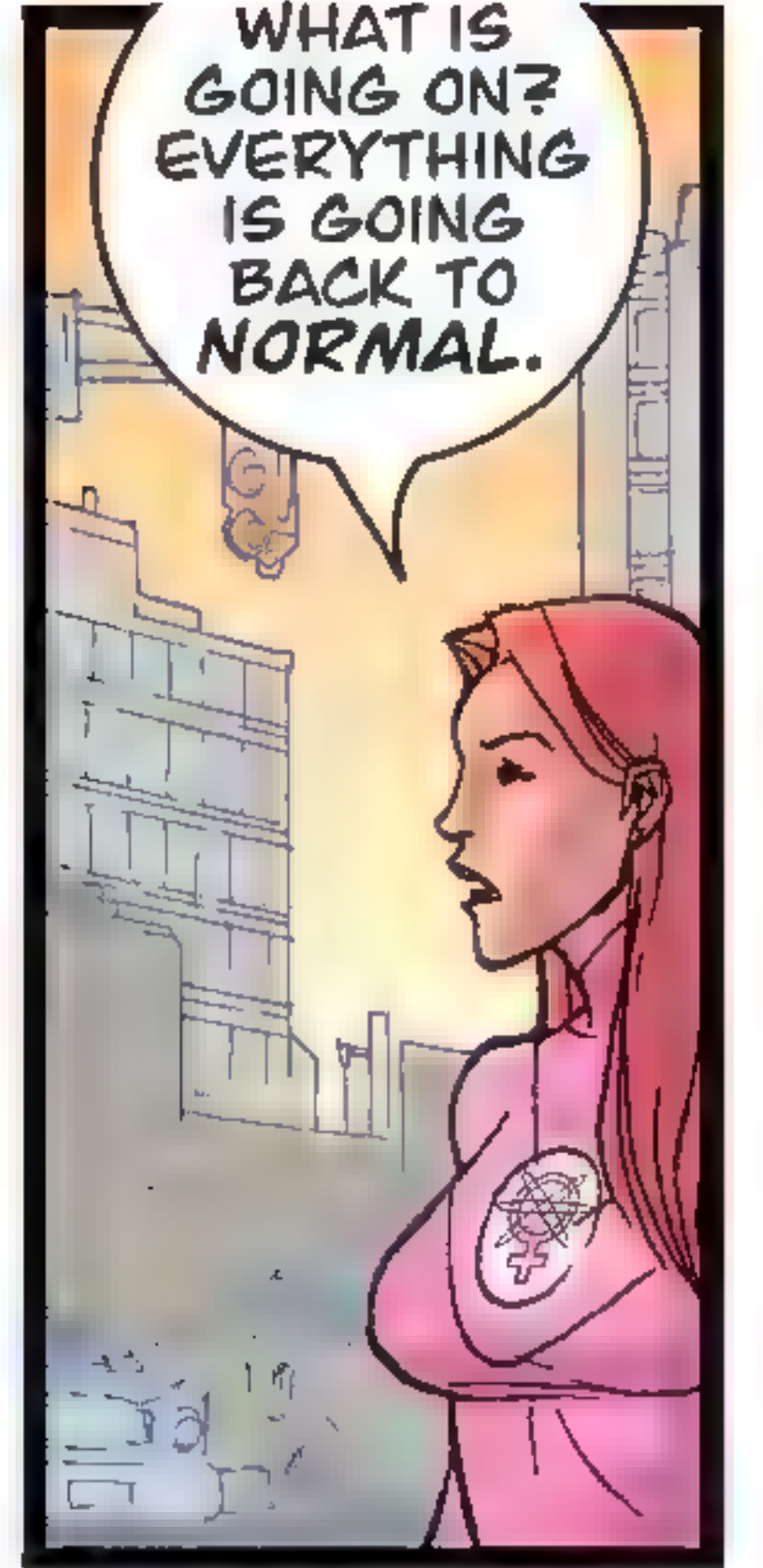
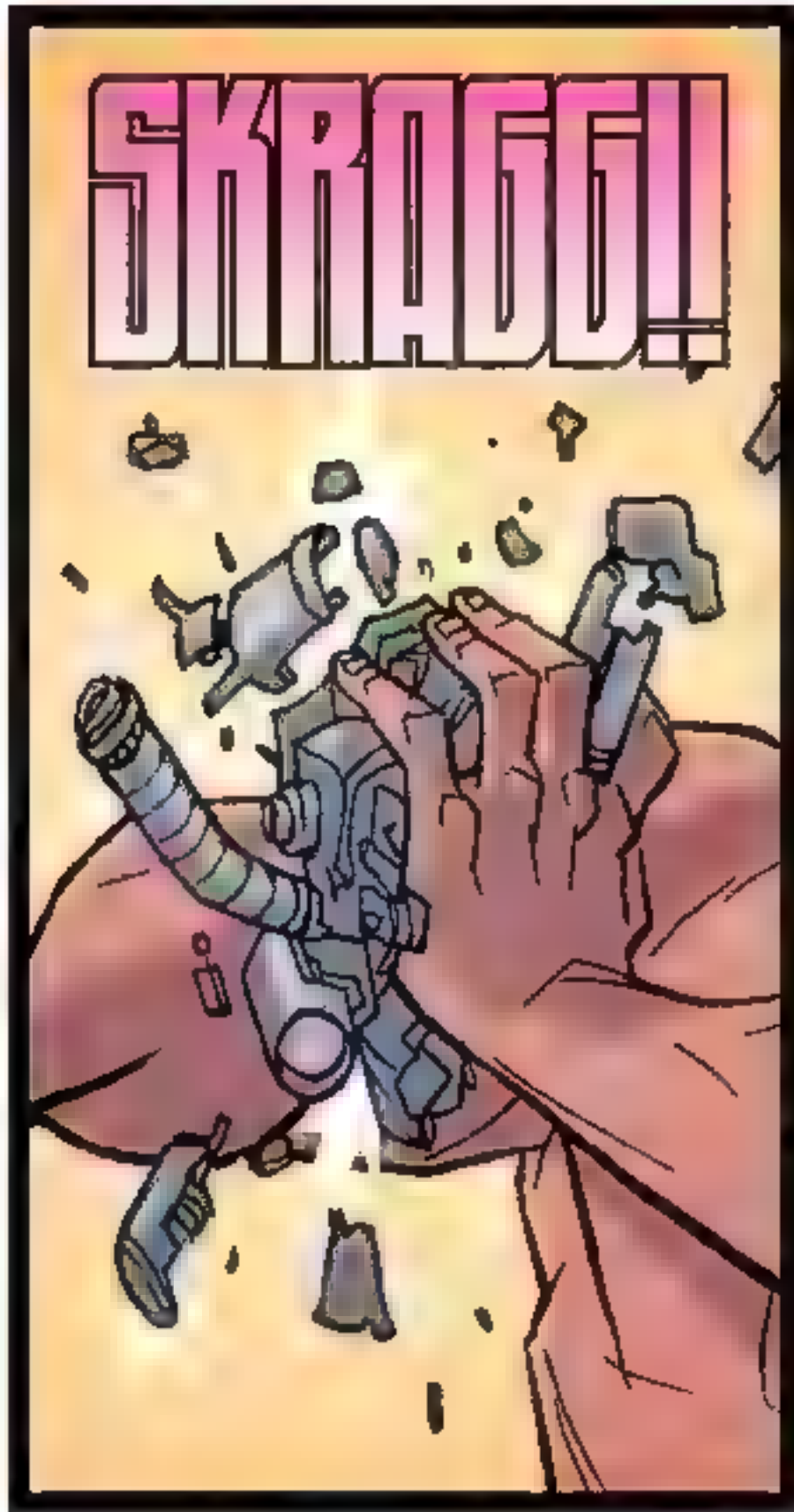
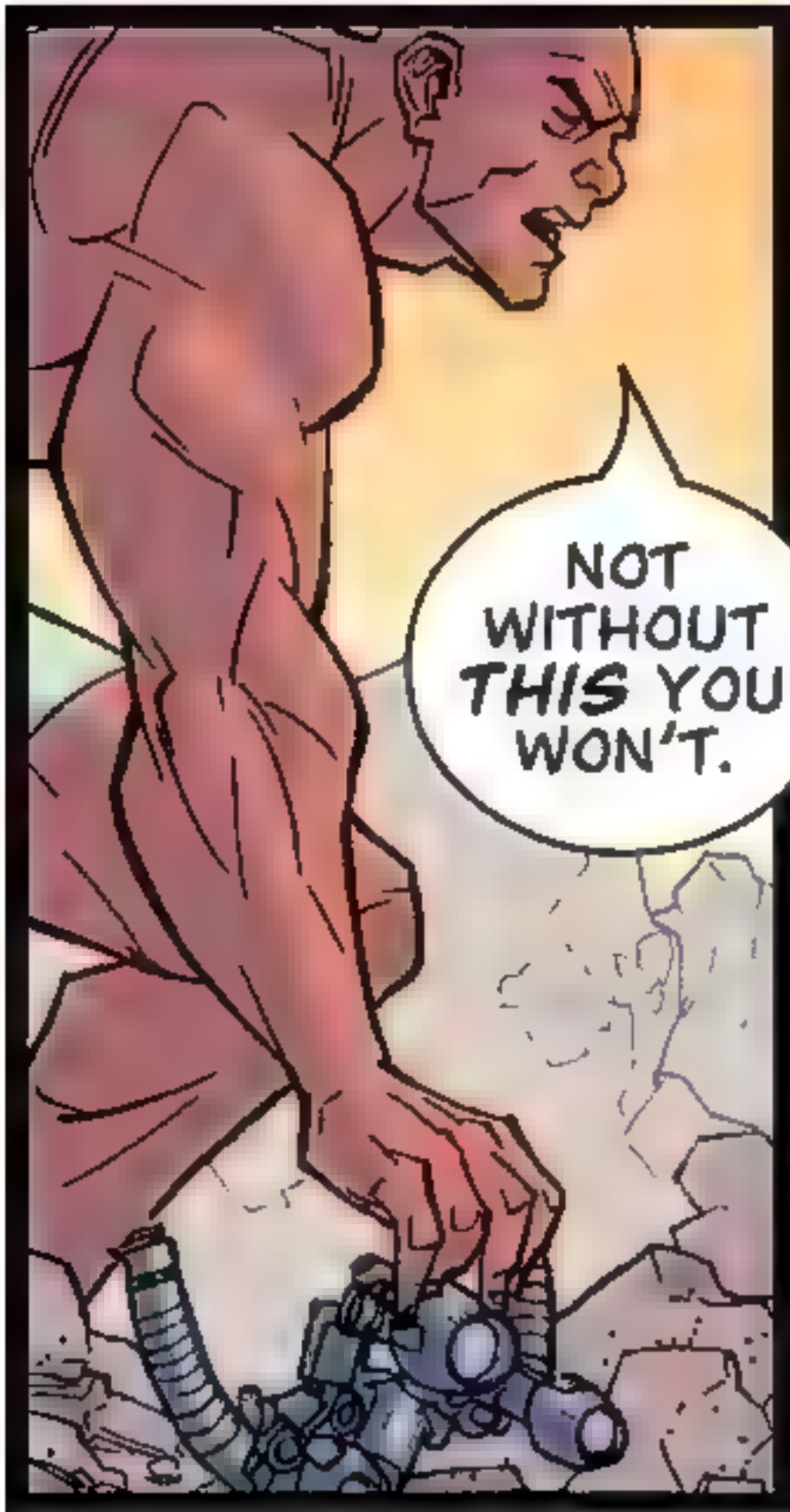
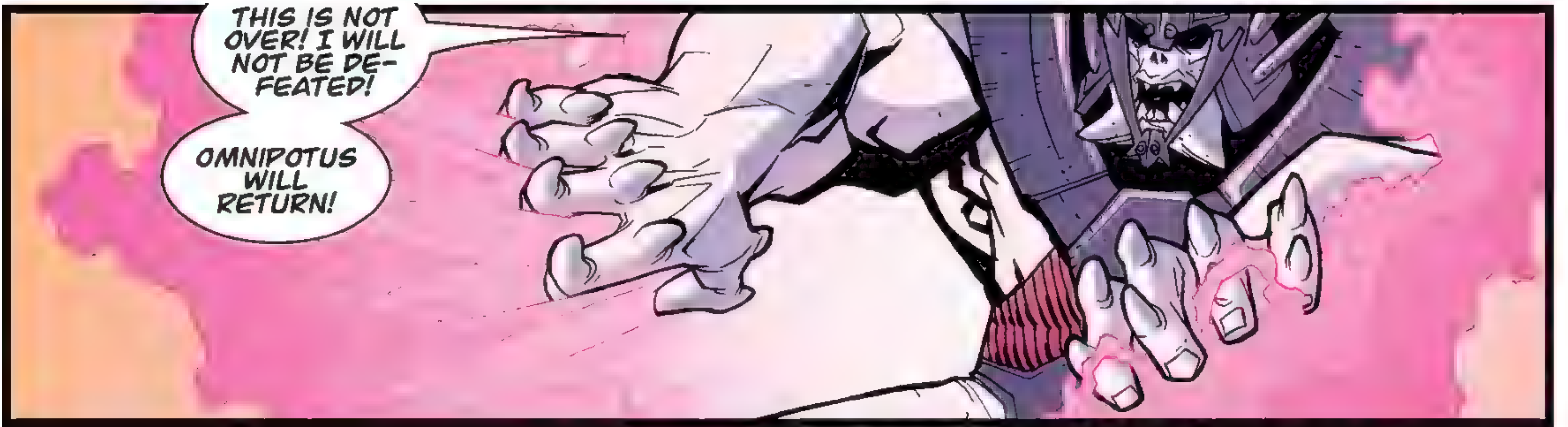
THE PORTAL WILL BE CLOSED IN MOMENTS--AND EVEN WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT COMBINED, YOU LACK THE POWER TO FORCE ME THROUGH.

IT'S OVER!! I HAVE WON!!

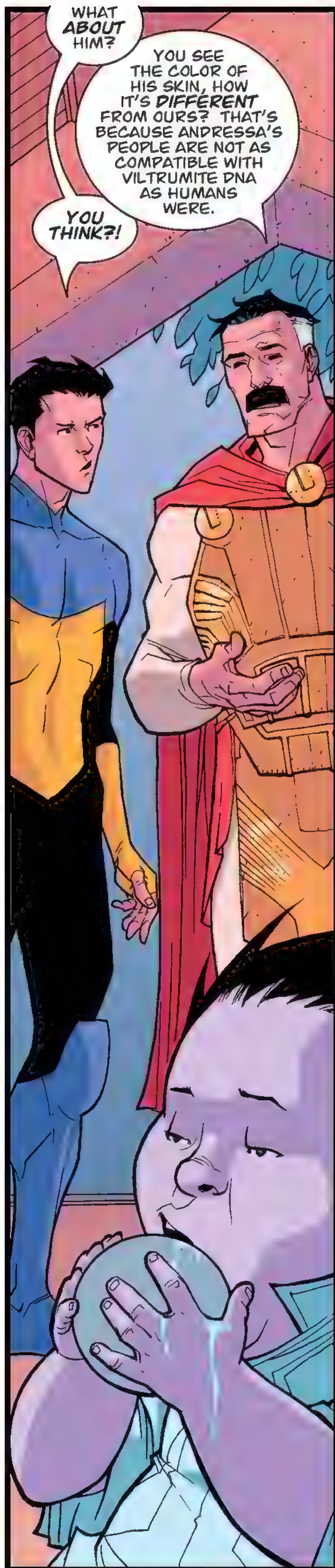


EXCUSE ME--









WHAT ABOUT HIM?

YOU SEE THE COLOR OF HIS SKIN, HOW IT'S DIFFERENT FROM OURS? THAT'S BECAUSE ANDRESSA'S PEOPLE ARE NOT AS COMPATIBLE WITH VILTRUMITE DNA AS HUMANS WERE.

YOU THINK?!

I WOULD APPRECIATE YOU GETTING RID OF THE TONE, SON. I'M STILL YOUR FATHER.

UNDER-
STAND?

OKAY, GOT IT. PLEASE--GO ON. JUST MAKE THIS ALL MAKE SENSE TO ME, DAD. PLEASE.

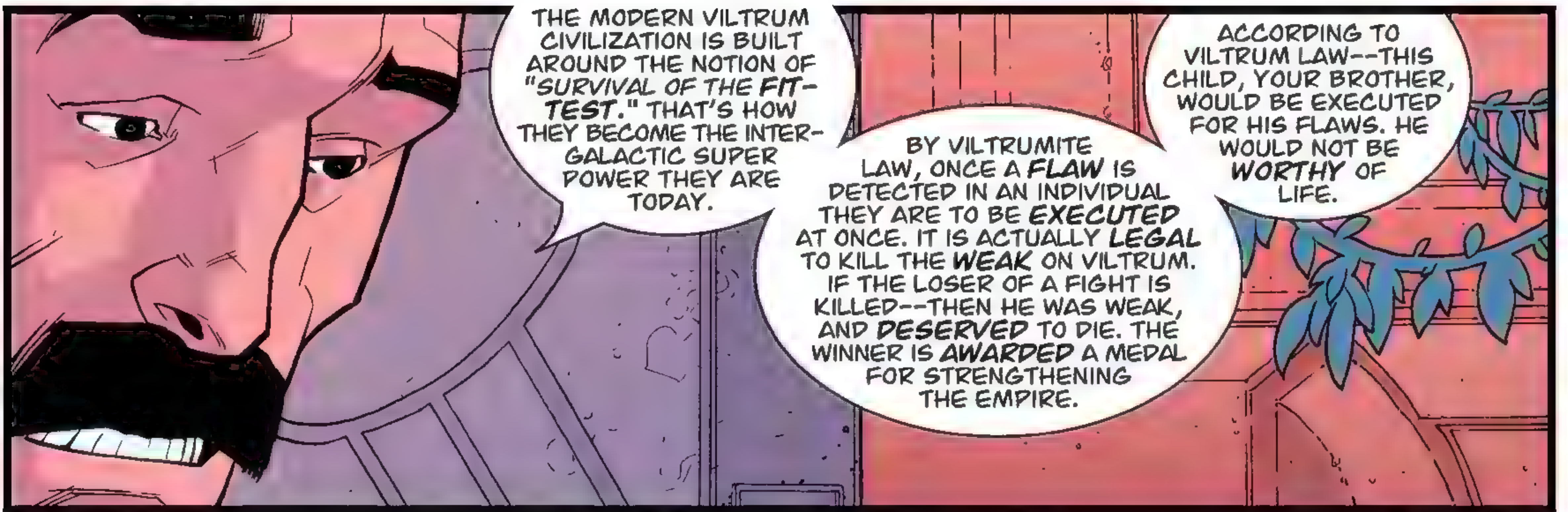
YOUR BROTHER'S SKIN TONE ISN'T THE ONLY THING DIFFERENT. HE'S-- WELL, HE'S **THREE WEEKS** OLD, MARK. BY EARTH STANDARDS HE LOOKS TO BE A YEAR OLD.

HE IS AGING TOO FAST. NOW, I SUSPECT THE VILTRUMITE DNA WILL CAUSE HIS AGING TO **SLOW** JUST AS IT HAS YOURS WHEN HE REACHES PUBERTY--BUT HOW **MUCH** IT WILL SLOW DOWN IS STILL IN QUESTION.

HUNDREDS, IF NOT **THOUSANDS** OF YEARS. HE'LL BE FINE. HE'LL STILL LIVE A LONG AND HEALTHY LIFE, ESPECIALLY BY **HUMAN** STANDARDS AND AMONG THESE PEOPLE.

BUT ON VILTRUM... THAT WOULD BE A WHOLE OTHER STORY.

IS HE GOING TO--? I MEAN, HOW LONG DO YOU THINK HE HAS?



THE MODERN VILTRUM CIVILIZATION IS BUILT AROUND THE NOTION OF "SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST." THAT'S HOW THEY BECOME THE INTER-GALACTIC SUPER POWER THEY ARE TODAY.

BY VILTRUMITE LAW, ONCE A **FLAW** IS DETECTED IN AN INDIVIDUAL THEY ARE TO BE **EXECUTED** AT ONCE. IT IS ACTUALLY **LEGAL** TO KILL THE **WEAK** ON VILTRUM. IF THE LOSER OF A FIGHT IS KILLED--THEN HE WAS **WEAK**, AND **DESERVED** TO DIE. THE **WINNER** IS **AWARDED** A MEDAL FOR STRENGTHENING THE EMPIRE.

ACCORDING TO VILTRUM LAW--THIS CHILD, YOUR BROTHER, WOULD BE EXECUTED FOR HIS FLAWS. HE WOULD NOT BE **WORTHY** OF LIFE.

WHAT'S HIS NAME? YOU HAVEN'T CALLED HIM BY NAME YET, YOU KEEP SAYING "SON" OR "YOUR BROTHER."

THE CUSTOM HERE IS FOR AN INDIVIDUAL TO **CHOOSE** THEIR OWN NAME ONCE THEY REACH ADULTHOOD.

WHICH WOULD BE **TWO WEEKS** FROM NOW, WERE IT NOT FOR HIS VILTRUMITE BLOOD.

WHAT IS YOUR NAME?

I MEAN--NOLAN IS AN **EARTH** NAME, RIGHT? YOU HAD TO HAVE A DIFFERENT NAME ON VILTRUM.

NO, NOLAN IS AND HAS ALWAYS BEEN MY NAME. THE VILTRUMITES HAVE NO NEED FOR LAST NAMES, SO GRAYSON WAS ADDED WHILE I WAS ON EARTH.

THE PRONUNCIATION WAS JUST A BIT DIFFERENT, AS I RECALL. CLOSER TO "NOWL-AHN" BUT MORE OR LESS THE SAME.



SOMEHOW THAT MAKES ME FEEL **BETTER**. ONE OF THE THINGS THAT GOT TO ME THE **MOST** WAS THAT I MORE THAN LIKELY DIDN'T EVEN KNOW YOUR NAME ANYMORE.



I HOPE THIS TALK WE'VE HAD IS SHOWING YOU THAT YOU KNEW ME BETTER THAN EVEN I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE ADMITTED.

I'M SORRY, SON--FOR EVERYTHING.



THAT, THOUGH, DOESN'T HELP AT ALL.

AN APOLOGY JUST ISN'T GOING TO CUT IT.



I UNDERSTAND THAT, TRULY, I DO, BUT IT DOESN'T CHANGE THE FACT THAT I NEED YOUR HELP.

THE VILTRUMITES ARE COMING FOR ME. THEY COULD BE HERE AT ANY MOMENT. YOU ARRIVED JUST IN TIME. ONCE THEY FIND YOUR BROTHER THEY WILL KILL HIM. IF I'M DEFEATED I WILL BE TAKEN BACK TO VILTRUM FOR EXECUTION.

I NEED YOUR HELP IN DEFENDING THIS PLANET.



AGAINST AN ARMY OF ADULT VILTRUMITES? I BARELY EVEN HURT YOU DURING OUR FIGHT.



NO. THEY WILL MORE THAN LIKELY SEND FOUR OR LESS. ALSO, THEY HAVE THEIR MOST POWERFUL SOLDIERS DOING MORE IMPORTANT THINGS LIKE CONQUERING NEW WORLDS...

LIKE ME.



ALSO, THEY WON'T BE EXPECTING YOU TO BE HERE. THEY DON'T KNOW YOU EXIST. BETWEEN THE TWO OF US, WE MIGHT STAND A CHANCE.

I NEED TO KNOW, SON. WILL YOU--



OF COURSE I WILL. YOU THINK I'M GOING TO STAND ASIDE AND WATCH THEM MURDER A BABY?!



THANK YOU, SON. NOW, I HOPE WE HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO PREPARE. THERE ARE MANY THINGS I CAN TEACH YOU BEFORE--



SORRY TO INTERRUPT, SIRE, BUT IT'S URGENT!



WHAT IS IT? OUT WITH IT!



IT'S--





MARK!
TAKE THEM
TO THE
CAVES!

ANDRESSA
WILL SHOW
YOU THE WAY!
GO!

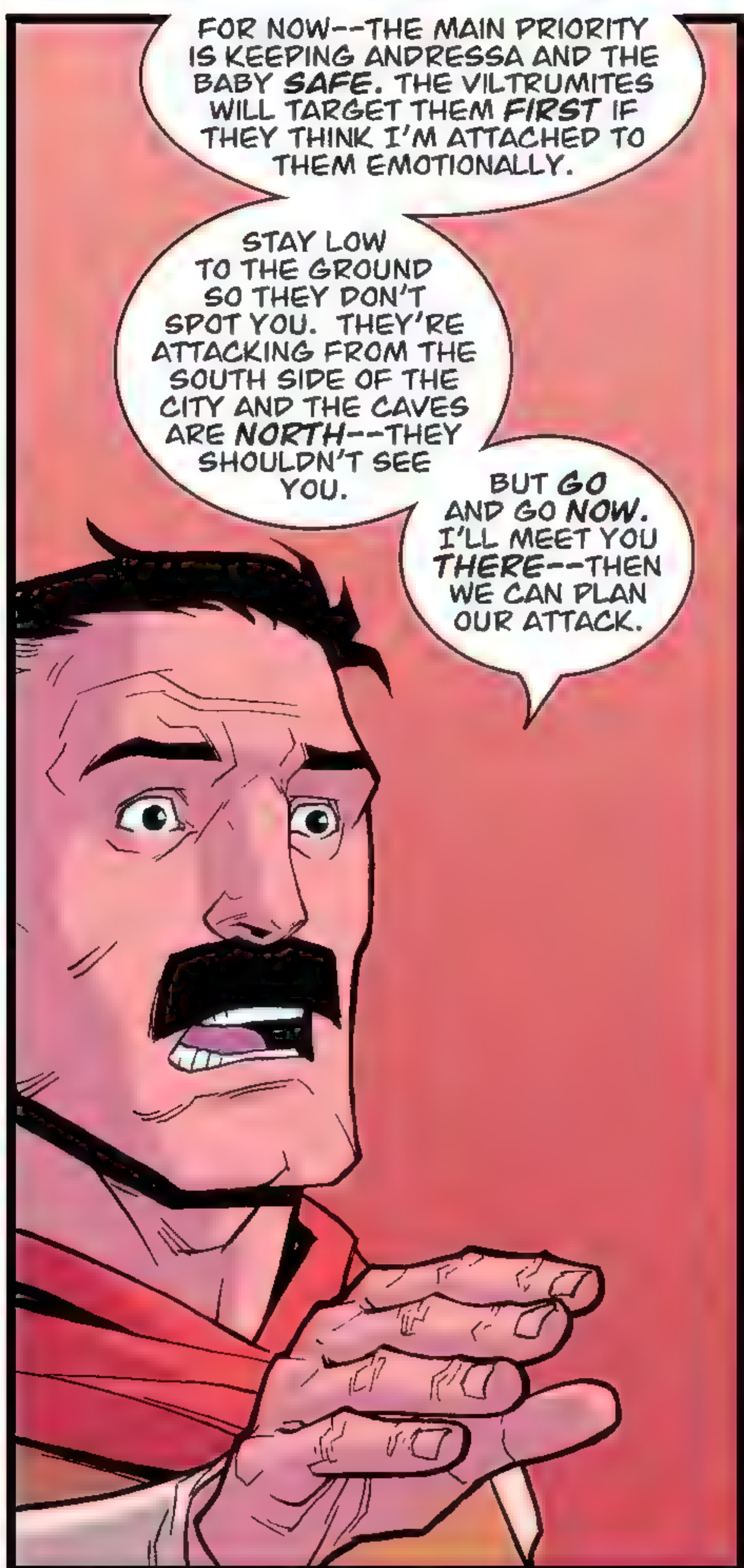
GO
NOW!!



WHAT?! I--
I JUST GOT
HERE?!

I DON'T
KNOW THE
FIRST THING
ABOUT THIS
PLACE--
CAVES?!
WHAT
CAVES?!

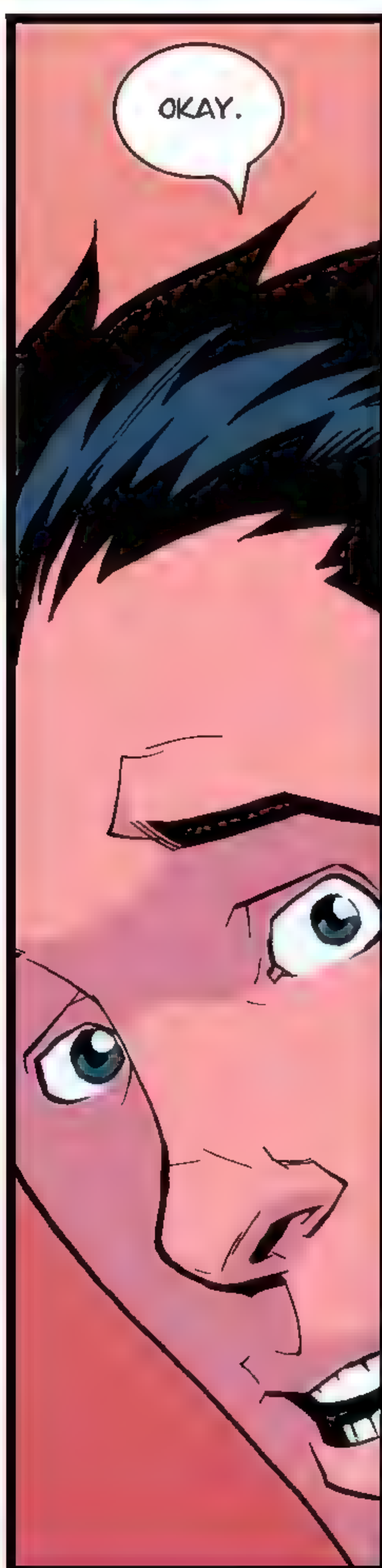
I
THOUGHT
YOU WANTED
ME TO HELP
YOU?!



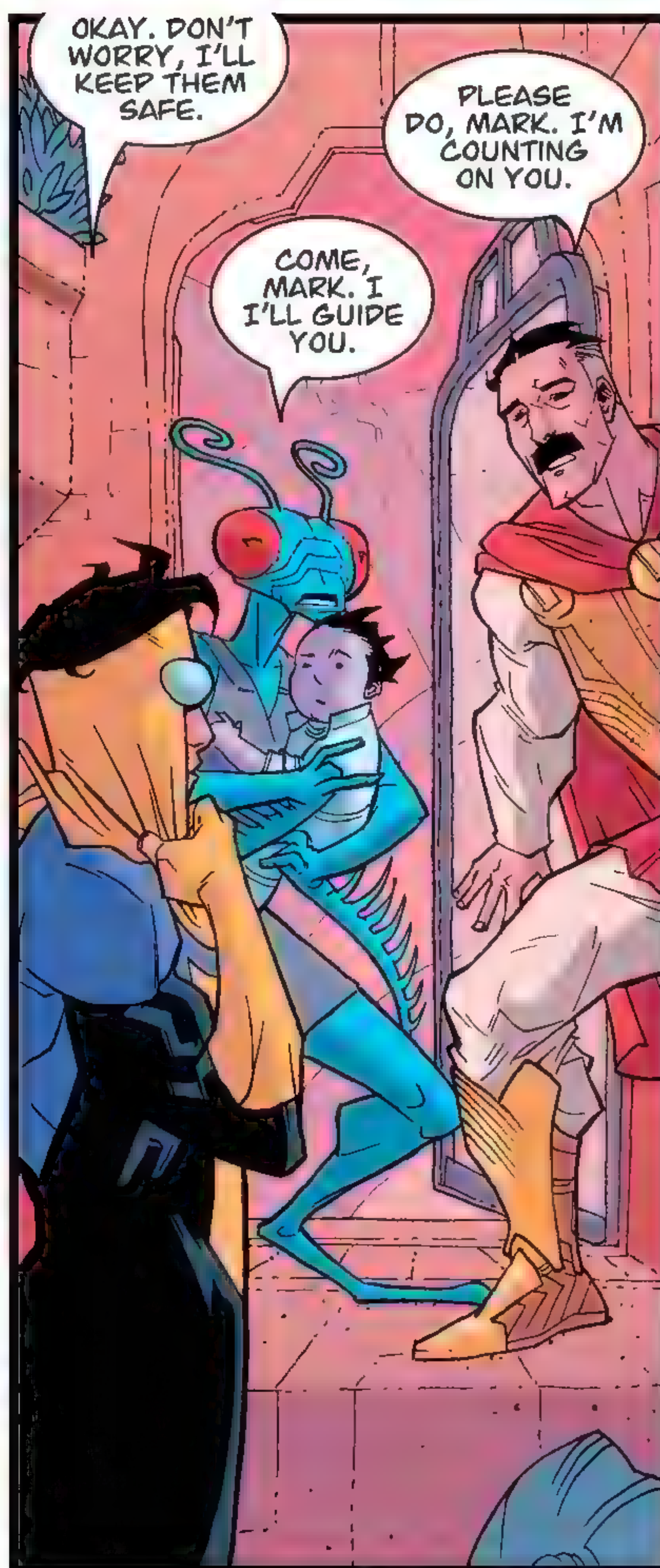
FOR NOW--THE MAIN PRIORITY
IS KEEPING ANDRESSA AND THE
BABY **SAFE**. THE VILTRUMITES
WILL TARGET THEM **FIRST** IF
THEY THINK I'M ATTACHED TO
THEM EMOTIONALLY.

STAY LOW
TO THE GROUND
SO THEY DON'T
SPOT YOU. THEY'RE
ATTACKING FROM THE
SOUTH SIDE OF THE
CITY AND THE CAVES
ARE **NORTH**--THEY
SHOULDN'T SEE
YOU.

BUT **GO**
AND **GO NOW**.
I'LL MEET YOU
THERE--THEN
WE CAN PLAN
OUR ATTACK.



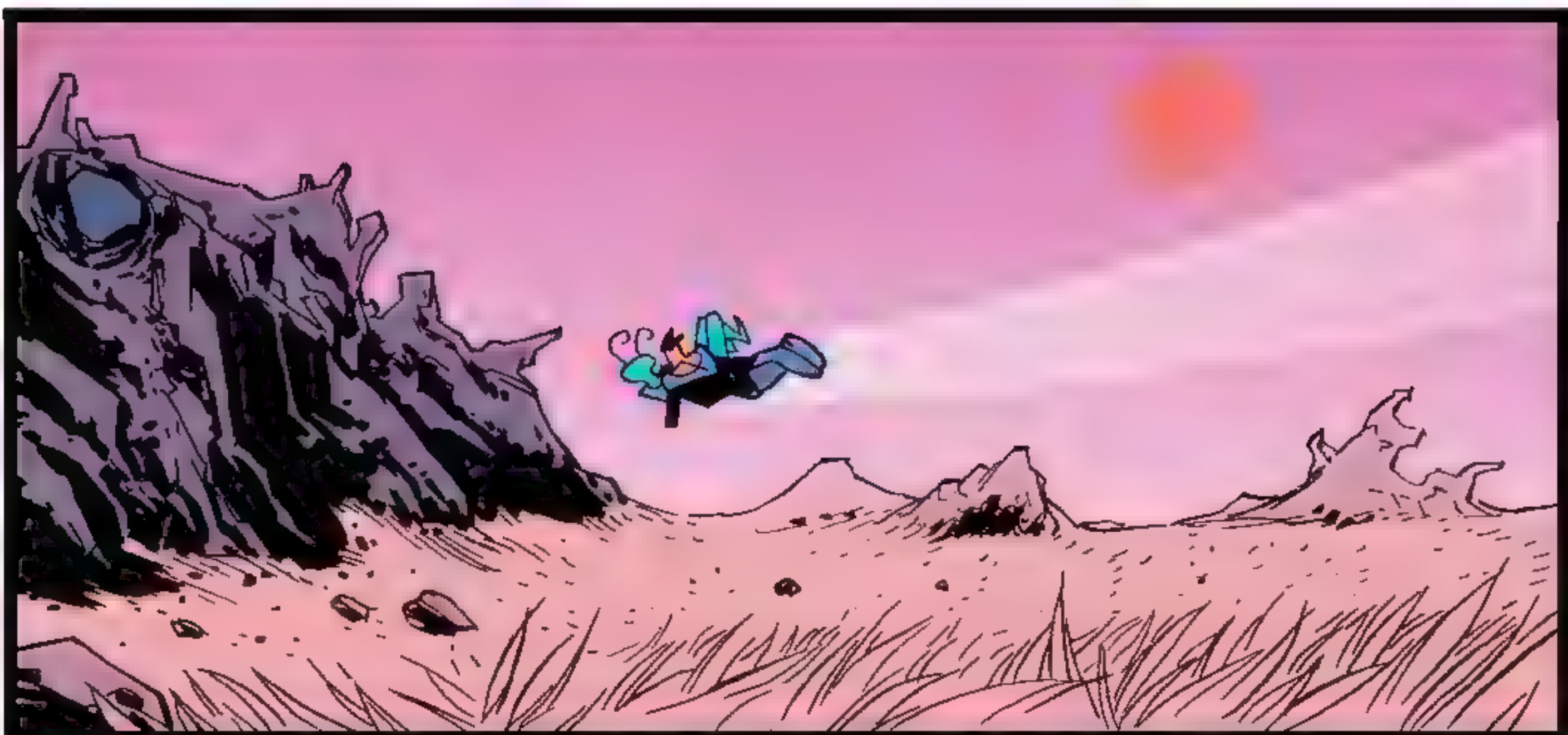
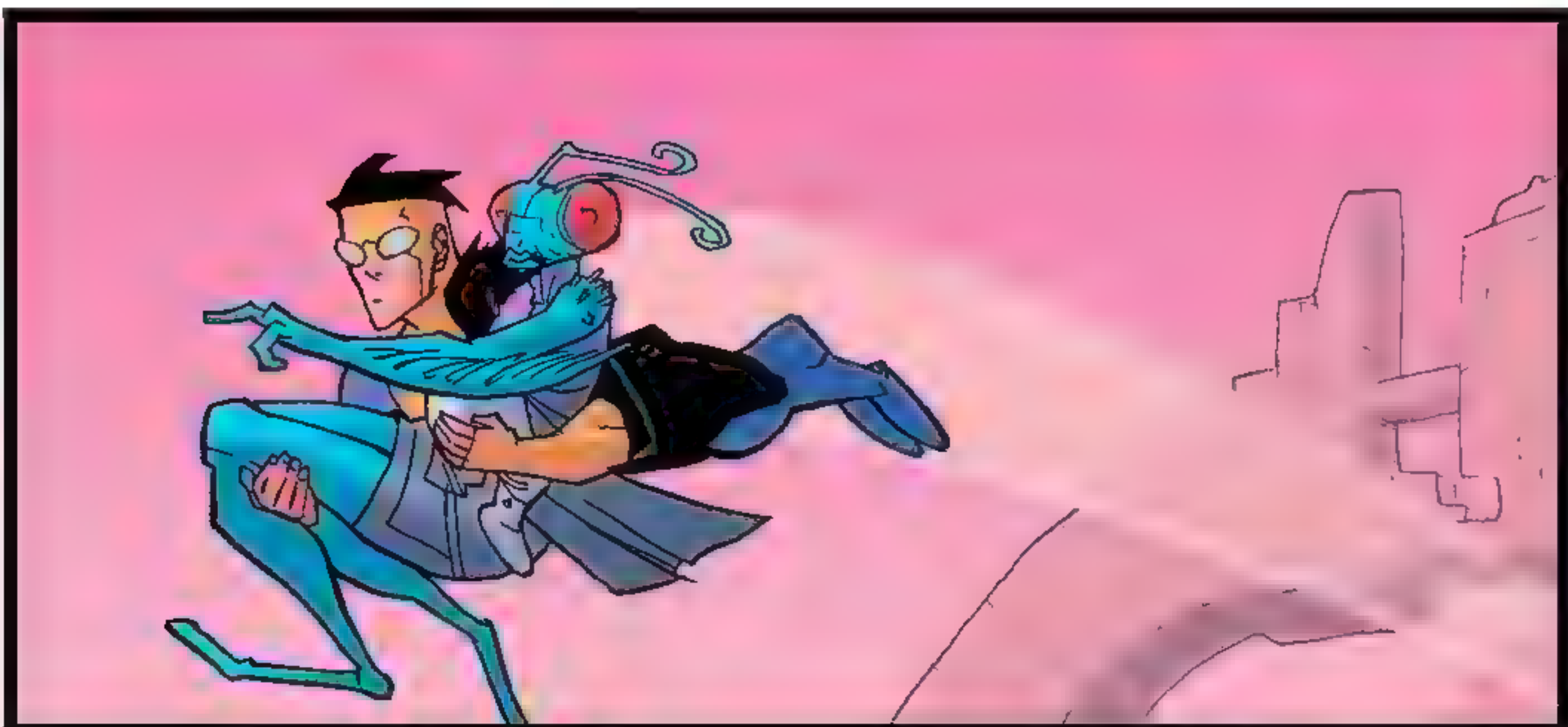
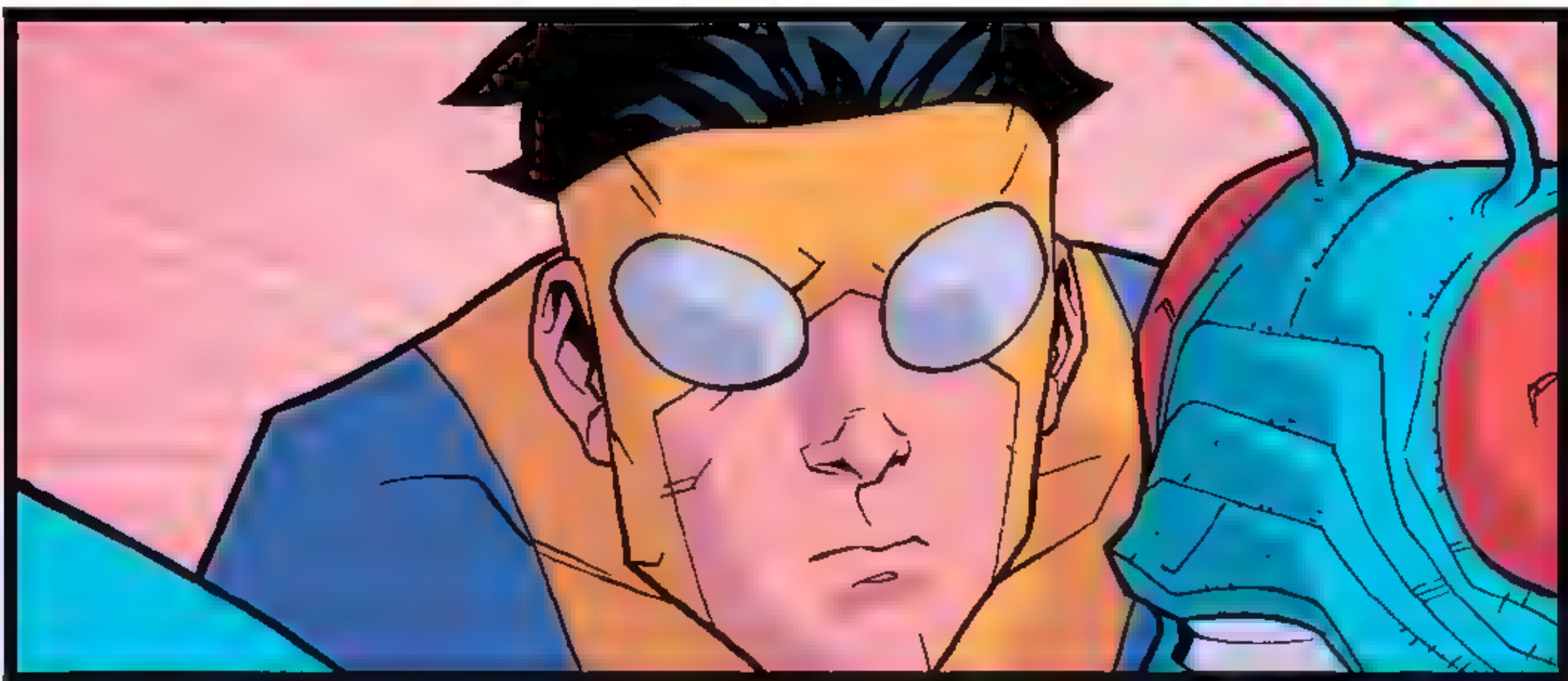
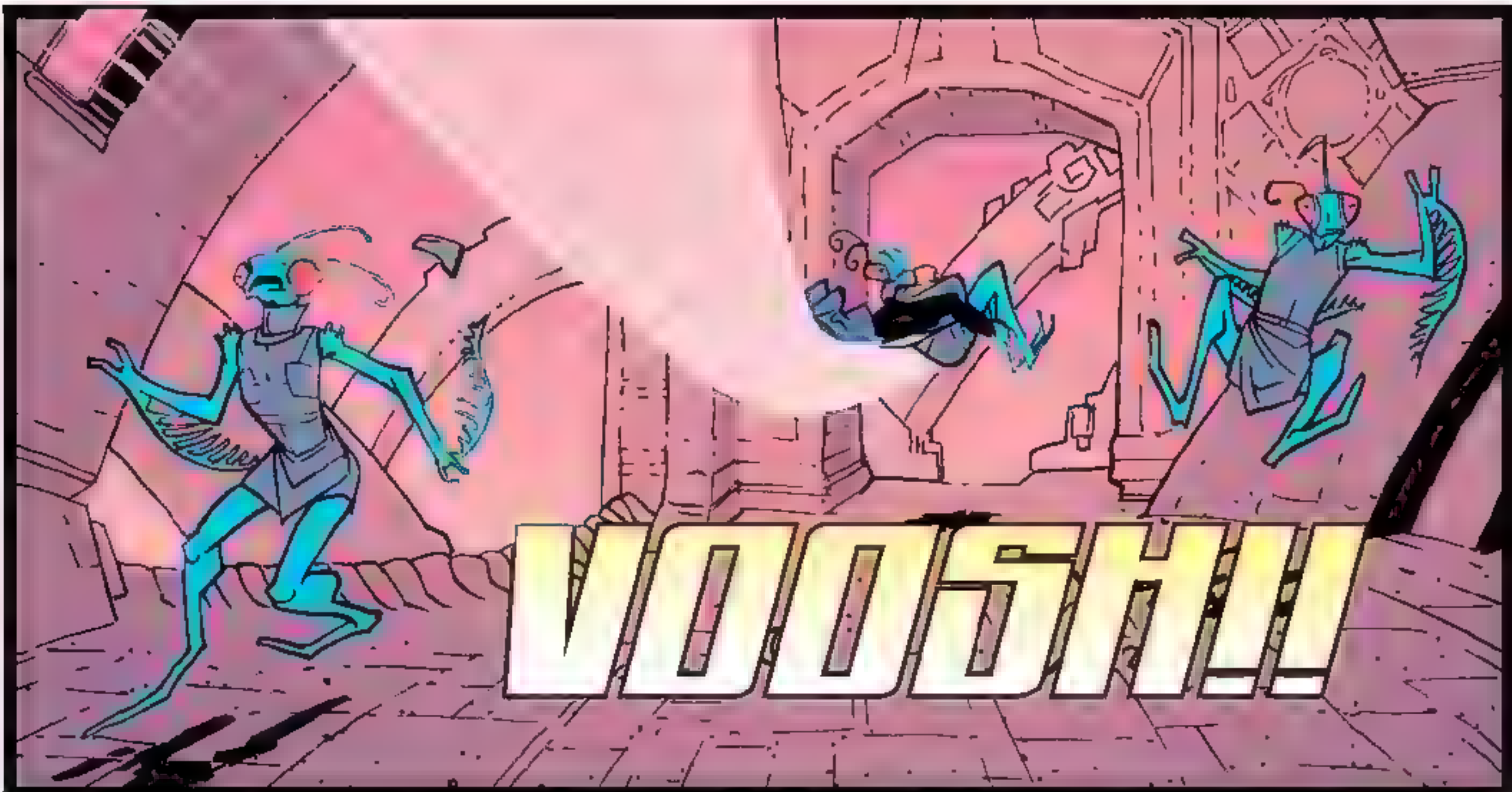
OKAY.



OKAY. DON'T
WORRY, I'LL
KEEP THEM
SAFE.

PLEASE
DO, MARK. I'M
COUNTING
ON YOU.

COME,
MARK. I
I'LL GUIDE
YOU.





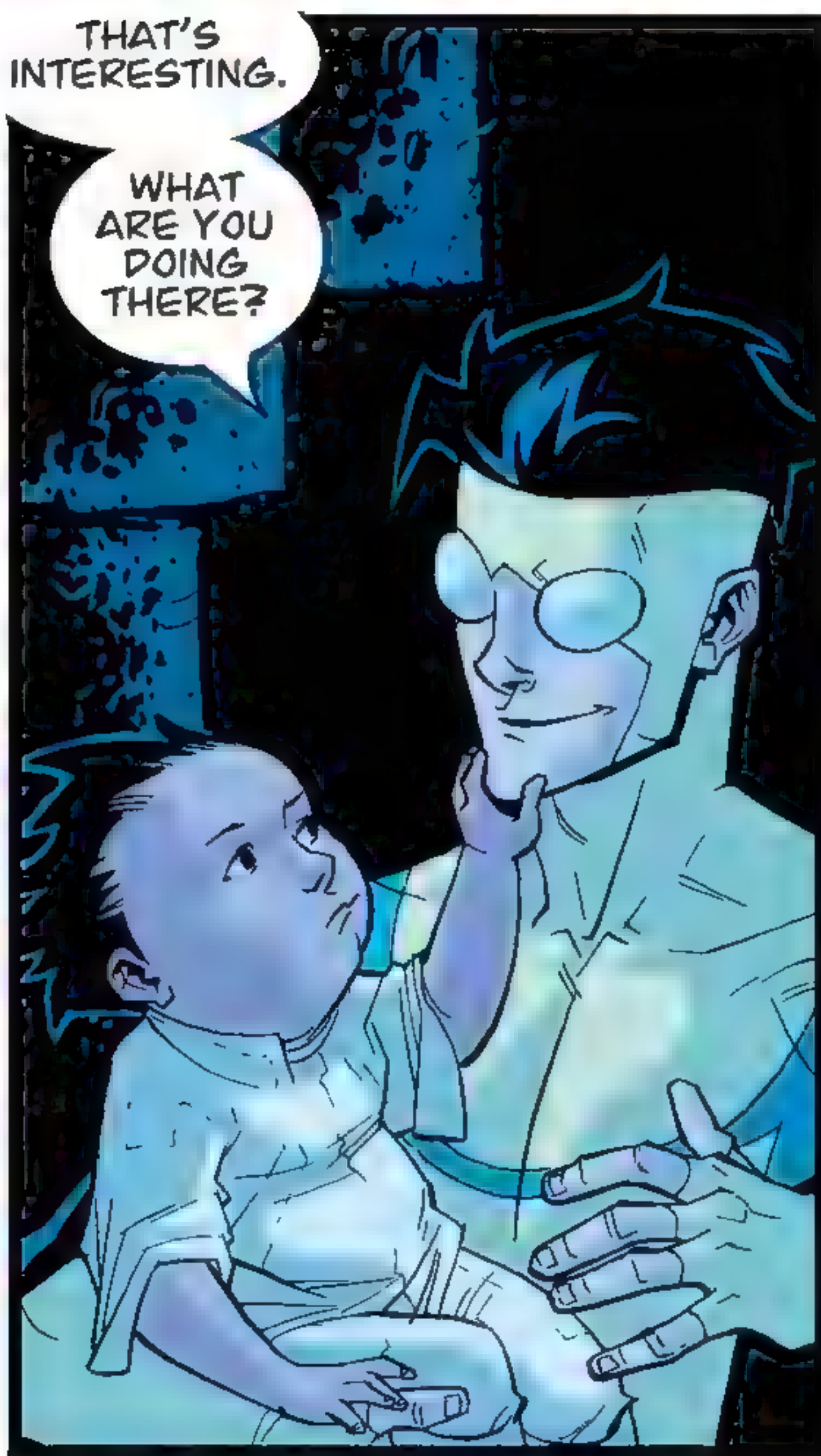
WHAT IS THIS PLACE?

THESE ARE THE CAVES OF ROCLAIN--ONCE EVERY GENERATION OUR PLANET IS FORCED TO ENDURE MASSIVE LIGHTNING STORMS. IT HAS BEEN THIS WAY FOR ALL OF RECORDED HISTORY.

ROCLAIN DISCOVERED THIS CAVE SYSTEM AND LED OUR PEOPLE HERE FOR SHELTER AGAINST THE STORM MANY, MANY AGES AGO.



IT WAS ALSO USED AS A HAVEN FOR OUR PEOPLE DURING THE WARS OF TIMES PAST BEFORE MY PEOPLE UNITED UNDER ONE WORLD RULER.

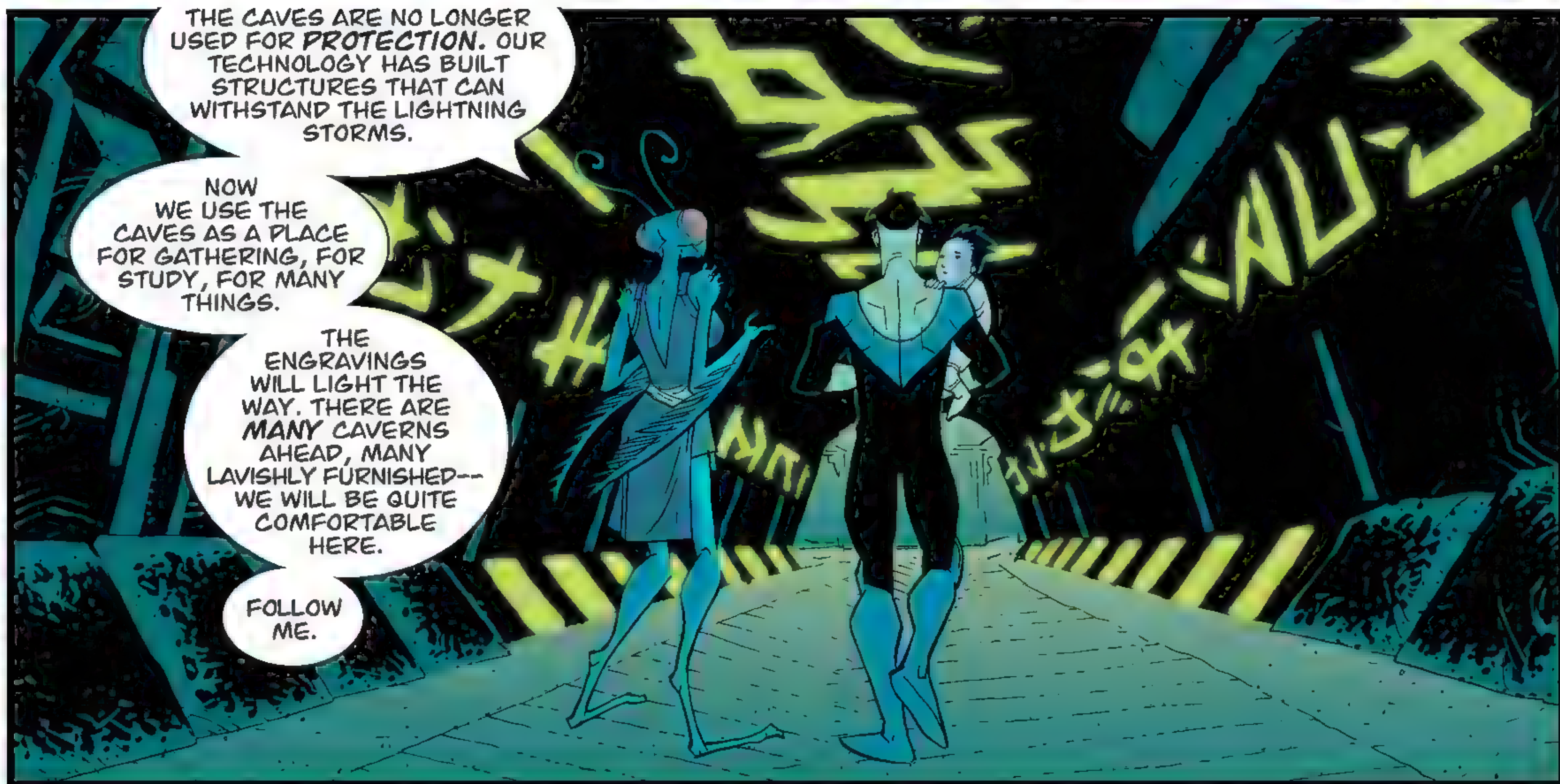


THAT'S INTERESTING.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING THERE?



THIS.



THE CAVES ARE NO LONGER USED FOR PROTECTION. OUR TECHNOLOGY HAS BUILT STRUCTURES THAT CAN WITHSTAND THE LIGHTNING STORMS.

NOW WE USE THE CAVES AS A PLACE FOR GATHERING, FOR STUDY, FOR MANY THINGS.

THE ENGRAVINGS WILL LIGHT THE WAY. THERE ARE MANY CAVERNS AHEAD, MANY LAVISHLY FURNISHED--WE WILL BE QUITE COMFORTABLE HERE.

FOLLOW ME.

SO--YOU'VE
BEEN WITH MY
FATHER
FOR...?



MOST OF MY
LIFE. AS YOUR
FATHER DESCRIBED
YOUR TIME KEEPING
METHODS TO
US, THREE
MONTHS.



THREE
MONTHS?! MAN--
HE DIDN'T WASTE
ANY TIME...

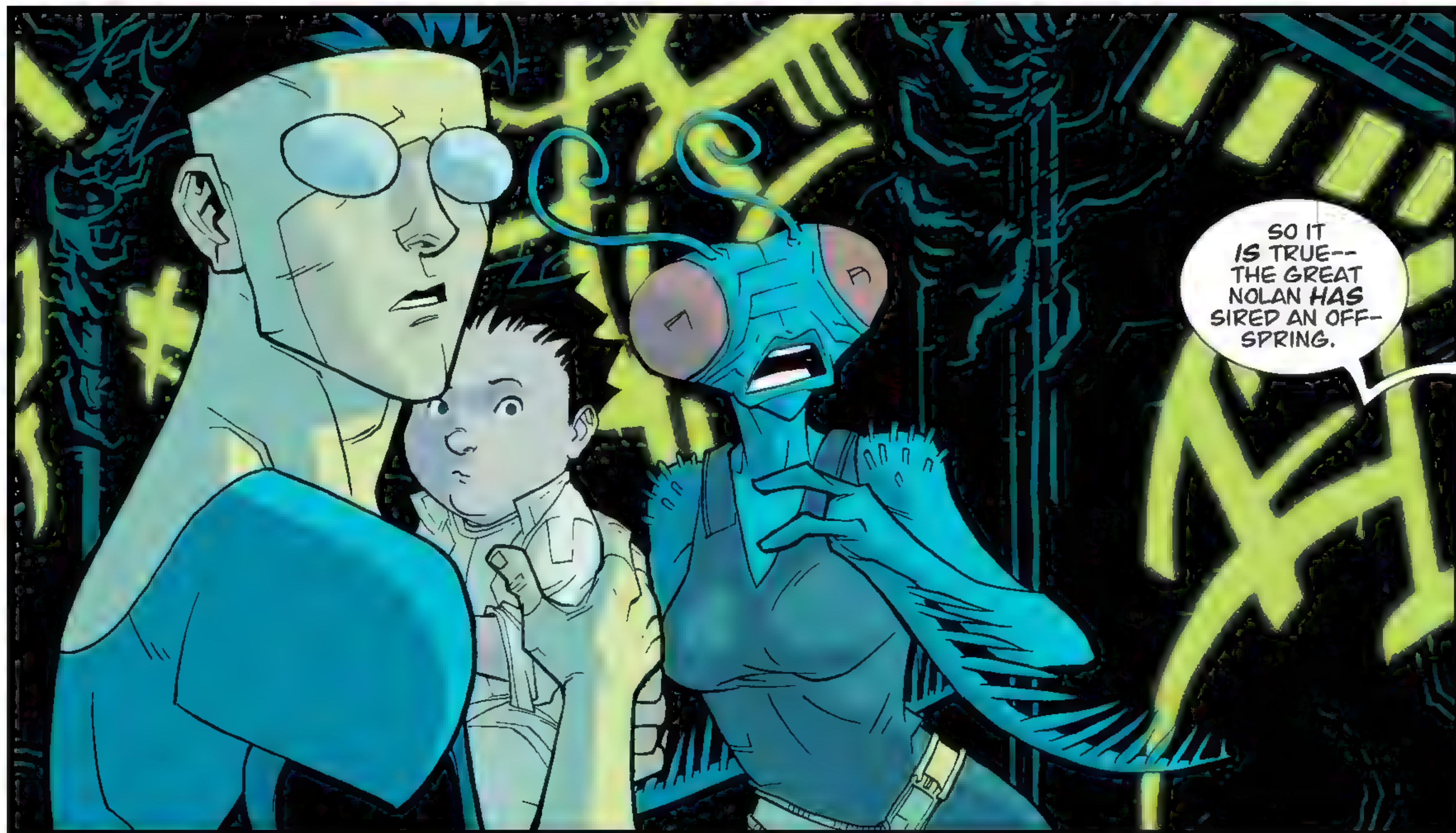


IT IS AN HONOR
TO BE **COUPLED**
WITH YOUR FATHER.
HE IS A GREAT
LEADER AND HAS
DONE A GREAT
MANY THINGS
TO **HELP** MY
PEOPLE.


FROM
WHAT I HAVE
SEEN YOU
ARE VERY
MUCH HIS
SON.

I
SUPPOSE--
IN **SOME**
WAYS,
YEAH.

YOU
ARE NEARLY
AS **FAST** AS
HIM, YES. THESE
CAVES ARE A DAY'S
TRAVEL FROM THE CITY
AND YET YOU HAVE
GOTTEN US HERE
IN **MOMENTS**,
LIKE HIM.

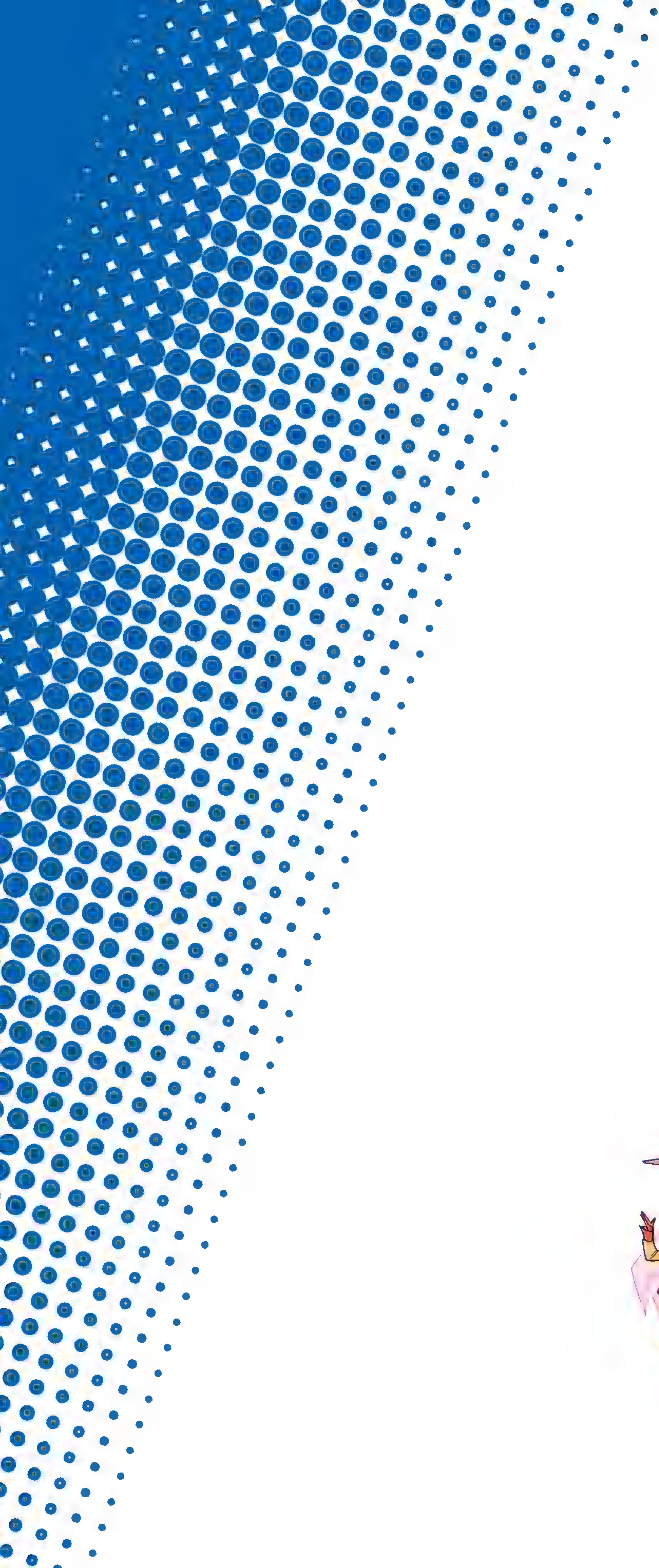


SO IT
IS TRUE--
THE GREAT
NOLAN HAS
Sired AN OFF-
SPRING.



IF YOU ARE
POWERFUL ENOUGH
TO WITHSTAND MY
ASSAULT, YOU WILL
BE ALLOWED TO LIVE.
YOU WILL BE WORTHY
TO STAND BY MY
SIDE--A SOLDIER
OF THE VILTRUM
EMPIRE.

IF YOU
ARE NOT--
YOU WILL
DIE.



ISSUE TWENTY-EIGHT





PREPARE FOR
BATTLE, YOUNG
VILTRUMITE.

I'M HERE
TO GIVE YOUR
LIFE **GLORY**--
OR AN **ENDING**.
I AM ANXIOUS
TO SEE WHICH
IT WILL BE.



I'M
NOT.

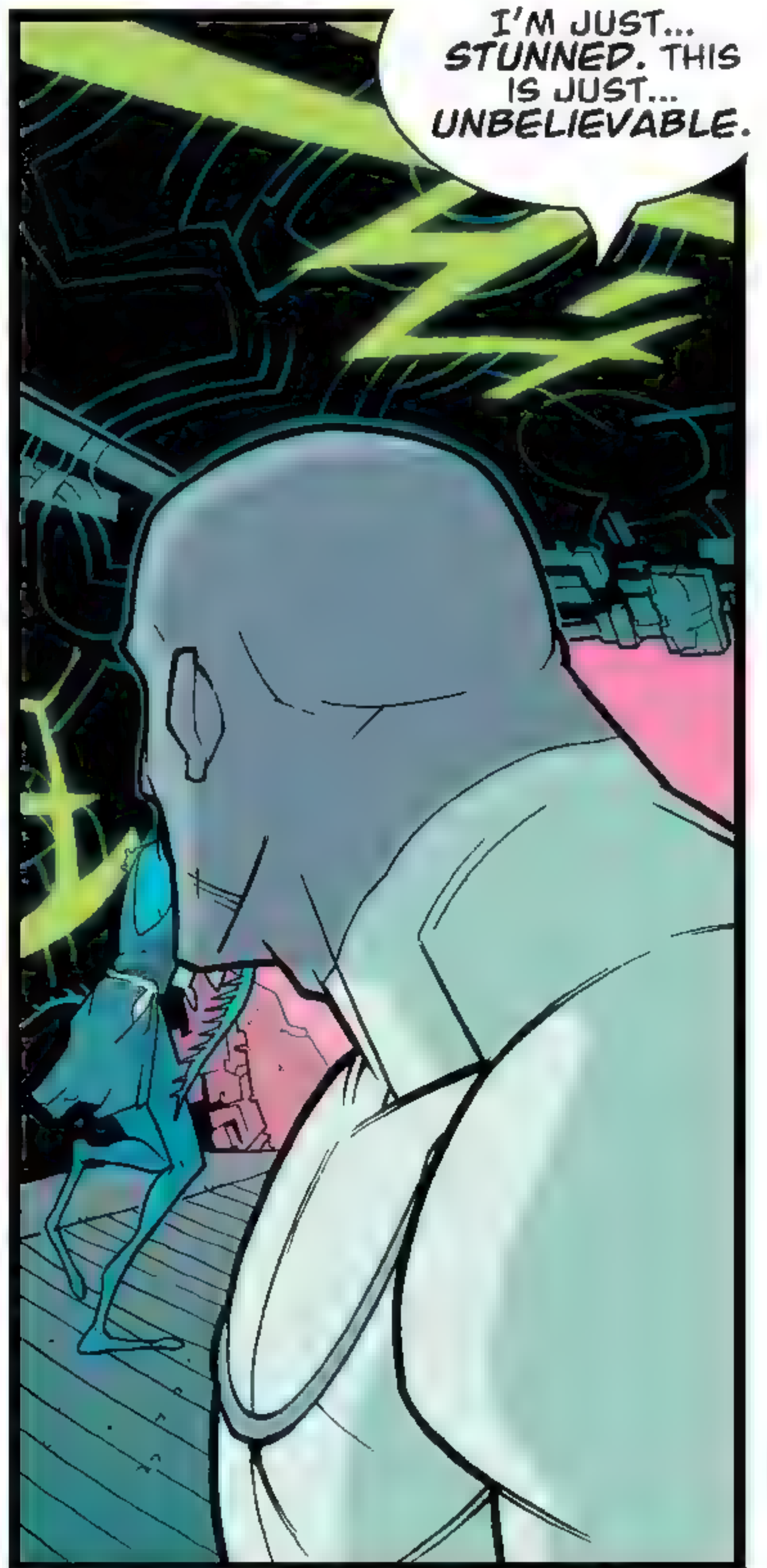
ANDRESSA,
HEAD FOR THE
MOUTH OF THE
CAVE. QUICKLY,
PLEASE.



YOU'RE--
PROTECTING
THESE TWO...
WHY? NOLAN
COULDN'T HAVE...
THAT'S JUST--
THERE'S NO
WAY.



HE DID. HE ABANDONED
YOUR WORLD AND CAME
HERE--AND CREATED
ANOTHER OFFSPRING
WITH THESE--
CREATURES.



I'M JUST...
STUNNED. THIS
IS JUST...
UNBELIEVABLE.





IF HE CAN'T FIND US--WE SHOULD BE OKAY. IF HE FINDS US, THOUGH... I DON'T THINK I CAN OUTRUN HIM!

I DON'T SEE HIM!



GOOD.

MY HAND IS STILL SORE FROM HITTING HIM--IT SEEMS LIKE HE MAY BE AS POWERFUL AS MY DAD.



WHAT WILL YOU DO NOW? HOW WILL YOU PROTECT US?

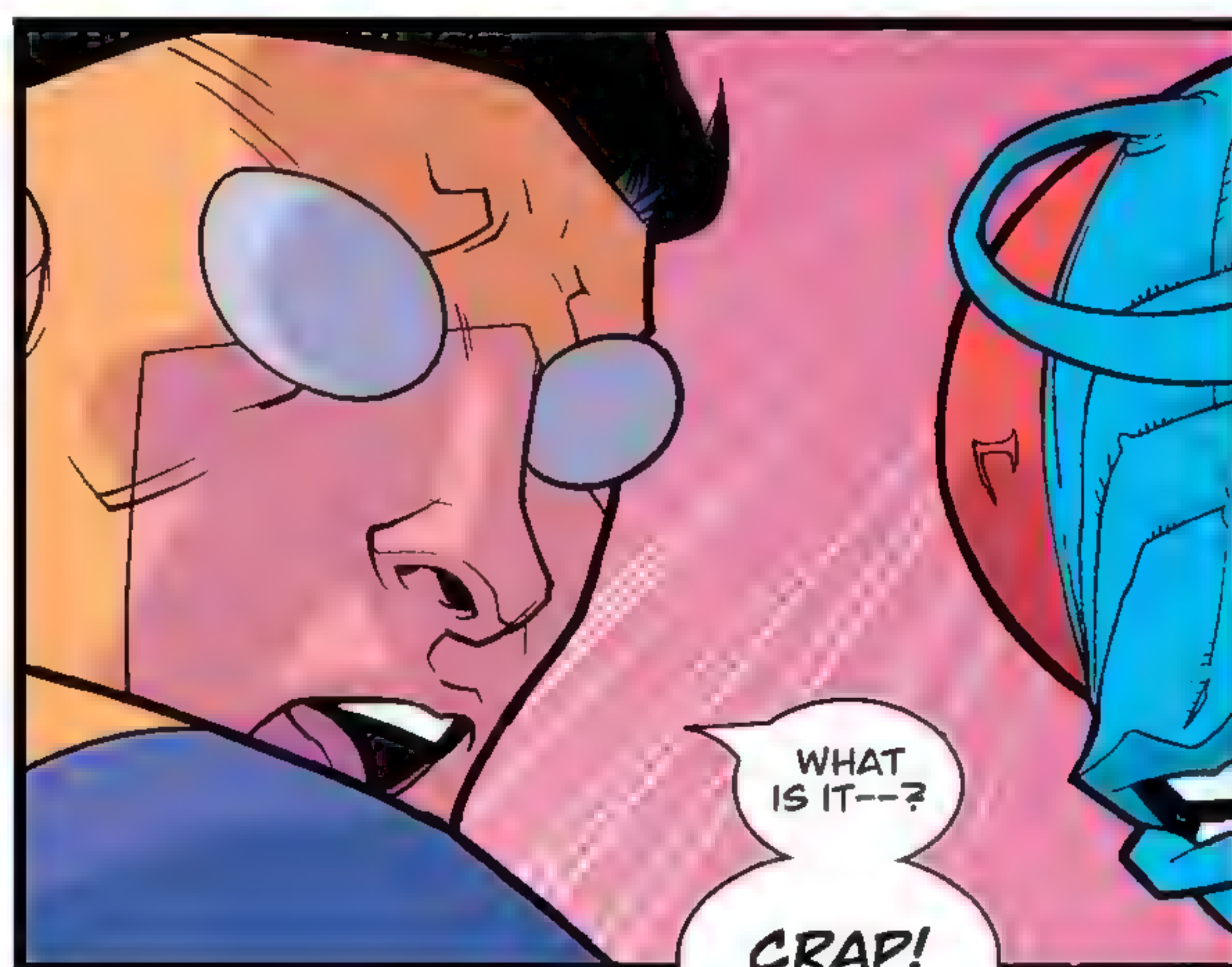


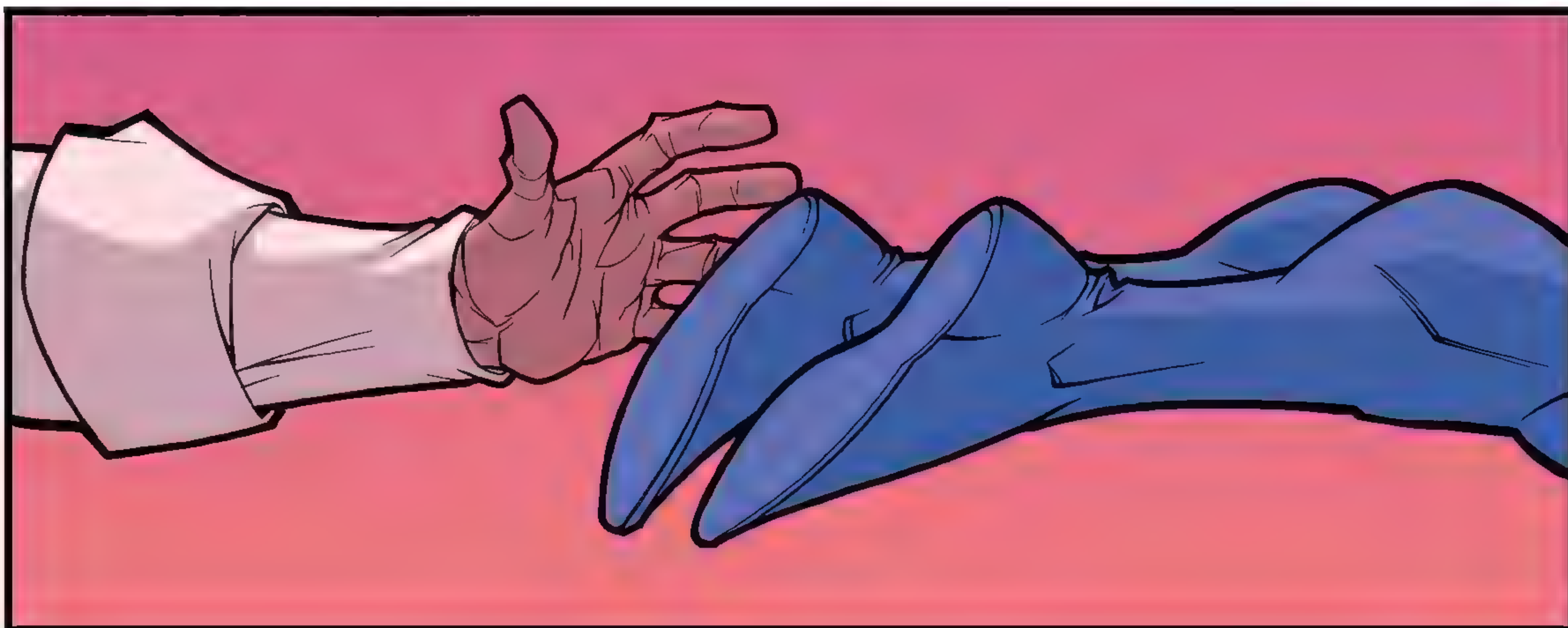
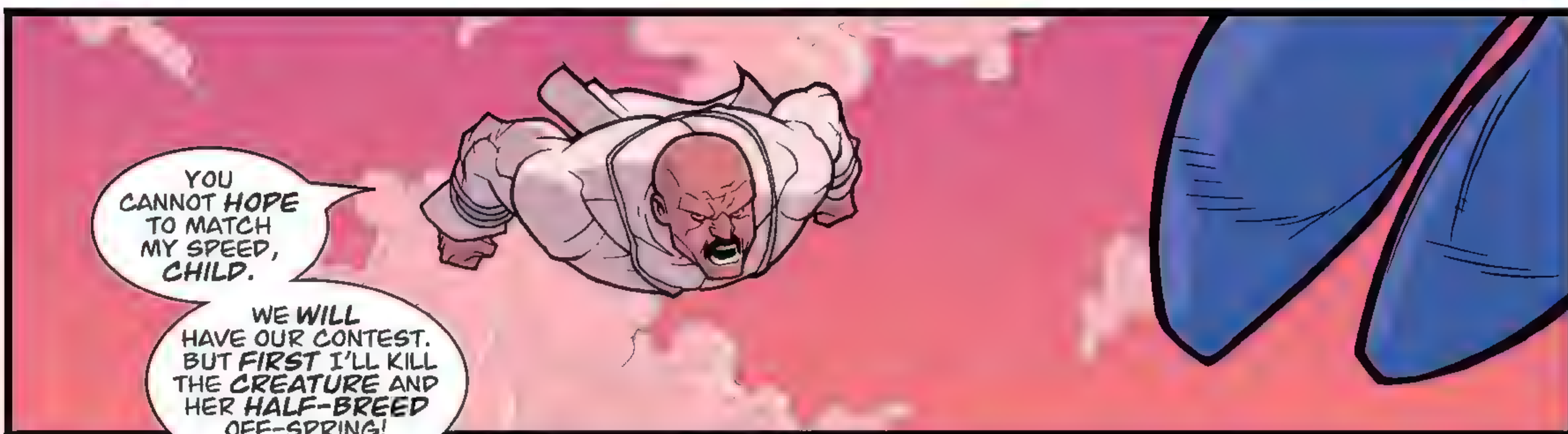
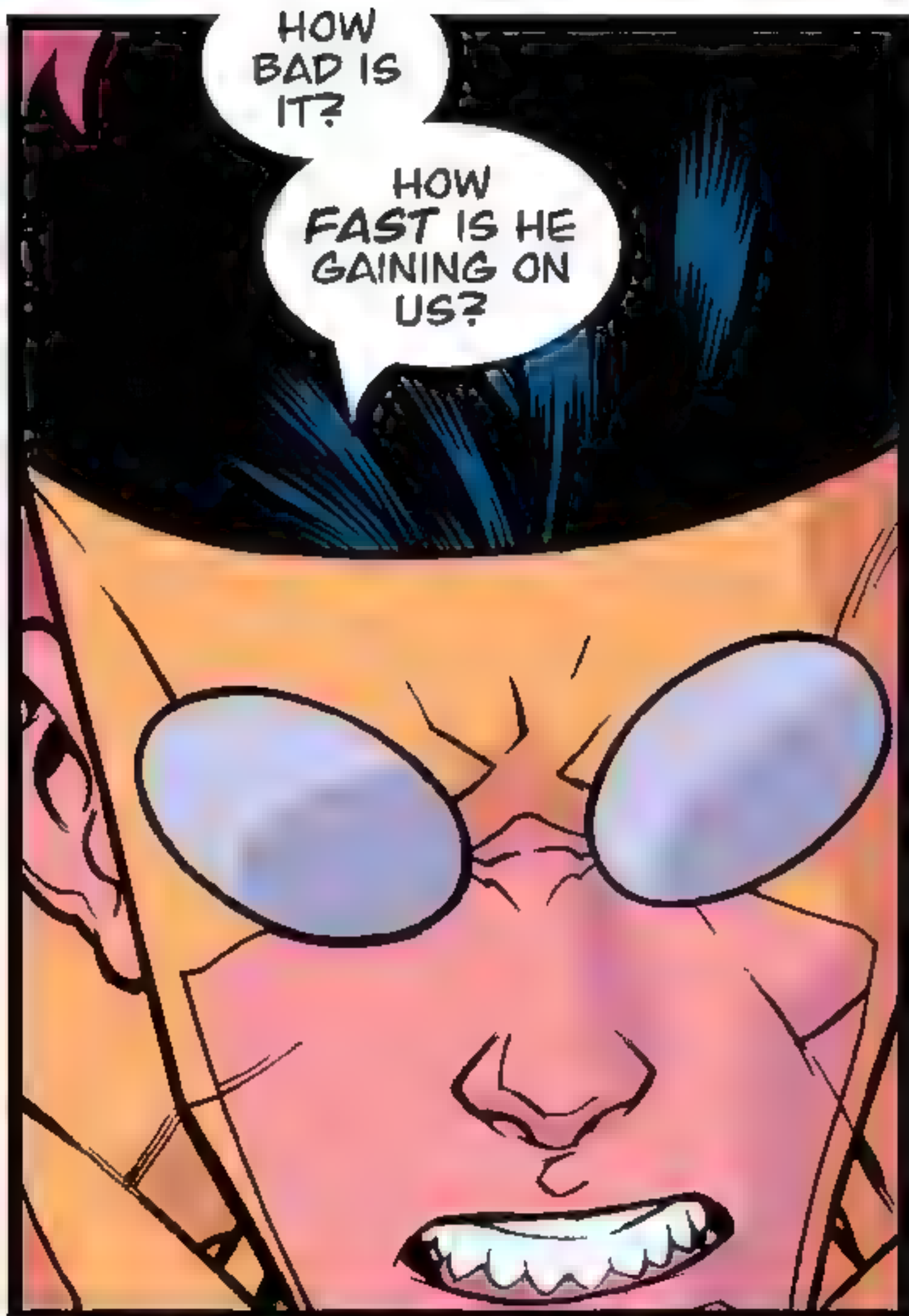
I GUESS WE'LL FIND SOMEWHERE ELSE TO HIDE YOU AND THEN I'LL GO FIND MY DAD AND TRY TO HELP HIM STOP THESE GUYS.

I WON'T LET THEM HURT YOU.

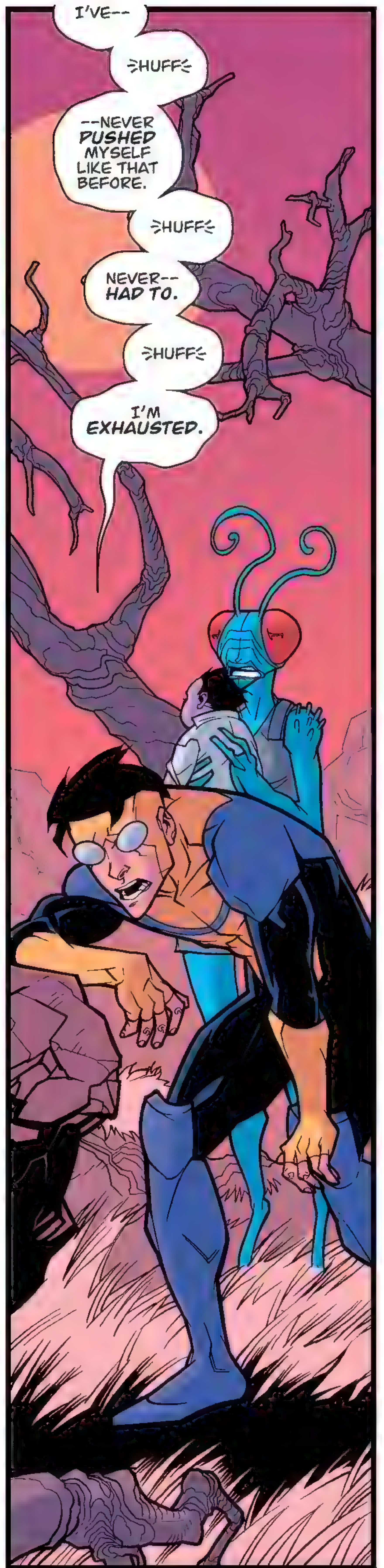
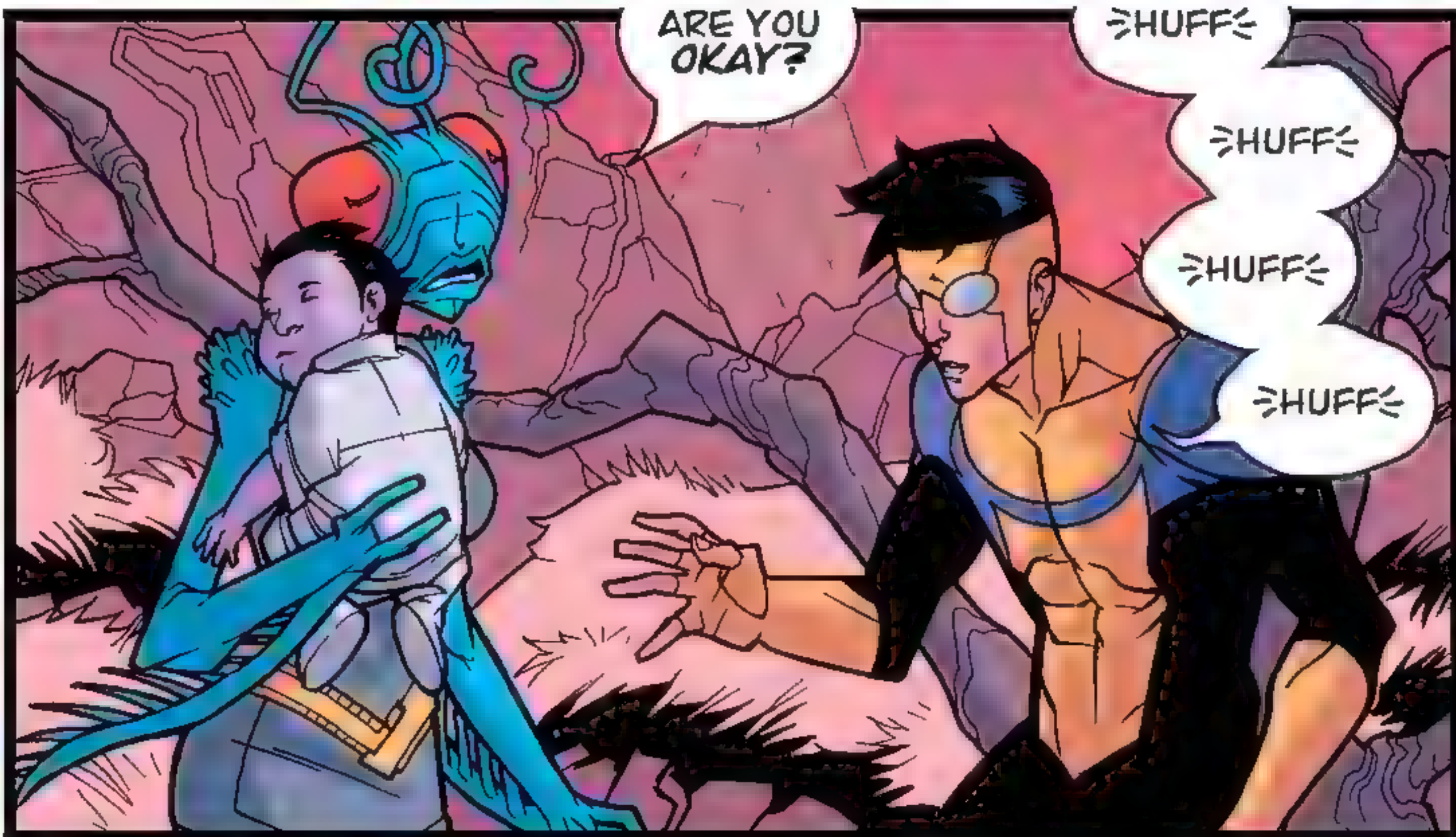
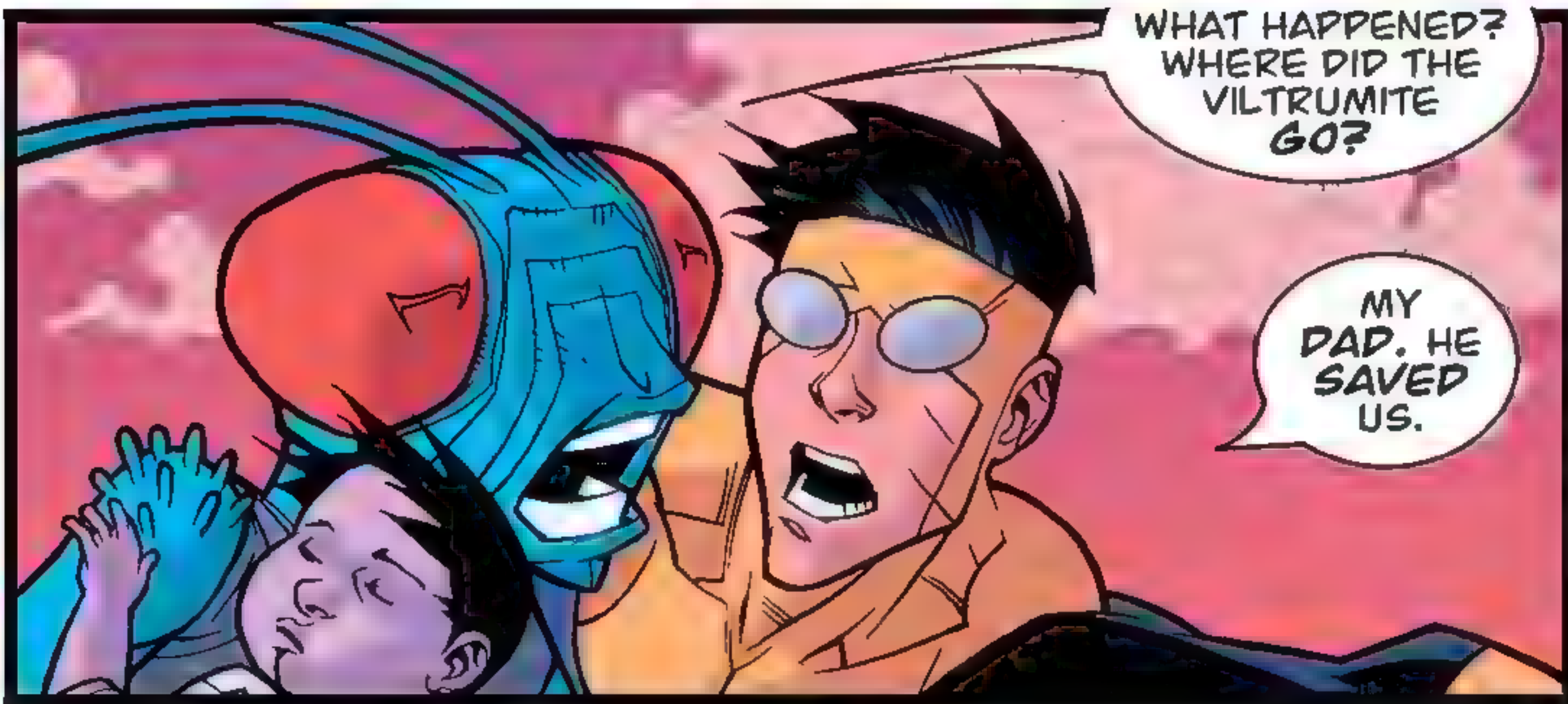
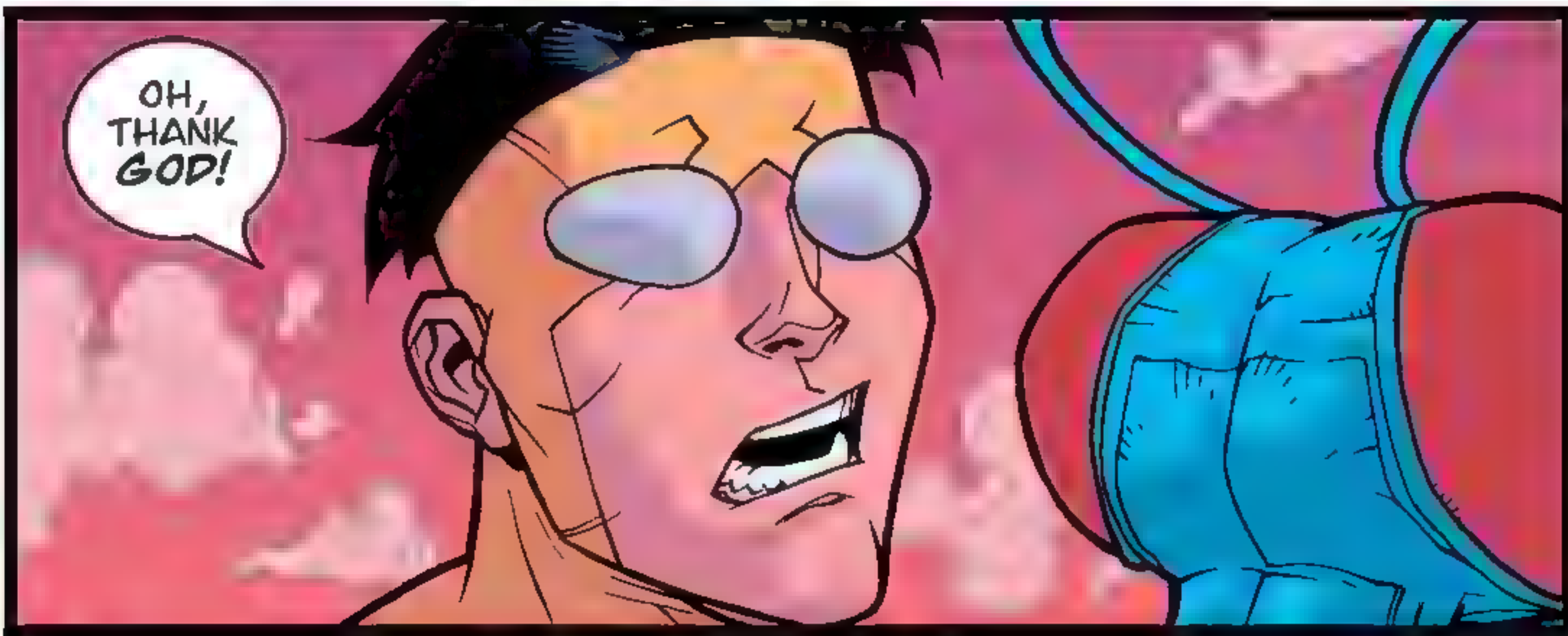


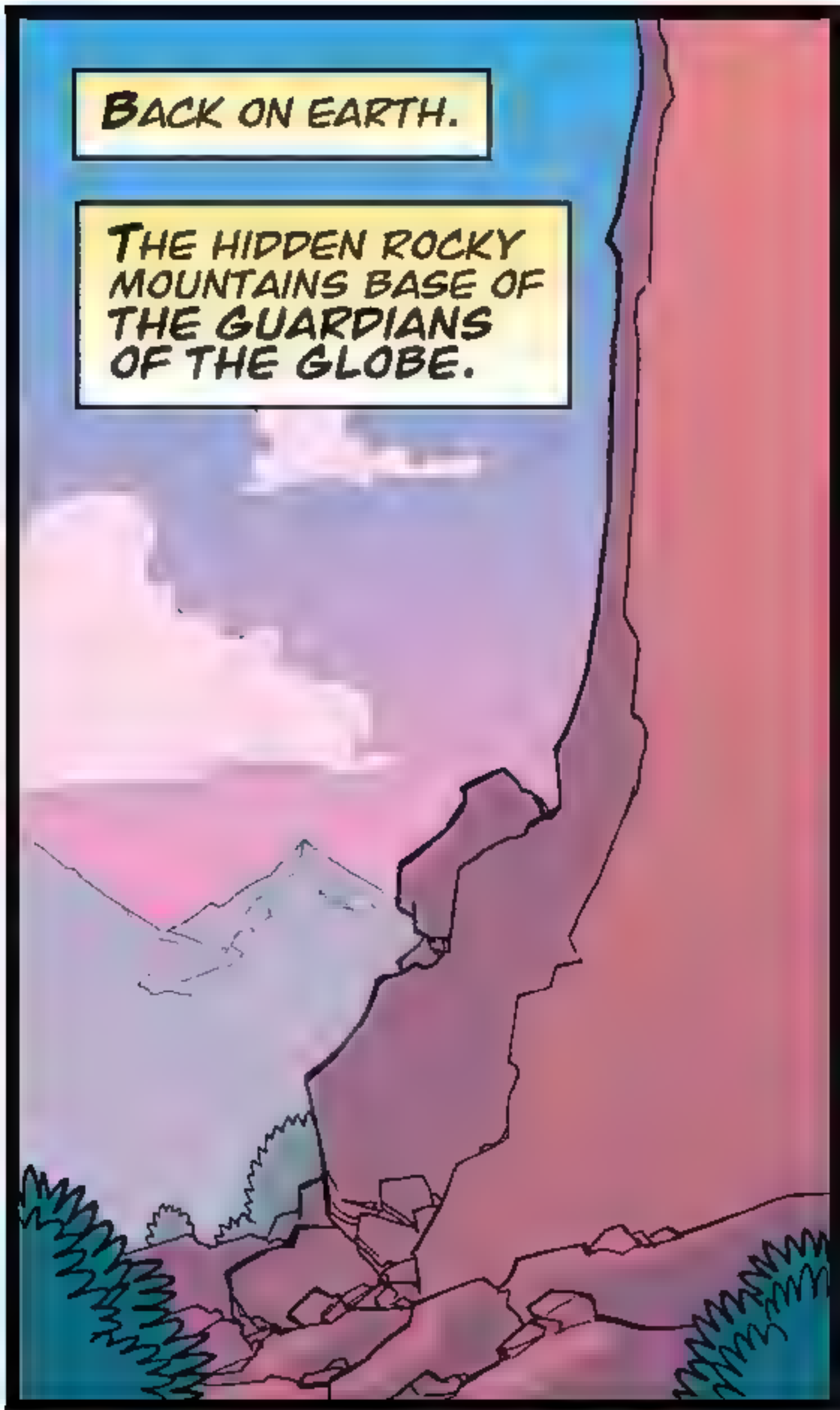
I PROMISE.











BACK ON EARTH.

THE HIDDEN ROCKY MOUNTAINS BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.



SAMSON,
I WAS
WANTING
TO--

--TALK
TO YOU.



I KNOW.
DATED. VERY
DATED.

I'M PLANNING ON
GETTING A NEW
ONE. I PROMISE.
I JUST WANTED
TO TRY IT ON
JUST IN
CASE.

IT'S
BEEN A
WHILE.

MY POWER SUIT
WAS DESTROYED BY
MONSTER GIRL IN THE FIGHT
WITH OMNIPOTUS, AND I'VE
GOT MY POWERS BACK NOW,
SO I DON'T REALLY NEED IT.
SO I FIGURED I'D SEE
IF THIS COSTUME
WOULD STILL
WORK.

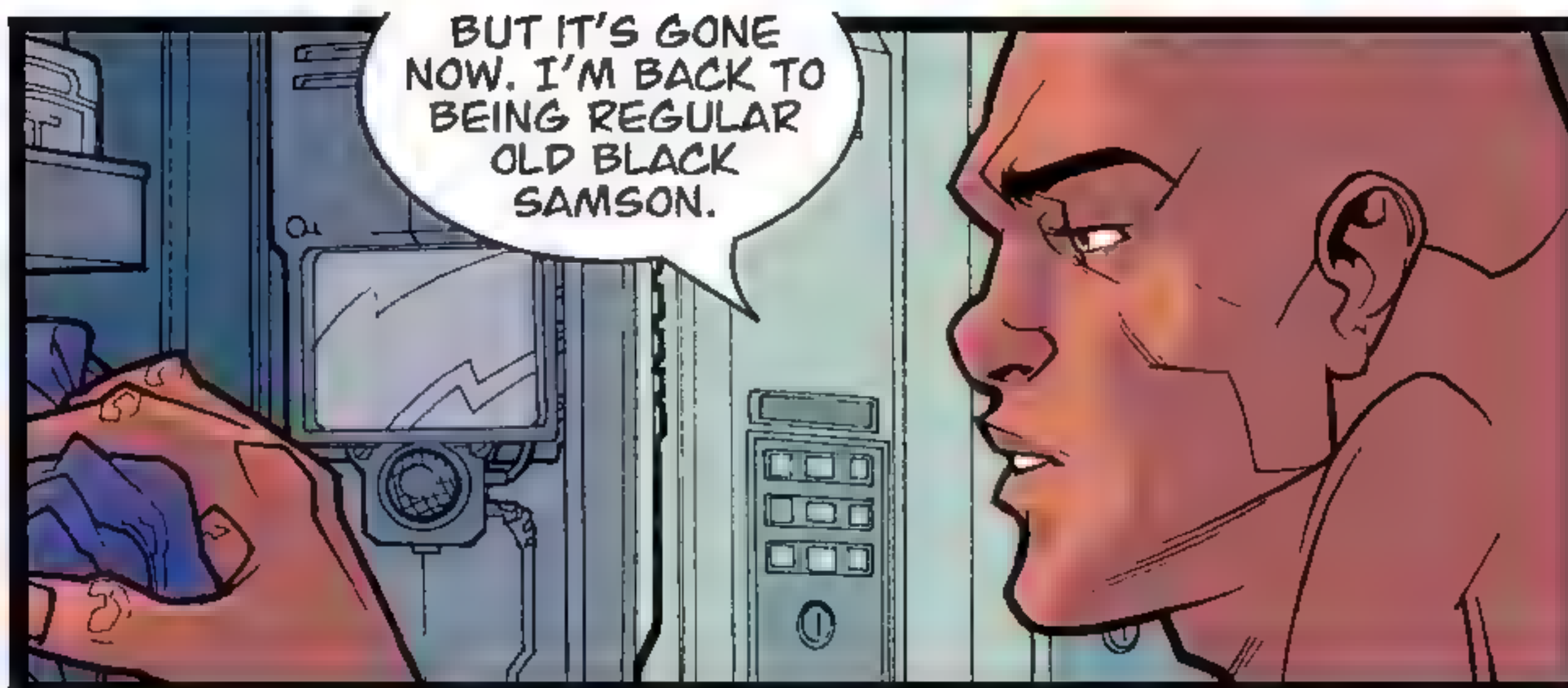
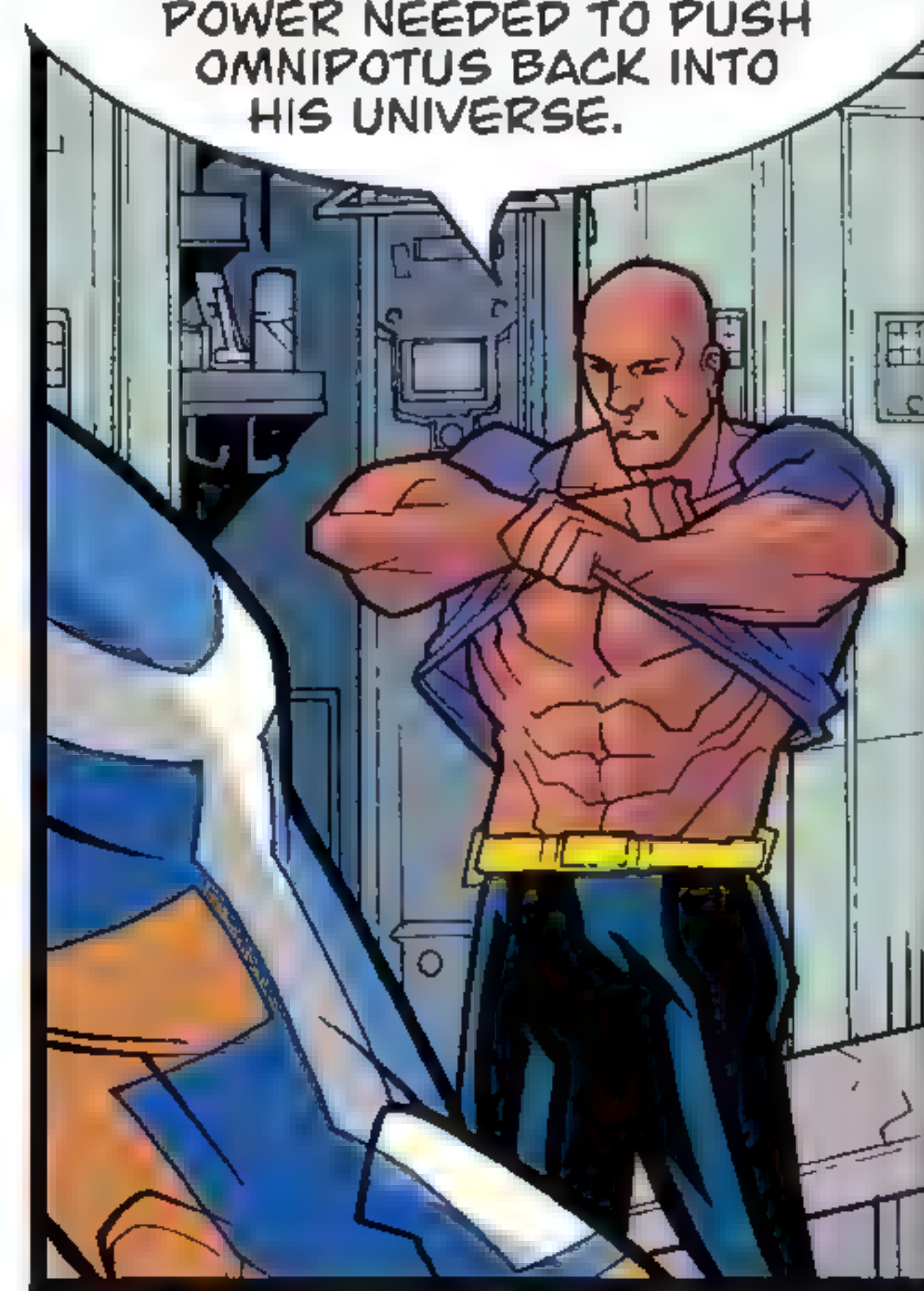
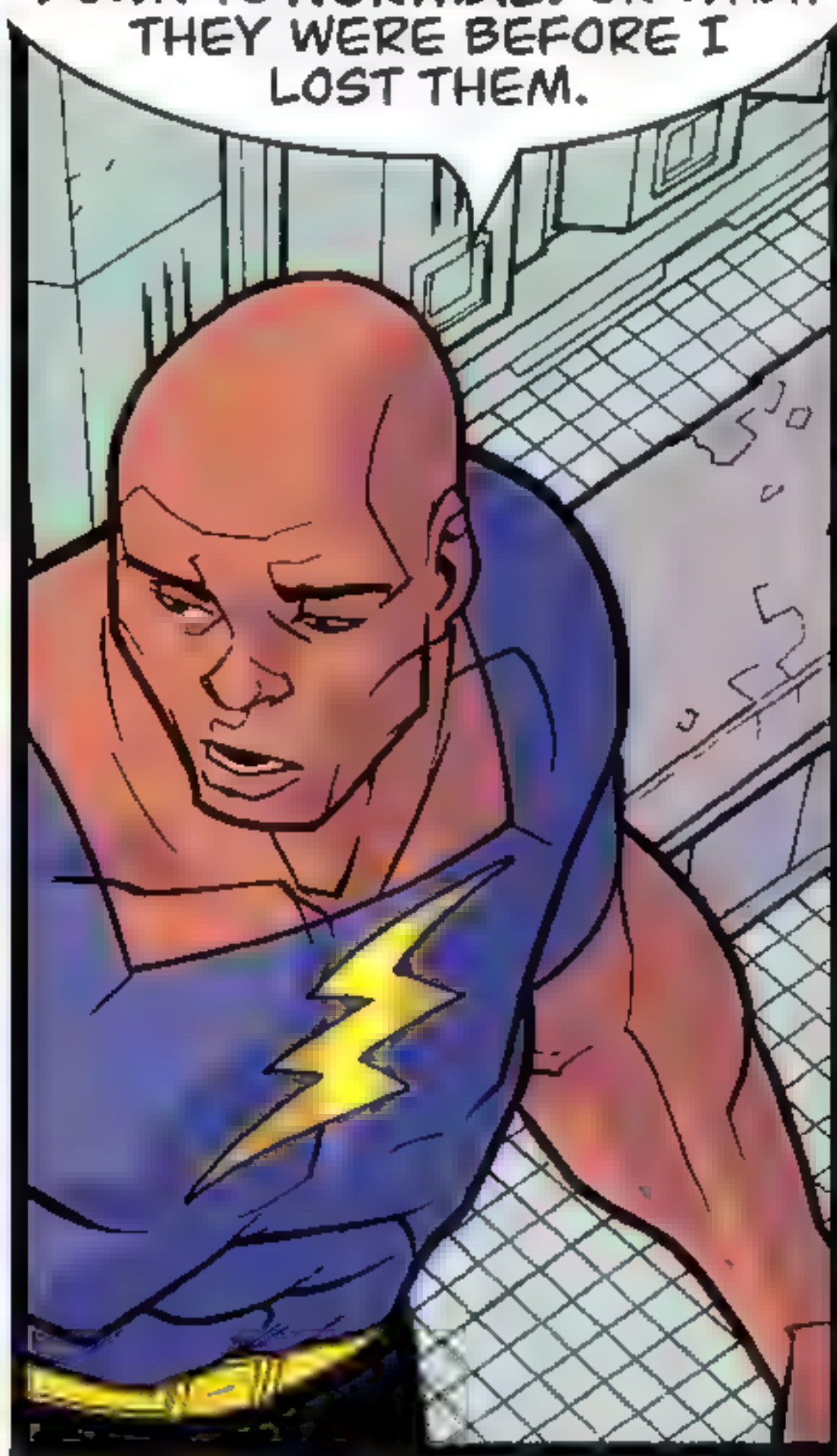
IT
DOESN'T.



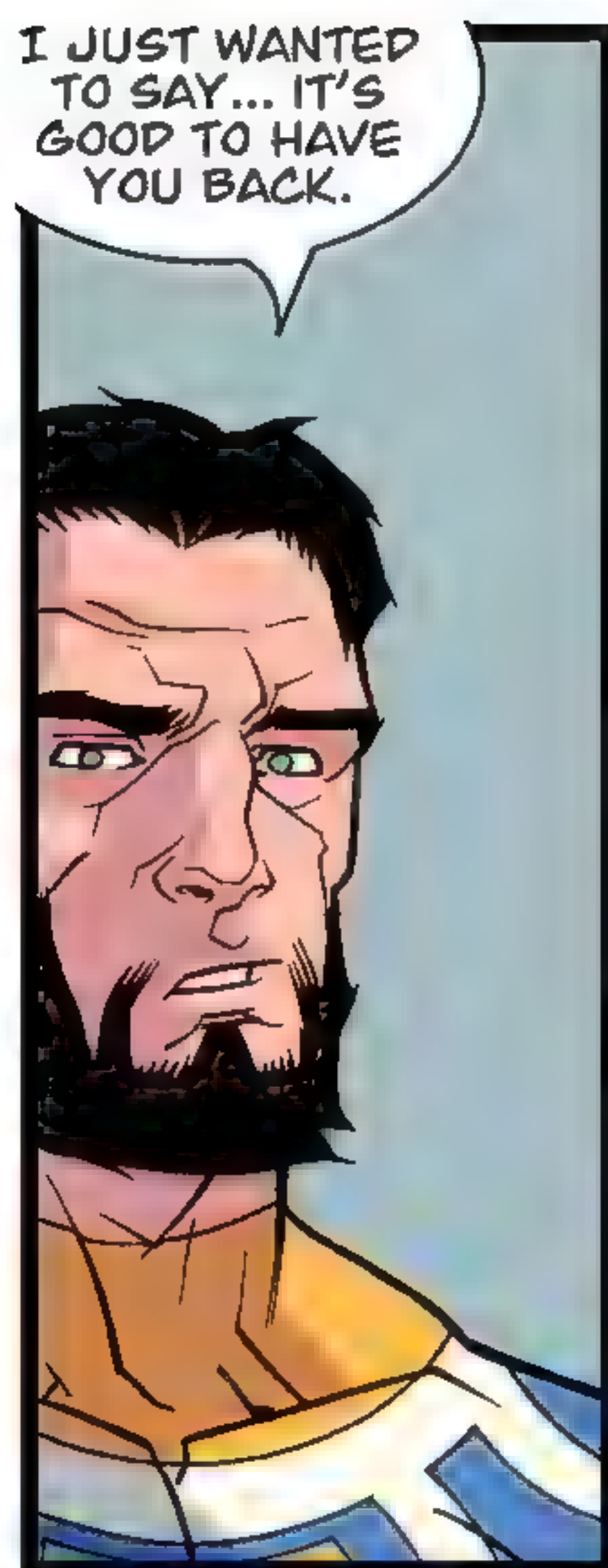
HOW
ARE YOU
FEELING?

GOOD. I'VE GOT MY POWERS
BACK. I'VE BEEN WORSE. MY
POWER LEVELS ARE BACK
DOWN TO NORMAL. OR WHAT
THEY WERE BEFORE I
LOST THEM.

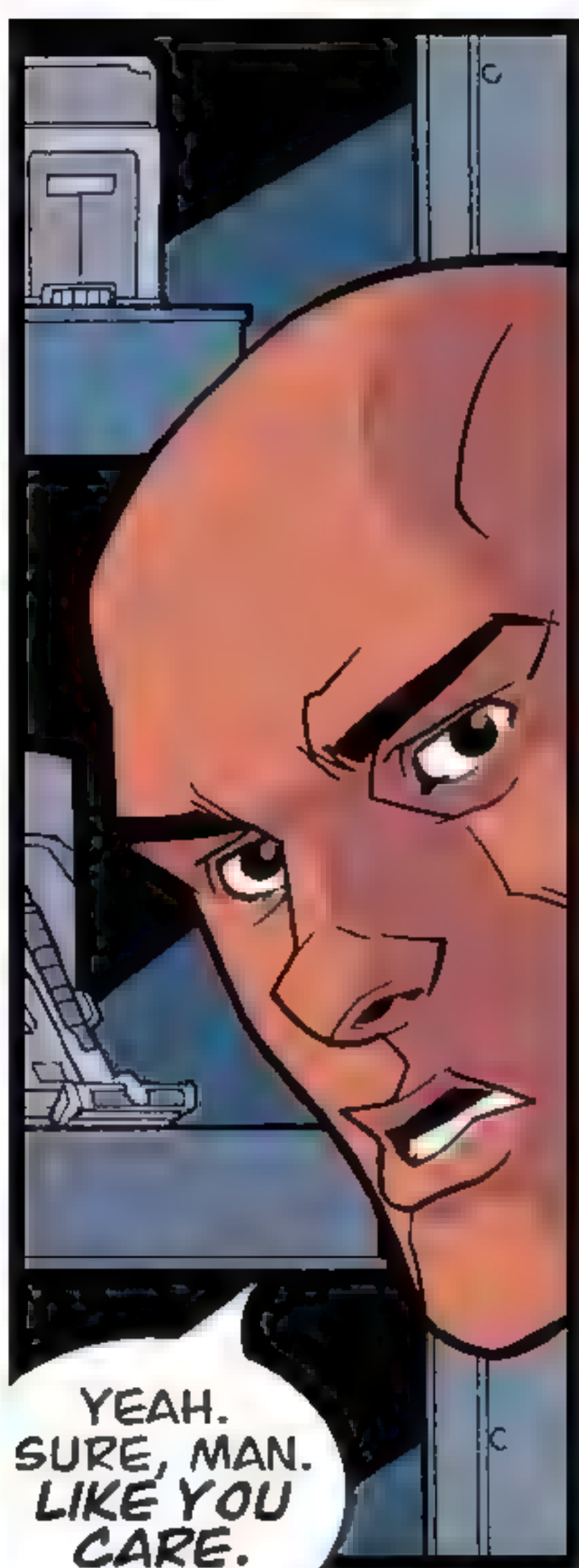
BEING IN THE COMA, IT GAVE
MY BODY A CHANCE TO HEAL--
RESET ITSELF OR SOMETHING.
ALL THAT TIME WITHOUT POWERS
SORT OF BUILD UP IN ME, GAVE ME
THAT SUDDEN BURST OF EXTRA
POWER NEEDED TO PUSH
OMNIPOTUS BACK INTO
HIS UNIVERSE.



BUT IT'S GONE
NOW. I'M BACK TO
BEING REGULAR
OLD BLACK
SAMSON.



I JUST WANTED TO SAY... IT'S GOOD TO HAVE YOU BACK.



YEAH. SURE, MAN. LIKE YOU CARE.



EXCUSE ME?



I WAS IN A COMA FOR A FEW MONTHS. YOU NEVER VISITED ME. I ASKED AROUND. I KNOW YOU DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT ANY OF US ON THIS TEAM. NEVER DID.



I'LL ADMIT IT. YOU'RE RIGHT. I DIDN'T.

BEFORE.

BUT THINGS ARE CHANGING. I'M CHANGING.

DO YOU KNOW WHY I NEVER VISITED YOU? WHY I NEVER REALLY GOT TO KNOW ANY OF THE ORIGINAL GUARDIANS? WHY I WAS SO DISTANT--DISCONNECTED?

YOU KNOW MY HISTORY, THE THINGS I'VE BEEN THROUGH, HOW LONG I'VE BEEN AROUND. YOU KNOW EVERYTHING. YOU ALL DID. STILL, YOU NEVER QUITE UNDERSTOOD.

I'VE SEEN THOUSANDS DIE. MANY OF THEM VERY CLOSE TO ME. I'VE LOST HUNDREDS OF WIVES, FRIENDS--EVEN THE ENEMIES STARTED GETTING TO ME AFTER A WHILE, AND I WANTED SOME OF THEM DEAD.

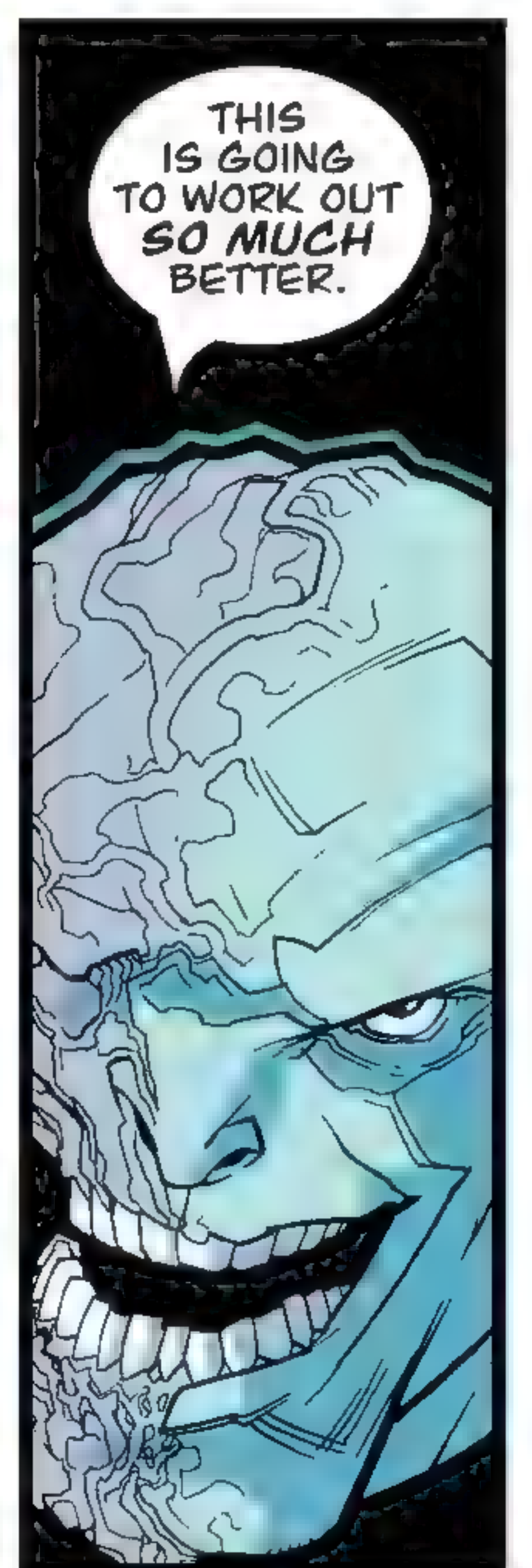
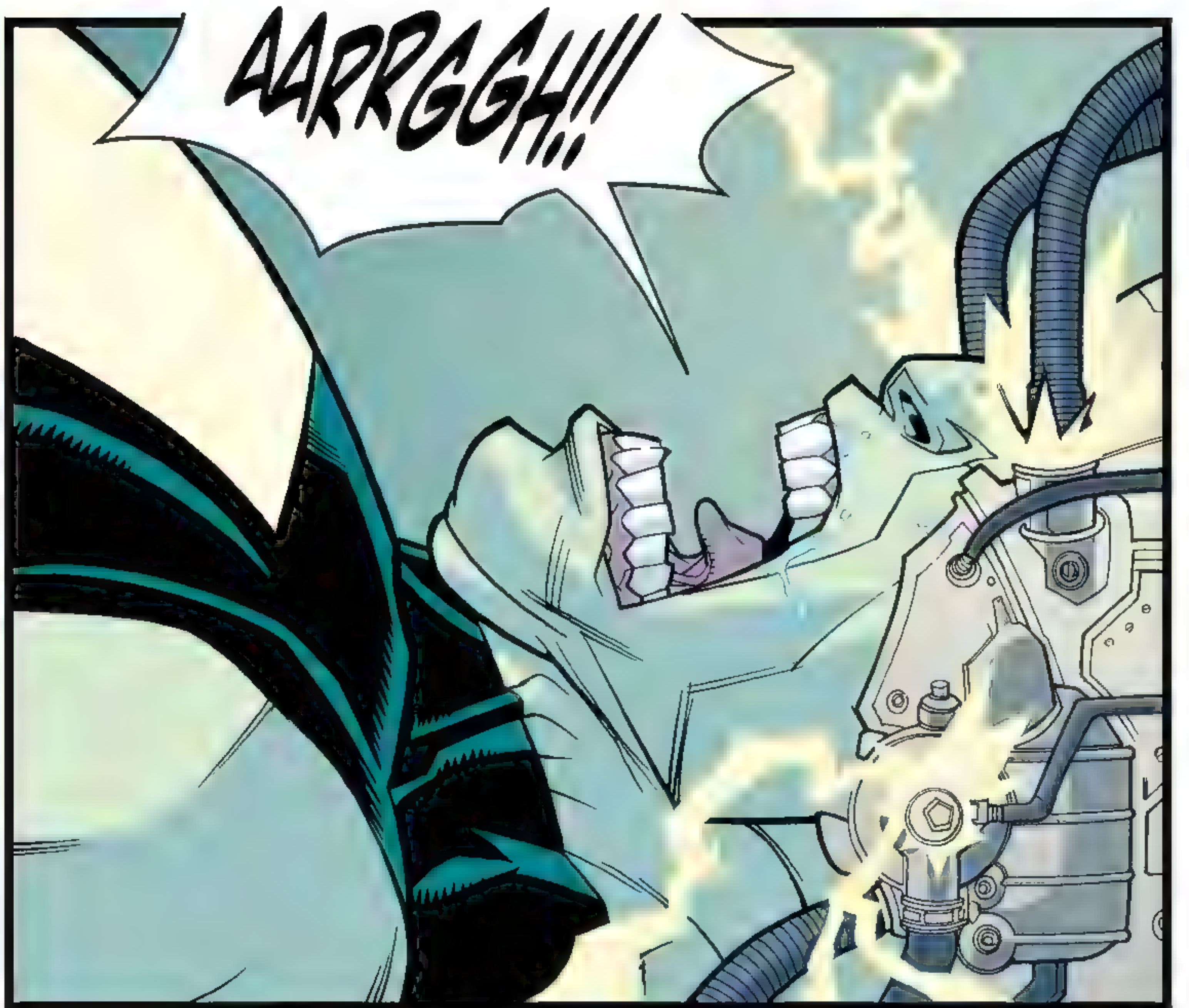
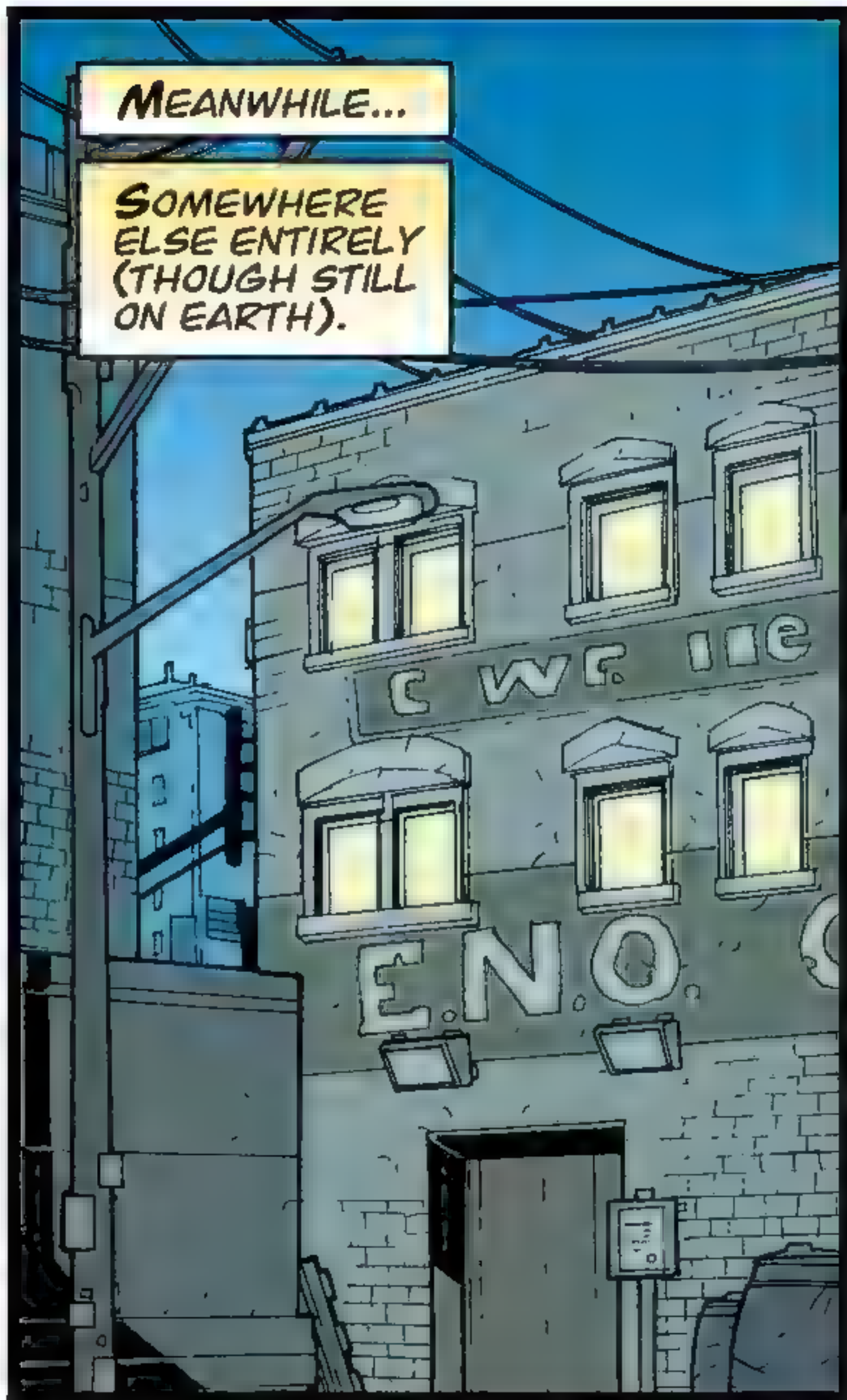


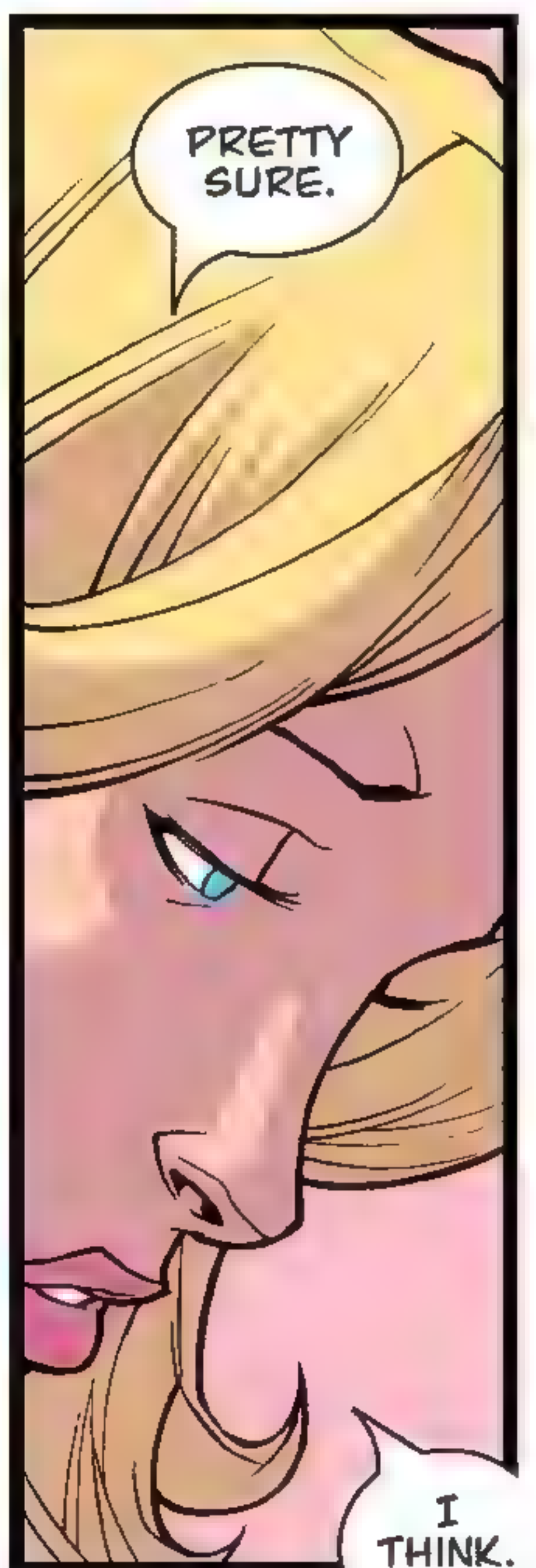
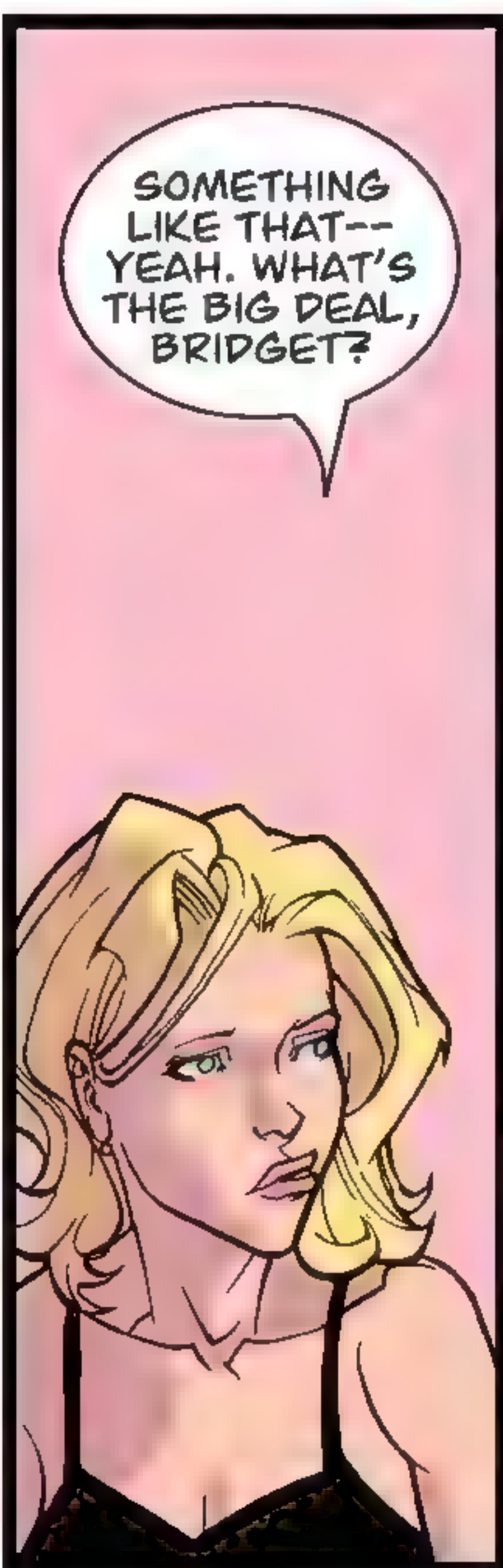
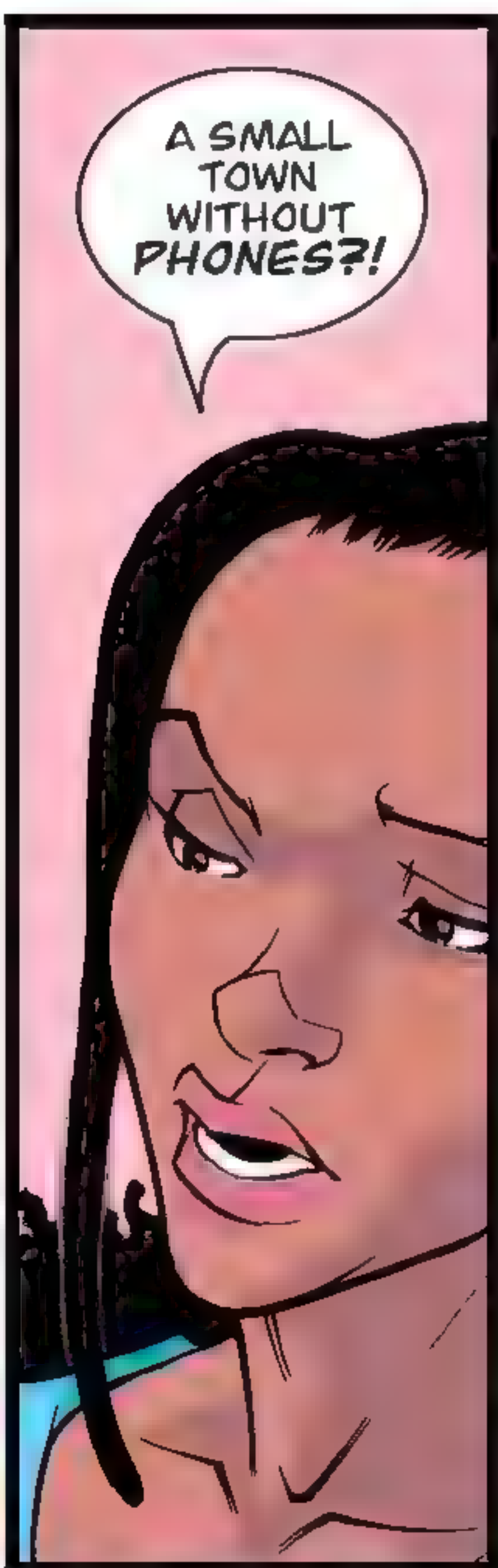
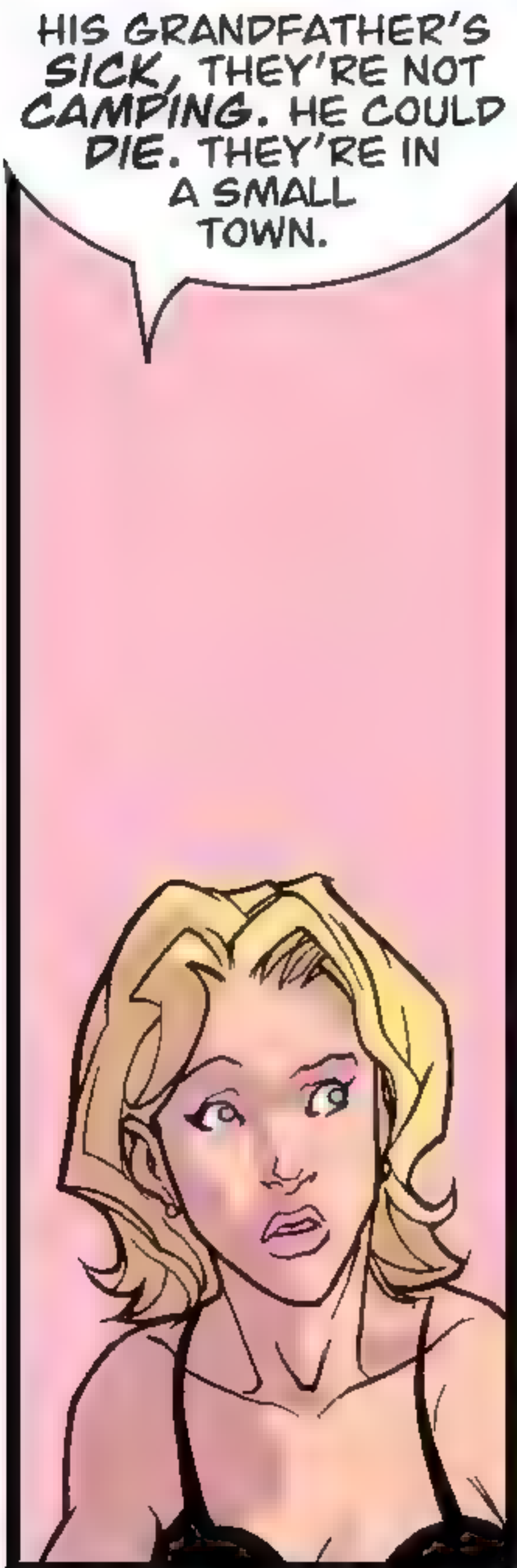
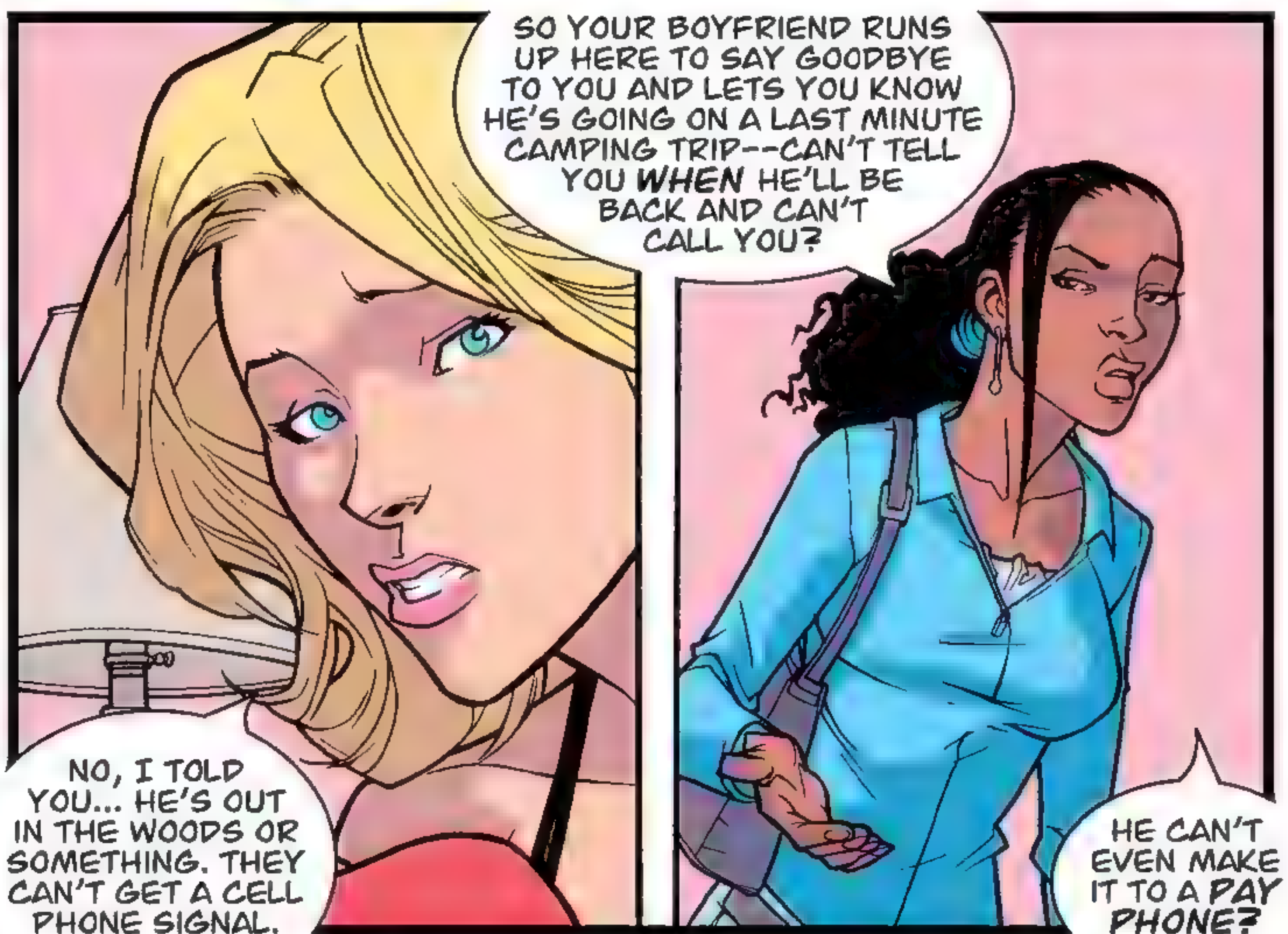
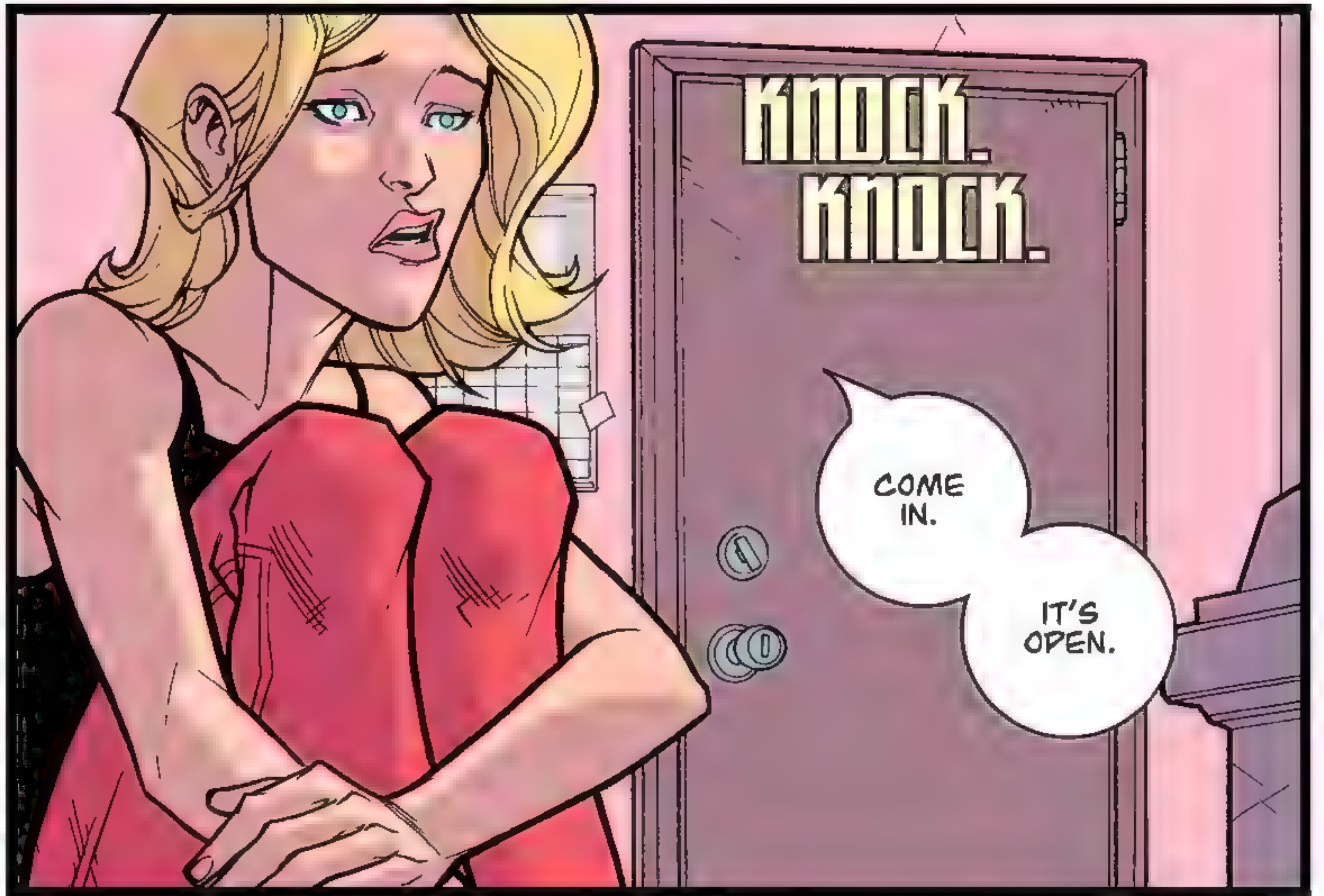
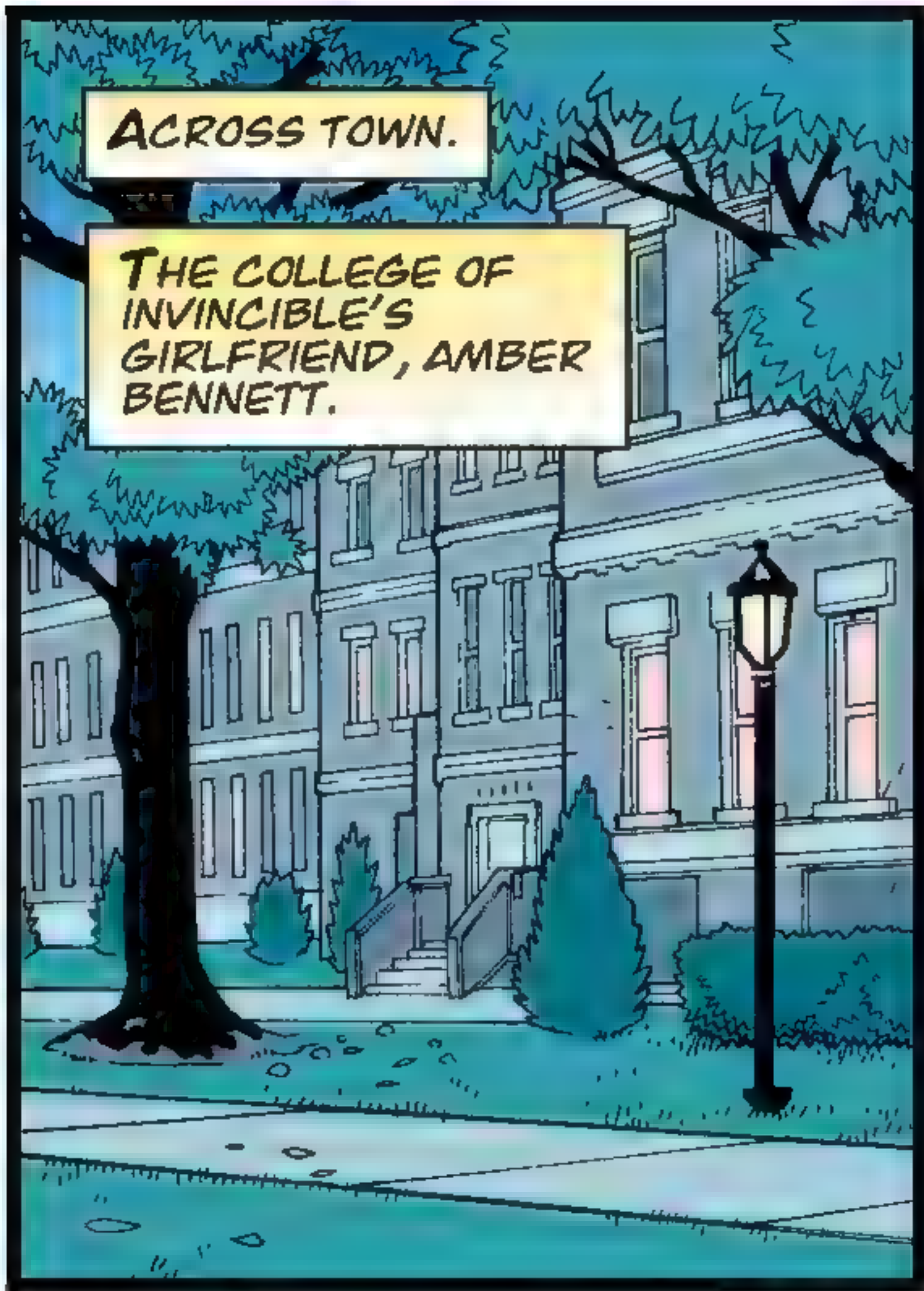
YOU HAVE TO REALIZE. I REMEMBER EVERY ONE OF THEM--EVERY LAST ONE. I REMEMBER THE SOUND OF THEIR VOICES, THE SMELL OF THEIR HAIR, THEIR FAVORITE THINGS, EVERYTHING.

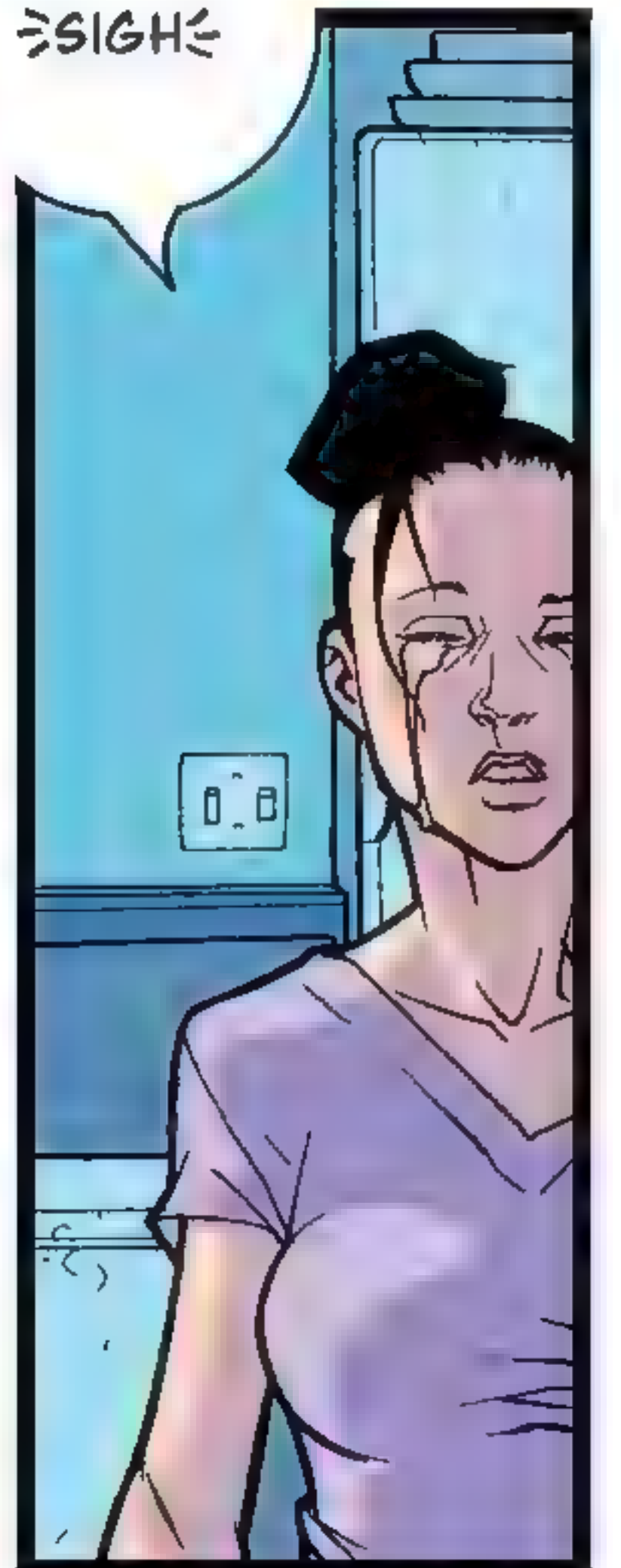
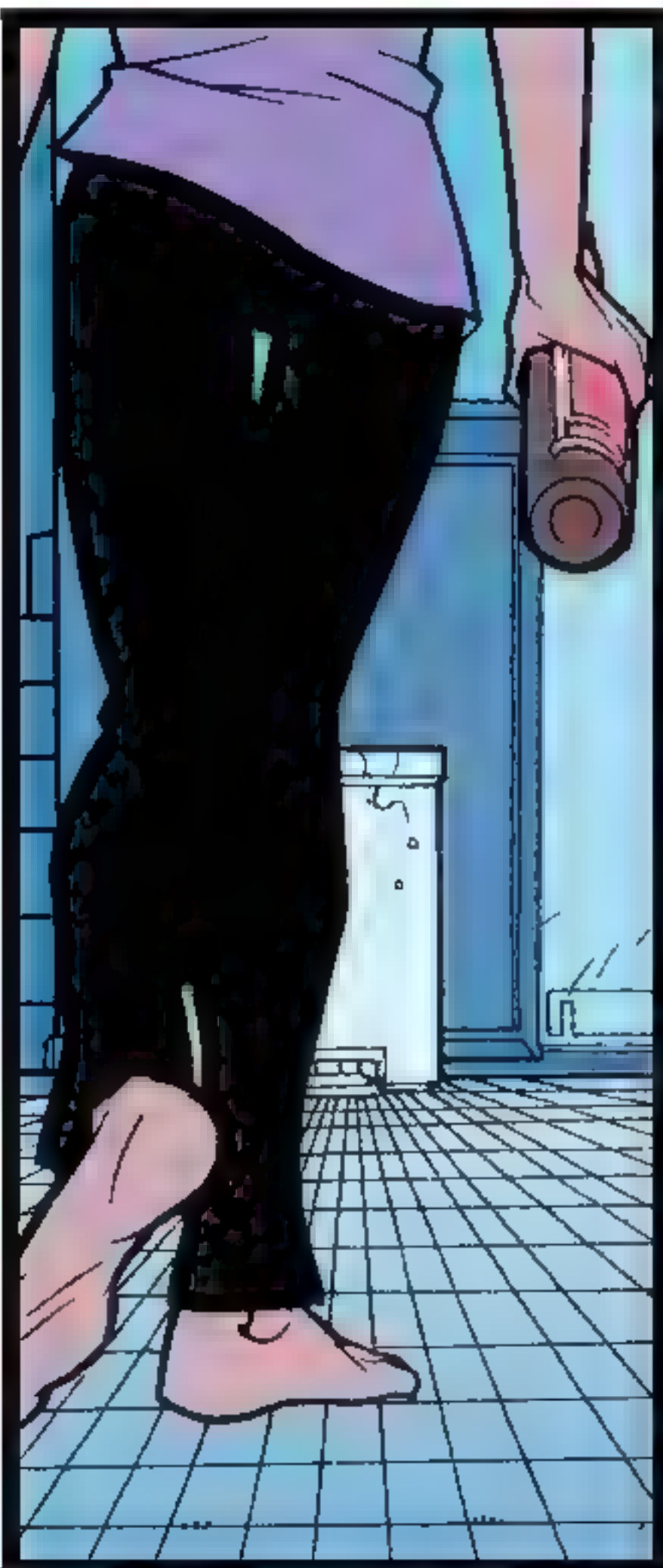
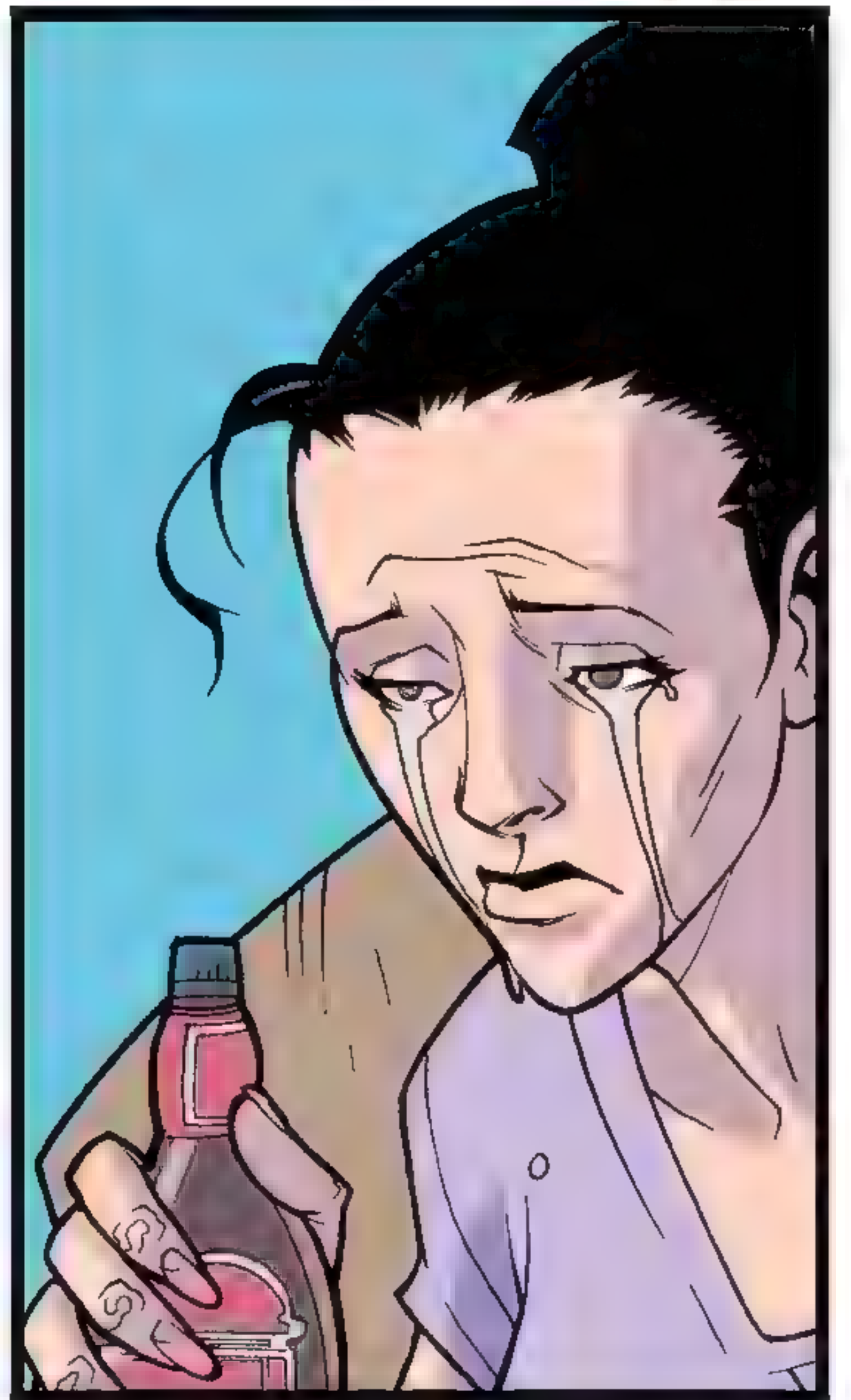
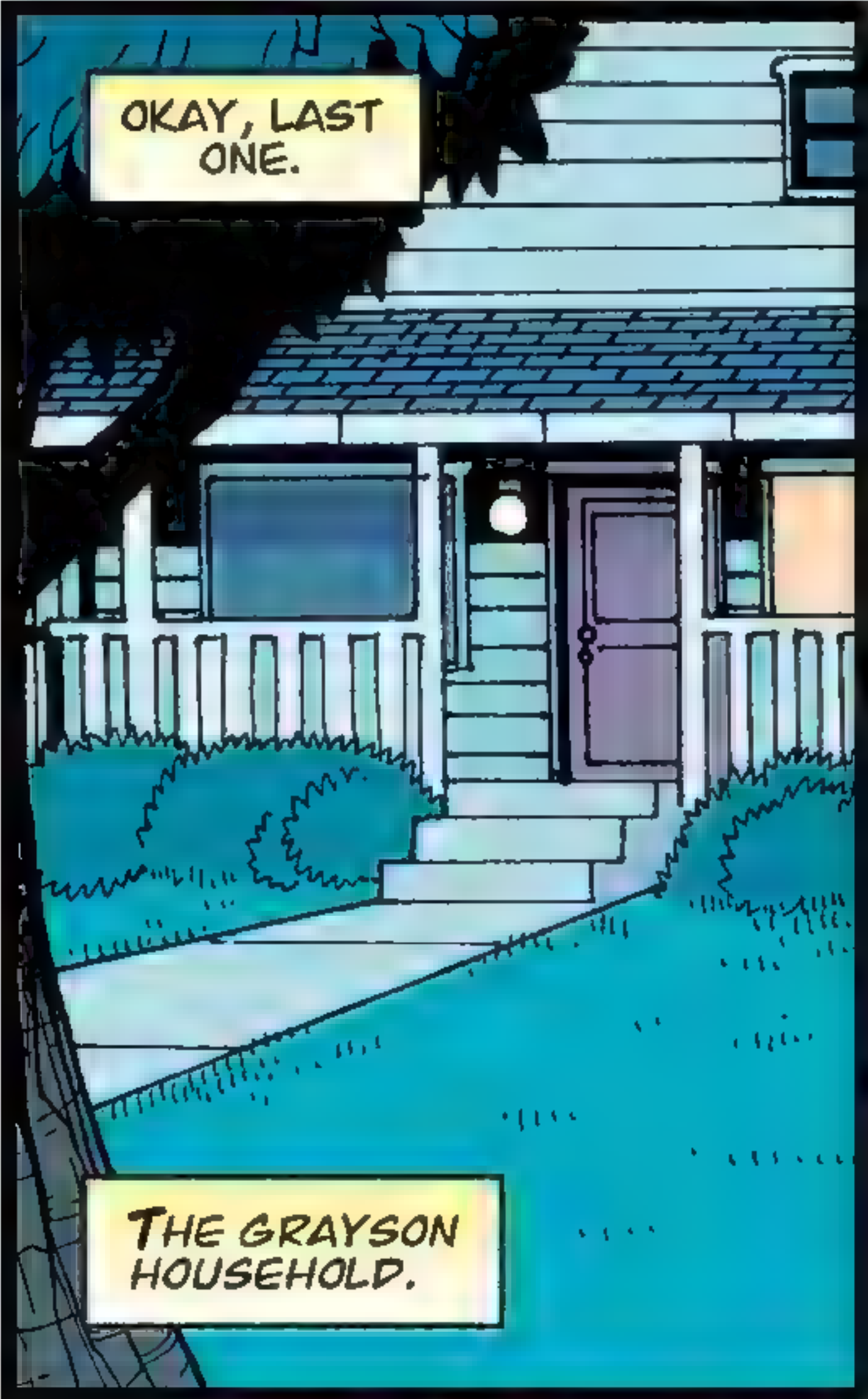
I HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN. THE YEARS CONTINUE ON--AND SO DO I, UNCHANGED... BUT THE PEOPLE AROUND ME--THEY TOUCH MY LIFE, I EXPERIENCE THEM, THEY BECOME A PART OF MY LIFE.

THEN THEY DIE.

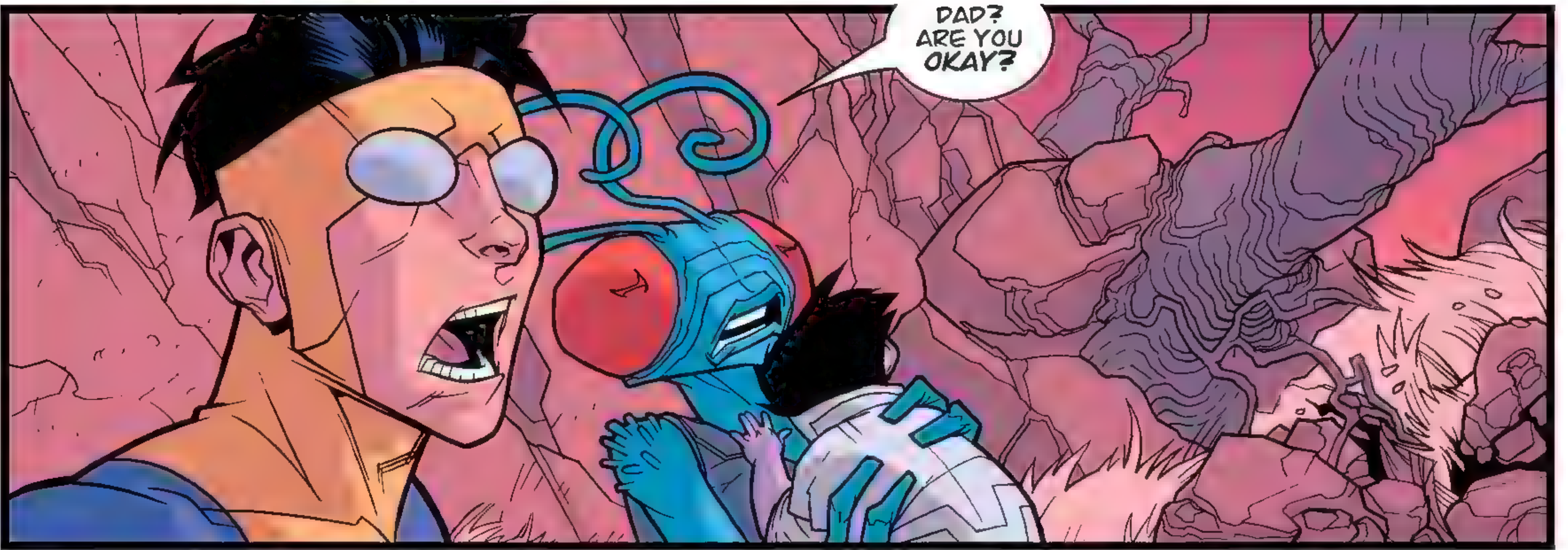












DAD?
ARE YOU
OKAY?



THIS IS
NOT MY
BLOOD.



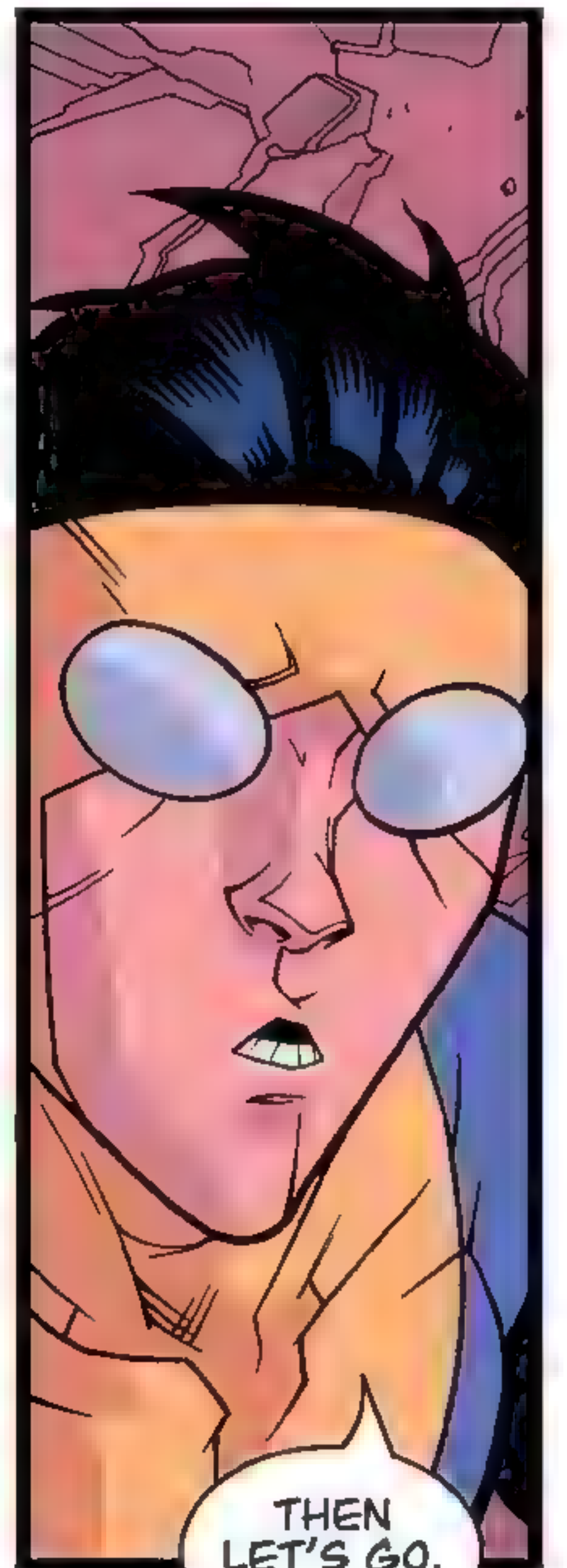
SO THE
VILTRUMITE...?



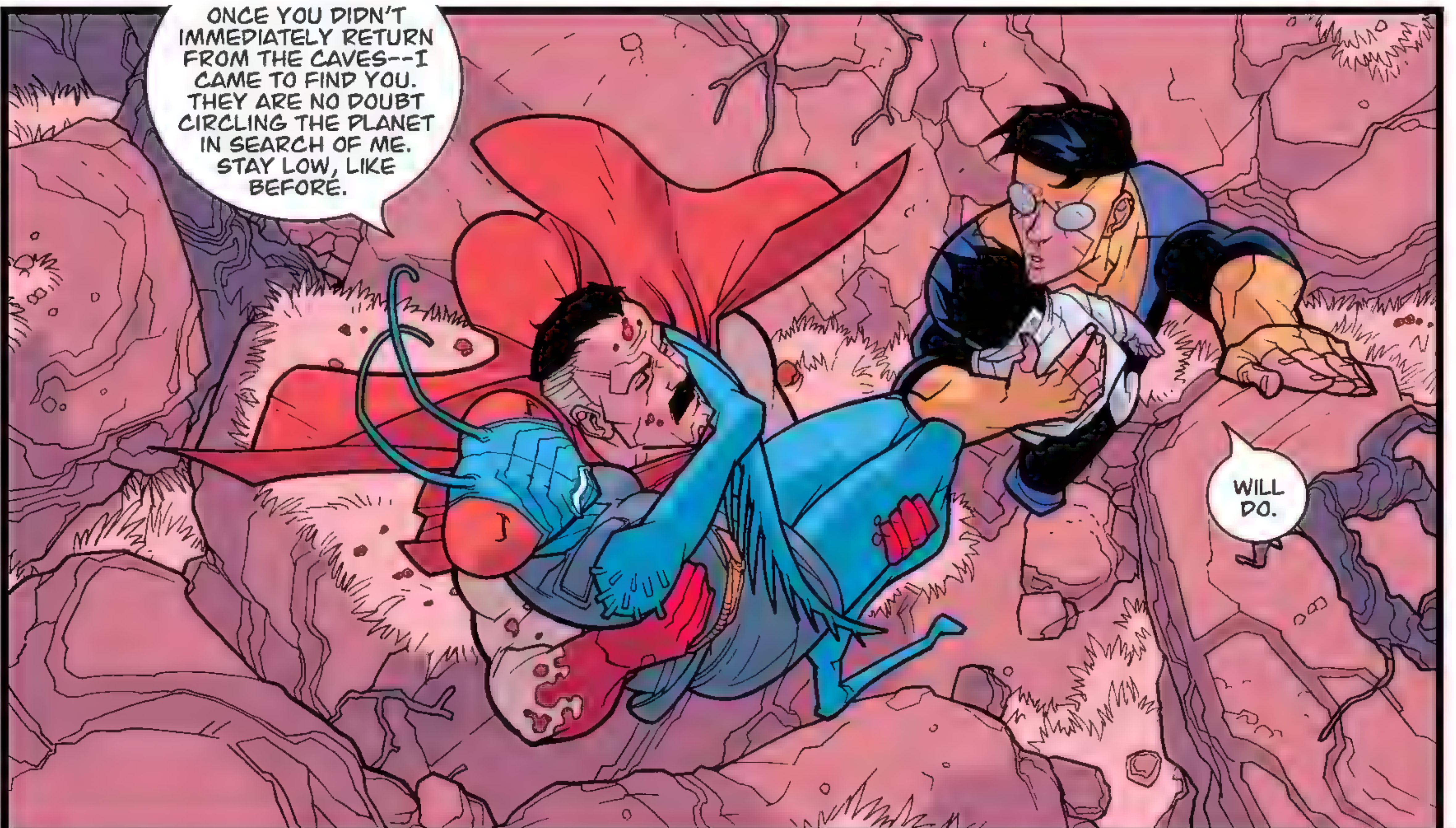
DEAD.

THAT
VILTRUMITE
WAS THE ONLY
ONE WHO KNEW
OF THE CAVES.
HE FOLLOWED YOU
ALONE. THE OTHERS
WON'T BE ABLE
TO FIND IT.

THEY
WILL BE
SAFE
THERE.

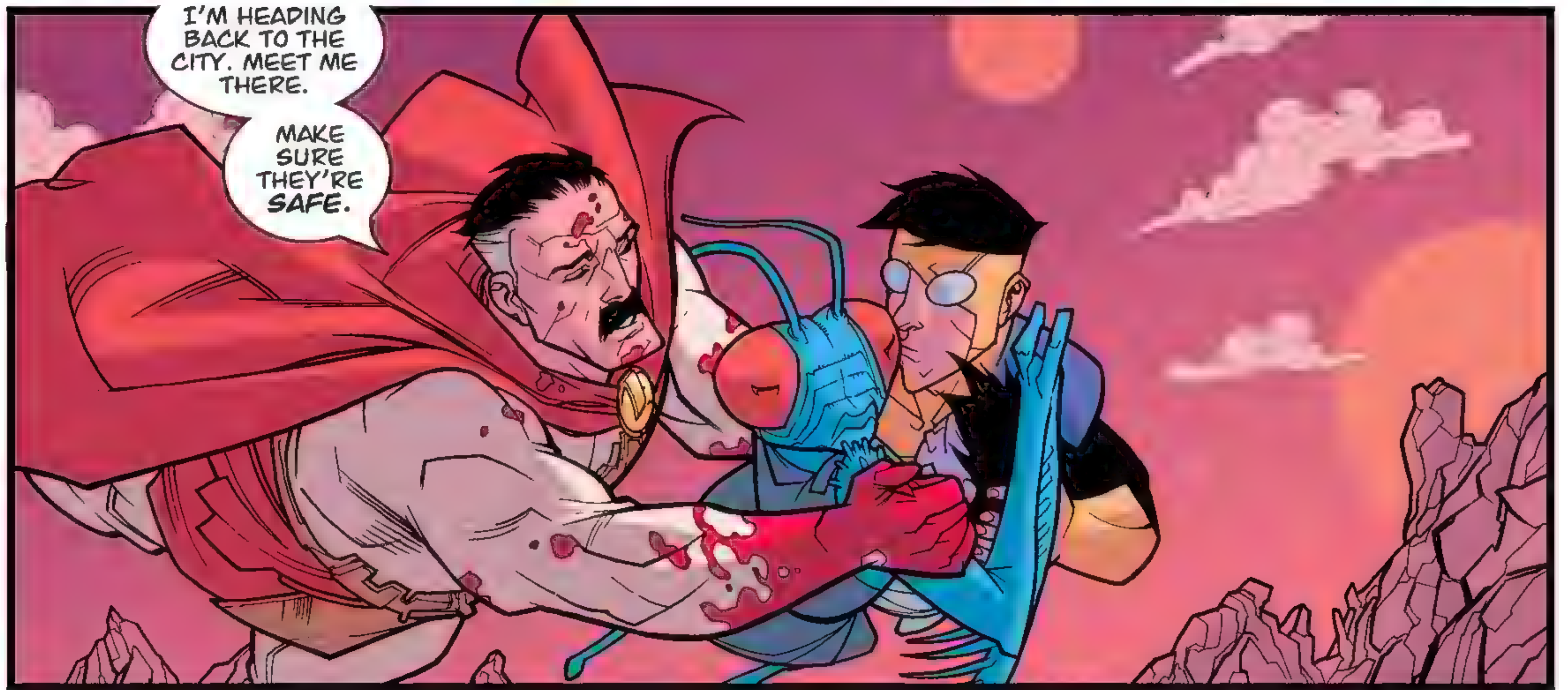
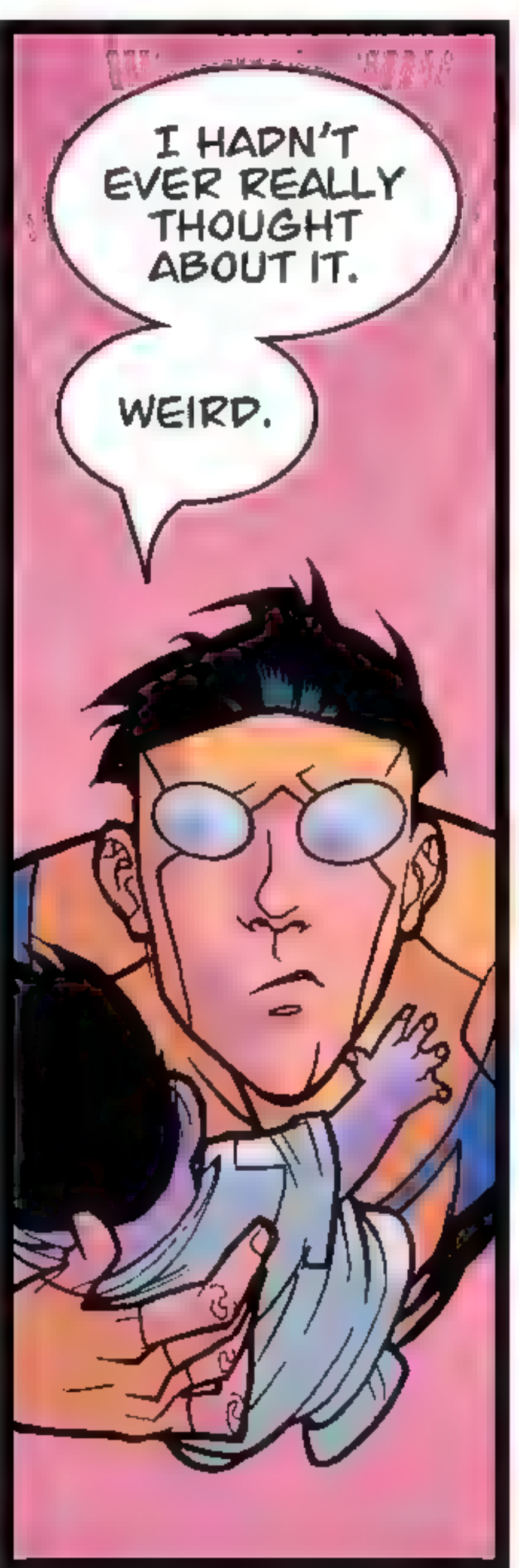
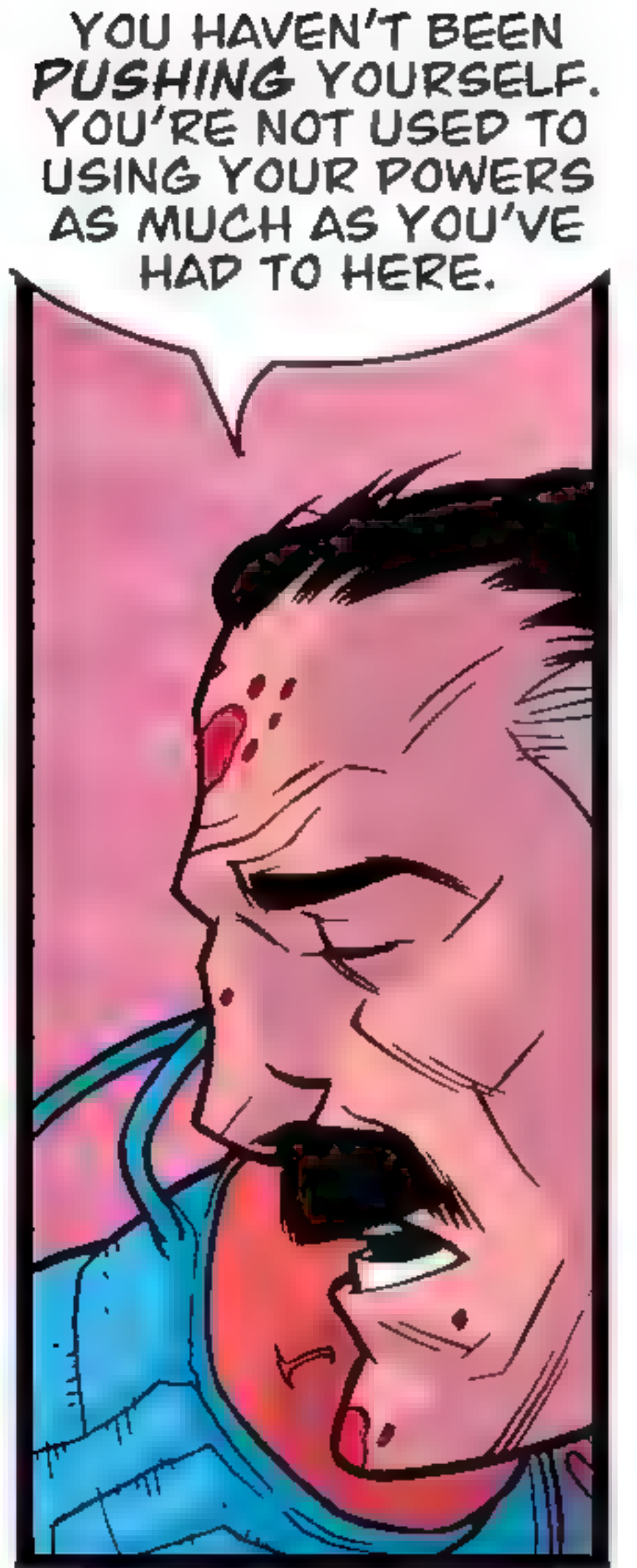
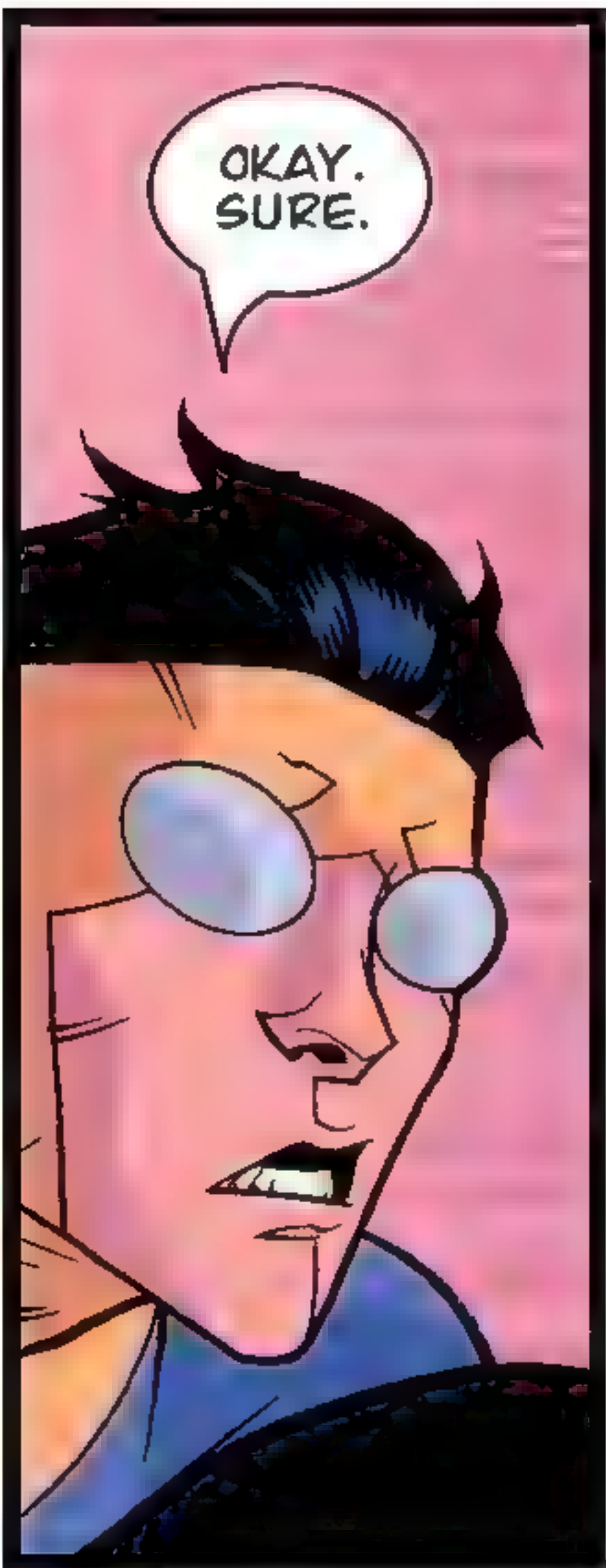


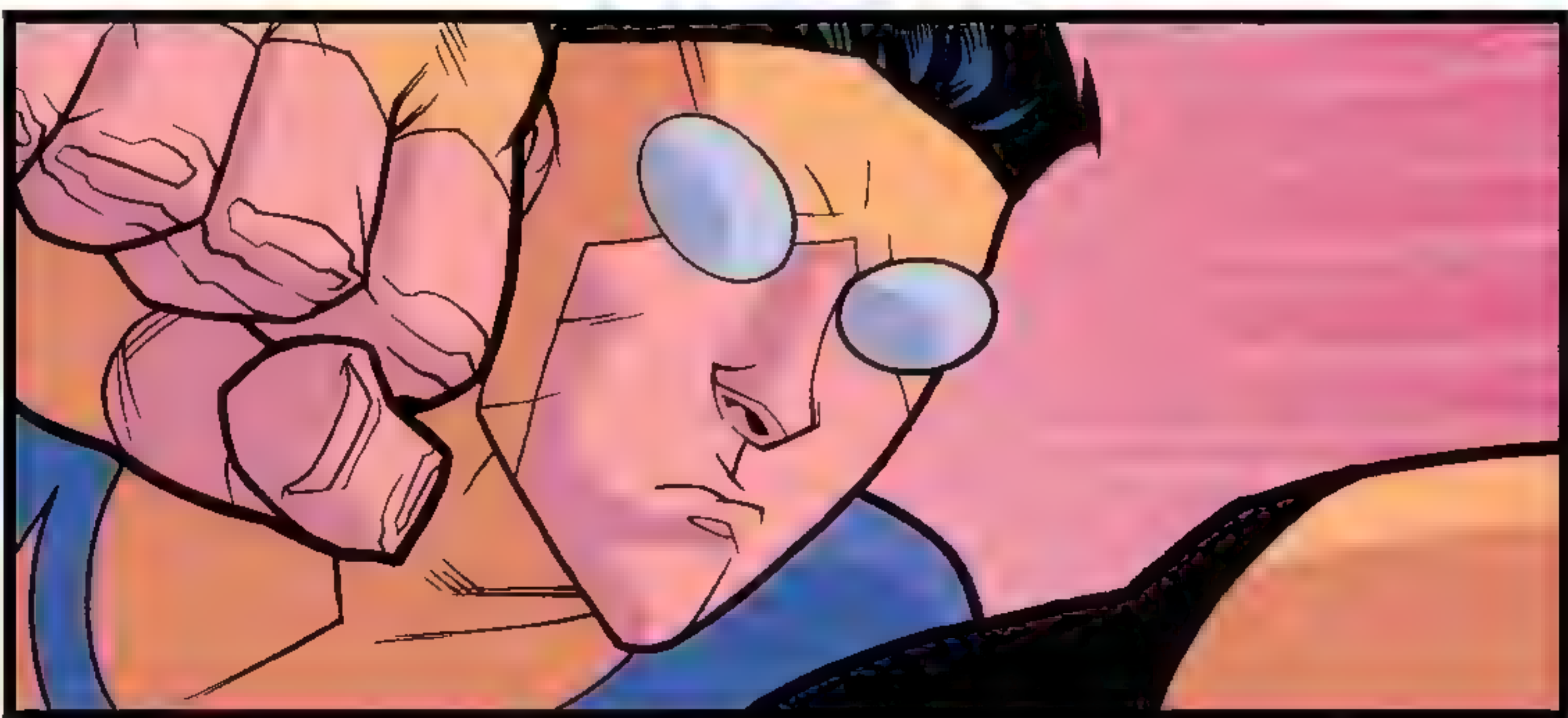
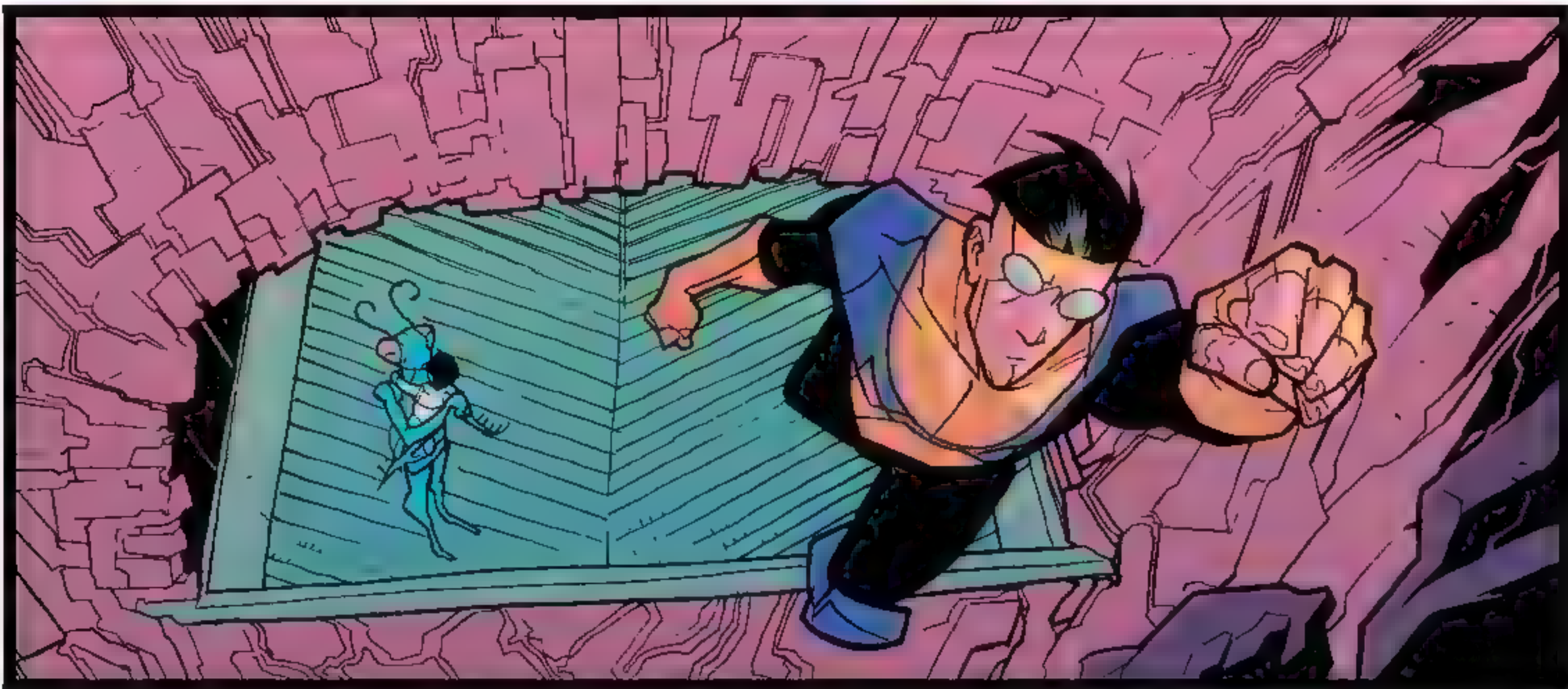
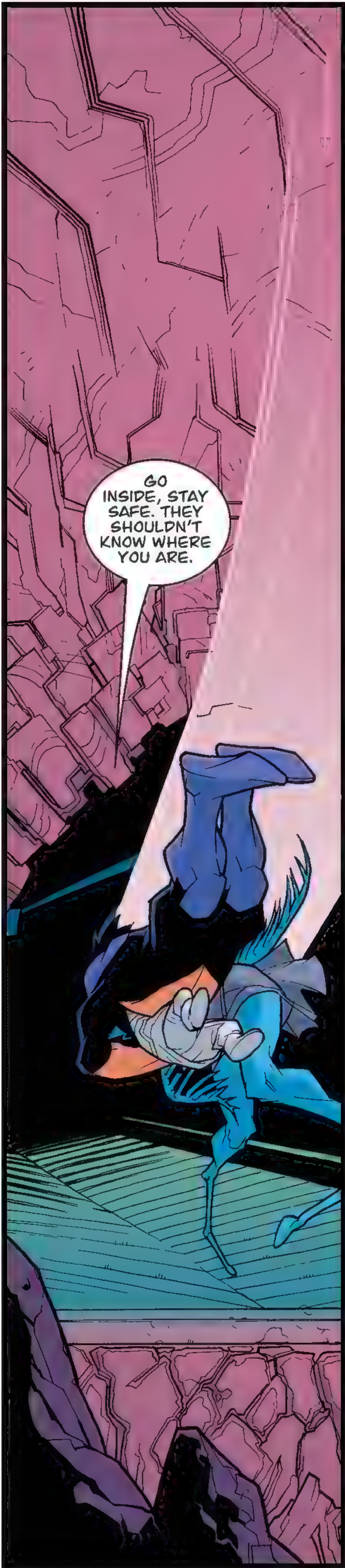
THEN
LET'S GO.



ONCE YOU DIDN'T
IMMEDIATELY RETURN
FROM THE CAVES--I
CAME TO FIND YOU.
THEY ARE NO DOUBT
CIRCLING THE PLANET
IN SEARCH OF ME.
STAY LOW, LIKE
BEFORE.

WILL
DO.







DAD?

OH,
MAN... I--
WHAT ARE
WE GOING
TO DO
NOW?

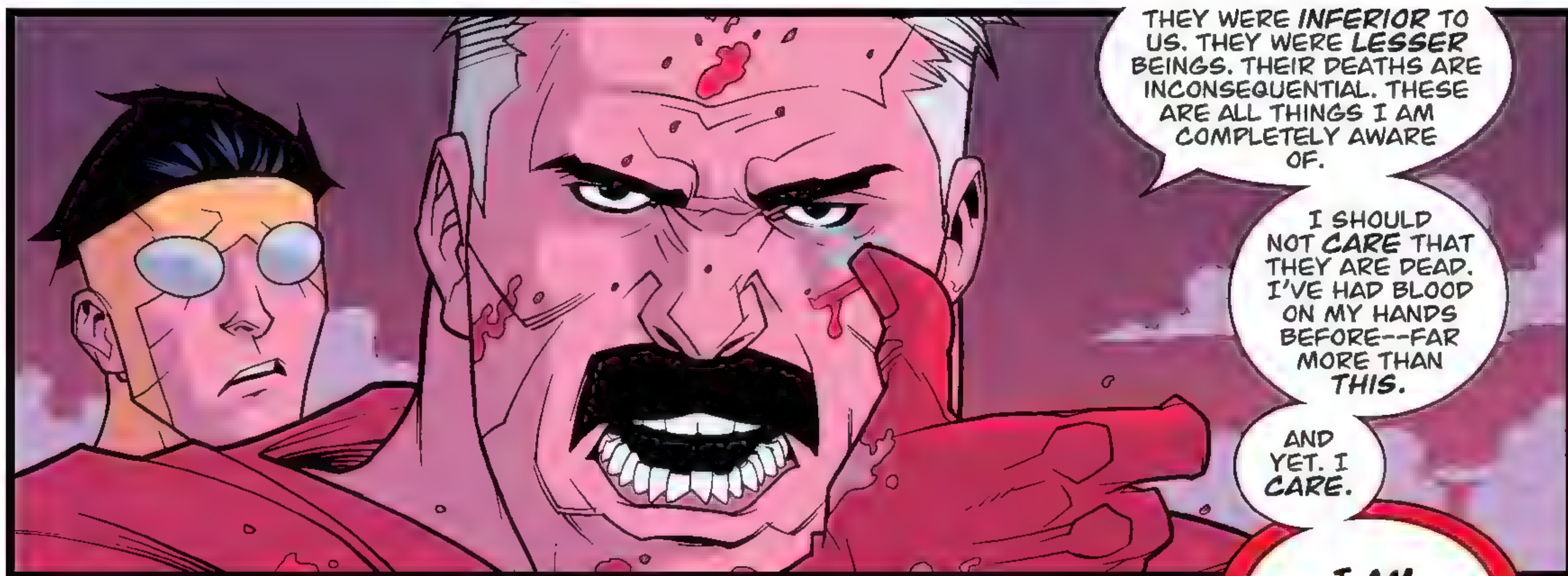


DAD?



ISSUE TWENTY-NINE





THEY WERE INFERIOR TO US. THEY WERE LESSER BEINGS. THEIR DEATHS ARE INCONSEQUENTIAL. THESE ARE ALL THINGS I AM COMPLETELY AWARE OF.

I SHOULD NOT CARE THAT THEY ARE DEAD. I'VE HAD BLOOD ON MY HANDS BEFORE--FAR MORE THAN THIS.

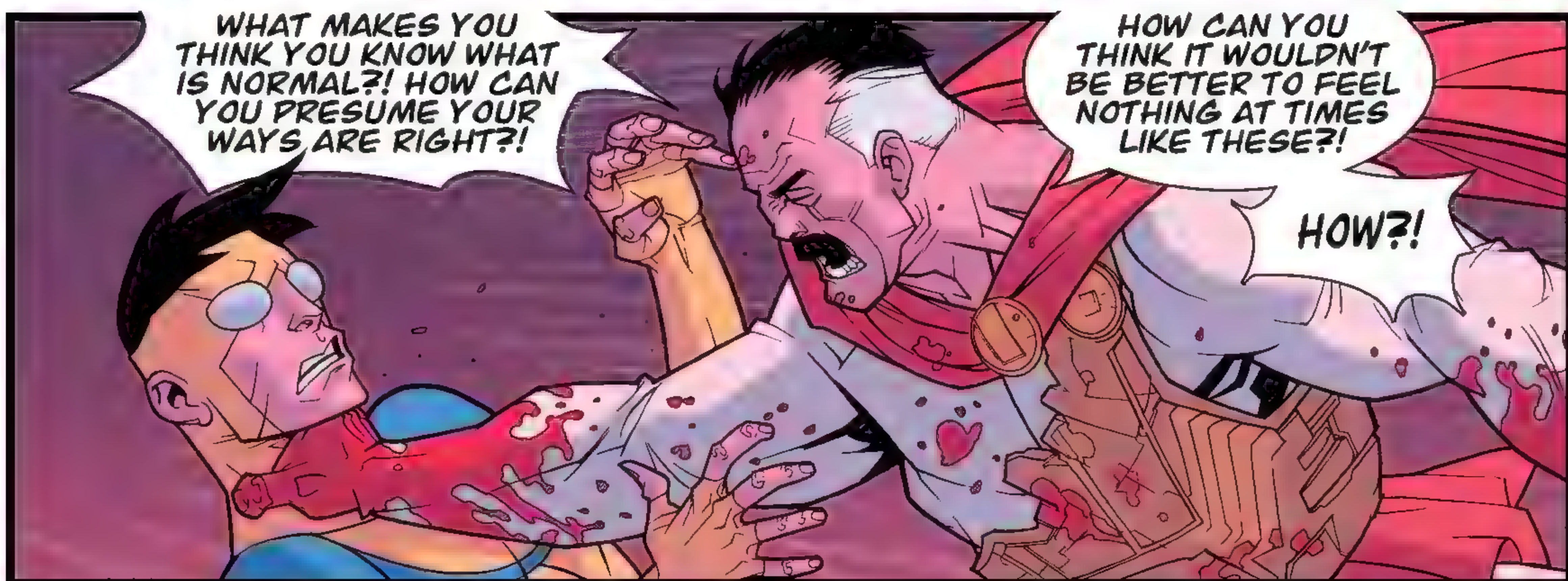
AND YET. I CARE.

I AM ENRAGED.



THAT'S OKAY, DAD. THAT'S NORMAL.

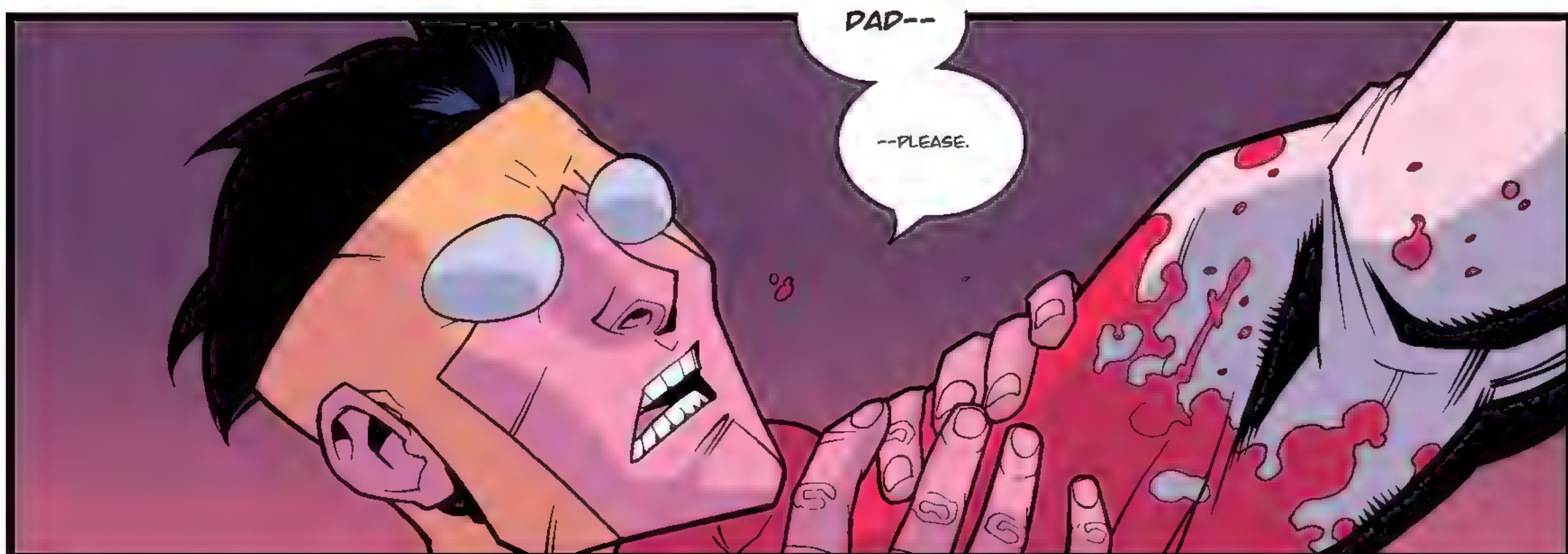
YOU'RE NOT THE SAME PERSON YOU ONCE WERE.



WHAT MAKES YOU THINK YOU KNOW WHAT IS NORMAL?! HOW CAN YOU PRESUME YOUR WAYS ARE RIGHT?!

HOW CAN YOU THINK IT WOULDN'T BE BETTER TO FEEL NOTHING AT TIMES LIKE THESE?!

HOW?!



DAD--

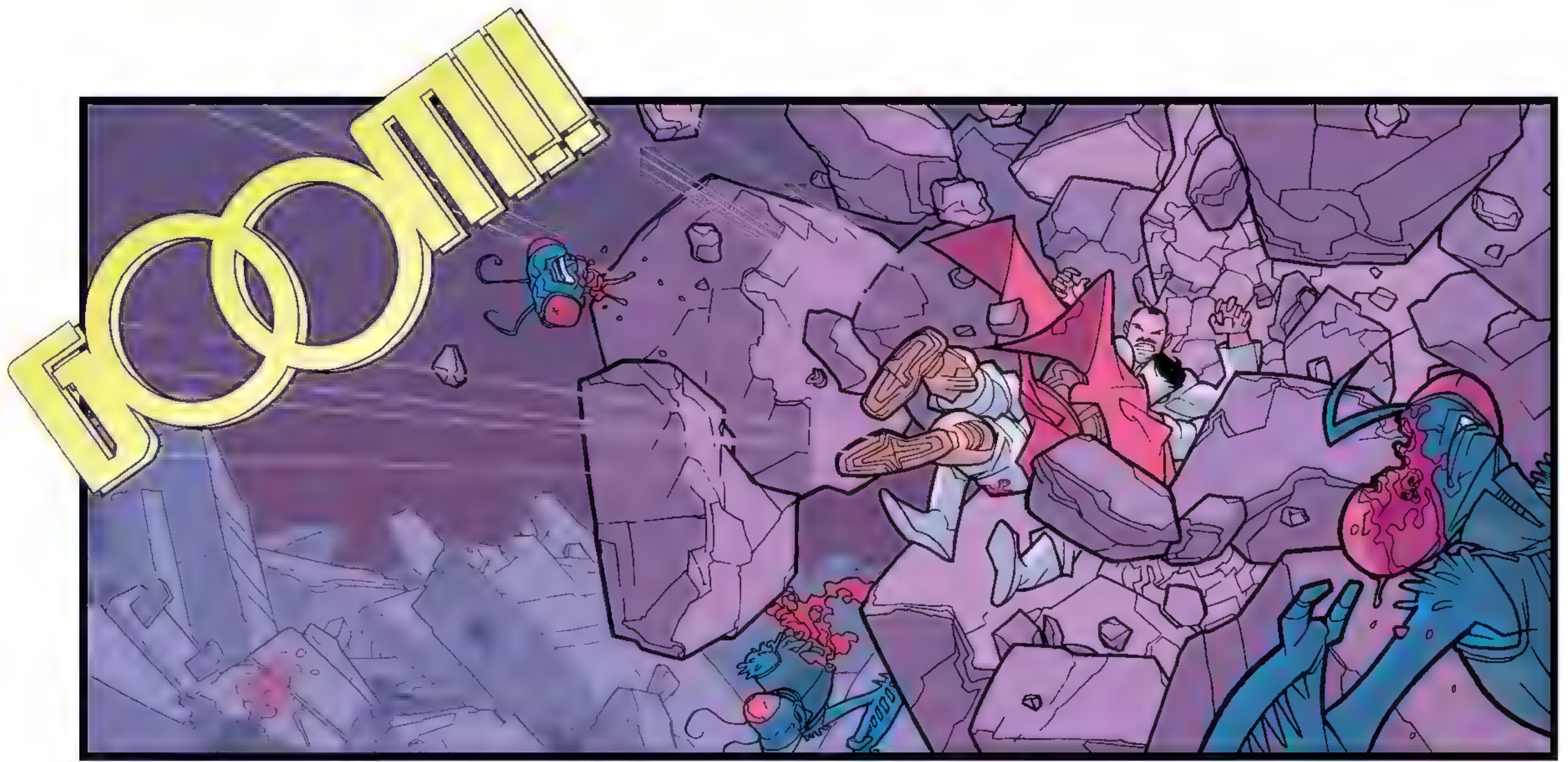
--PLEASE.



THERE'S
THE NOLAN
WE'VE HEARD
STORIES
OF.

I MUST
ADMIT, YOU HAD
ME WORRIED
FOR A LITTLE
WHILE
THERE.





WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?! YOU THINK YOU CAN GET AWAY WITH THIS?! THESE PEOPLE DID NOTHING TO DESERVE THIS!!

I WAS RULING THEM-- THEY WERE READY TO BECOME A PART OF THE VILTRUM EMPIRE!

WHY DID YOU DO THIS?!

WRAMMM!
WRAMMM!
WRAMMM!



TO PISS YOU OFF!



THE MORE PISSED YOU ARE-- THE LESS YOU THINK. THE LESS YOU THINK-- THE EASIER YOU'LL BE TO DEFEAT!

NOT THAT OUR VICTORY HERE WAS EVER IN QUESTION.

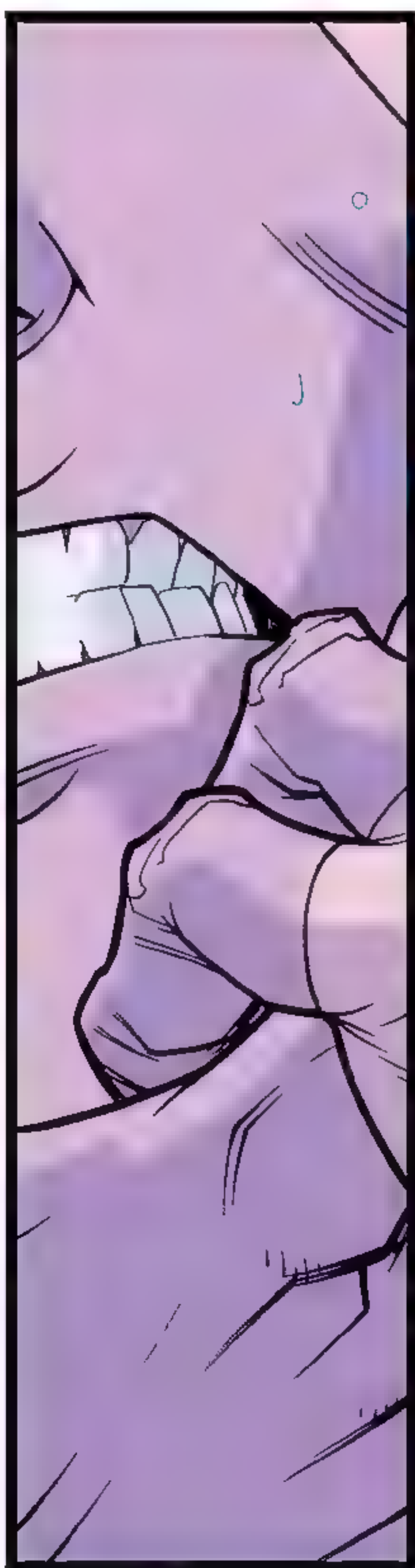
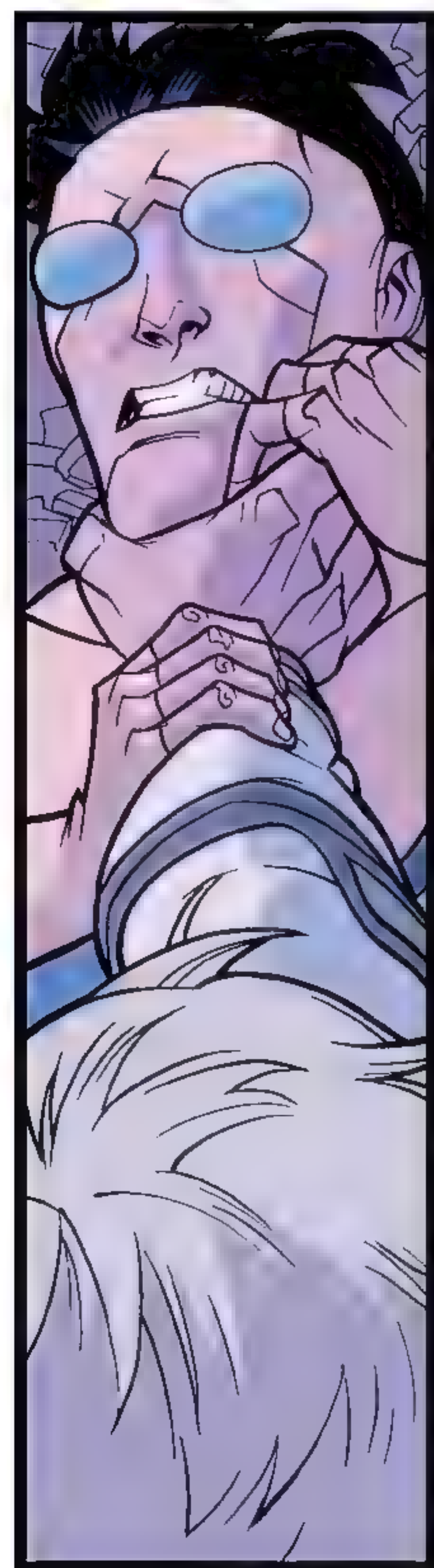
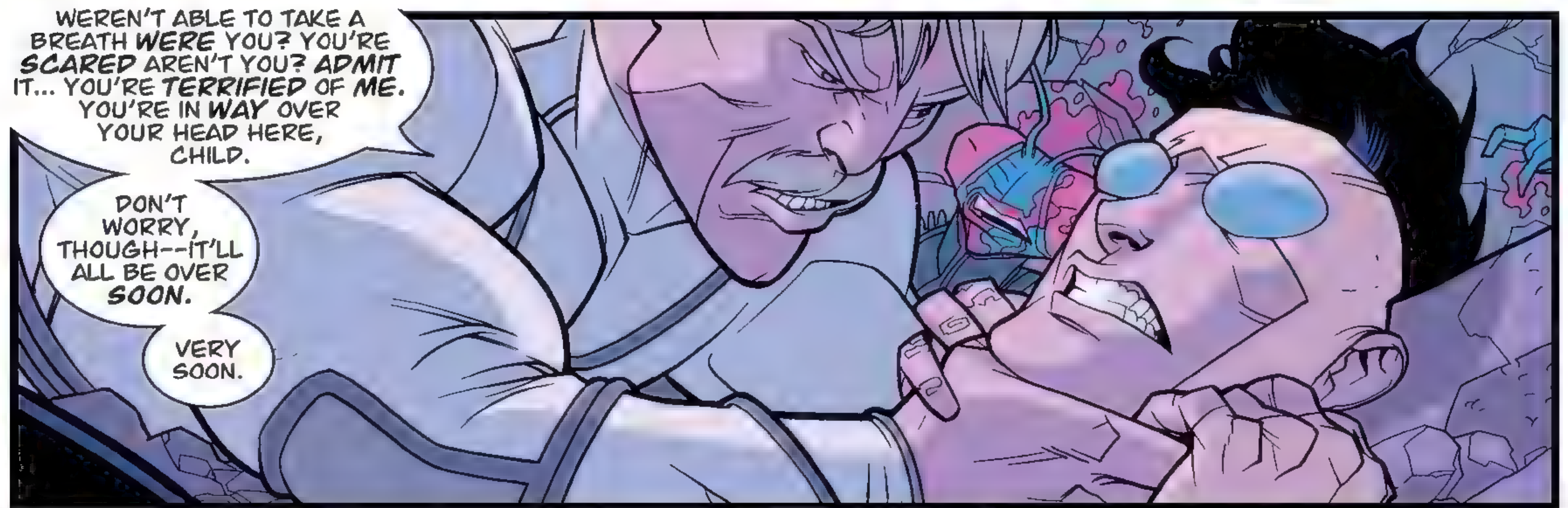


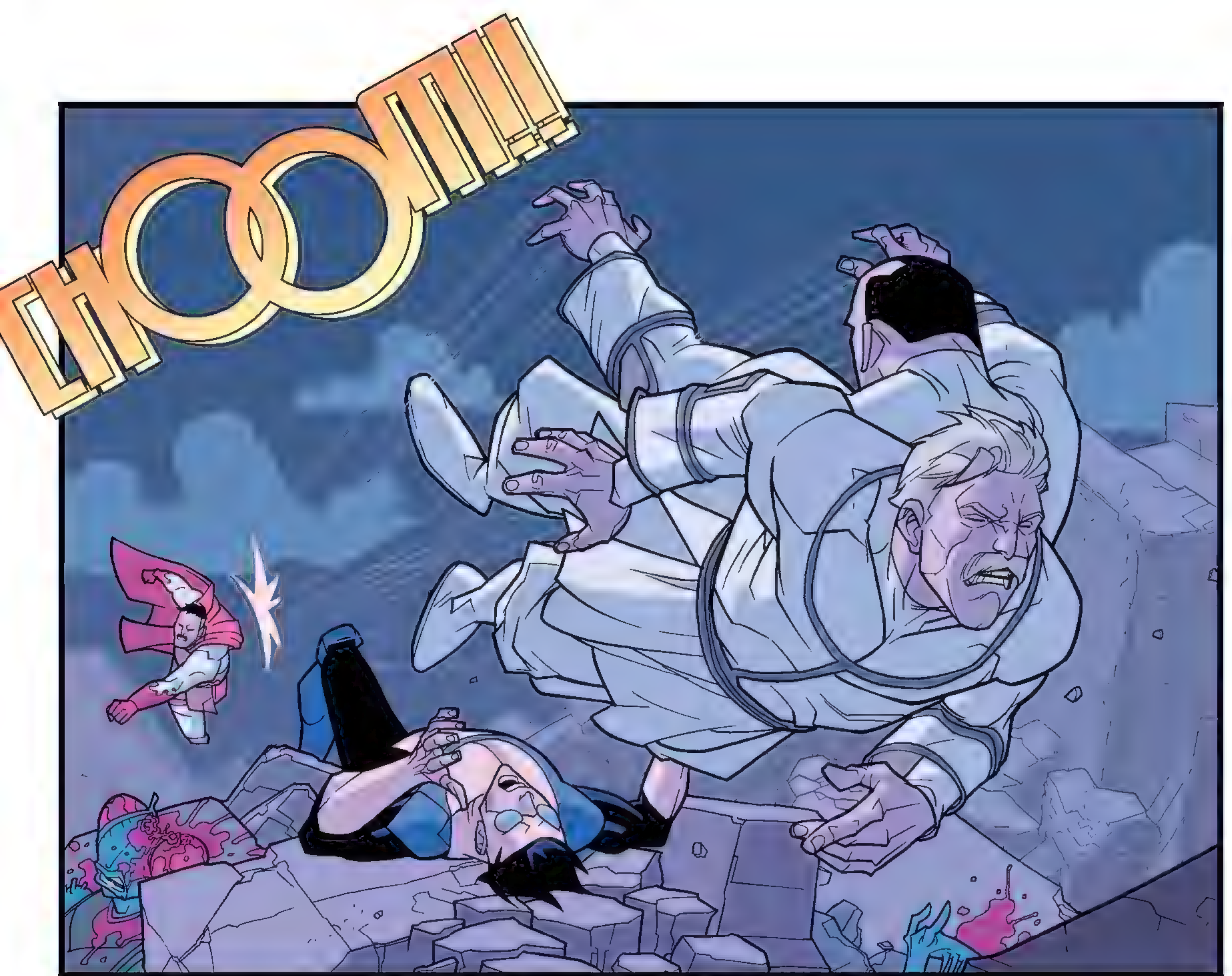
I CAN ASSUME THAT SINCE LUCAN IS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND--YOU'VE KILLED HIM.

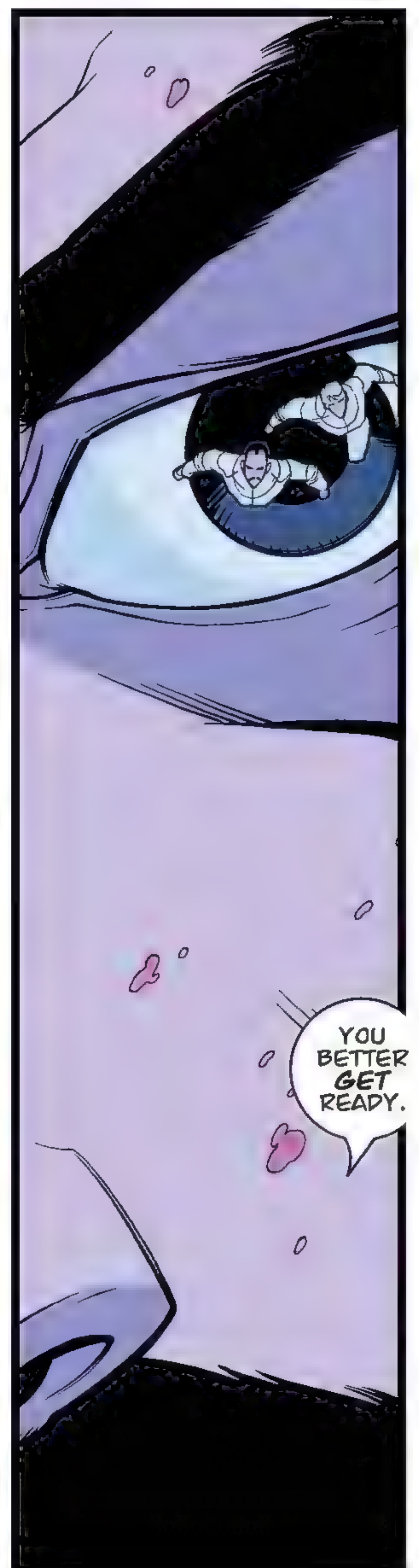
GOOD.

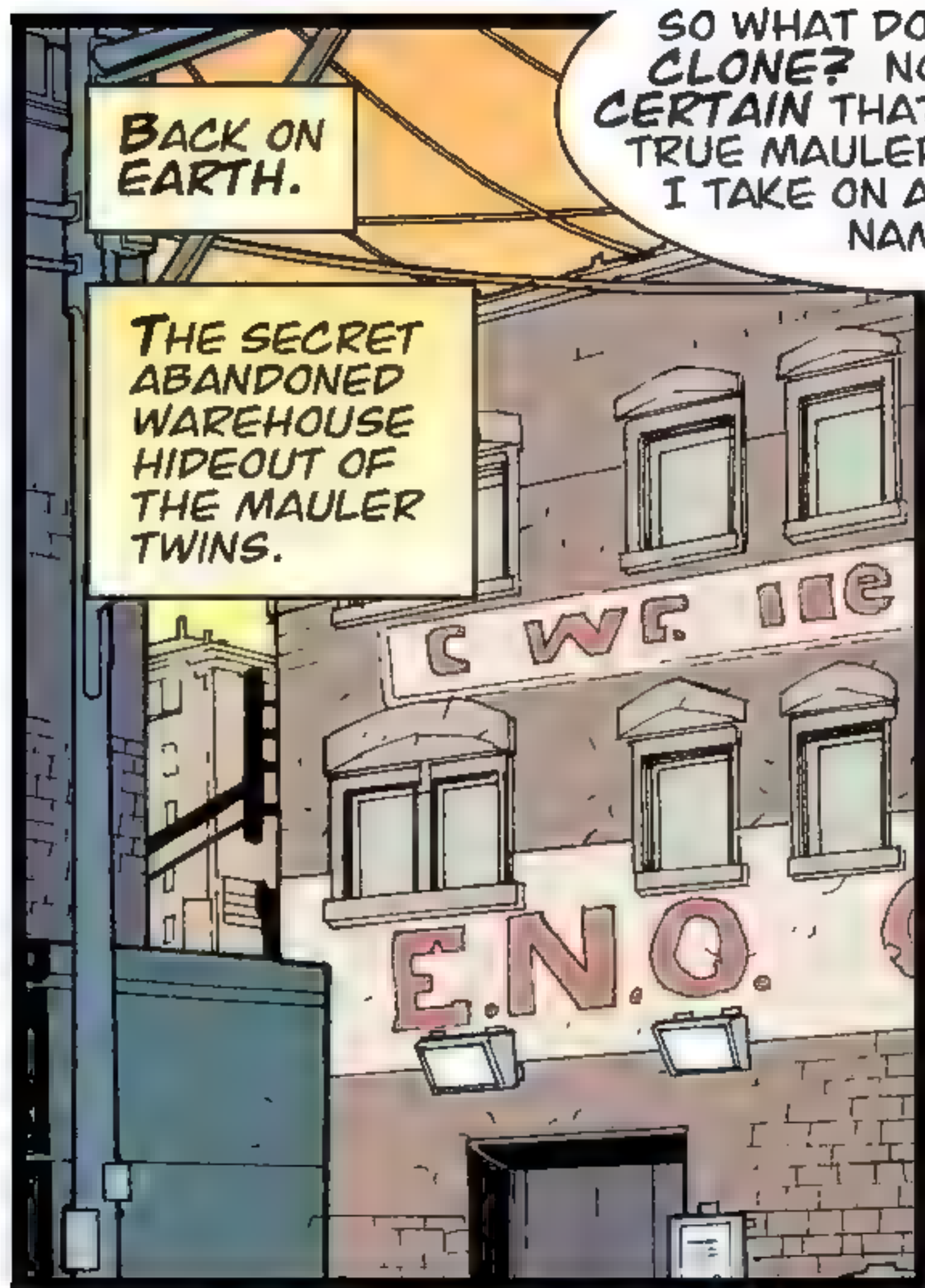
I ALWAYS KNEW HE WAS WEAK. SOON, I'LL KNOW YOU WERE WEAK, TOO.











BACK ON EARTH.

THE SECRET ABANDONED WAREHOUSE HIDEOUT OF THE MAULER TWINS.

SO WHAT DO YOU THINK, CLONE? NOW THAT IT'S CERTAIN THAT I'M THE ONE, TRUE MAULER, SHOULDN'T I TAKE ON A DIFFERENT NAME?

I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT THIS ALREADY AND I THINK I'VE ALREADY DECIDED ON A GOOD NAME.

KING MAULER.

I THINK I SHOULD MAKE ABOUT SIX MORE CLONES AND HAVE YOU ALL BE MY SLAVES---THAT WOULD REALLY HELP US ACHIEVE OUR---WELL, MY GOALS QUICKER.



IT'S FUNNY HOW WE NEVER THOUGHT TO HAVE MORE THAN TWO OF US BEFORE, ISN'T IT?

YES---

--FUNNY.

ARE YOU TIRED?! FINE. STOP REARRANGING THINGS AND GET ME SOME MORE LEMONADE.

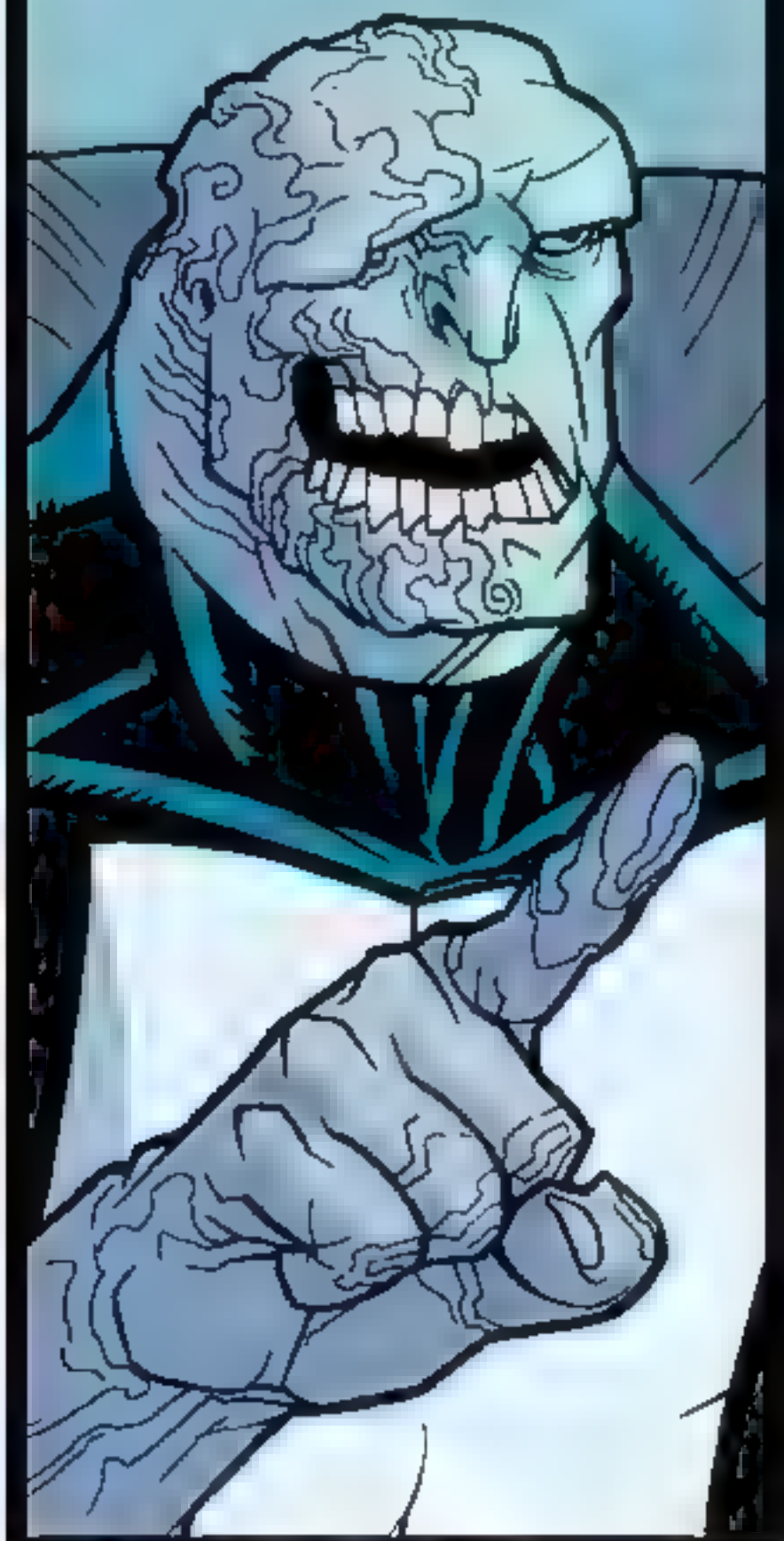
CONSIDER IT A BREAK.

YES, SIR.

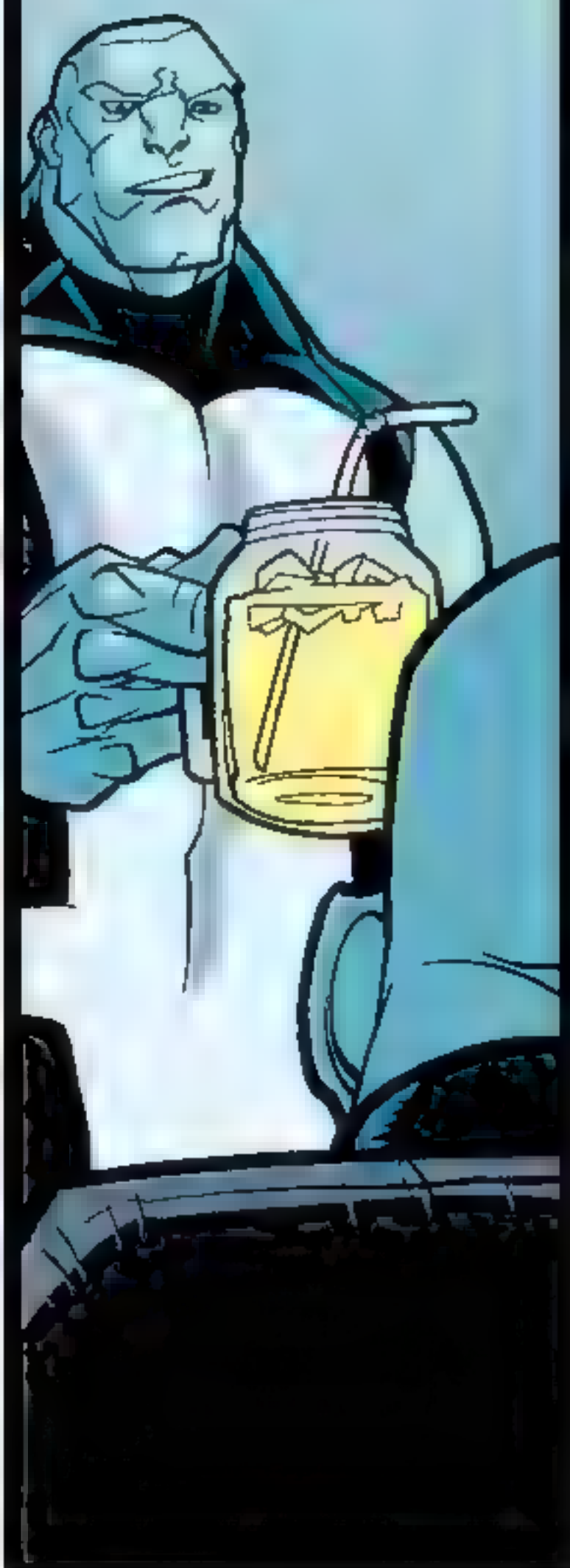
THANK YOU, SIR.

OKAY, I CAN IMAGINE YOU'RE NOT TOO PLEASED WITH THIS SITUATION BUT THIS FALSE SERVITUDE IS STARTING TO GET ANNOYING.

I ORDER YOU TO STOP.

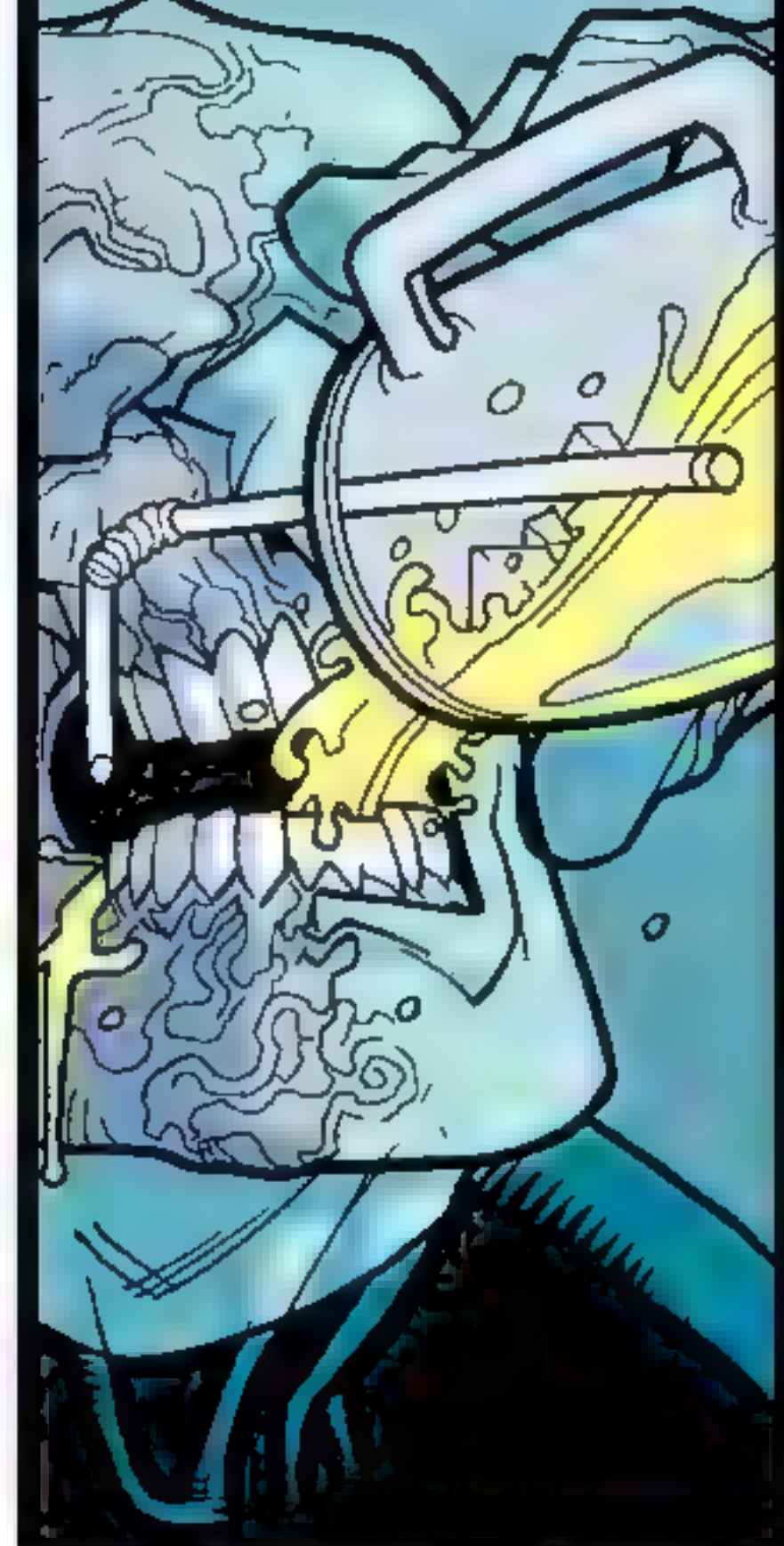


AT ONCE, SIR.



VERY FUNNY.

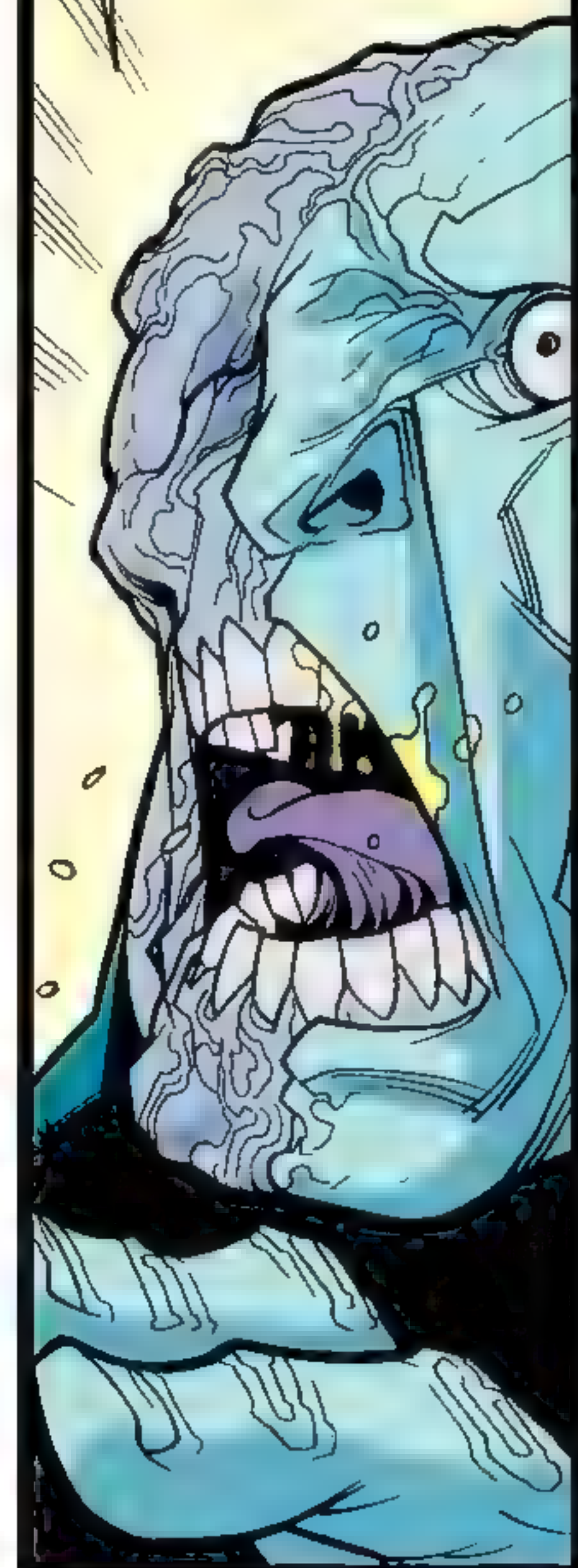
=GULP!=



WAS THAT A NEW BATCH? THAT TASTED TERRIBLE! WHAT DID YOU--?



GAKK!!



I'LL ADMIT, POISONING YOU IS A BIT CLICHÉ, BUT WE ARE SO EVENLY MATCHED, KILLING YOU BY HAND WOULD HAVE BEEN NO SIMPLE TASK.

GAK!

DON'T FIGHT IT. THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO. JUST TAKE COMFORT IN THE FACT THAT YOU WILL LIVE ON--IN ME, AND MY FUTURE CLONES.

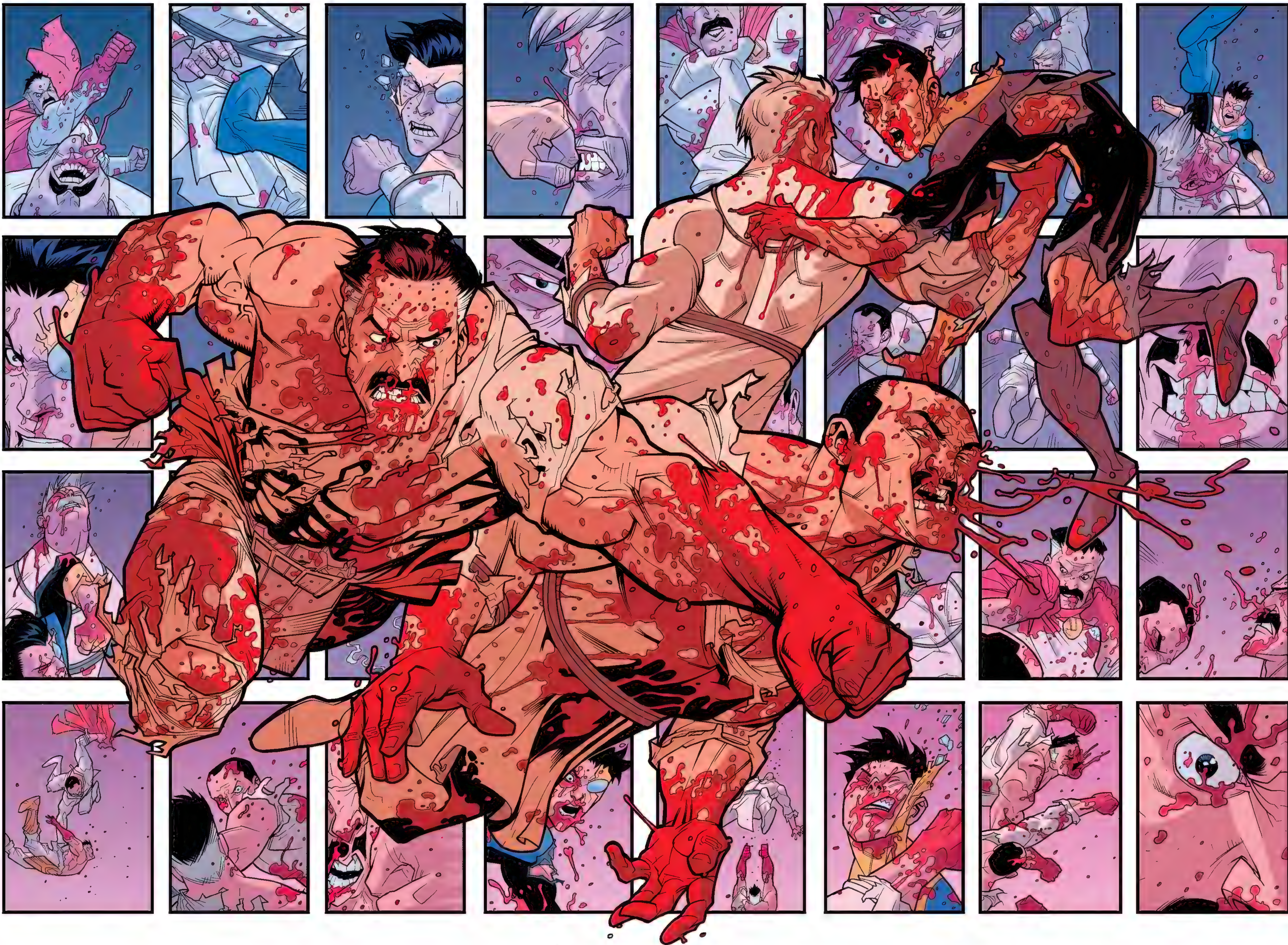
AND REALLY, I AM SORRY FOR DOING THIS. I REGRET IT MORE THAN YOU KNOW--IT'S VERY MUCH LIKE KILLING MYSELF.

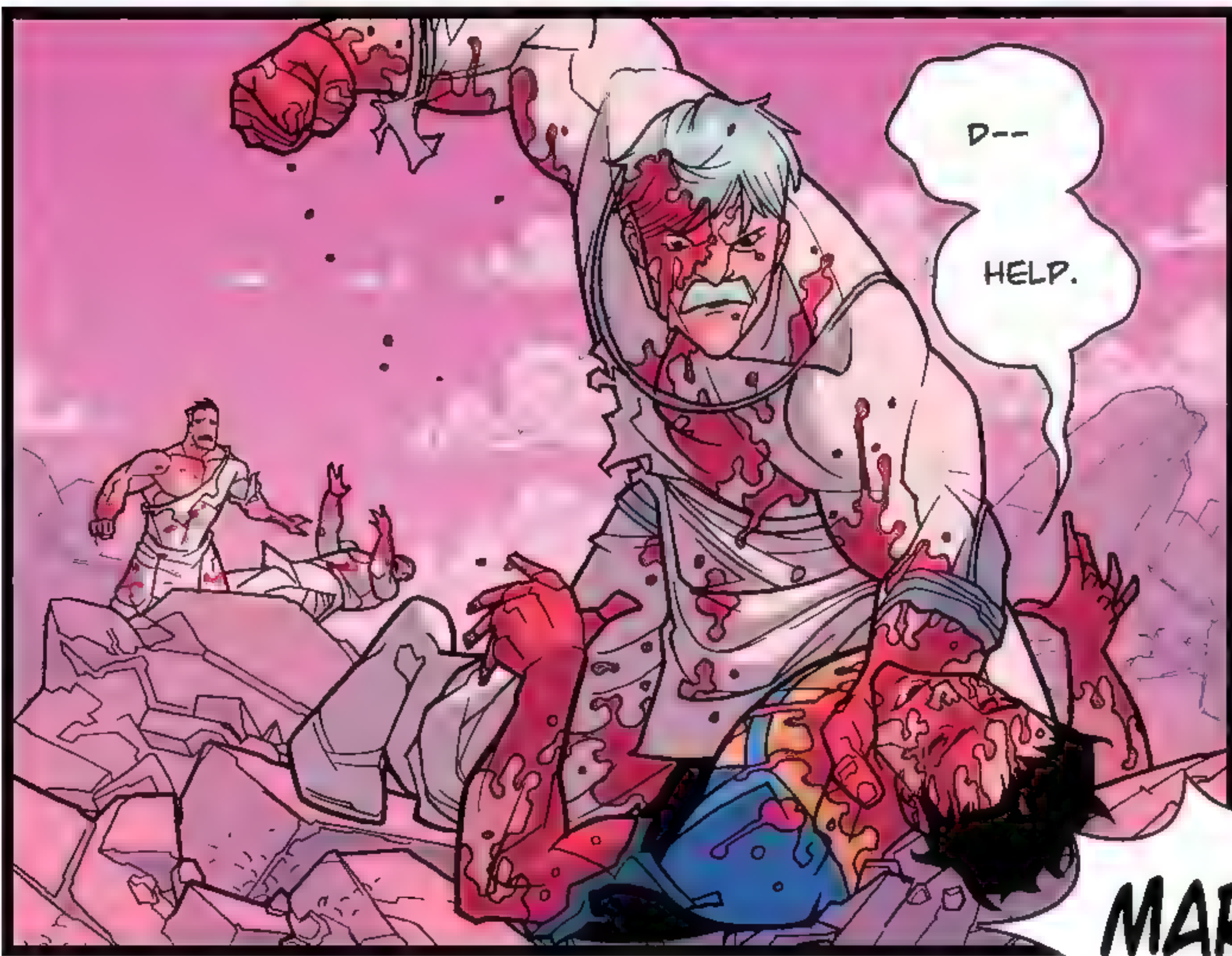
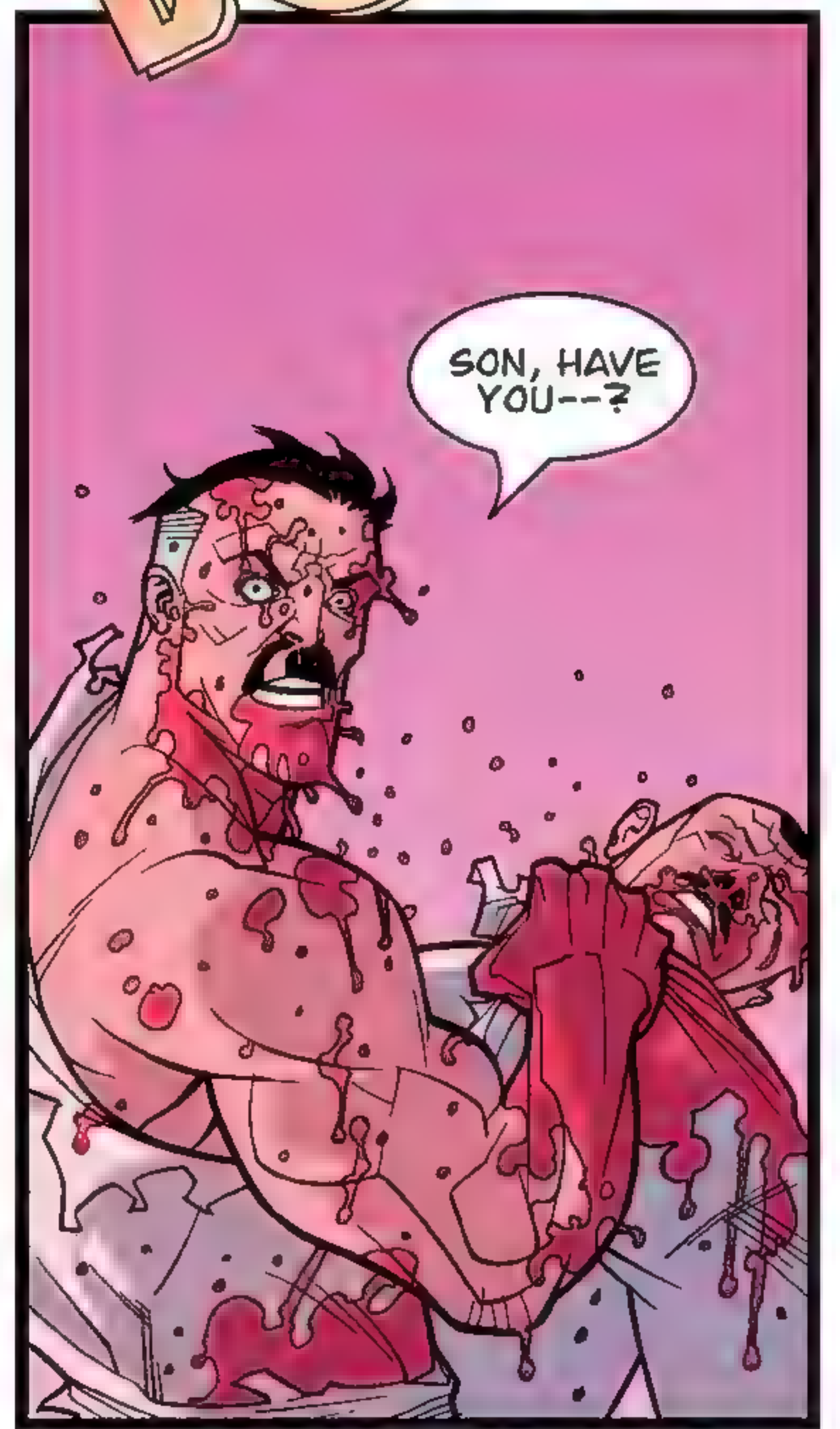
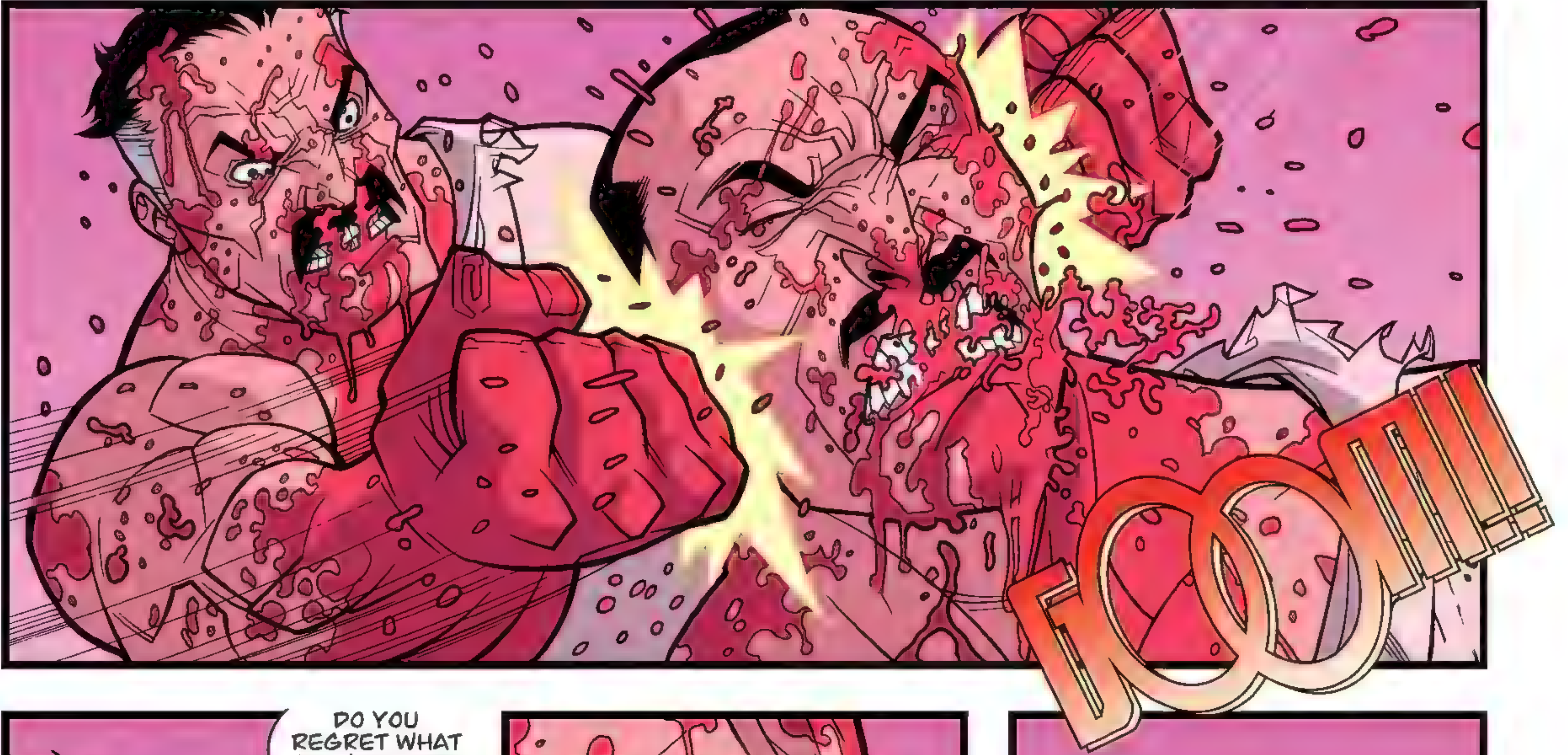


YOU'VE ONLY GOT YOURSELF TO BLAME, THOUGH. YOU MADE IT CLEAR TO ME, THAT WORKING TOGETHER, WITH MYSELF, ONLY WORKS IF I'M UNAWARE OF WHICH ONE IS THE CLONE.

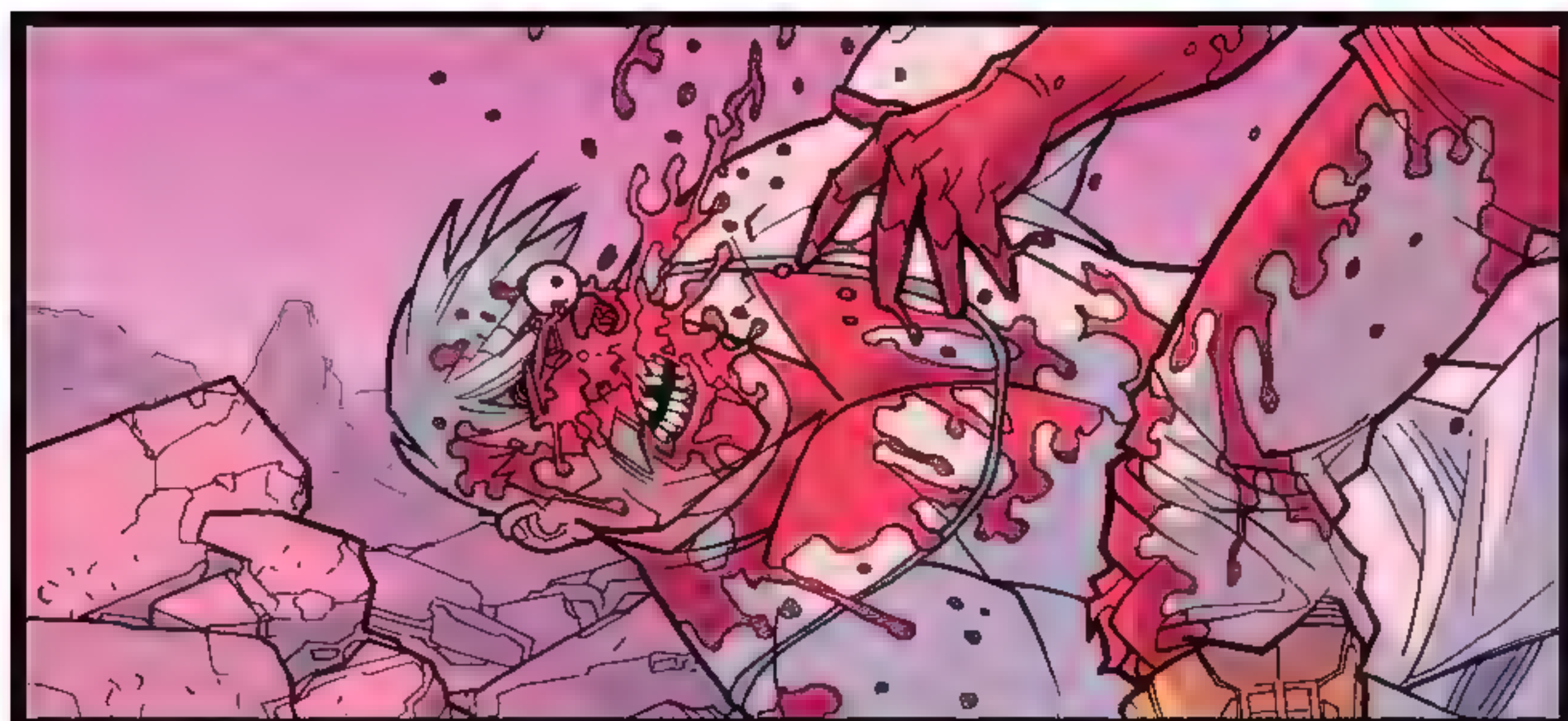
SO YOU JUST HAD TO GO.







YOU'LL
DIE FOR
THIS!!



≡HUFF≡

≡HUFF≡

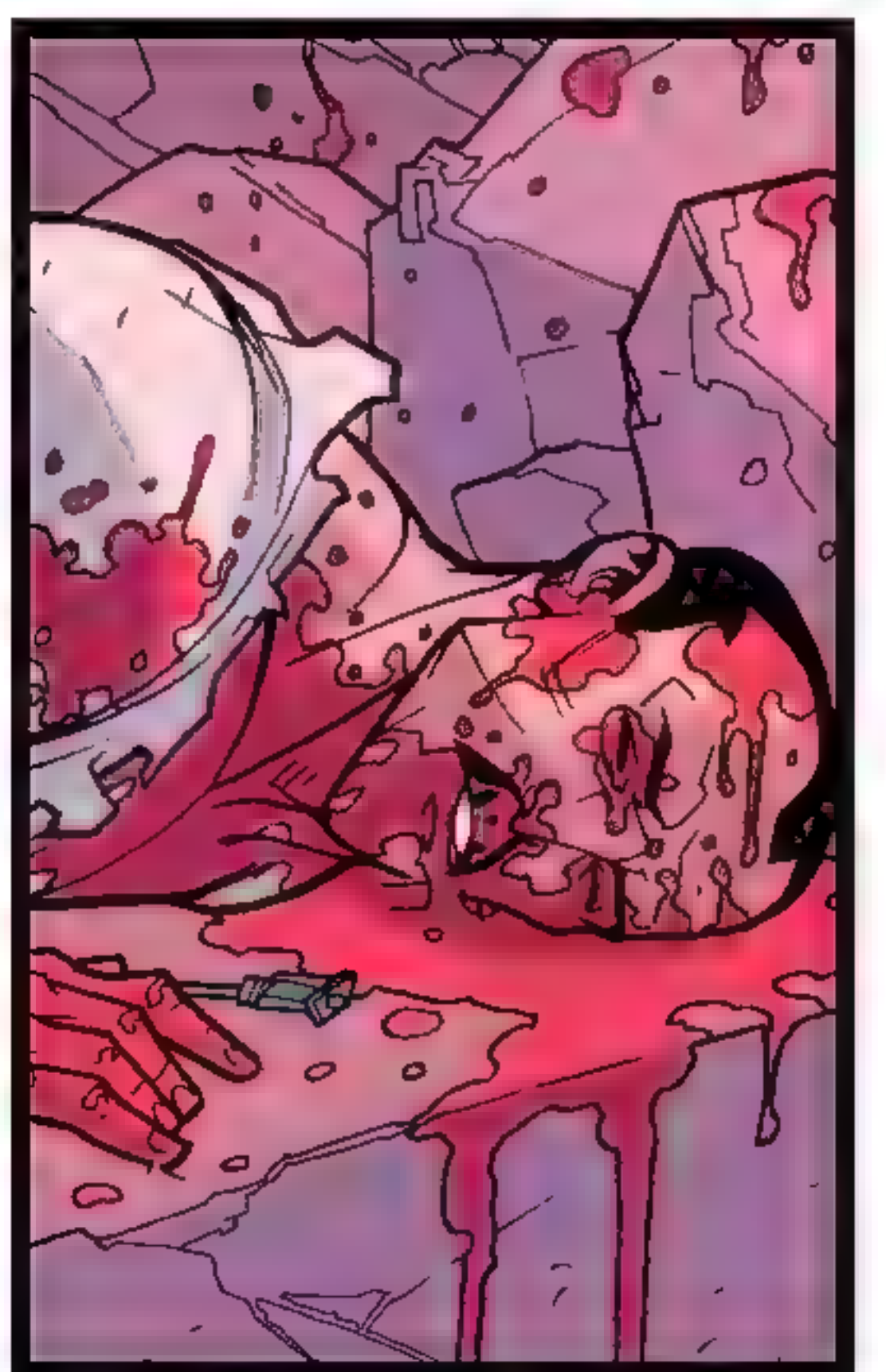
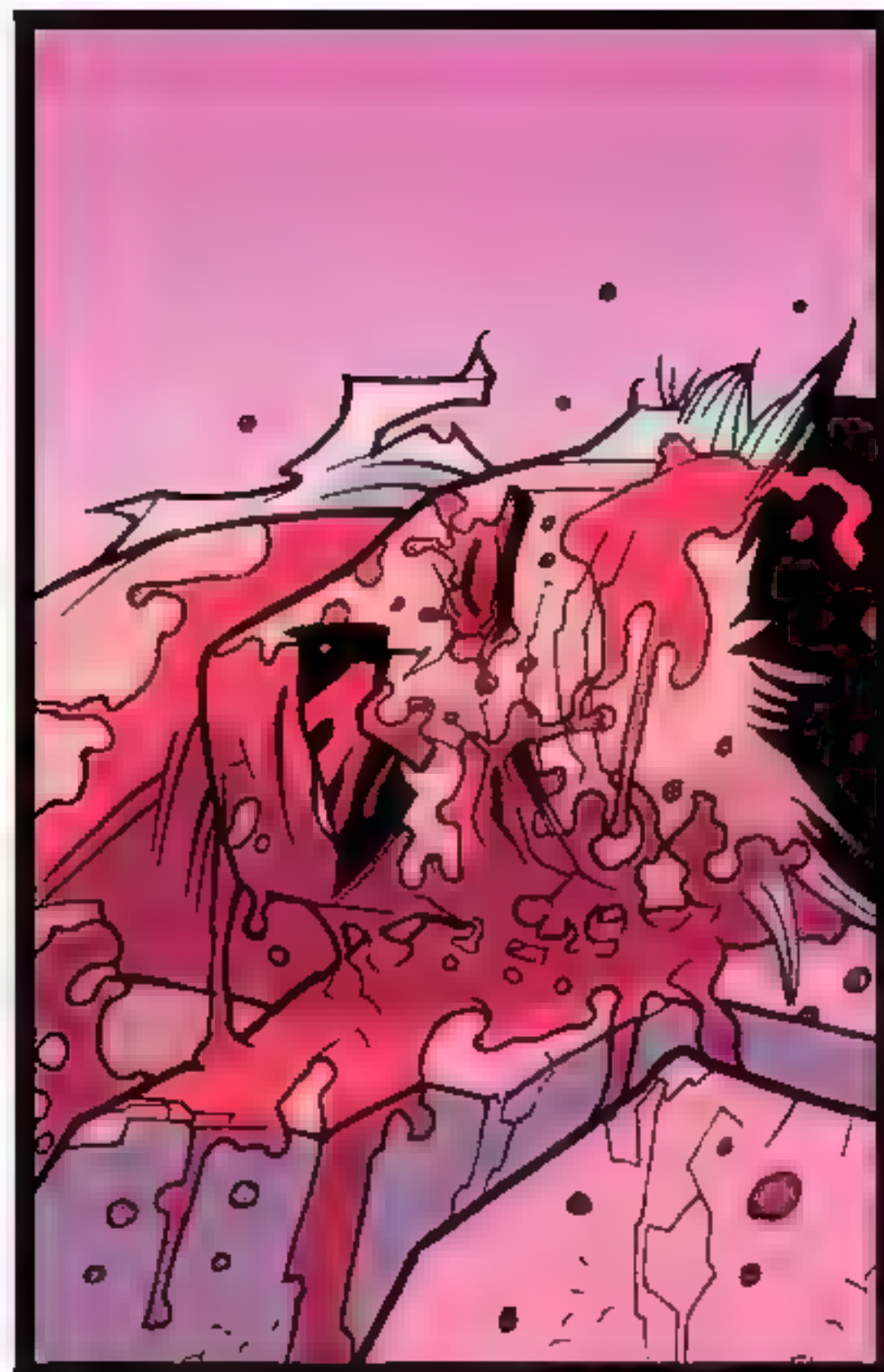
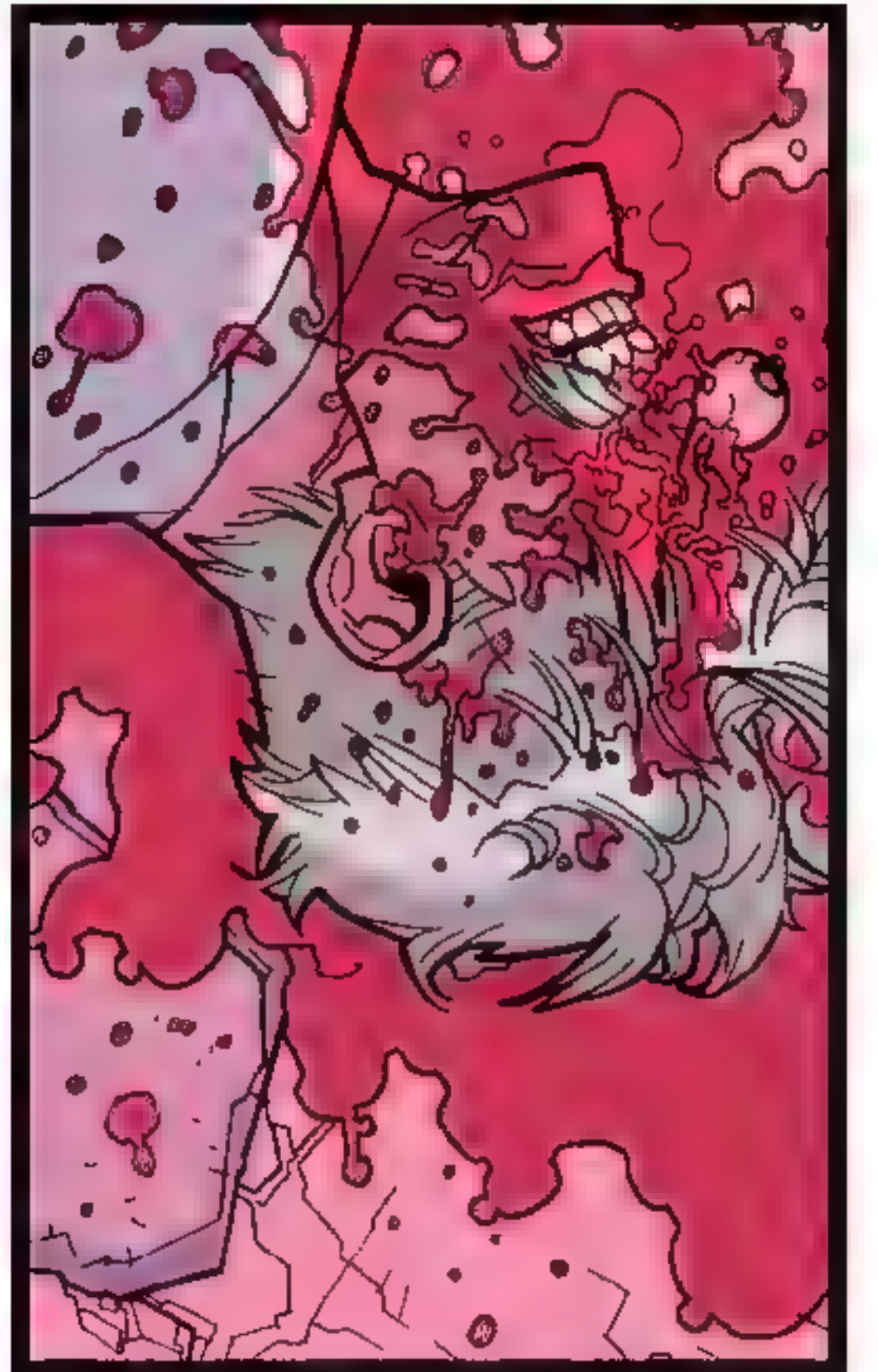
IT'S--

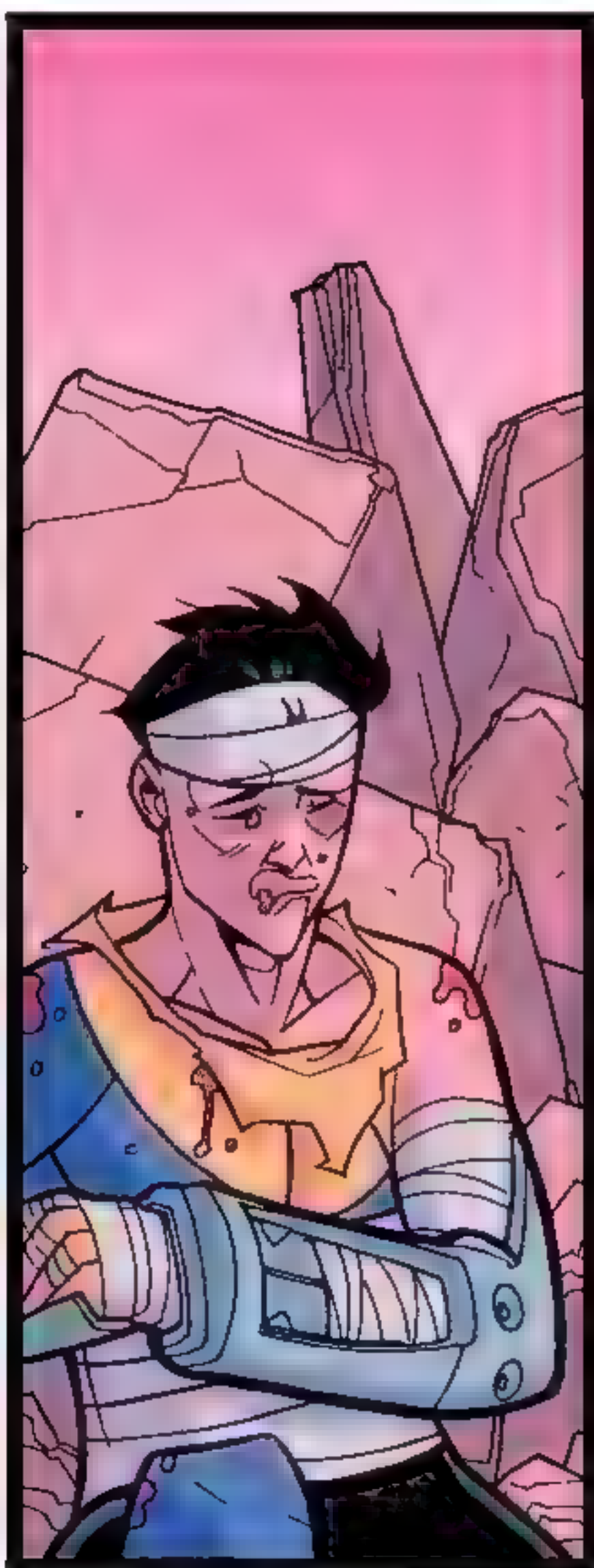
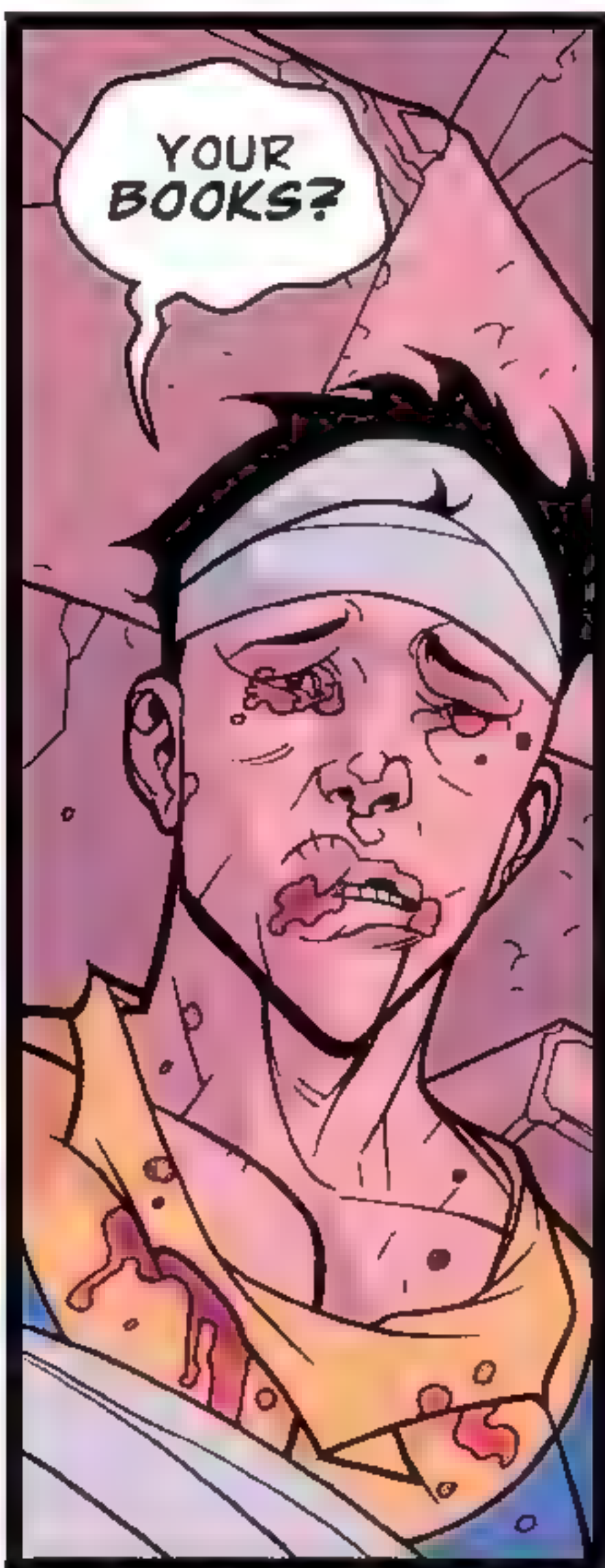
≡HUFF≡

--OVER.

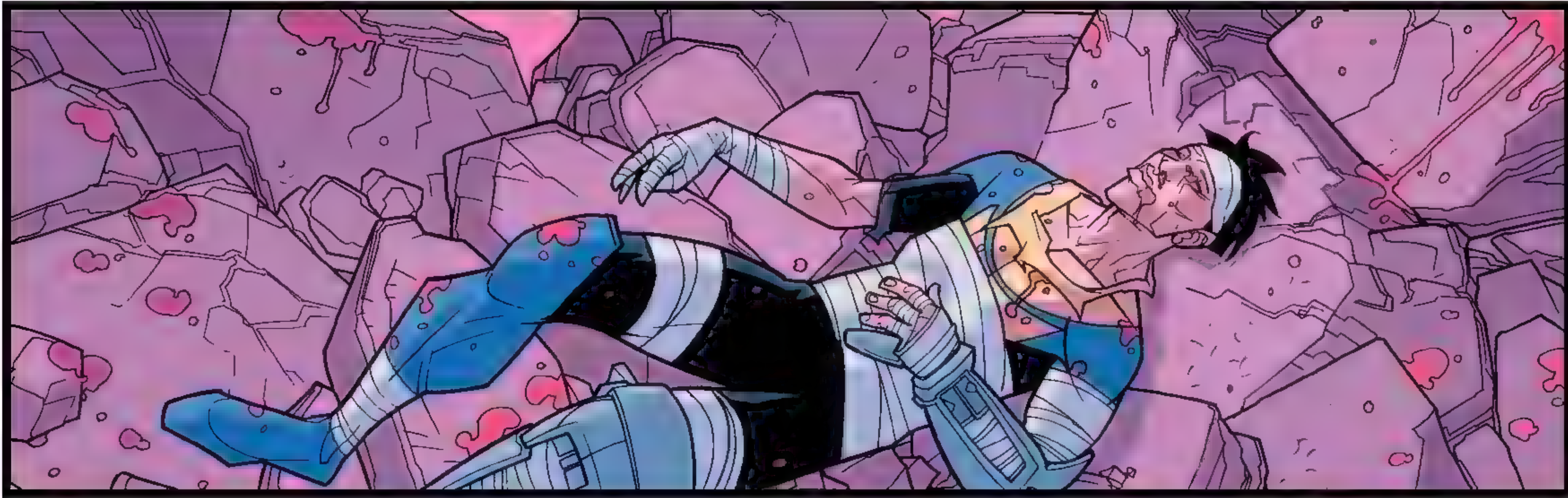
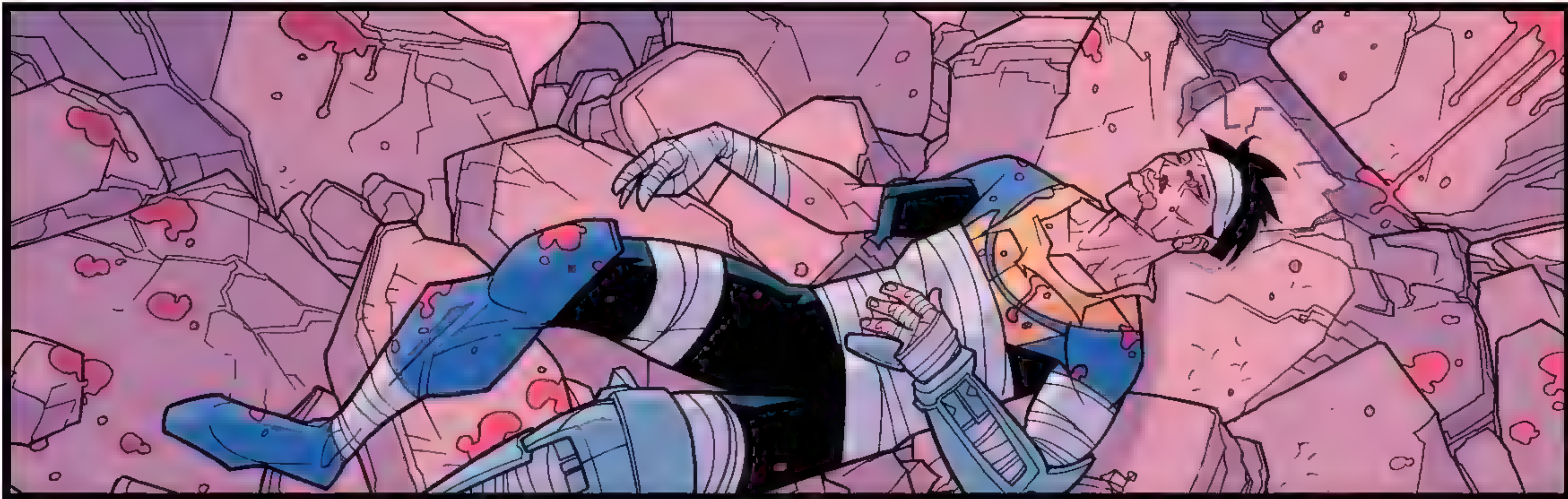


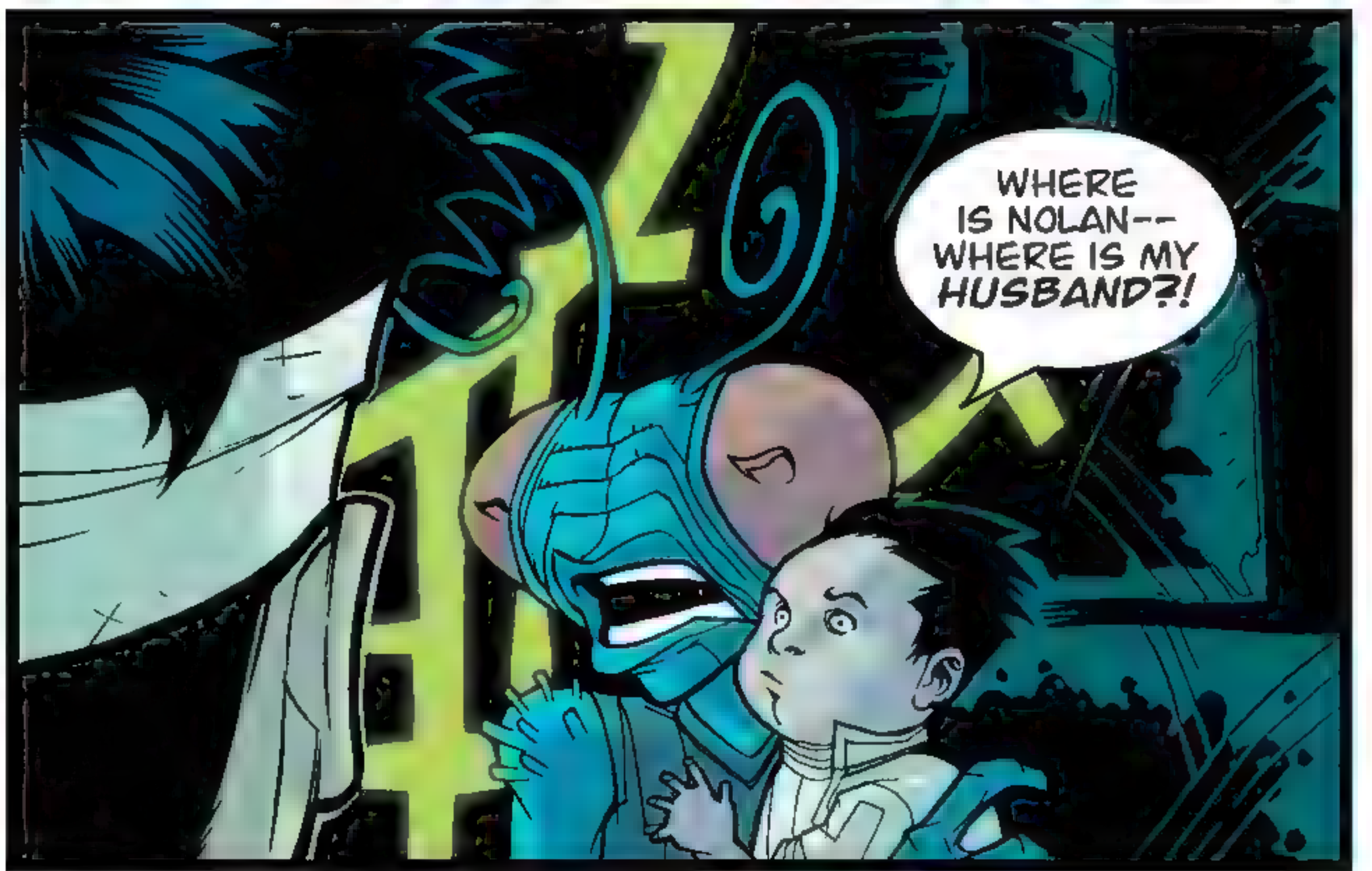
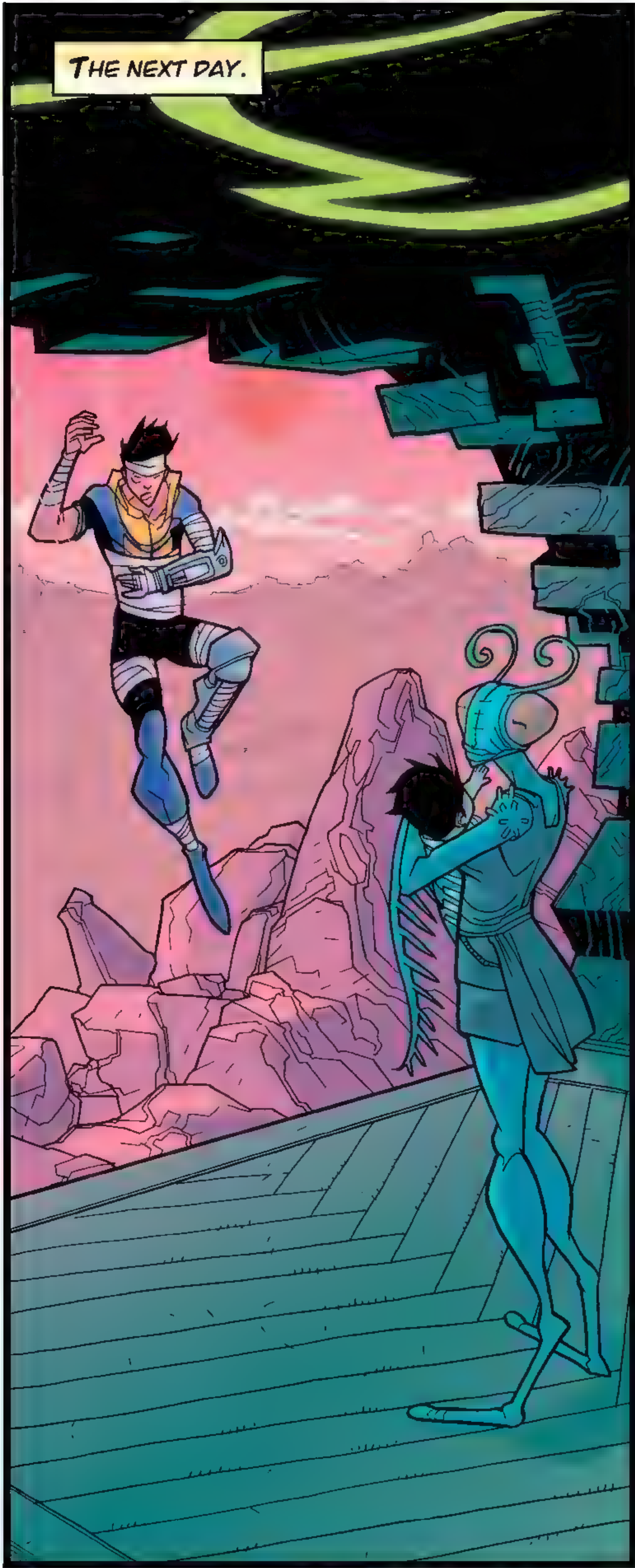
SNAP!

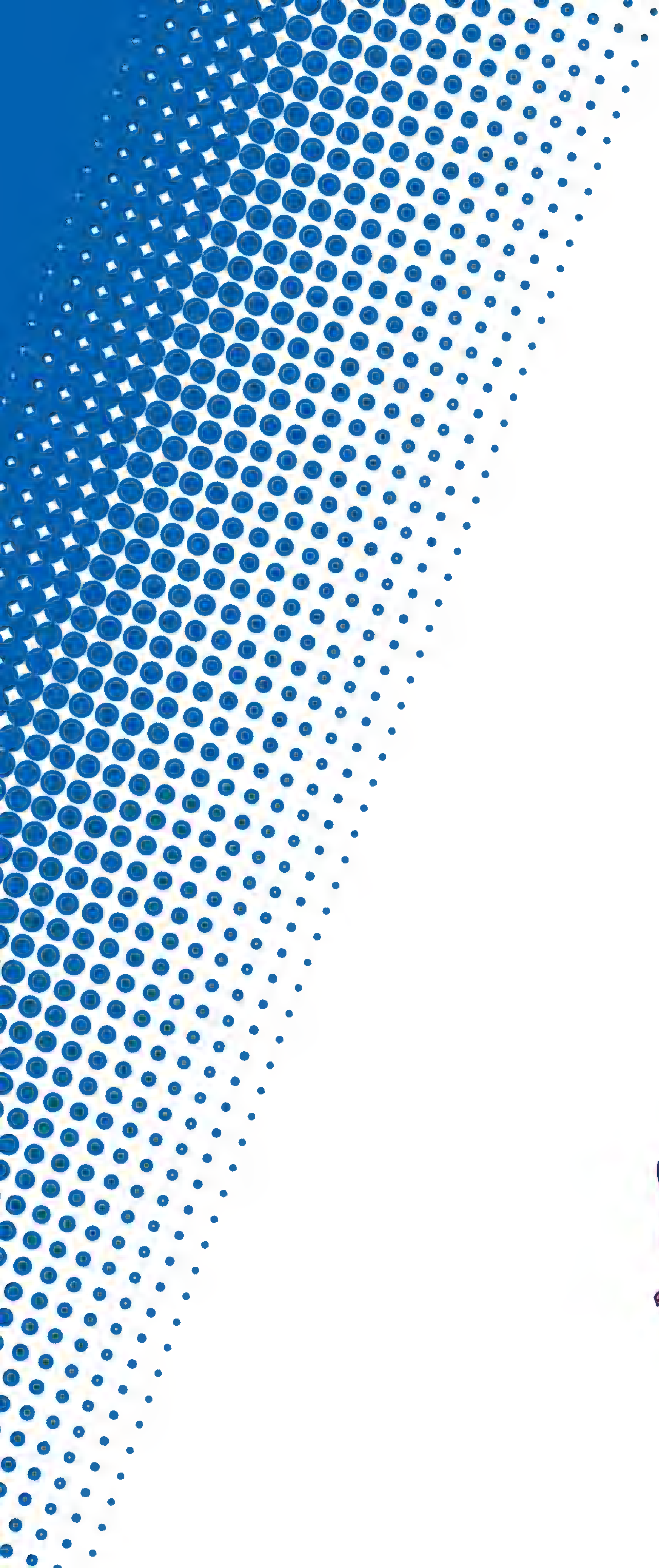




WHATEV--







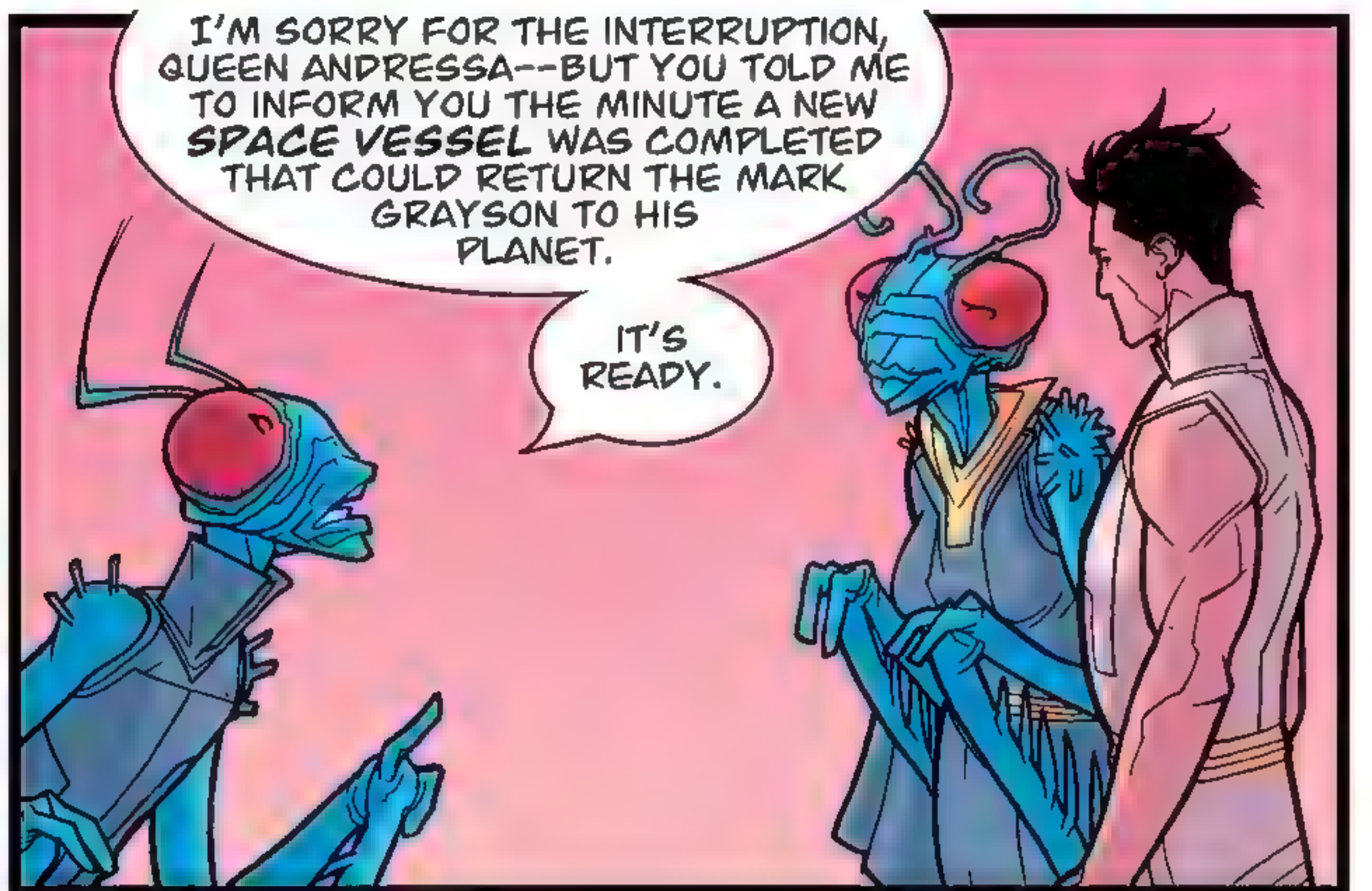
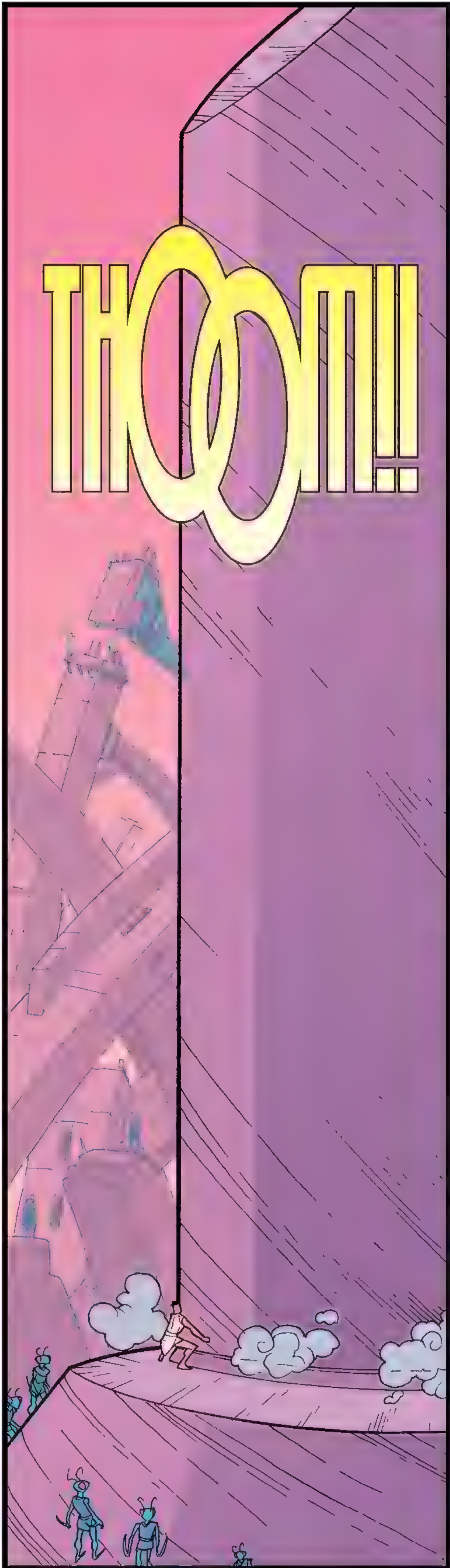
ISSUE THIRTY





ALMOST--

--THERE.





EXCELLENT. MAKE THE PREPARATIONS AT ONCE. I WANT THE SHIP PREPARED FOR LAUNCH BEFORE OUR SUNS BEGIN THEIR DECENT.

YES, QUEEN. YOUR WILL BE DONE.



WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?! I'M NOT THROUGH YET. WITH THE HELP OF YOUR ARCHITECTS I COULD HAVE THIS ENTIRE PALACE BUILT IN ANOTHER COUPLE WEEKS.

I CAN'T LEAVE NOW-- ESPECIALLY NOT TODAY.



I'D ASK YOU TO PLEASE NOT QUESTION ME IN FRONT OF MY SUBJECTS, MARK. YOUR TIME HERE HAS BEEN LONG--TOO LONG. THIS IS NOT YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AND THE WORK YOU'VE ALREADY DONE SHOULD BE MORE THAN ENOUGH TO APPEASE YOUR CONSCIENCE.

YOU HAVE A LIFE YOU MUST RETURN TO. I REGRET IT HAS TAKEN THIS LONG TO REDISCOVER THE TECHNOLOGY TO GET YOU HOME. YOU MUST GO.

TWO MORE WEEKS IS NOTHING FOR ME... I'VE ALREADY BEEN HERE OVER A MONTH. TWO MORE WEEKS MAY PUT ANOTHER FEW GRAY HAIRS ON MY MOTHER'S HEAD BUT I ASSURE YOU--IT'LL BE WORTH IT WHEN I EXPLAIN TO HER ALL THAT I'VE DONE!



NO. YOU MUST GO, MARK. YOU MUST GO AND BE WITH YOUR PEOPLE.

IF FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN YOU REMIND ME OF HIM--OF WHAT I LOST--



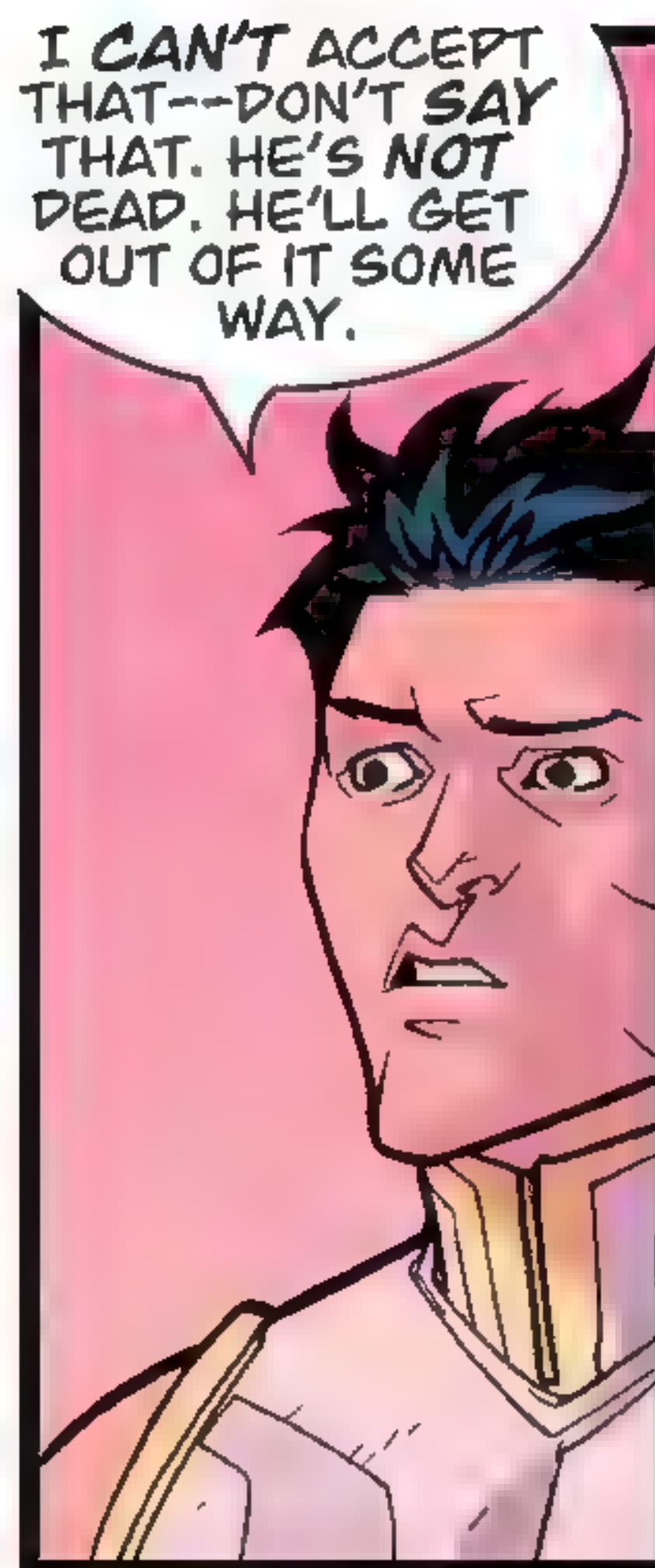
YEAH, MY DAD. I--



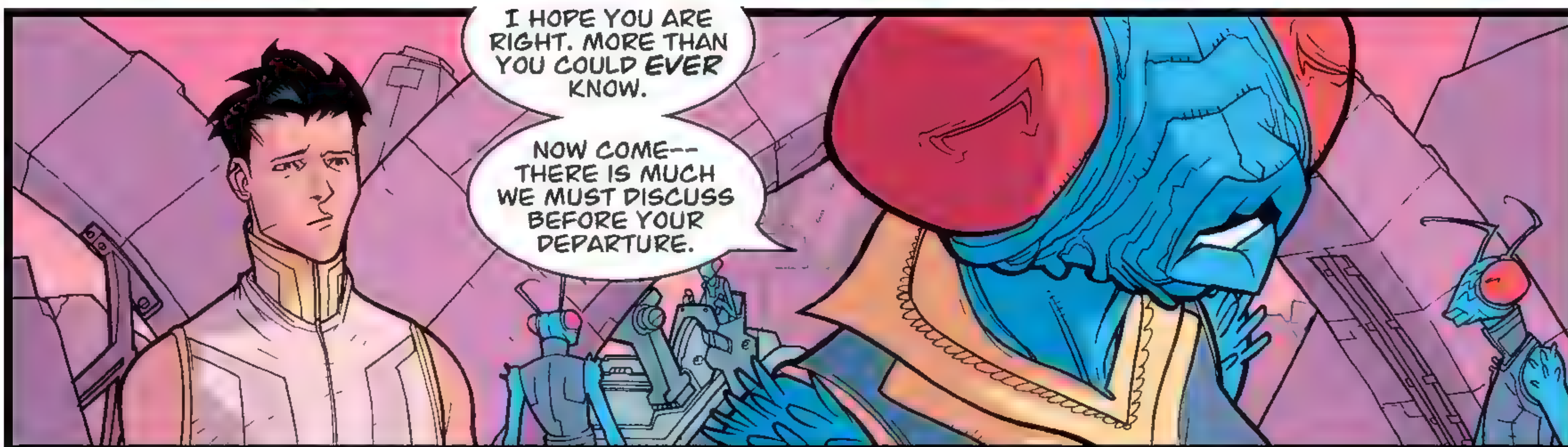
HE HAD TO COME BACK JUST LONG ENOUGH TO MAKE ME CARE WHEN SOMETHING BAD HAPPENED TO HIM.



AFTER ALL THIS TIME, I STILL FIND IT HARD TO BELIEVE THAT HE'S GONE. A LIFE ENDED AFTER LASTING SO LONG--IT DOESN'T EVEN SEEM REAL.

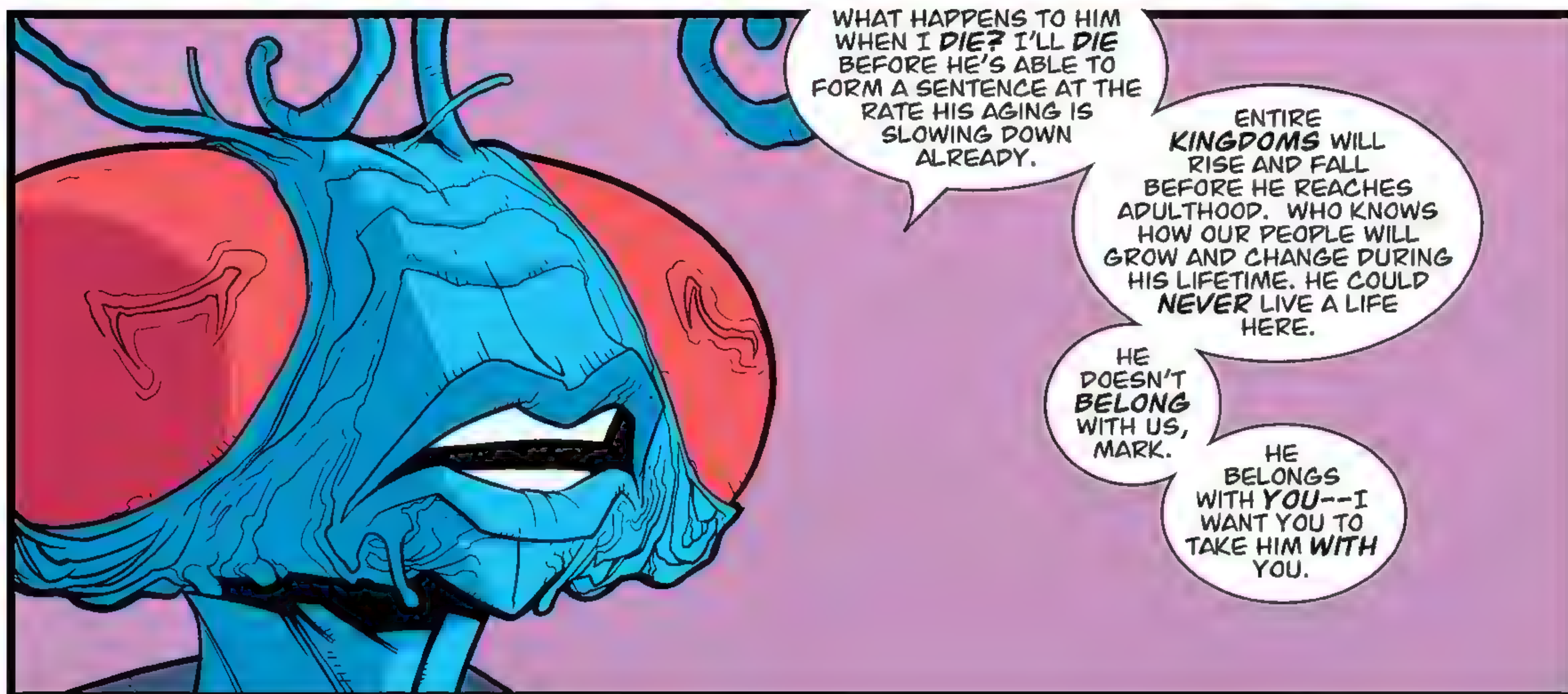
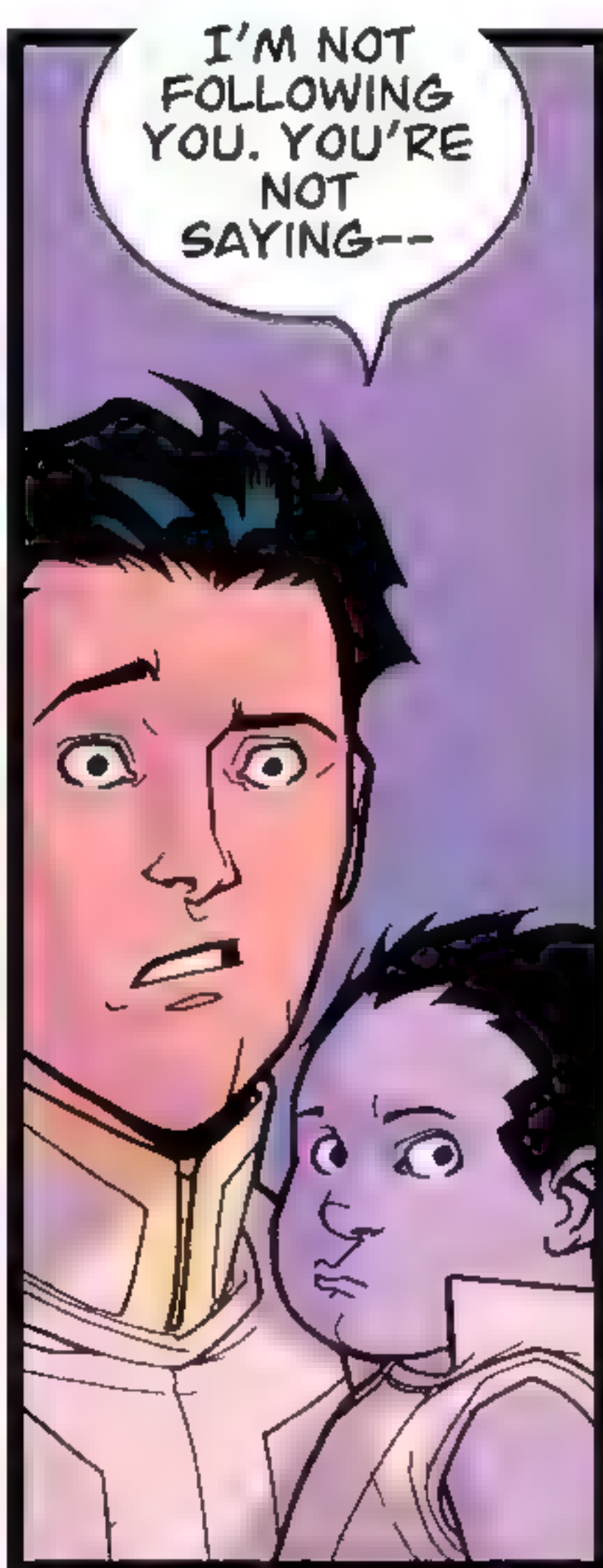
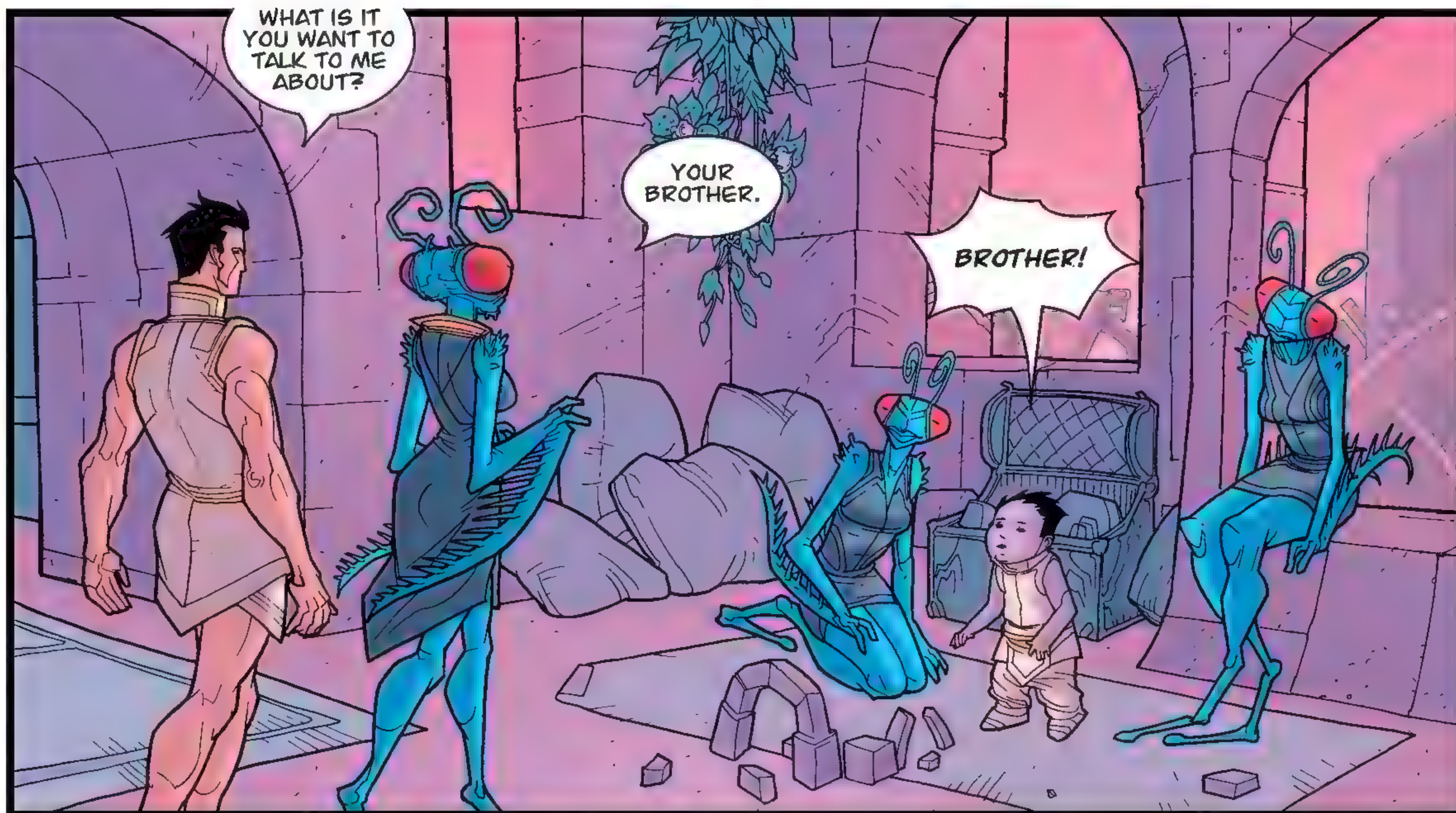


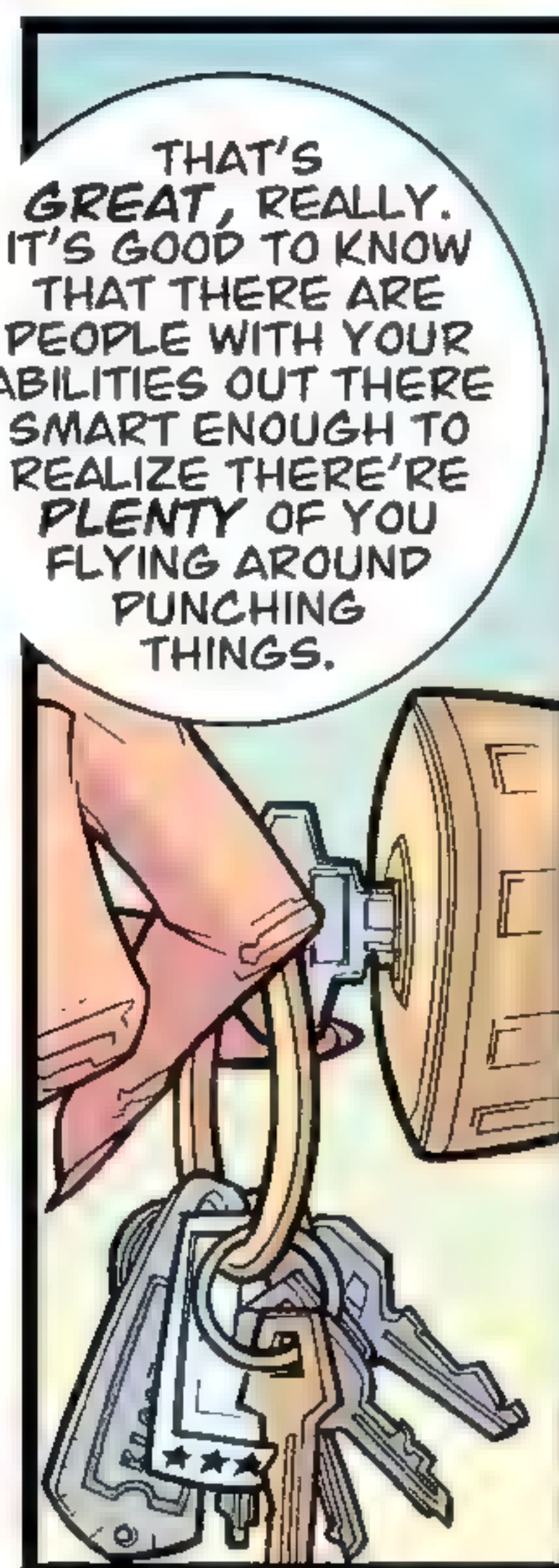
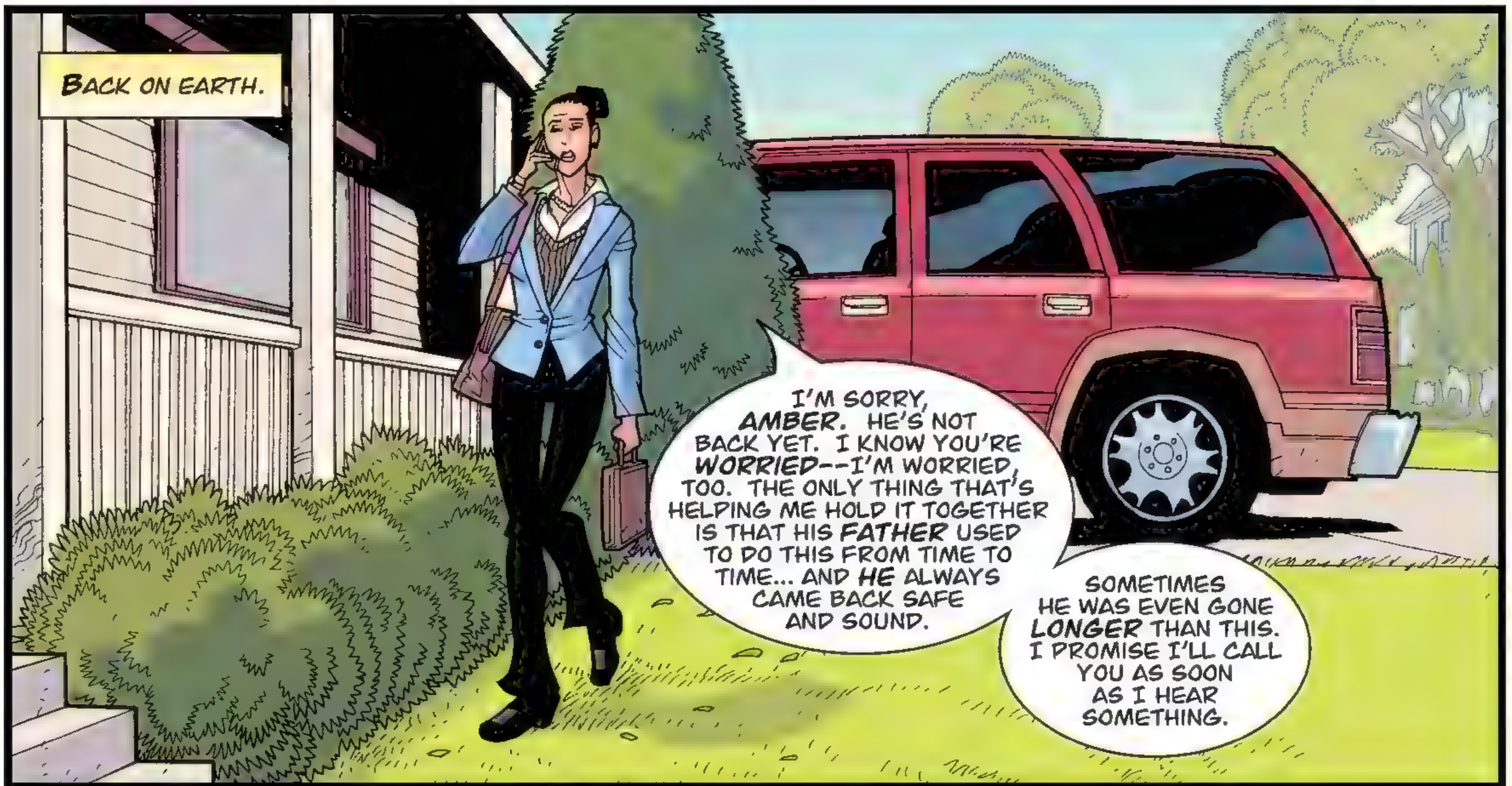
I CAN'T ACCEPT THAT--DON'T SAY THAT. HE'S NOT DEAD. HE'LL GET OUT OF IT SOME WAY.

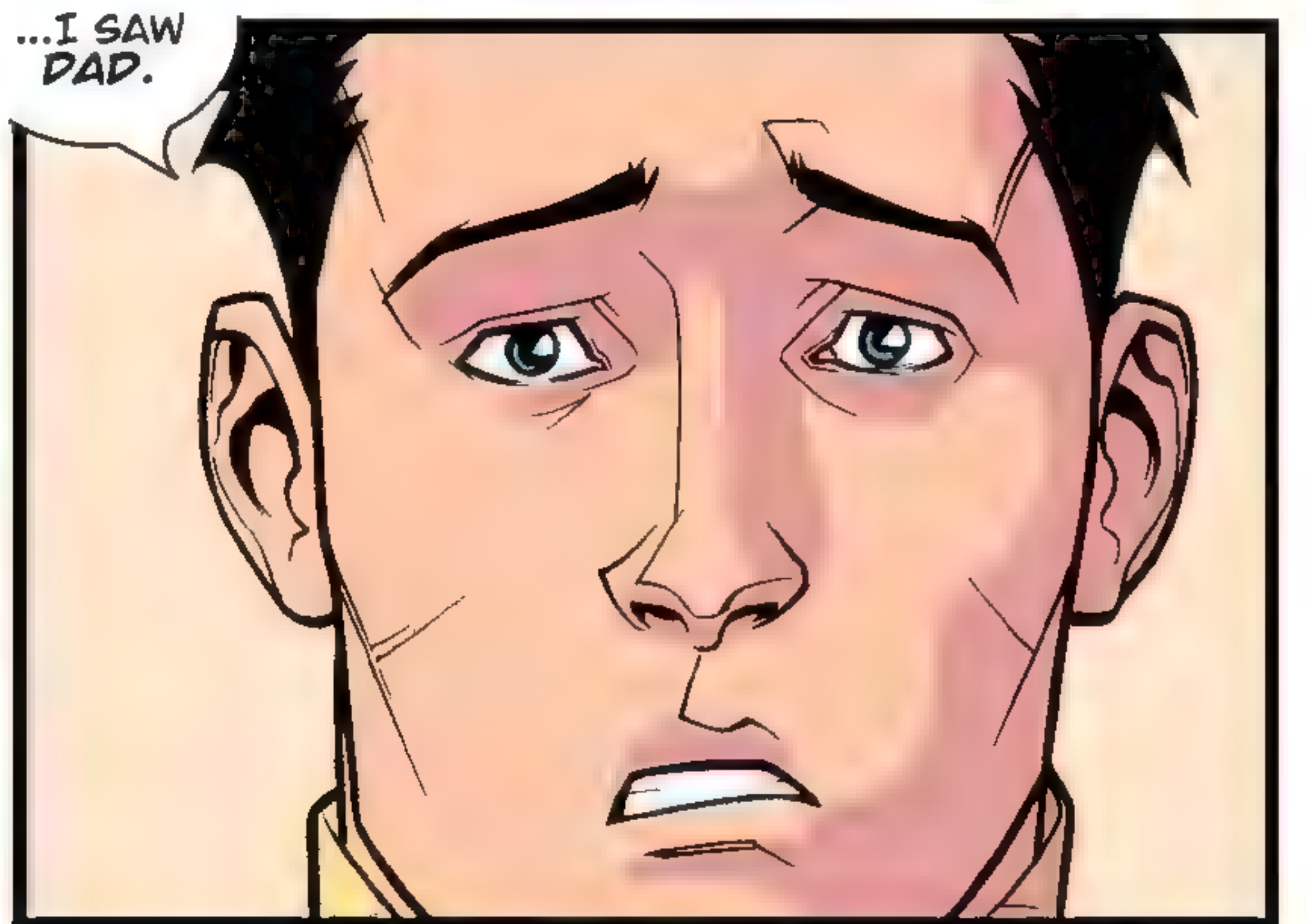
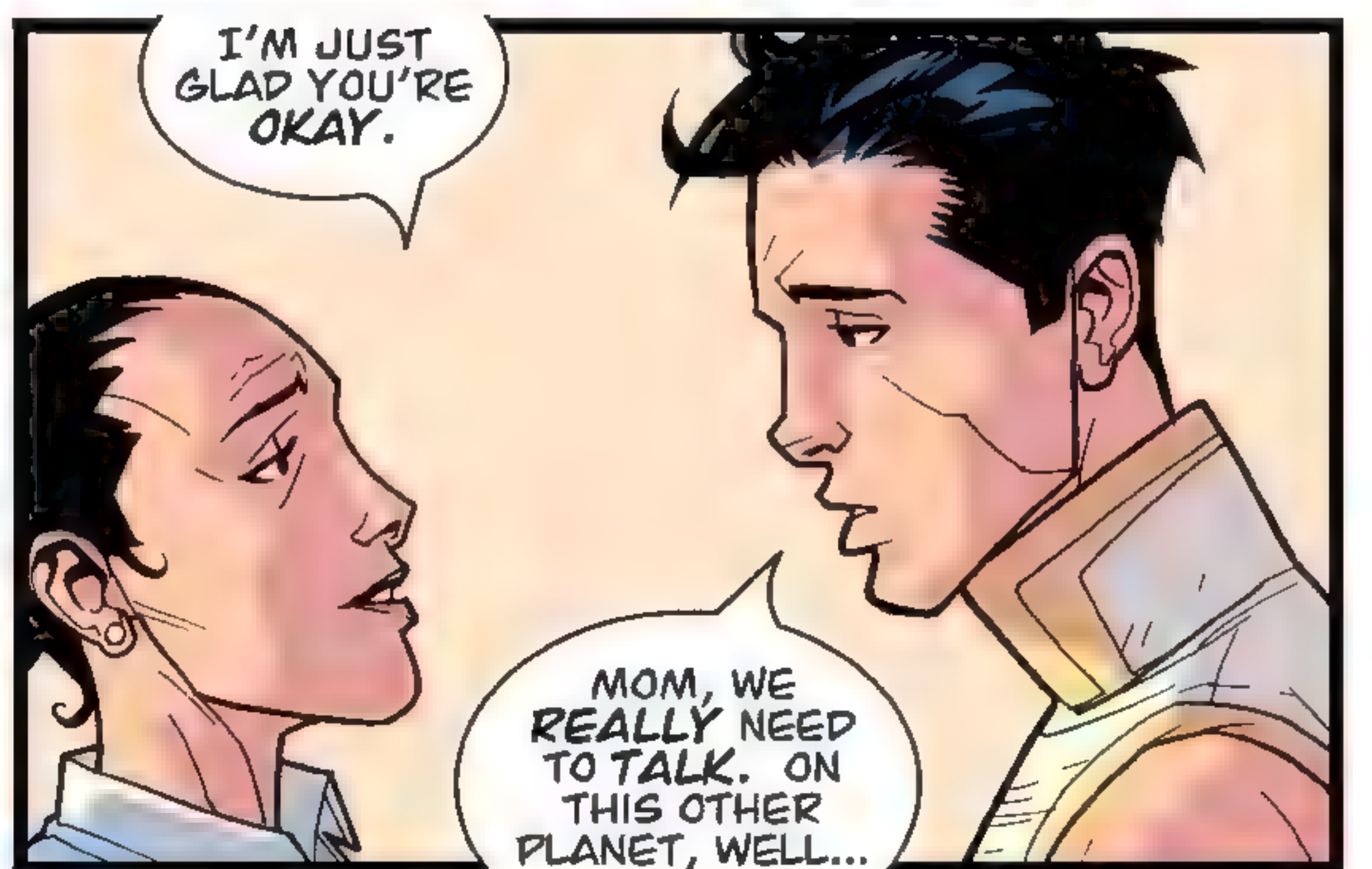
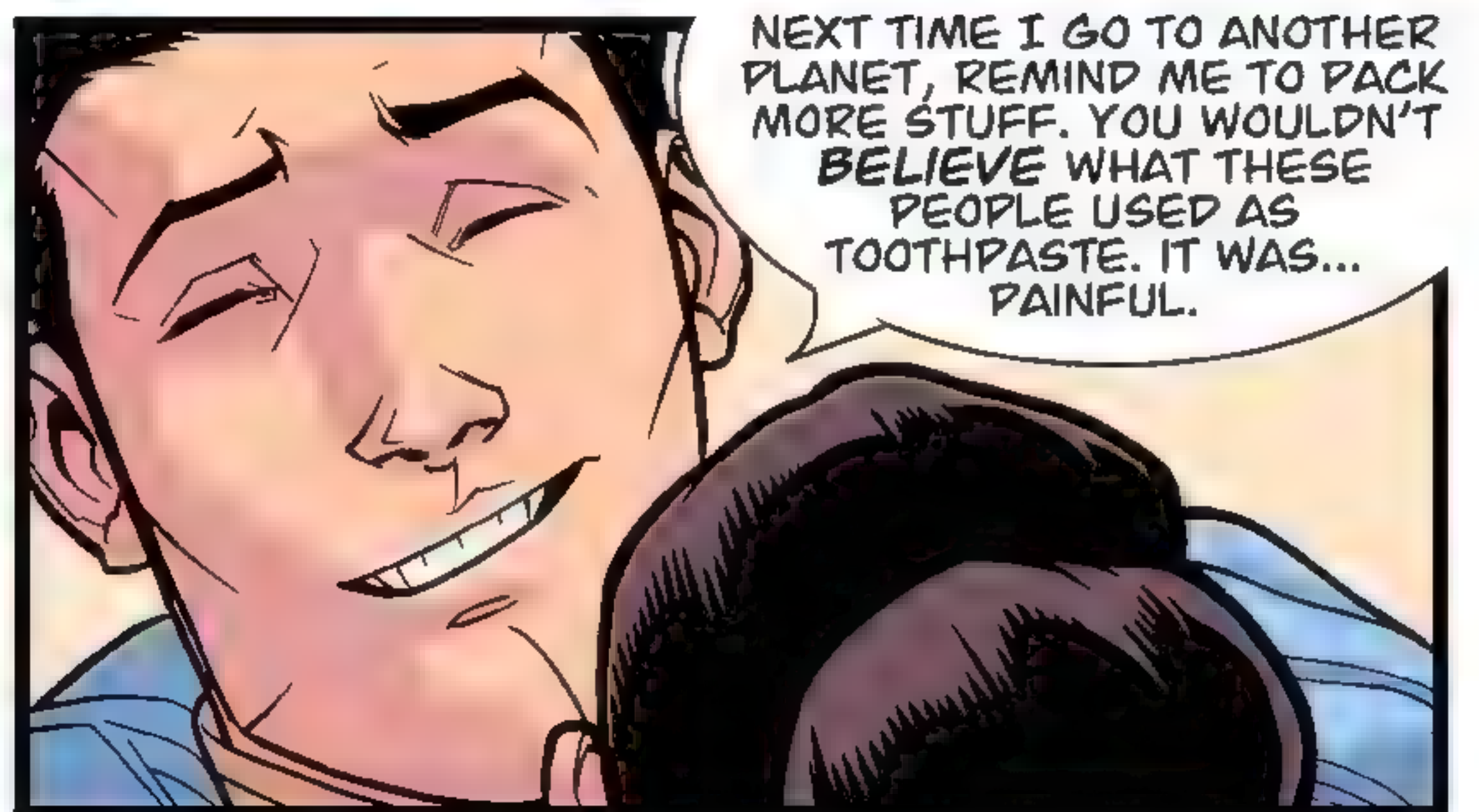
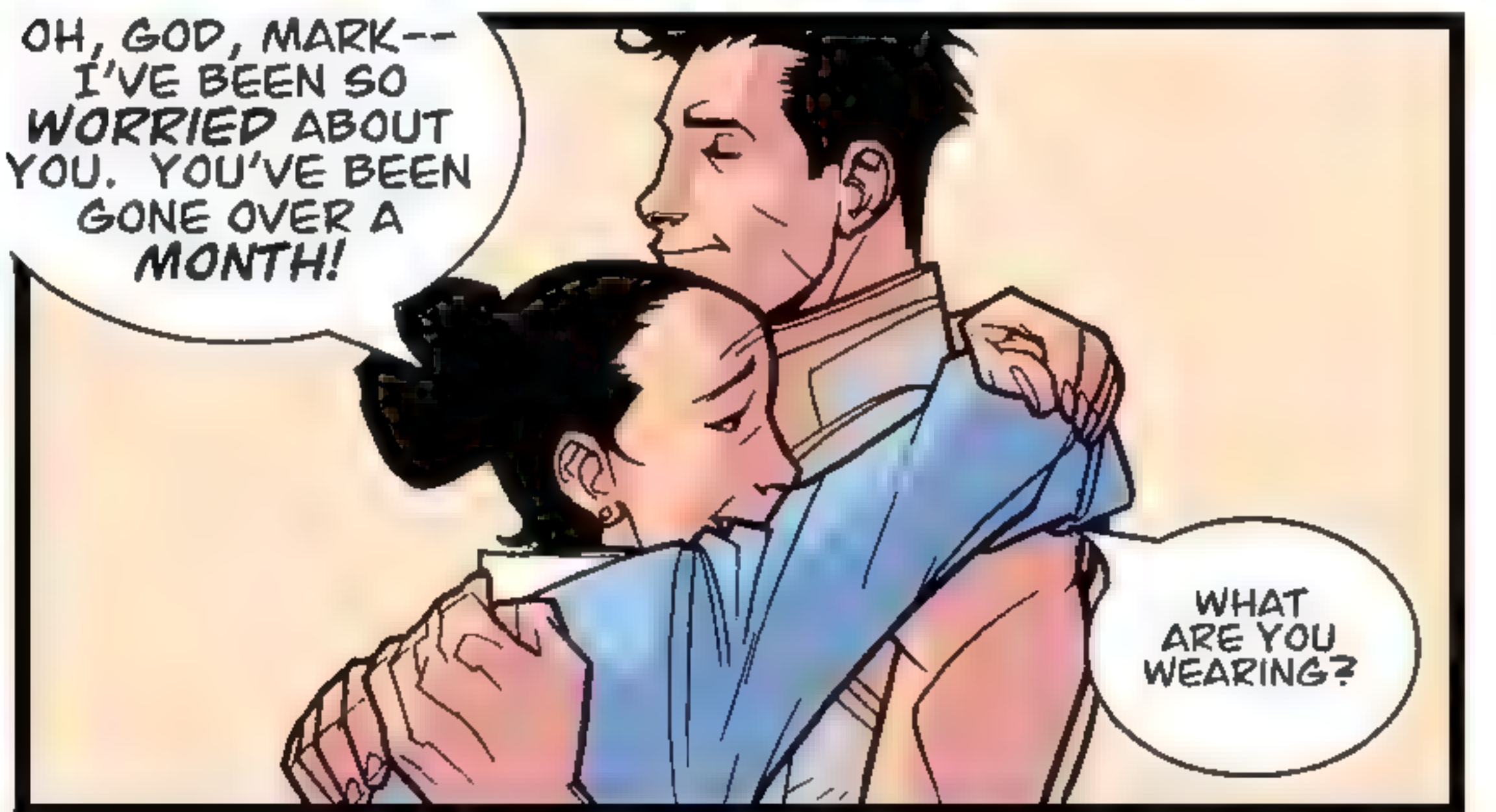
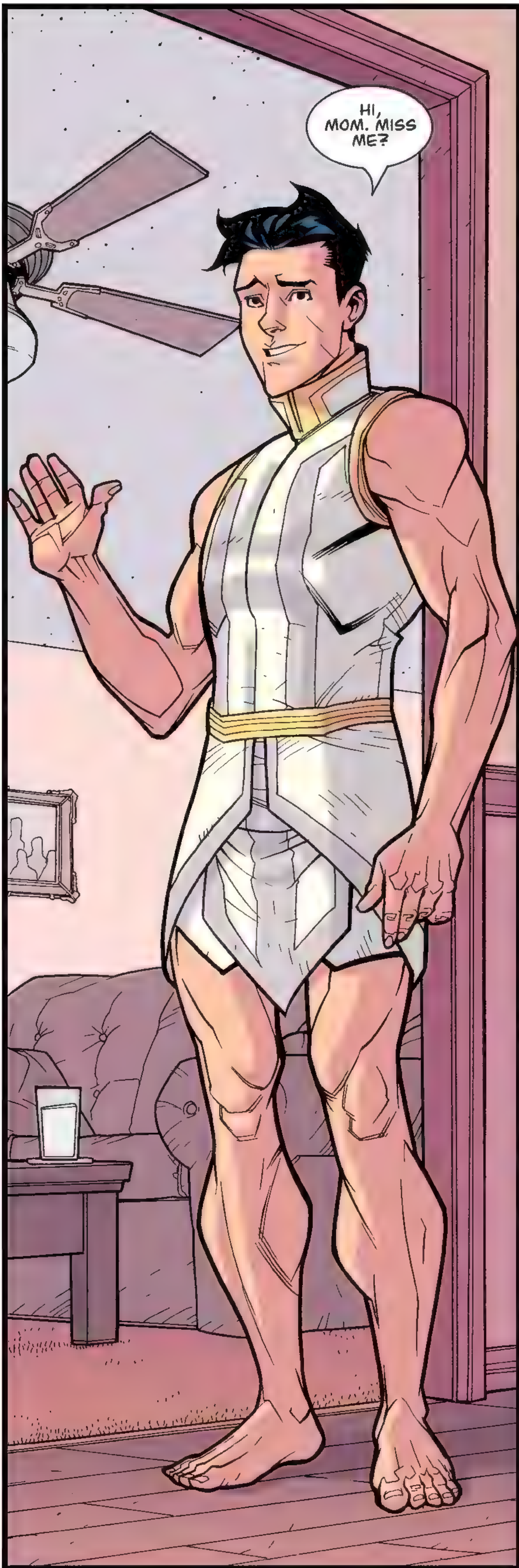


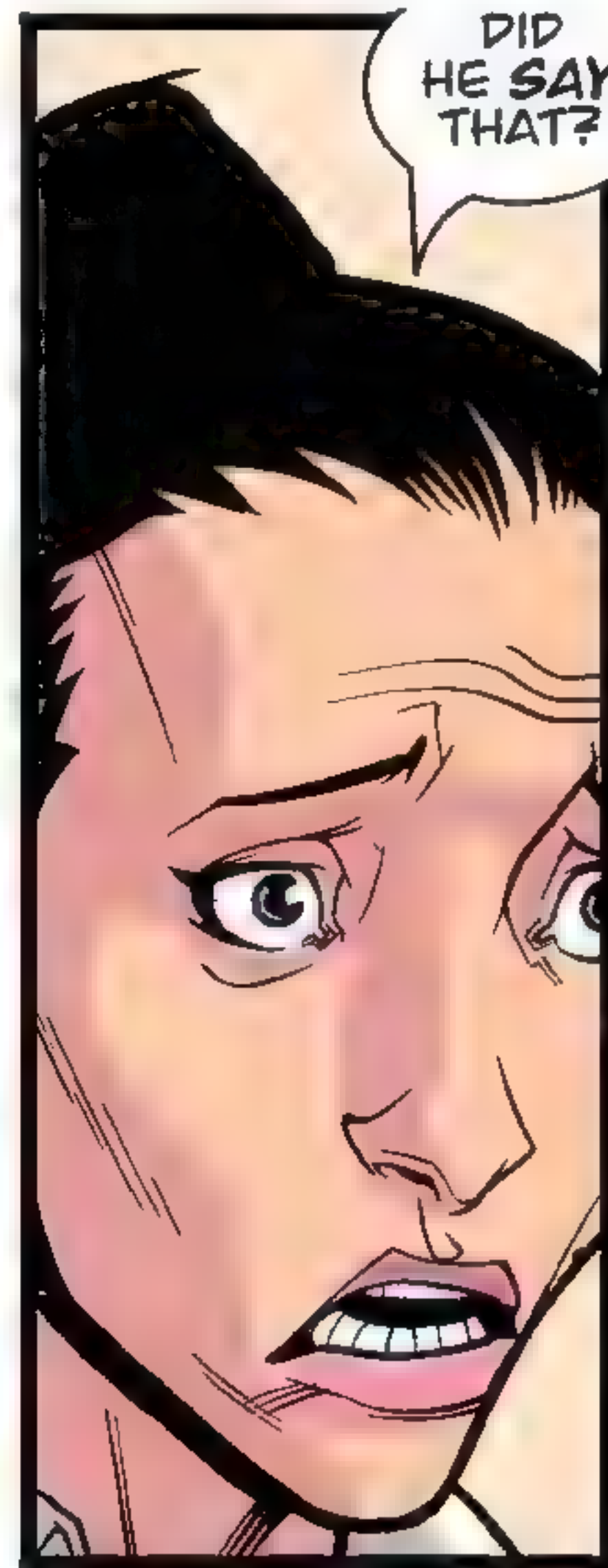
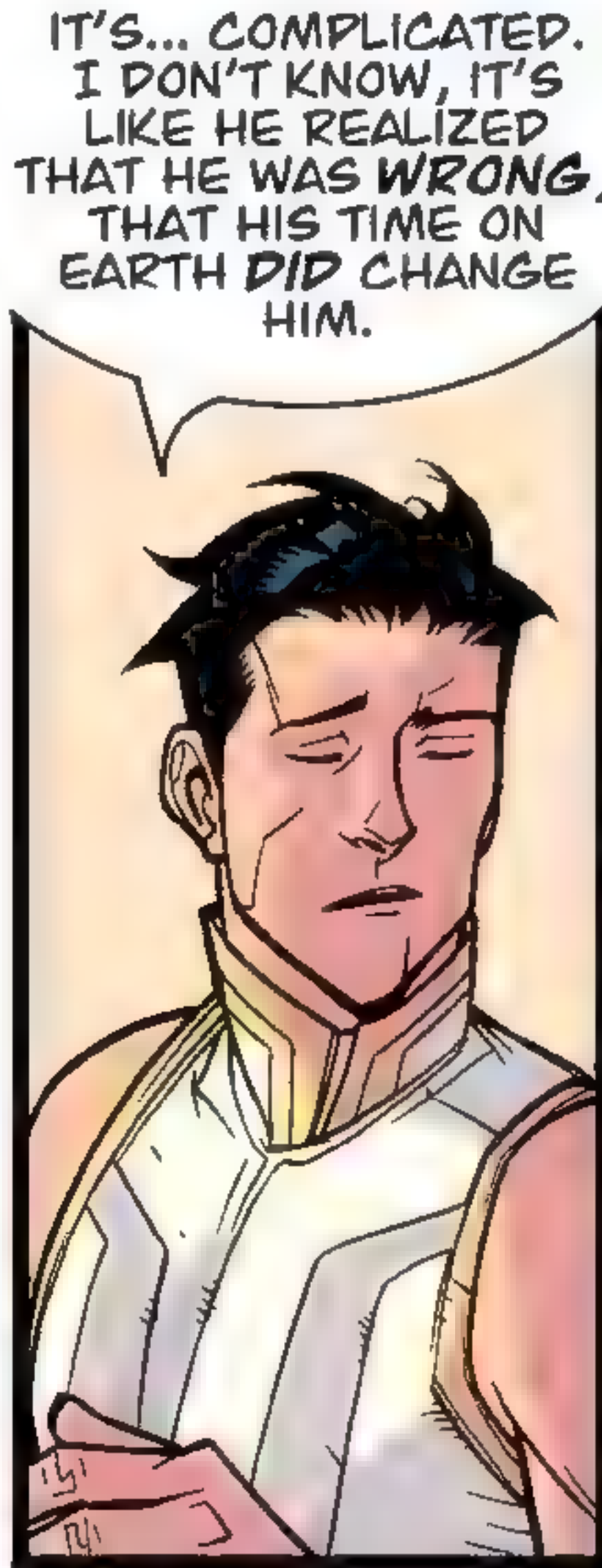
I HOPE YOU ARE RIGHT. MORE THAN YOU COULD EVER KNOW.

NOW COME-- THERE IS MUCH WE MUST DISCUSS BEFORE YOUR DEPARTURE.









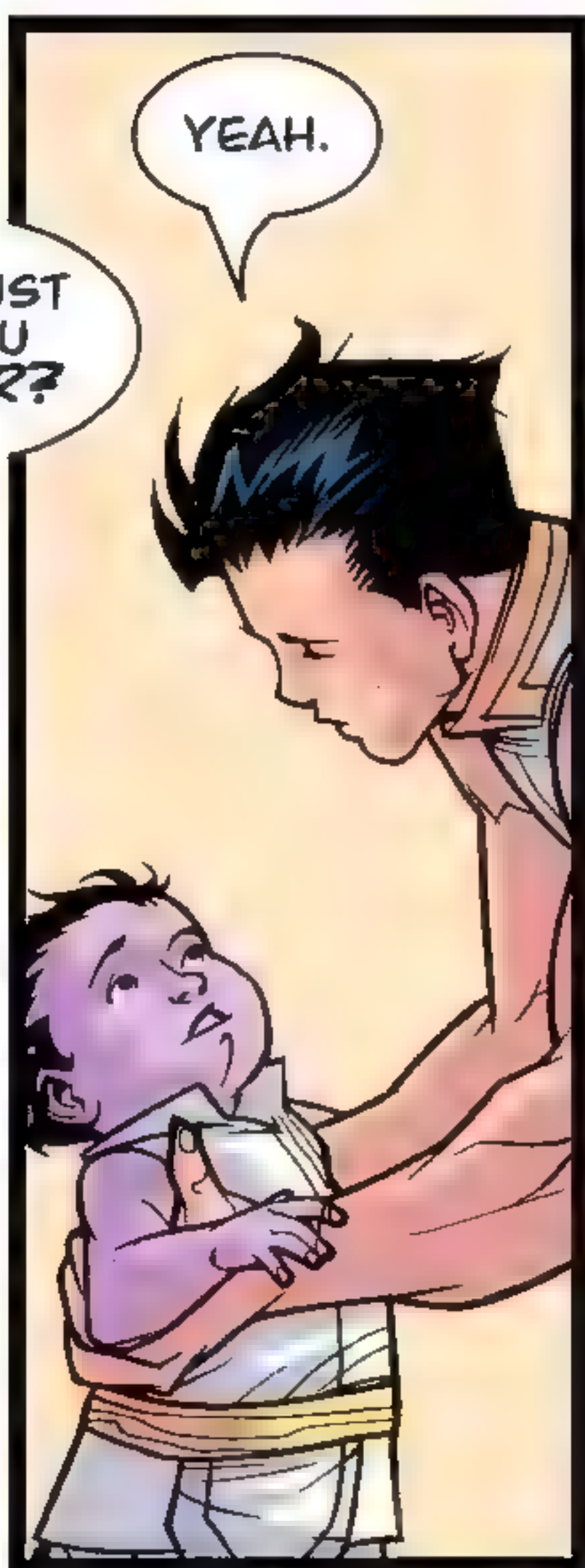




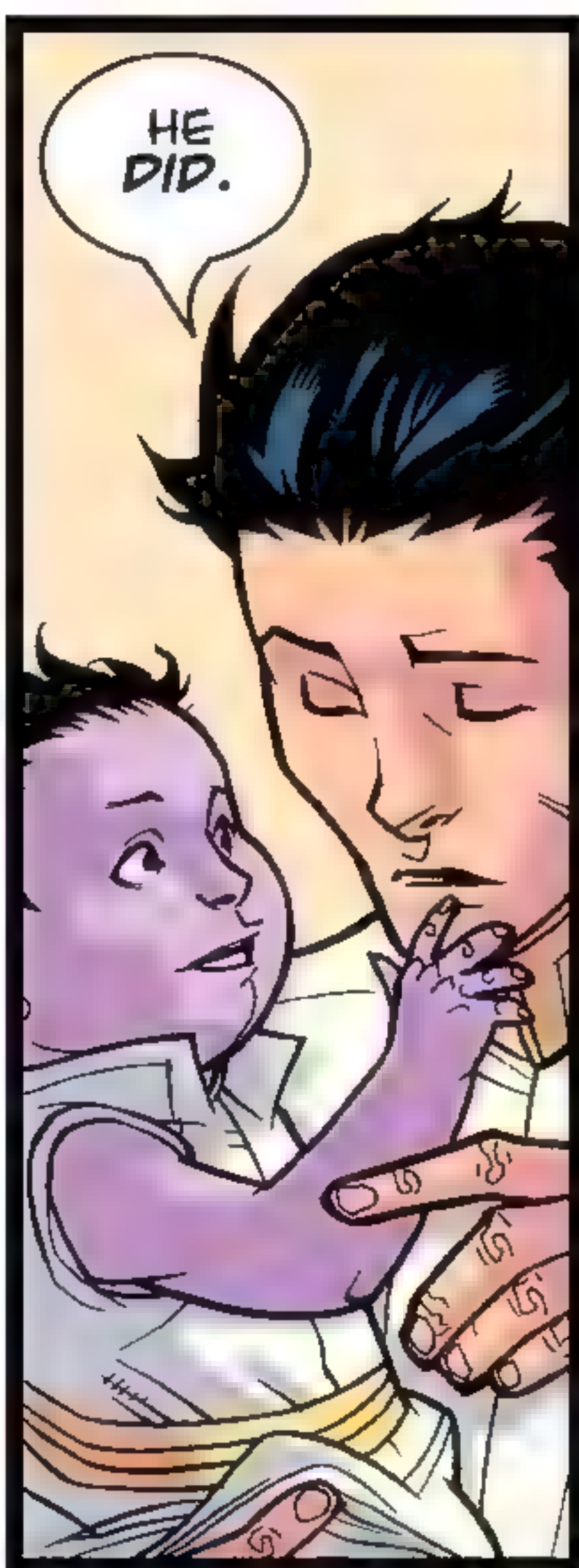
WHO--?

WHERE DID HE--?

DID HE JUST CALL YOU BROTHER?



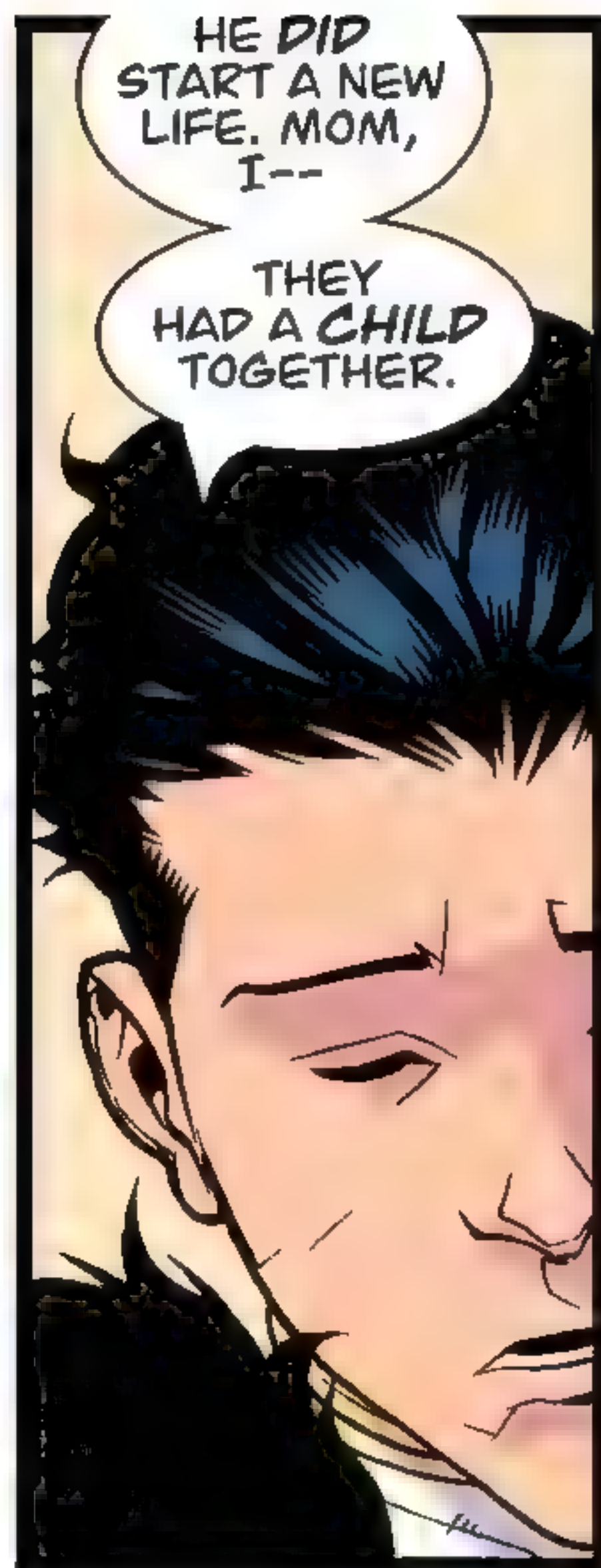
YEAH.



HE DID.

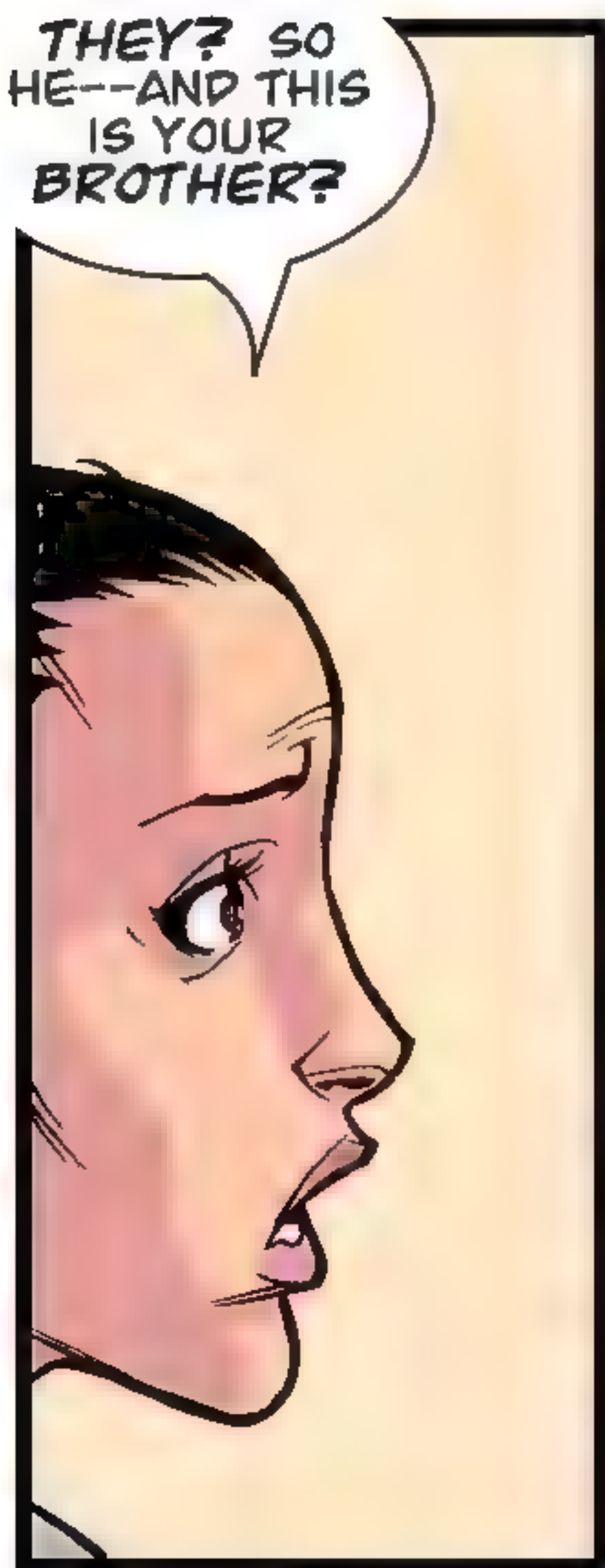


WHAT ARE YOU TELLING ME? IS HE--?

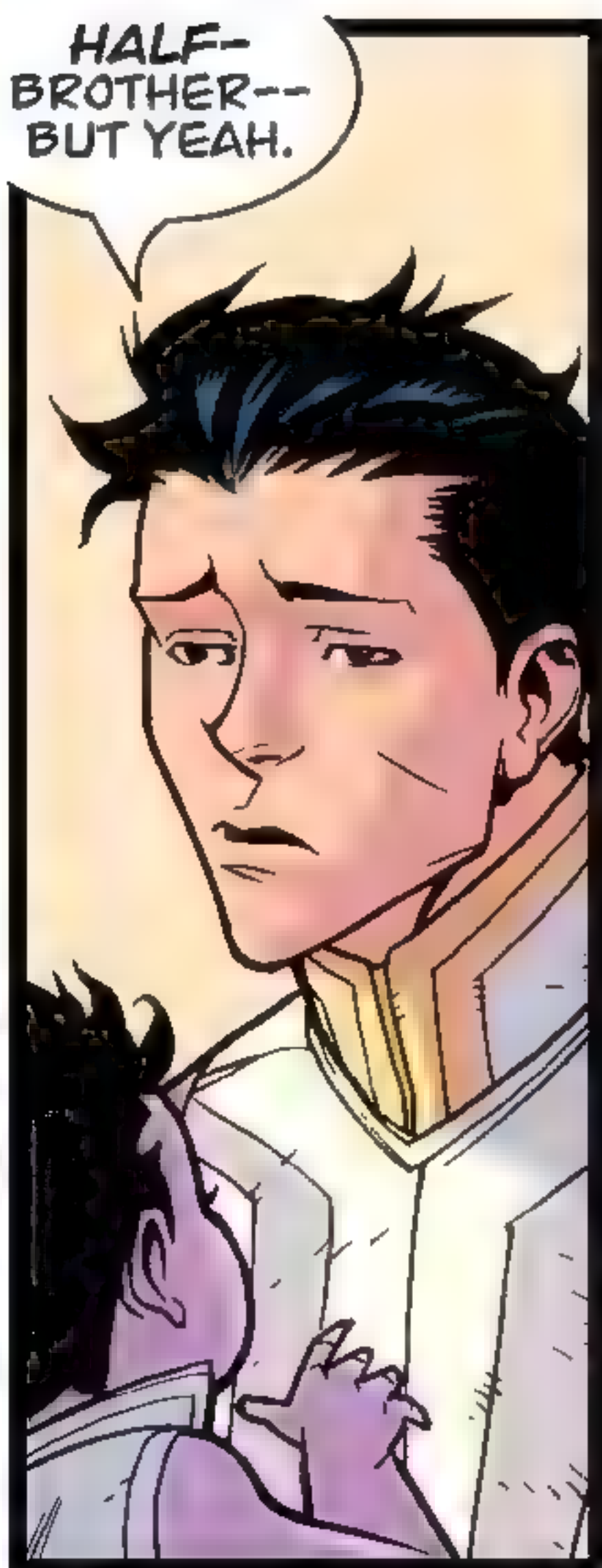


HE DID START A NEW LIFE. MOM, I--

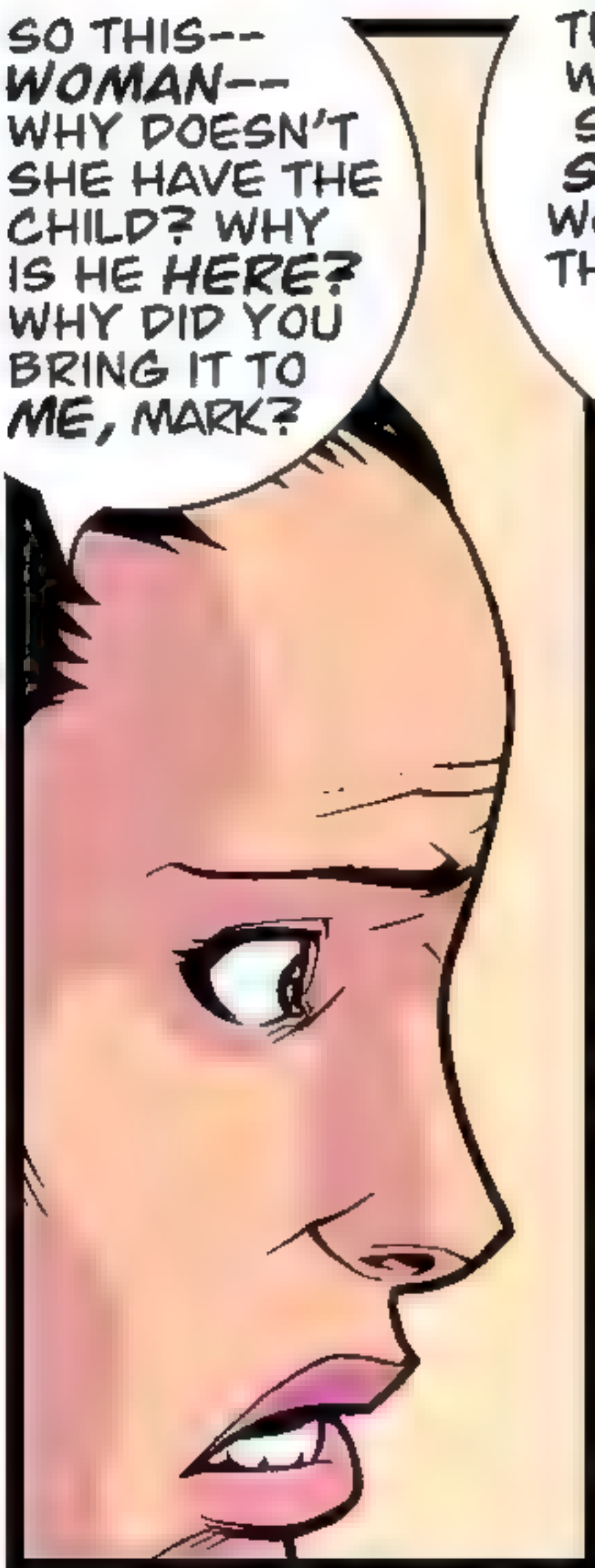
THEY HAD A CHILD TOGETHER.



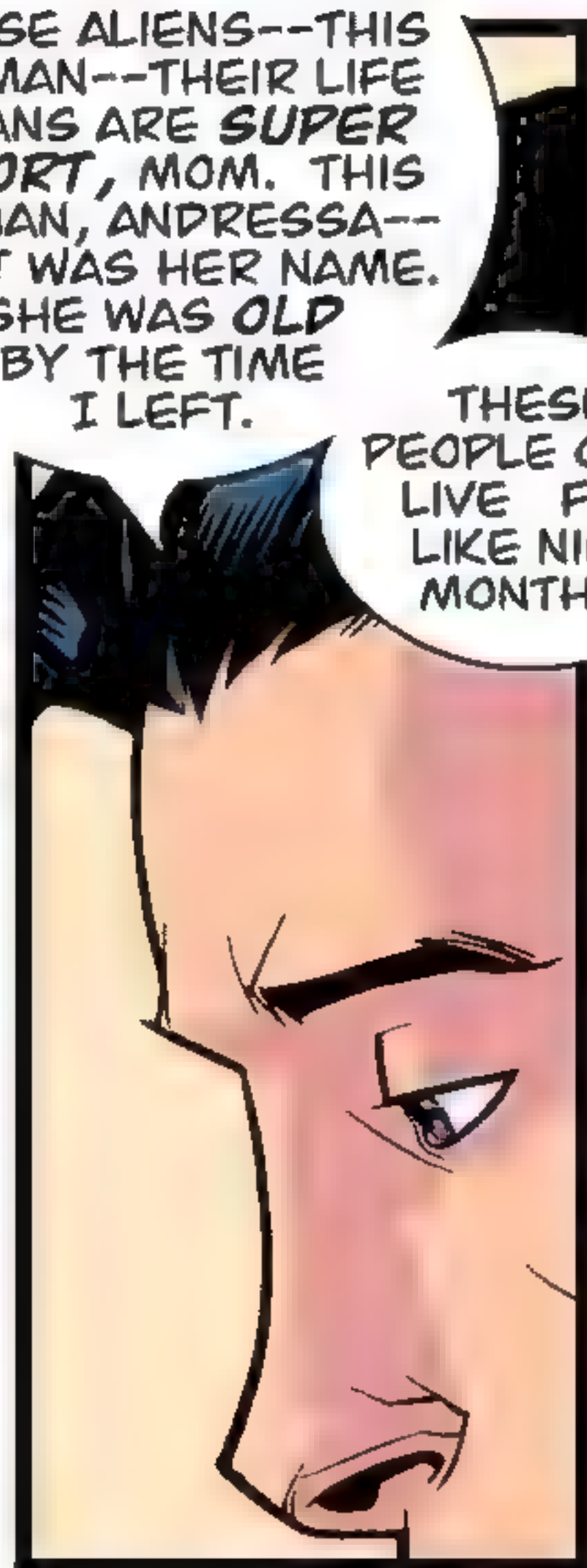
THEY? SO HE--AND THIS IS YOUR BROTHER?



HALF-BROTHER-- BUT YEAH.

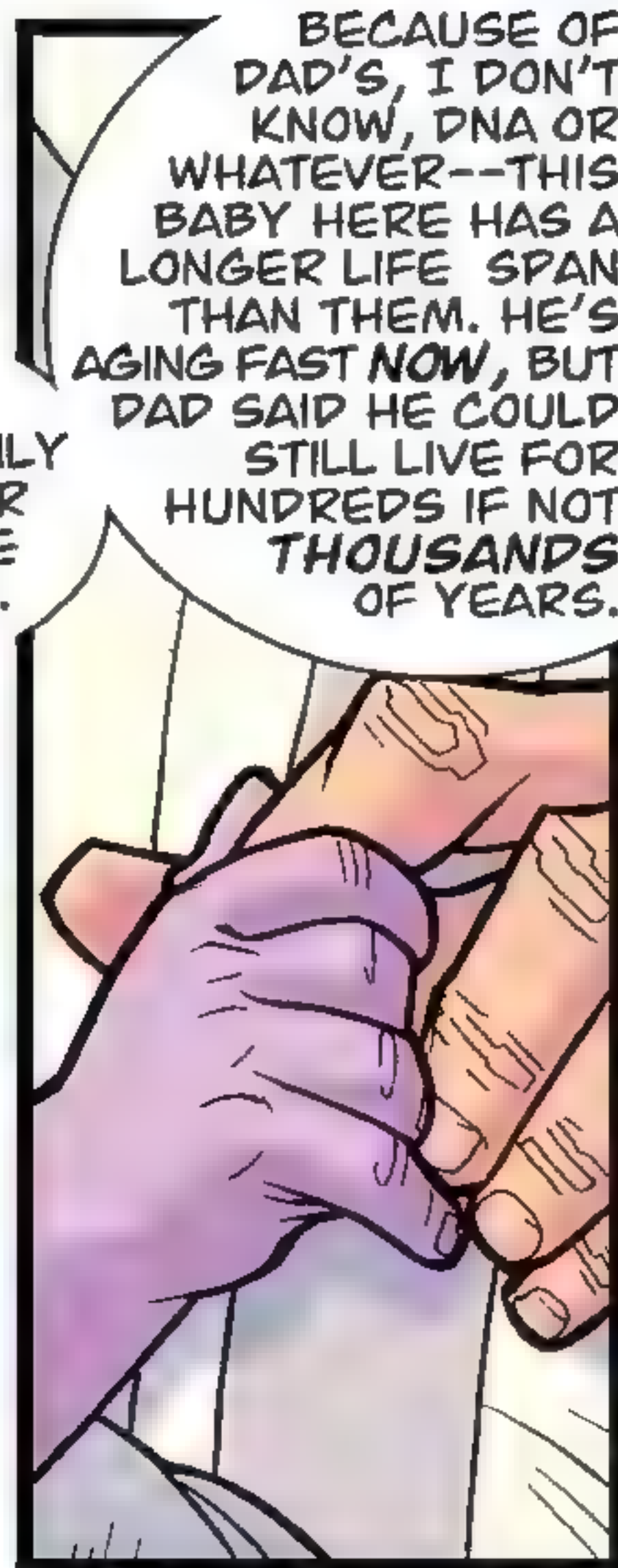


SO THIS-- WOMAN-- WHY DOESN'T SHE HAVE THE CHILD? WHY IS HE HERE? WHY DID YOU BRING IT TO ME, MARK?



THESE ALIENS--THEIR LIFE SPANS ARE **SUPER SHORT**, MOM. THIS WOMAN, ANDRESSA-- THAT WAS HER NAME. SHE WAS **OLD** BY THE TIME I LEFT.

THESE PEOPLE ONLY LIVE FOR LIKE NINE MONTHS.



BECAUSE OF DAD'S, I DON'T KNOW, DNA OR WHATEVER--THIS BABY HERE HAS A LONGER LIFE SPAN THAN THEM. HE'S AGING FAST NOW, BUT DAD SAID HE COULD STILL LIVE FOR HUNDREDS IF NOT THOUSANDS OF YEARS.



HE'D OUTLIVE EVERYONE THERE. THAT'S NO WAY FOR HIM TO BE RAISED. HE COULDN'T STAY THERE.



HE'S ABOUT TWO MONTHS OLD RIGHT NOW, AND HE LOOKS LIKE HE'S ALMOST TWO YEARS OLD. HIS AGING IS ALREADY STARTING TO SLOW DOWN, BUT HE COULD BE AN ADULT IN LIKE FIVE YEARS.



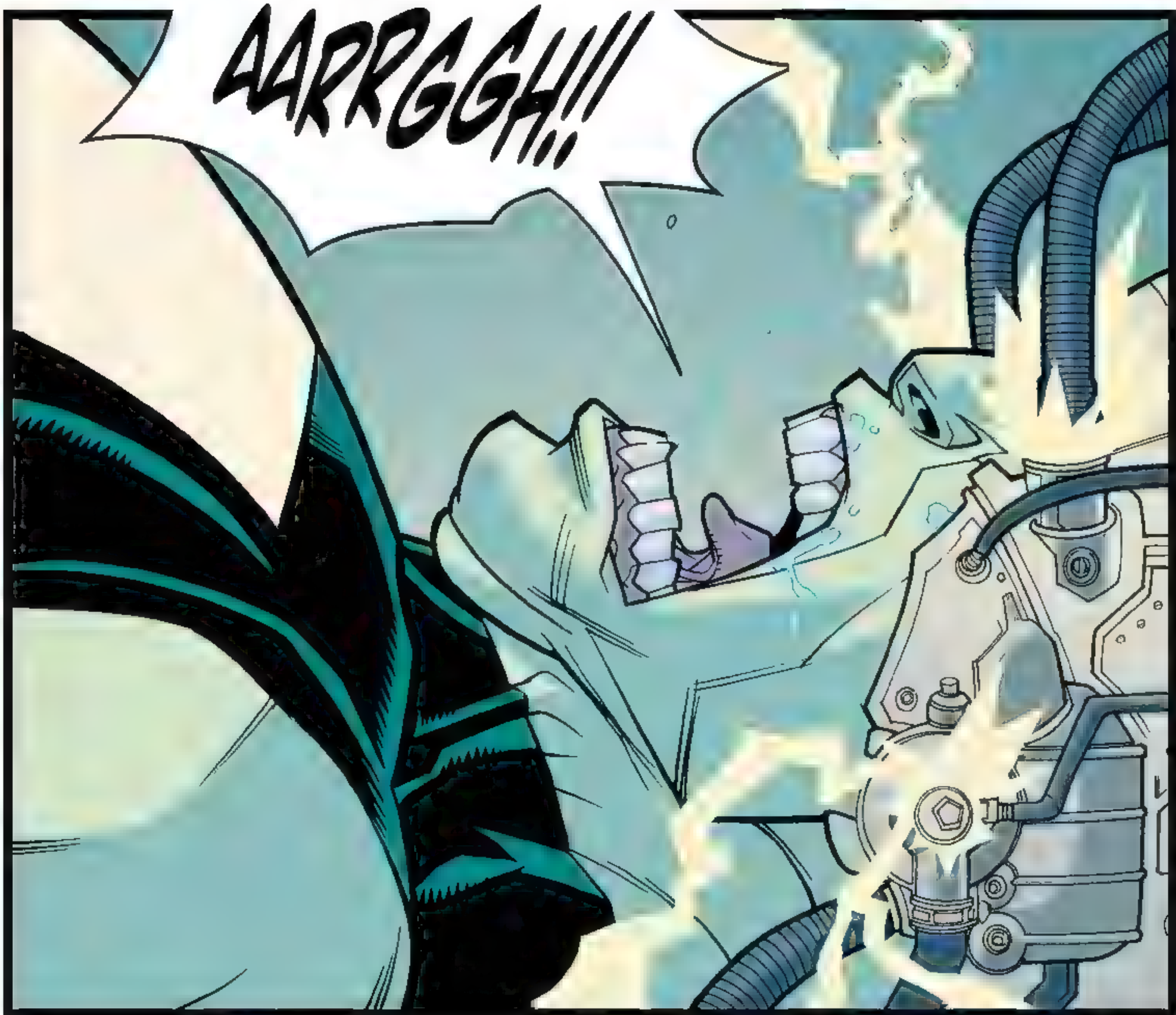
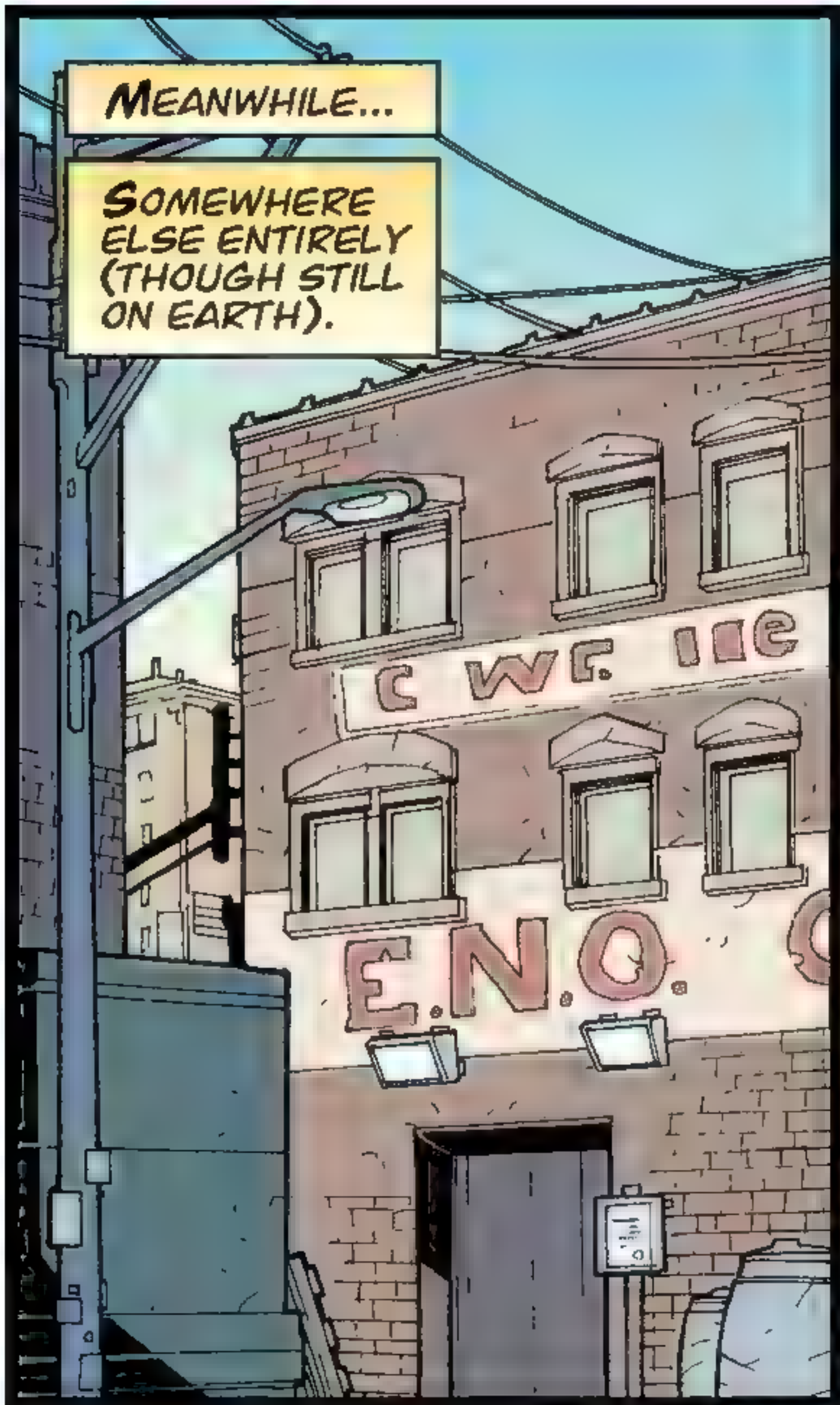
I KNOW IT'S HARD... I KNOW IT'S WEIRD... BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO DO WITH HIM. I WAS KIND OF HOPING YOU COULD TAKE CARE OF HIM.

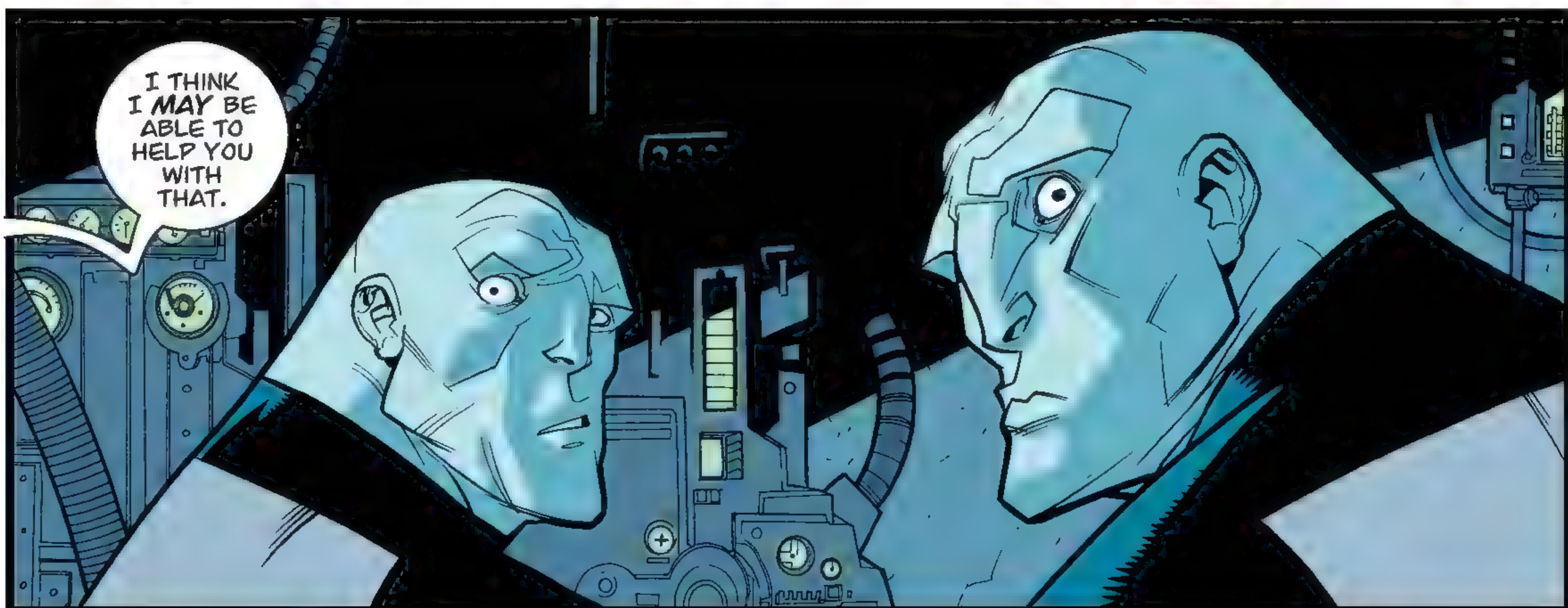
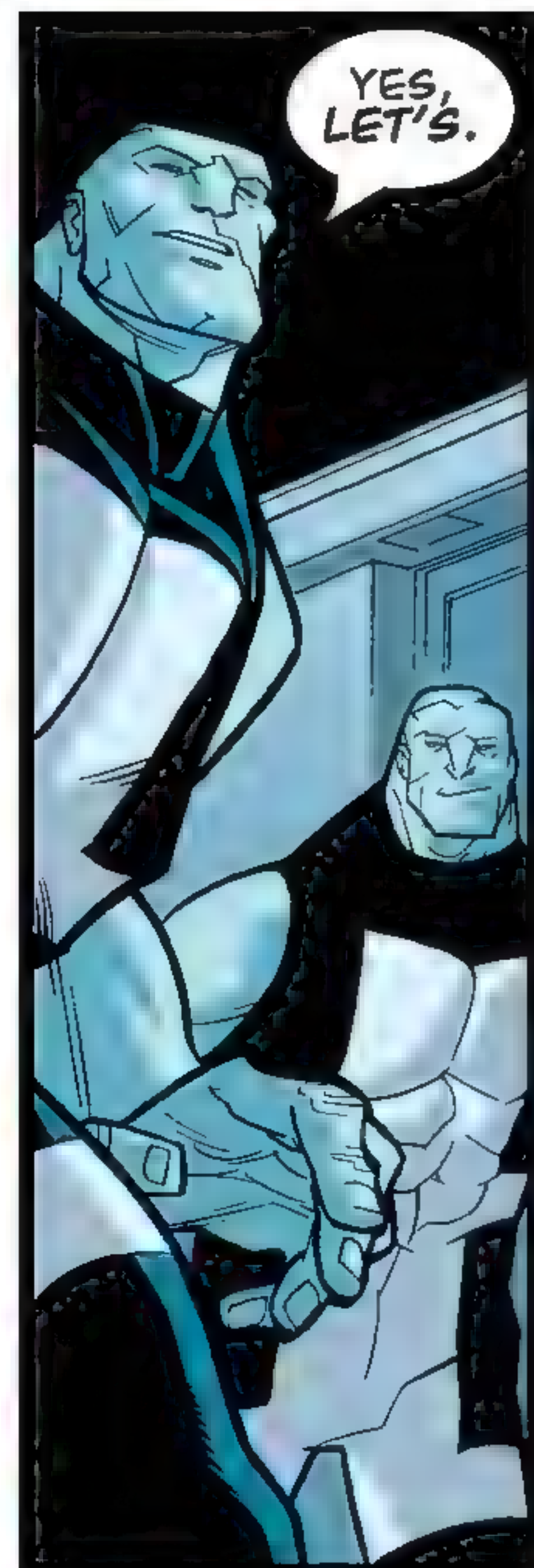
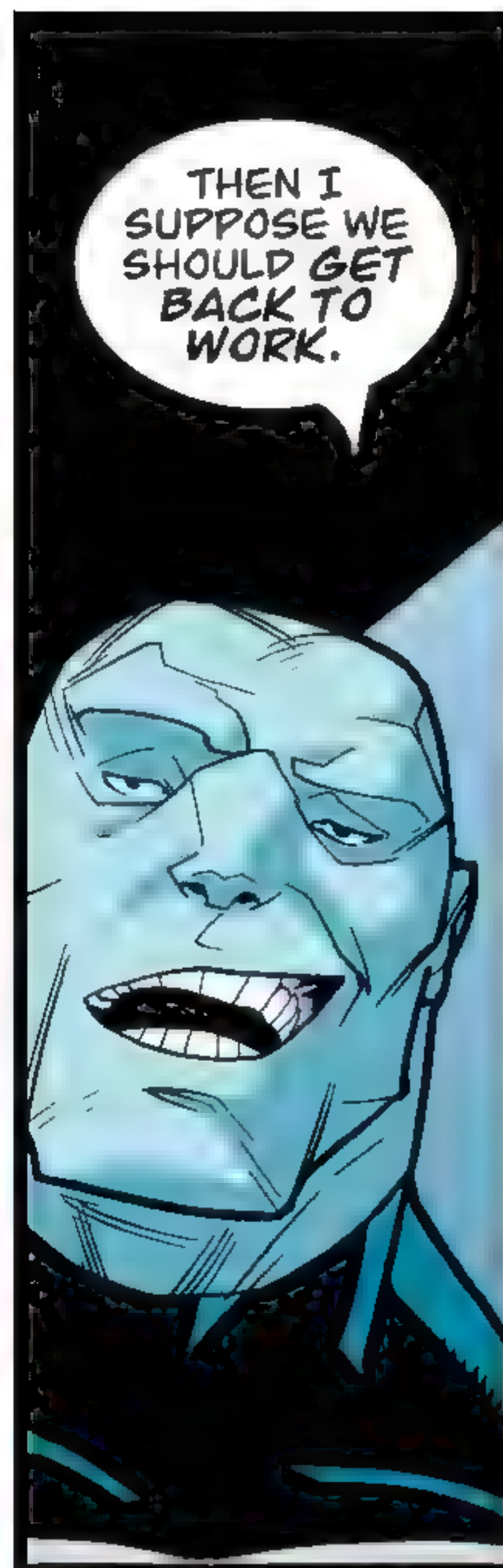
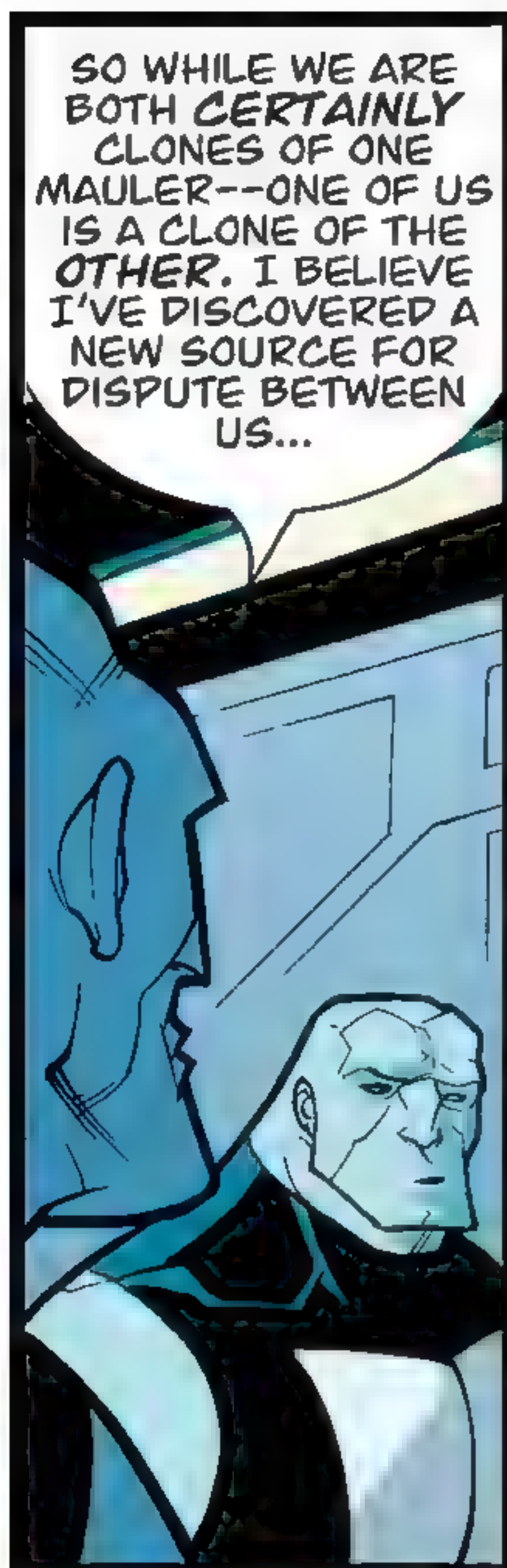


MARK?

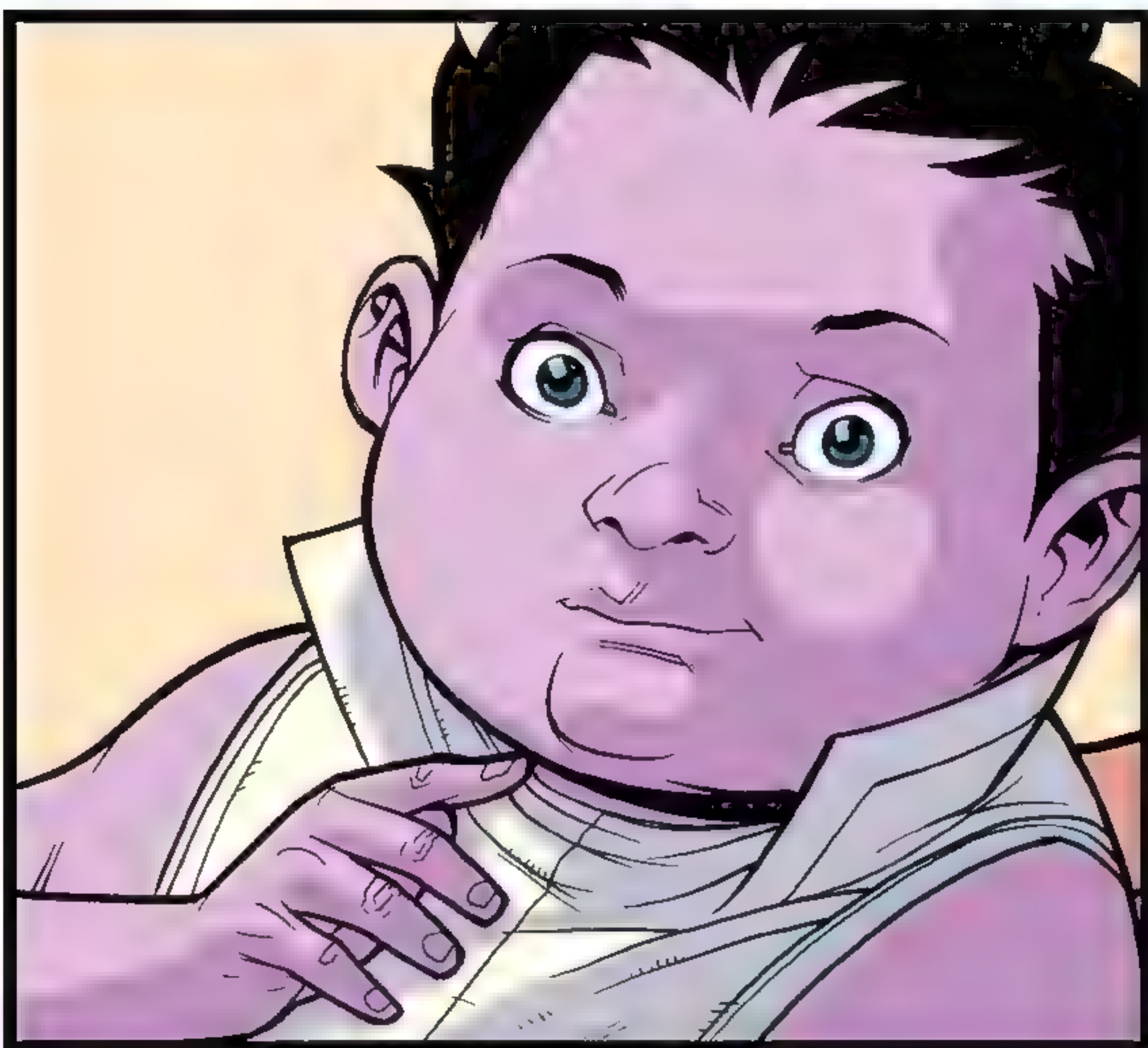
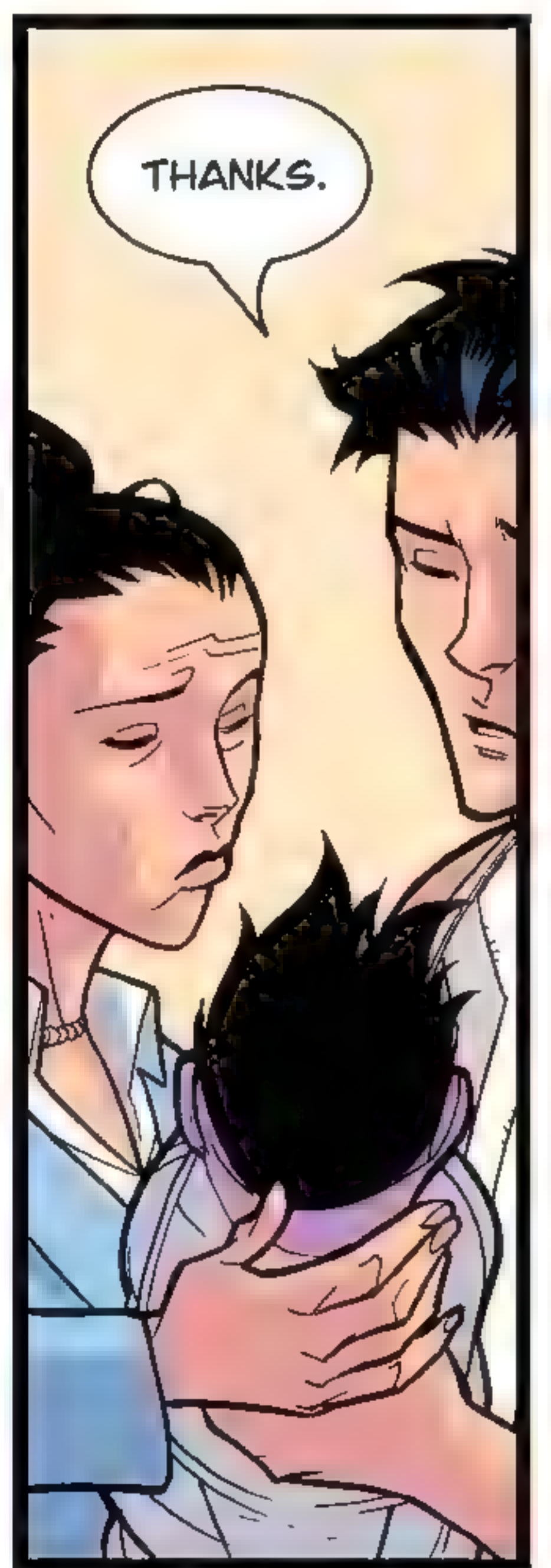
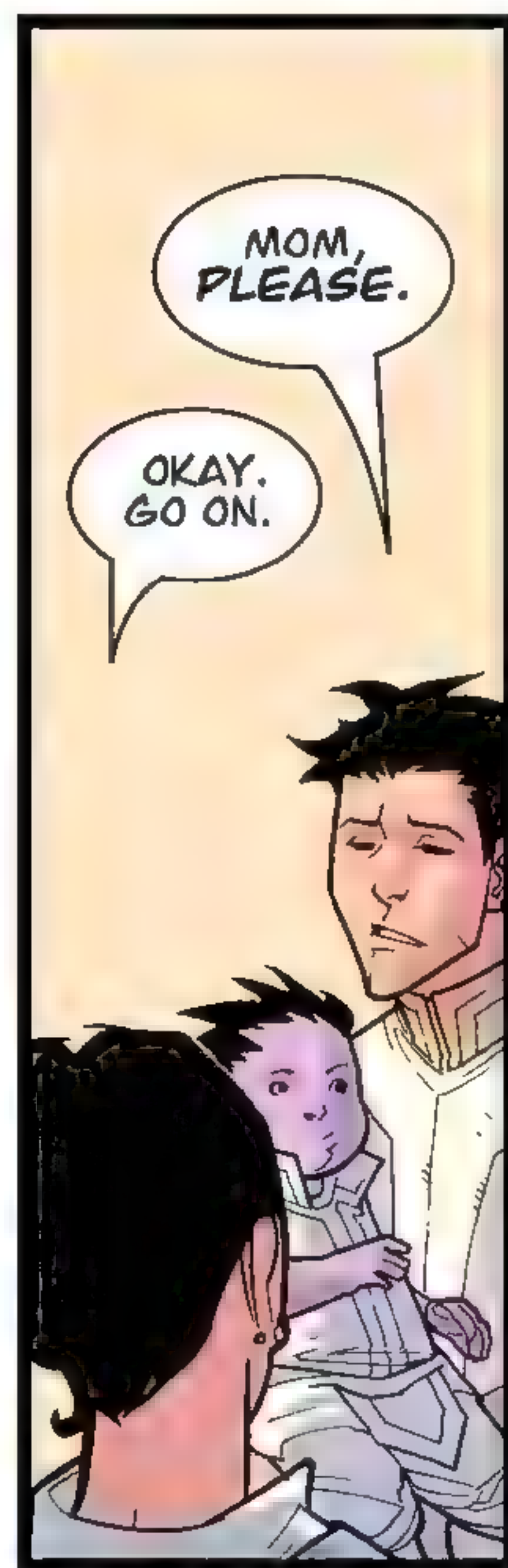
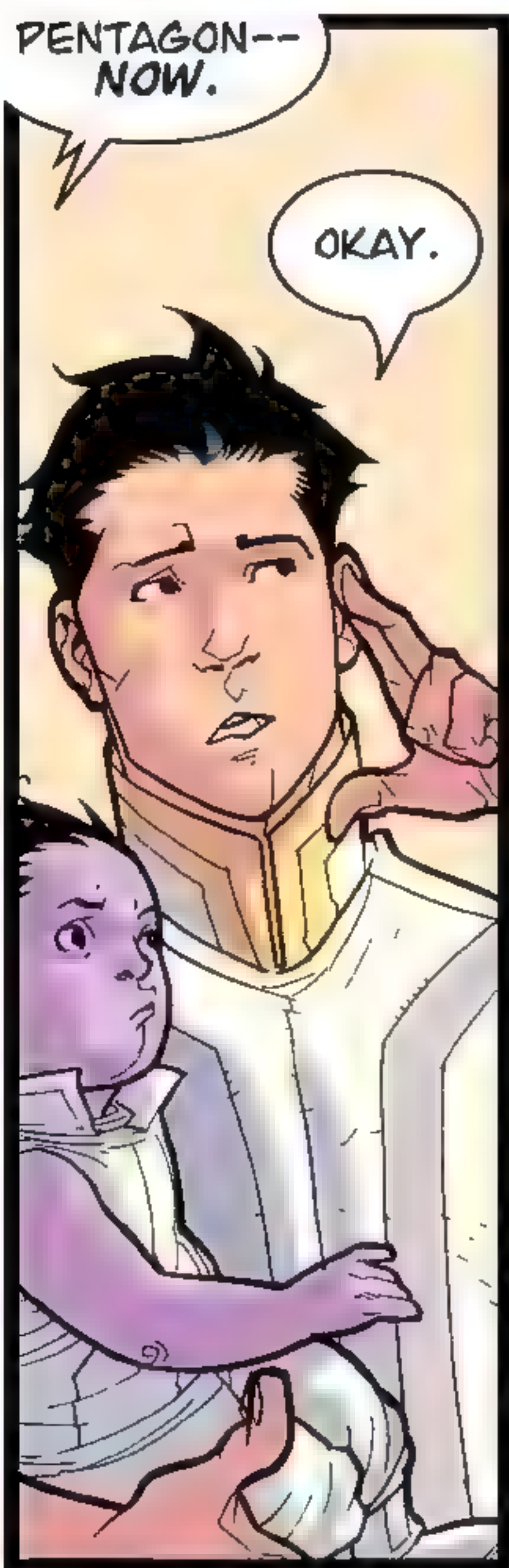


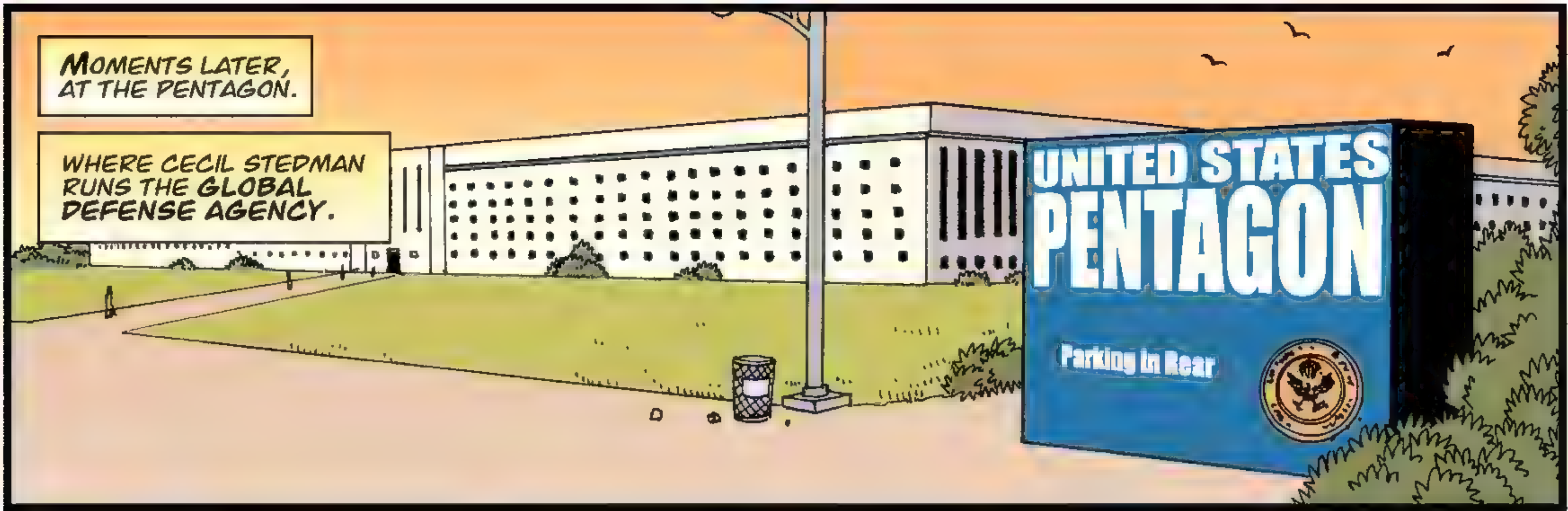
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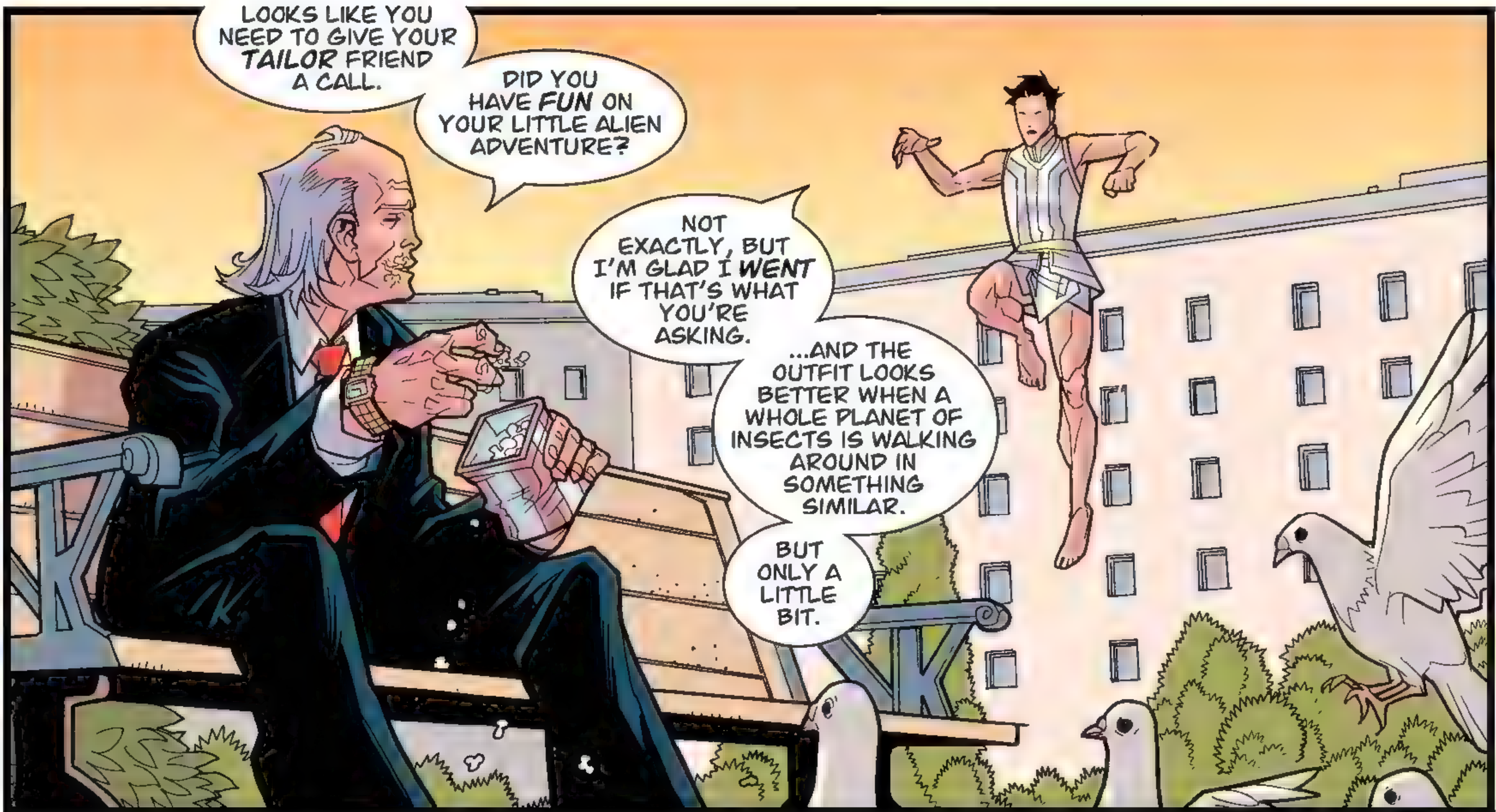






MOMENTS LATER,
AT THE PENTAGON.

WHERE CECIL STEDMAN
RUNS THE GLOBAL
DEFENSE AGENCY.



LOOKS LIKE YOU
NEED TO GIVE YOUR
TAILOR FRIEND
A CALL.

DID YOU
HAVE FUN ON
YOUR LITTLE ALIEN
ADVENTURE?

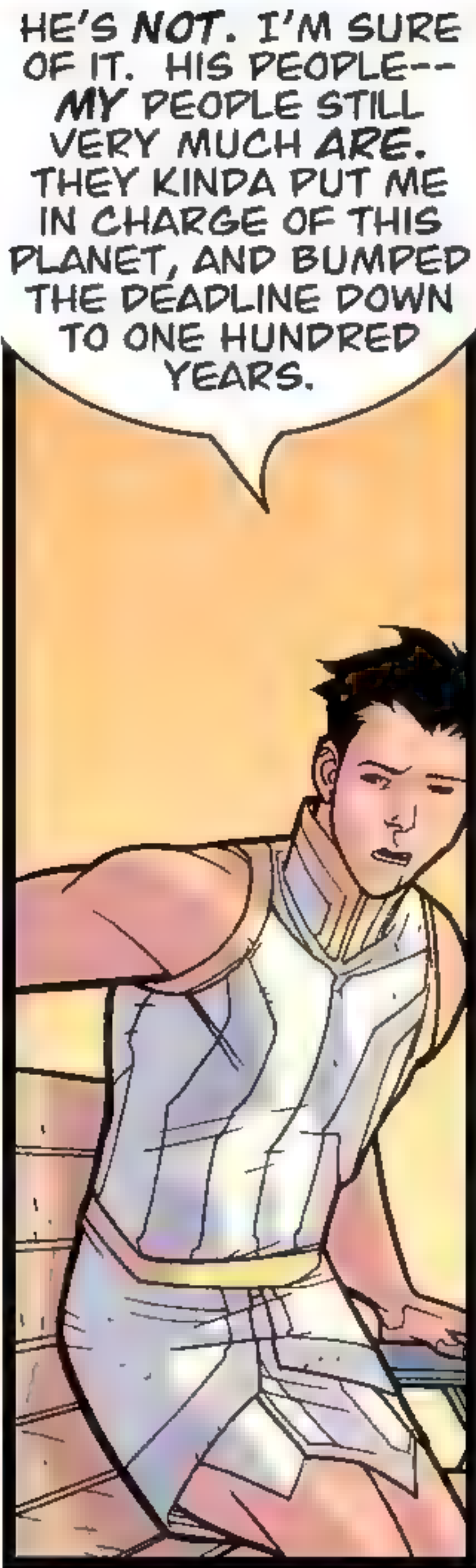
NOT
EXACTLY, BUT
I'M GLAD I WENT
IF THAT'S WHAT
YOU'RE
ASKING.

...AND THE
OUTFIT LOOKS
BETTER WHEN A
WHOLE PLANET OF
INSECTS IS WALKING
AROUND IN
SOMETHING
SIMILAR.

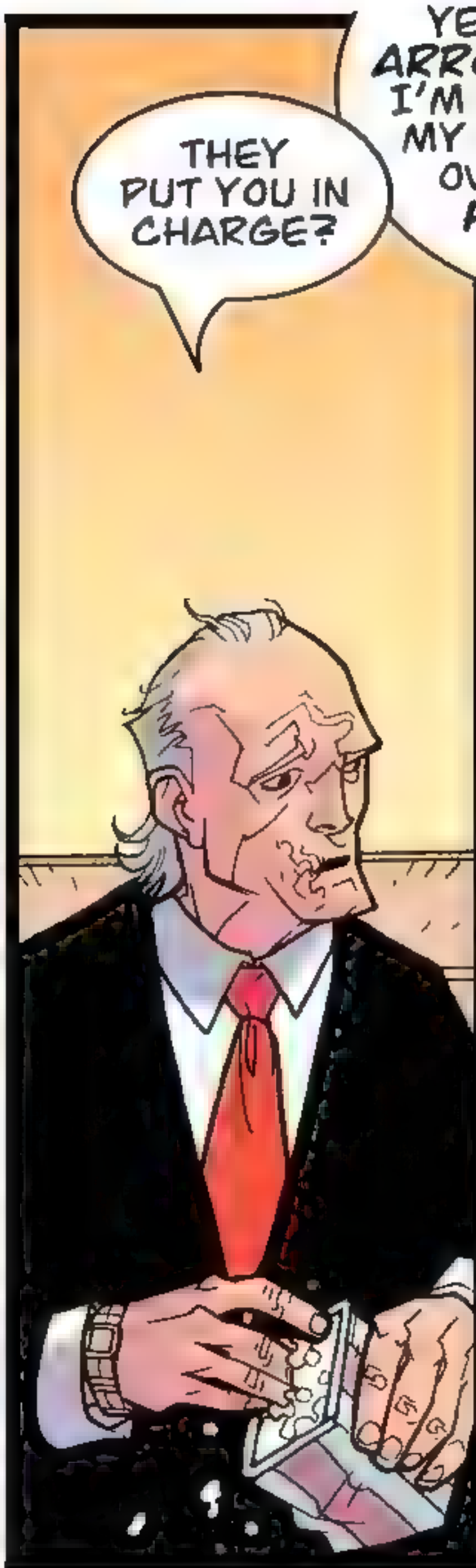
BUT ONLY A
LITTLE
BIT.



AND YOU SAW
YOUR FATHER.
DO YOU FEEL LIKE
HE'S NO LONGER
A THREAT TO THIS
PLANET?



HE'S NOT. I'M SURE
OF IT. HIS PEOPLE--
MY PEOPLE STILL
VERY MUCH ARE.
THEY KINDA PUT ME
IN CHARGE OF THIS
PLANET, AND BUMPED
THE DEADLINE DOWN
TO ONE HUNDRED
YEARS.

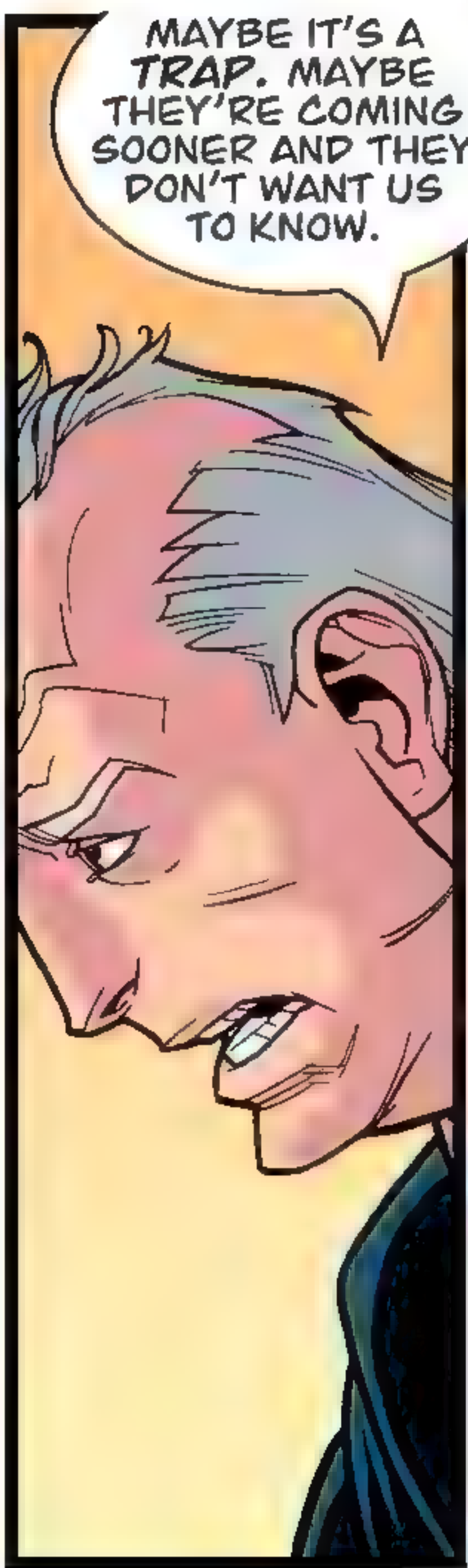


THEY
PUT YOU IN
CHARGE?



YEAH--THEY'RE SO
ARROGANT THEY THINK
I'M GOING TO COME TO
MY SENSES AND TAKE
OVER THIS PLANET
FOR THEM--OR
SOMETHING.

I DON'T
KNOW, MAYBE
THEY JUST DON'T
CARE IF I HELP
THEM OR NOT. MAYBE
ONE HUNDRED YEARS
IS THE SOONEST
THEY CAN GET OUT
HERE TO TAKE
OVER.



MAYBE IT'S A
TRAP. MAYBE
THEY'RE COMING
SOONER AND THEY
DON'T WANT US
TO KNOW.

WOW.

I HADN'T REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT THAT.

SO... WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

NOTHING. PUT THAT THOUGHT OUT OF YOUR MIND. IF WHAT WE KNOW IS TRUE--IF THEY SENT SO MUCH AS **FOUR** VILTRUMITES TO THIS PLANET THERE WOULDN'T BE A **DAMN** THING WE COULD DO.

SO ALL WE CAN REALLY DO IS WAIT... AND HOPE SOMETHING COMES ALONG THAT ALLOWS US TO FIGHT THEM.

THAT MAKES SENSE.

NOW THAT WE'VE MOVED PAST THAT.

YOUR BROTHER.

YEAH.

LET YOUR MOTHER KNOW THAT WE CAN HELP WITH THAT. HAVING ANOTHER VILTRUMITE RAISED BY **HER** TO BE A FINE UPSTANDING CITIZEN LIKE **YOU** IS IN ALL OUR BEST INTERESTS.

WE COULD ARRANGE LEGITIMATE ADOPTION PAPERS AND GIVE THE CHILD BIRTH RECORDS AND EVEN EMPLOY SOME LOW-TECH HOLOGRAPHICS TO MATCH HIS SKIN COLOR.

THE ADVANCED AGING WILL BE TRICKY. WE COULDN'T ALLOW THE CHILD TO ATTEND PUBLIC SCHOOLS BECAUSE SOMEONE WOULD NOTICE HIS... UNIQUENESS... SO WE WOULD PROVIDE A PRIVATE TUTOR.

WE COULD MAKE THIS VERY EASY ON HER. OR WE COULD HELP YOU LOCATE A FOSTER FAMILY... IF SHE DIDN'T WANT THE CHILD.

I'LL LET HER KNOW.

GOOD. NOW I'VE GOT TO REPRIMAND YOU.

I KNOW THIS TURNED OUT FOR THE BEST. SEEING YOUR FATHER, GETTING MORE INFO ON THE VILTRUMITES, YOUR BROTHER... BUT I DON'T WANT YOU TO DISOBEY ME AGAIN.

HOLD ON, YOU'RE TELLING ME I WAS **RIGHT** TO GO--BUT THAT I **SHOULDN'T** DO THIS AGAIN?

THAT'S KINDA SILLY. DID I EVEN MISS ANYTHING WHEN I WAS GONE THESE LAST TWO MONTHS?

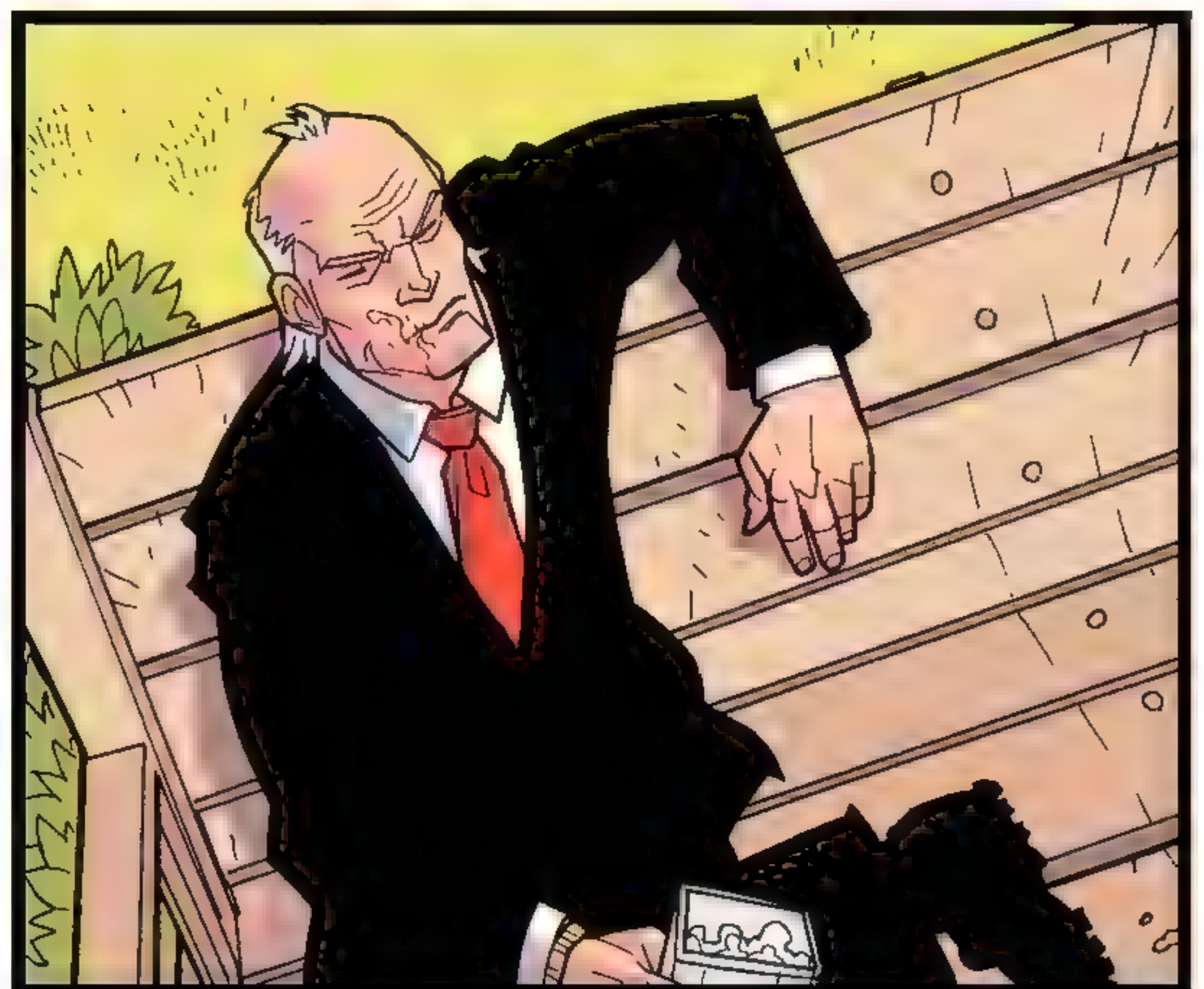
A BEING CALLED **OMNIPOTUS** TRIED TO TAKE OVER THE **WORLD**. I HAD TO AMASS ALMOST THE ENTIRE SUPERHERO COMMUNITY AND EVEN HIRE ON THOSE **CAPE** BASTARDS FROM NEW YORK TO HELP OUT.

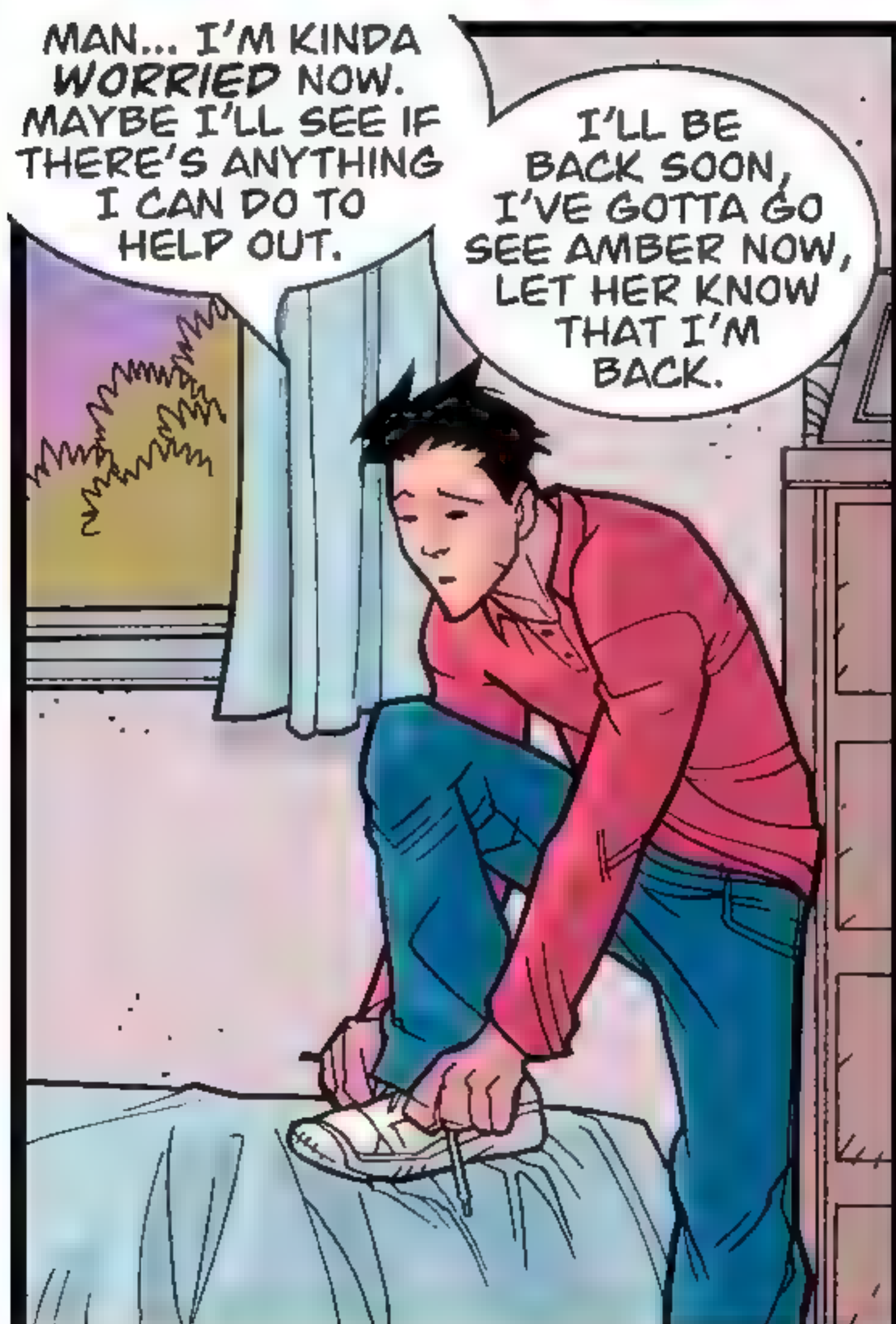
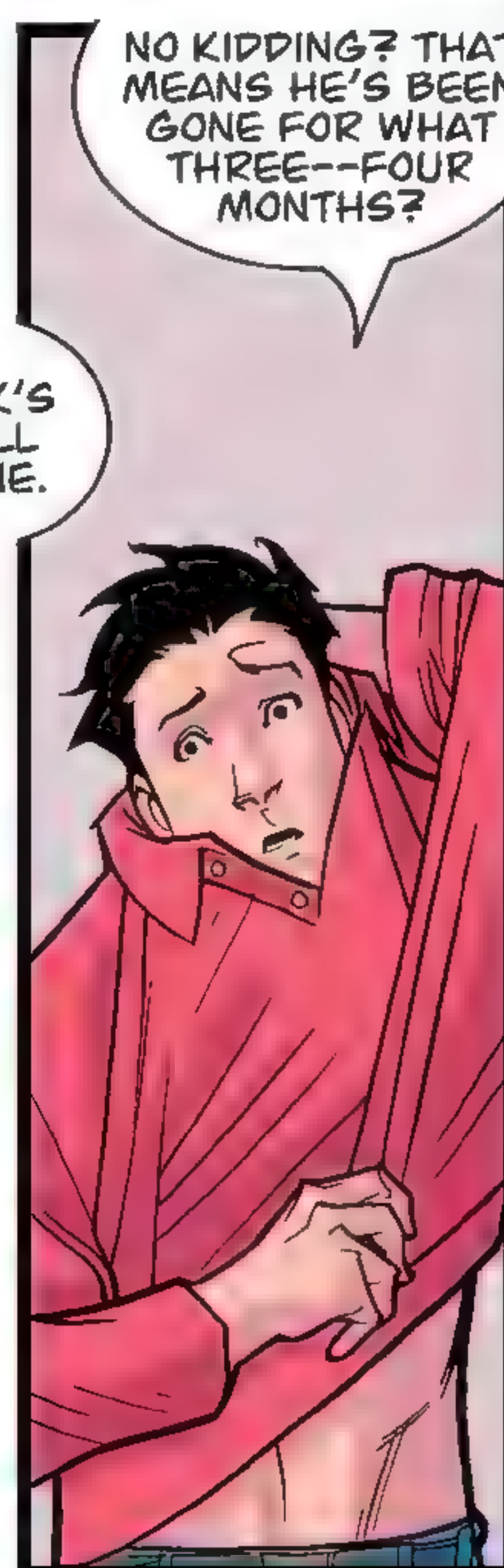
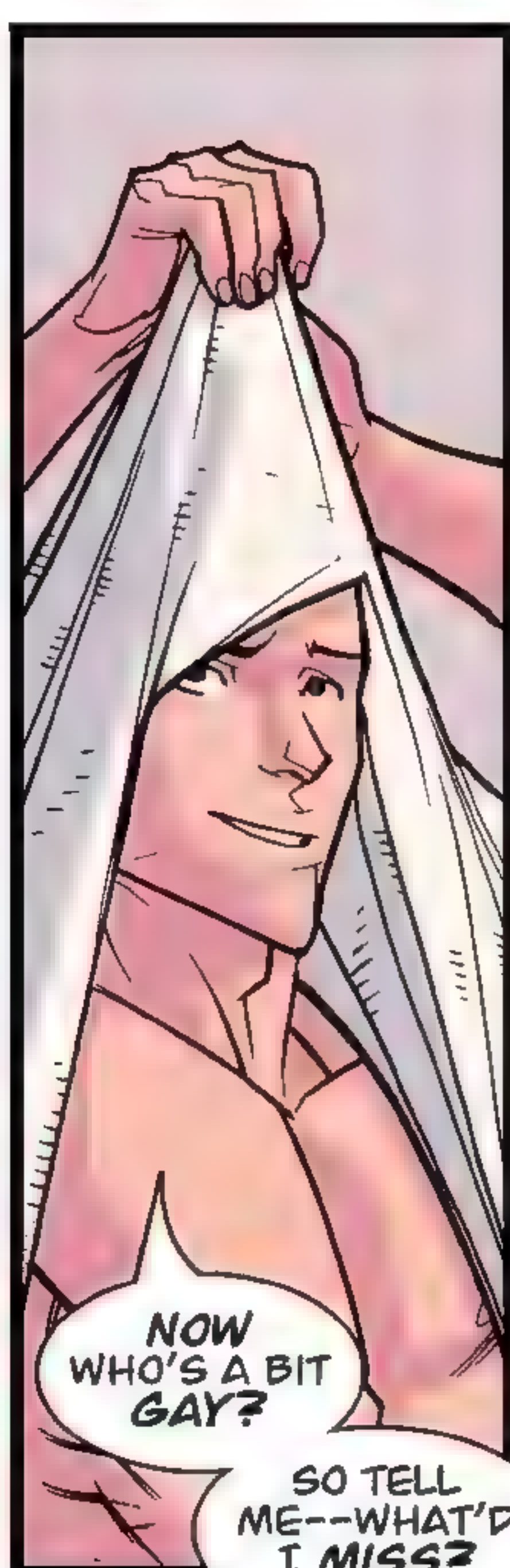
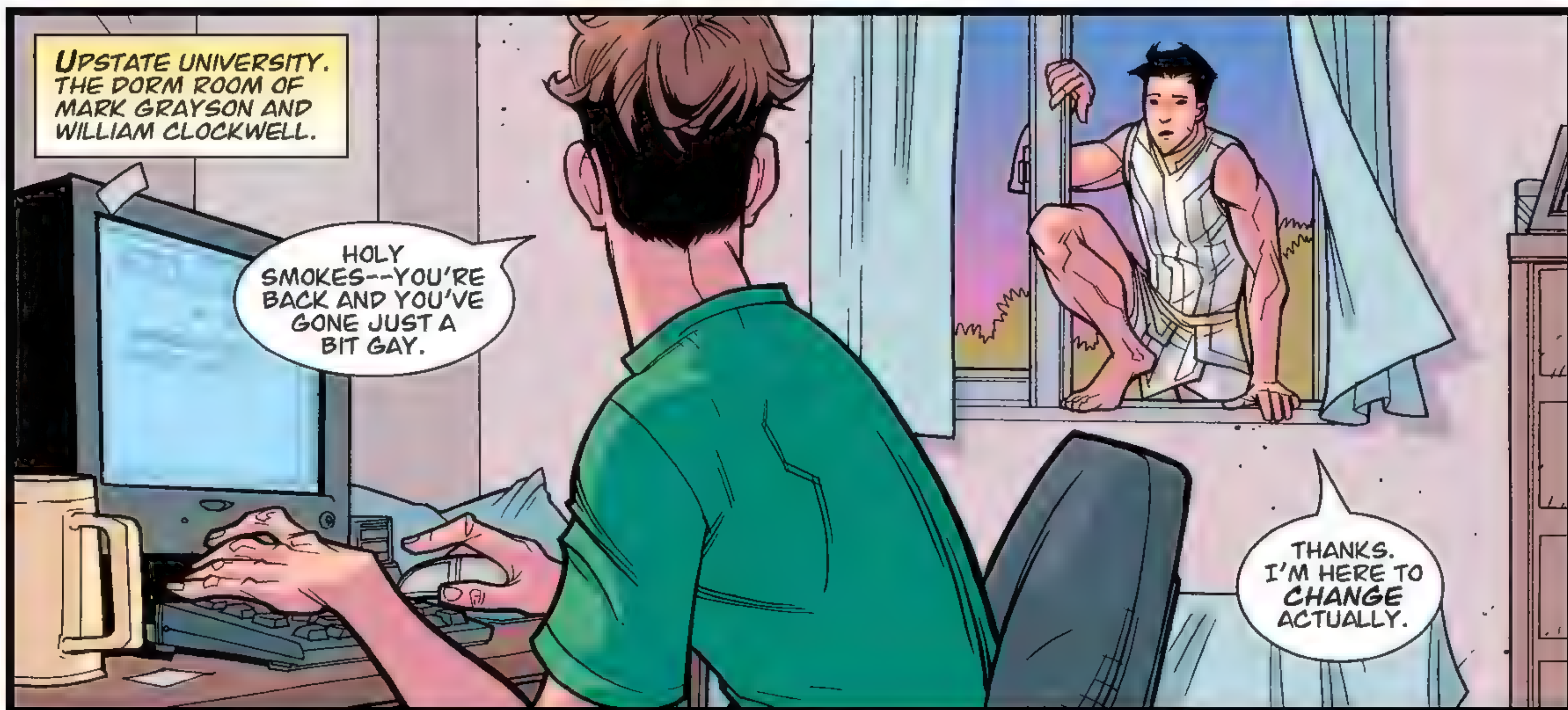
WE ALMOST DIDN'T WIN THAT ONE.

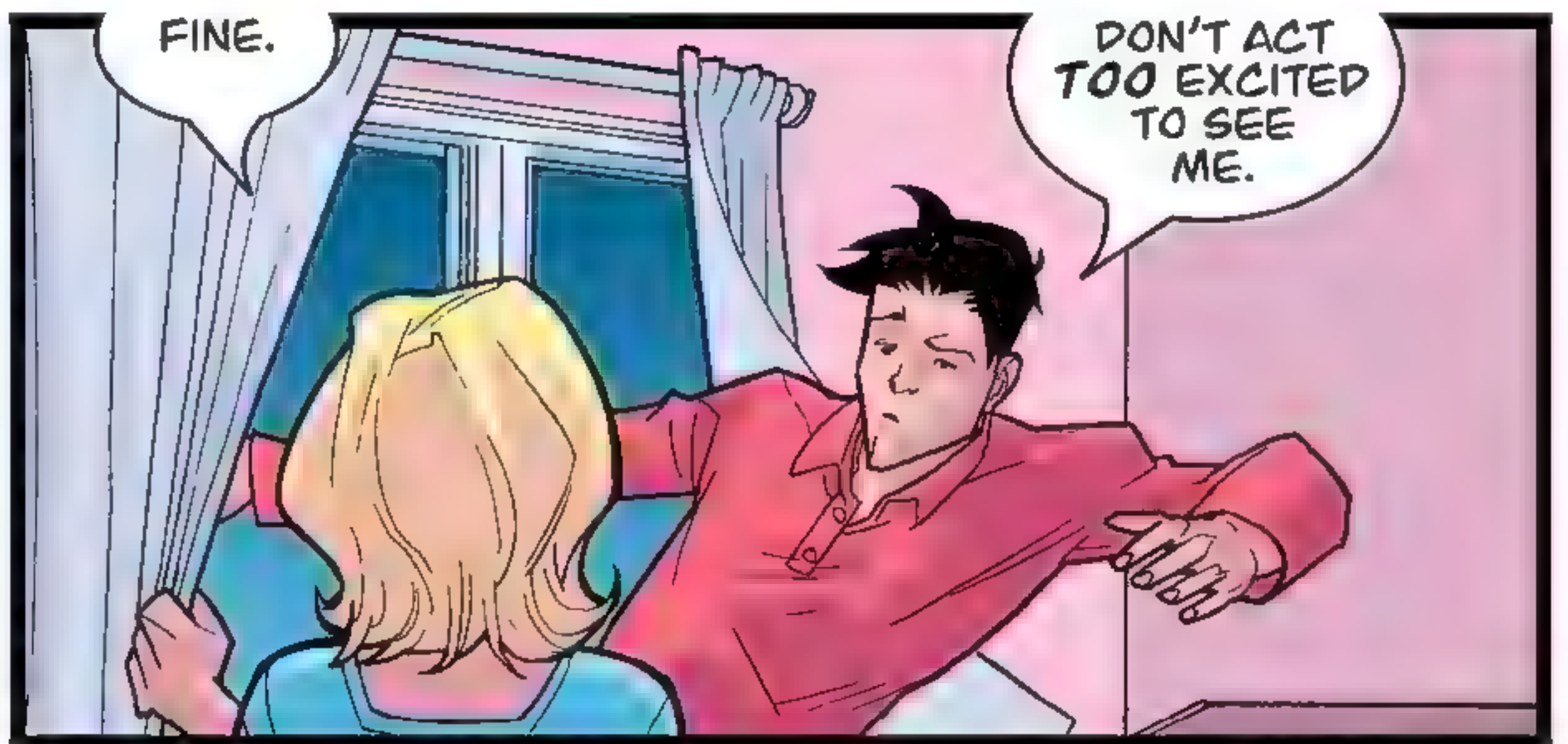
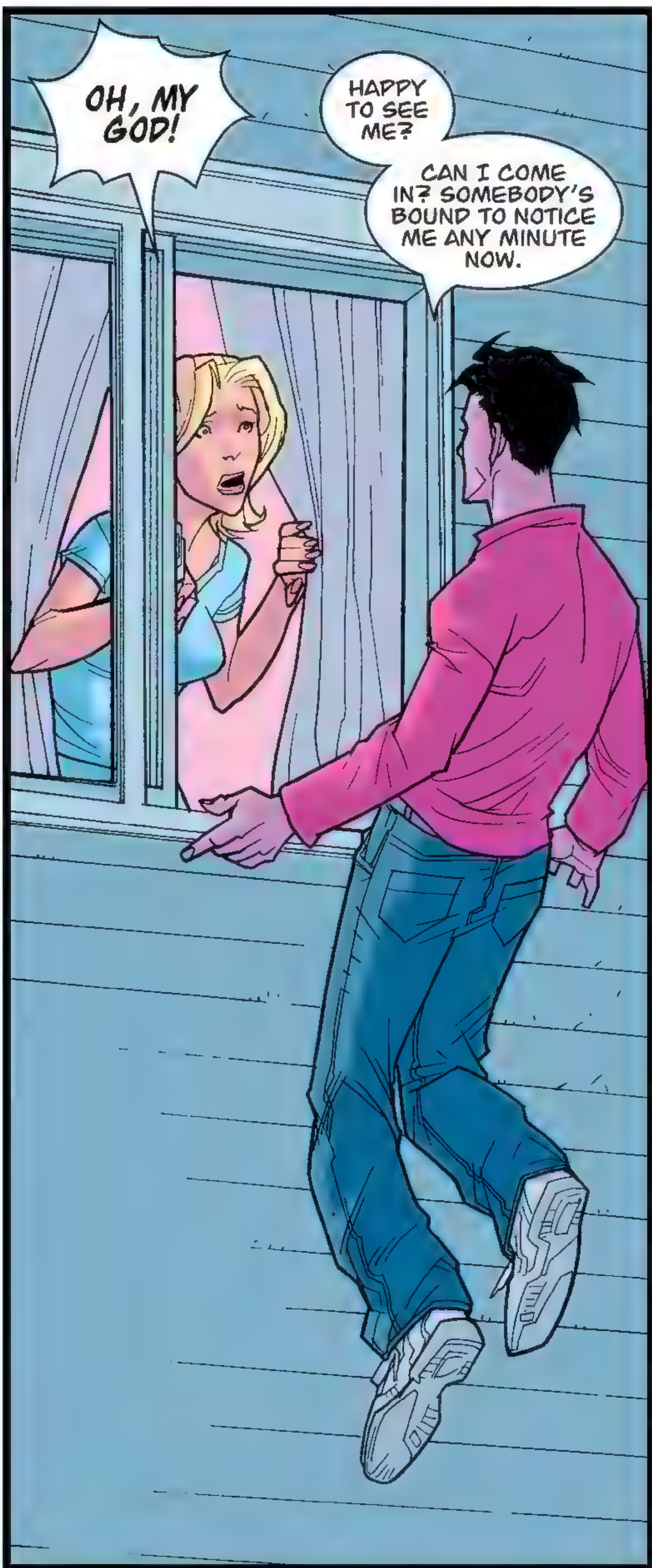
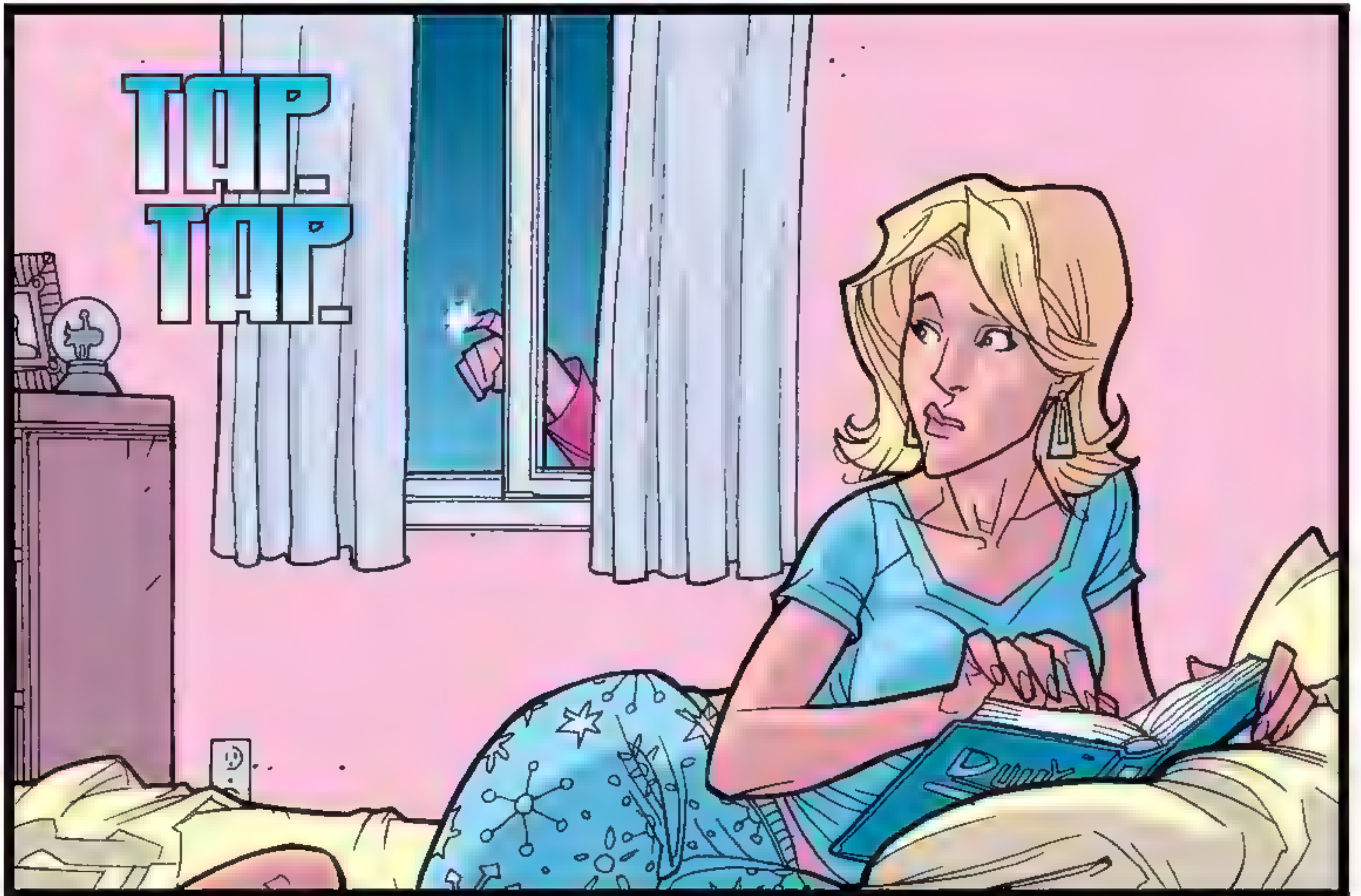
BUT YOU DID.

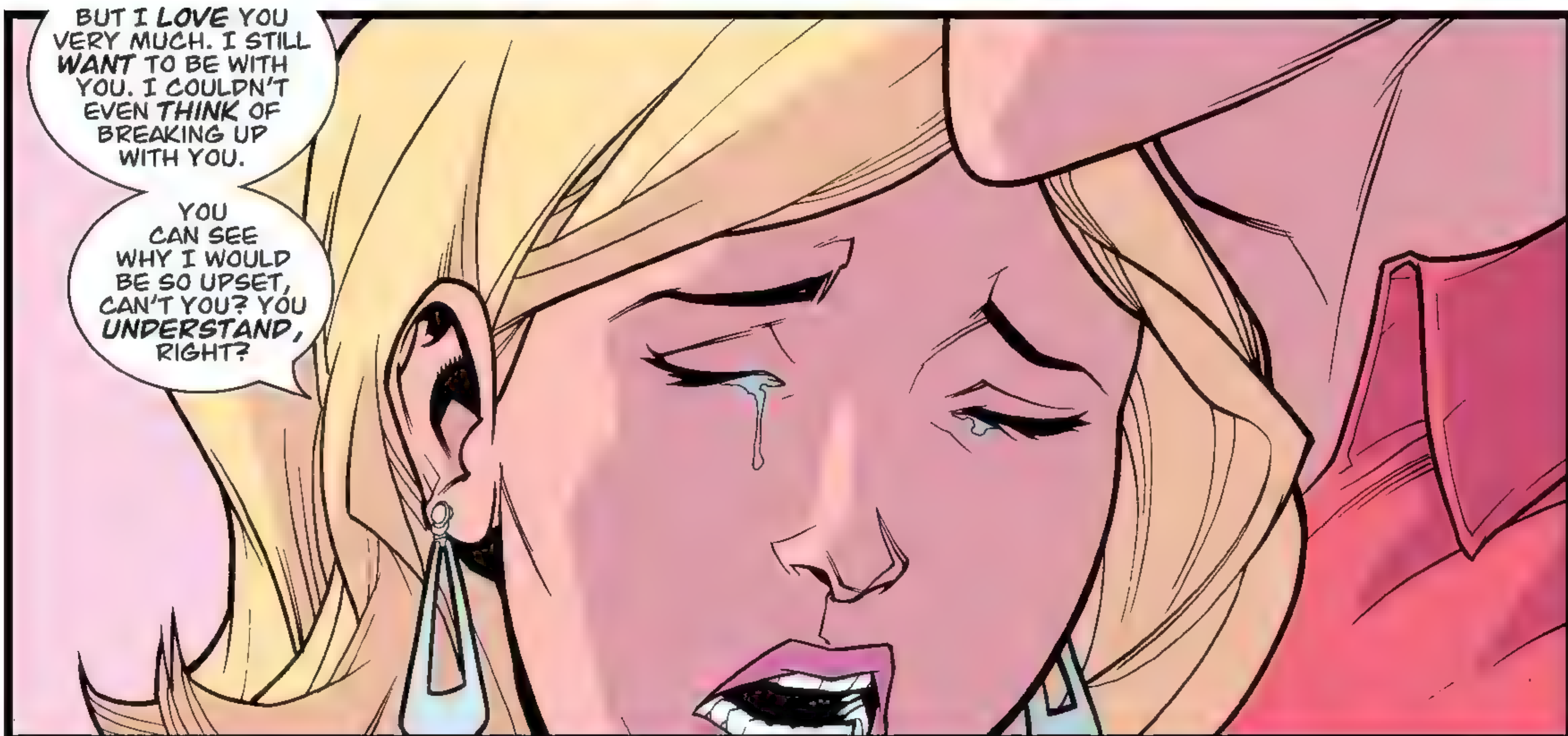
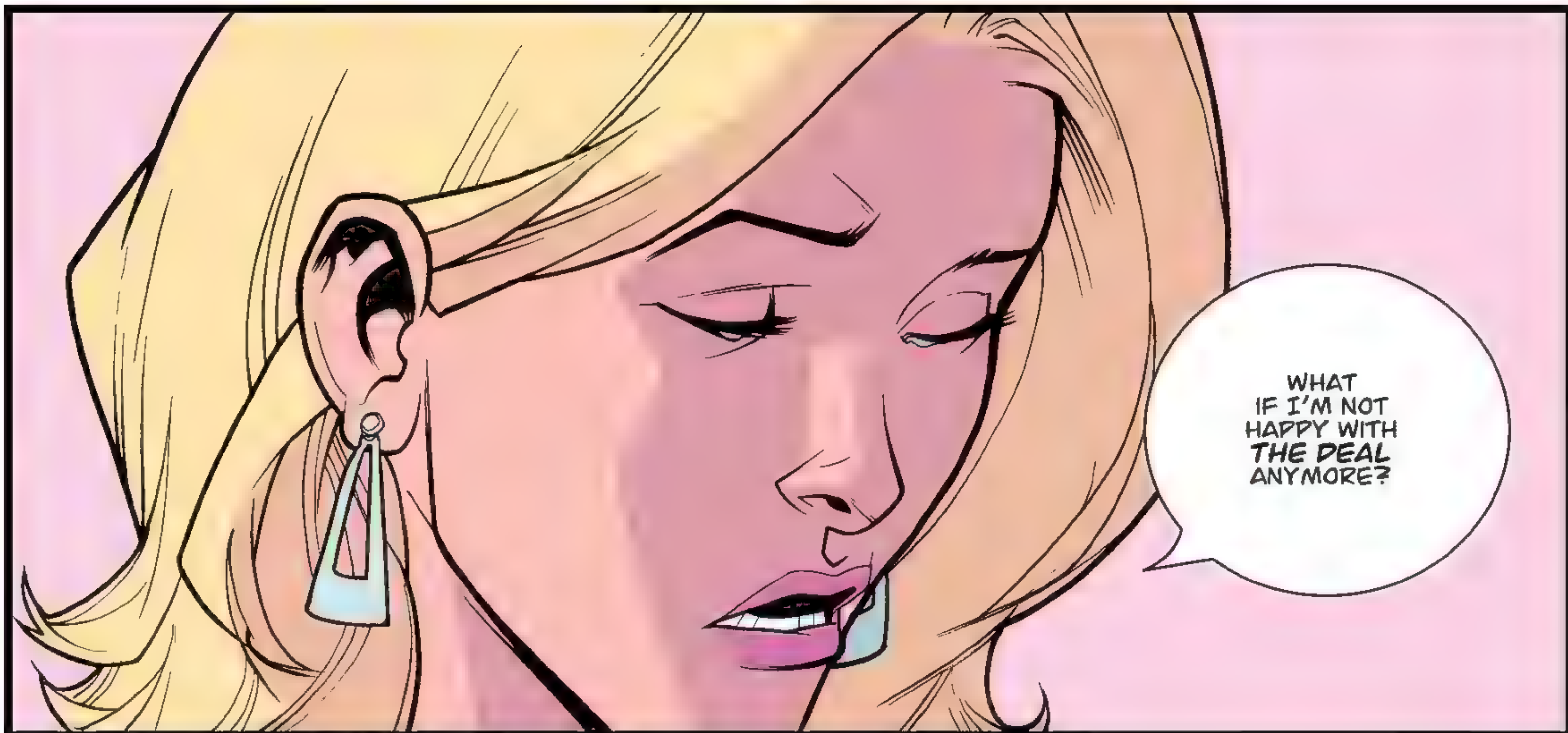
THAT'S NOT THE **POINT**, MARK. THE POINT IS YOU WERE **NEEDED**.

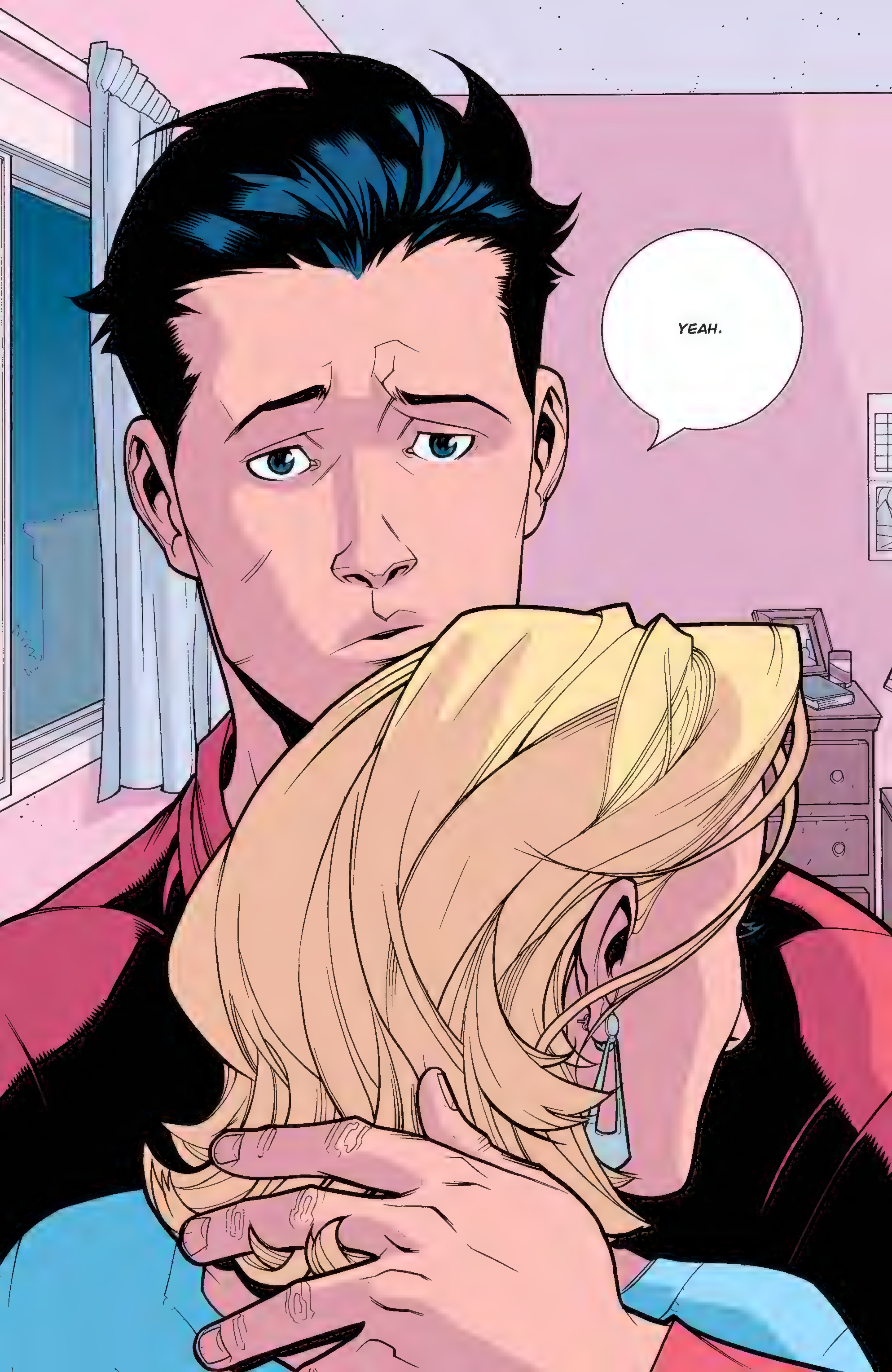
ACTUALLY, I THINK THE POINT IS THAT AN **ALIEN WORLD** WOULD HAVE BEEN COMPLETELY DESTROYED IF I HAD STAYED HERE--AND WHILE I WAS GONE--YOU GUYS SAVED **THIS PLANET** WITHOUT ME.



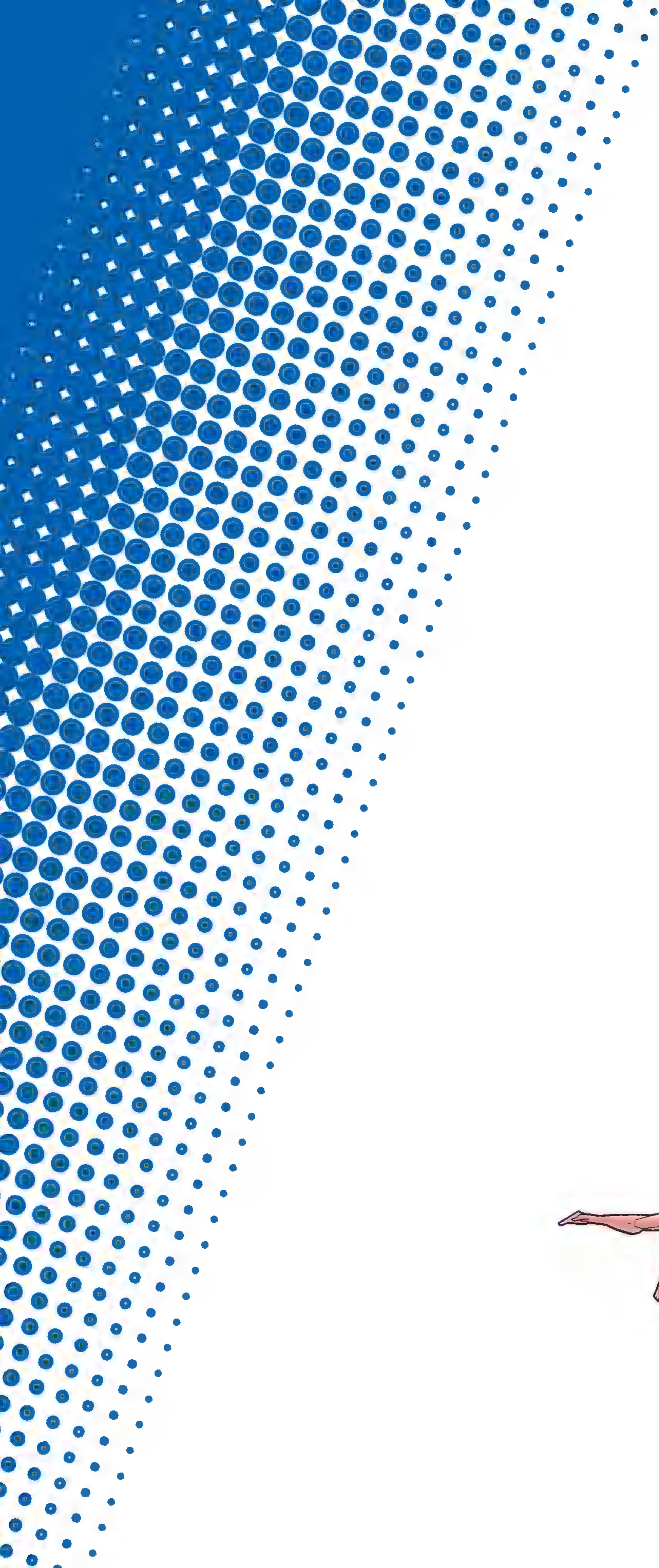








YEAH.



ISSUE THIRTY-ONE



WYAS

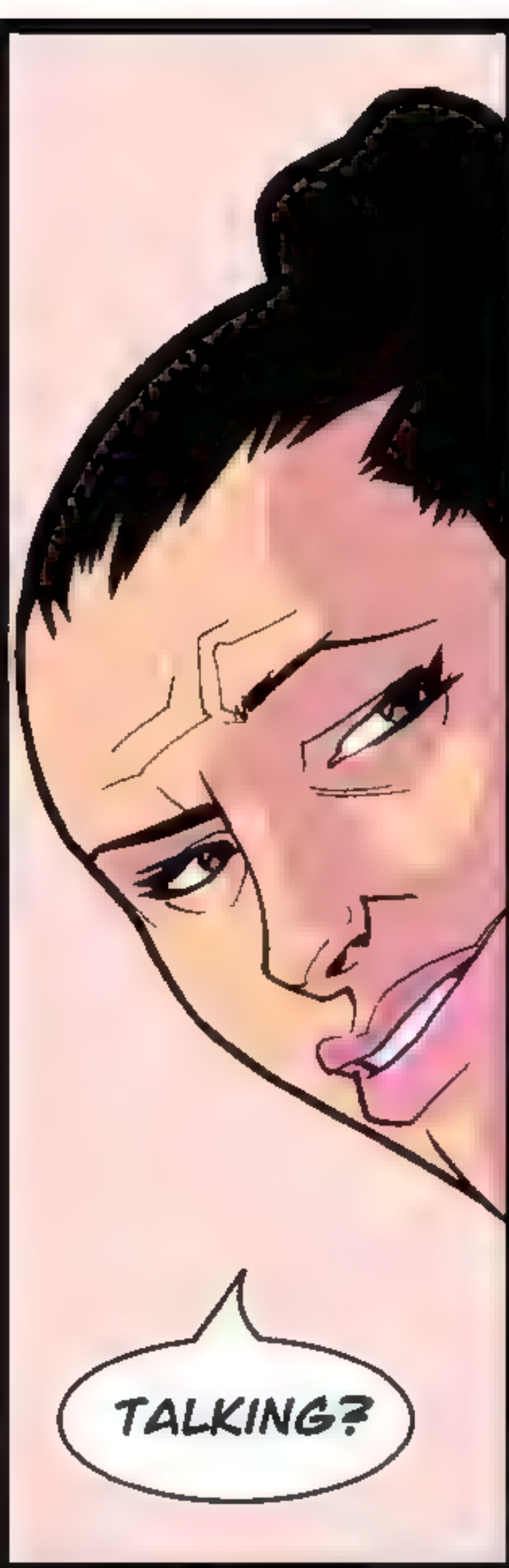
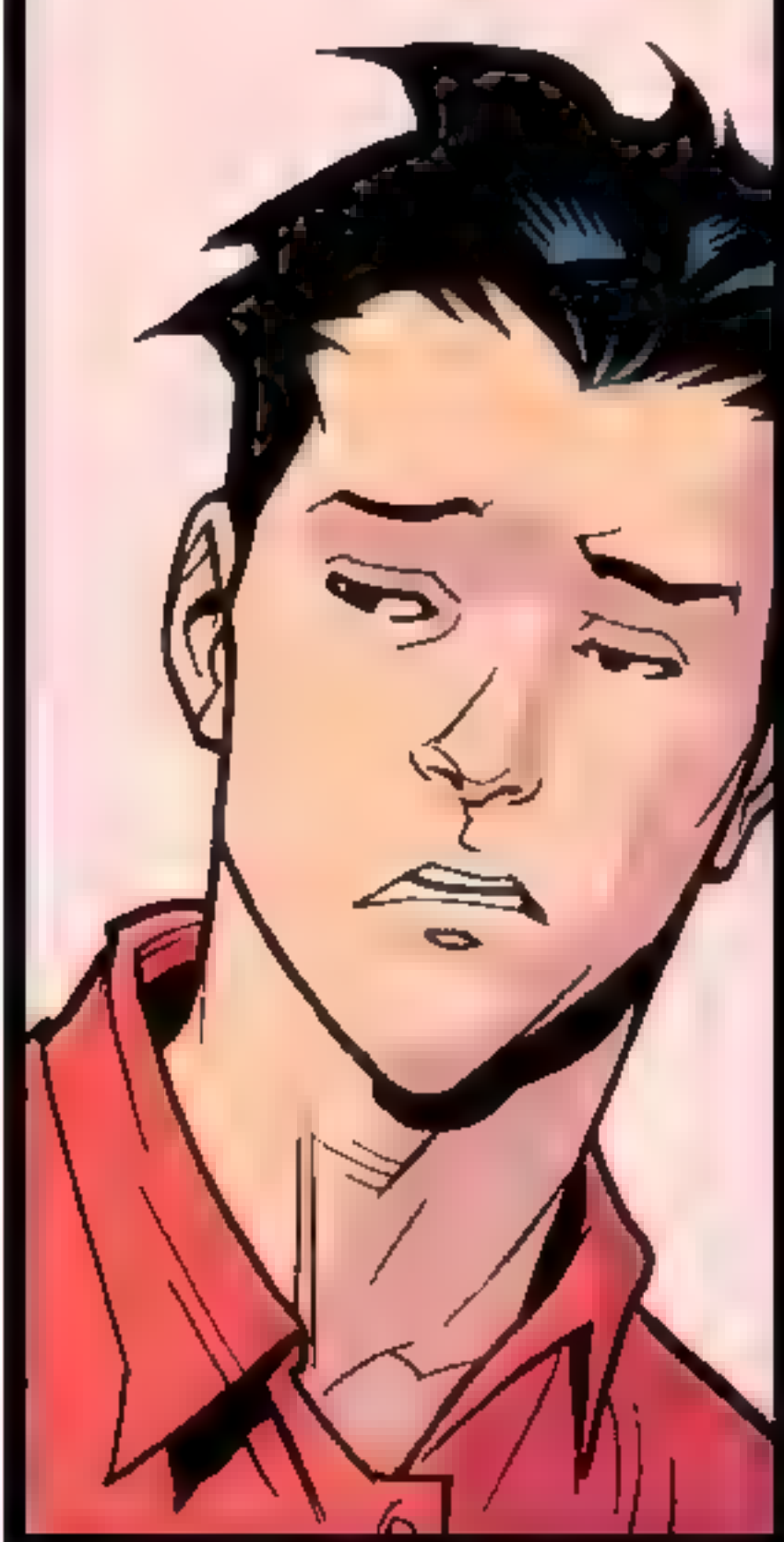


I SEE
YOU TWO
ARE GETTING
ALONG.

LET ME JUST RECAP A LITTLE HERE, SON. YOU GO OUT INTO SPACE ON A BIG ADVENTURE--- SEE YOUR FATHER, WHICH I REALLY DON'T WANT TO GET INTO, BRING BACK YOUR STEP BROTHER, ASK ME TO RAISE HIM--- AND THEN YOU SKIP OUT FOR THE REST OF THE DAY?



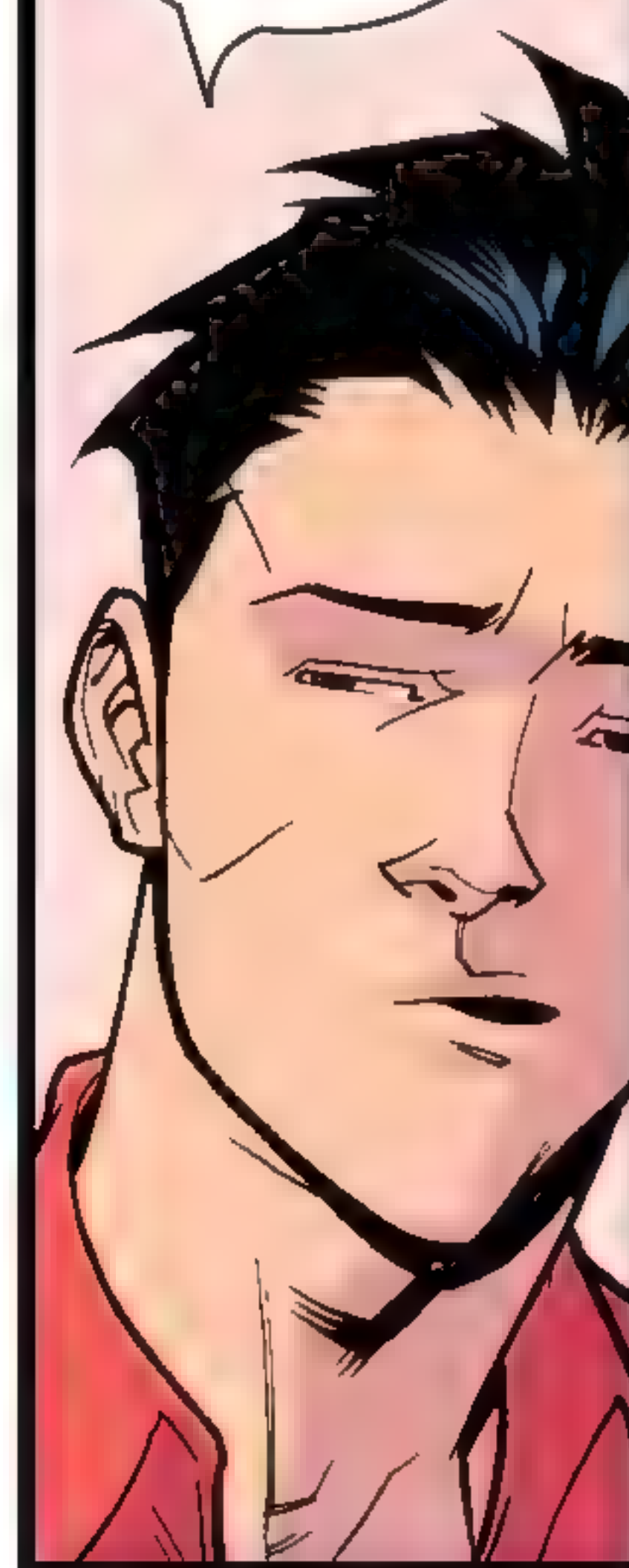
YEAH, I GUESS SO. SORRY ABOUT THAT. TALKING TO AMBER TOOK A LITTLE MORE TIME THAN I EXPECTED.



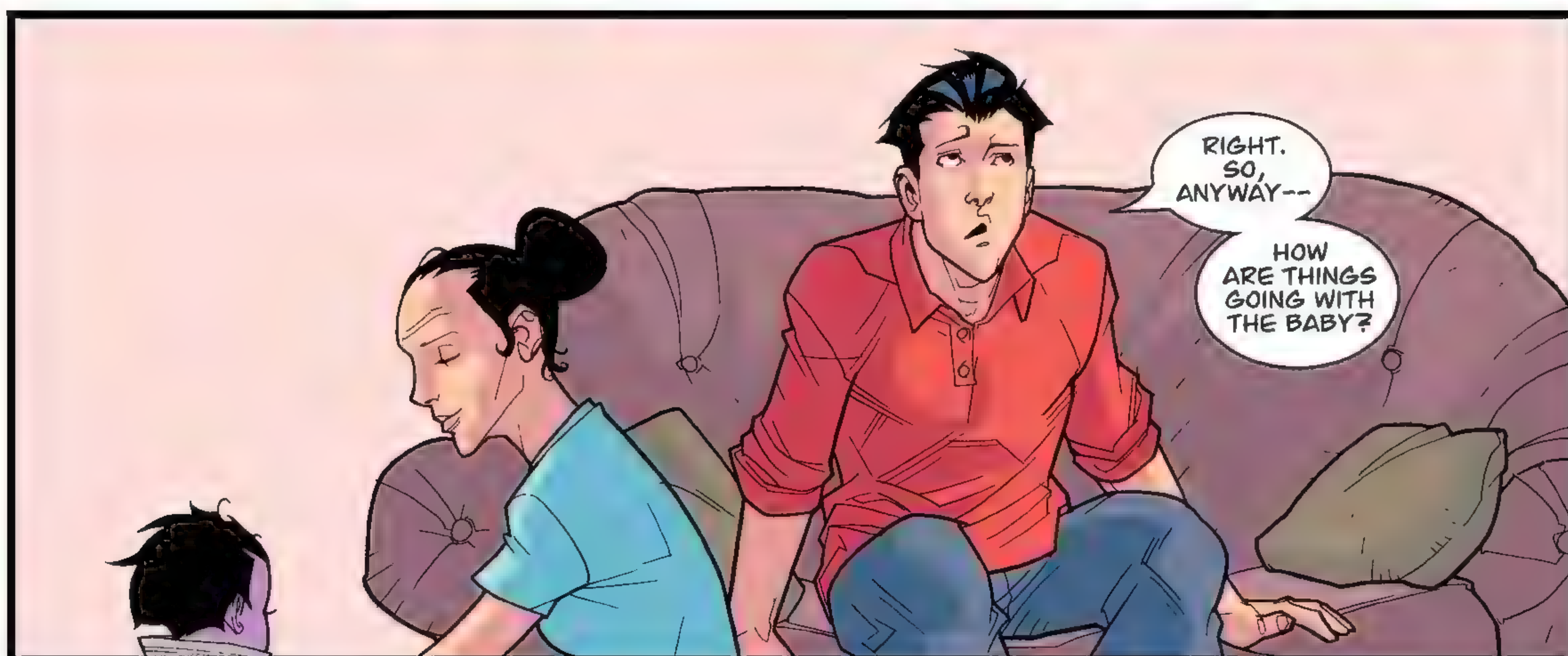
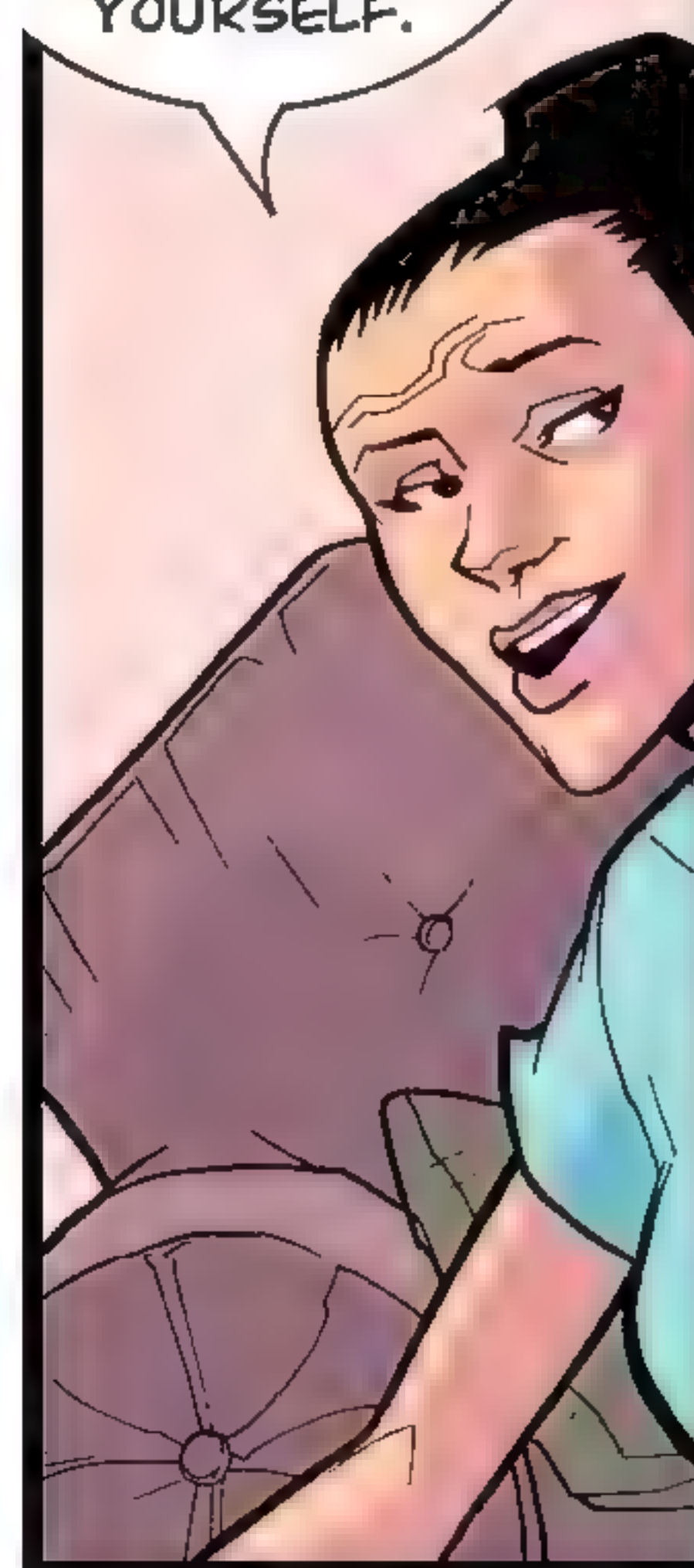
TALKING?

MOM-- PLEASE.

DON'T DO THAT.



WELL, IF YOU EXPECT ME TO THINK YOU'VE BEEN **JUST TALKING** FOR THREE HOURS, YOU'RE FOOLING YOURSELF.



RIGHT. SO, ANYWAY---

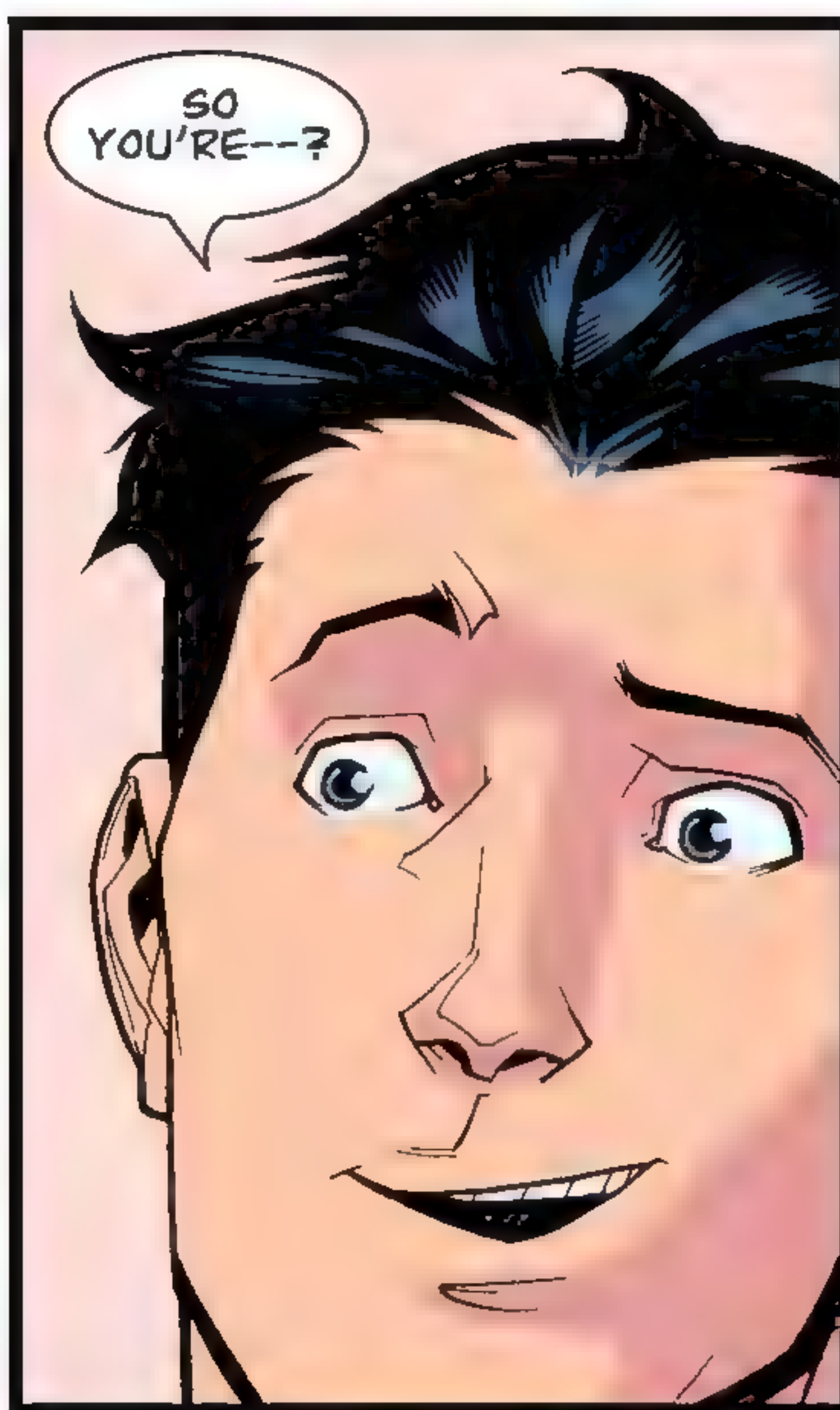
HOW ARE THINGS GOING WITH THE BABY?

YOU'RE A CRAFTY ONE, MARK GRAYSON.

YOU LEAVE ME HERE WITH A BABY THAT HAS NO ONE TO RAISE IT FOR THREE HOURS AND YOU THINK I'M GOING TO BE ABLE TO PART WITH IT?



SO YOU'RE---?



LIKE YOU DIDN'T PLAN THIS.

HOW COULD I SAY NO? OF **COURSE** I'M GOING TO TAKE CARE OF HIM.





SPEAKING OF HIM. DOES HE HAVE A NAME?



ACTUALLY, NO. THE MANTIS PEOPLE AGED SO FAST THEY CHOSE THEIR OWN NAME ONCE THEY WERE OLD ENOUGH. I THINK THAT WAS ABOUT A WEEK INTO THEIR LIFE, THOUGH, SO HE SHOULD ALREADY HAVE PICKED ONE.



I DON'T THINK WE'LL BE HONORING THAT TRADITION. CECIL SAID I'D NEED TO FIND OUT HIS NAME SOON, ANYWAY.



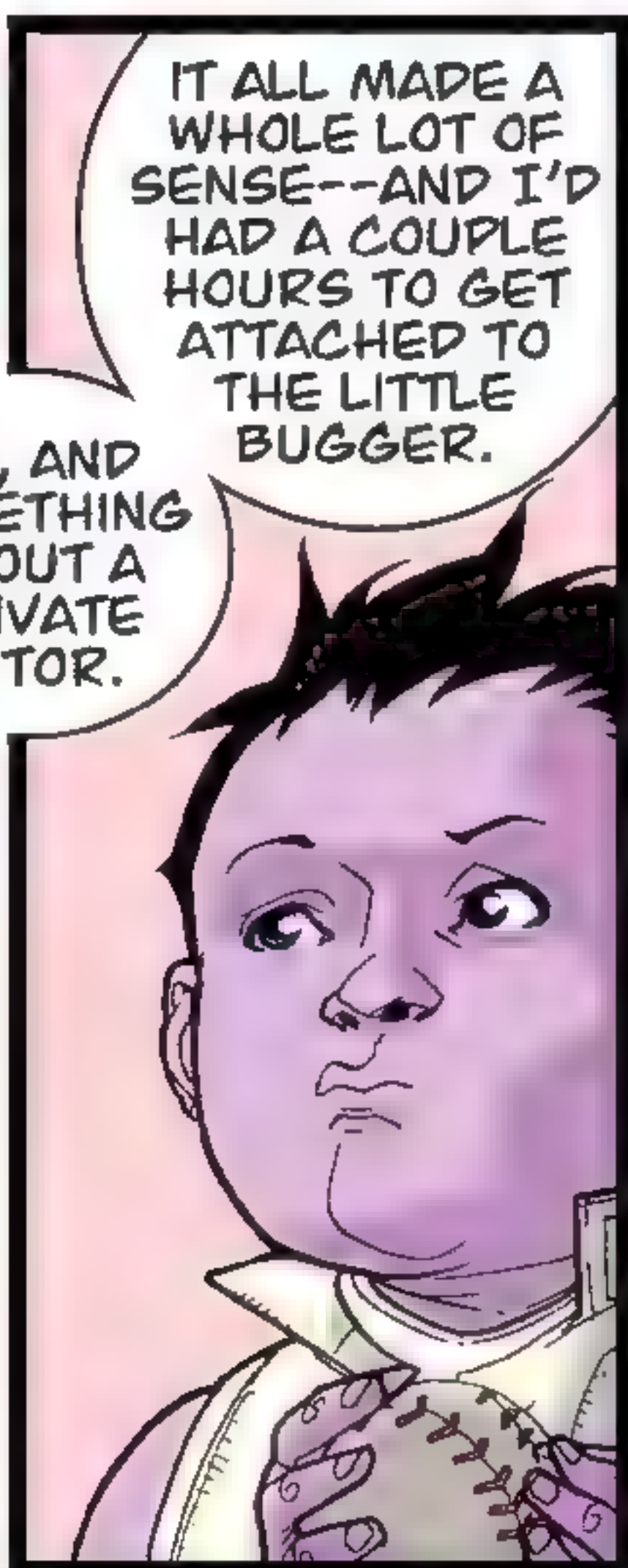
YOU TALKED TO CECIL?



YEAH, HE 'PORTED OVER WHILE YOU WERE WITH YOUR GIRLFRIEND.

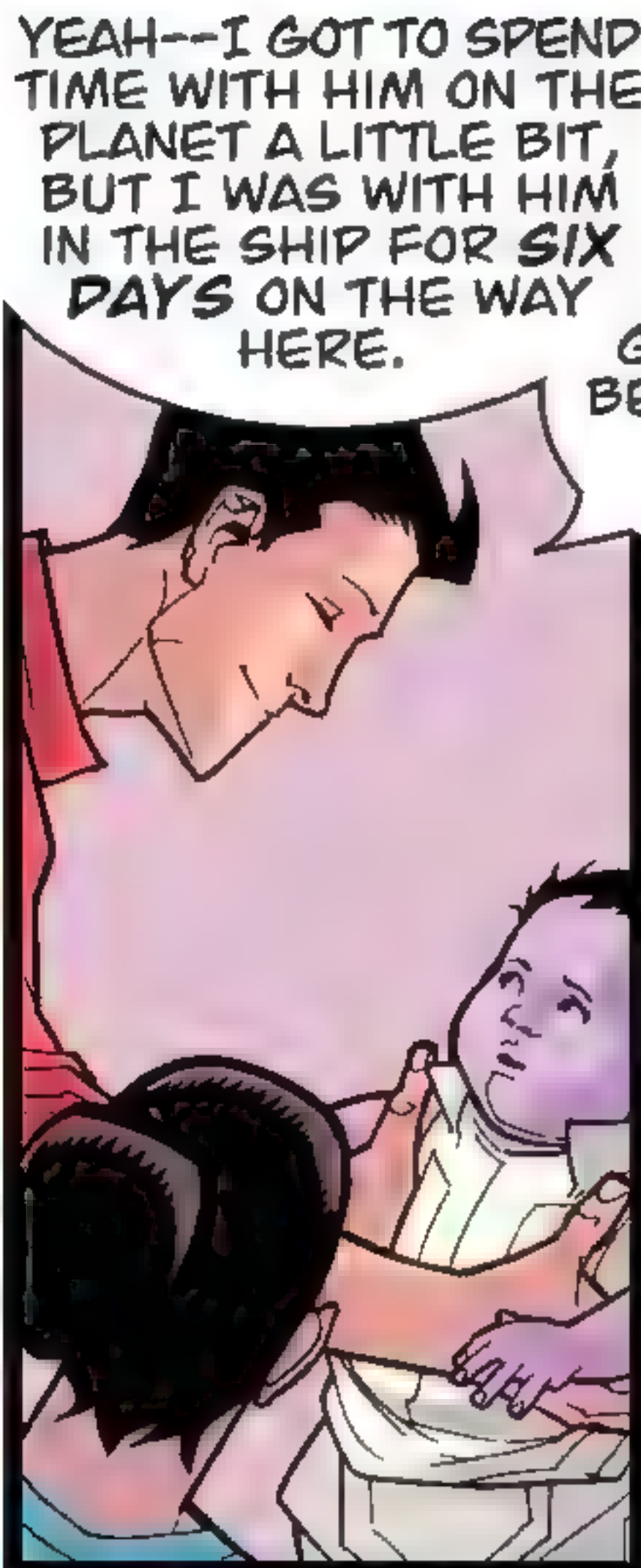


HE TOLD ME ALL ABOUT THE ADOPTION OPTIONS AVAILABLE AND SOMETHING ABOUT HOLOGRAPHIC SOMETHING OR OTHERS TO MASK HIS SKIN TONE.



IT ALL MADE A WHOLE LOT OF SENSE--AND I'D HAD A COUPLE HOURS TO GET ATTACHED TO THE LITTLE BUGGER.

OH, AND SOMETHING ABOUT A PRIVATE TUTOR.



YEAH--I GOT TO SPEND TIME WITH HIM ON THE PLANET A LITTLE BIT, BUT I WAS WITH HIM IN THE SHIP FOR SIX DAYS ON THE WAY HERE.



BROTHER!

WE'VE GOTTEN TO BE BUDDIES, HAVEN'T WE?



I'M GLAD HE COULD-- I NEED YOU, KID.

--SPEAK OF THE DEVIL. LOOKS LIKE I'VE GOT TO RUN. I'LL SEE YOU TOMORROW?



YES, PLEASE--AND I ALMOST FORGOT TO MENTION: ART BROUGHT A NEW COSTUME BY FOR YOU. IT'S UPSTAIRS.

BE CAREFUL.

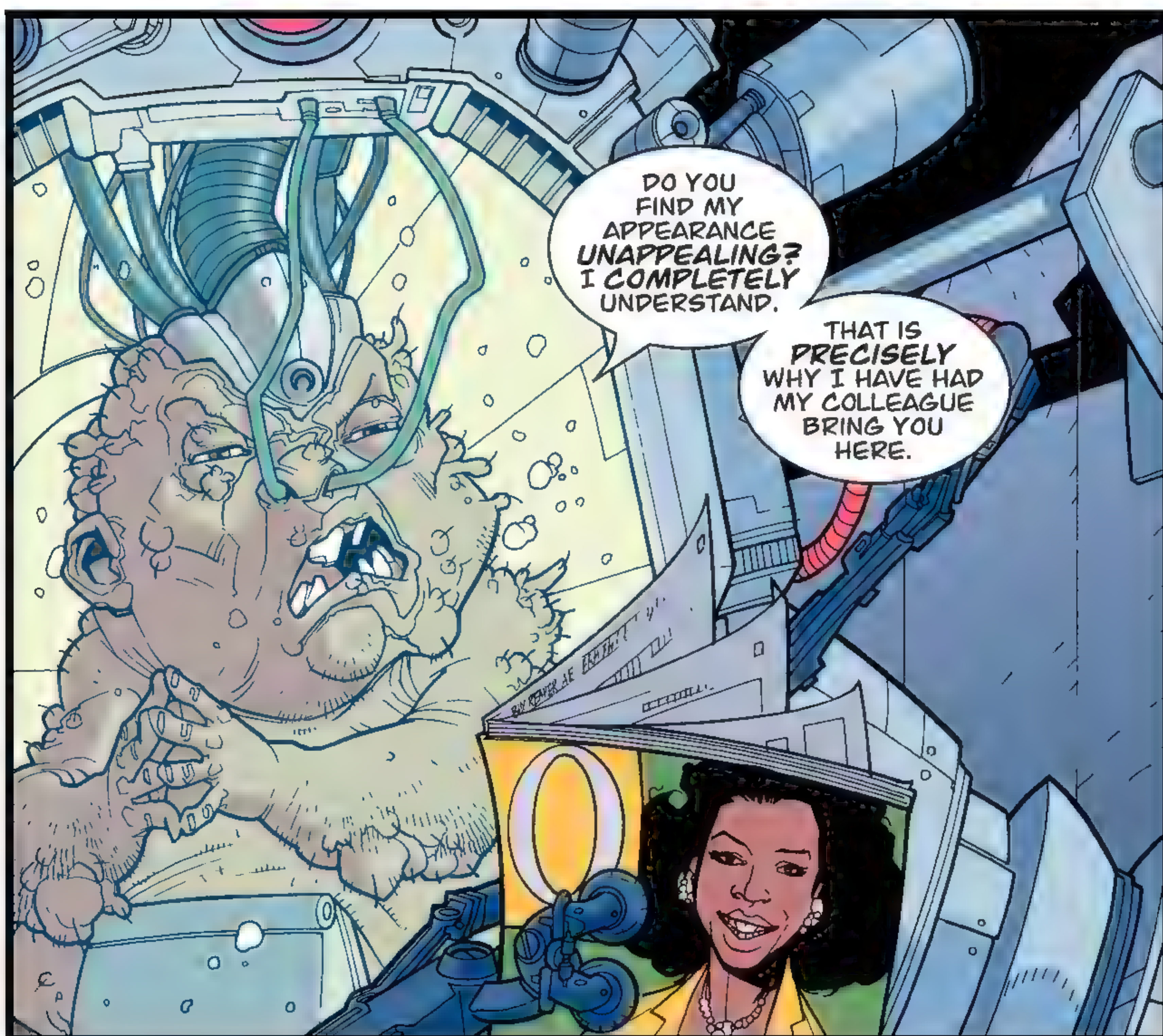
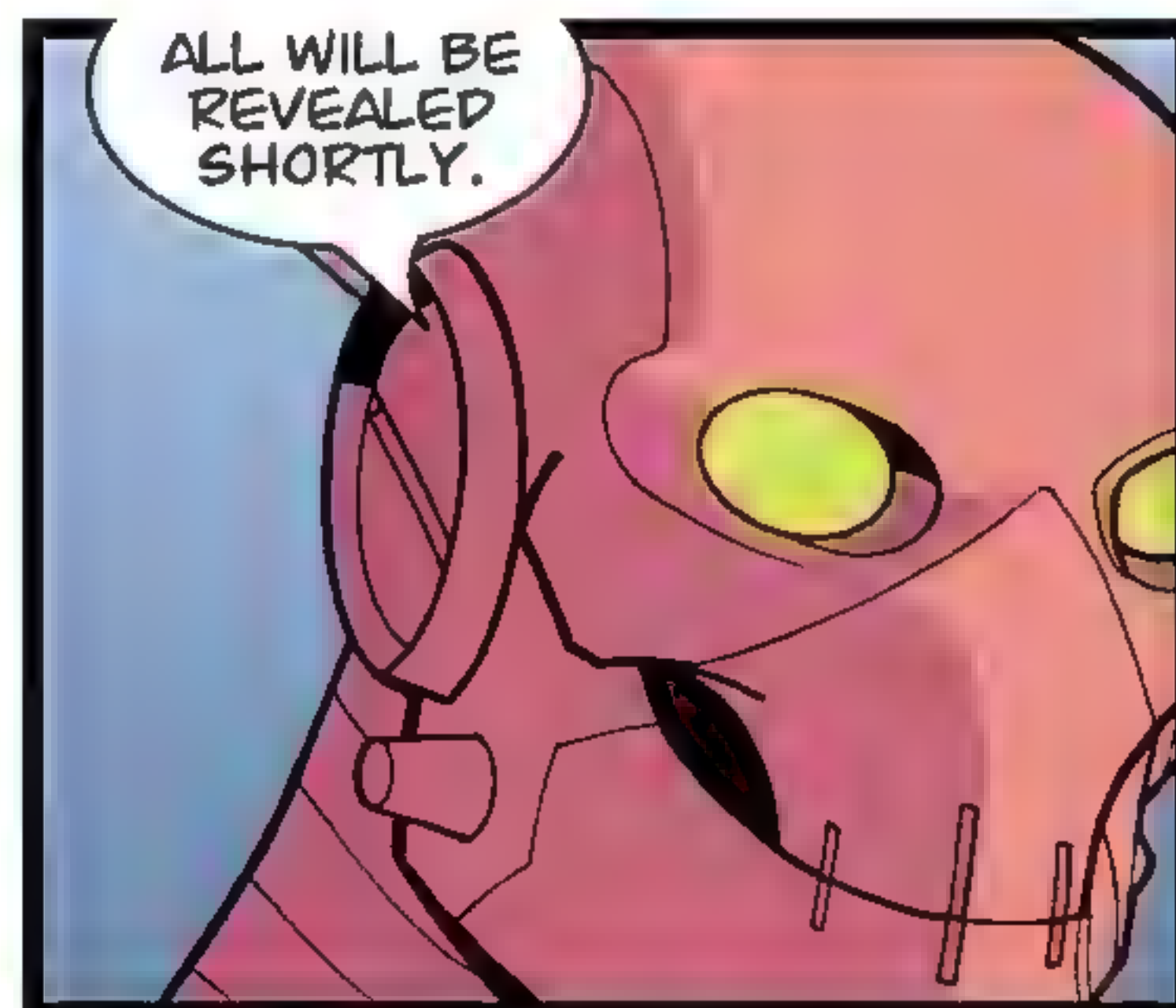
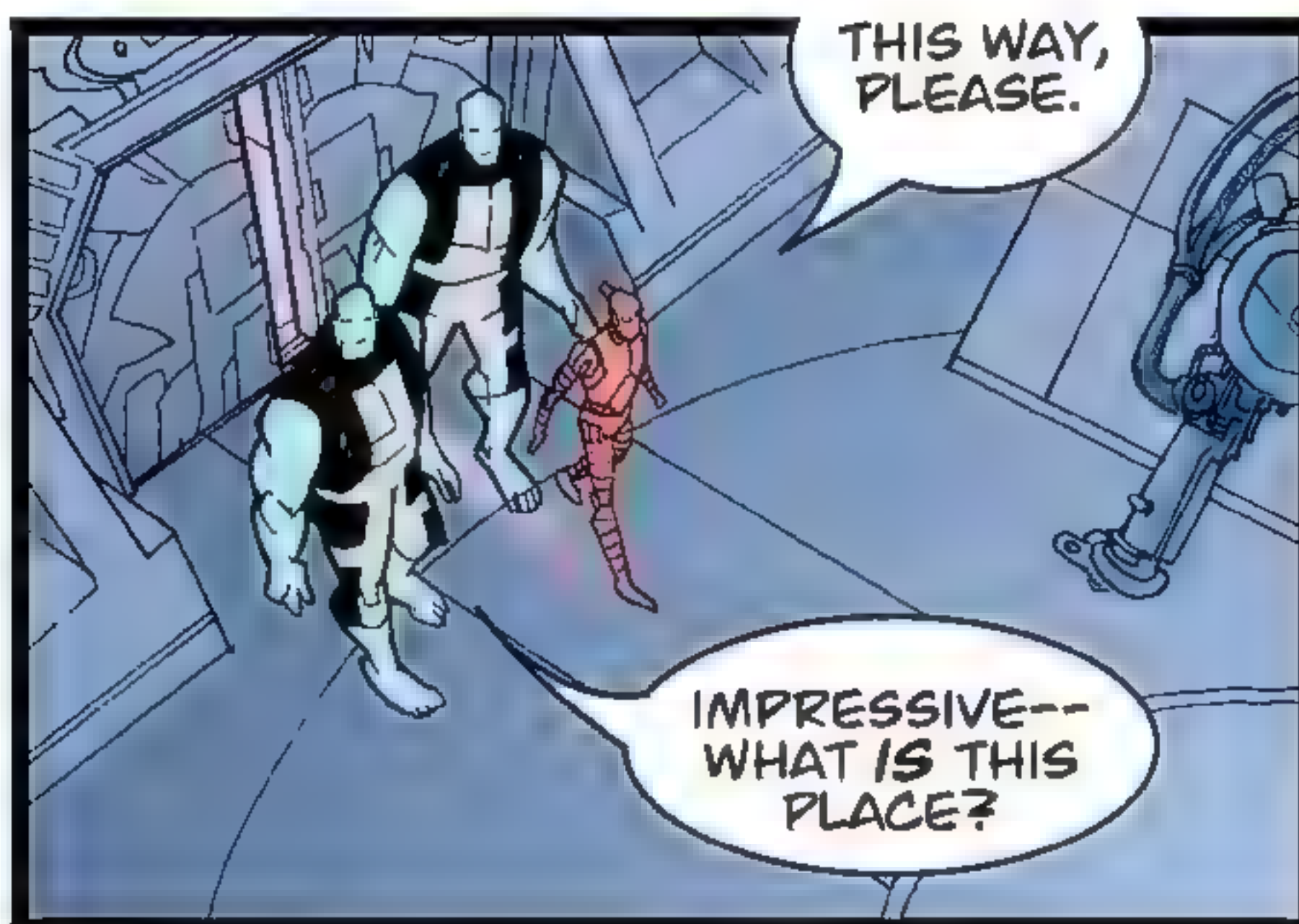
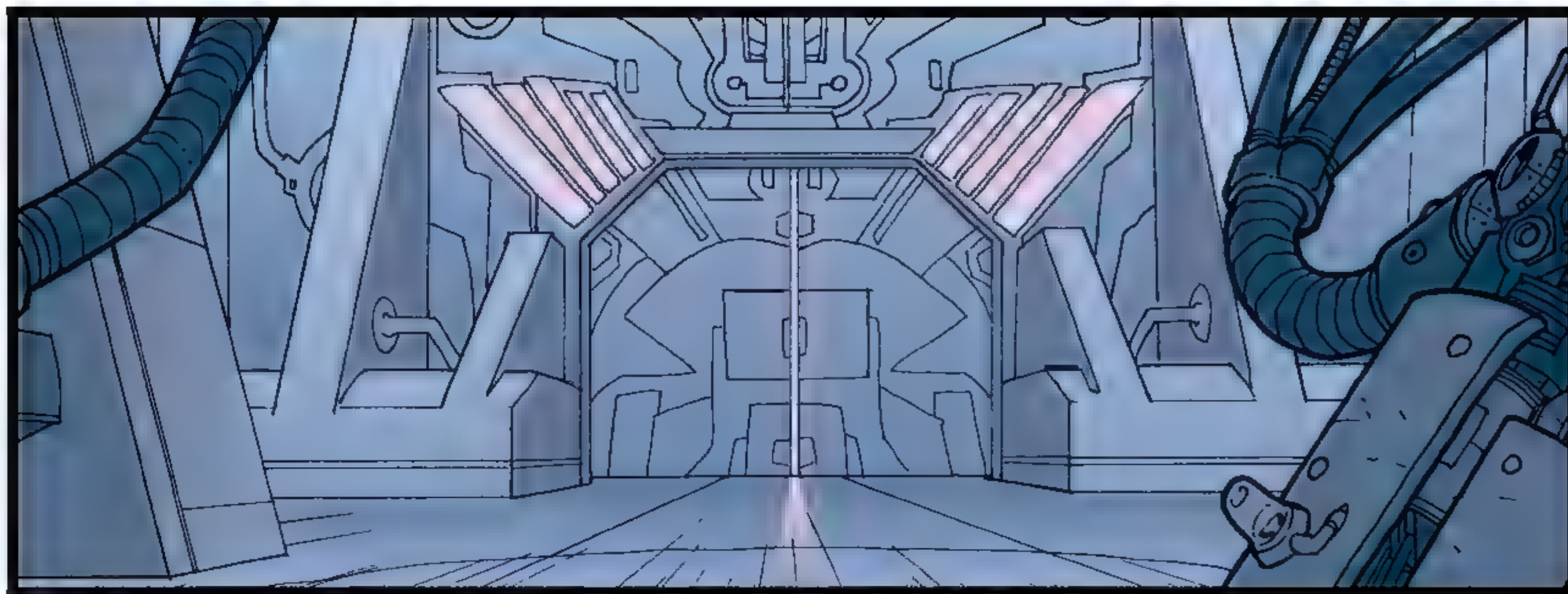


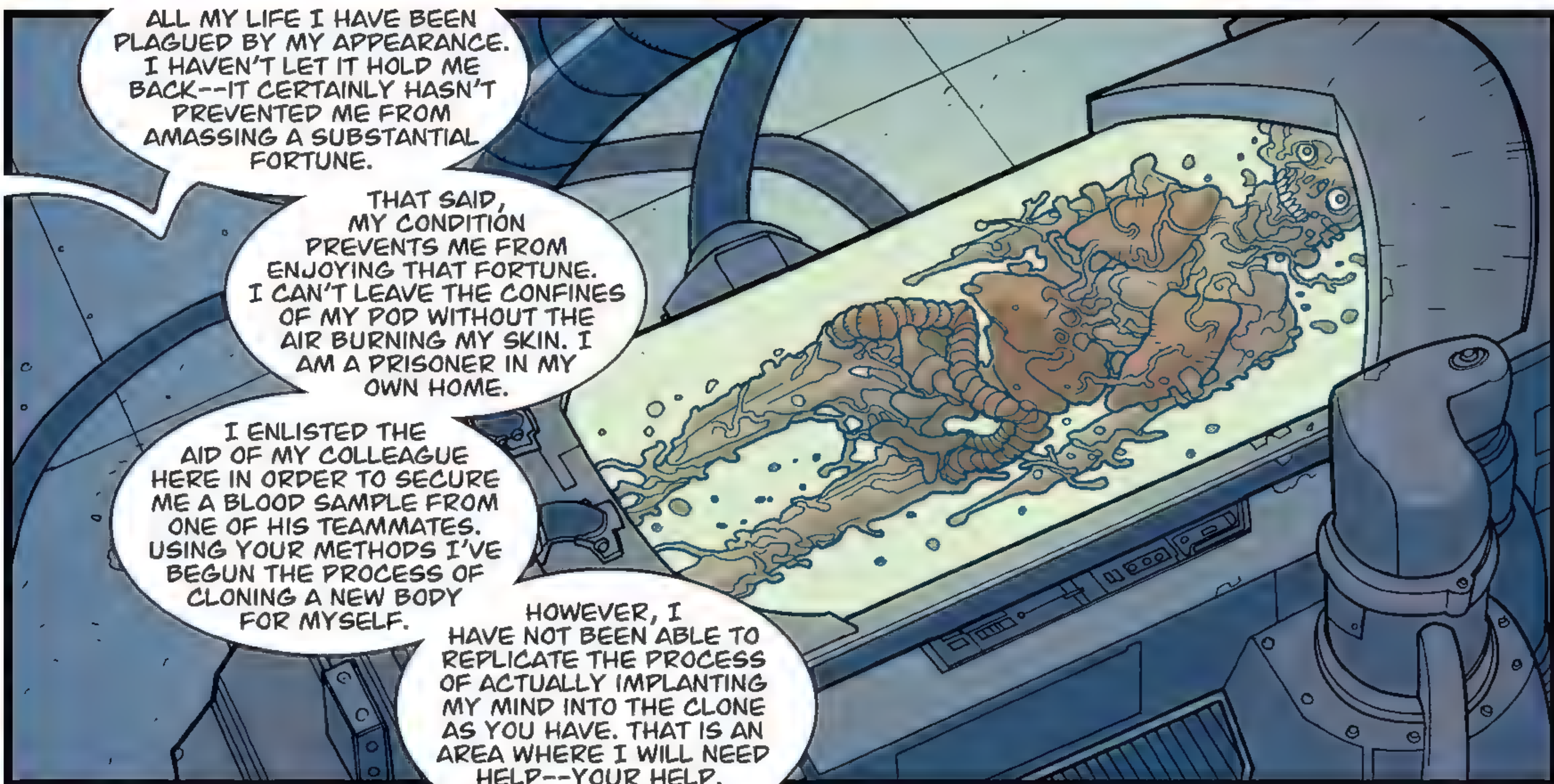
WILL DO.



YOU ARE A CUTE ONE, AREN'T YOU?

AN UNDISCLOSED
LOCATION.

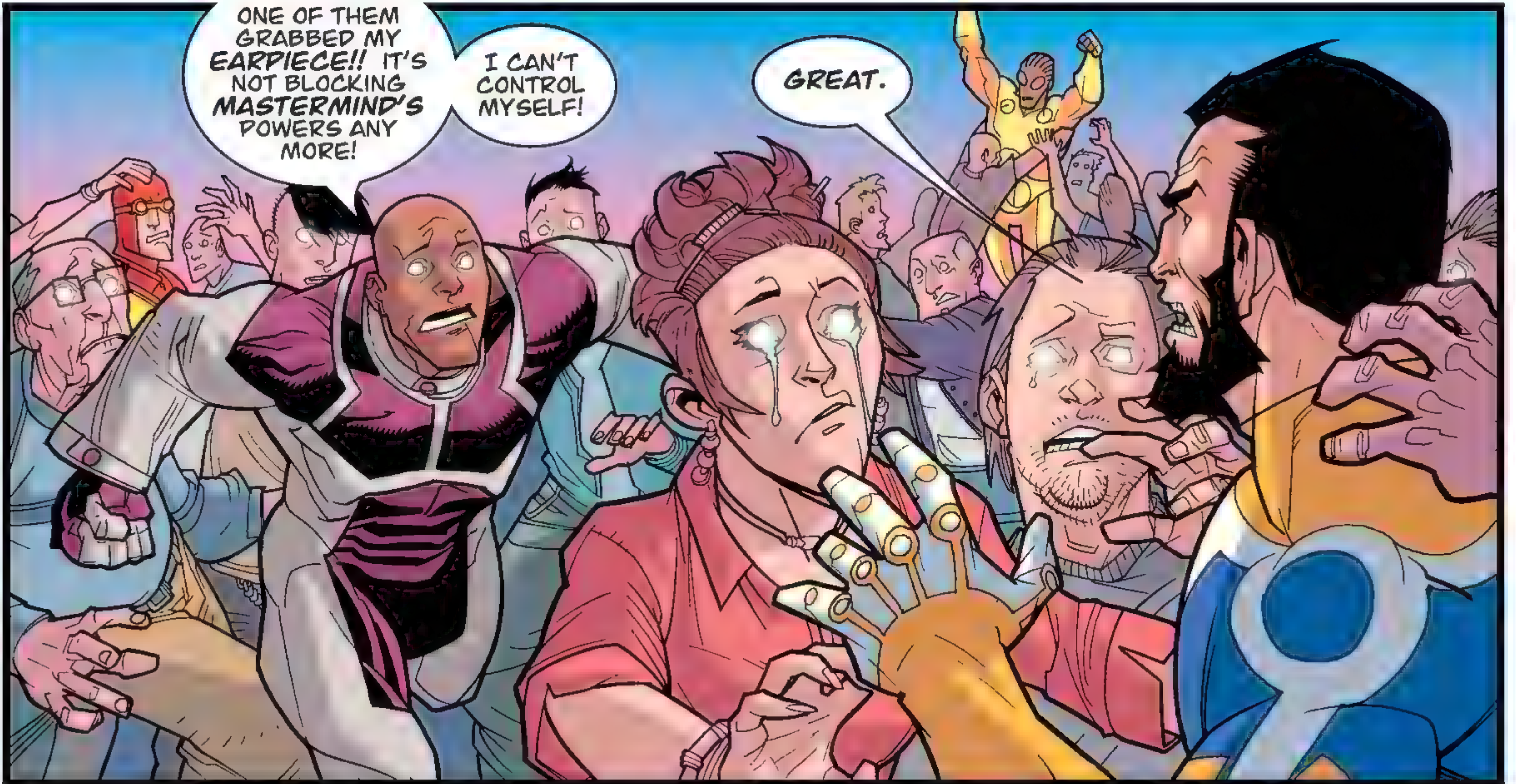
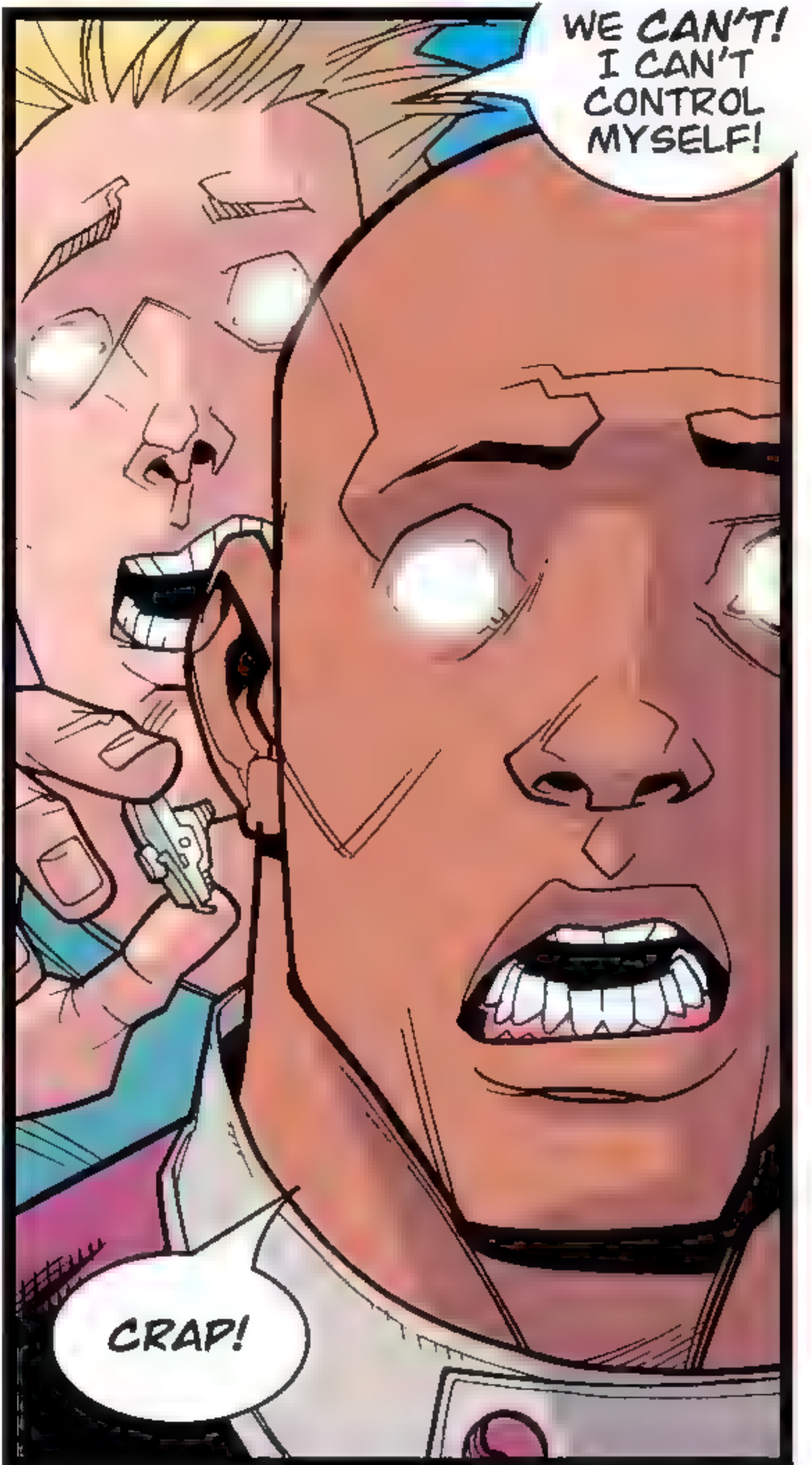






YOU
KIDDIN',
RIGHT?!

THIS
CAN'T BE
ALL YOU
GOT!!





THANKS FOR THE ADVERTISEMENT, BLACK SAMSON! NOW THEY'RE ALL GOING AFTER OUR EARPICES.



DON'T LAY THAT ON ME, JERK! THEY WERE AFTER MINE BEFORE I SAID ANYTHING! BESIDES, THEY'RE BEING CONTROLLED BY ONE GUY! IF HE TOLD ONE OF THEM TO DO IT, HE TOLD ALL OF THEM!

CRAP! THERE GOES MY EARPICE!



WHERE'S ROBOT?! THIS GUY'S POWERS WOULDN'T WORK ON HIM, WOULD THEY?



HE DIDN'T ANSWER THE CALL THIS MORNING-- HAVE ANY OF YOU NOTICED HIM ACTING A LITTLE WEIRD LATELY?

YOU MEAN MORE THAN USUAL?

THIS IS NOT GOING WELL, GUYS-- YOU GOT A PLAN? I MEAN--THESE PEOPLE CAN'T REACH MY EAR BUT I CAN'T FIGHT ALL OF YOU AND STILL GET TO HIM.



I'M COMING DOWN BEHIND YOU, GIRL! SWAT ME OUT OF THE WAY BEFORE I KNOCK YOU DOWN TO WHERE THEY CAN GET YOUR EARPICE.



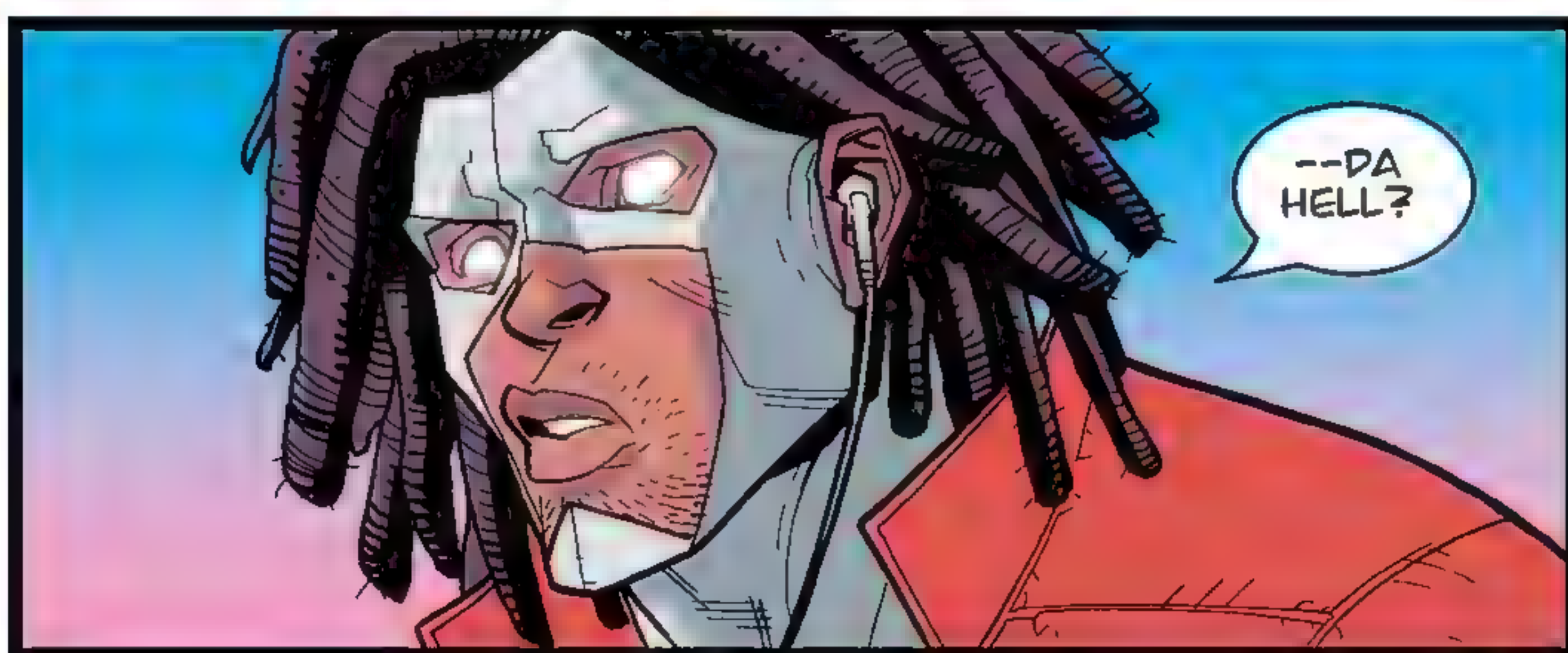
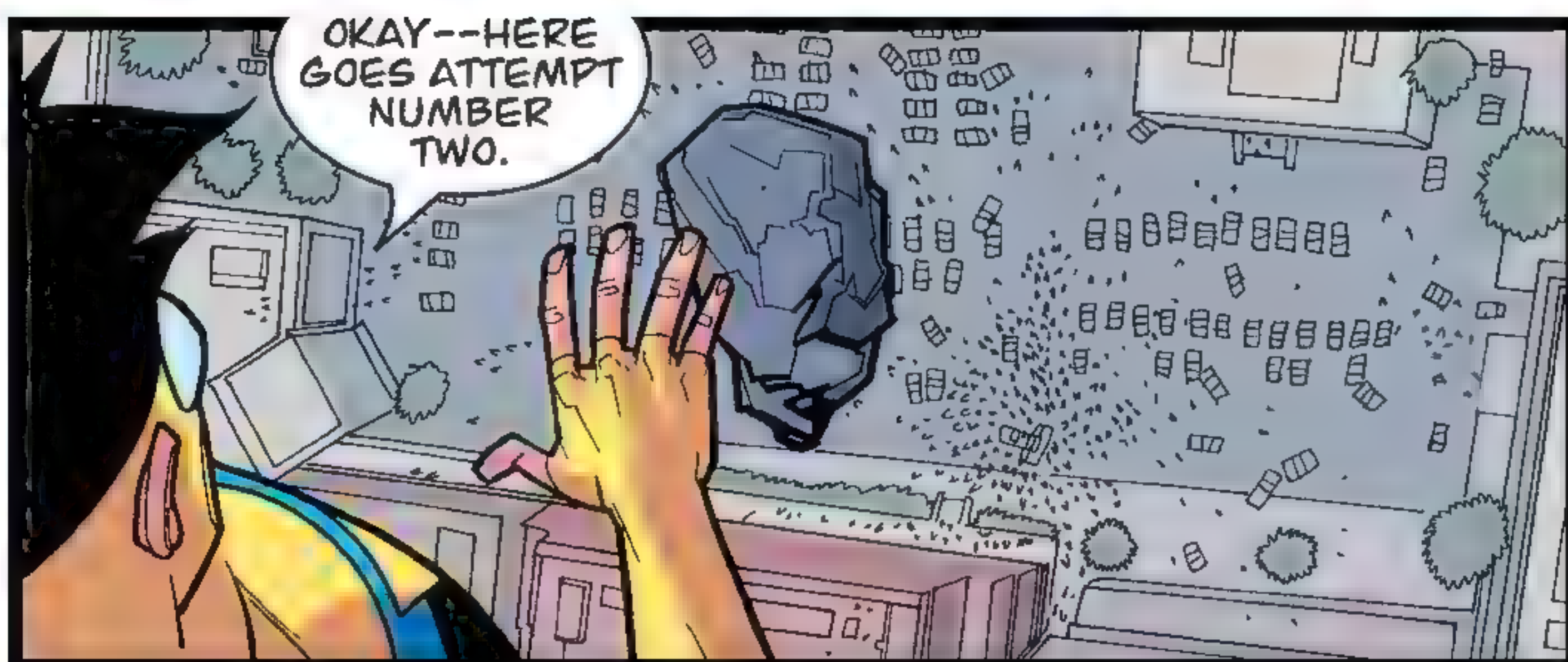
JUST HOLD OUT AS LONG AS YOU CAN, GUYS. I'M ALMOST THERE.

I'M TAKING THIS GUY OUT.

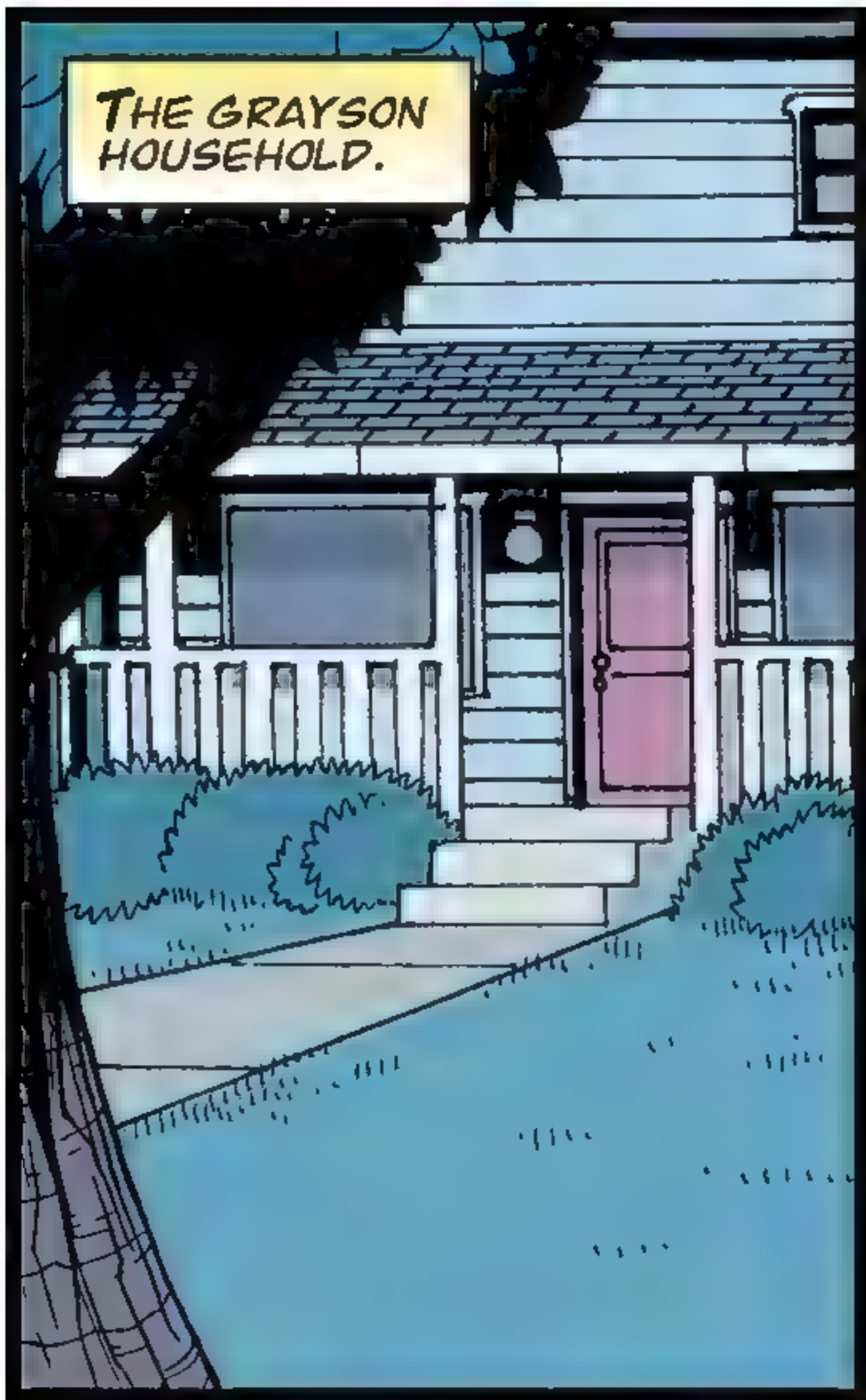


LOOKS TA ME LIKE THE OL' GUARDIANS OF DA GLOBE ARE GONNA BE A THINGA DA PAST HERE SOON.

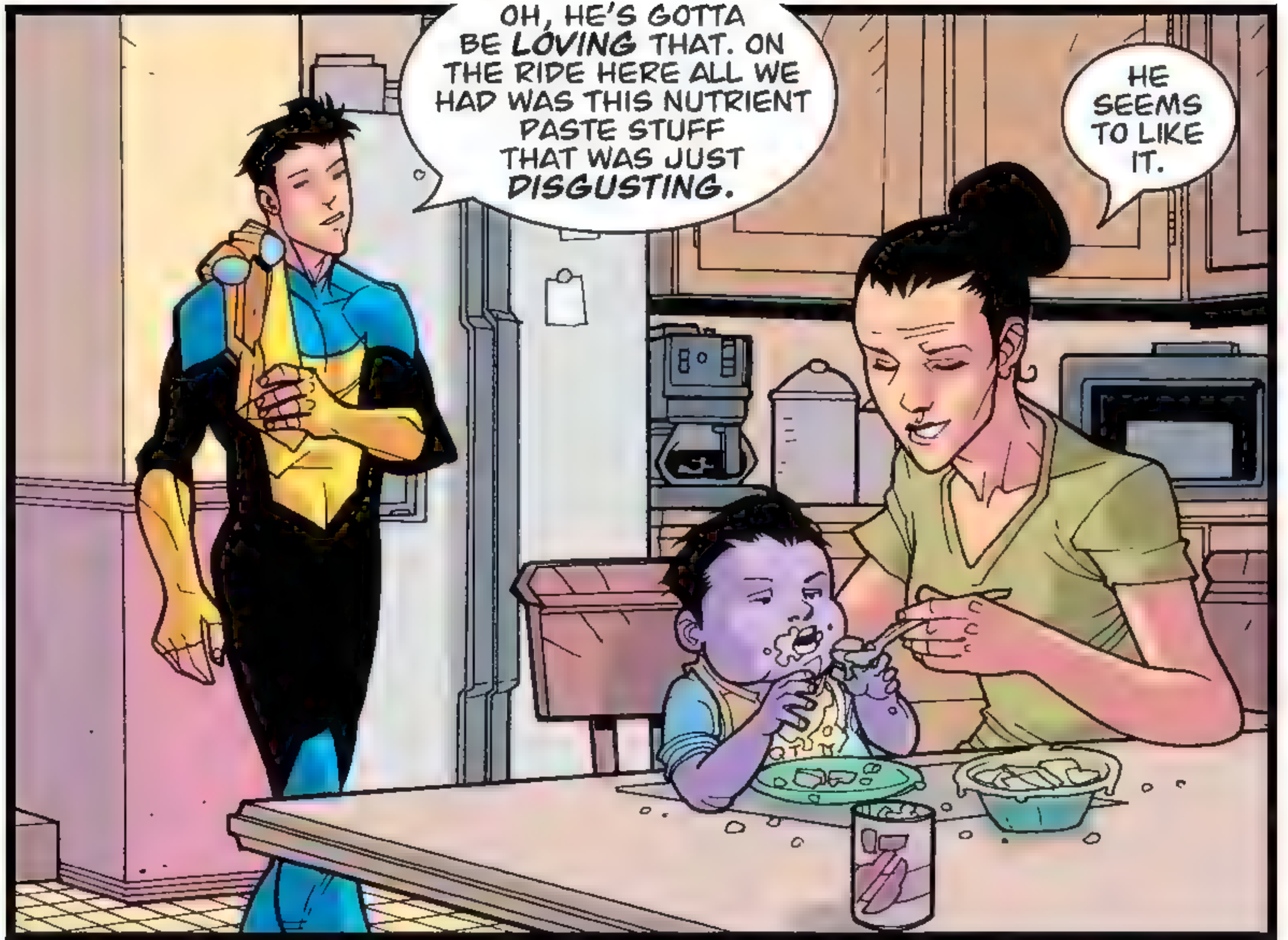
YA FEEL ME?







THE GRAYSON HOUSEHOLD.

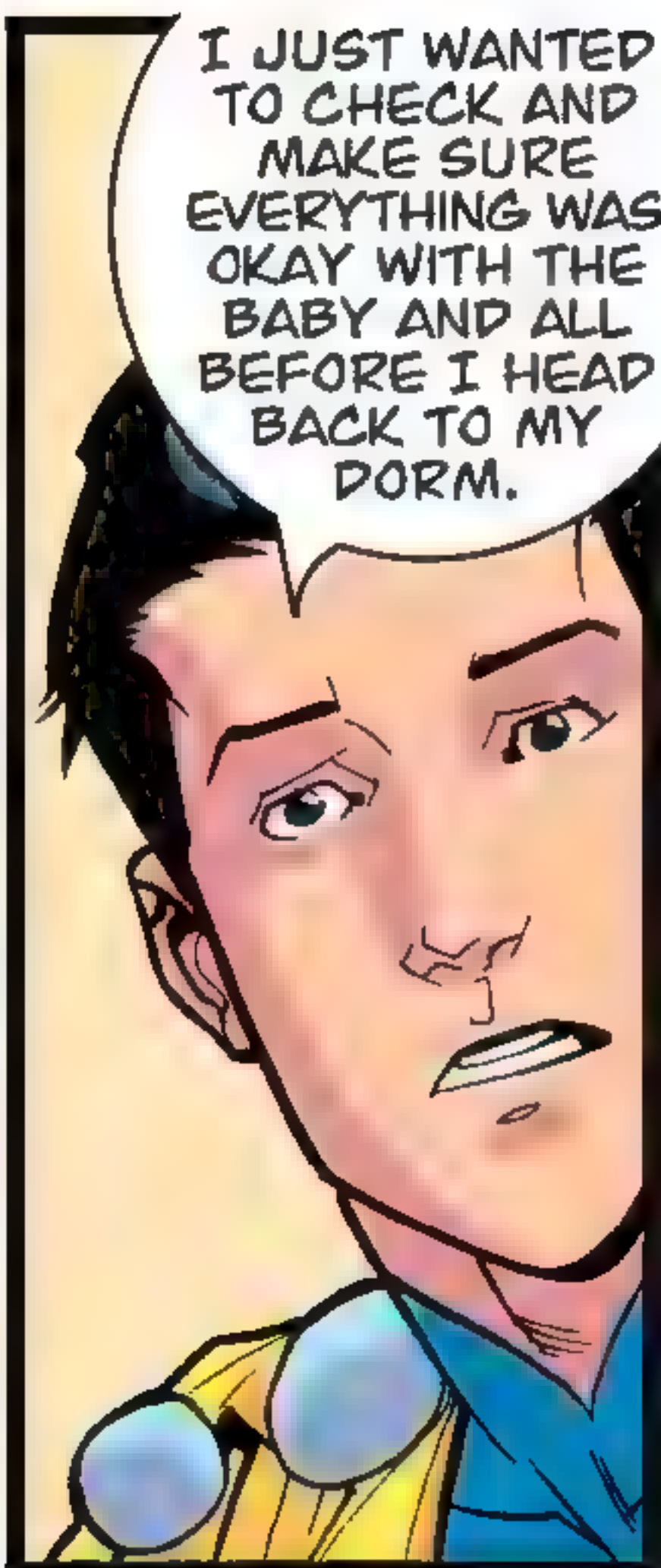


OH, HE'S GOTTA BE LOVING THAT. ON THE RIDE HERE ALL WE HAD WAS THIS NUTRIENT PASTE STUFF THAT WAS JUST DISGUSTING.

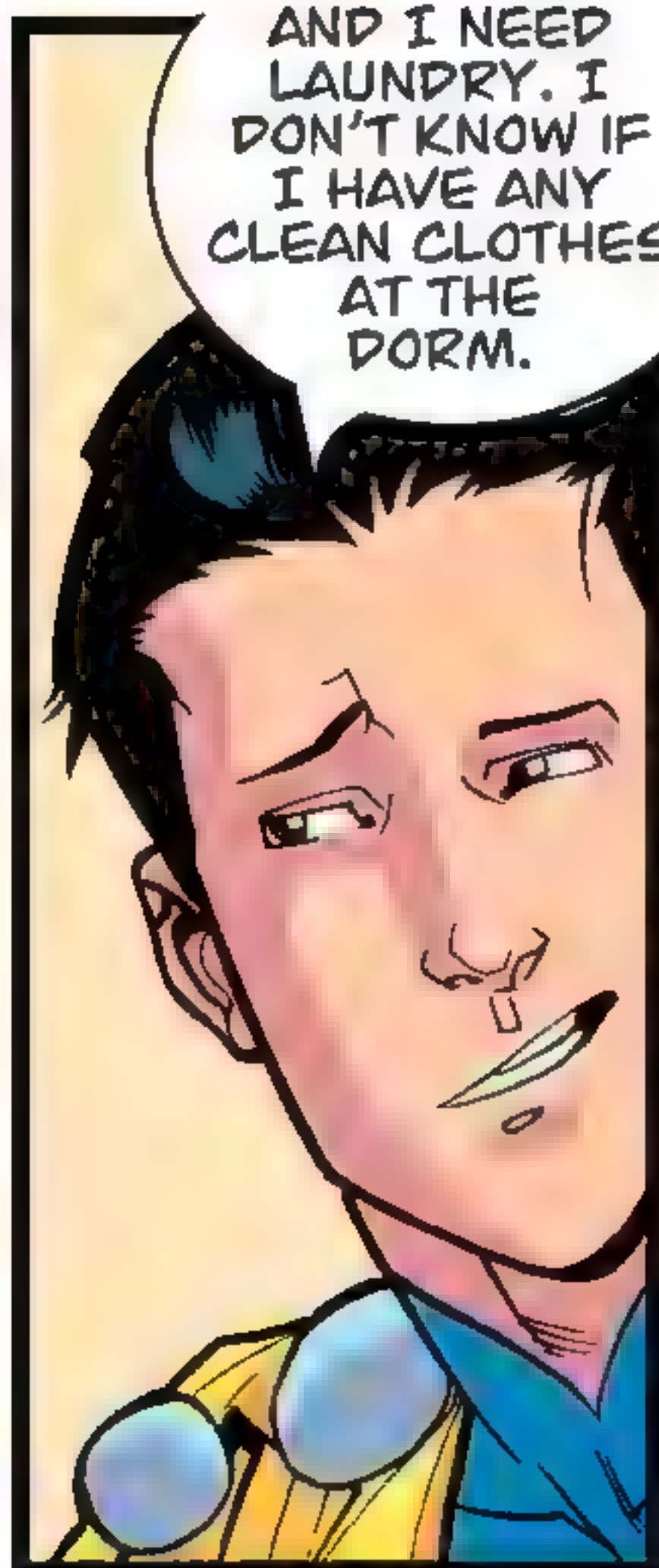
HE SEEMS TO LIKE IT.



WHAT ARE YOU DOING BACK HERE? YOU NEED LAUNDRY OR SOMETHING?



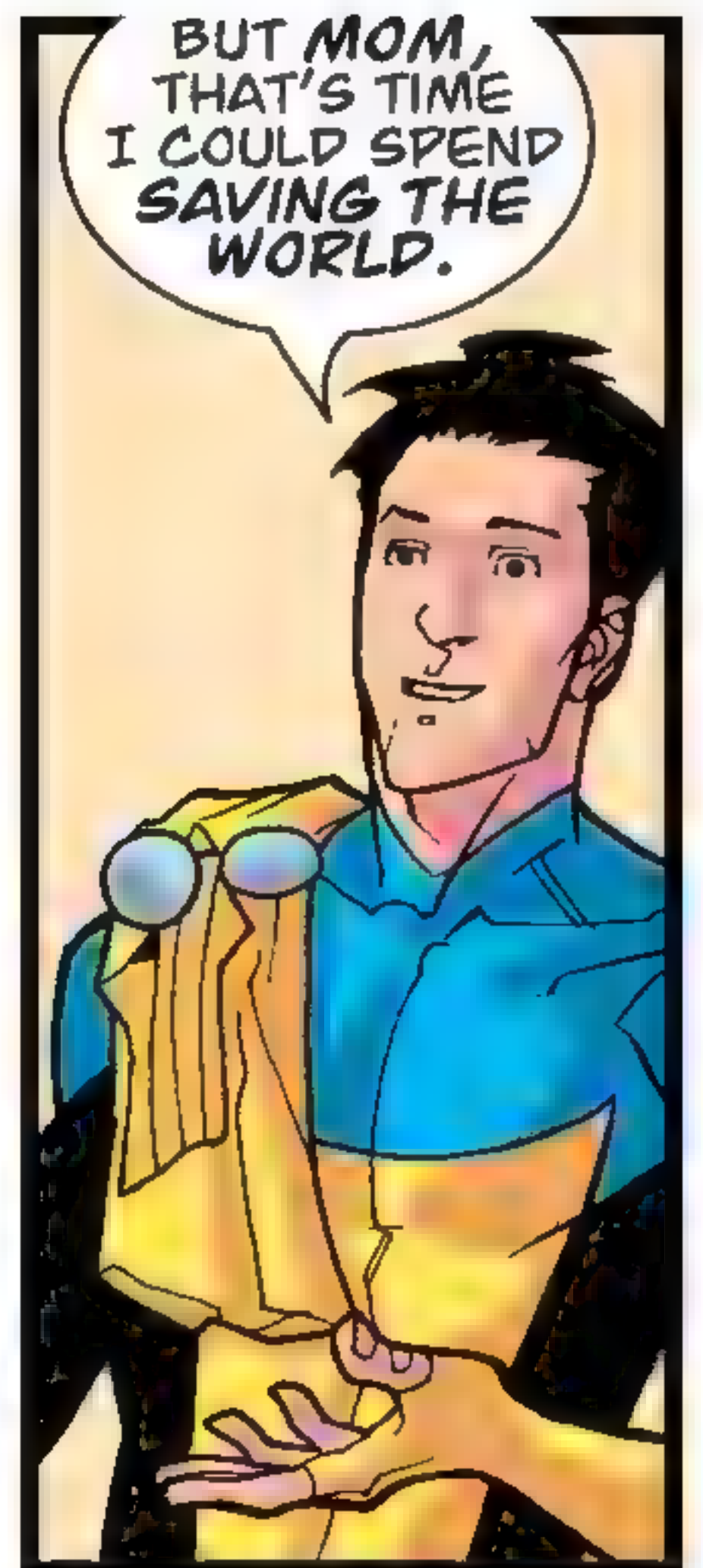
I JUST WANTED TO CHECK AND MAKE SURE EVERYTHING WAS OKAY WITH THE BABY AND ALL BEFORE I HEAD BACK TO MY DORM.



AND I NEED LAUNDRY. I DON'T KNOW IF I HAVE ANY CLEAN CLOTHES AT THE DORM.



YOU KNOW--IT'D BE A LOT EASIER IF YOU ACTUALLY BROUGHT YOUR CLOTHES BACK FOR ME TO WASH ON A REGULAR BASIS. OR, Y'KNOW--YOU COULD JUST WASH THE CLOTHES YOURSELF.



BUT MOM, THAT'S TIME I COULD SPEND SAVING THE WORLD.



RIGHT. YOU'RE ALWAYS SAVING THE WORLD. I FORGOT.

FEED YOUR BROTHER WHILE I GO GET YOUR CLOTHES.



WHAT'S SHE GOT FOR YOU HERE?

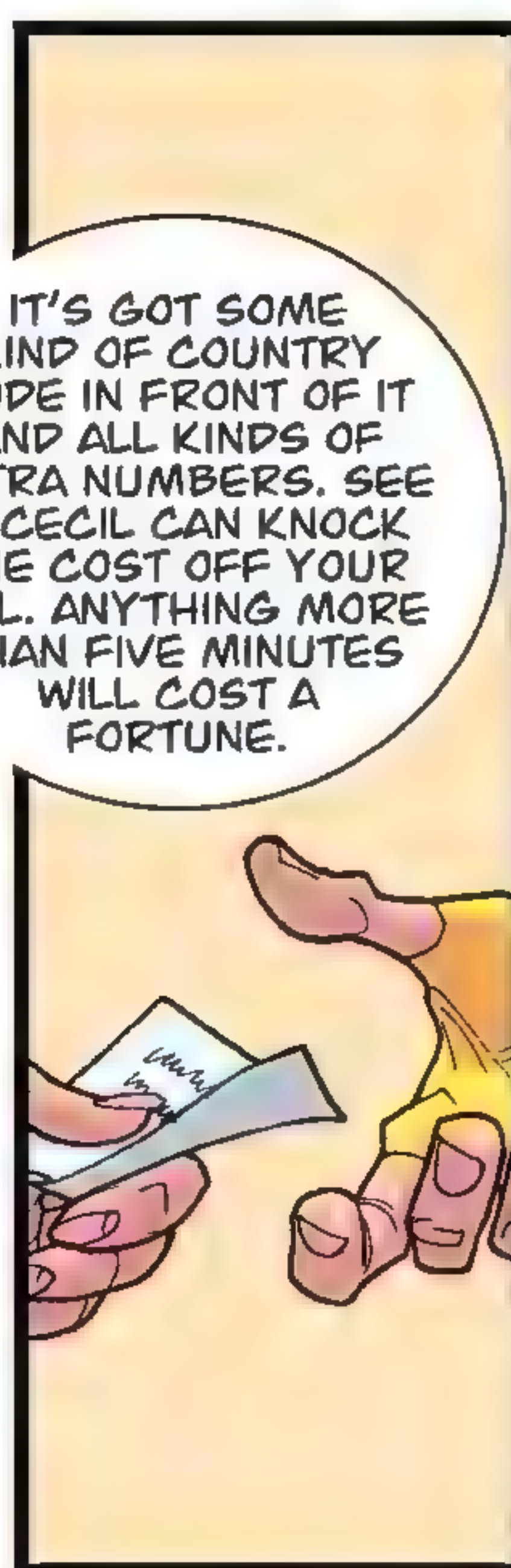
PEARS?

NICE.

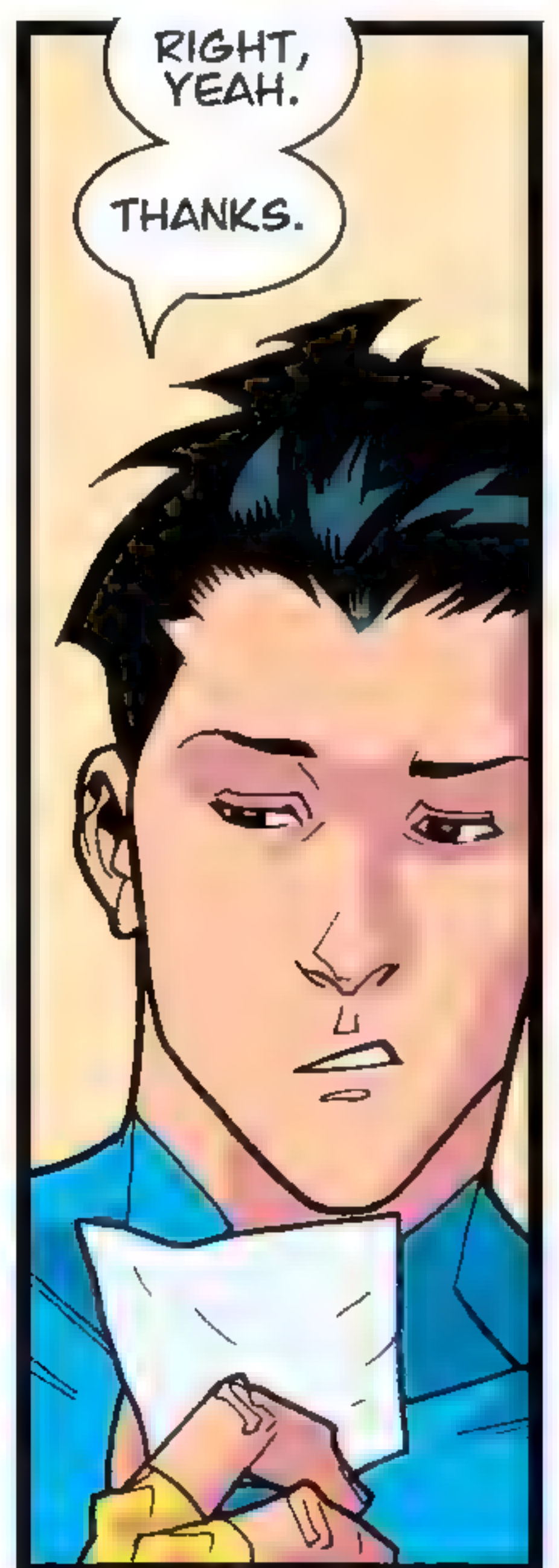


YOUR FRIEND EVE CALLED EARLIER. SHE LEFT A NUMBER FOR YOU TO CALL HER BACK.

OH, I ALMOST FORGOT.



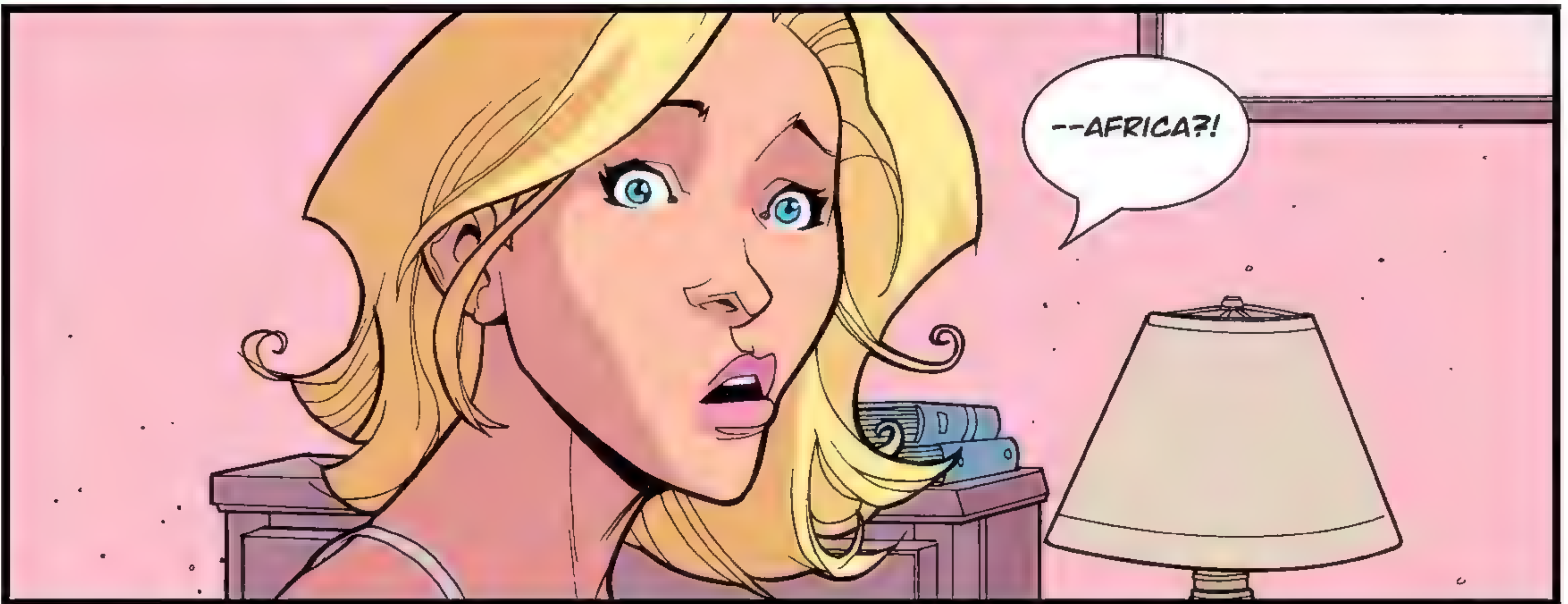
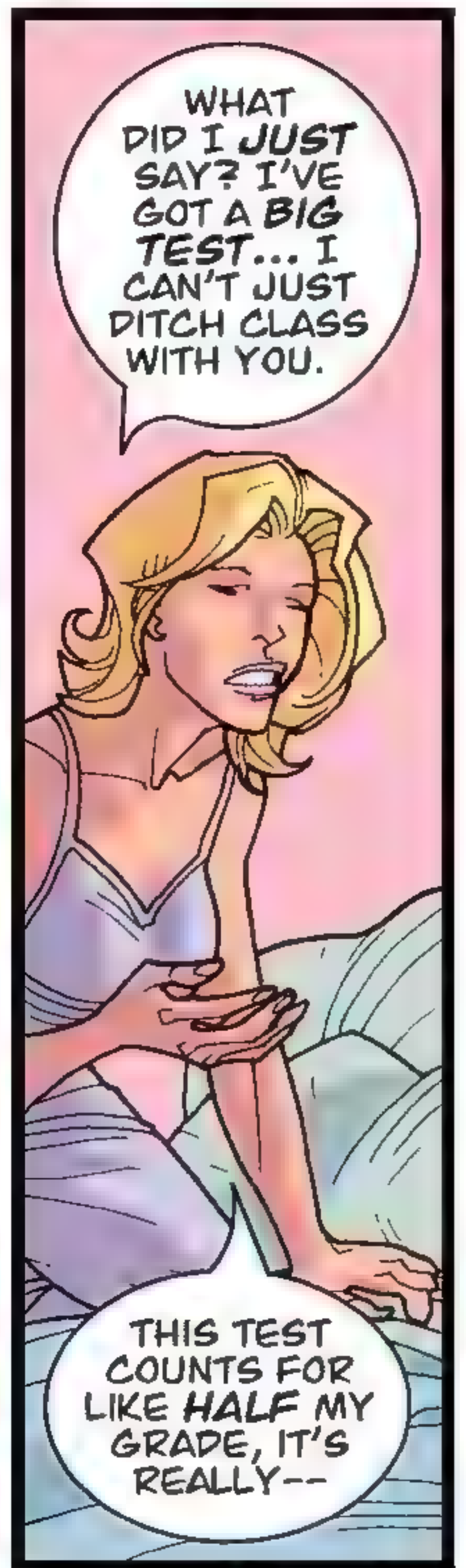
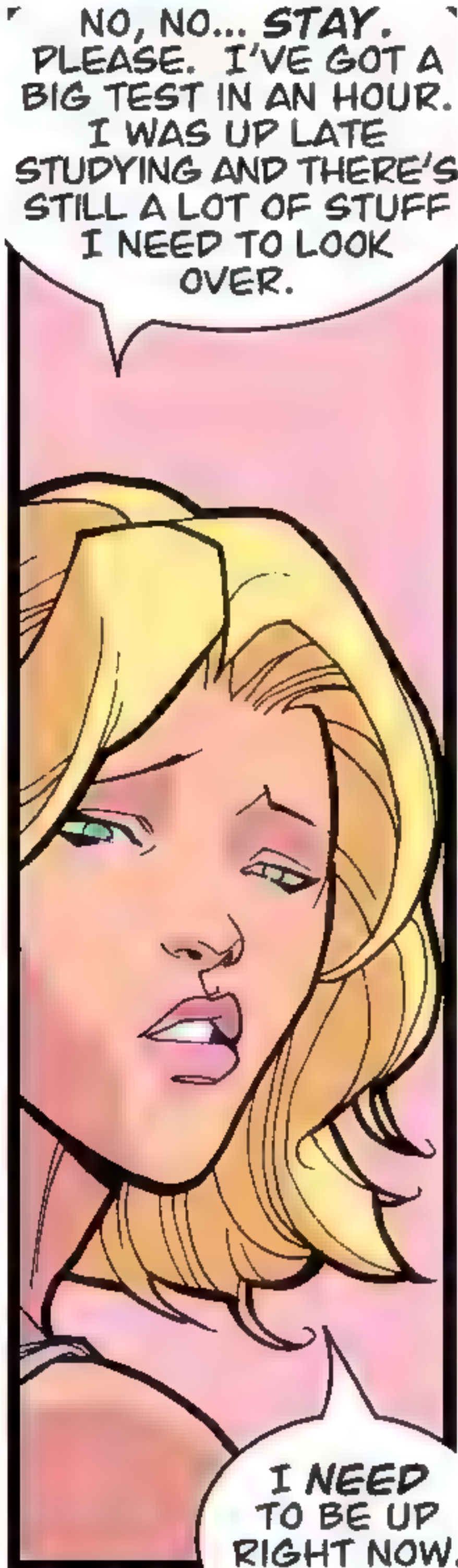
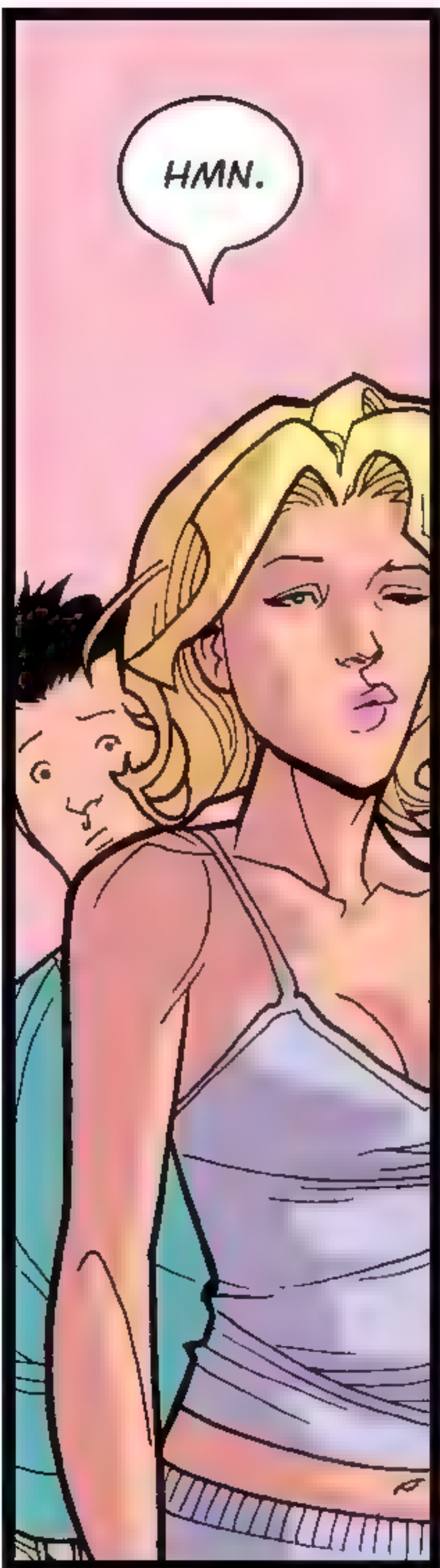
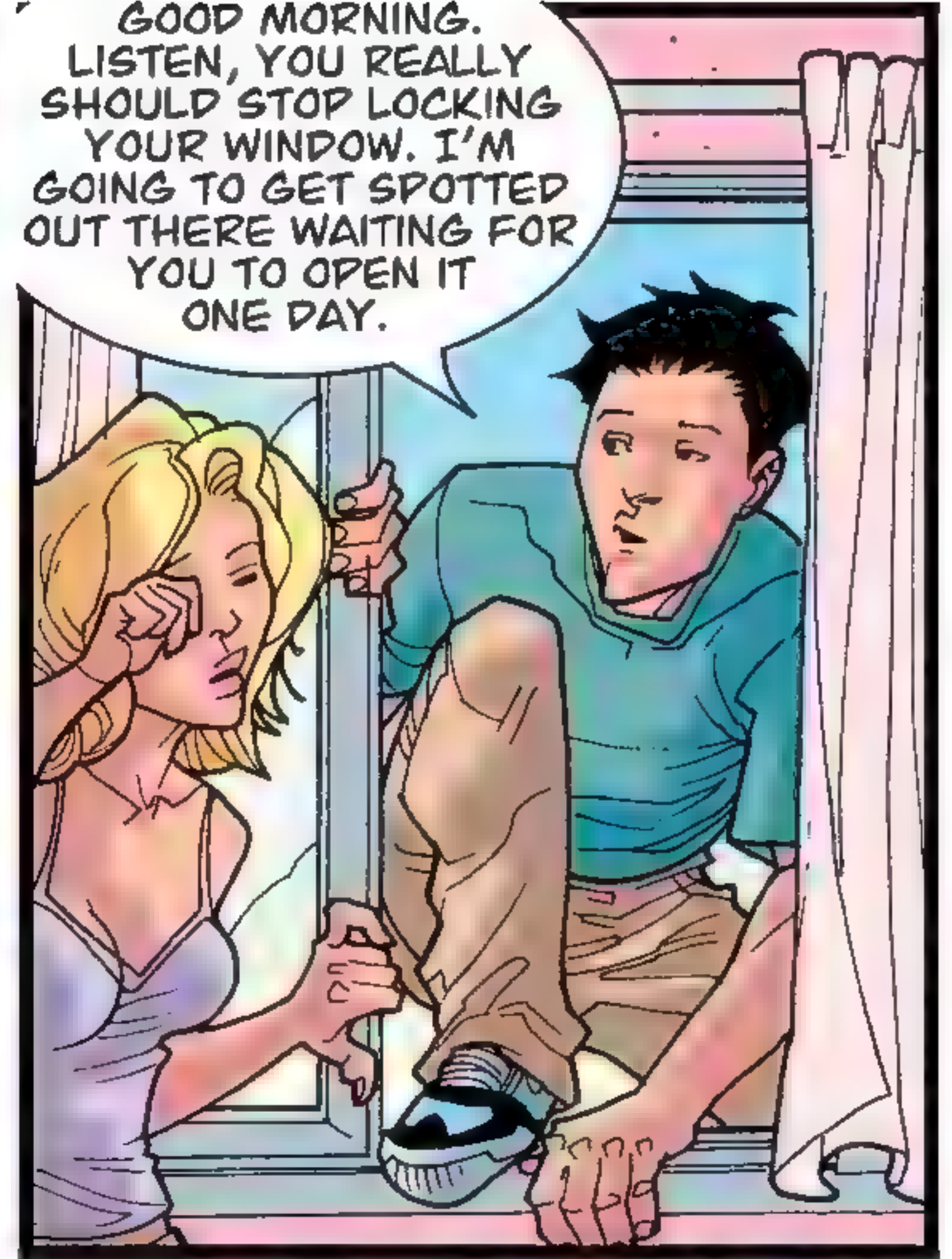
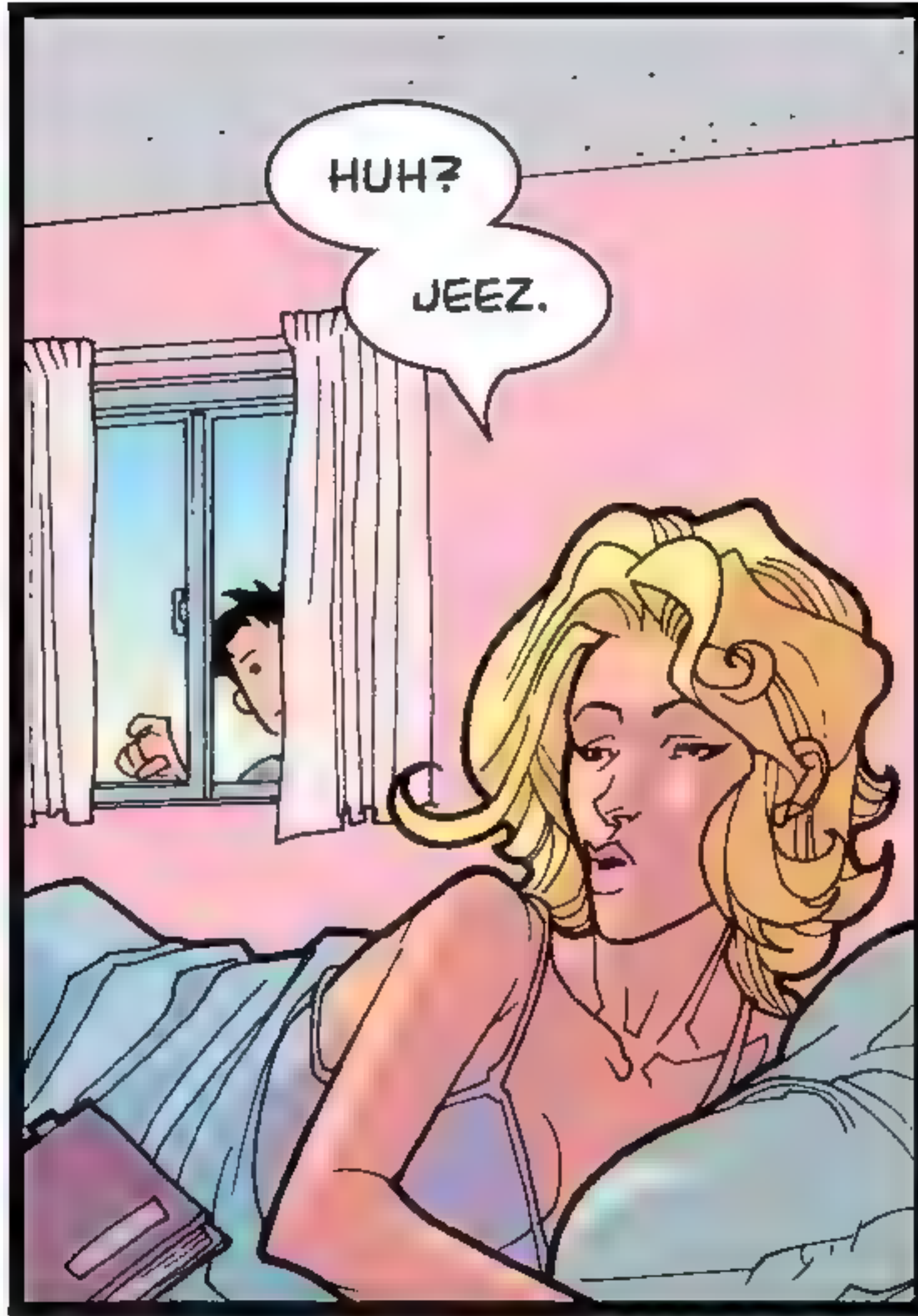
IT'S GOT SOME KIND OF COUNTRY CODE IN FRONT OF IT AND ALL KINDS OF EXTRA NUMBERS. SEE IF CECIL CAN KNOCK THE COST OFF YOUR BILL. ANYTHING MORE THAN FIVE MINUTES WILL COST A FORTUNE.



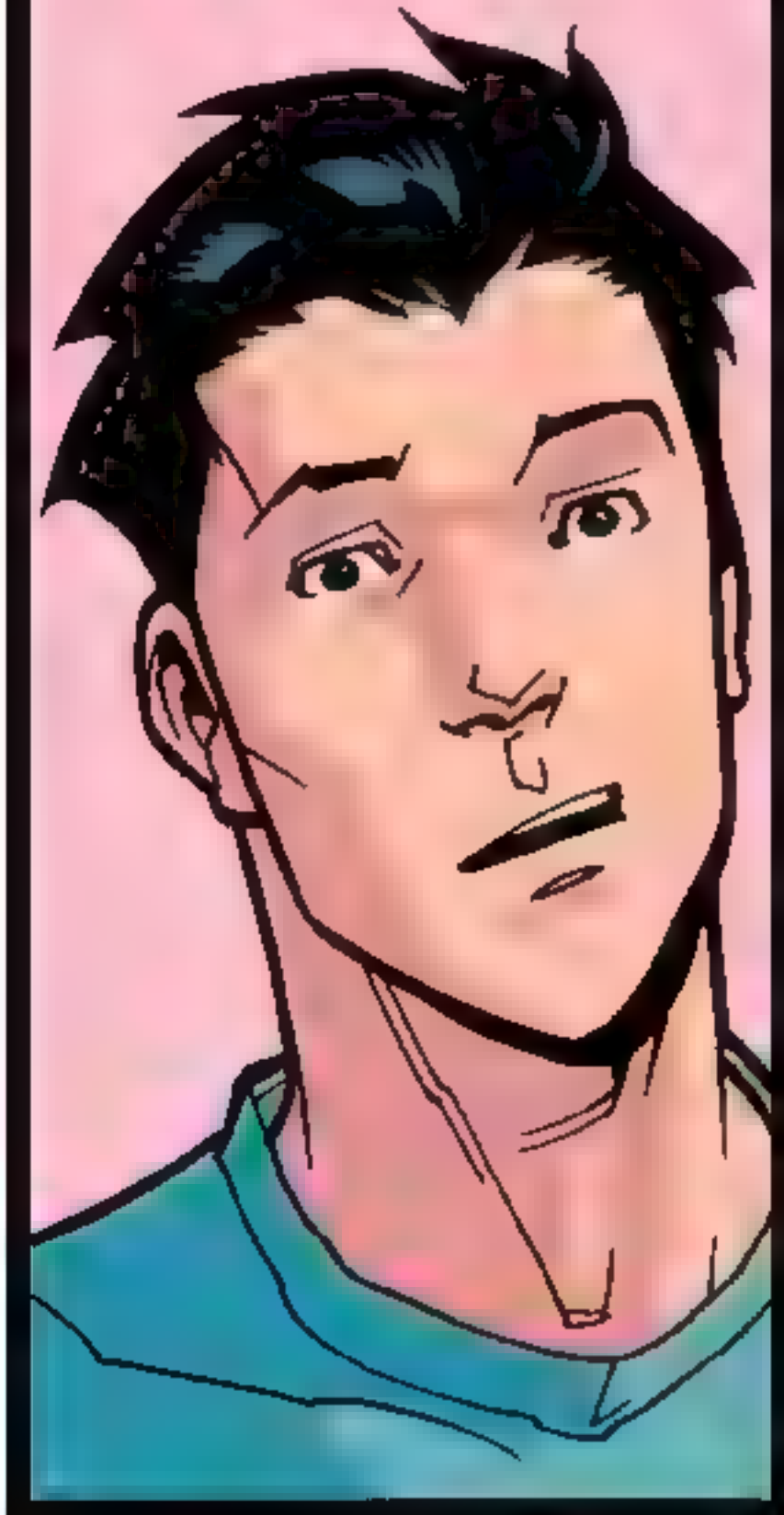
RIGHT, YEAH.

THANKS.

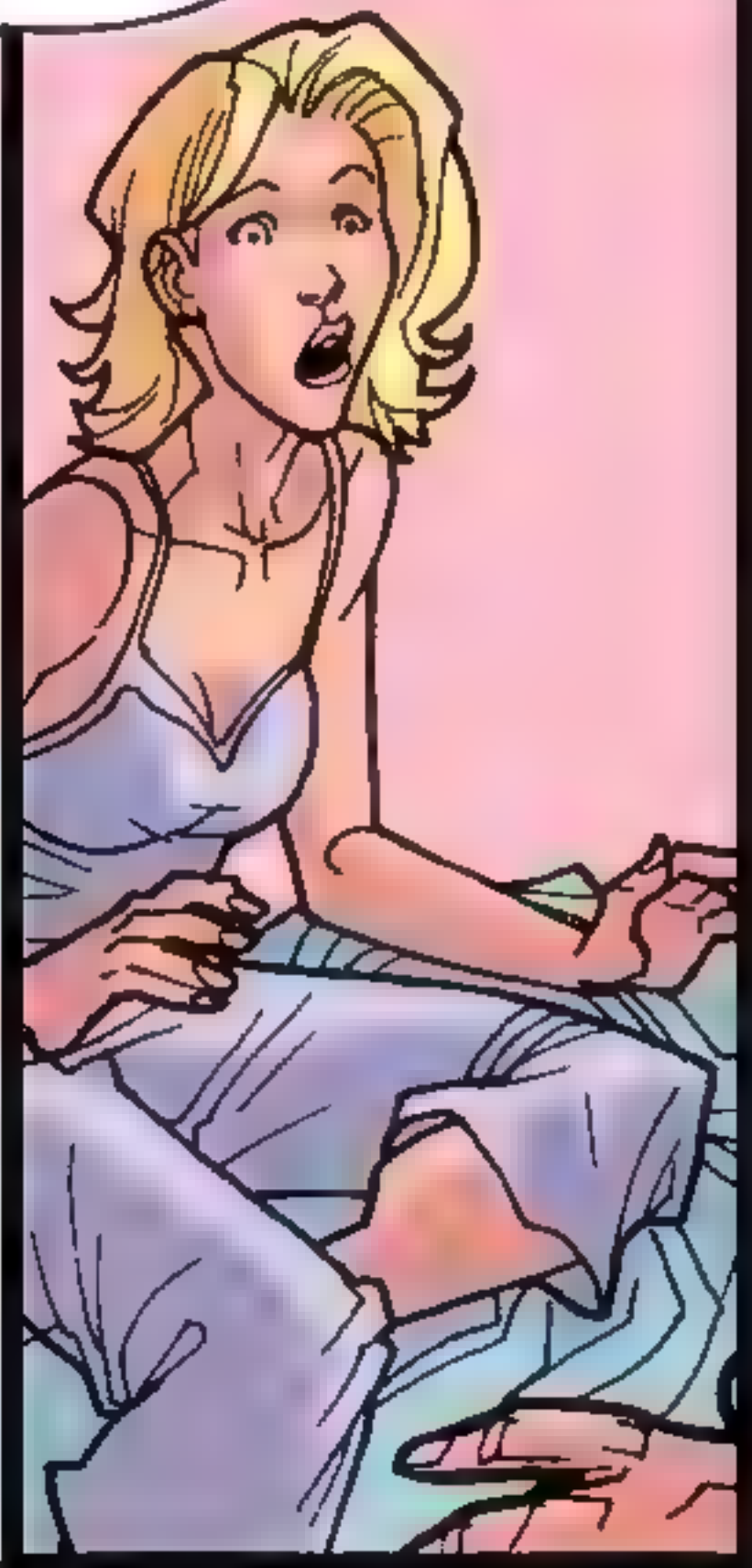




COME ON... YOU COULD MAKE UP THE TEST. YOU'D EVEN HAVE MORE TIME TO STUDY. YOU NEVER SKIP CLASS.



WE HAVEN'T REALLY GOTTEN TO SEE EACH OTHER AT ALL SINCE I GOT BACK.



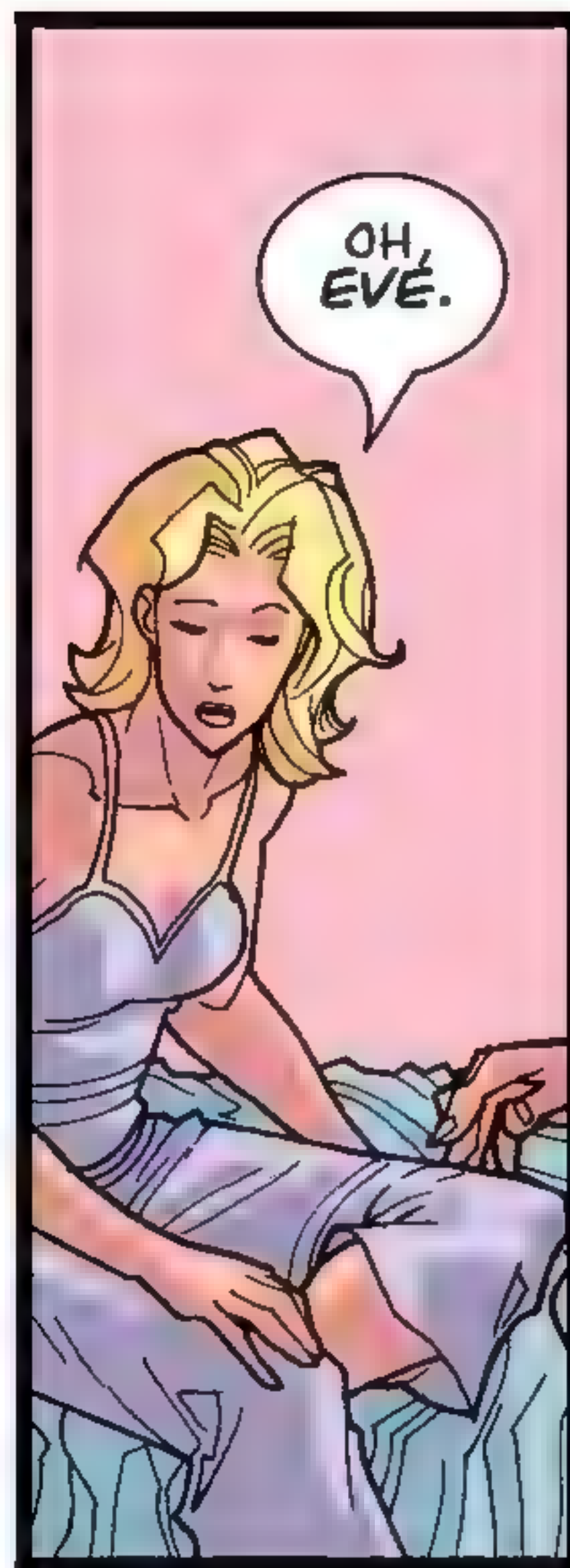
HELLO?! DID YOU SAY SOMETHING ABOUT AFRICA?!

LET'S FOLLOW UP ON THAT FIRST.



OH, THAT. MY FRIEND EVE LIVES THERE NOW. YOU'VE MET EVE.

SHE INVITED US.

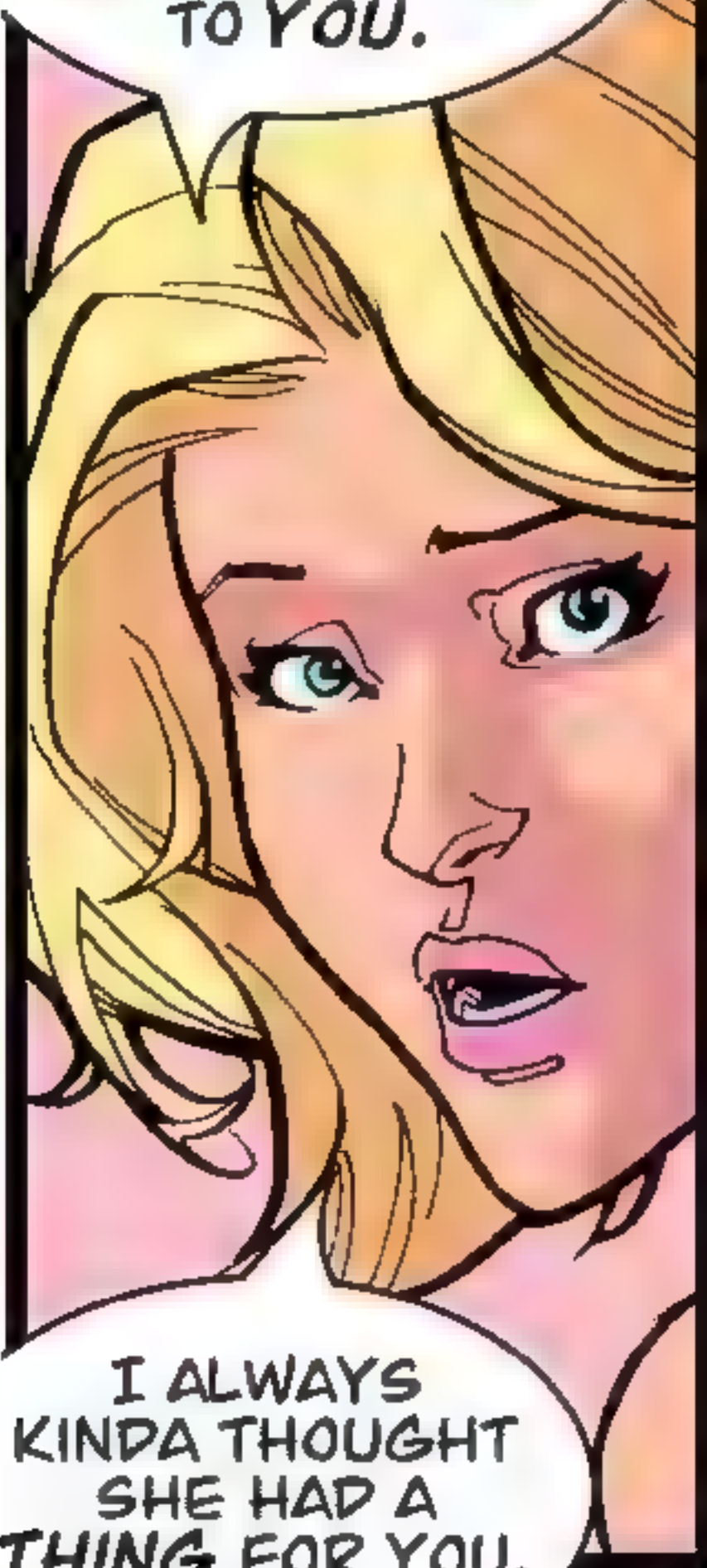


OH, EVE.



WHAT? YOU LIKE EVE, RIGHT?

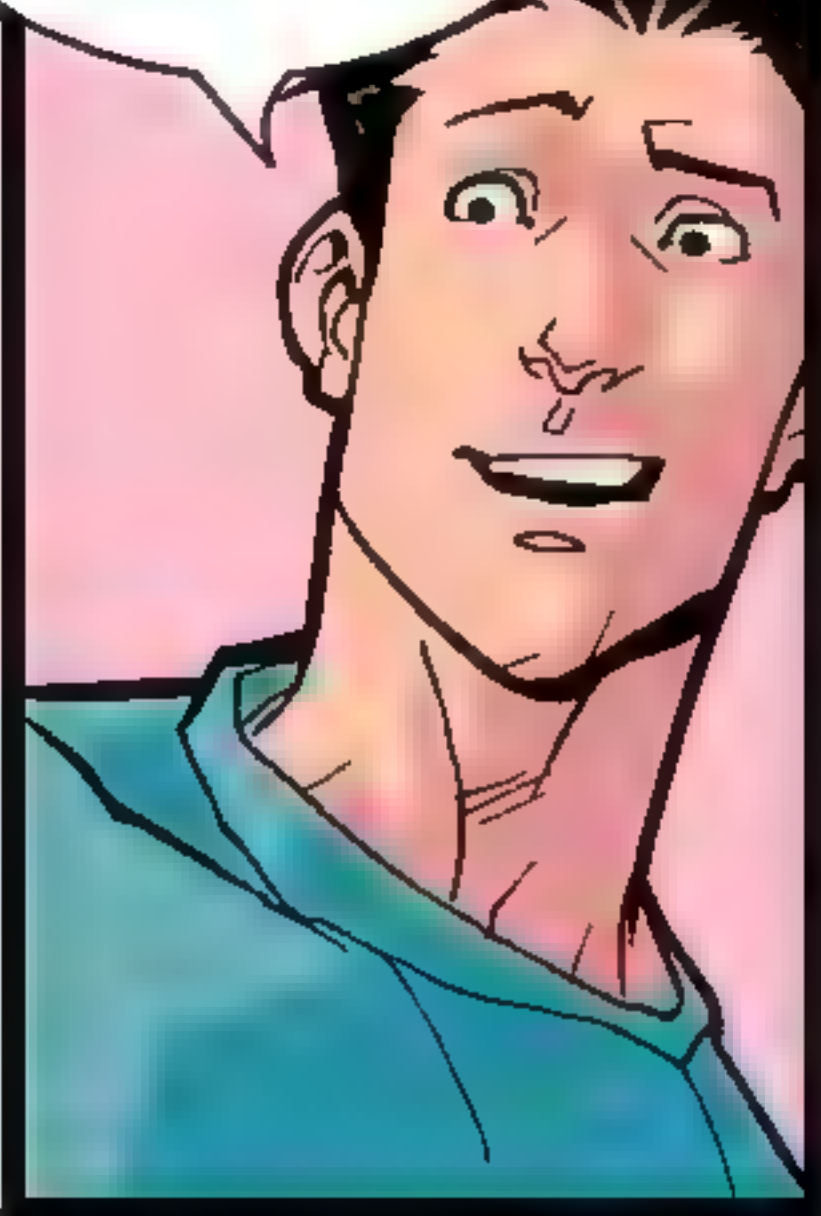
YEAH, SHE'S COOL IT'S JUST THAT, I ALWAYS THOUGHT SHE WENT OUT WITH WILLIAM TO GET TO YOU.



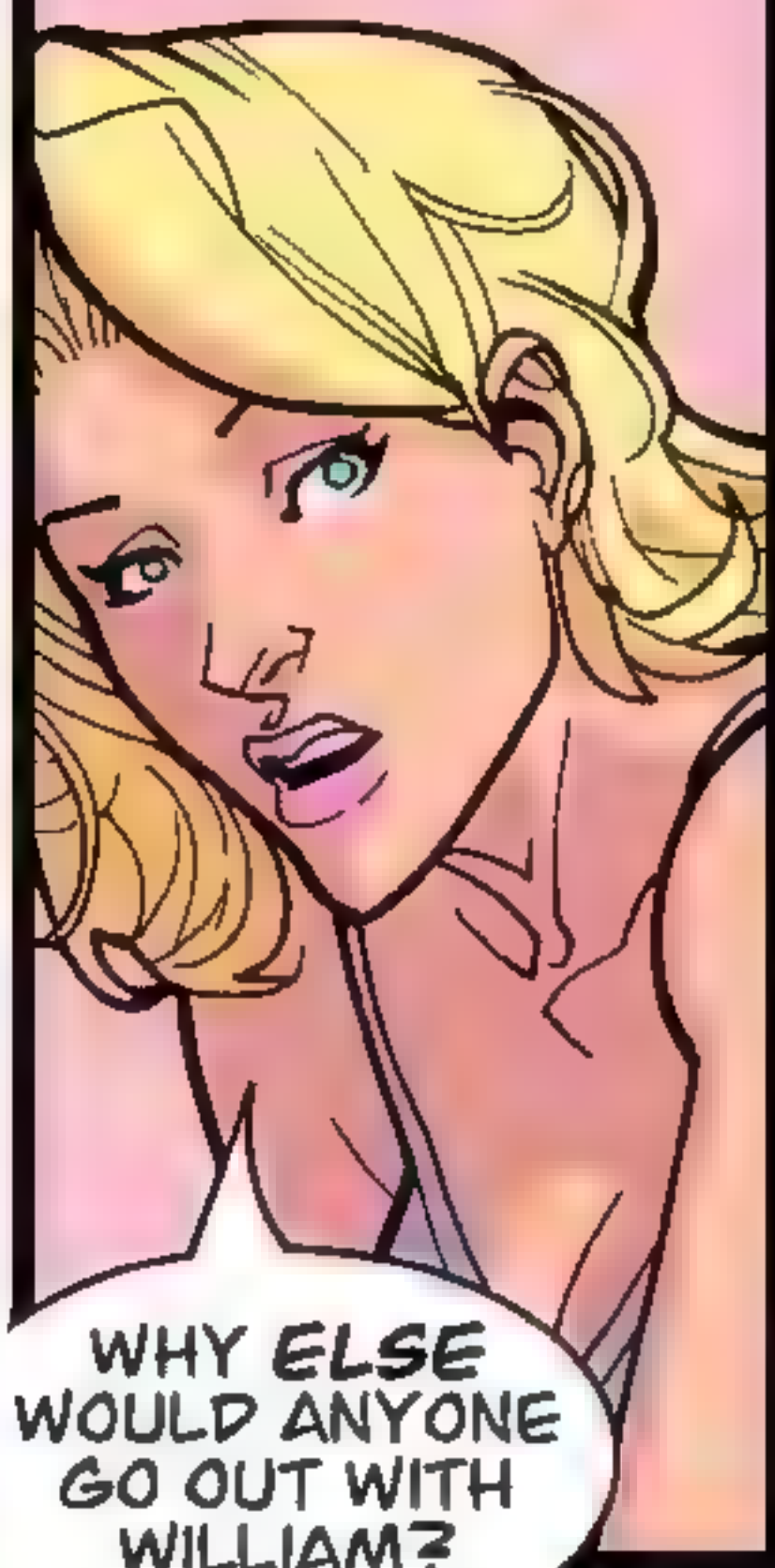
I ALWAYS KINDA THOUGHT SHE HAD A THING FOR YOU.

EVE? YOU THOUGHT EVE HAD A THING FOR ME?

THAT'S HILARIOUS! WE'RE JUST REALLY GOOD FRIENDS--THE SUPERHERO THING AND ALL. WHAT MAKES YOU THINK SHE LIKED ME?

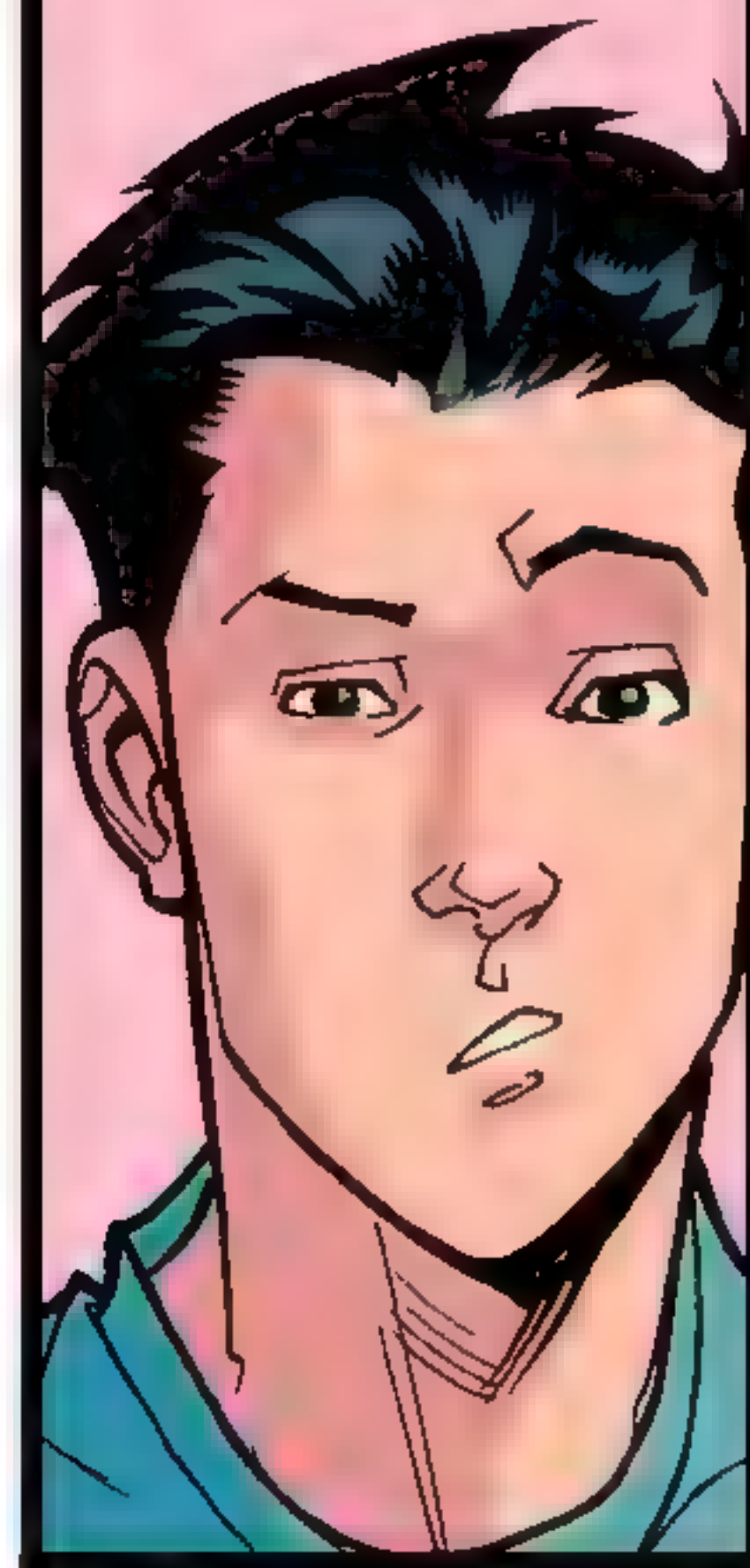


I DON'T KNOW, THE WAY SHE ACTS AROUND YOU SOMETIMES. BESIDES...

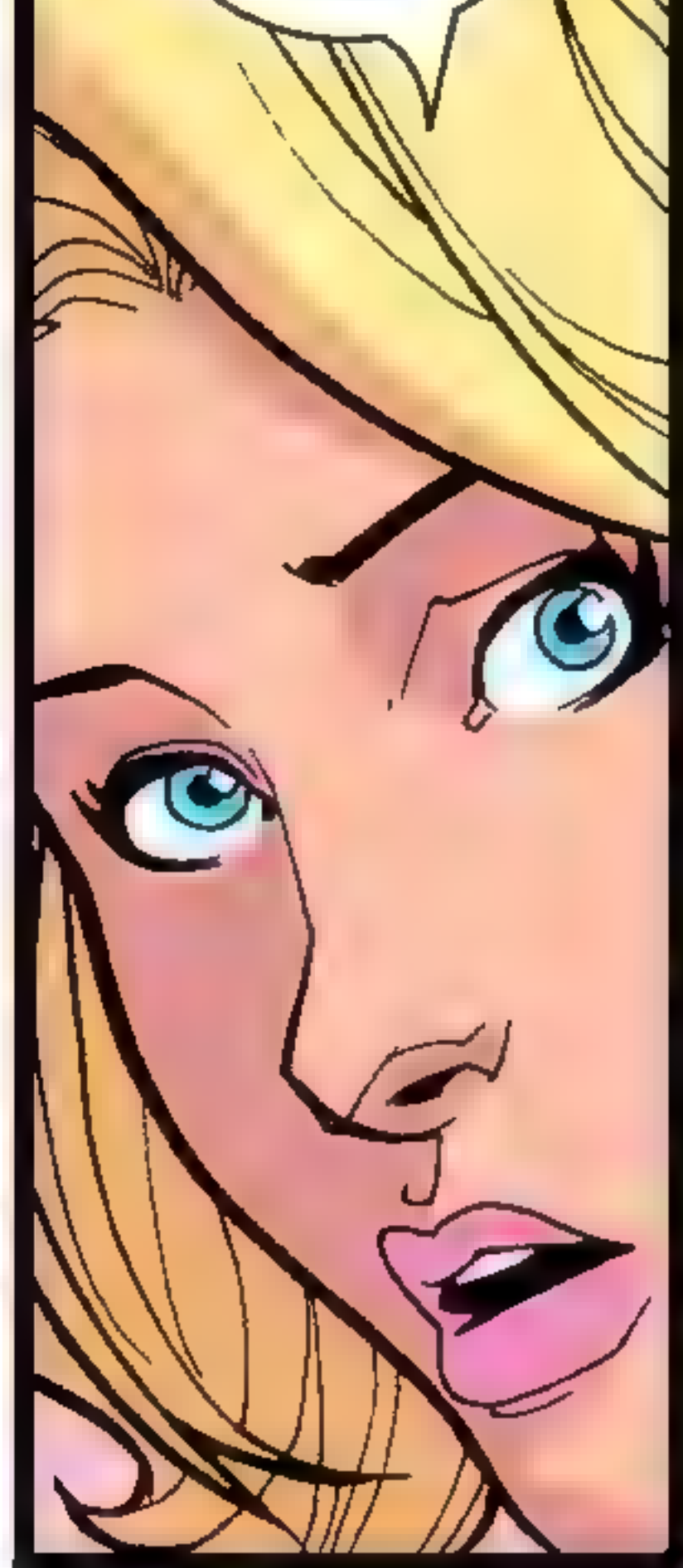


WHY ELSE WOULD ANYONE GO OUT WITH WILLIAM?

HM. MAYBE YOU DO HAVE A POINT.



YOU DON'T HAVE A THING FOR HER, DO YOU?

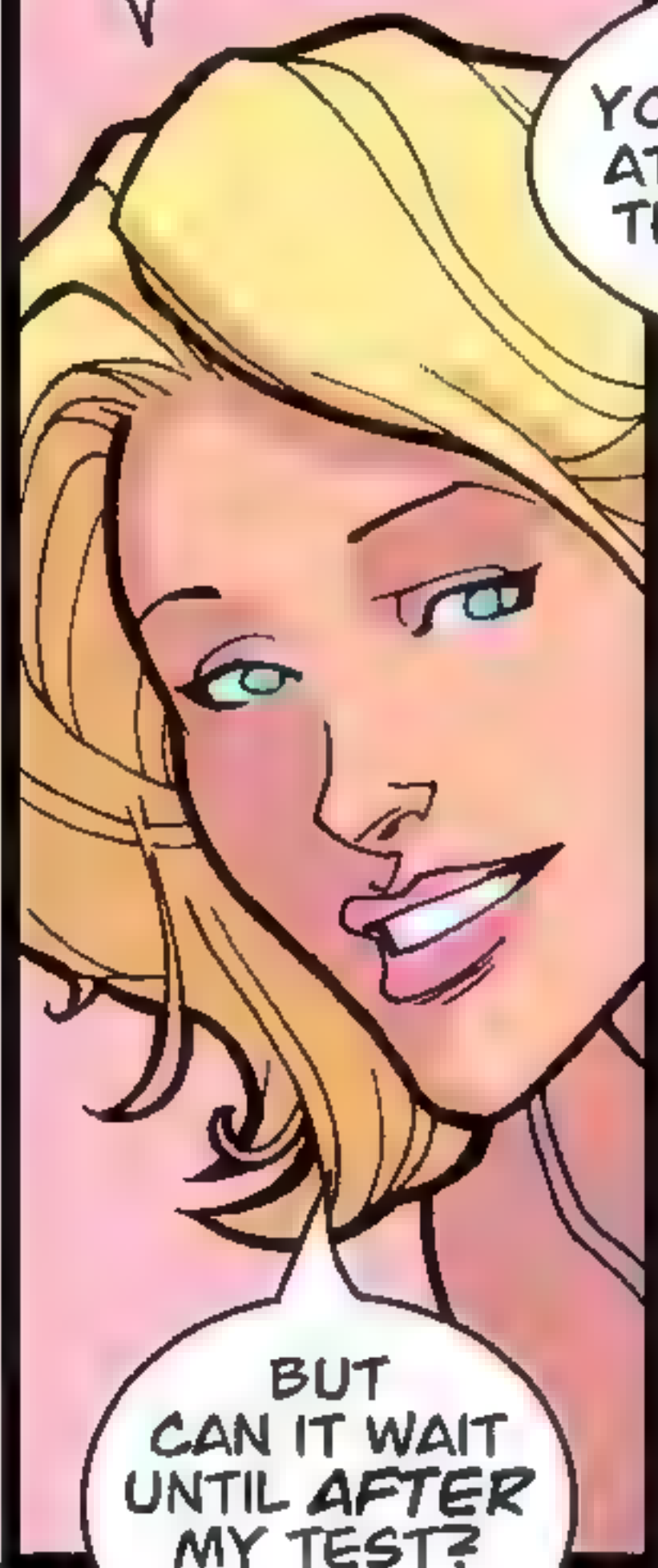


NO, OF COURSE NOT. I MEAN, SHE'S CUTE BUT I NEVER REALLY LOOKED AT HER THAT WAY. SHE WAS WITH REX WHEN WE FIRST MET.



I'VE NEVER EVEN THOUGHT ABOUT IT. SO ARE WE GOING TO AFRICA OR NOT?

I CAN'T PASS THAT UP. YOU KNOW THAT.



BUT CAN IT WAIT UNTIL AFTER MY TEST?

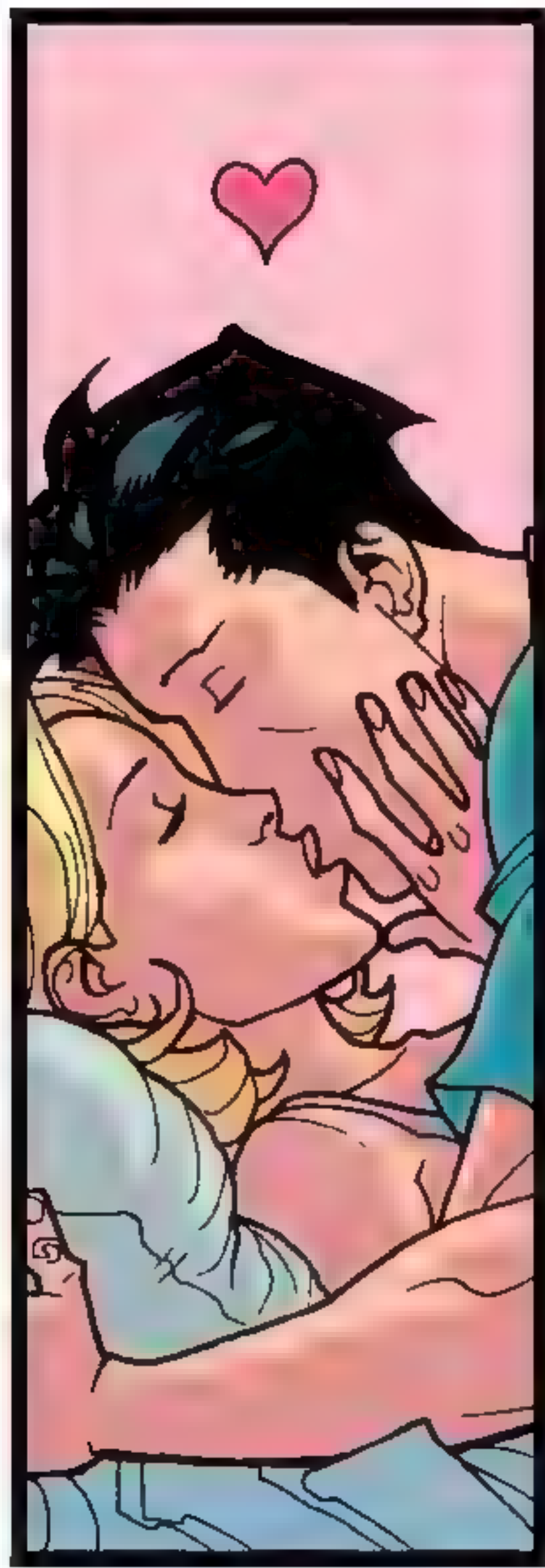
YEAH, SURE... I SHOULD PROBABLY MAKE AN APPEARANCE AT MY CLASSES TODAY ANYWAY.

I'LL MEET YOU BACK HERE AT... HOW DOES THREE-THIRTY SOUND?

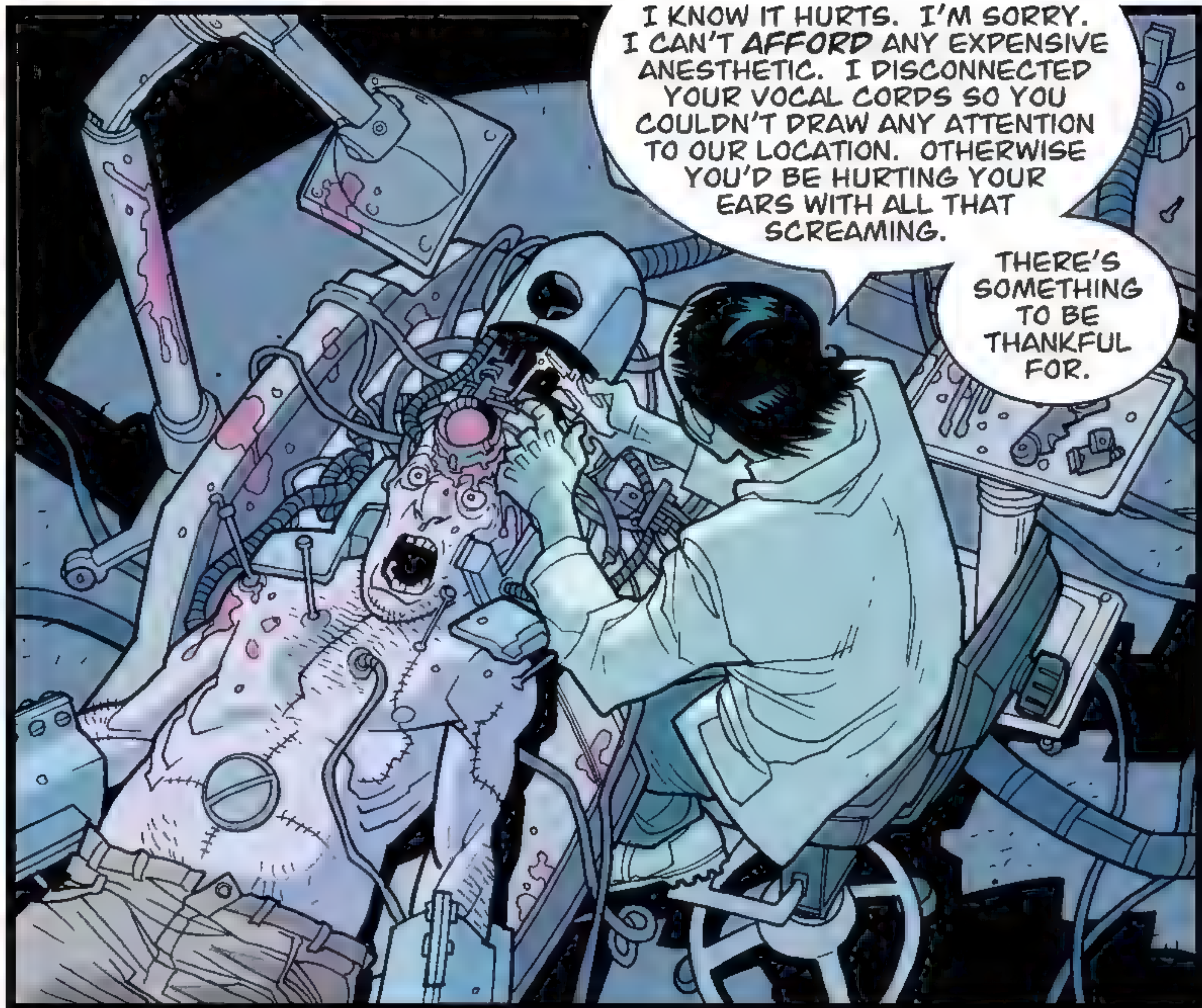


IT SOUNDS GREAT.

C'MERE.



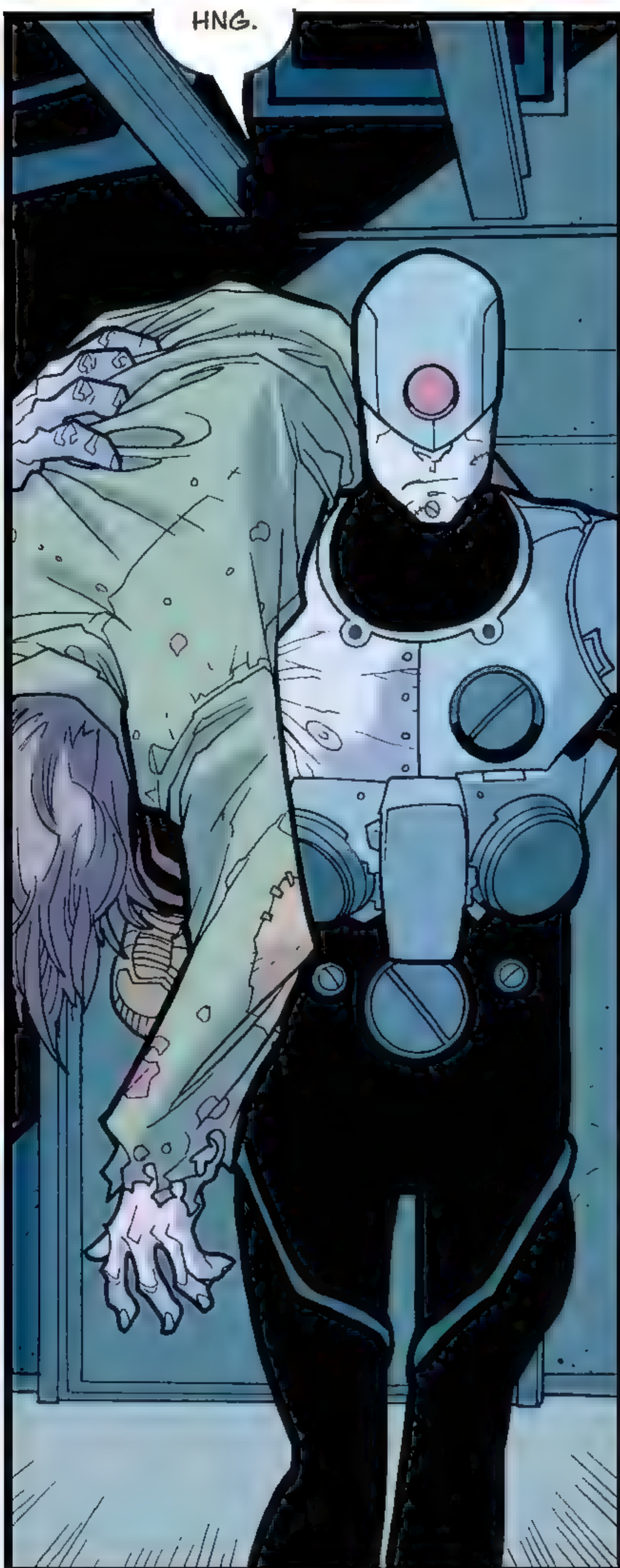
BACK AT UPSTATE UNIVERSITY--THE SECRET CLOCK TOWER HIDEOUT OF D.A. SINCLAIR, CREATOR OF THE REANIMEN.



I KNOW IT HURTS. I'M SORRY. I CAN'T AFFORD ANY EXPENSIVE ANESTHETIC. I DISCONNECTED YOUR VOCAL CORDS SO YOU COULDN'T DRAW ANY ATTENTION TO OUR LOCATION. OTHERWISE YOU'D BE HURTING YOUR EARS WITH ALL THAT SCREAMING.

THERE'S SOMETHING TO BE THANKFUL FOR.

HNG.



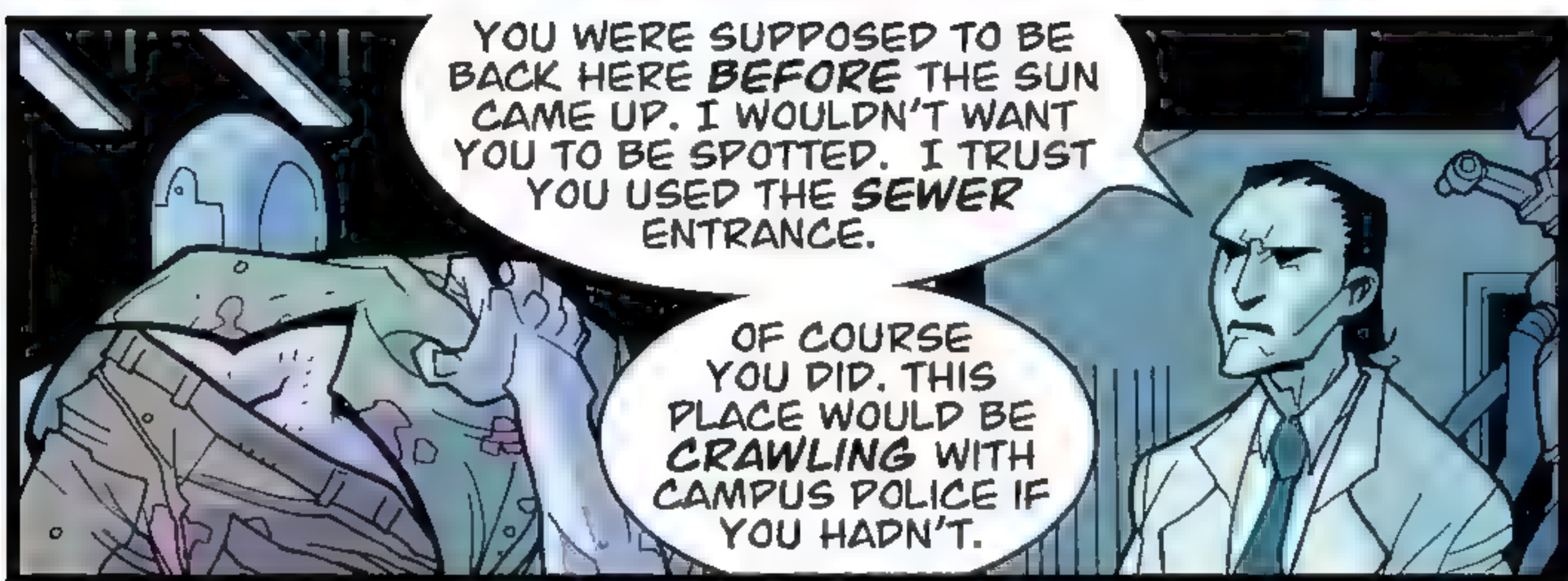
AH, RICK SHERIDAN--MY FIRST WORKING REANIMAN--THE ONE WHO STARTED IT ALL. MY PRIDE AND JOY.

YOU'RE LATE.



YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE BACK HERE BEFORE THE SUN CAME UP. I WOULDN'T WANT YOU TO BE SPOTTED. I TRUST YOU USED THE SEWER ENTRANCE.

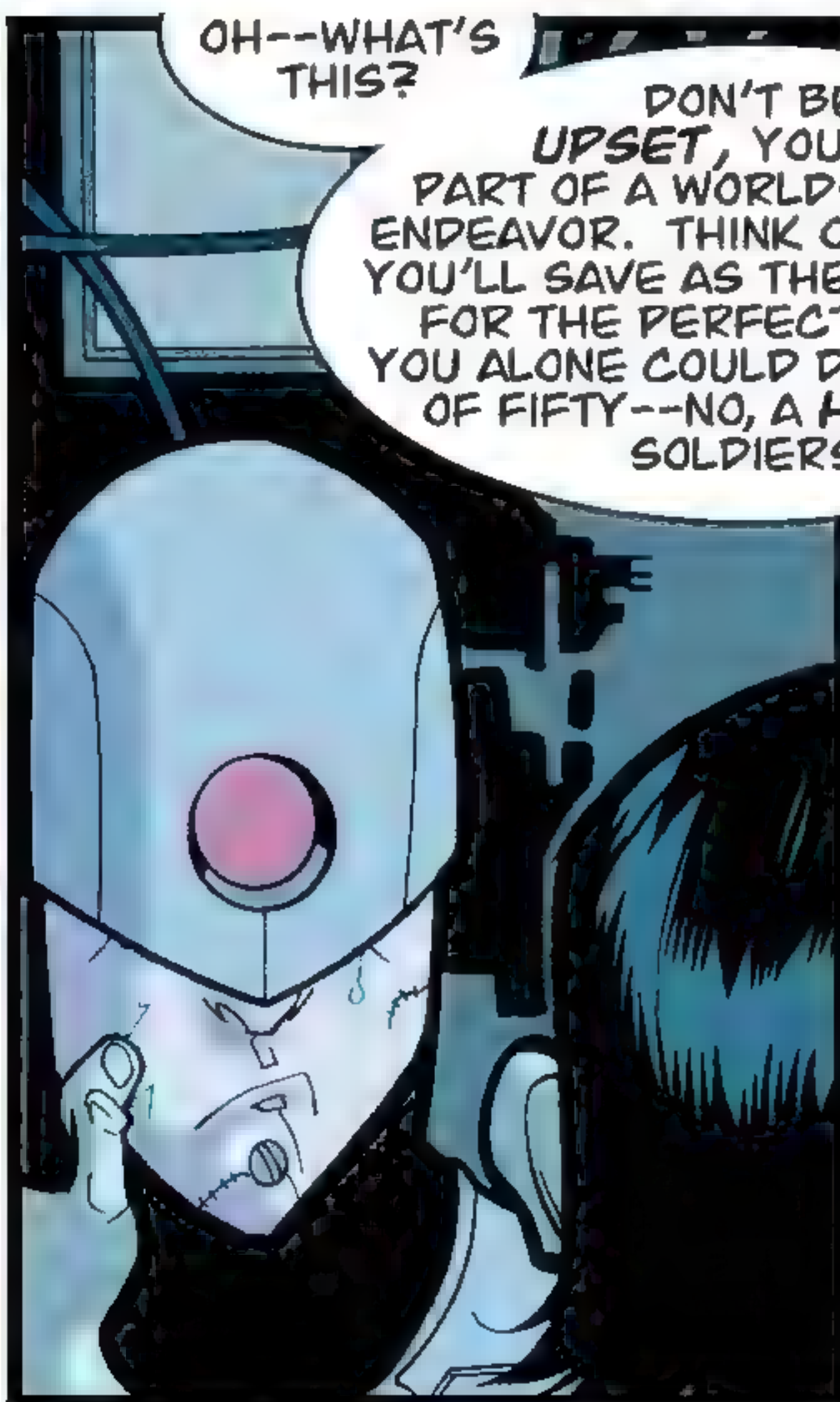
OF COURSE YOU DID. THIS PLACE WOULD BE CRAWLING WITH CAMPUS POLICE IF YOU HADN'T.

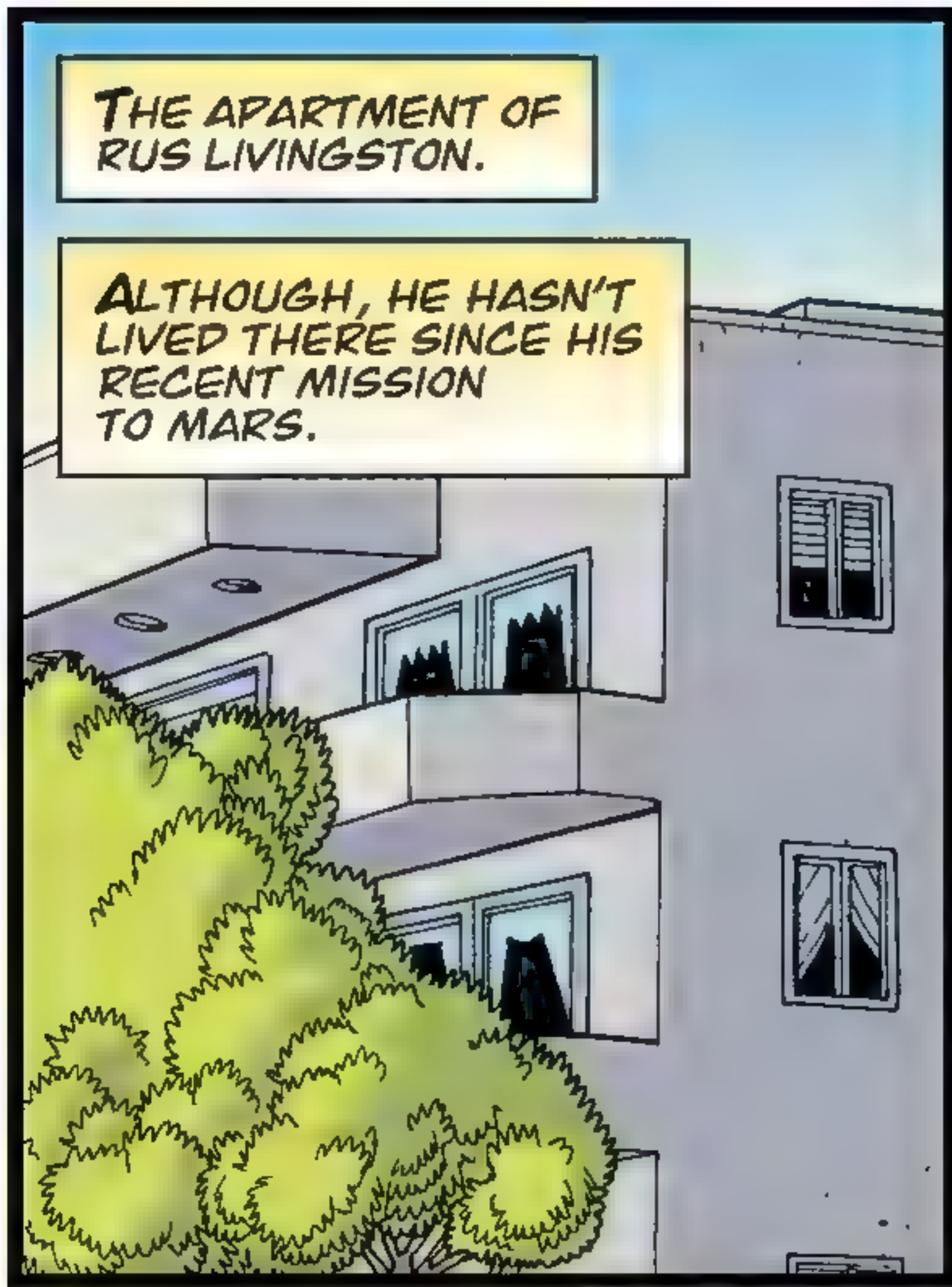


OH--WHAT'S THIS?

DON'T BE UPSET, YOU'RE A PART OF A WORLD-ALTERING ENDEAVOR. THINK OF THE LIVES YOU'LL SAVE AS THE PROTOTYPE FOR THE PERFECT SOLDIER. YOU ALONE COULD DO THE WORK OF FIFTY--NO, A HUNDRED SOLDIERS.

NOW PUT THAT ONE IN WITH THE OTHERS. I HAVE WORK TO DO.





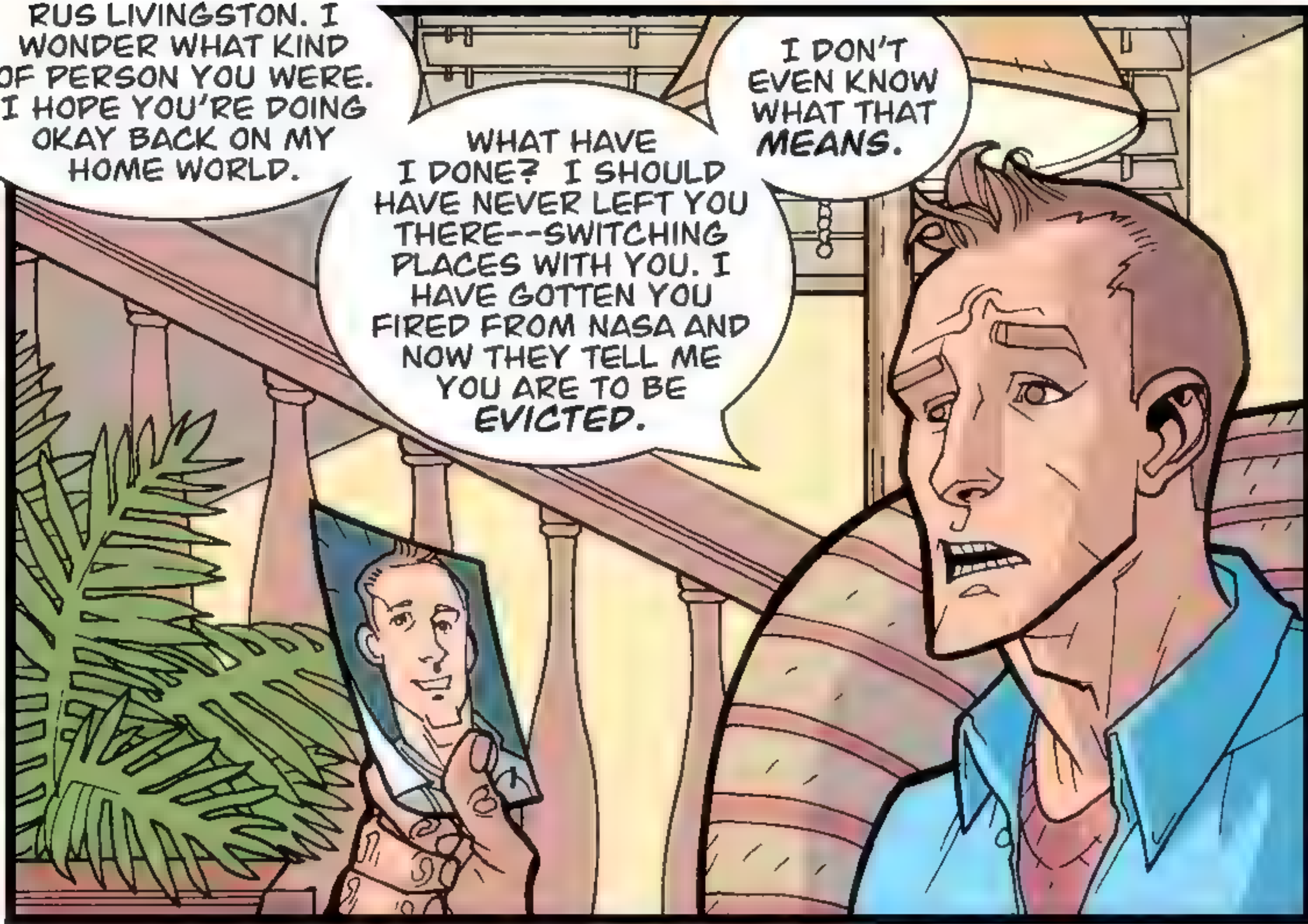
THE APARTMENT OF
RUS LIVINGSTON.

ALTHOUGH, HE HASN'T
LIVED THERE SINCE HIS
RECENT MISSION
TO MARS.

RUS LIVINGSTON. I
WONDER WHAT KIND
OF PERSON YOU WERE.
I HOPE YOU'RE DOING
OKAY BACK ON MY
HOME WORLD.

WHAT HAVE
I DONE? I SHOULD
HAVE NEVER LEFT YOU
THERE--SWITCHING
PLACES WITH YOU. I
HAVE GOTTEN YOU
FIRED FROM NASA AND
NOW THEY TELL ME
YOU ARE TO BE
EVICTED.

I DON'T
EVEN KNOW
WHAT THAT
MEANS.



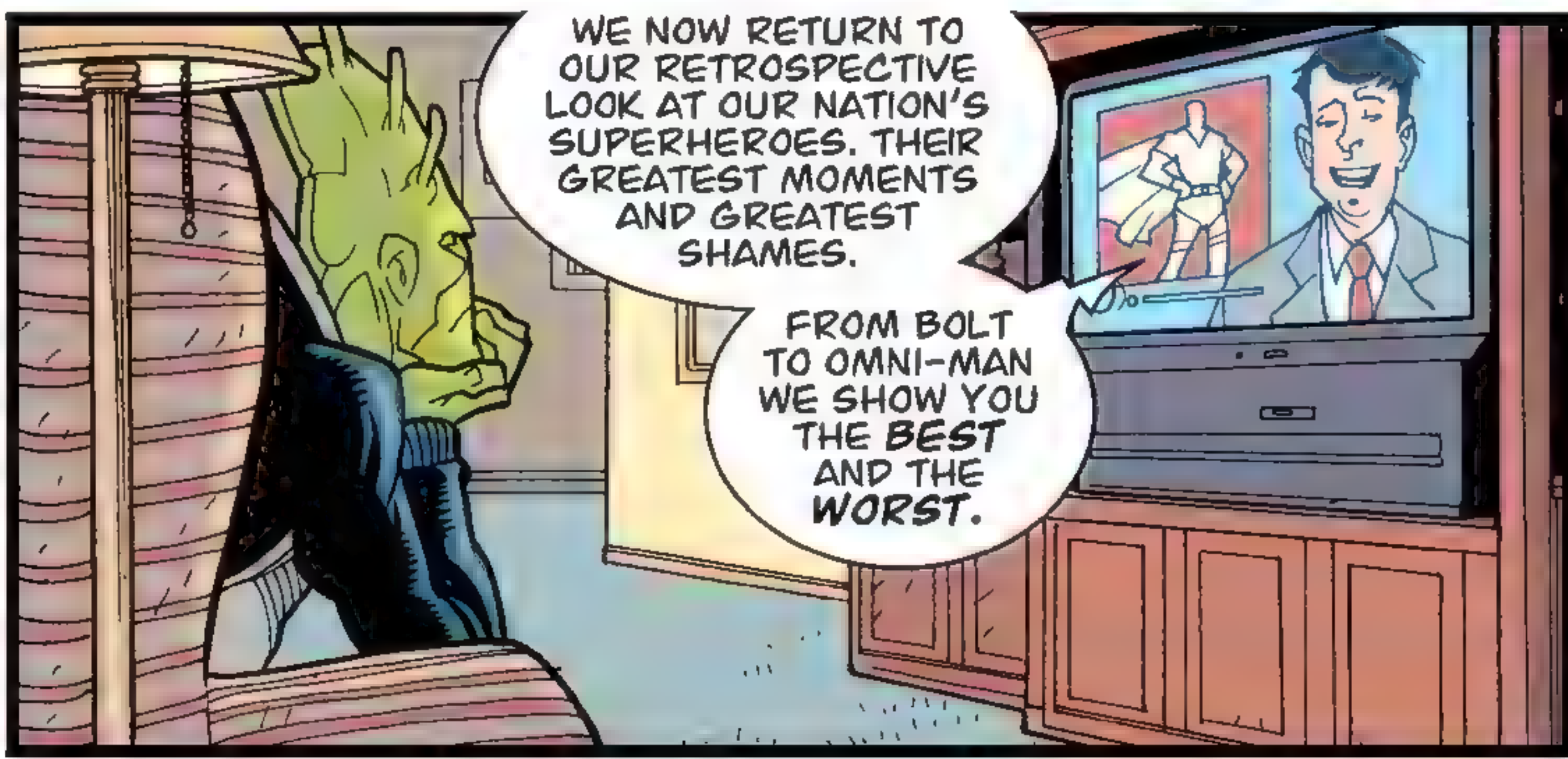
I HATED MY HOME WORLD--
MARS. MYSELF AND THE
OTHER REBELS HATED THE
ENSLAVEMENT OF THE
SEQUIDS. THEY TALKED
ME INTO THIS... COMING
HERE. I JUST DON'T
KNOW IF IT WAS THE
BEST IDEA.

SURE, THE
SEQUIDS ARE
PROBABLY FREE NOW--
PROBABLY OVERTHROWING
OUR CORRUPT MONARCH
ONE... BUT I AM
HERE.



ALONE.

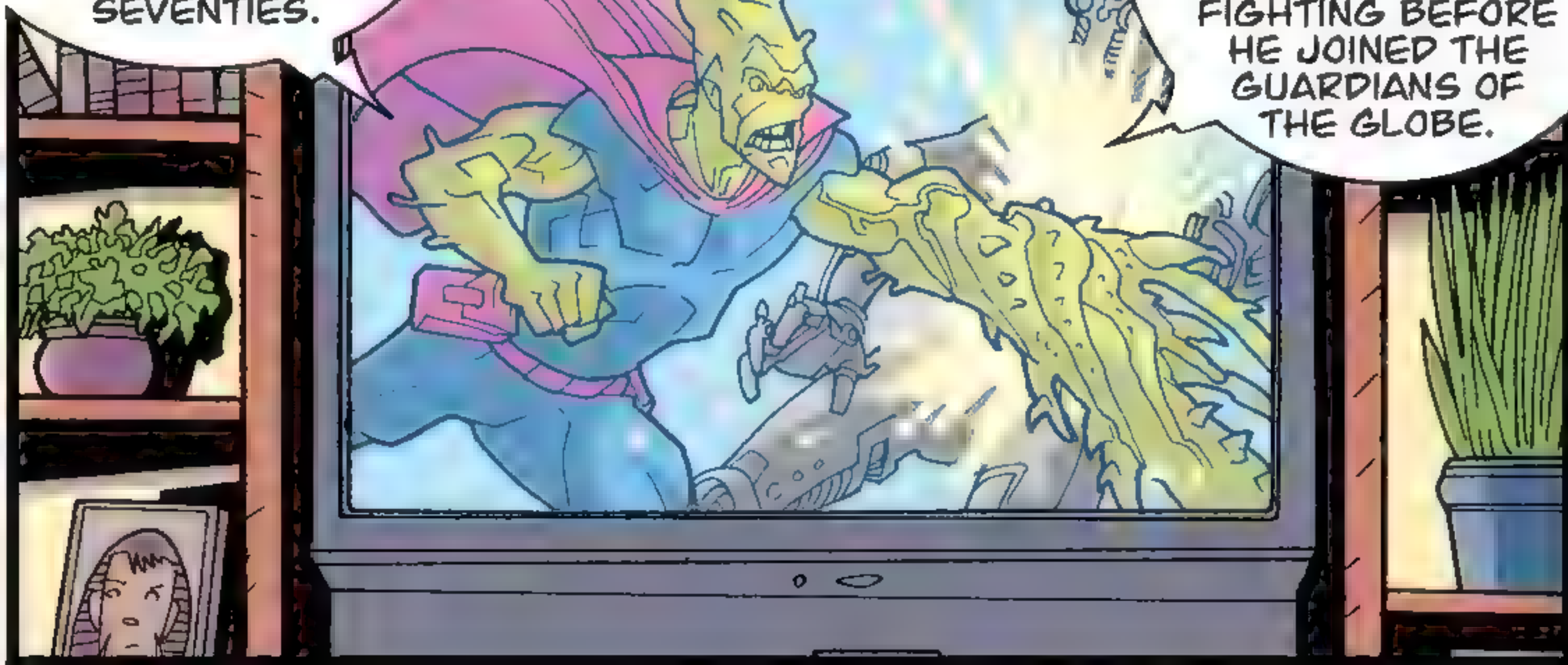
WITH
NOTHING
TO DO AND
NO ONE TO
TALK TO.



WE NOW RETURN TO
OUR RETROSPECTIVE
LOOK AT OUR NATION'S
SUPERHEROES. THEIR
GREATEST MOMENTS
AND GREATEST
SHAMES.

FROM BOLT
TO OMNI-MAN
WE SHOW YOU
THE BEST
AND THE
WORST.

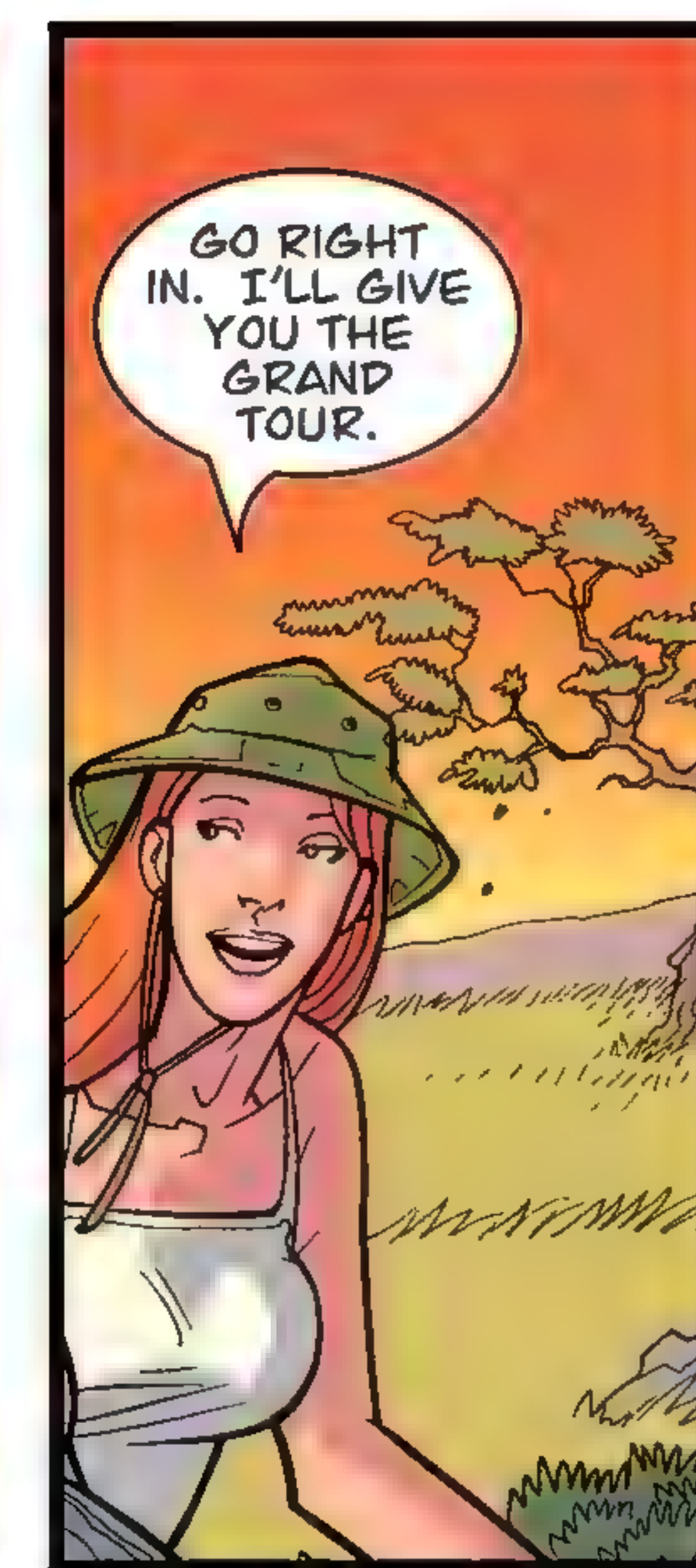
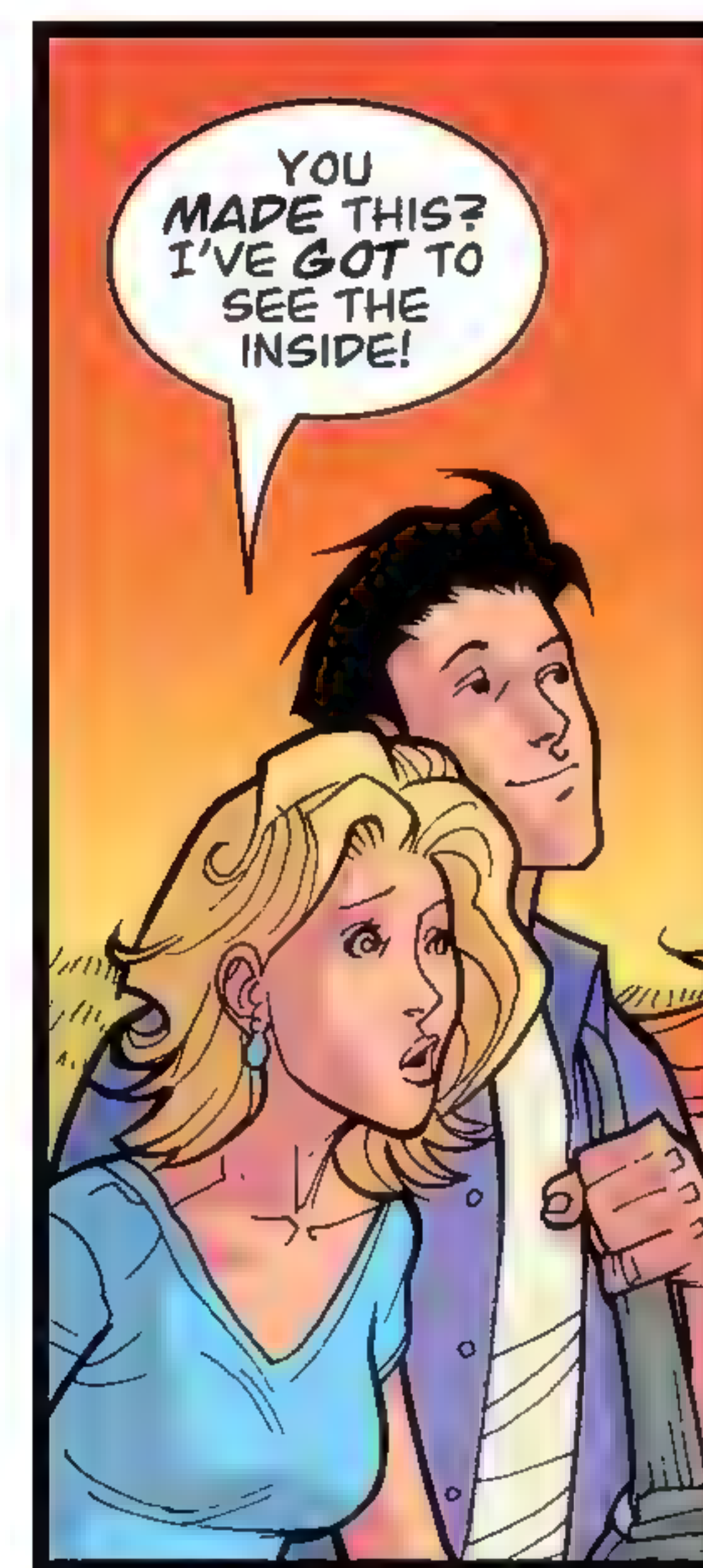
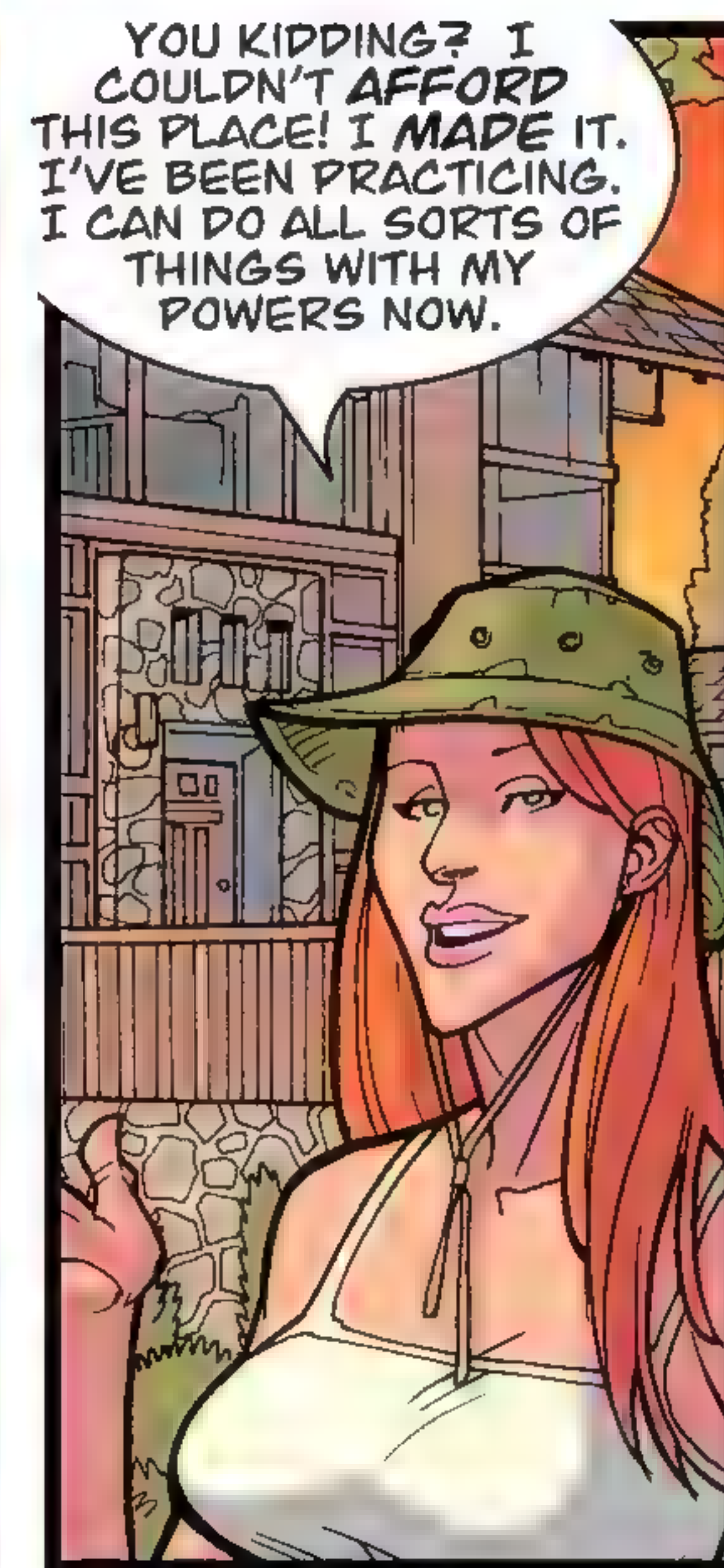
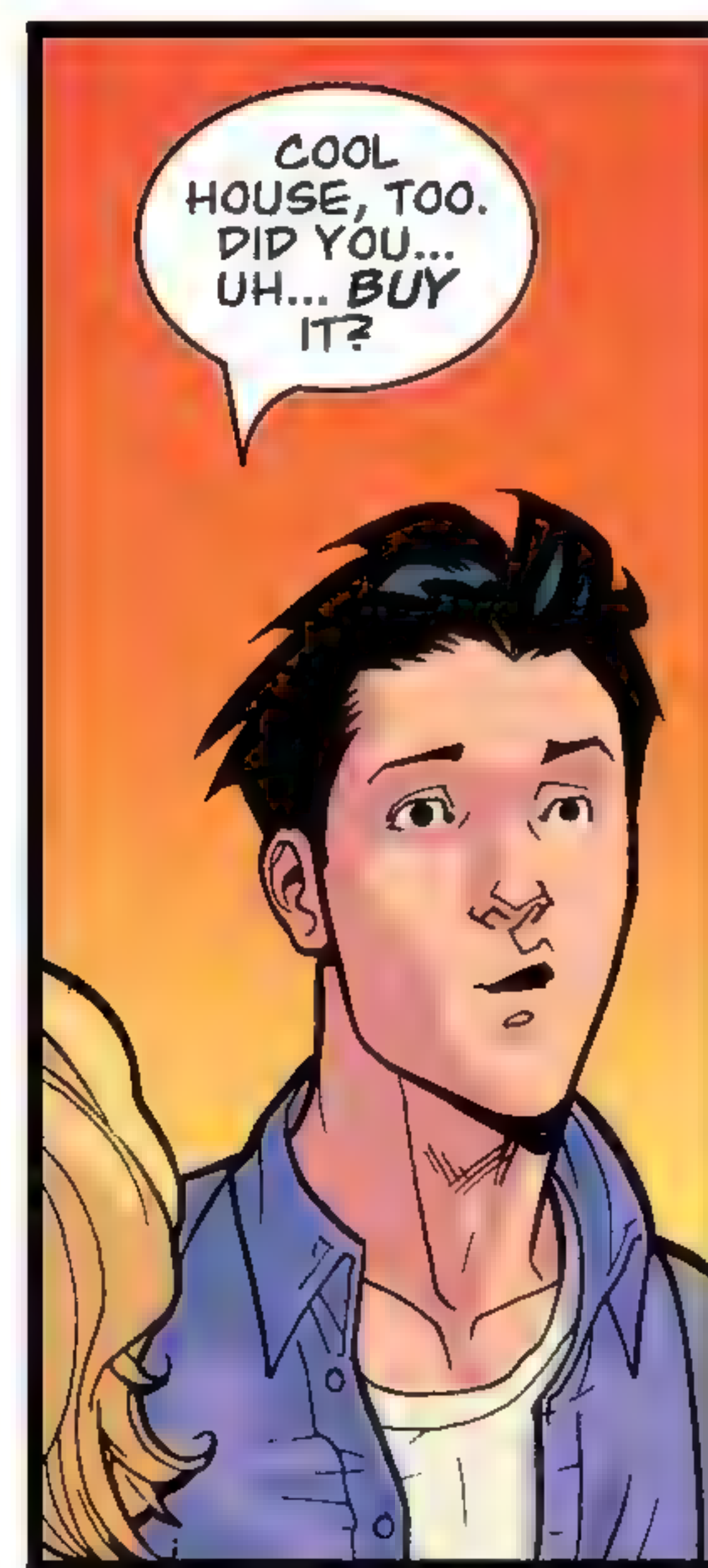
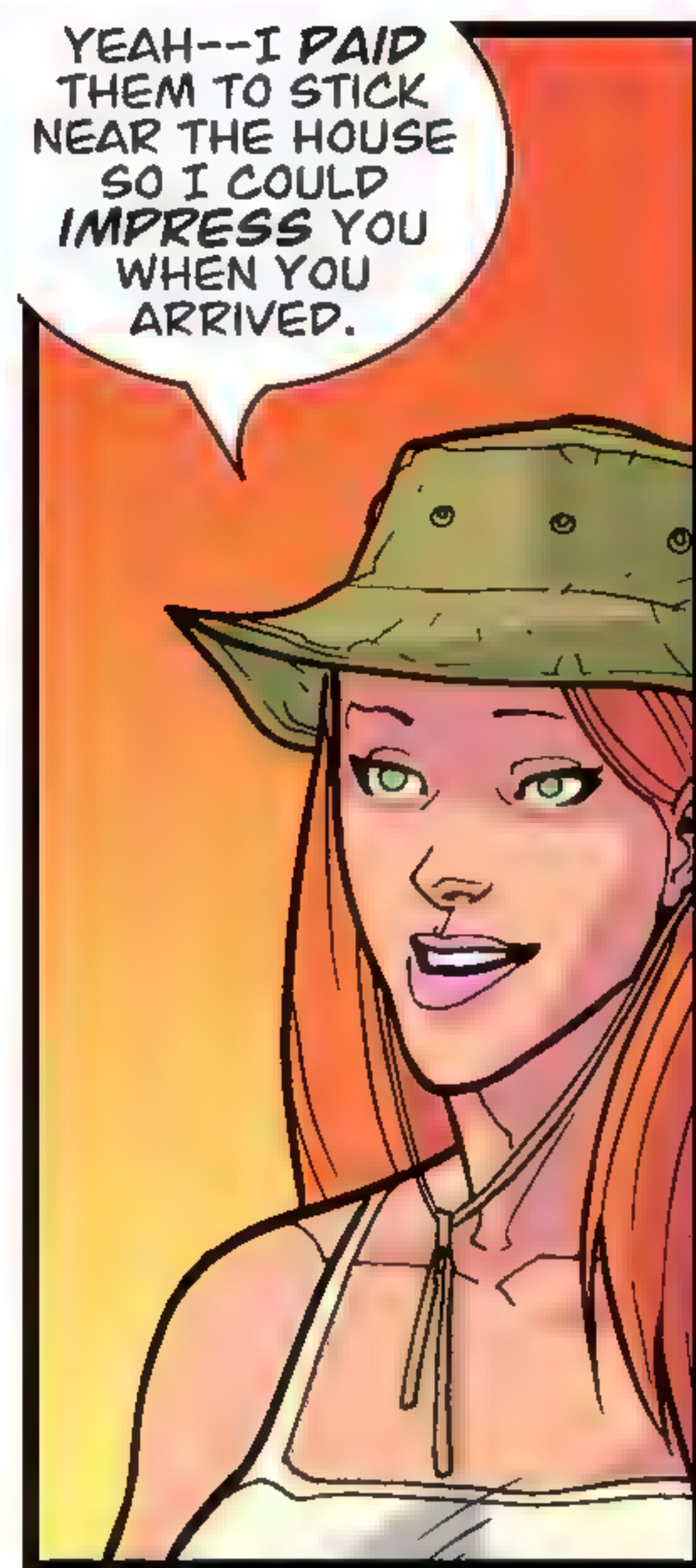
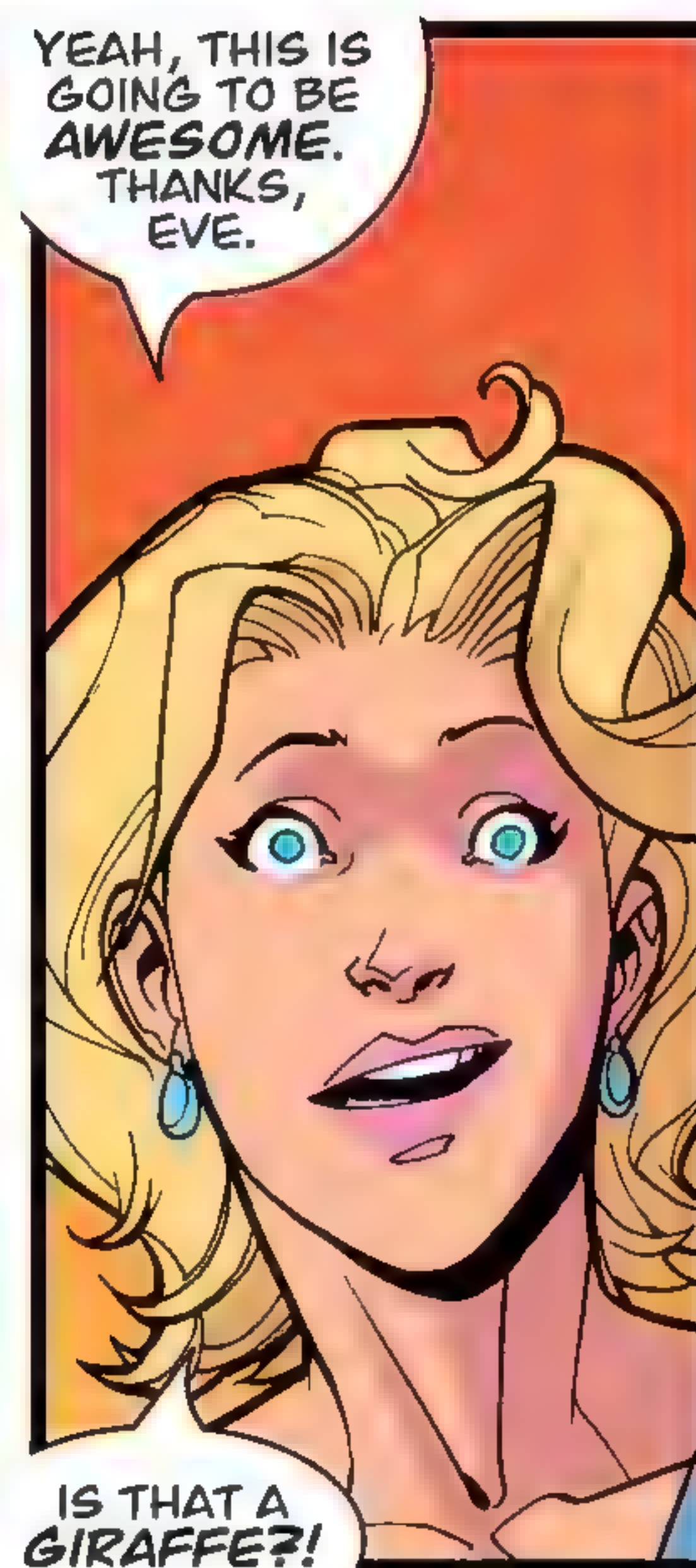
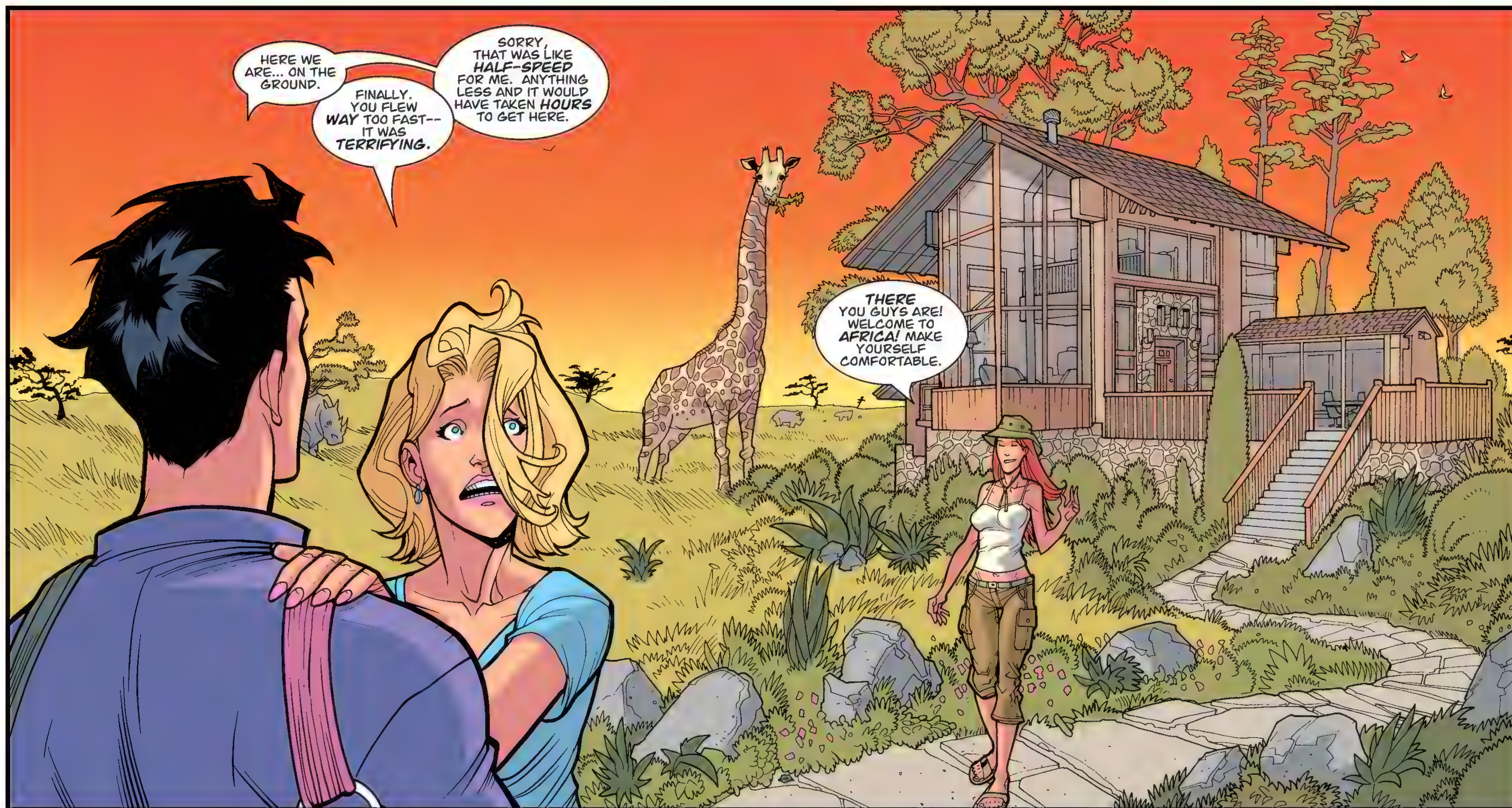
NEXT UP IS
MARTIAN MAN.
HE FIRST APPEARED
ON THE SCENE IN
THE LATE
SEVENTIES.

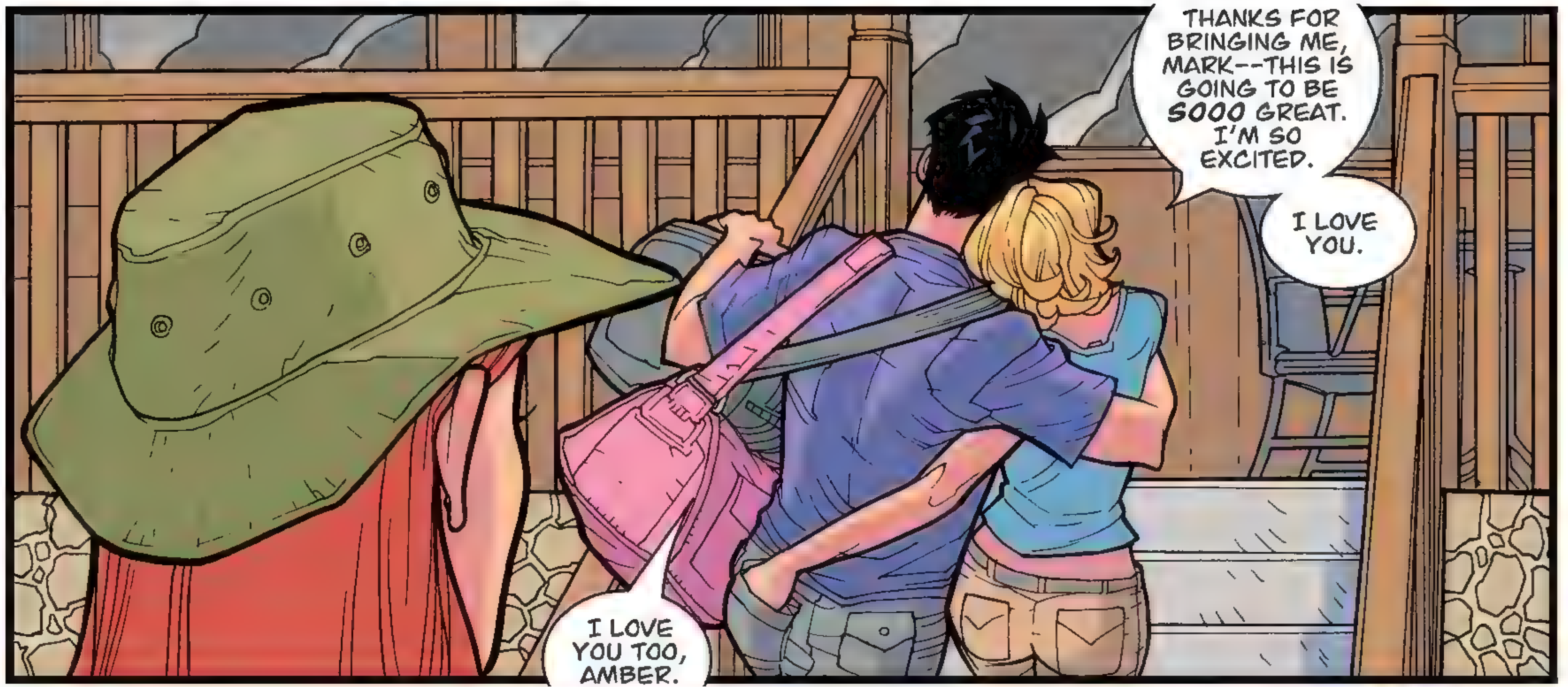


USING HIS AMAZING
SHAPE-CHANGING
ABILITIES, HE HAD A
LONG, SUCCESSFUL
CAREER IN CRIME
FIGHTING BEFORE
HE JOINED THE
GUARDIANS OF
THE GLOBE.



SUPER-
HEROES?



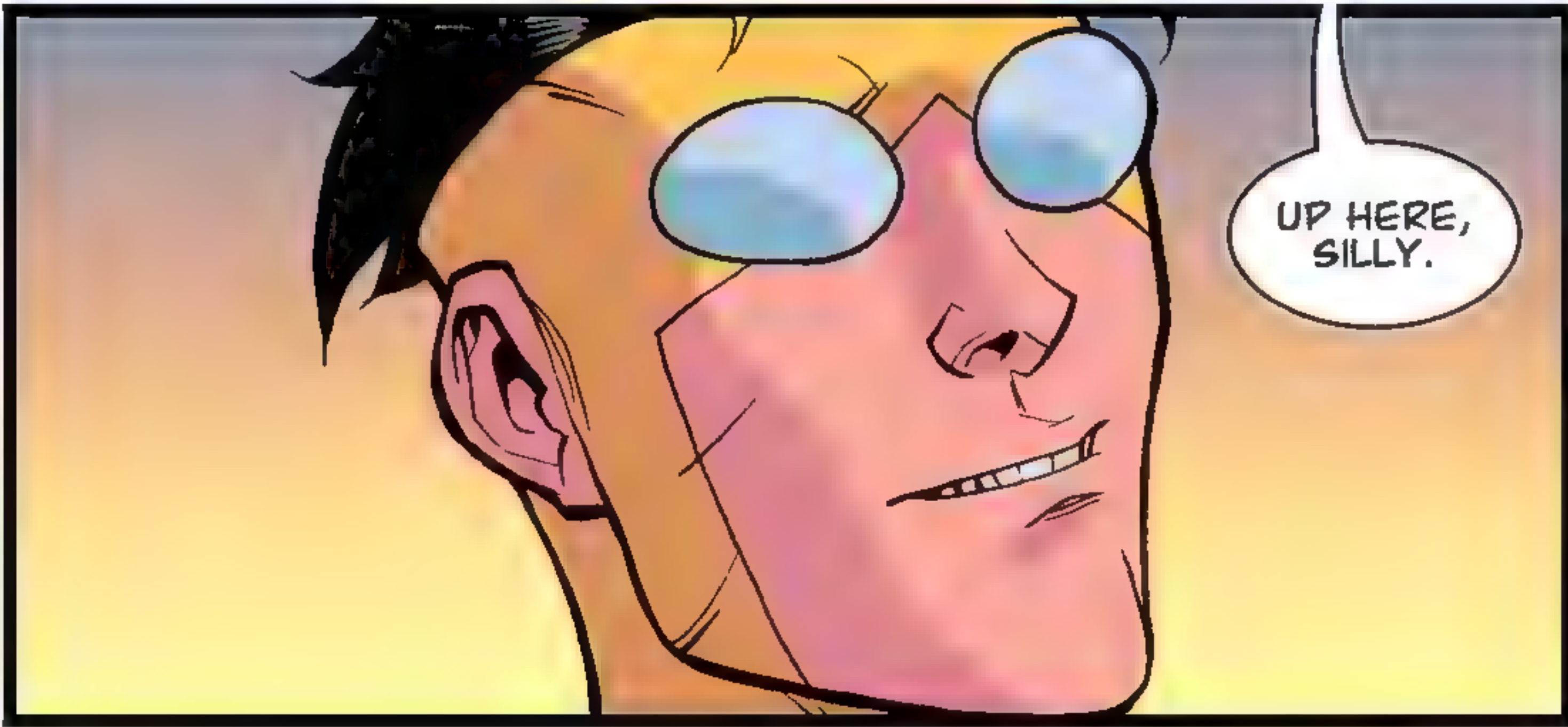
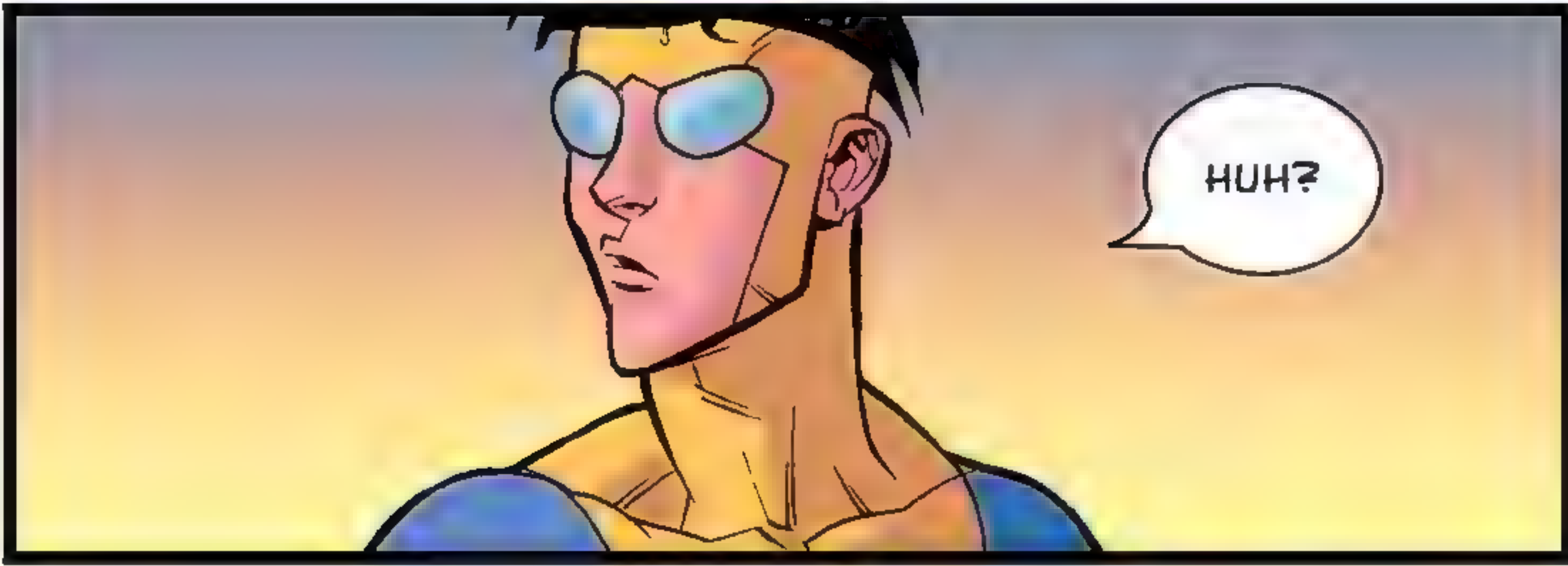


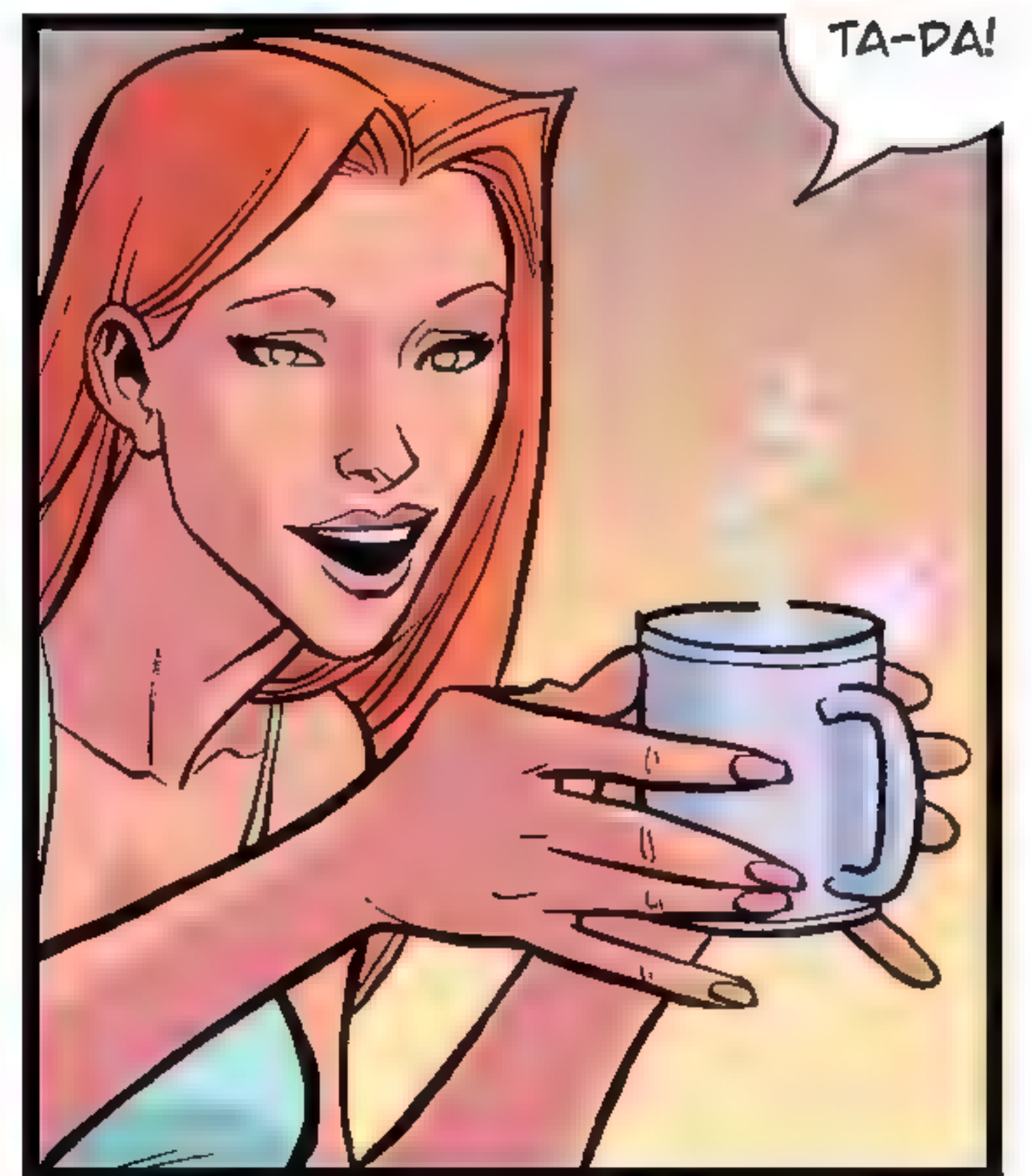
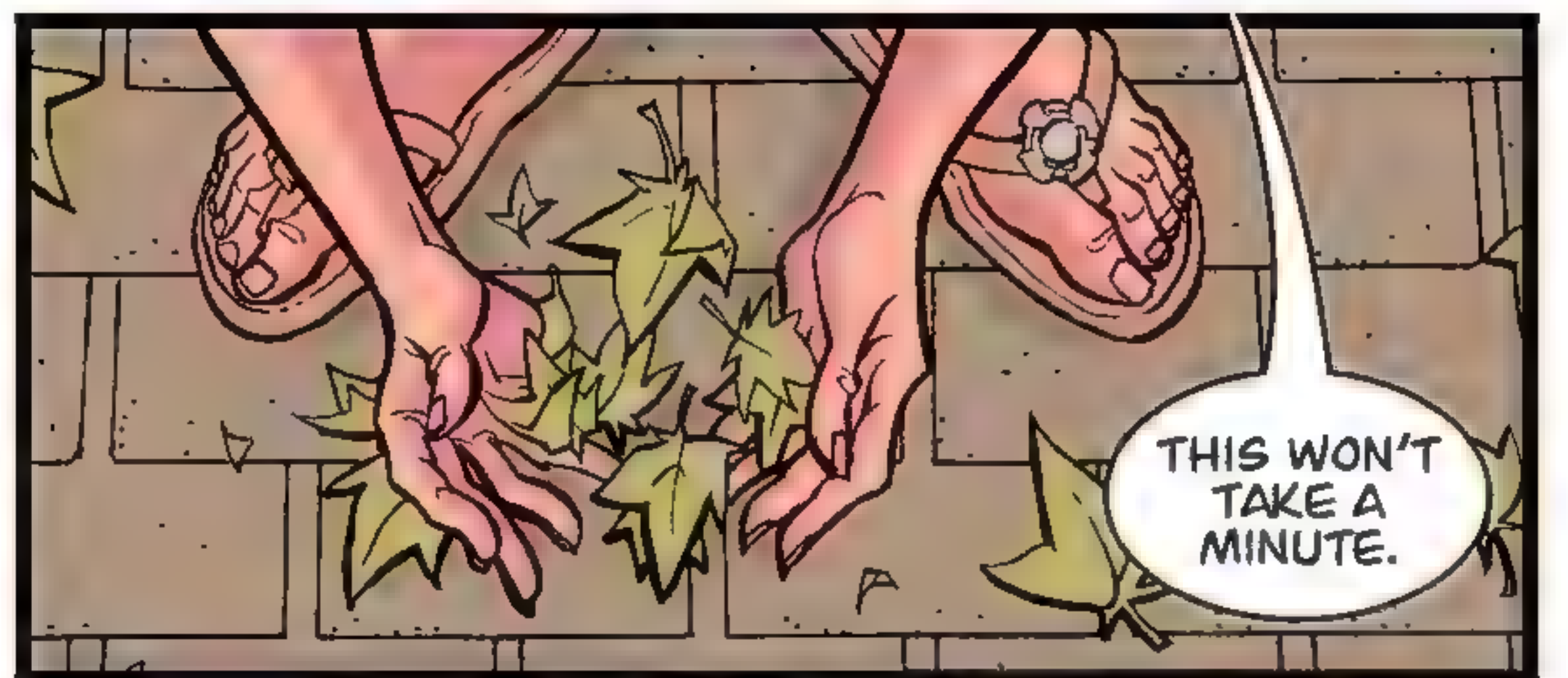
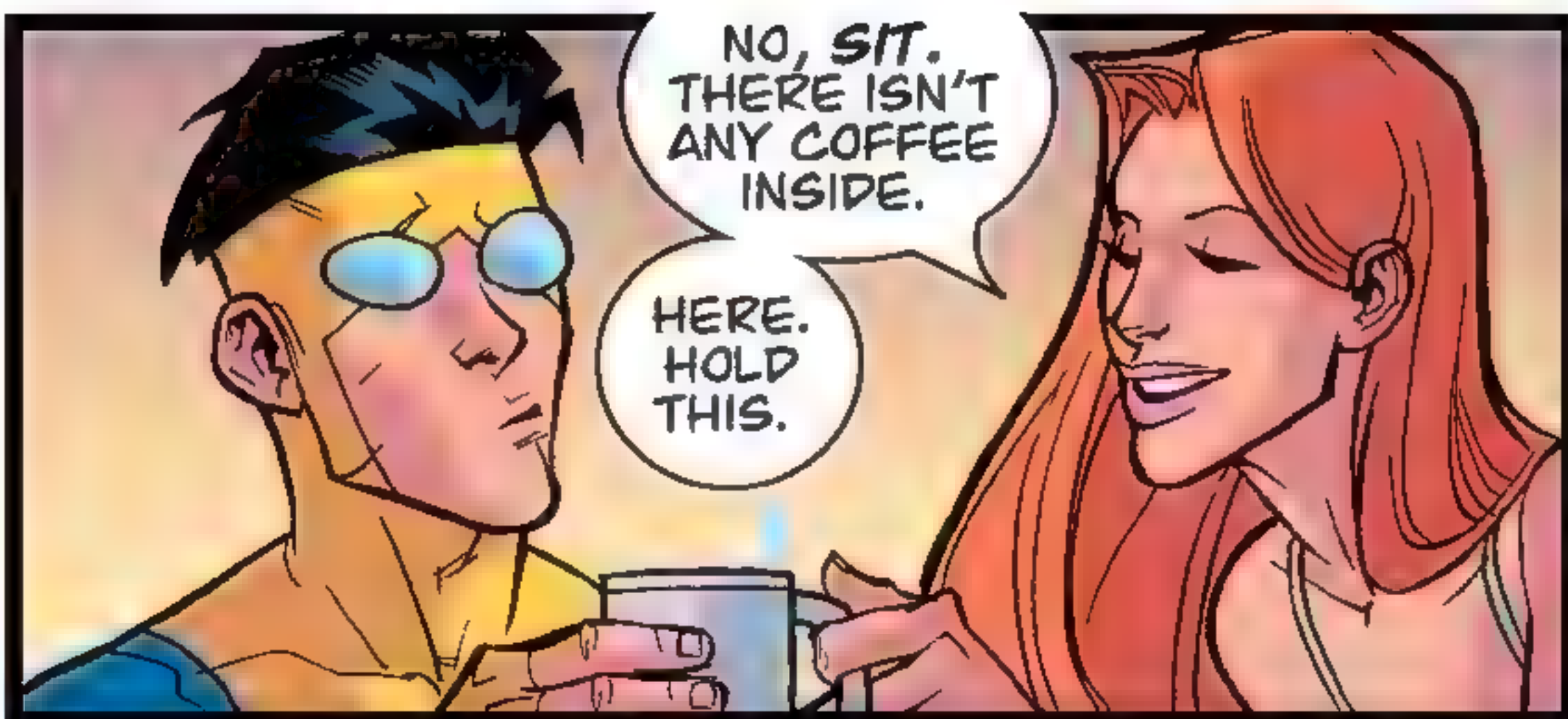
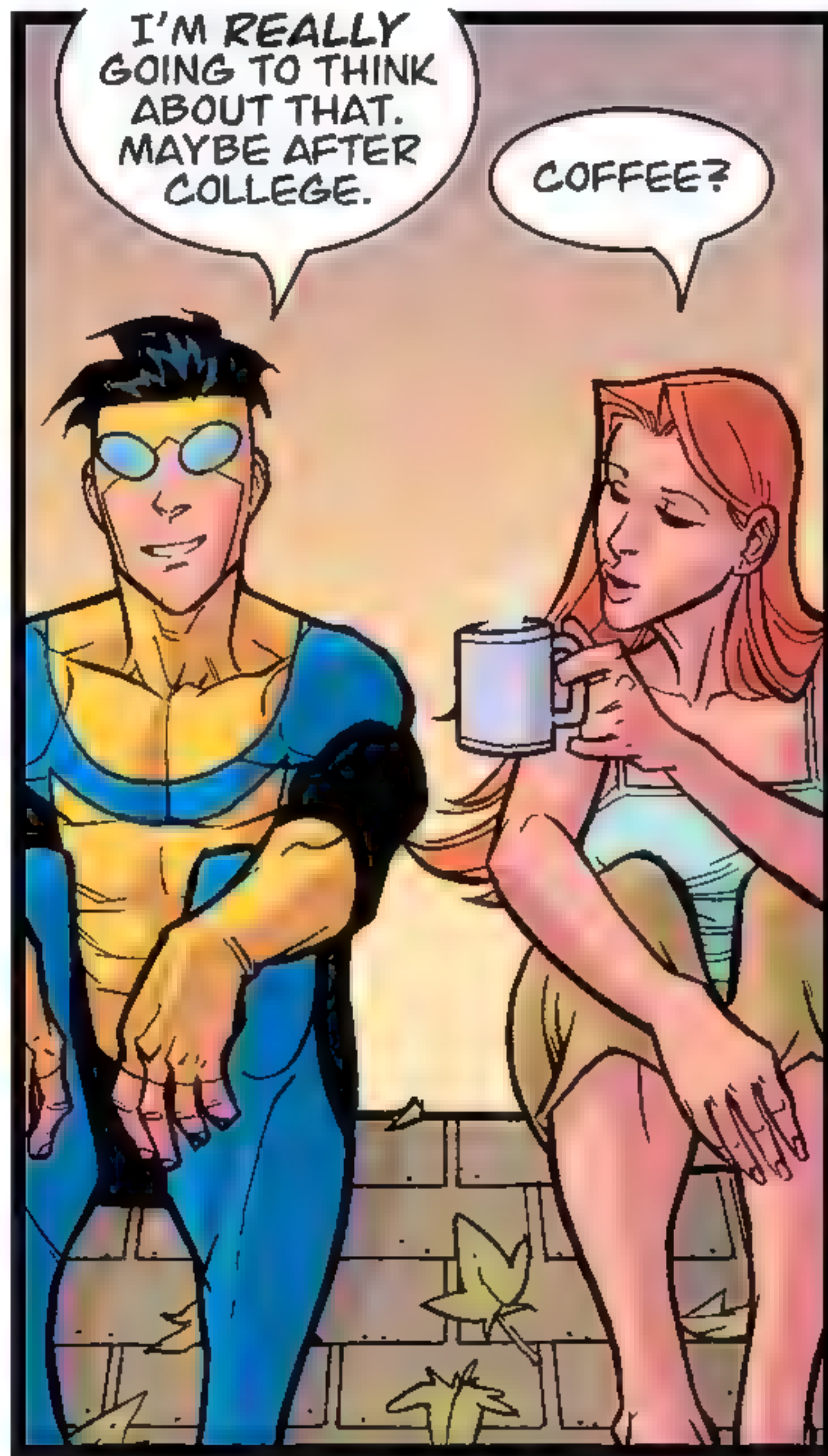
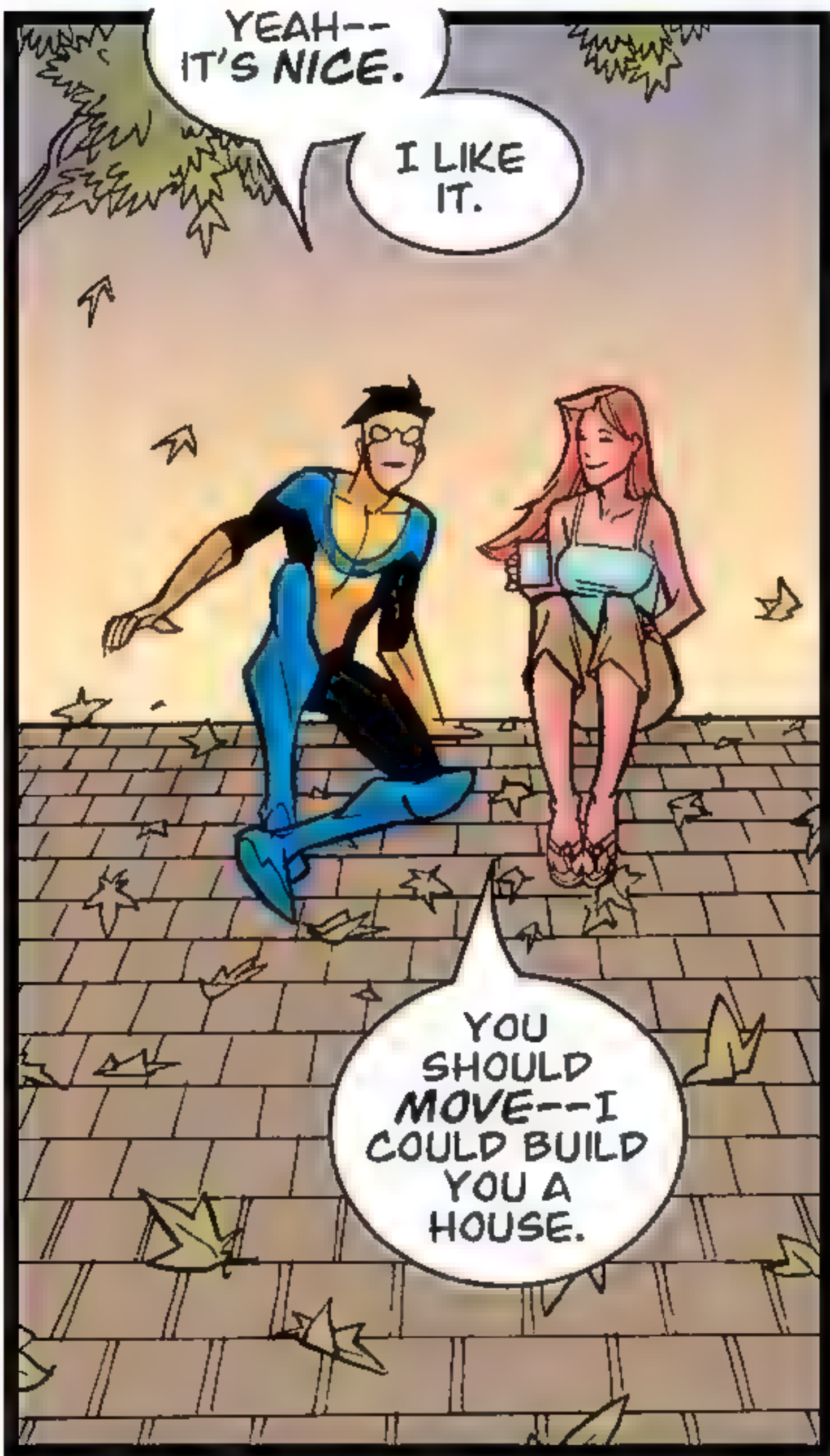
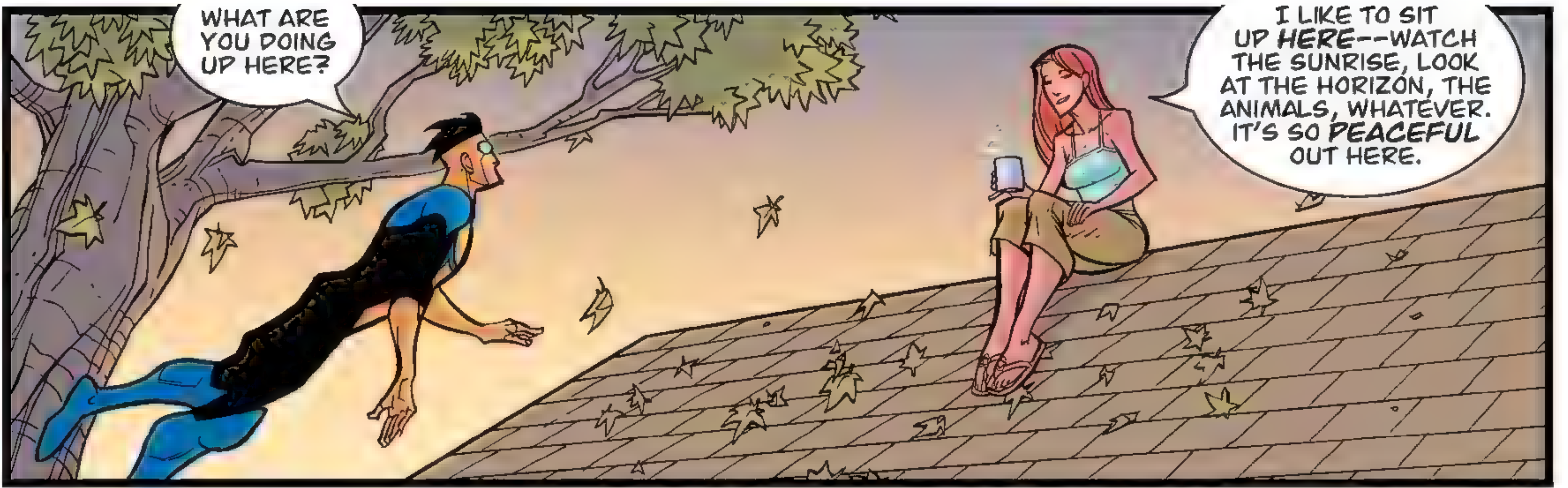


ISSUE THIRTY-TWO





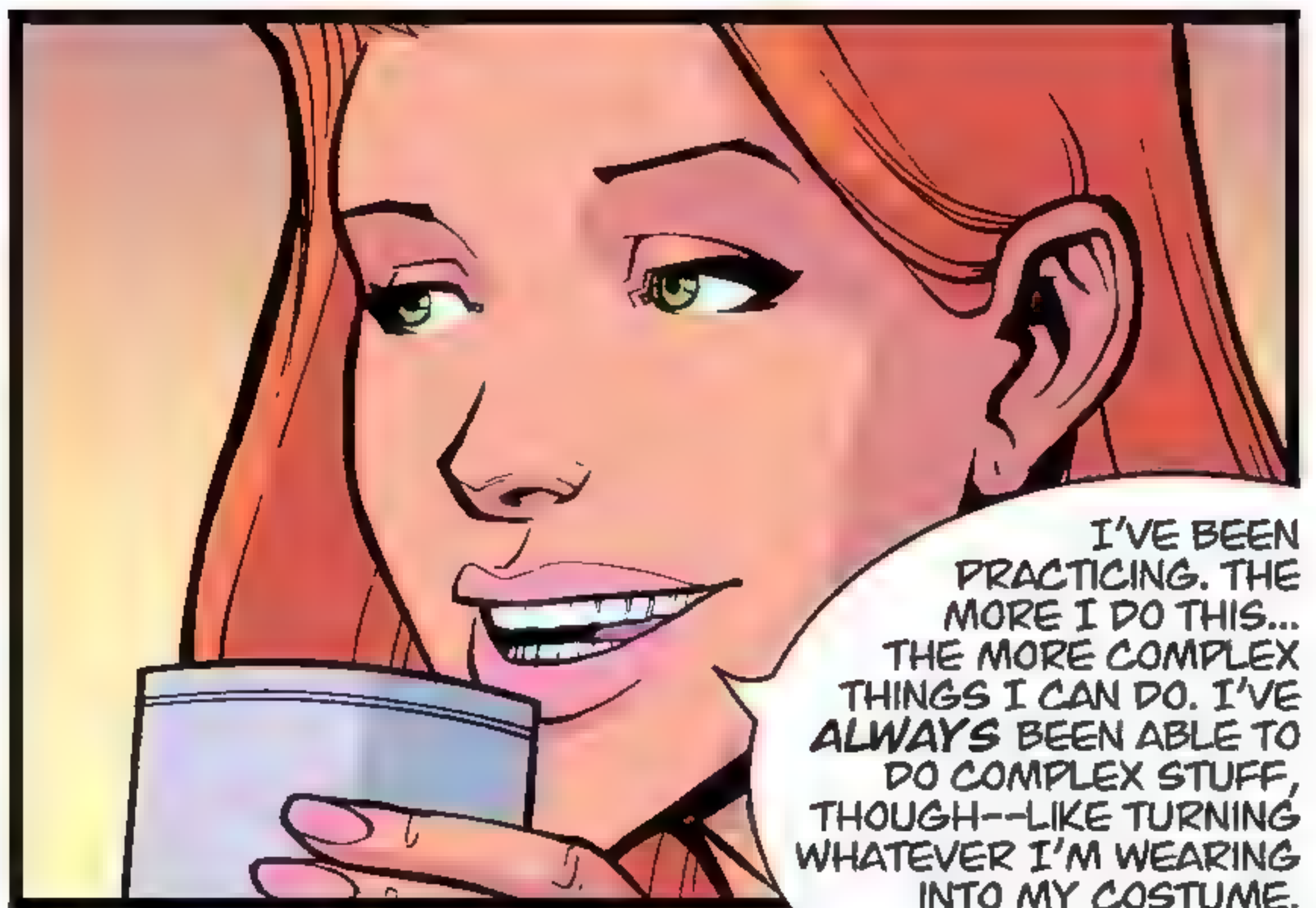




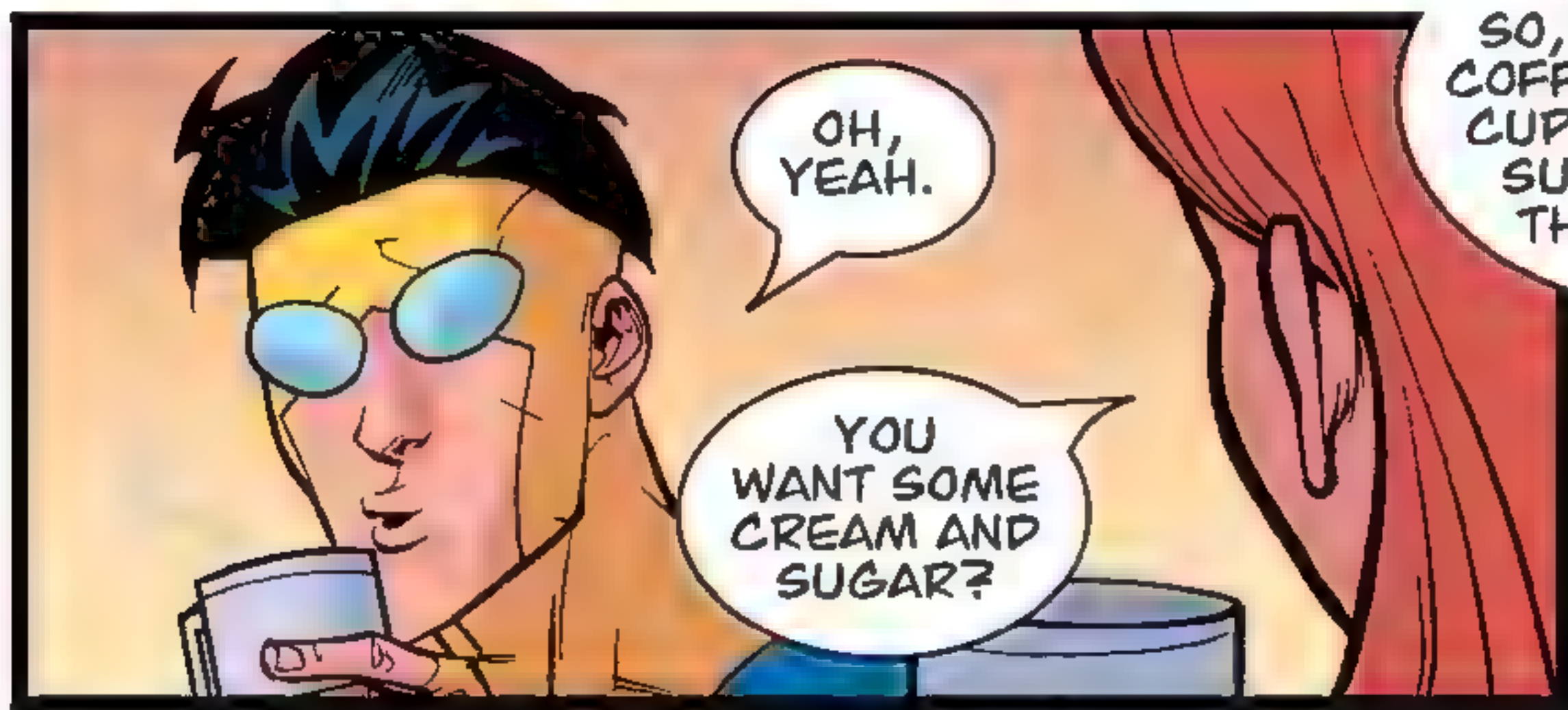


WHOA. I'VE SEEN YOU BEND PIPE, AND CHANGE THE DENSITY OF AIR AROUND YOU SO YOU CAN FLY-- BUT THIS--THIS IS COMPLEX.

THE COFFEE-- THE HOUSE-- HOW DO YOU DO IT?

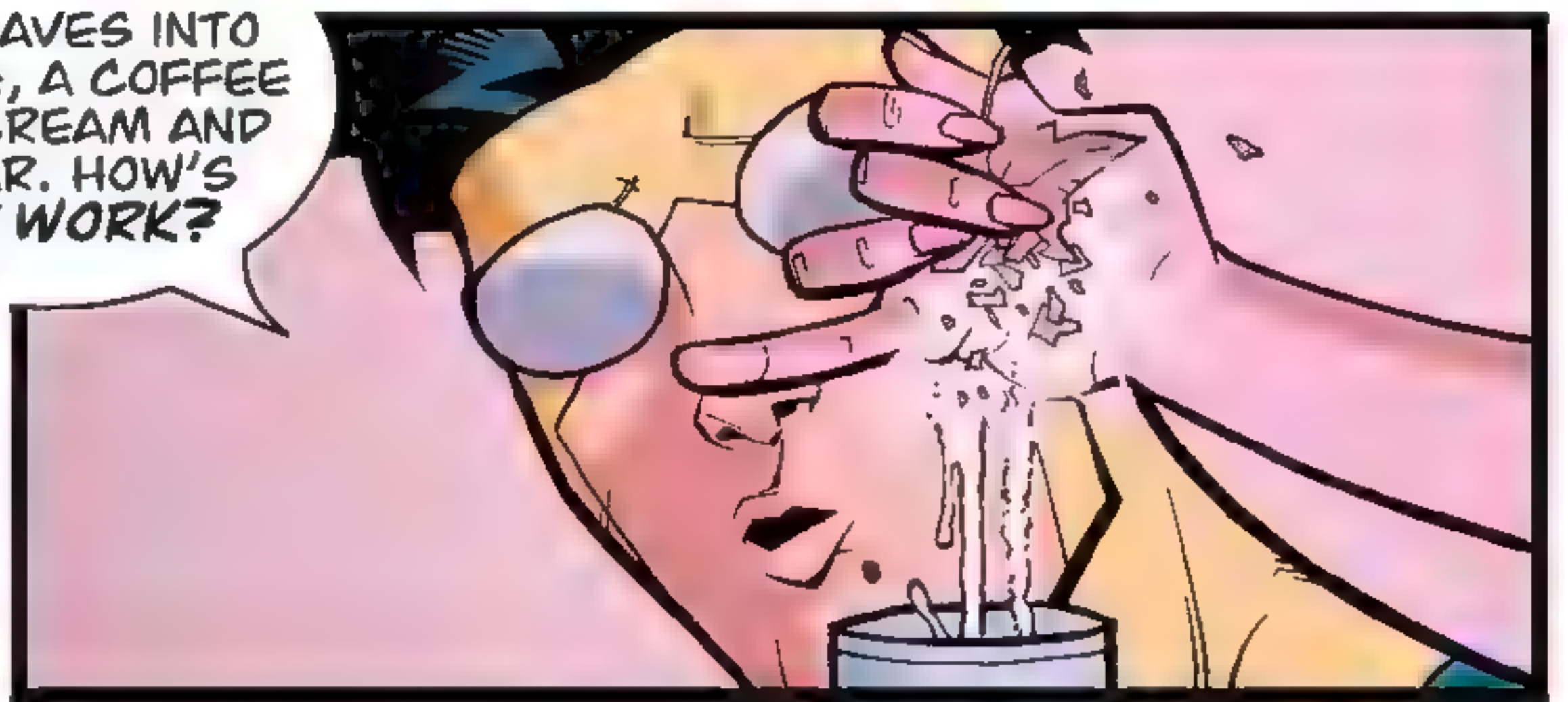


I'VE BEEN PRACTICING. THE MORE I DO THIS... THE MORE COMPLEX THINGS I CAN DO. I'VE ALWAYS BEEN ABLE TO DO COMPLEX STUFF, THOUGH--LIKE TURNING WHATEVER I'M WEARING INTO MY COSTUME.



OH, YEAH.

YOU WANT SOME CREAM AND SUGAR?



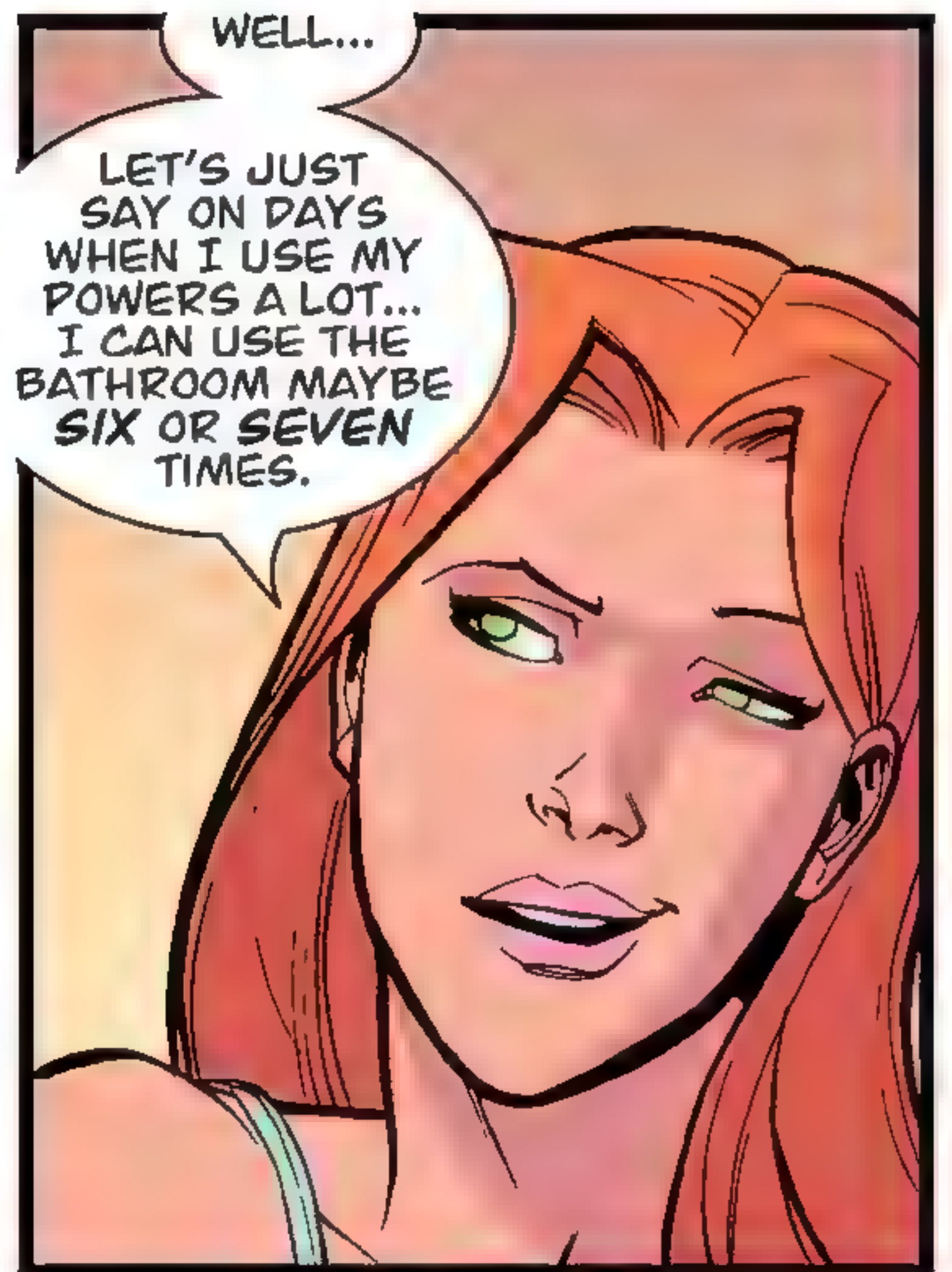
SO, LEAVES INTO COFFEE, A COFFEE CUP, CREAM AND SUGAR. HOW'S THAT WORK?



IT'S ALL ATOMS WHEN YOU GET DOWN TO IT. I REARRANGE THE ATOMS AND SOME THINGS TURN INTO OTHER THINGS. IT'S PRETTY SIMPLE... IN A REALLY COMPLICATED WAY.

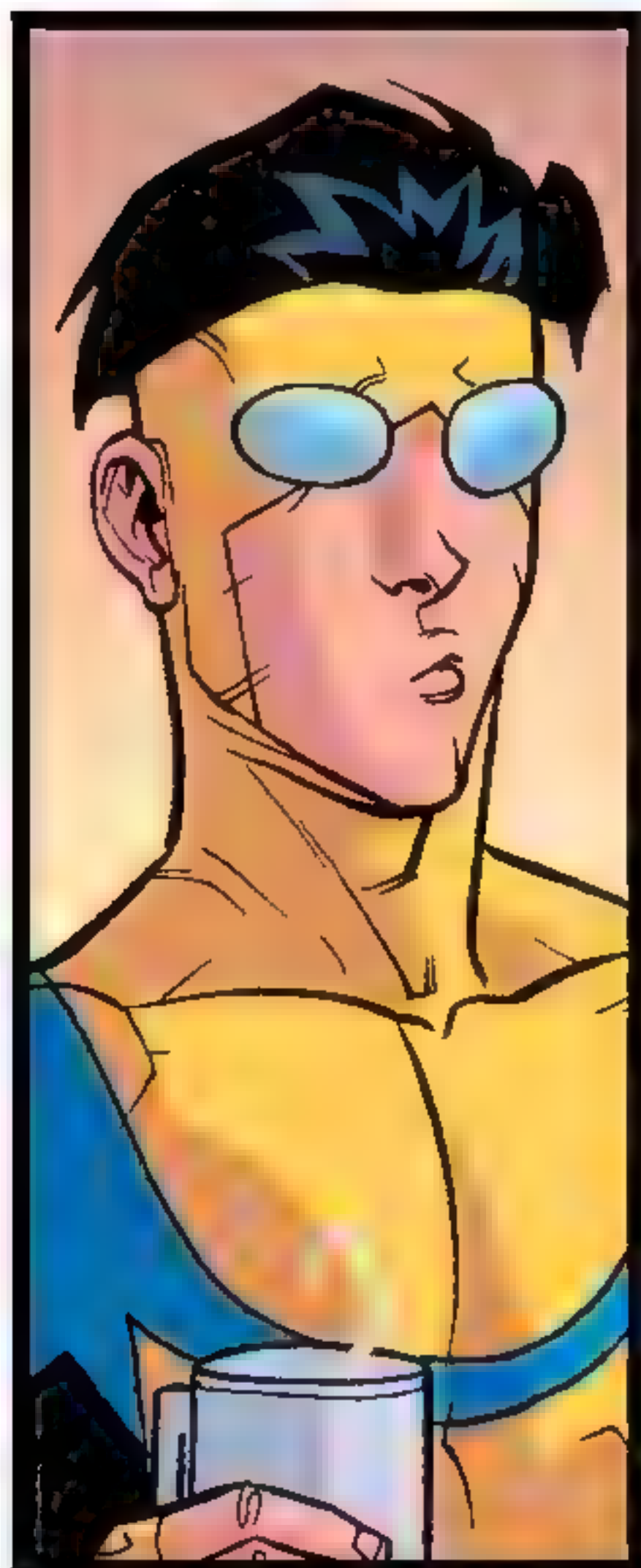


SO--YOU'RE MOVING ATOMS AROUND TO MAKE THINGS DIFFERENT THINGS... DO YOU ALWAYS USE THE SAME AMOUNT OF ATOMS? I MEAN... IS THERE EVER ANYTHING LEFT OVER?

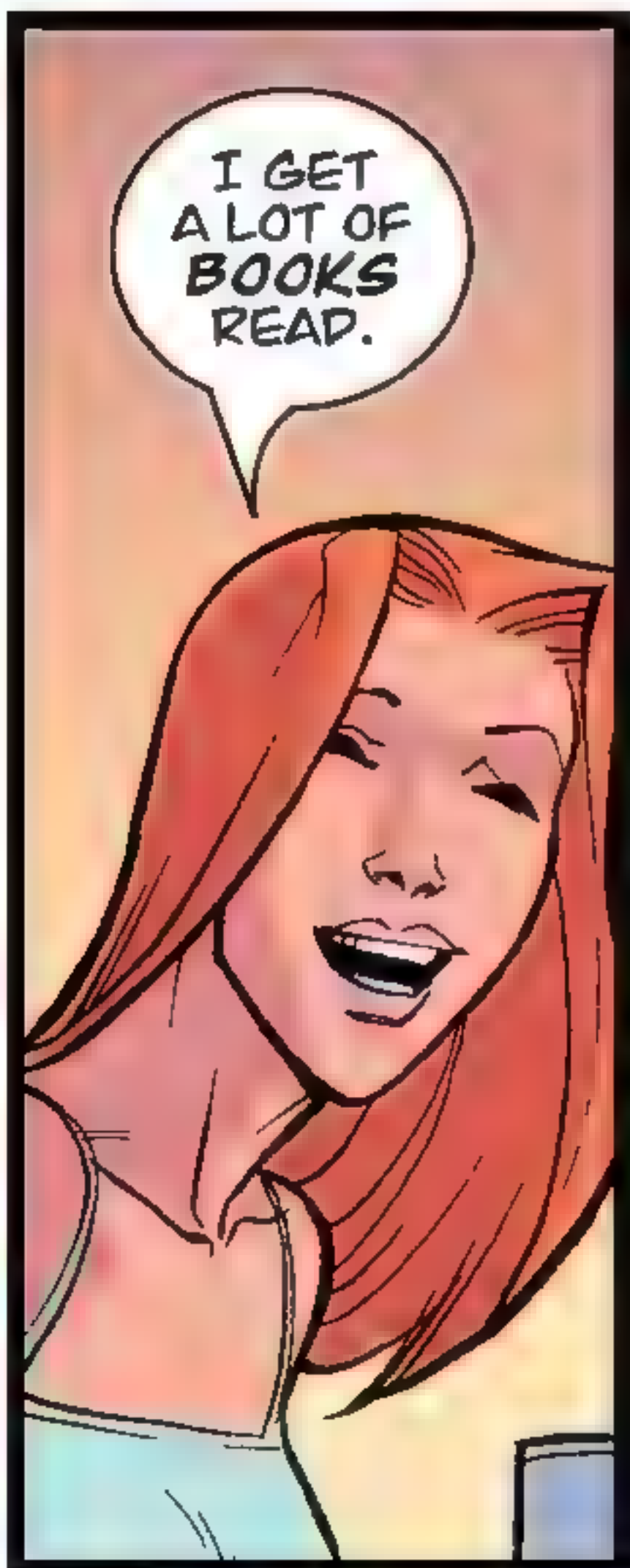


WELL...

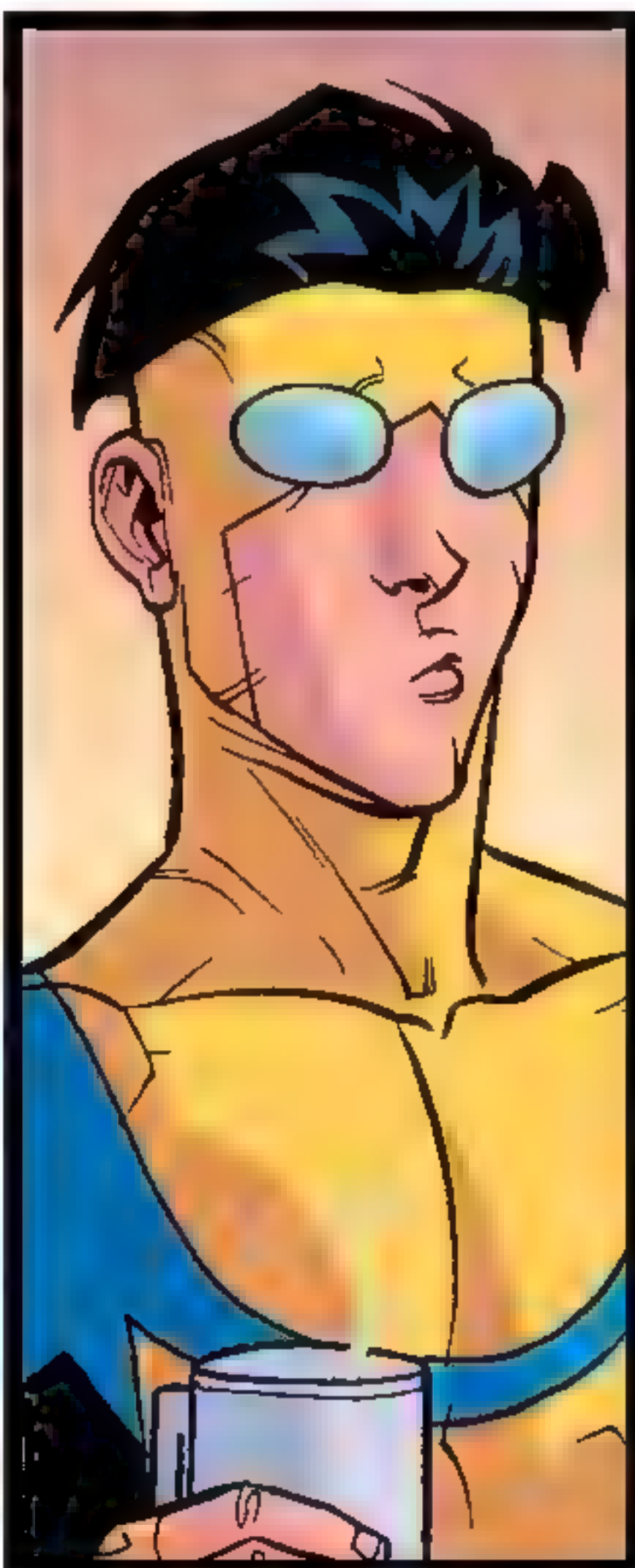
LET'S JUST SAY ON DAYS WHEN I USE MY POWERS A LOT... I CAN USE THE BATHROOM MAYBE SIX OR SEVEN TIMES.



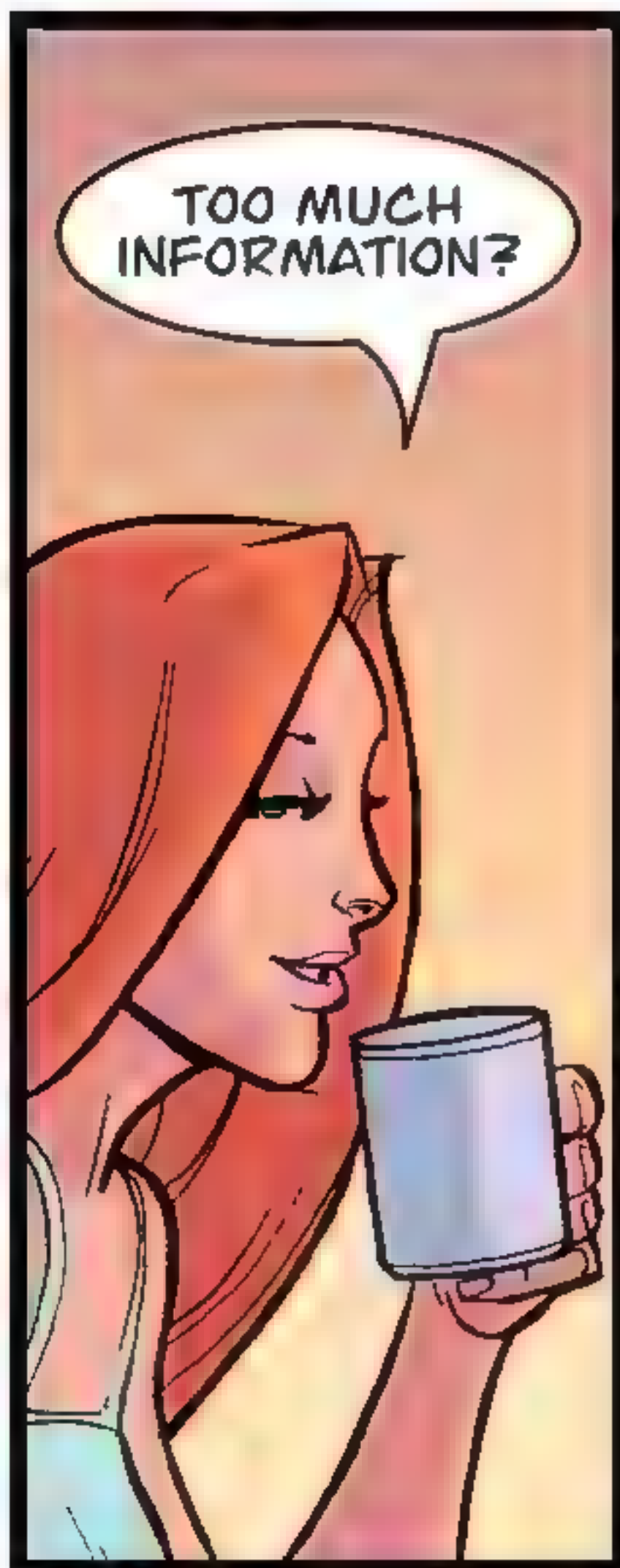
I GET A LOT OF BOOKS READ.

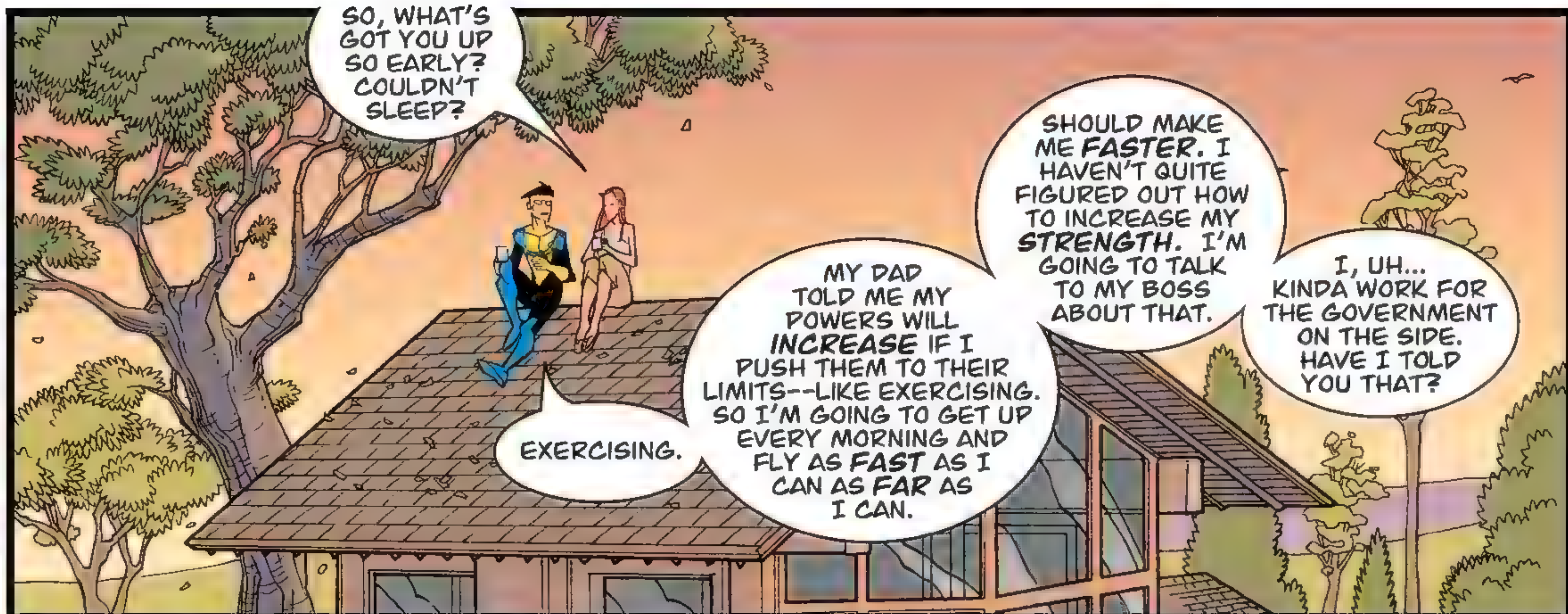


TOO MUCH INFORMATION?



LITTLE BIT.





SO, WHAT'S GOT YOU UP SO EARLY? COULDN'T SLEEP?

SHOULD MAKE ME **FASTER**. I HAVEN'T QUITE FIGURED OUT HOW TO INCREASE MY **STRENGTH**. I'M GOING TO TALK TO MY BOSS ABOUT THAT.

I, UH... KINDA WORK FOR THE GOVERNMENT ON THE SIDE. HAVE I TOLD YOU THAT?

MY DAD TOLD ME MY POWERS WILL **INCREASE** IF I PUSH THEM TO THEIR LIMITS--LIKE EXERCISING. SO I'M GOING TO GET UP EVERY MORNING AND FLY AS **FAST** AS I CAN AS FAR AS I CAN.

EXERCISING.

YOU TALKED TO YOUR FATHER?

WHEN?!

HE WAS ON THAT PLANET I WENT TO, THE ONE WITH THE BUG PEOPLE?

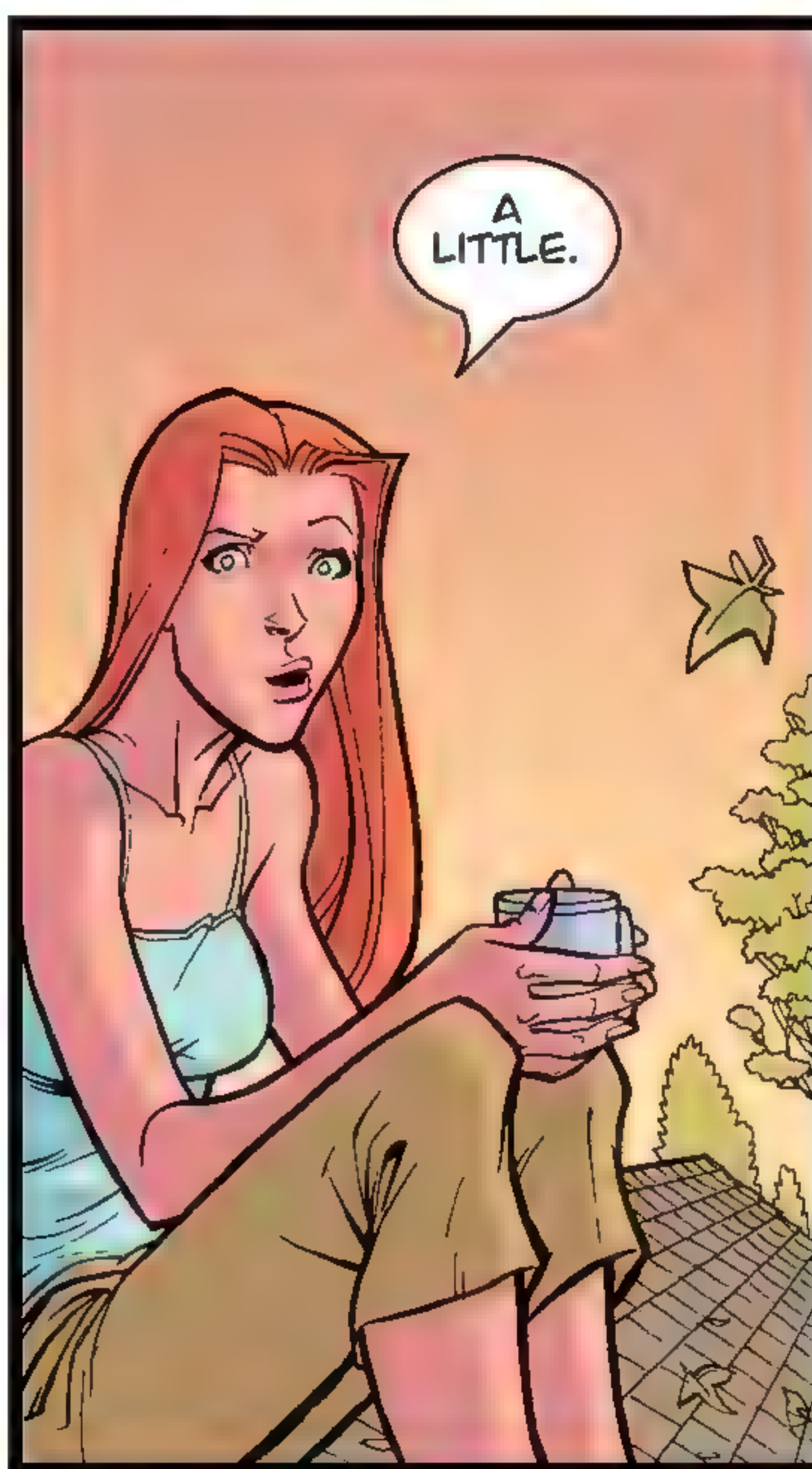
BUG PEOPLE?

YEAH, THE PLANET WHERE MY BROTHER'S MOTHER CAME FROM-- WHERE I GOT MY LITTLE BROTHER...

LITTLE BROTHER?!



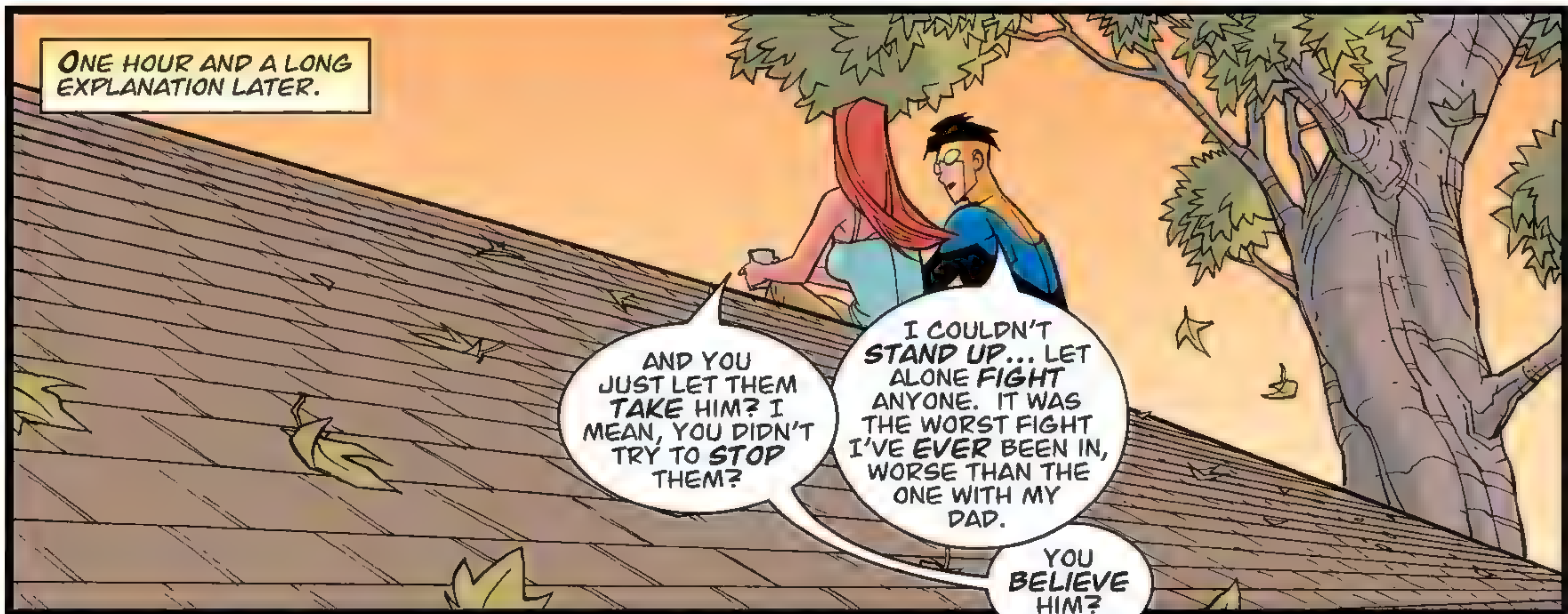
SO, UH... LOOKS LIKE I'VE GOT A LITTLE EXPLAINING TO DO.



A LITTLE.



OKAY... WHERE DO I BEGIN? SCIENCE DOG CAME TO MY HOUSE...

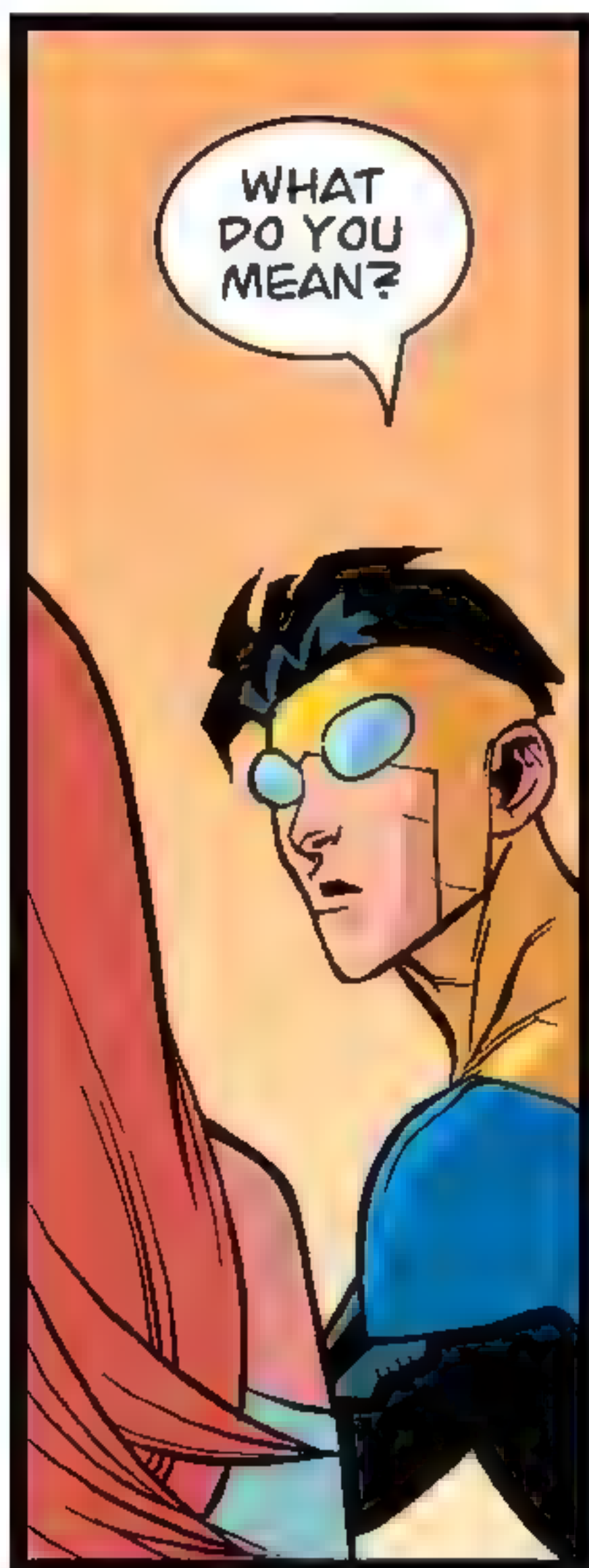


ONE HOUR AND A LONG EXPLANATION LATER.

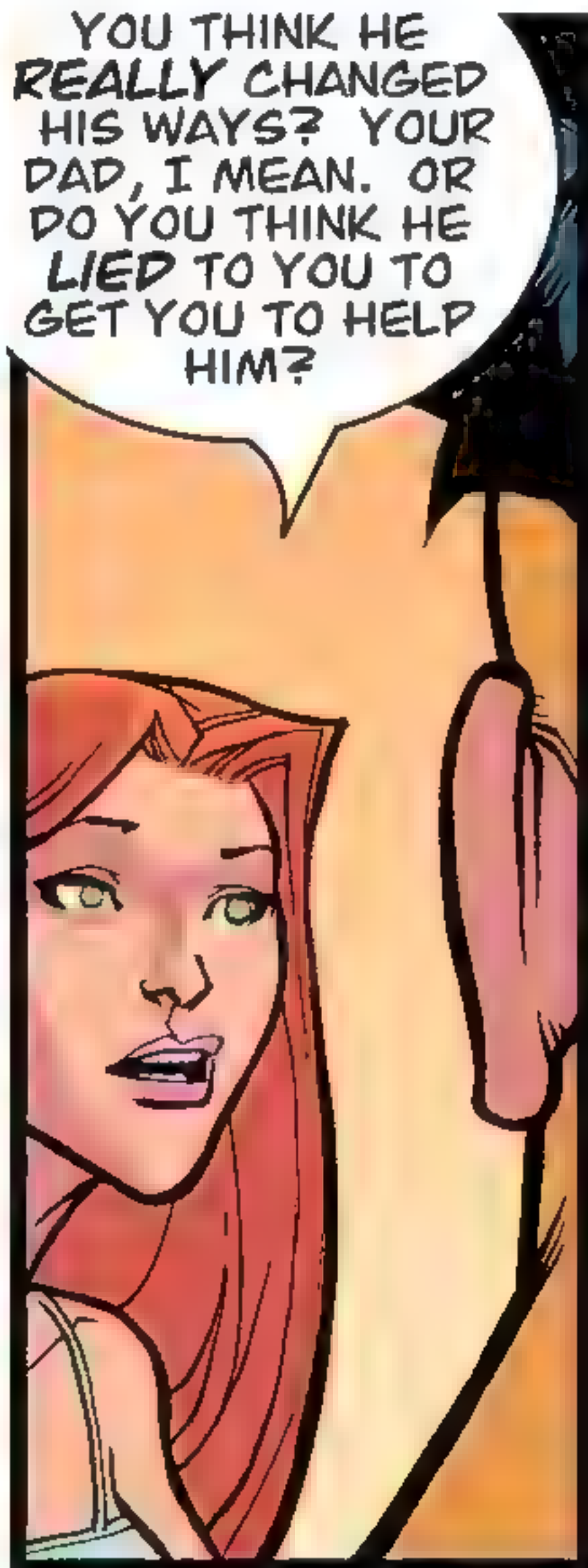
AND YOU JUST LET THEM TAKE HIM? I MEAN, YOU DIDN'T TRY TO STOP THEM?

I COULDN'T STAND UP... LET ALONE FIGHT ANYONE. IT WAS THE WORST FIGHT I'VE EVER BEEN IN, WORSE THAN THE ONE WITH MY DAD.

YOU BELIEVE HIM?



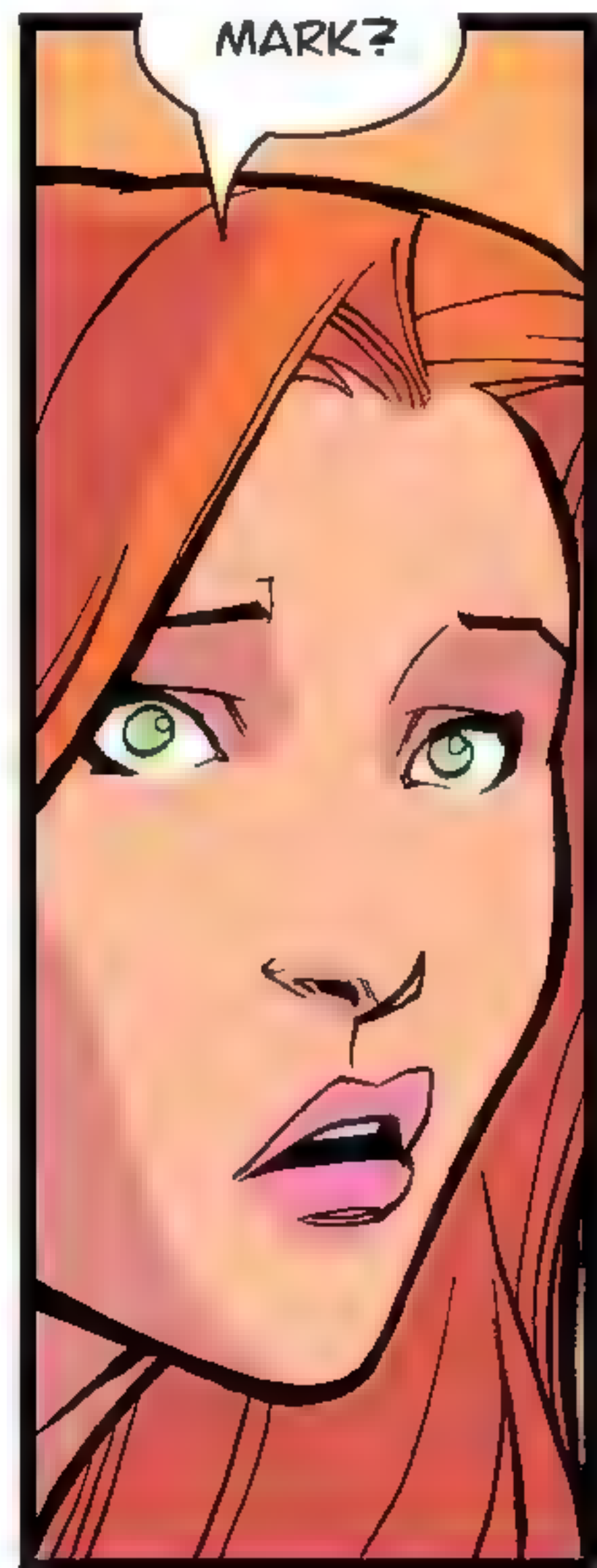
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?



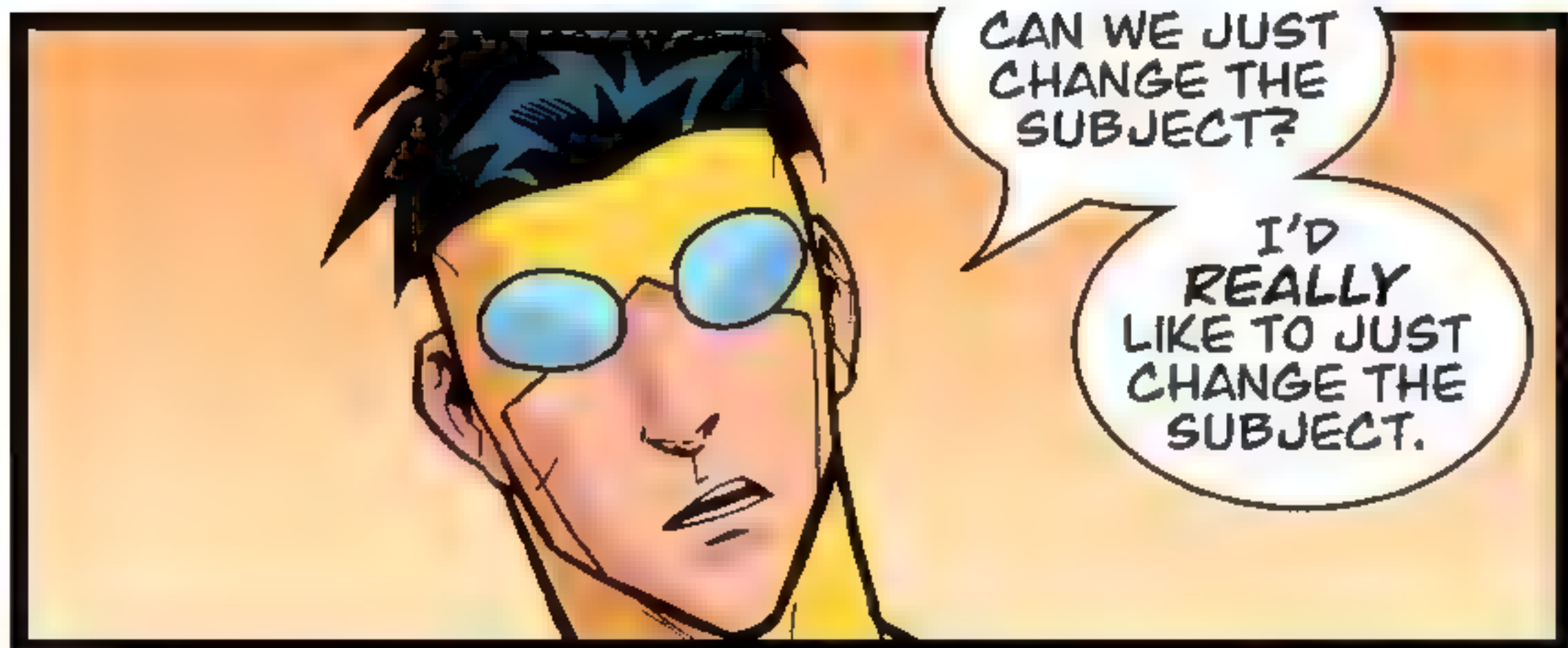
YOU THINK HE REALLY CHANGED HIS WAYS? YOUR DAD, I MEAN. OR DO YOU THINK HE LIED TO YOU TO GET YOU TO HELP HIM?



I DON'T KNOW. I'M TRYING TO NOT THINK ABOUT IT. I'M TOO BUSY TRYING TO CONVINCE MYSELF THAT THE VILTRUMITES HAVEN'T EXECUTED HIM YET... AND THAT I'M GOING TO SOMEHOW BE ABLE TO SAVE HIM.

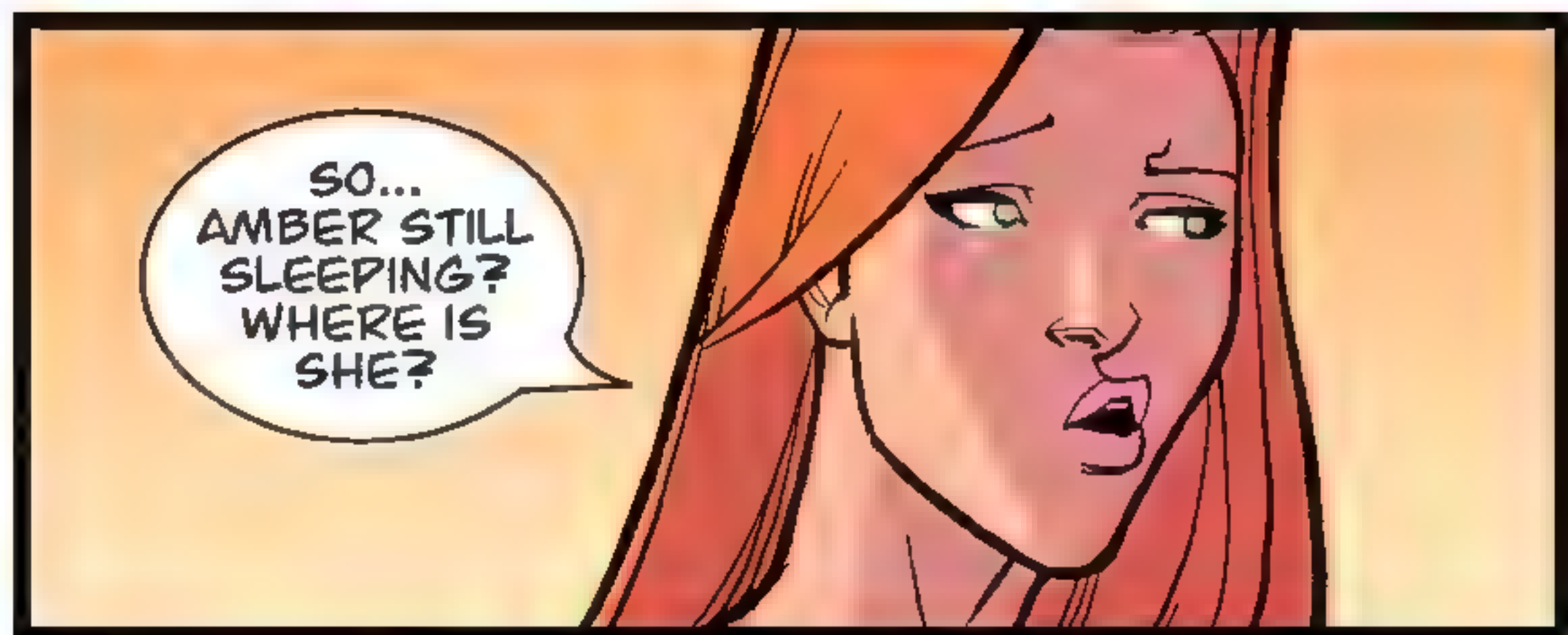


MARK?



CAN WE JUST CHANGE THE SUBJECT?

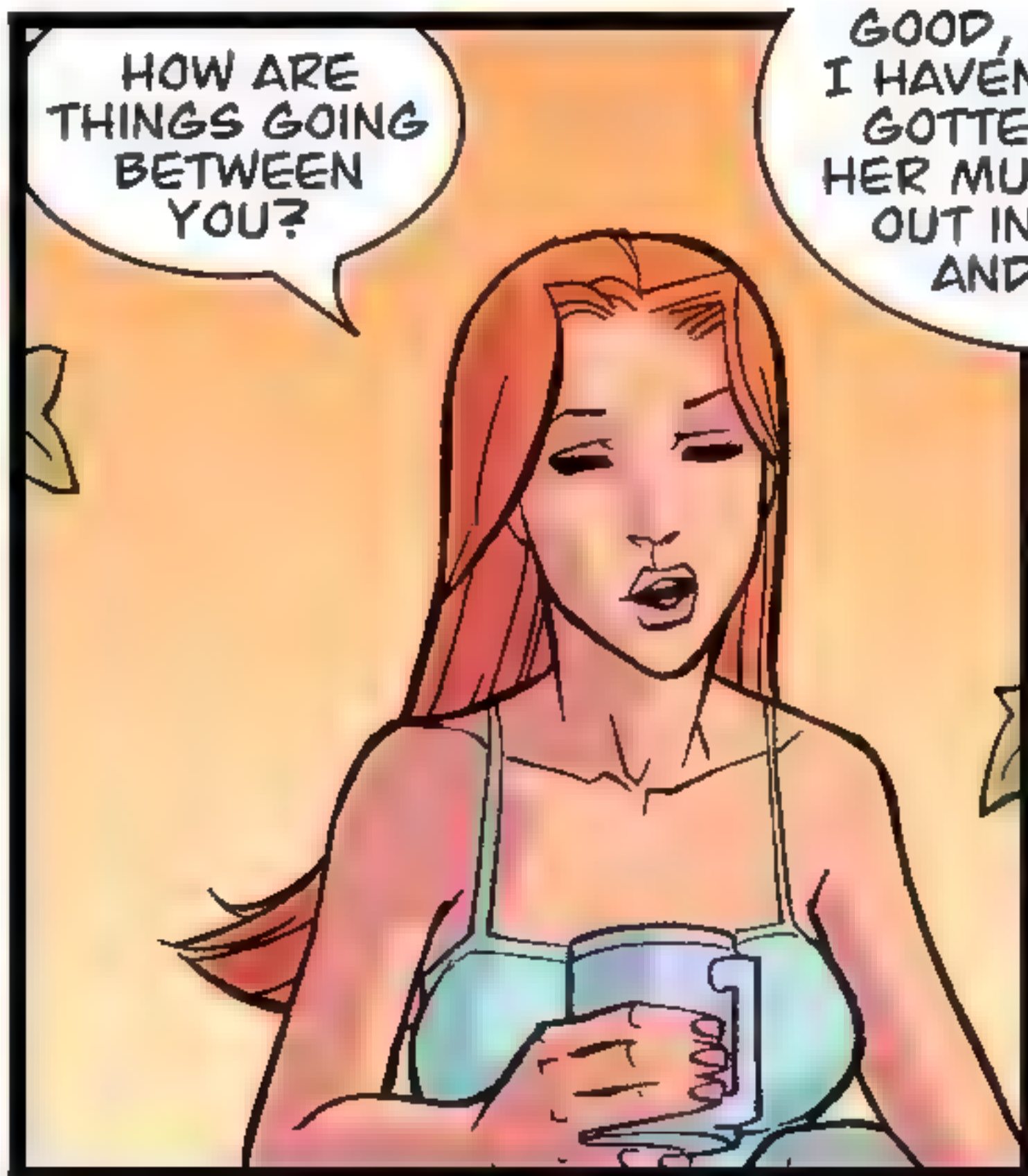
I'D REALLY LIKE TO JUST CHANGE THE SUBJECT.



SO... AMBER STILL SLEEPING? WHERE IS SHE?



WHEN I LEFT THIS MORNING SHE WAS. I GUESS SHE STILL IS.

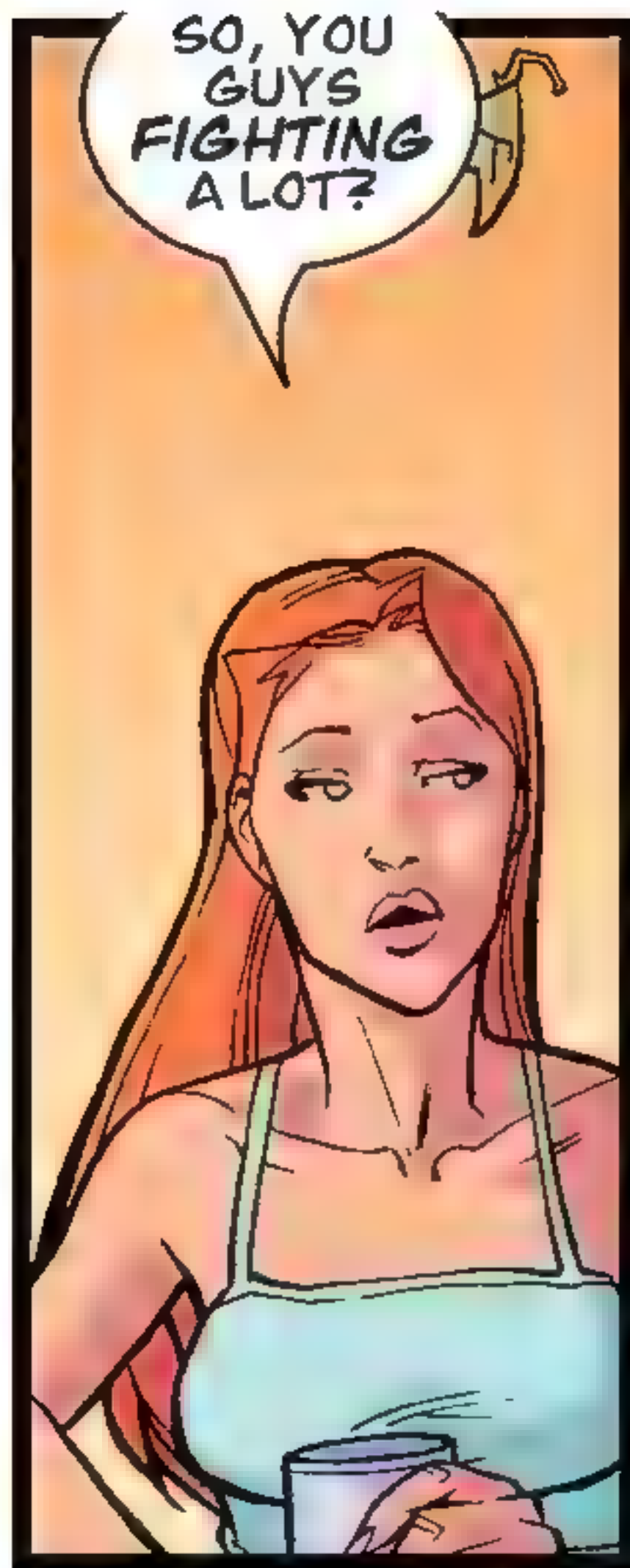


HOW ARE THINGS GOING BETWEEN YOU?

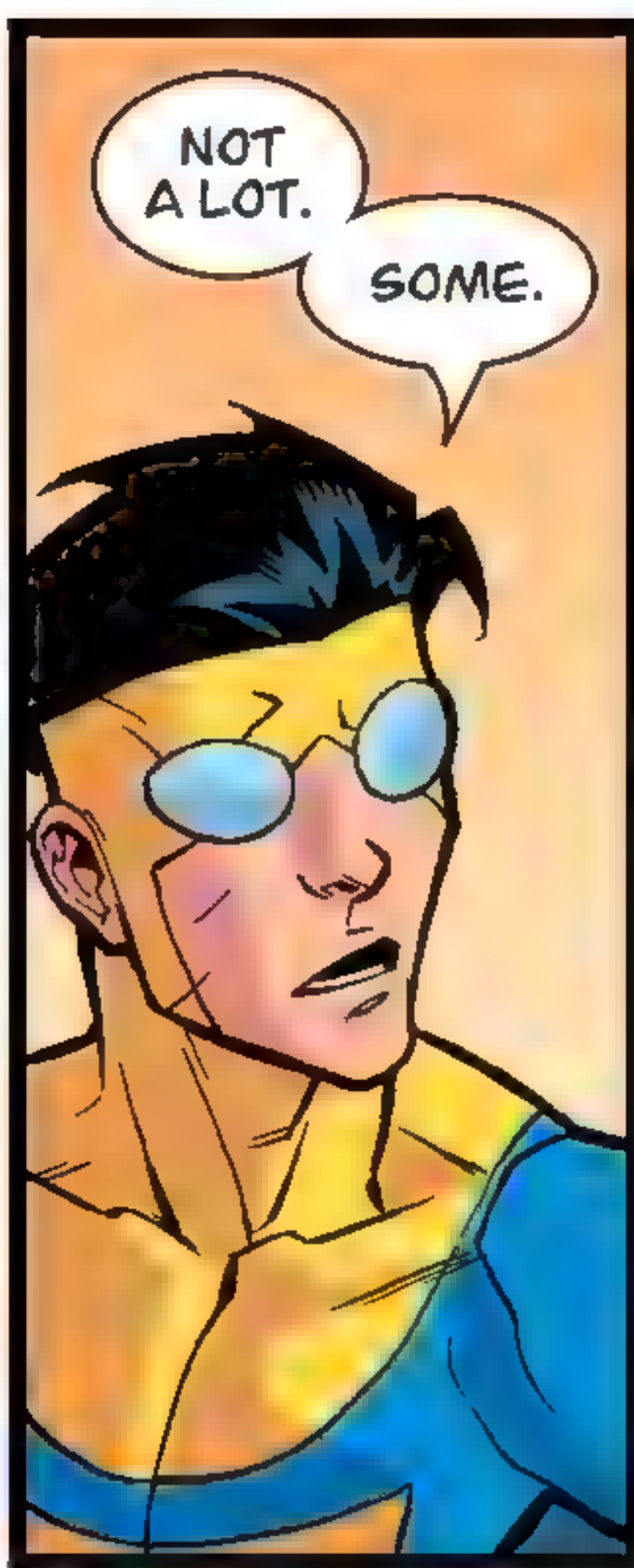


GOOD, I GUESS. I HAVEN'T REALLY GOTTEN TO SEE HER MUCH, BEING OUT IN SPACE AND ALL.

SHE CERTAINLY WASN'T HAPPY ABOUT THAT.



SO, YOU GUYS FIGHTING A LOT?

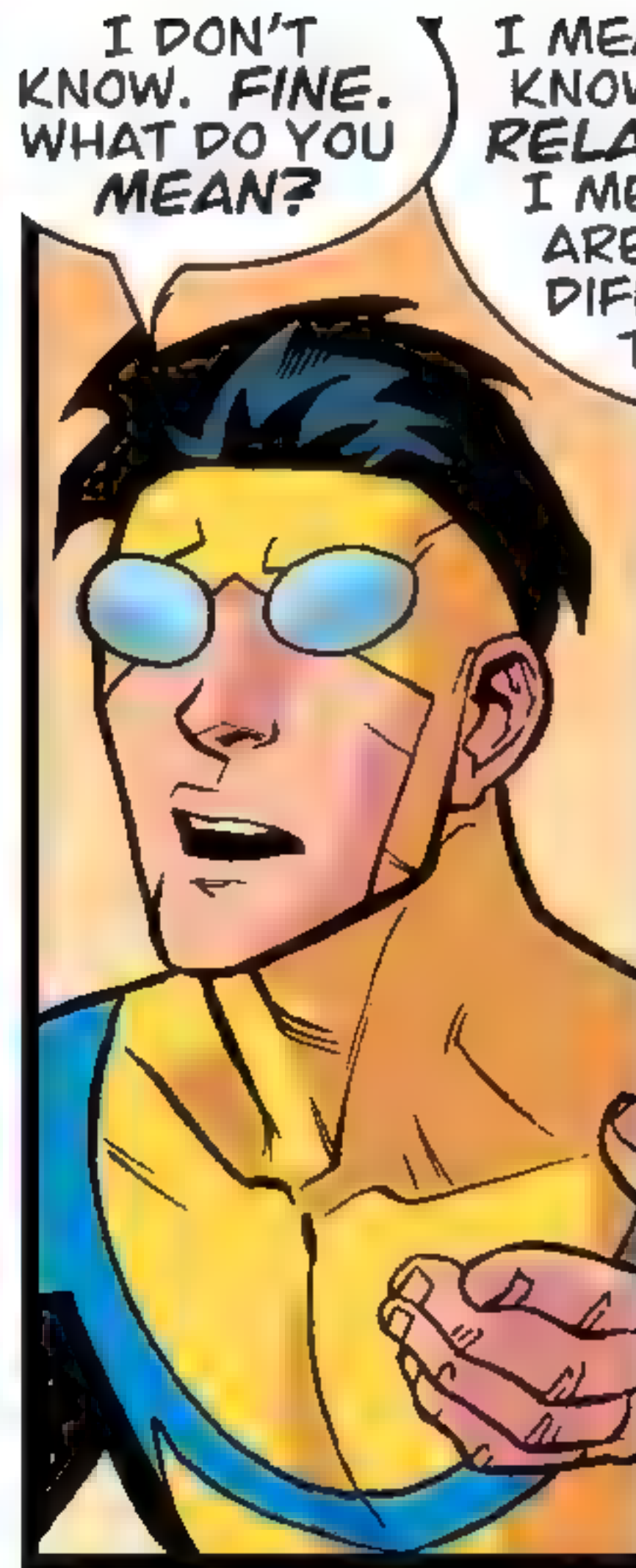


NOT A LOT.

SOME.



HOW IS THAT?

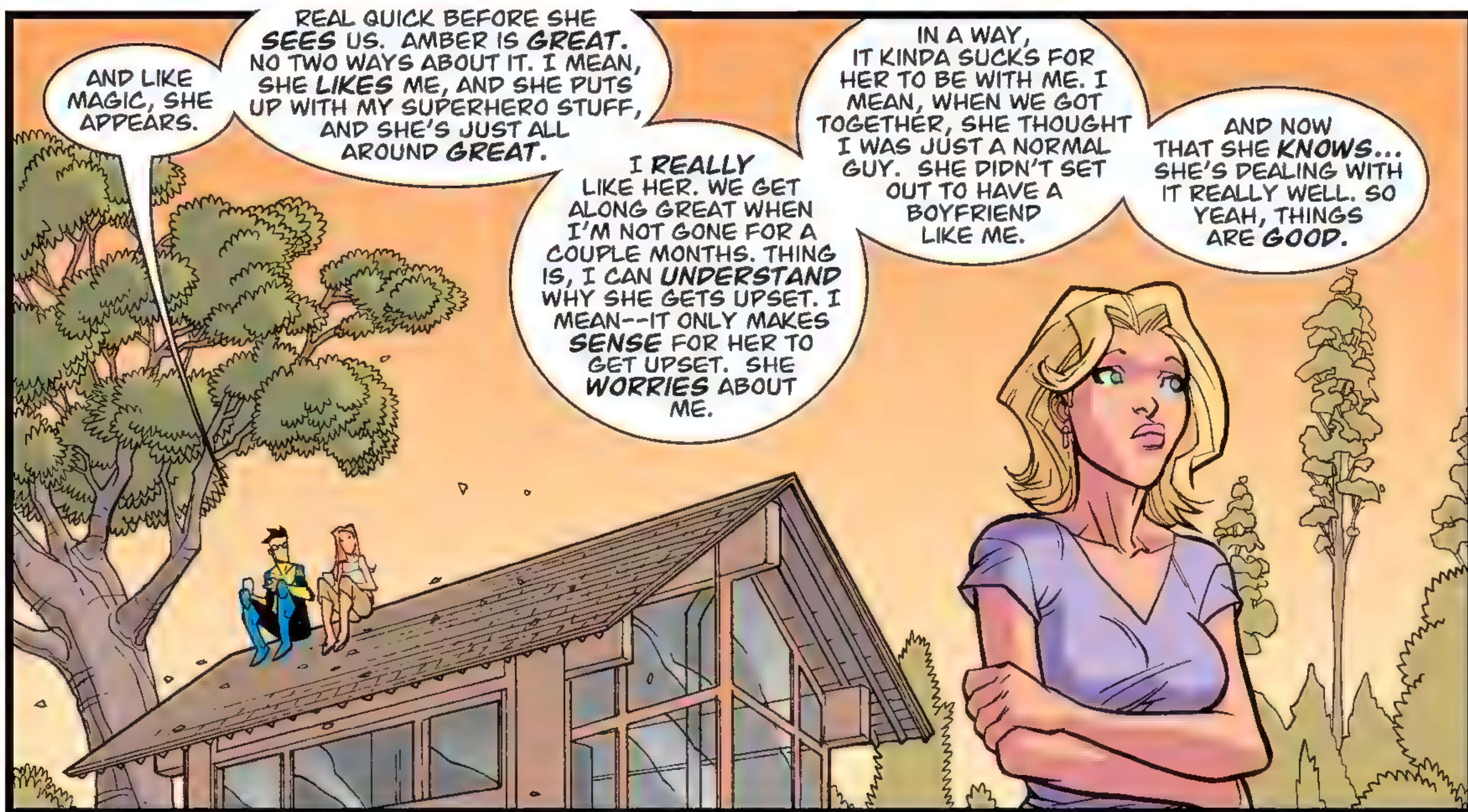


I DON'T KNOW. FINE. WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

I MEAN--I DON'T KNOW. CAN YOU RELATE TO HER? I MEAN, THERE ARE A LOT OF DIFFERENCES THERE.



I THINK THAT'S WHAT MY MAIN PROBLEM WITH WILLIAM WAS. WE DIDN'T RELATE... Y'KNOW... AT ALL.



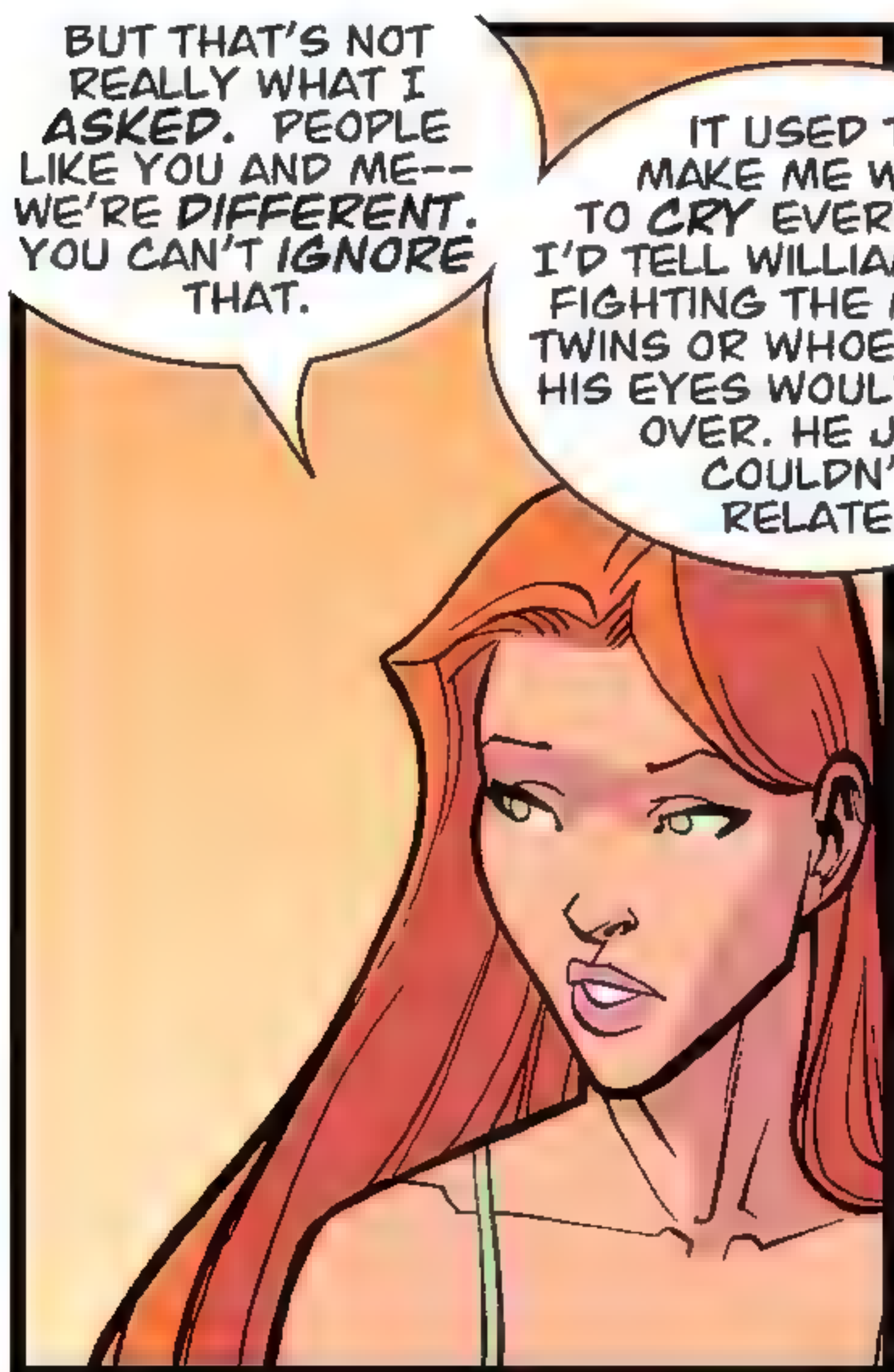
AND LIKE MAGIC, SHE APPEARS.

REAL QUICK BEFORE SHE SEES US. AMBER IS GREAT. NO TWO WAYS ABOUT IT. I MEAN, SHE LIKES ME, AND SHE PUTS UP WITH MY SUPERHERO STUFF, AND SHE'S JUST ALL AROUND GREAT.

I REALLY LIKE HER. WE GET ALONG GREAT WHEN I'M NOT GONE FOR A COUPLE MONTHS. THING IS, I CAN UNDERSTAND WHY SHE GETS UPSET. I MEAN--IT ONLY MAKES SENSE FOR HER TO GET UPSET. SHE WORRIES ABOUT ME.

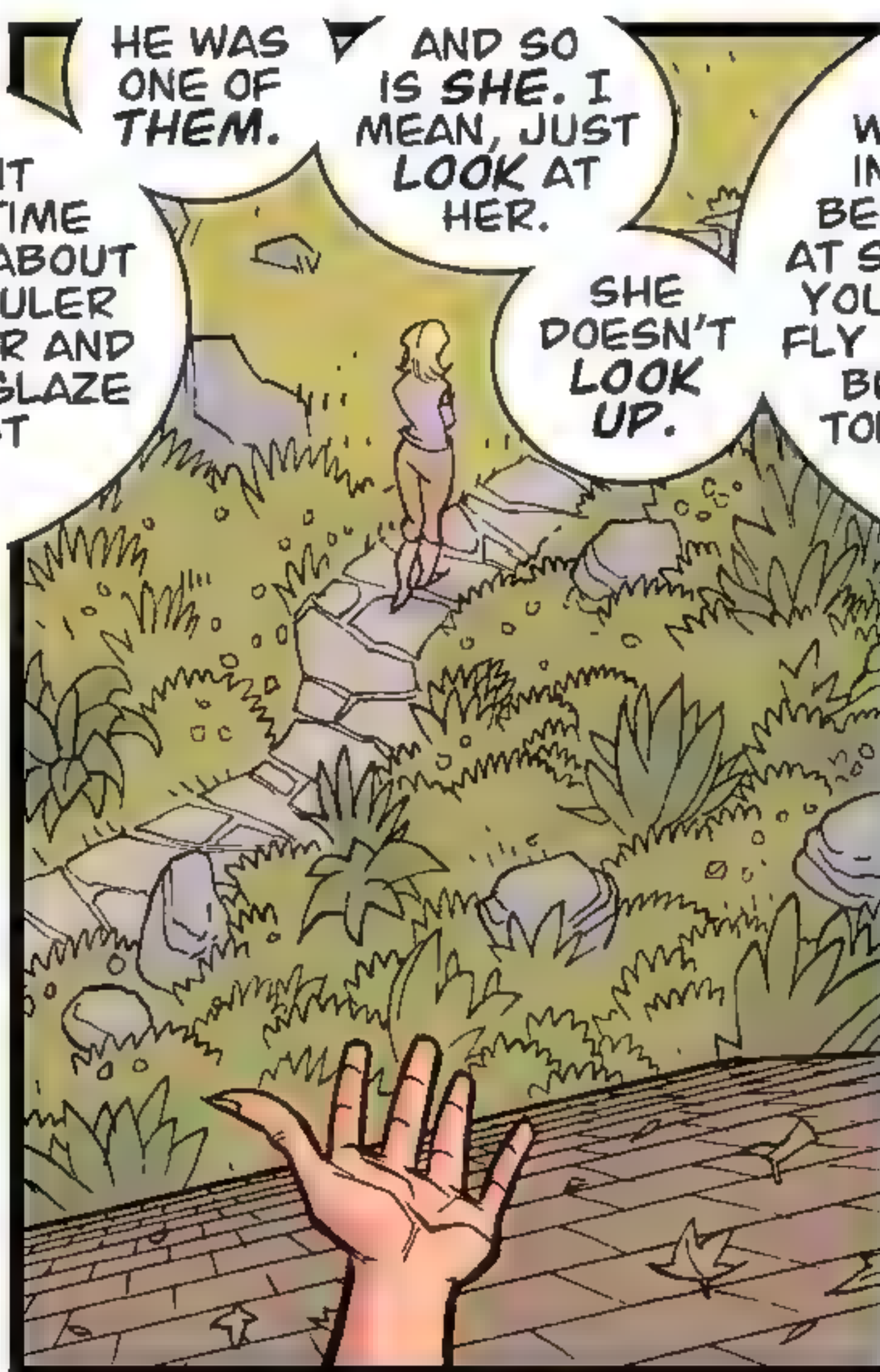
IN A WAY, IT KINDA SUCKS FOR HER TO BE WITH ME. I MEAN, WHEN WE GOT TOGETHER, SHE THOUGHT I WAS JUST A NORMAL GUY. SHE DIDN'T SET OUT TO HAVE A BOYFRIEND LIKE ME.

AND NOW THAT SHE KNOWS... SHE'S DEALING WITH IT REALLY WELL. SO YEAH, THINGS ARE GOOD.



BUT THAT'S NOT REALLY WHAT I ASKED. PEOPLE LIKE YOU AND ME--WE'RE DIFFERENT. YOU CAN'T IGNORE THAT.

IT USED TO MAKE ME WANT TO CRY EVERY TIME I'D TELL WILLIAM ABOUT FIGHTING THE MAULER TWINS OR WHOEVER AND HIS EYES WOULD GLAZE OVER. HE JUST COULDN'T RELATE.



HE WAS ONE OF THEM.

AND SO IS SHE. I MEAN, JUST LOOK AT HER.

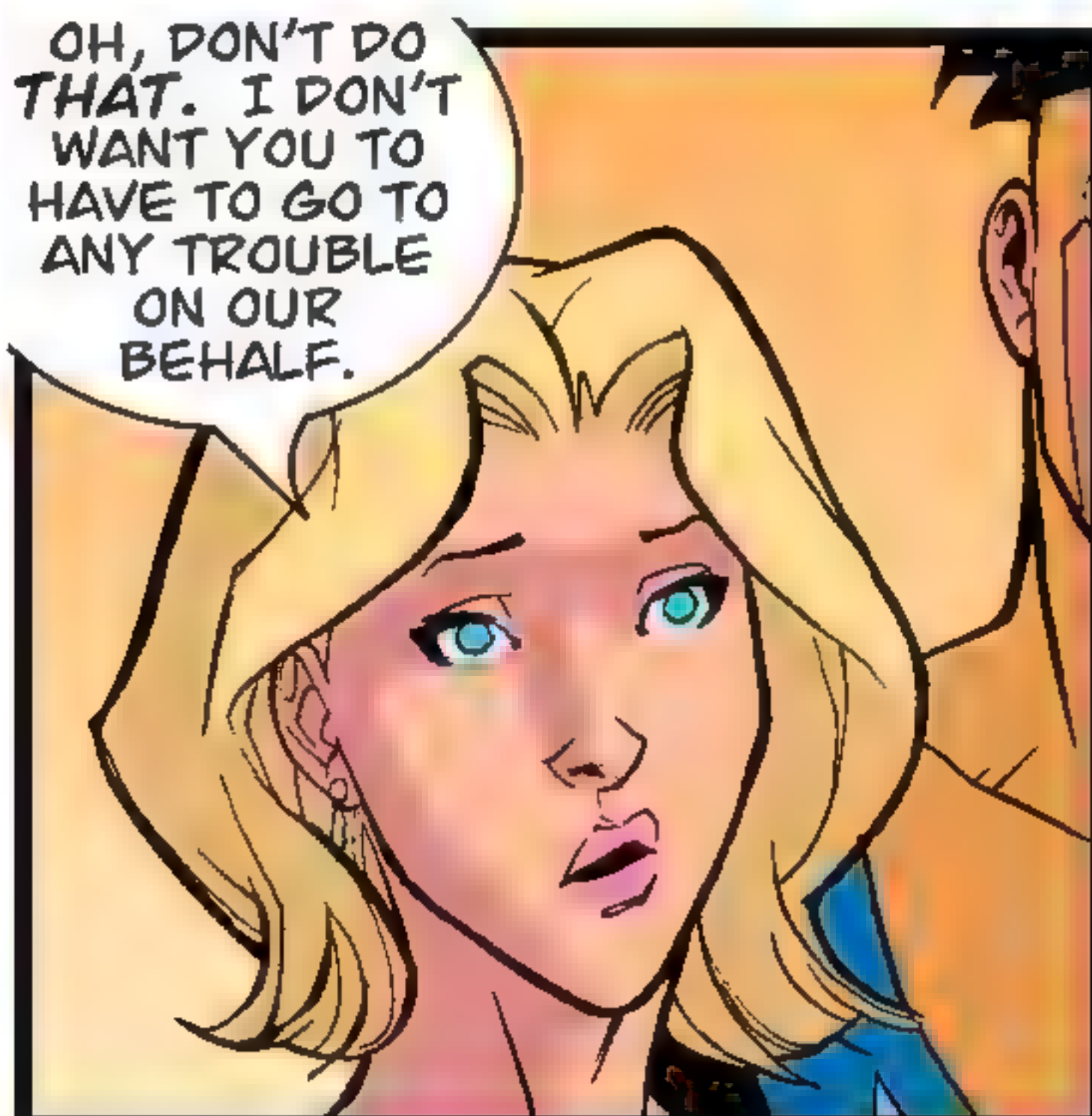
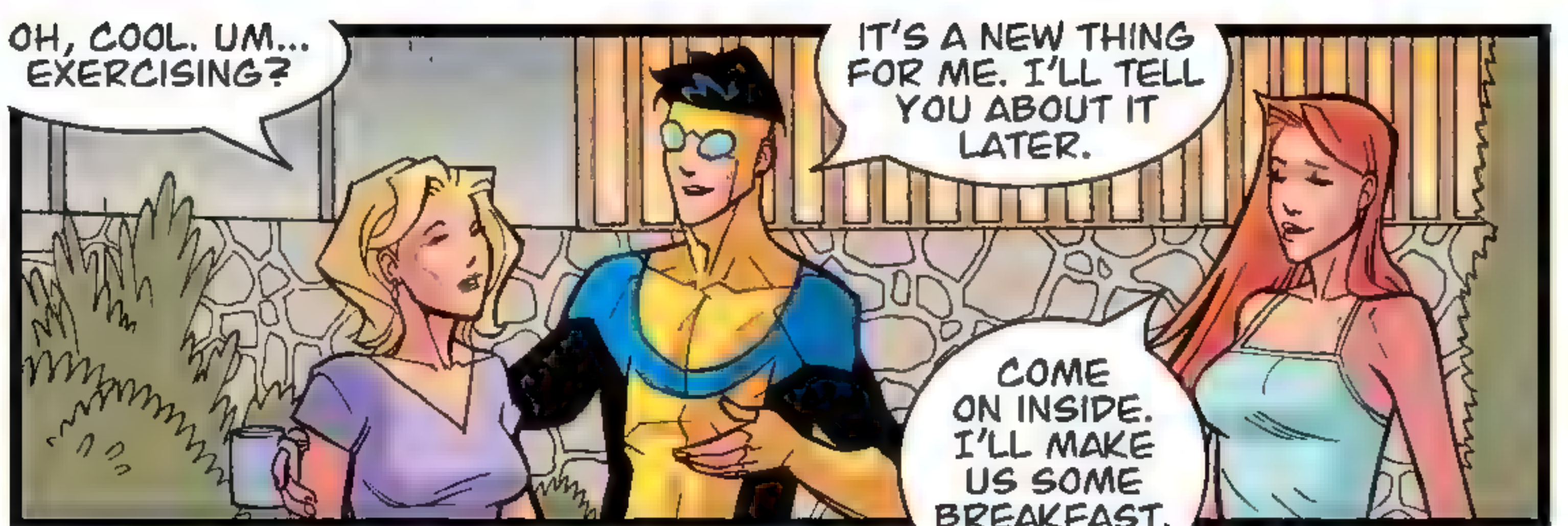
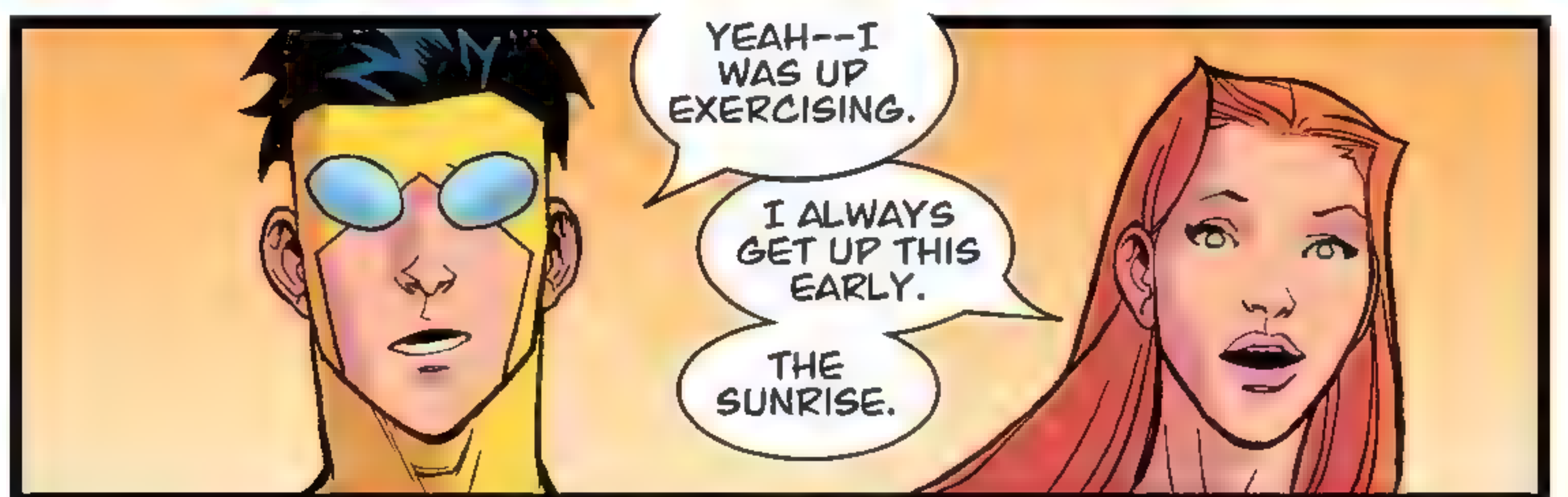
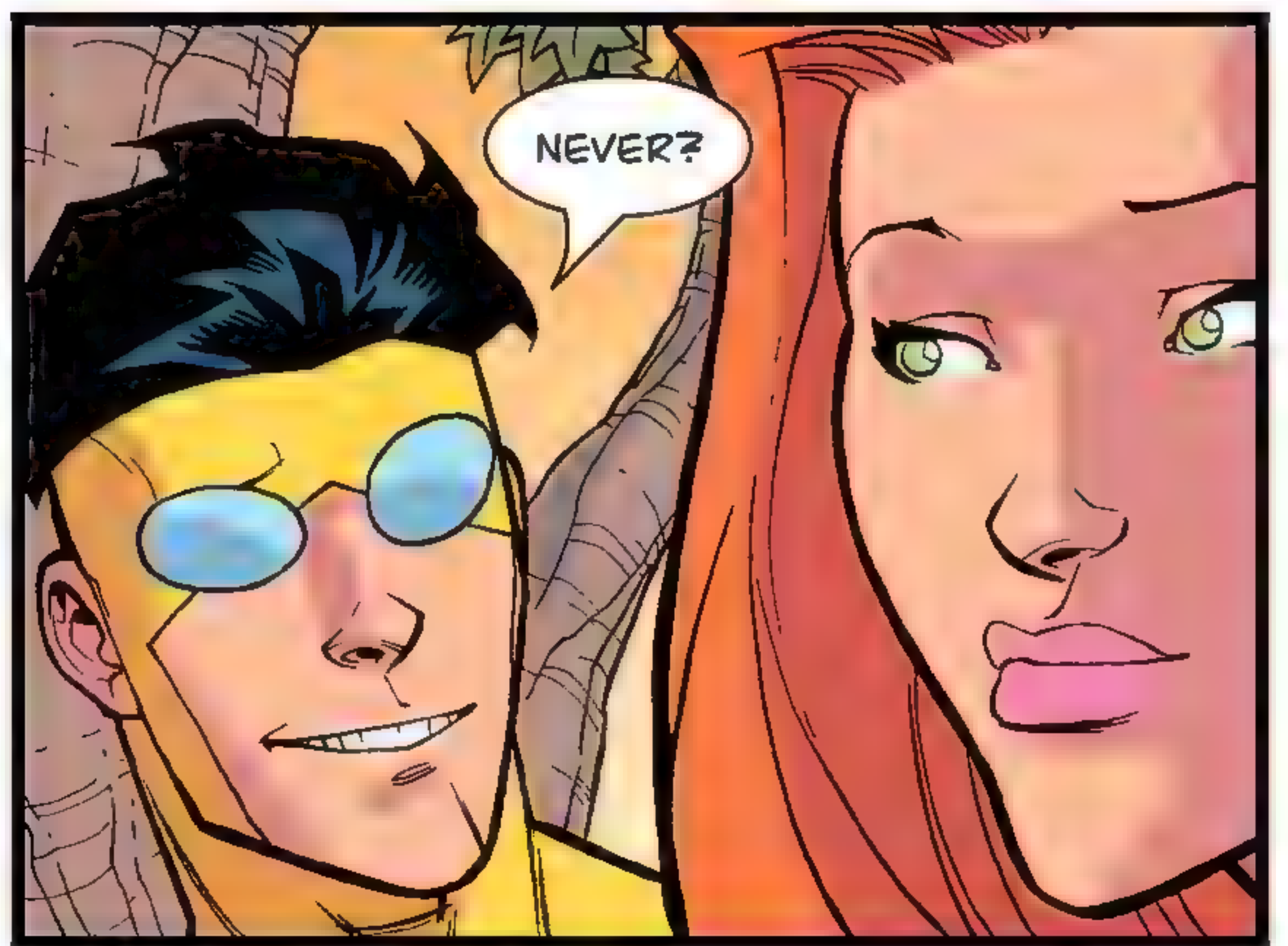
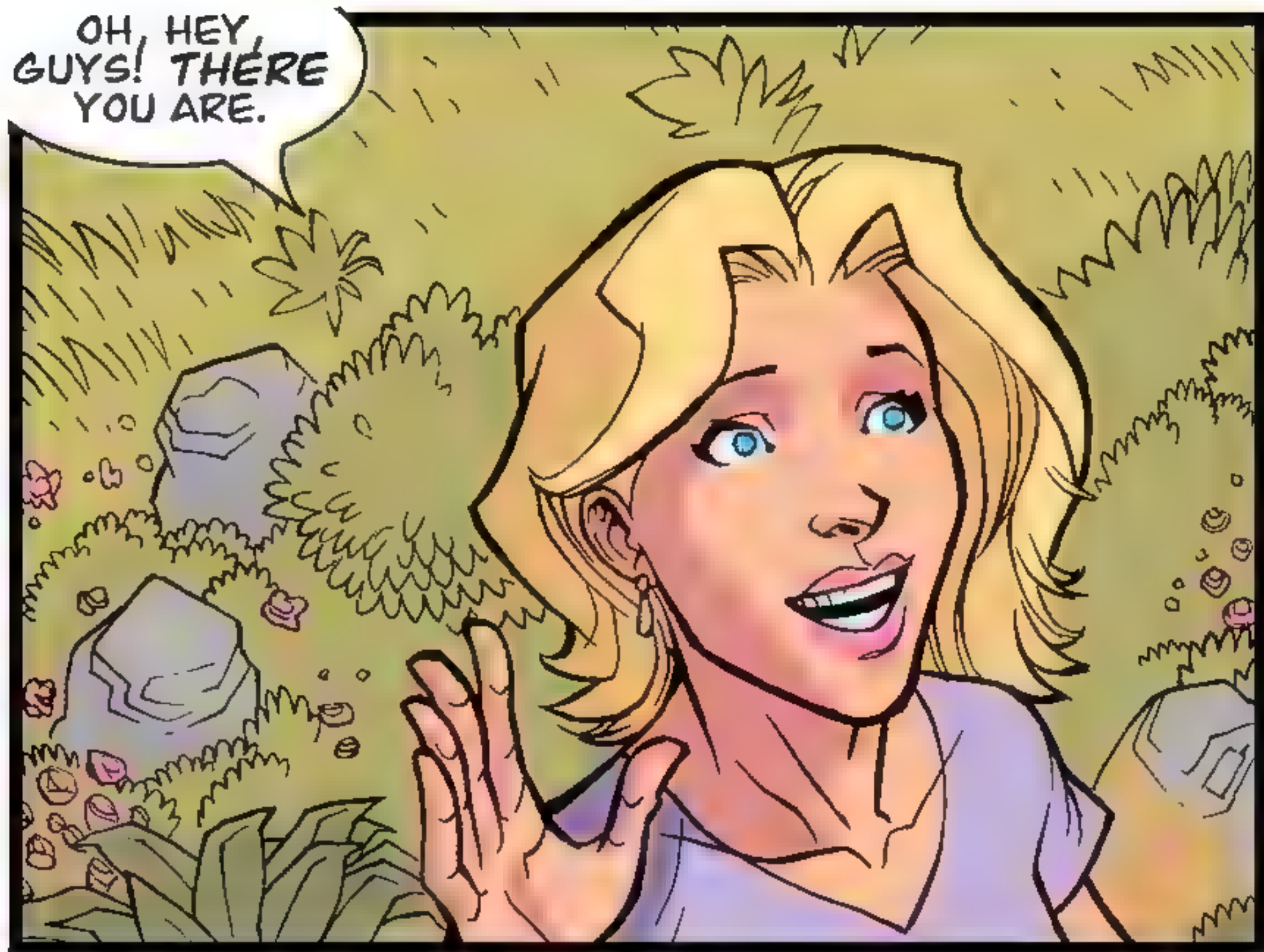
SHE DOESN'T LOOK UP.

YOU REMEMBER? WE WERE CHANGING INTO OUR COSTUMES BEHIND THE DUMPSTER AT SCHOOL? REMEMBER? YOU ASKED, "HOW DO WE FLY OUT OF HERE WITHOUT BEING SPOTTED?" I TOLD YOU THAT THESE PEOPLE NEVER LOOK UP.

THAT'S JUST HOW IT IS. THEY'RE BLIND TO OUR WORLD--WHAT WE DO--HOW WE LIVE--THE STRESS--THE PRESSURE. THEY DON'T WANT TO BE IN OUR WORLD.



THAT'S WHY THEY NEVER LOOK UP.



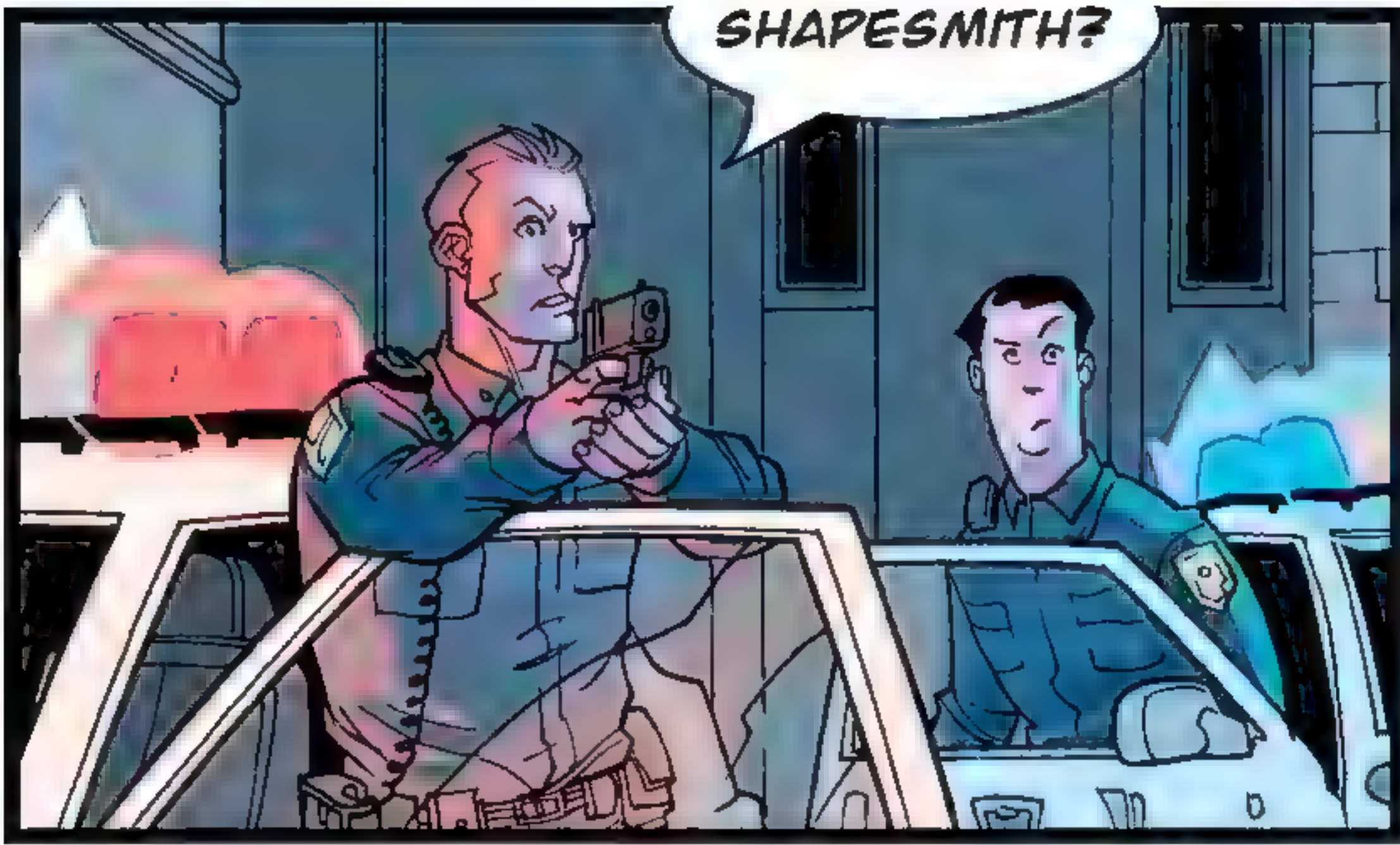


A comic book illustration of a superhero named The Shapsmith. He is a muscular man with a white and black suit, black gloves, and a black mask with white eye lenses. He is standing in a city street, surrounded by a crowd of people. In the background, there is a police car with its lights on. The Shapsmith is looking down at a group of people who are lying on the ground, some of whom appear to be injured. He has a confident, smug expression on his face. The scene is set in a city with brick buildings and a fire escape.

TAKE
THAT, LIZARD
LEAGUE!

I BET
YOU'LL THINK
TWICE BEFORE
YOU AGAIN
FACE--

**THE
SHAPESMITH!**





THIS IS
SOOOOOO
NEAT. I'M SO
GLAD WE GOT TO
COME OUT HERE.
REALLY, EVE---
THANKS FOR
INVITING
US.

IT'S---
IT'S JUST
AMAZING.

YEAH,
THIS PLACE
IS **REALLY** COOL.
WE'RE GOING TO
HAVE COME BACK
HERE **REAL**
SOON.

YOU GUYS
ARE ALWAYS
WELCOME HERE,
ANY TIME
YOU WANT,
REALLY.

I CAN'T
WAIT TO TELL
BRIDGET
ALL ABOUT
IT.

WELL, YOU
CAN'T EXACTLY
DO THAT. HOW
IN THE HECK ARE
YOU GOING TO
EXPLAIN GOING TO
AFRICA FOR THE
WEEKEND?

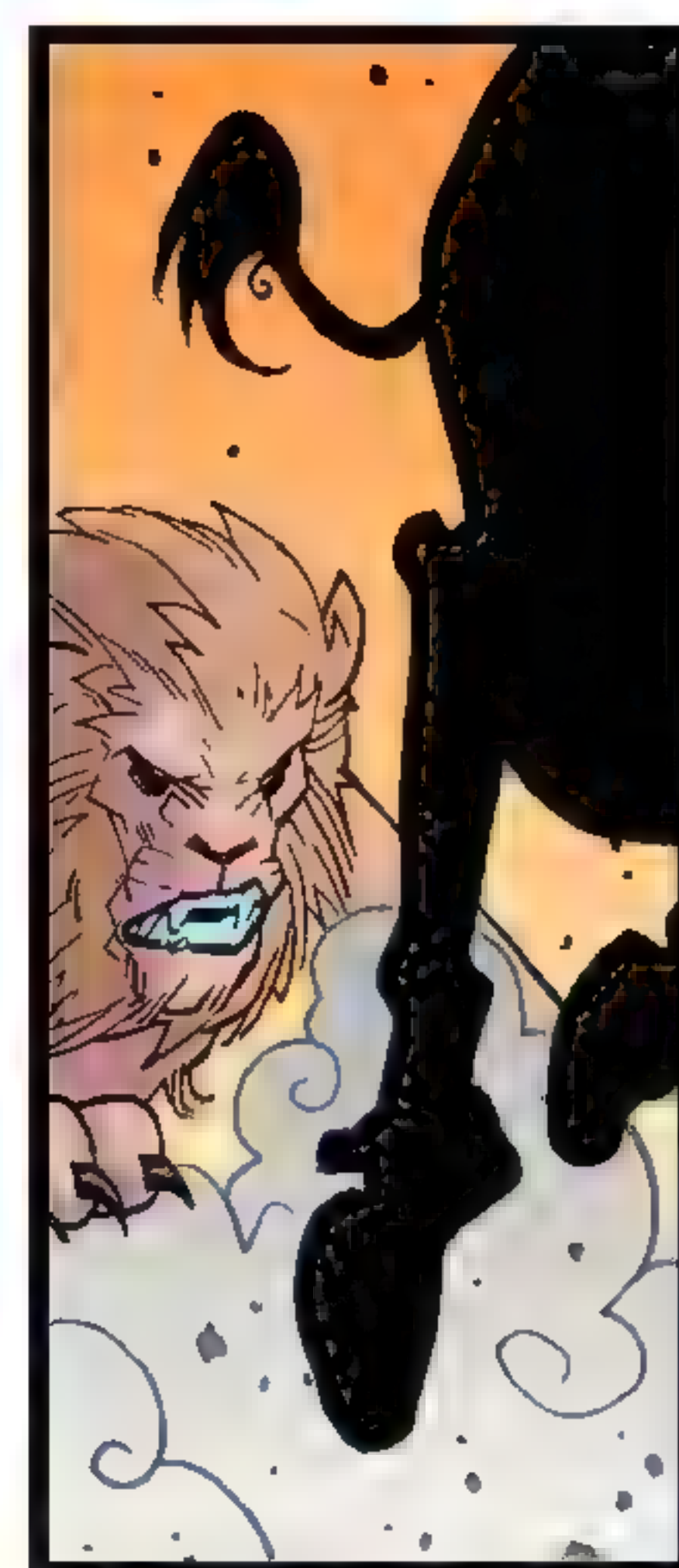
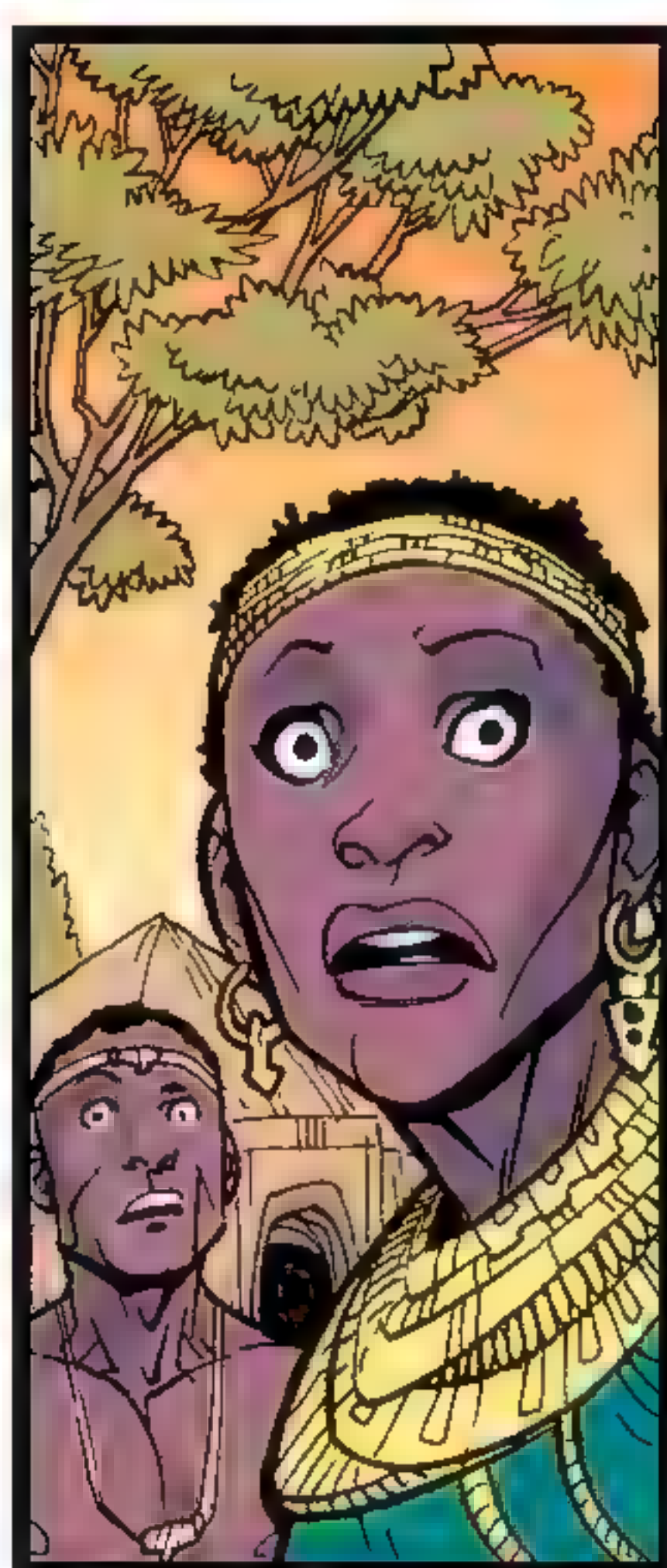
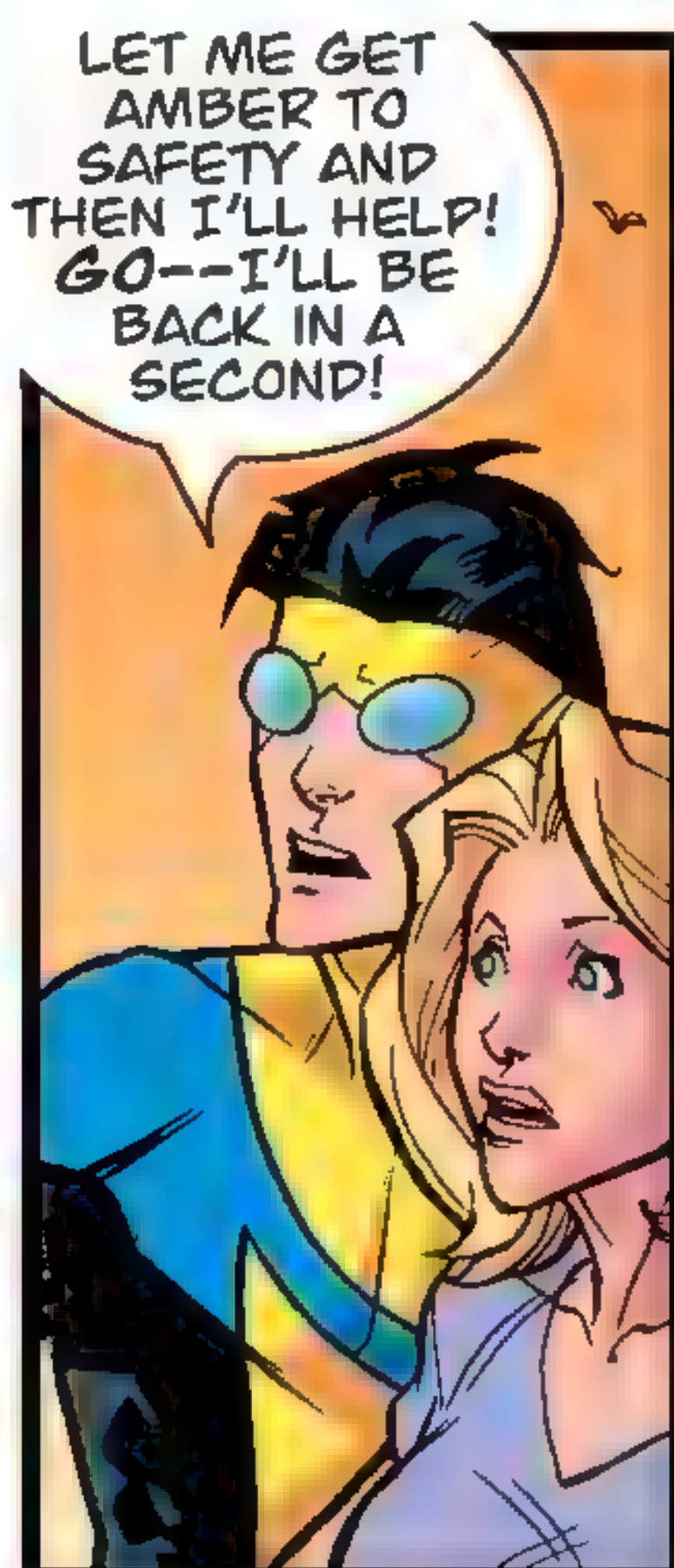
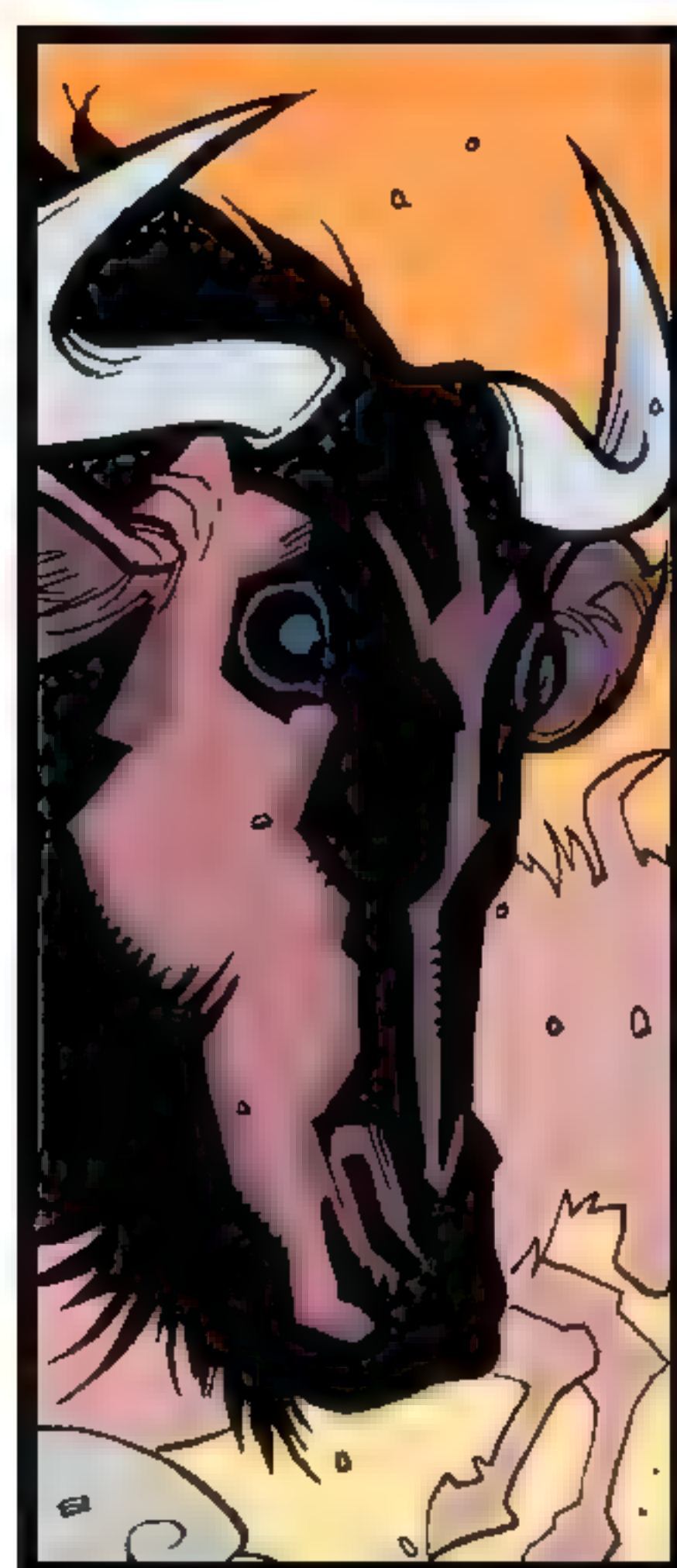
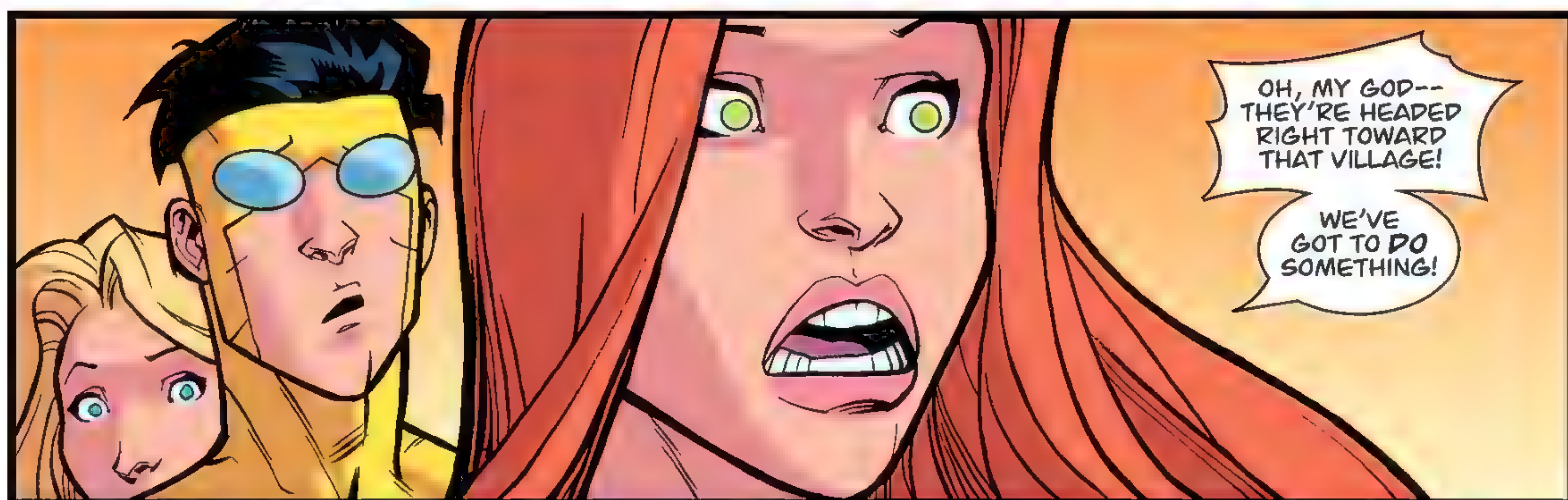
JEEZ, I HADN'T
REALLY **THOUGHT**
ABOUT THAT. OF
COURSE I CAN'T
TELL HER... OR
ANYONE.

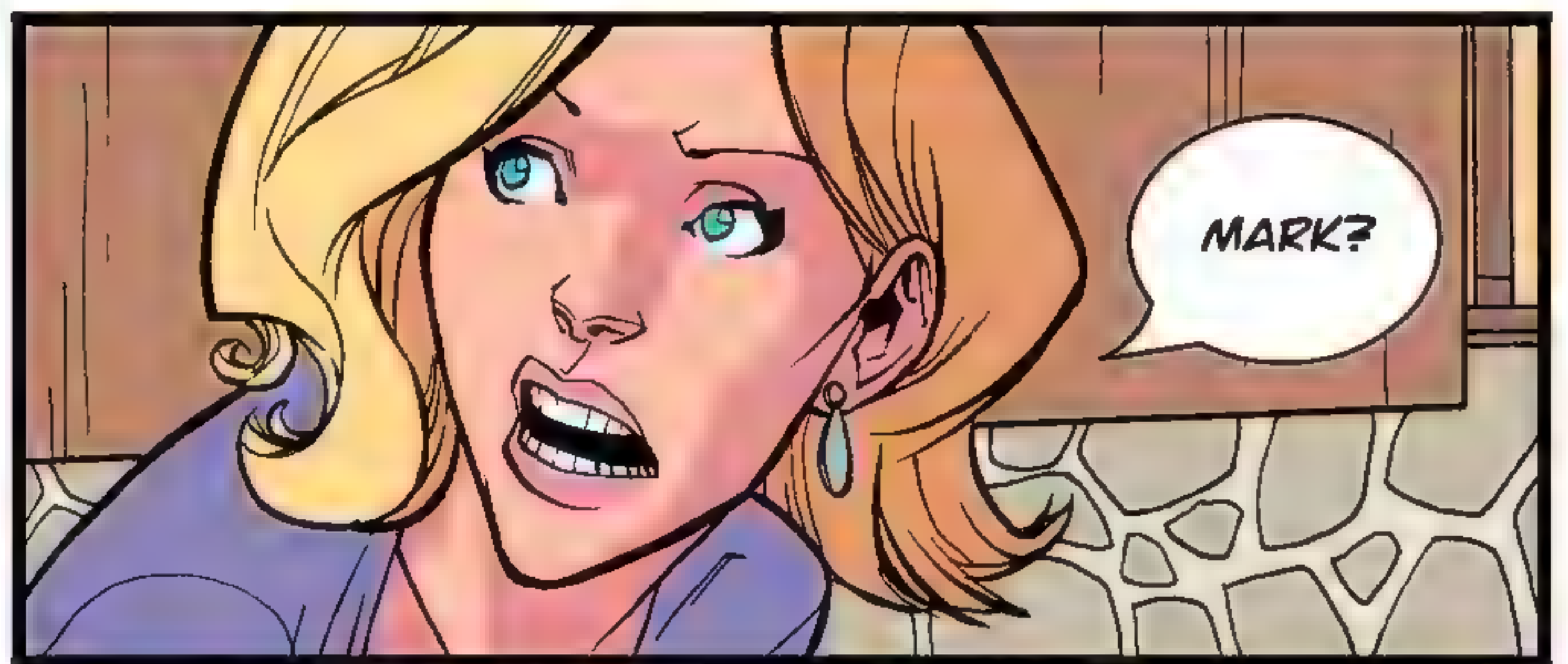
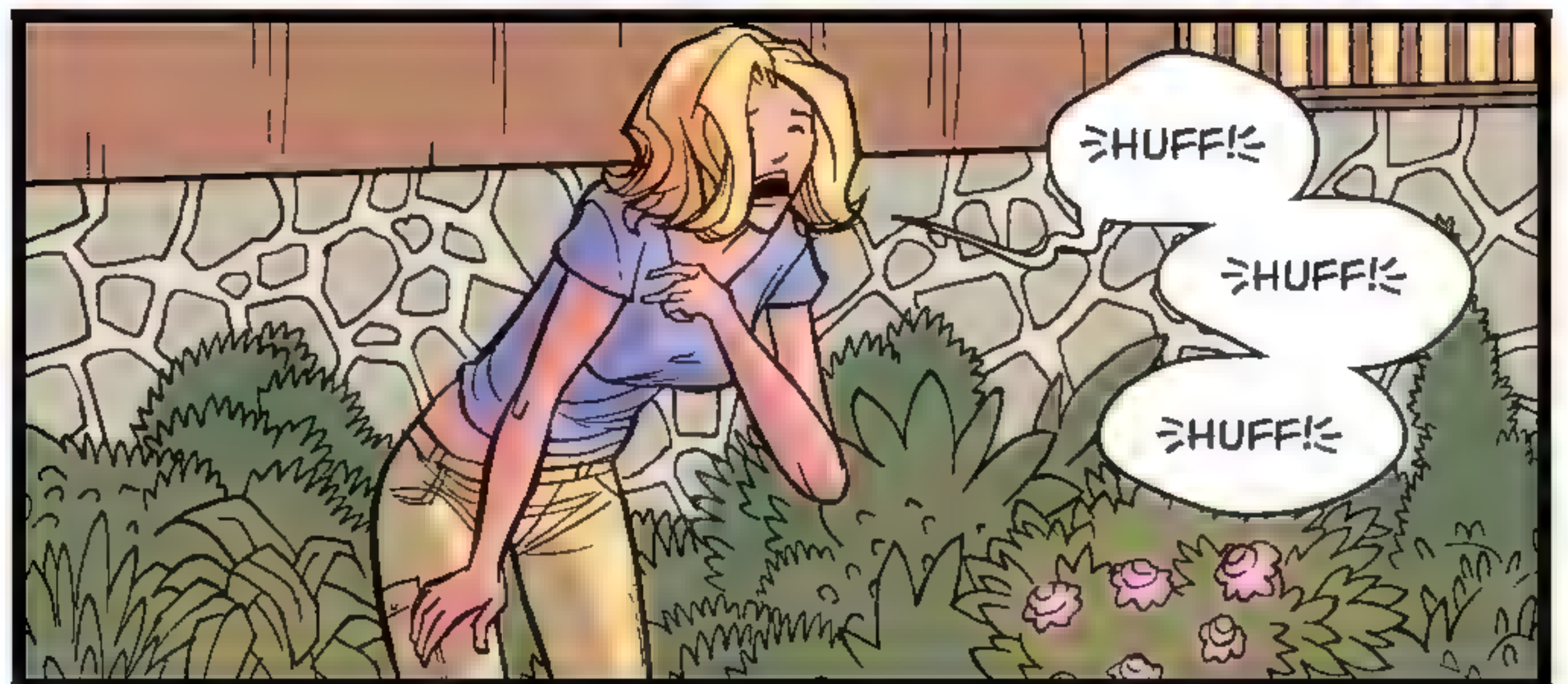
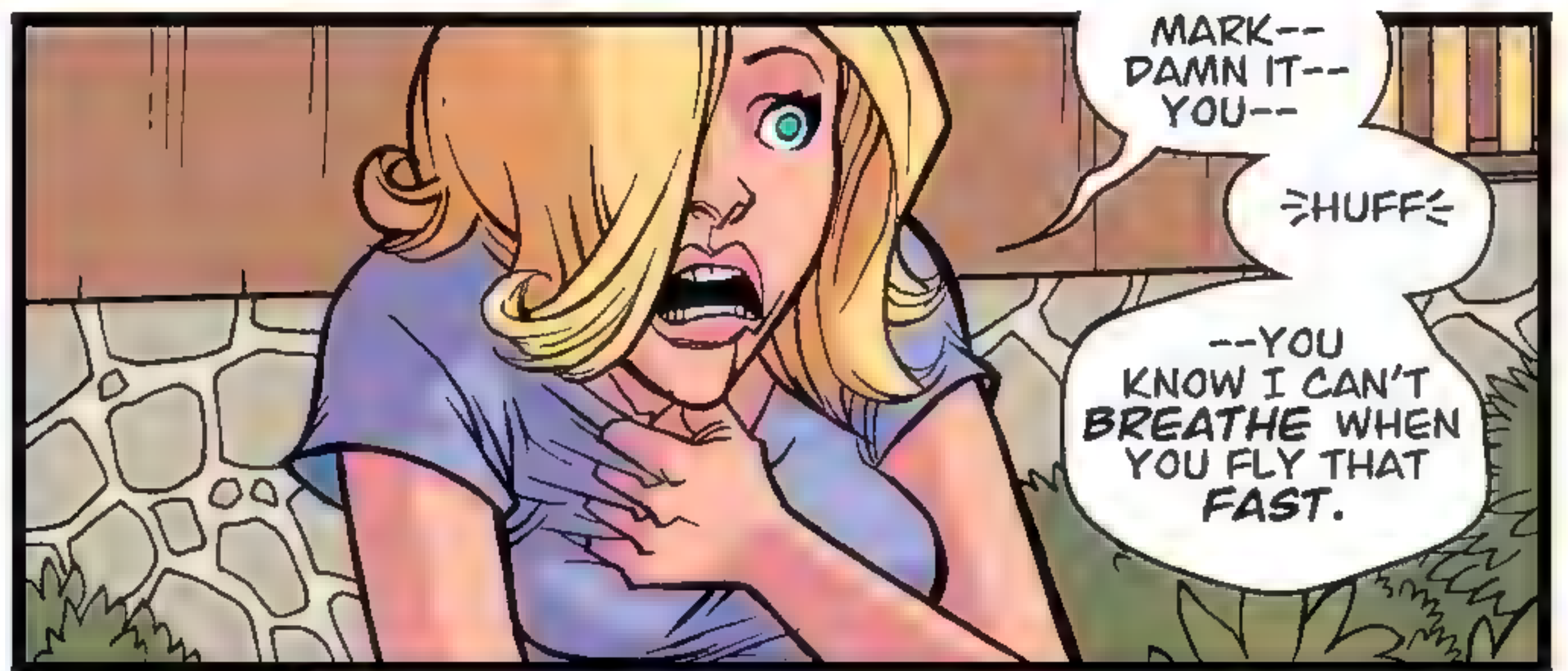
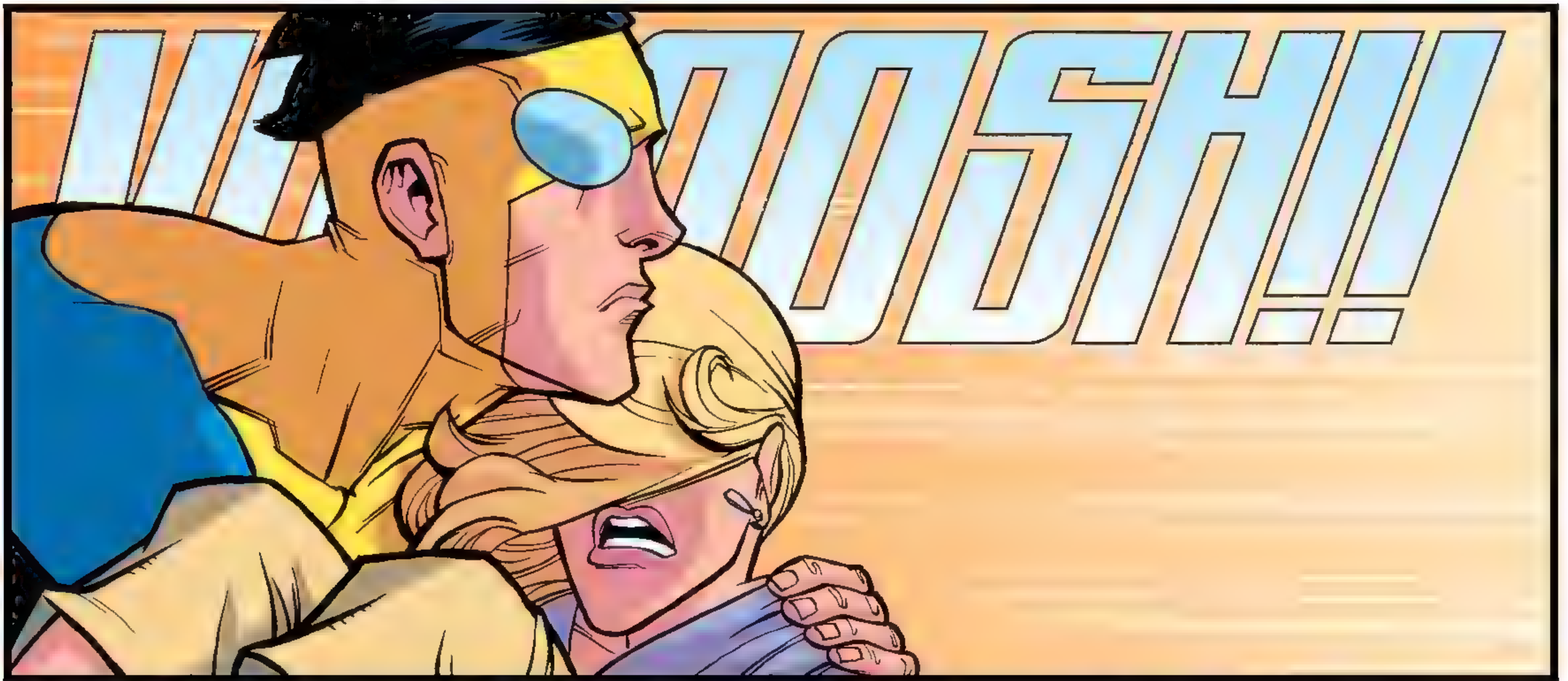
IT'LL
HAVE TO BE
OUR SECRET,
THEN.

DO YOU
HEAR
THAT?

HEAR WHAT?

DESPITE
CONTRARY
POPULAR
BELIEF---I
DO NOT HAVE
SUPER-
HEARING.





AN UNDISCLOSED LOCATION.

THIS WOULD BE EASIER IF YOU WOULD JUST ALLOW US TO DO THE PROCEDURE AT OUR PLACE.

THEN WE WOULDN'T HAVE TO TAKE THE TIME TO MOVE AND REASSEMBLE EVERYTHING.

NO! FOR WHAT I'M PAYING YOU-- YOU WILL DO EVERY SINGLE THING I ASK YOU TO-- MY WAY.

THIS ISN'T SUPPOSED TO BE EASY.

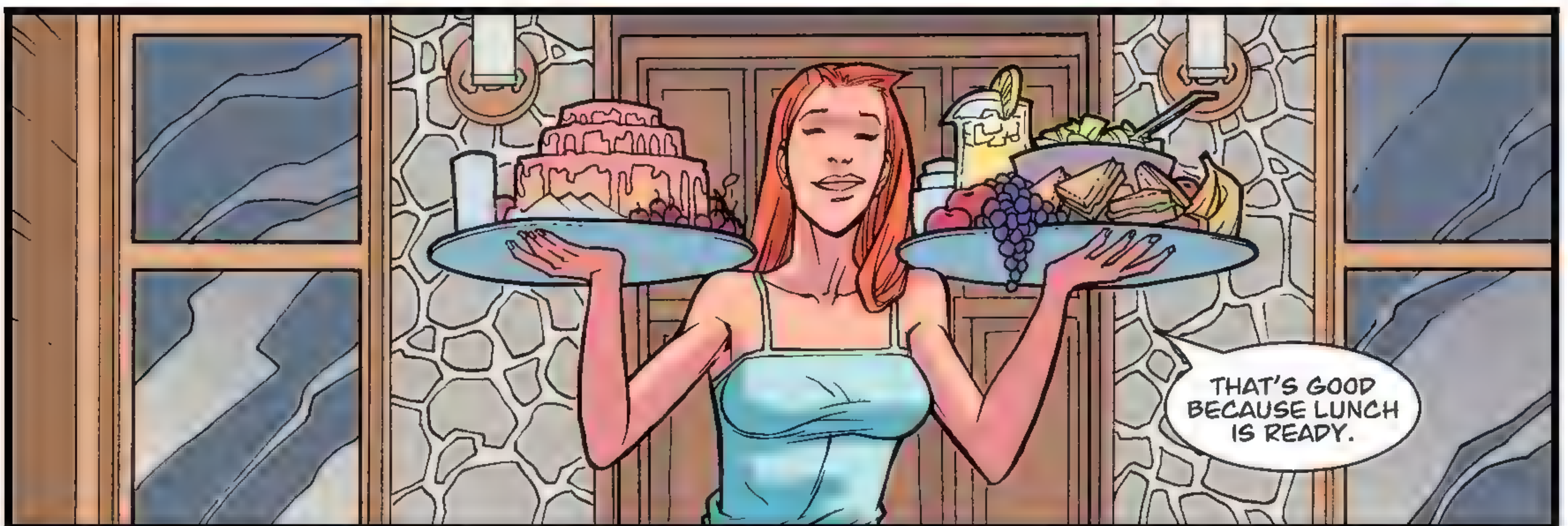
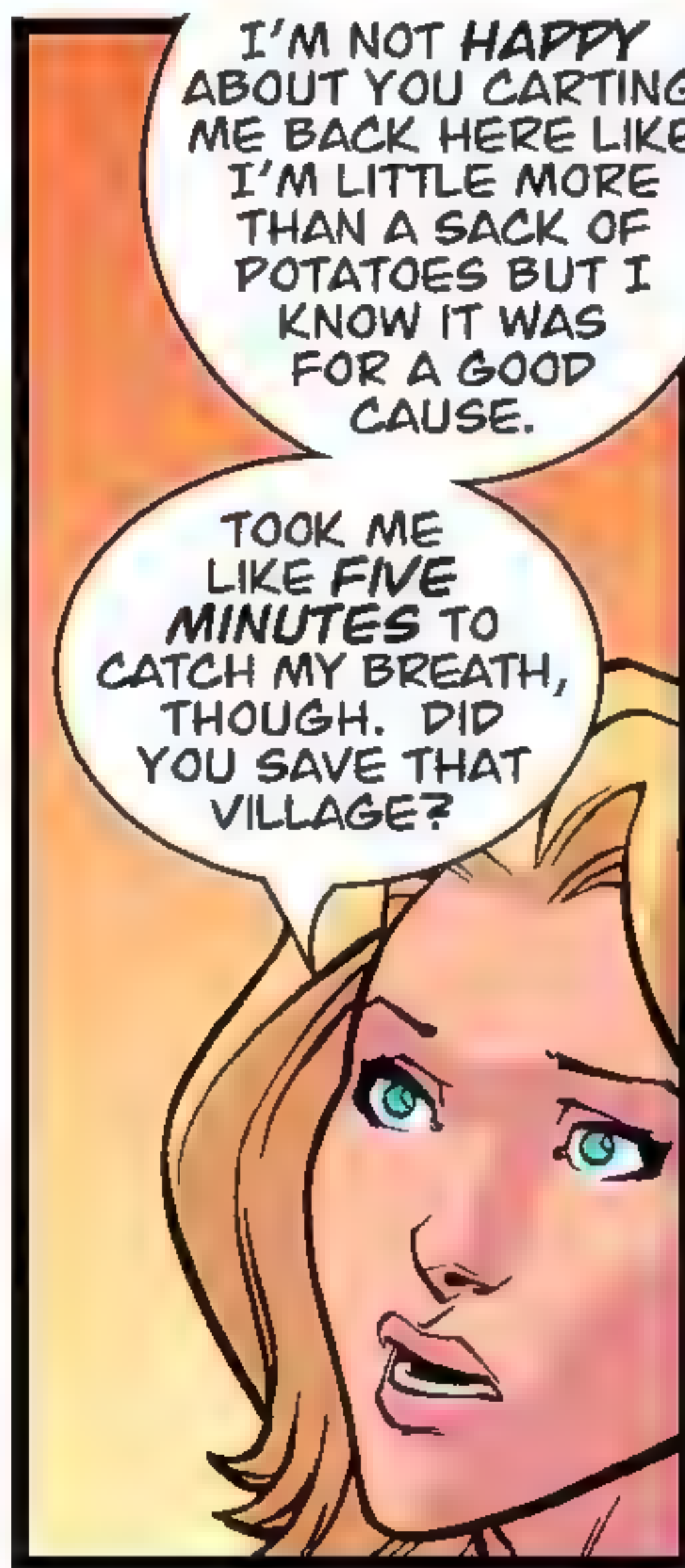
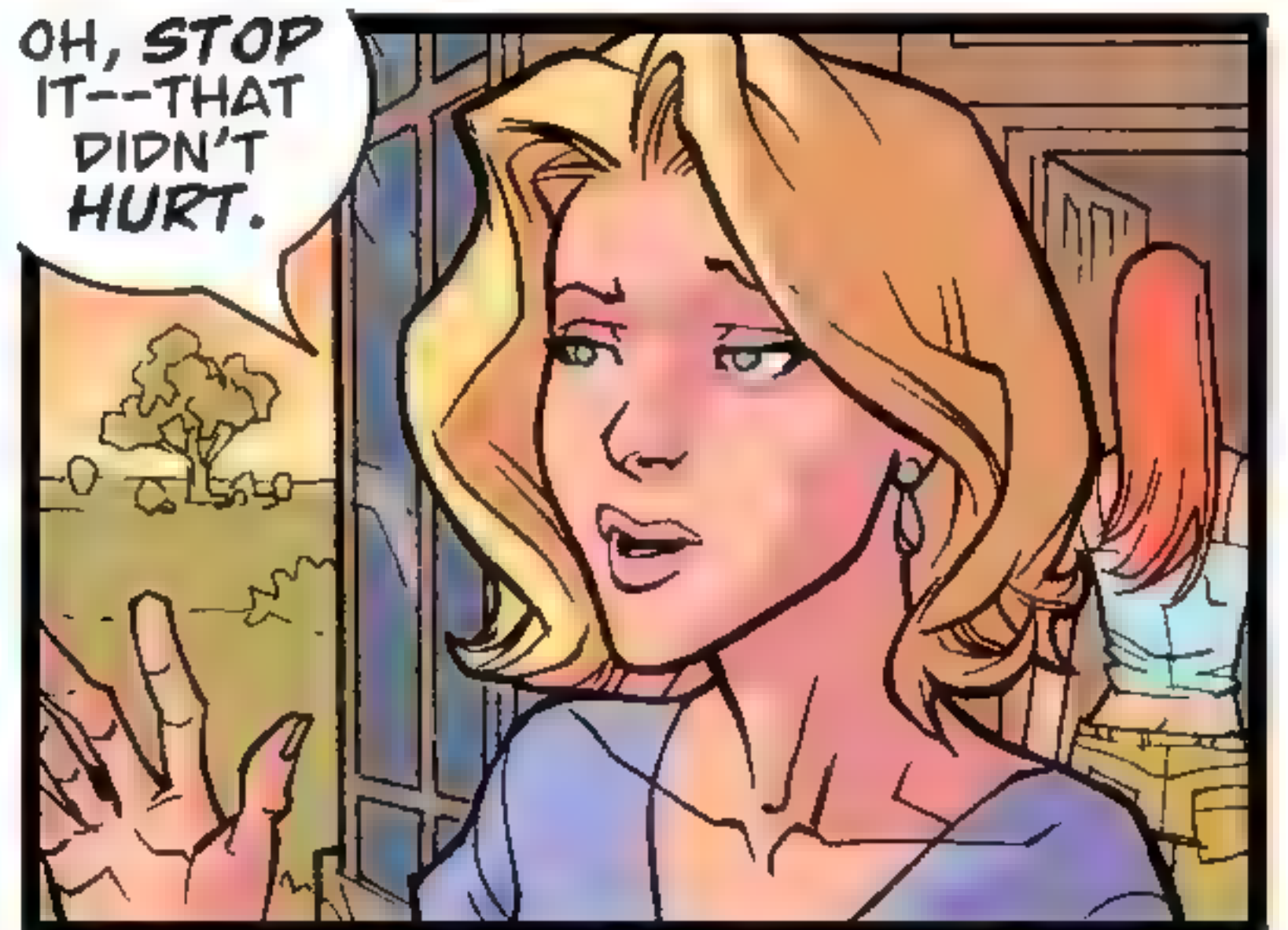
AND I WANT MY MIND-- ALL MY KNOWLEDGE-- ALL MY PERSONALITY-- I WANT THE CLONE TO BE PERFECT, NO DIFFERENCES BEYOND THE PHYSICAL.

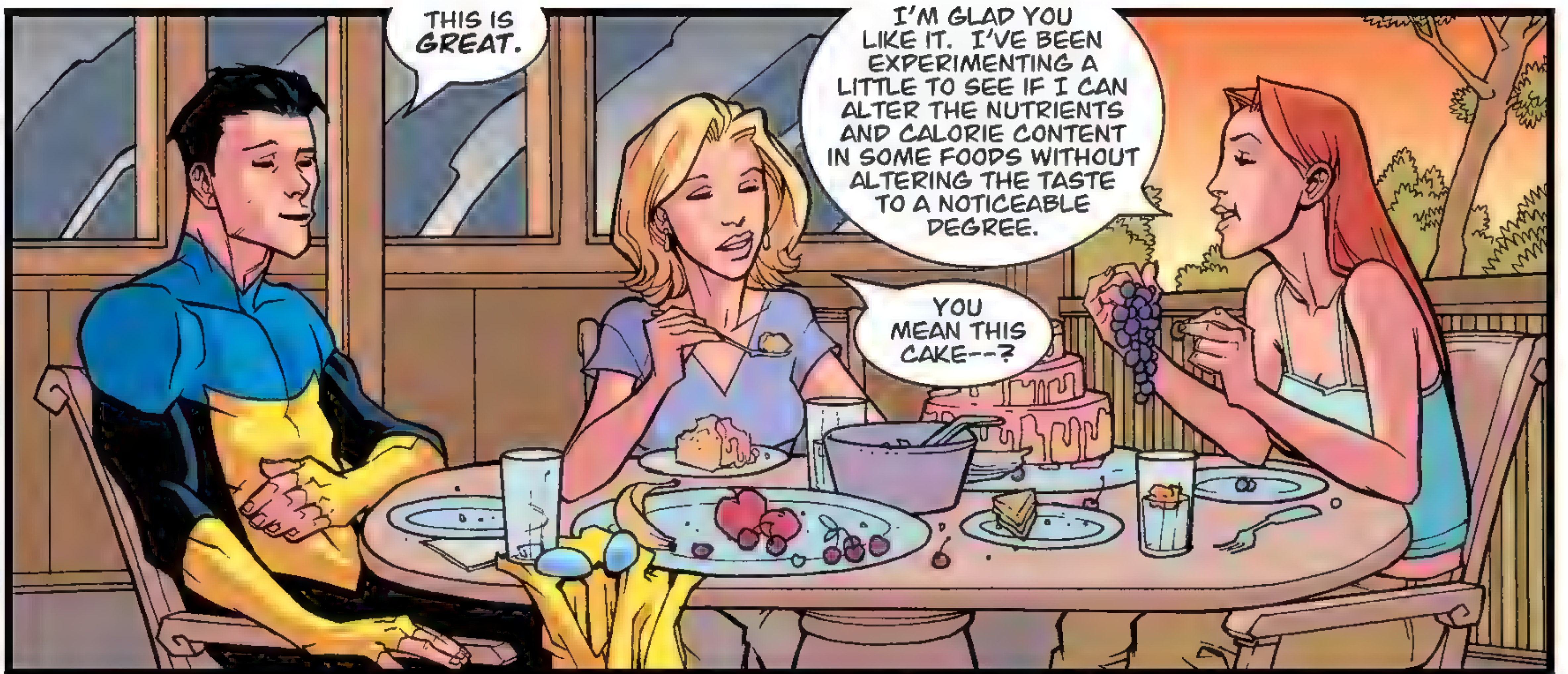
I CLONED THIS ONE A FEW SHORT WEEKS AGO--AND HE CAN'T EVEN TELL. IT'S A SEAMLESS PROCESS. THAT'S WHY YOU'VE CONTACTED US.

RIGHT-- I'M THE CLONE. THAT'LL BE THE DAY.

KEEP IN MIND--THE PROCESS WILL NOT ERASE YOUR MIND--OR TRANSFER YOU INTO THE NEW BODY--IT WILL ONLY CREATE A PERFECT DUPLICATE... IN THIS CASE AN IMPROVED ONE.

THAT IS SOMETHING I HAVE ALREADY TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT.





THIS IS GREAT.

I'M GLAD YOU LIKE IT. I'VE BEEN EXPERIMENTING A LITTLE TO SEE IF I CAN ALTER THE NUTRIENTS AND CALORIE CONTENT IN SOME FOODS WITHOUT ALTERING THE TASTE TO A NOTICEABLE DEGREE.

YOU MEAN THIS CAKE--?

HAS ABOUT HALF THE CALORIES AND ALL THE VITAMINS AND CRAP OF A STALK OF BROCCOLI.

IT TASTE FUNNY?

JUST A LITTLE-- BUT IT'S STILL GREAT.

AND AT HALF THE CALORIES I CAN EAT TWICE AS MUCH.

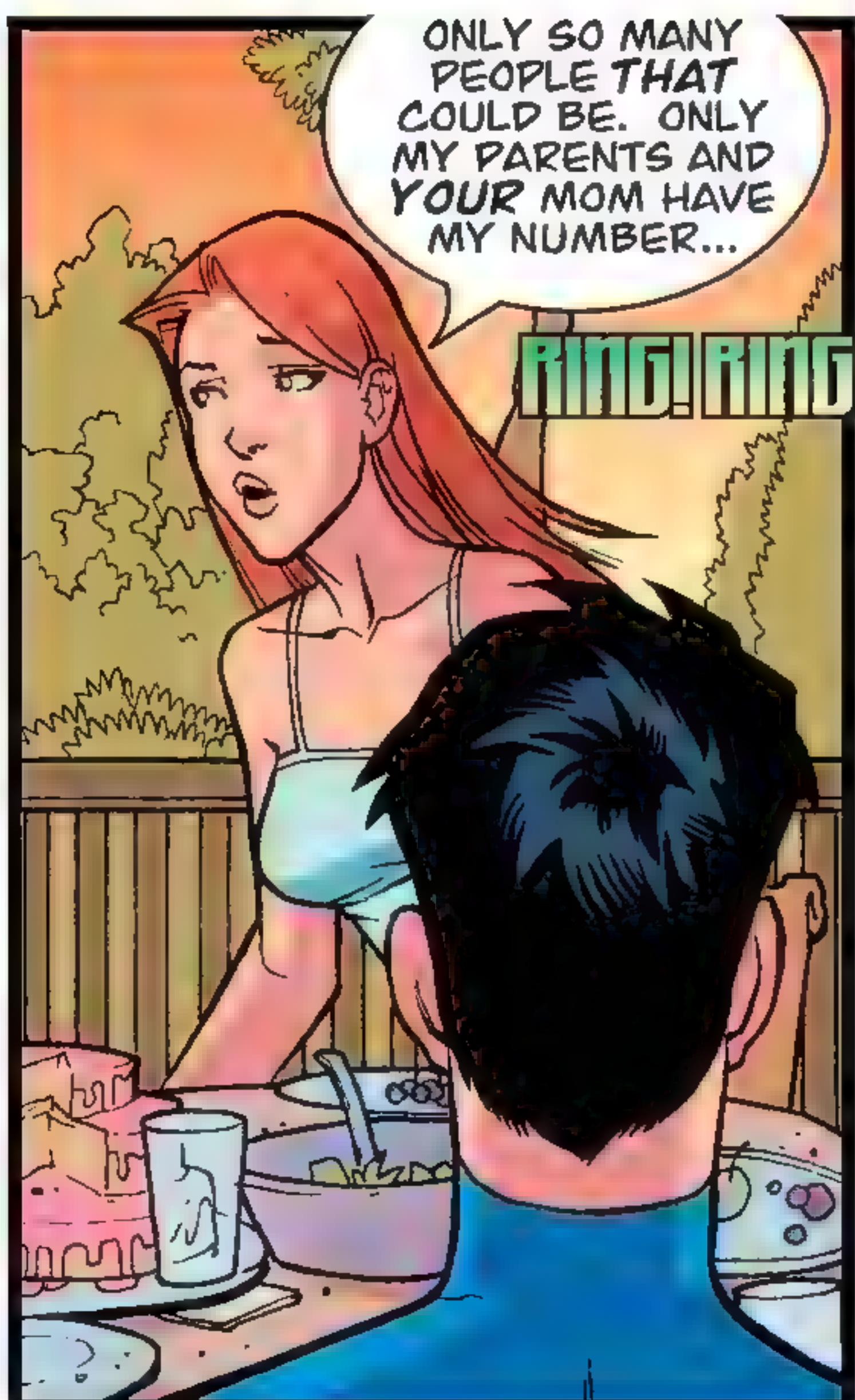
SLOW DOWN THERE, HON'. I'VE STILL GOT TO CARRY YOU BACK OVER THE ATLANTIC LATER TODAY.

OH, SHUT UP.

EVE-- PLEASE--YOU'VE GOT TO COME BACK TO SCHOOL WITH ME. YOU COULD LIVE IN MY DORM--ATTEND SOME CLASSES--MAKE FOOD FOR ME. YOU NEED TO GO TO COLLEGE STILL, RIGHT?

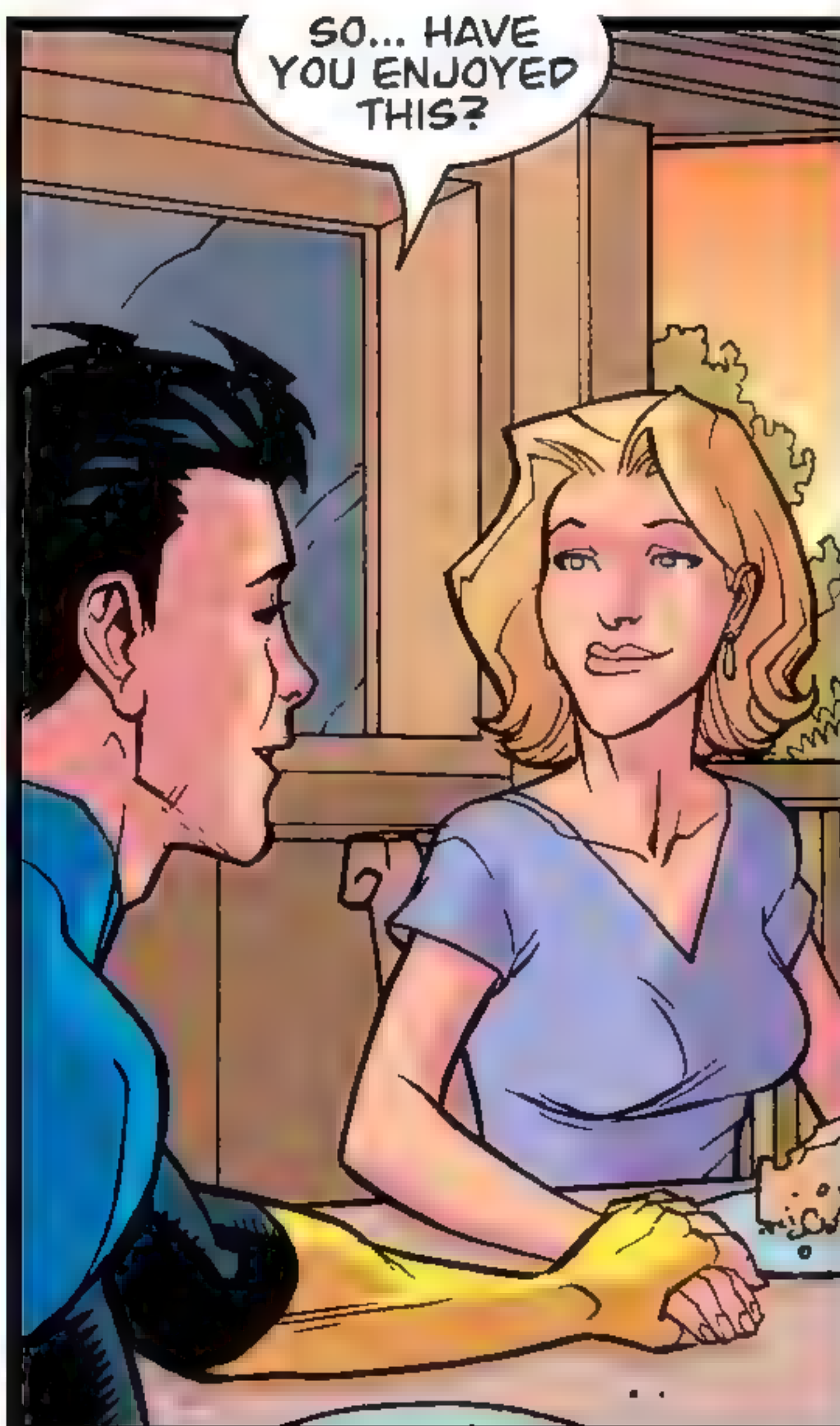
WHY? I DON'T NEED TO LEARN A TRADE. EVERYTHING I NEED--I CAN JUST MAKE.

RING! RING!

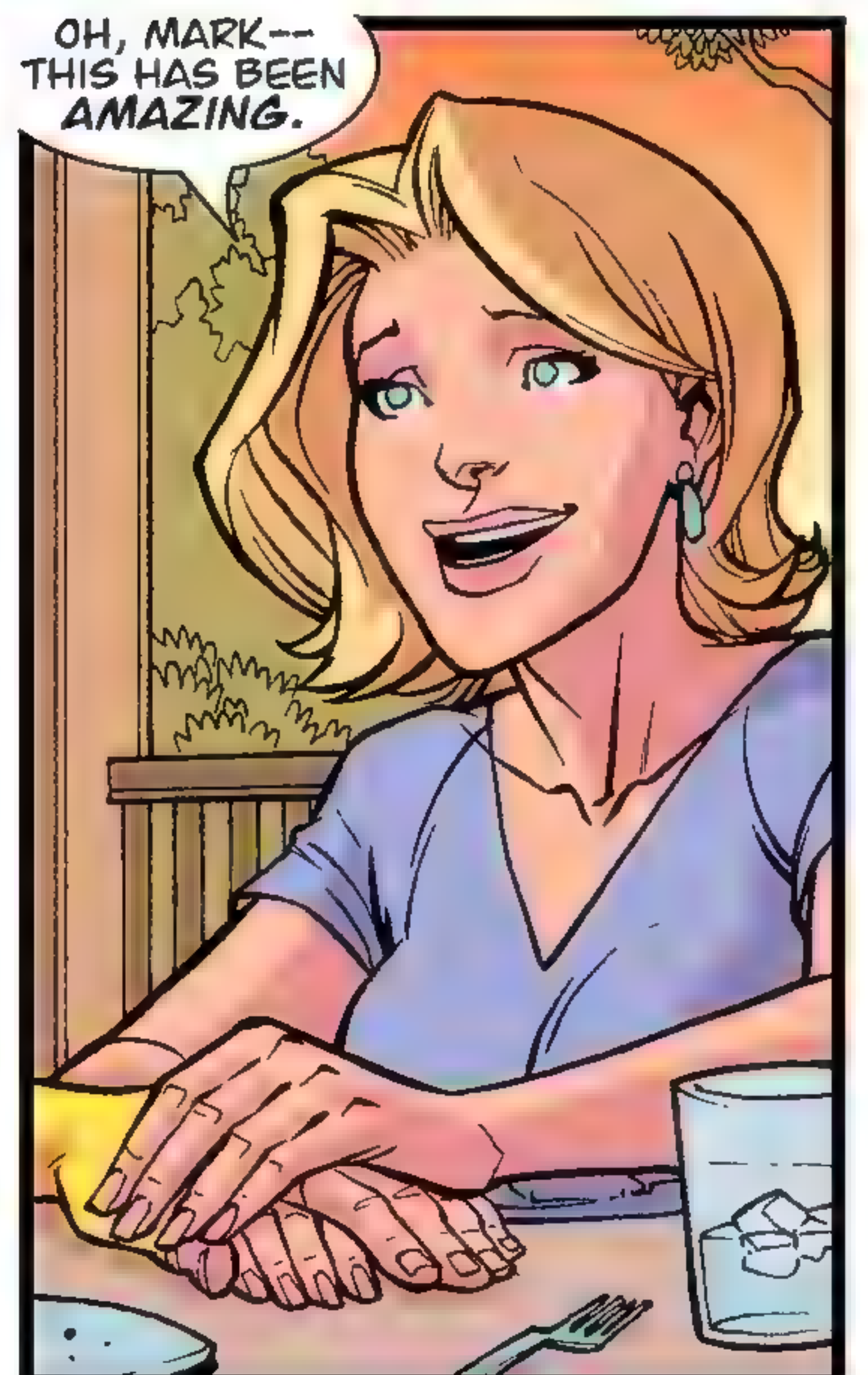


ONLY SO MANY PEOPLE THAT COULD BE. ONLY MY PARENTS AND YOUR MOM HAVE MY NUMBER...

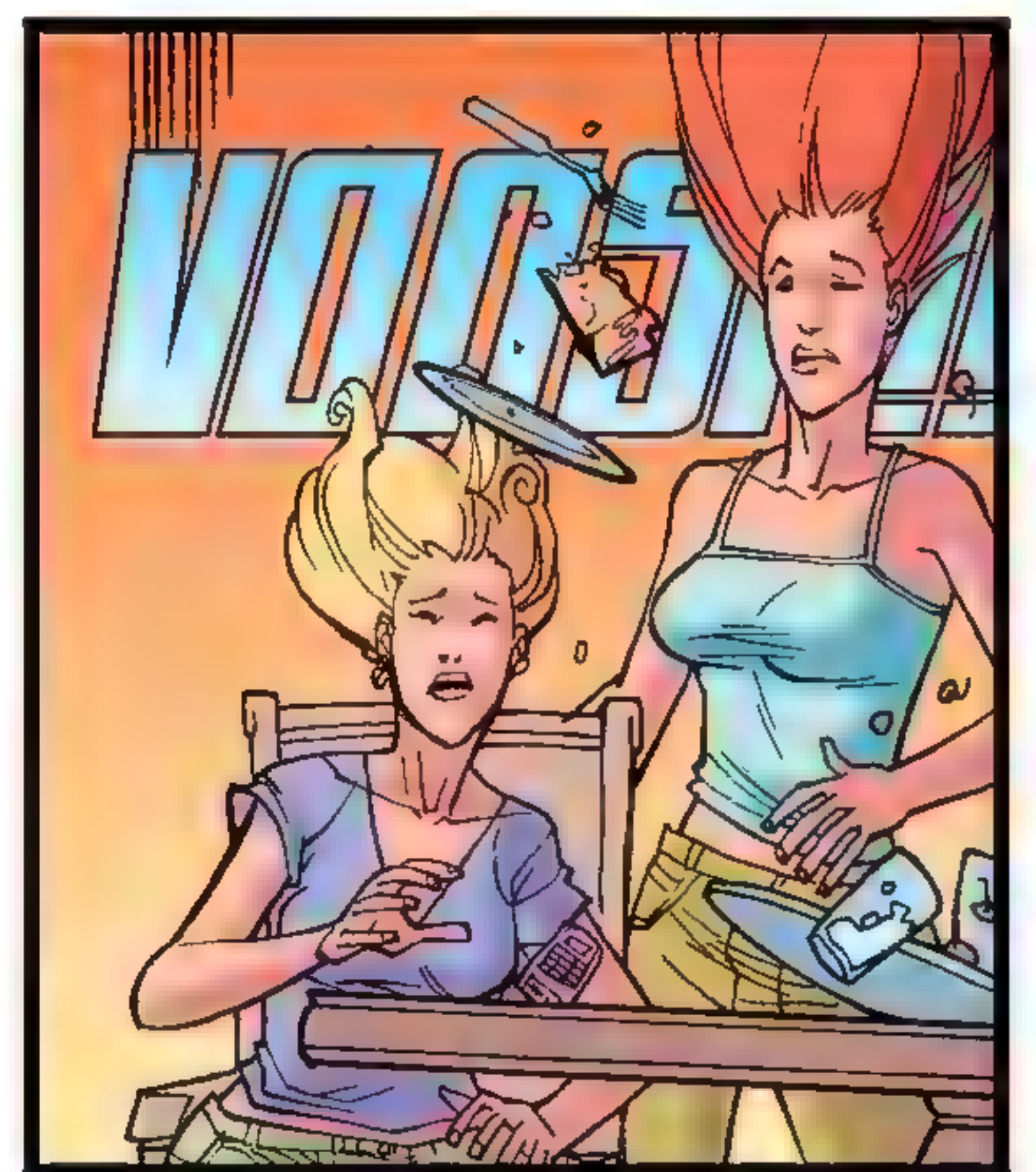
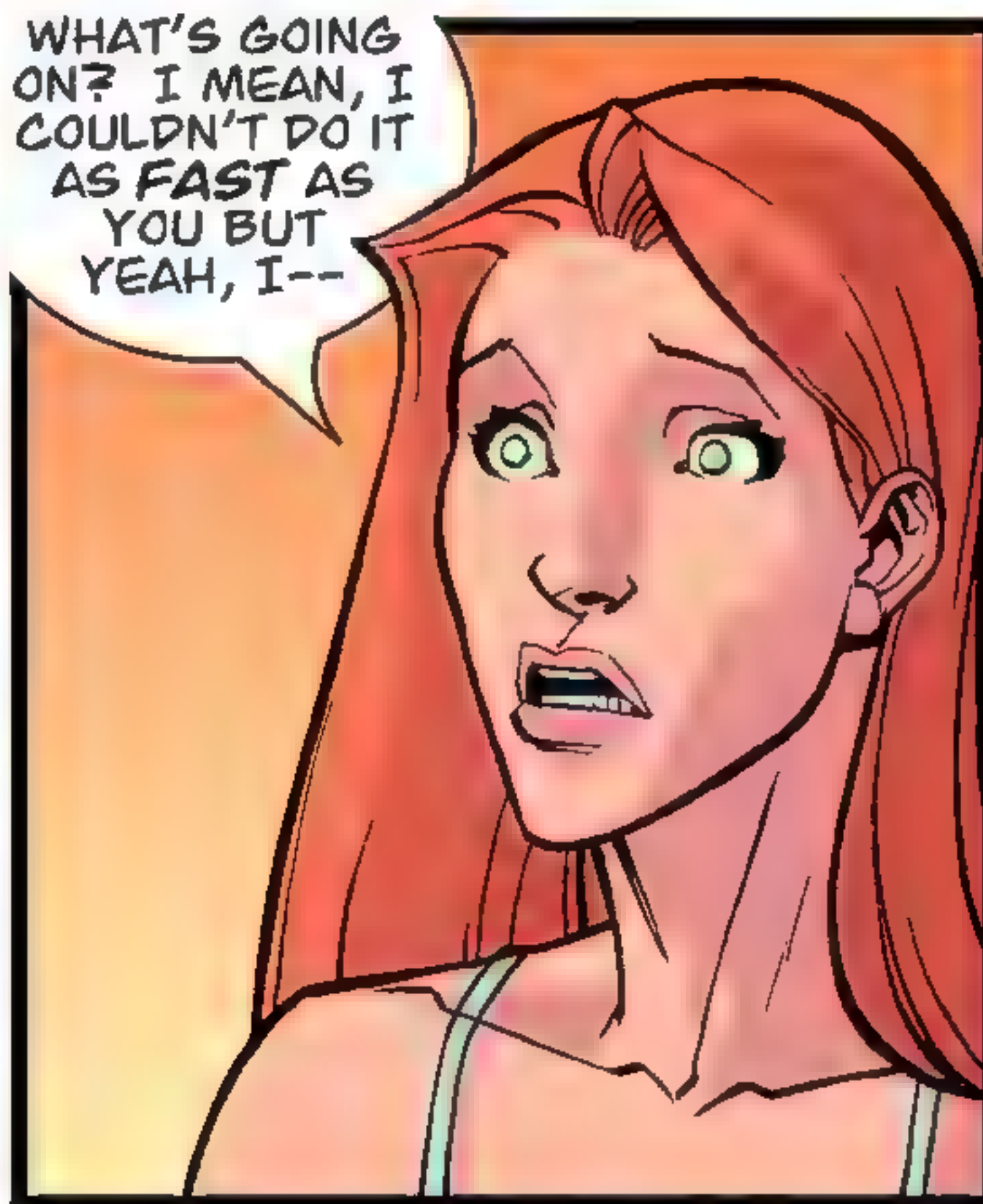
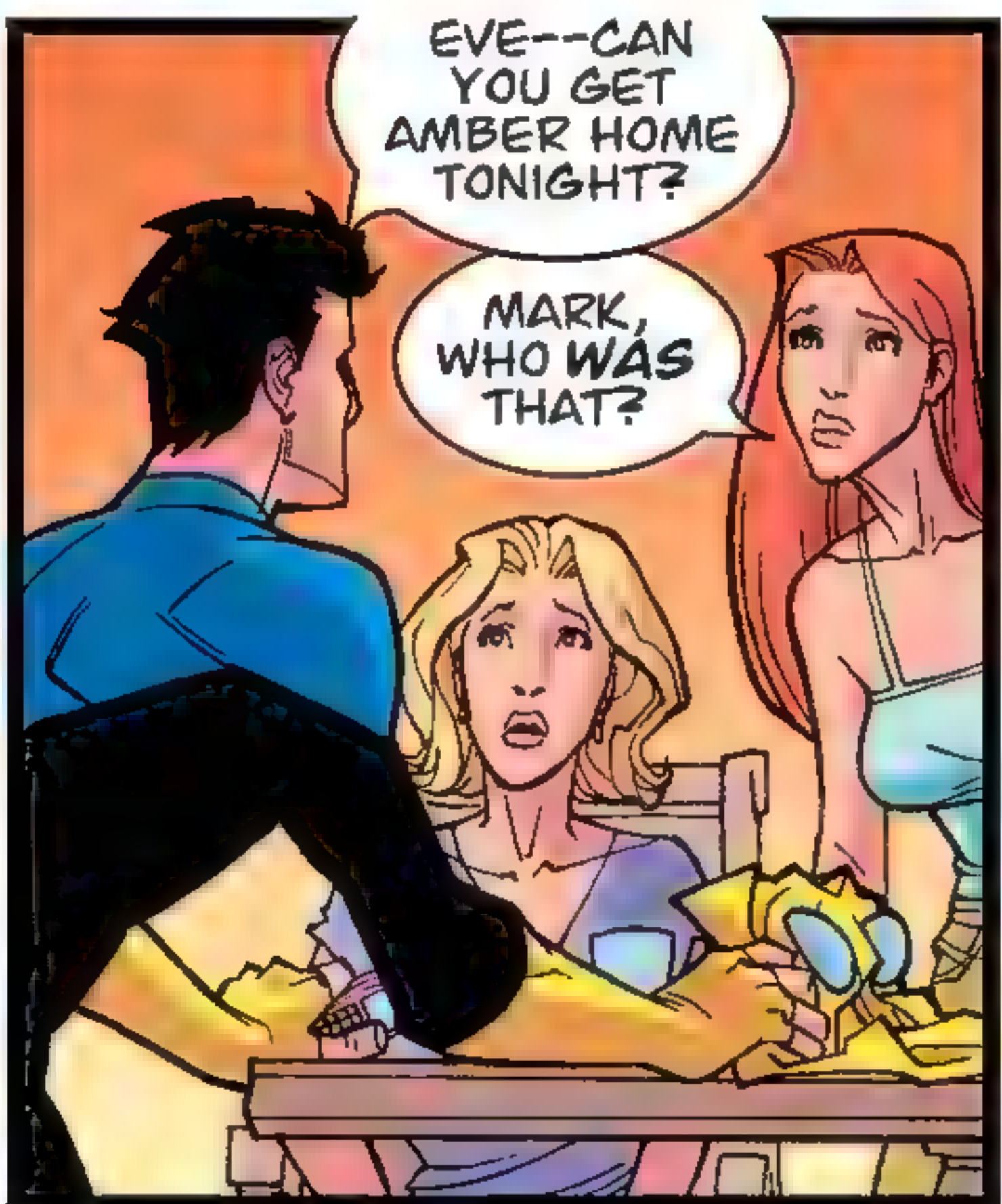
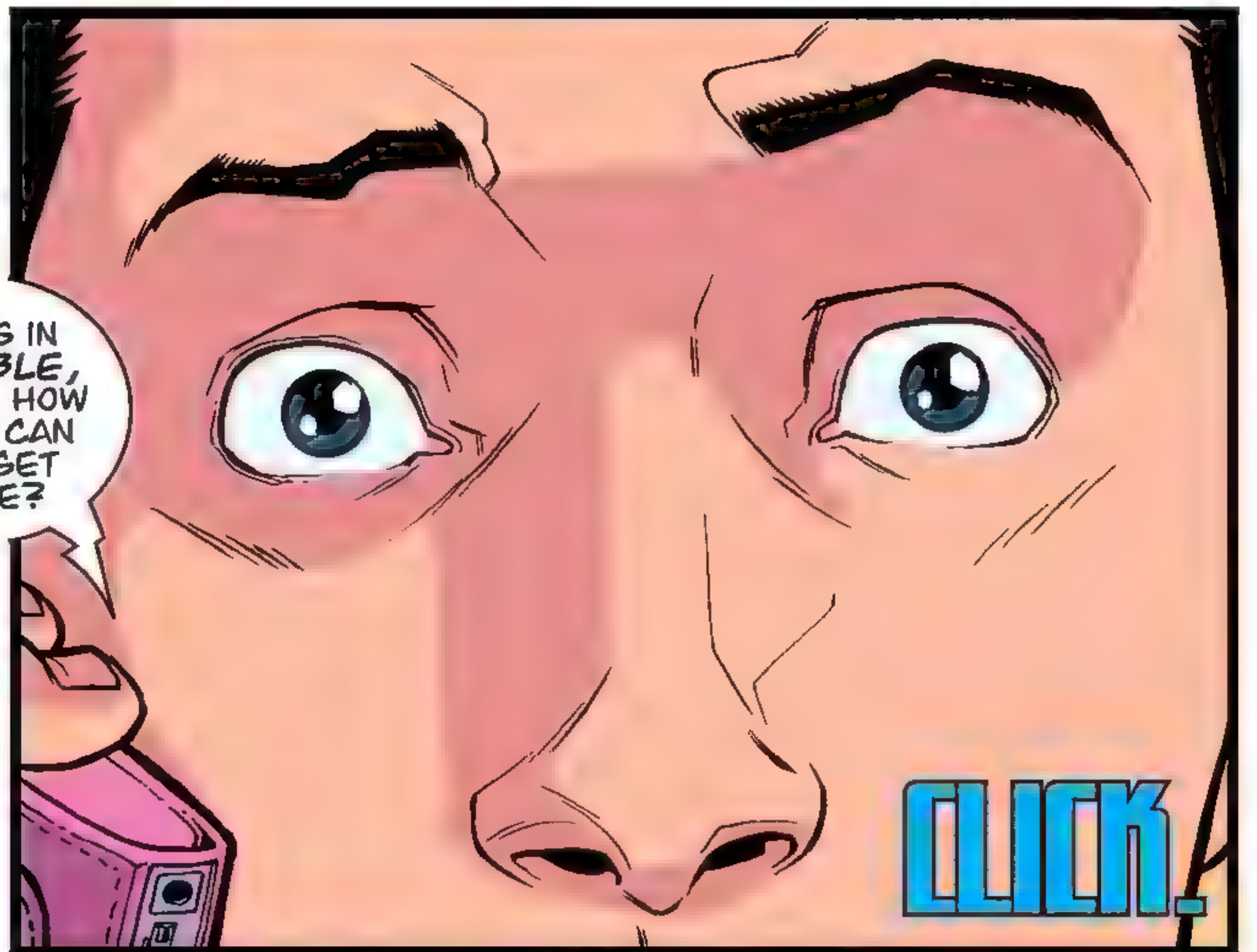
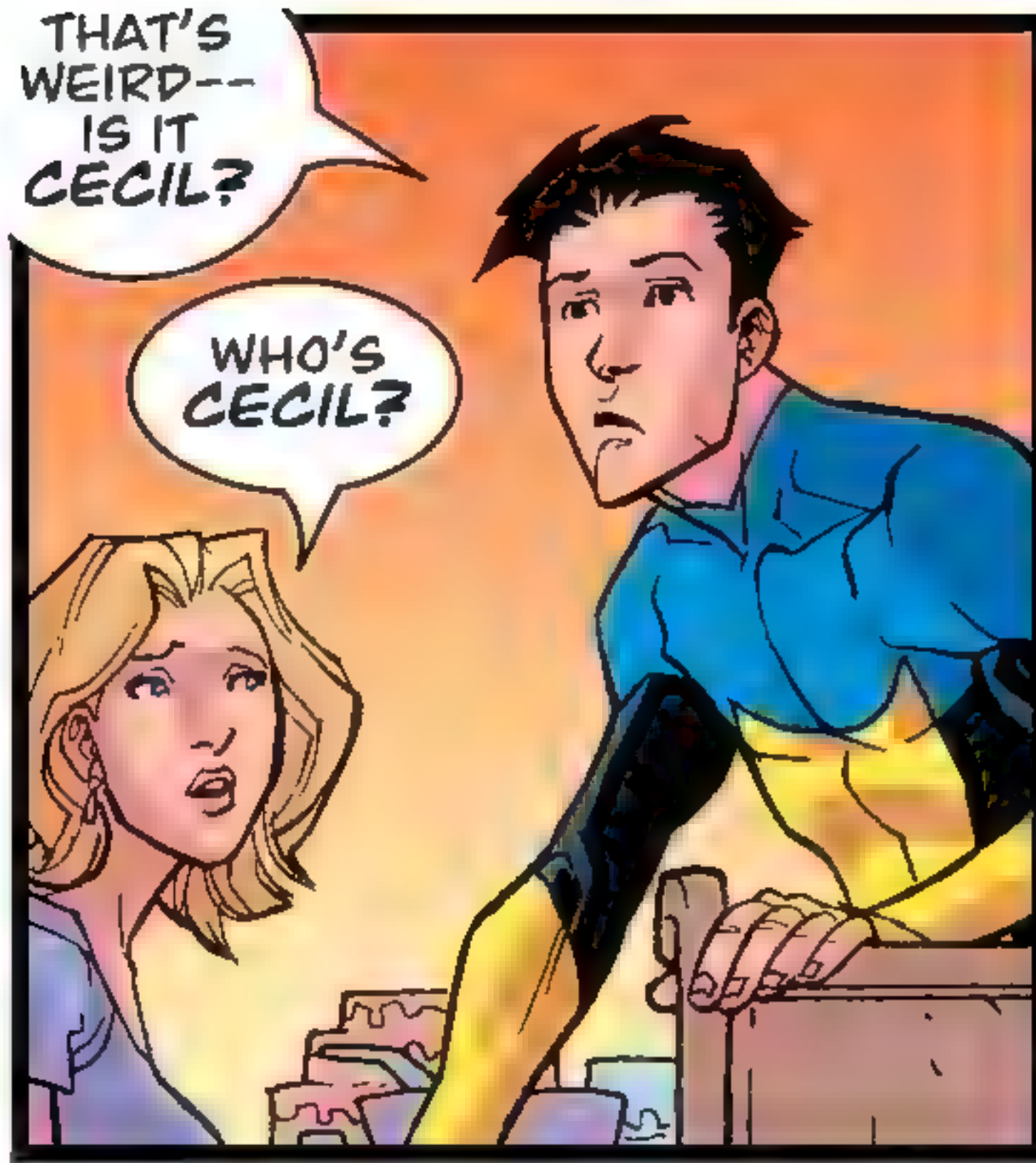
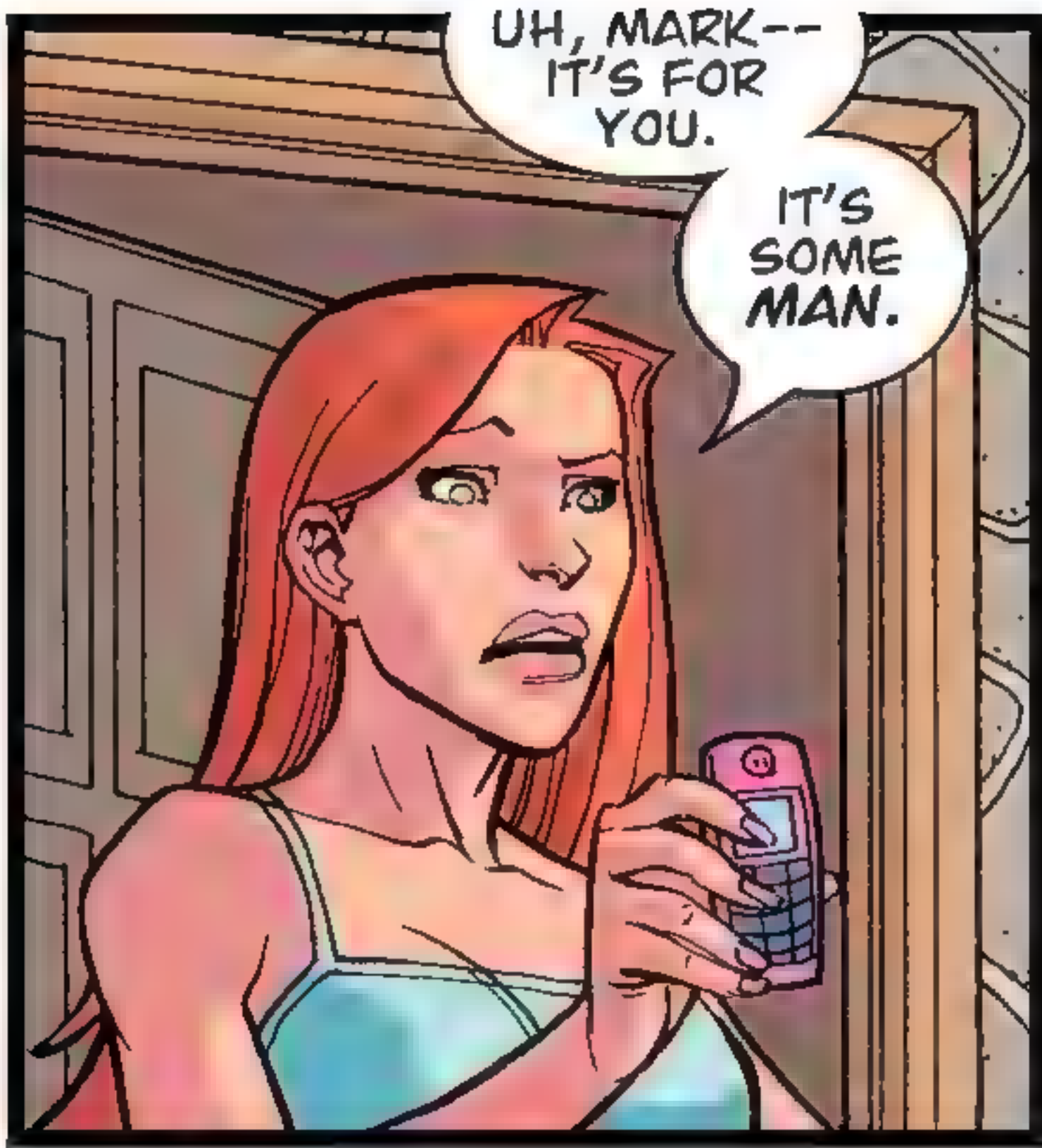
RING! RING!



SO... HAVE YOU ENJOYED THIS?



OH, MARK-- THIS HAS BEEN AMAZING.

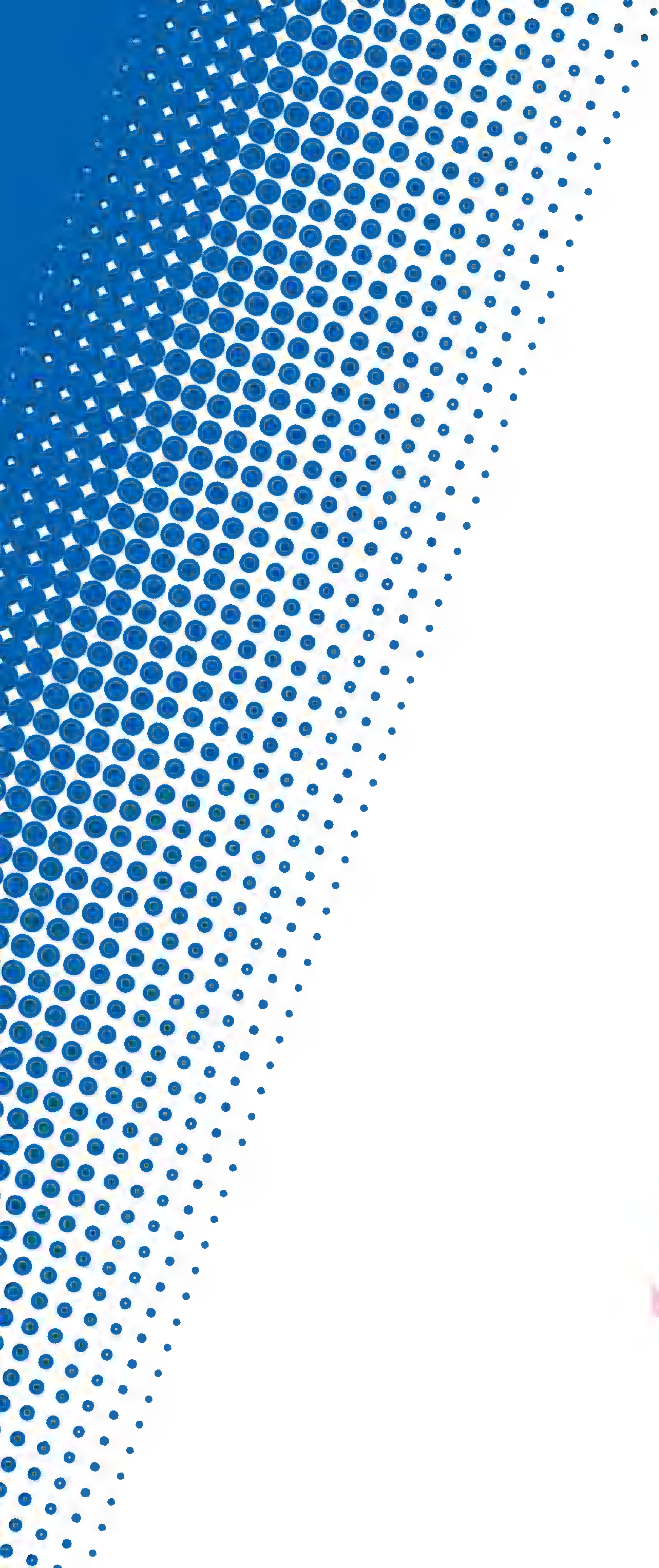






WELCOME
HOME, MARK
GRAYSON.

I'M
IMPRESSED.
YOU MADE
GOOD
TIME.



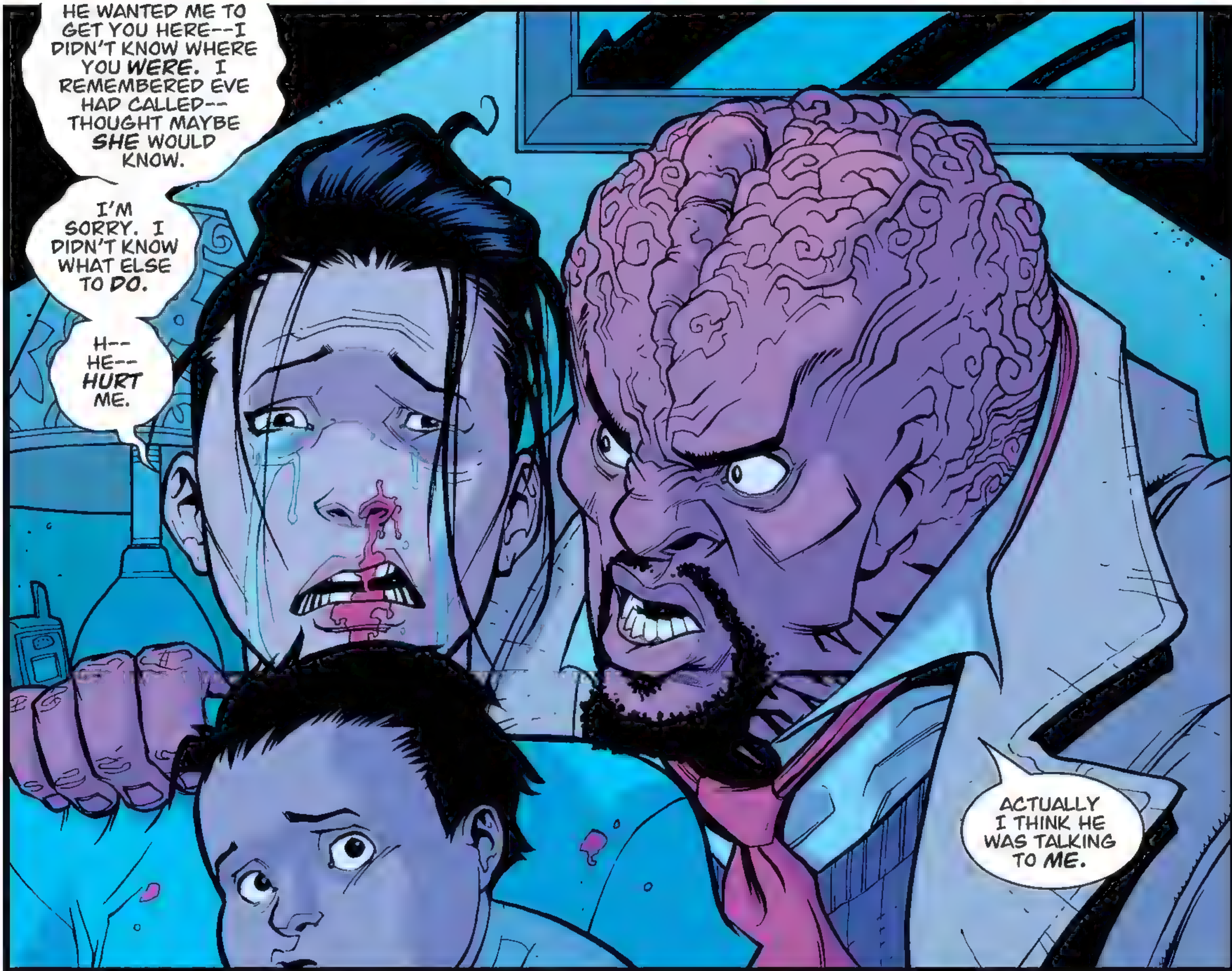
ISSUE THIRTY-THREE





WHO ARE YOU?!
WHAT DO YOU WANT?! WHY ARE YOU HERE?!

TALK!



HE WANTED ME TO GET YOU HERE--I DIDN'T KNOW WHERE YOU WERE. I REMEMBERED EVE HAD CALLED--THOUGHT MAYBE SHE WOULD KNOW.

I'M SORRY. I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO DO.

H-- HE-- HURT ME.

ACTUALLY I THINK HE WAS TALKING TO ME.



LET.
HER.
GO.



NOT YET.

I'VE LEARNED A LOT ABOUT YOU, MARK GRAYSON. LOTS OF THINGS. I KNOW HOW VIOLENT YOU CAN GET WHEN YOU'RE MAD--LIKE RIGHT NOW. I KNOW YOU GET THAT FROM YOUR FATHER.



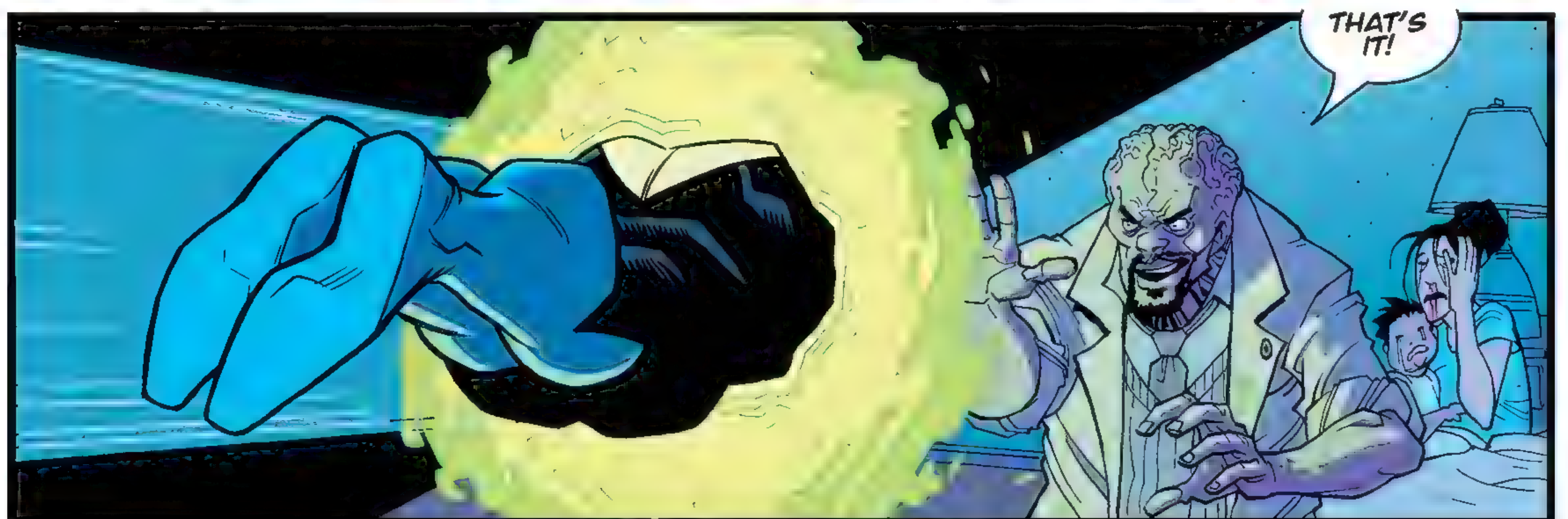
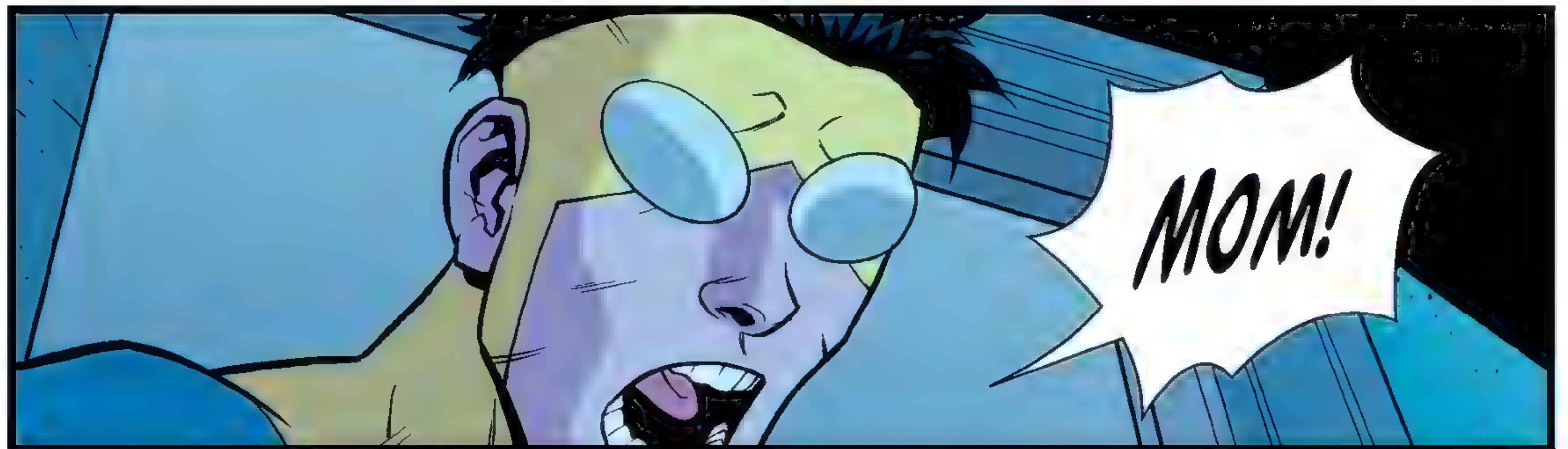
I HAD A **GIFT**--I WAS JUST TRYING TO **IMPROVE** IT. I WAS JUST **COPYING** THE MEMORIES FROM MY COUNTERPARTS FROM OTHER REALITIES. YOU HAD TO **HALT** THAT PROCESS--YOU CAUSED THE MACHINE TO **OVERLOAD**--TO **EXPLODE**!

I WAS **CRUSHED**! I HAD **INTERNAL ORGAN DAMAGE**! I HAD TO FIND A REALITY WITH THE BEST **SURGEONS** TO **REBUILD** MY BODY!

THE **GREATEST** MINDS IN A **DOZEN** REALITIES COULDN'T FIND A WAY TO **FIX** MY **BRAIN**! I WILL **ALWAYS** BE A **FREAK**!

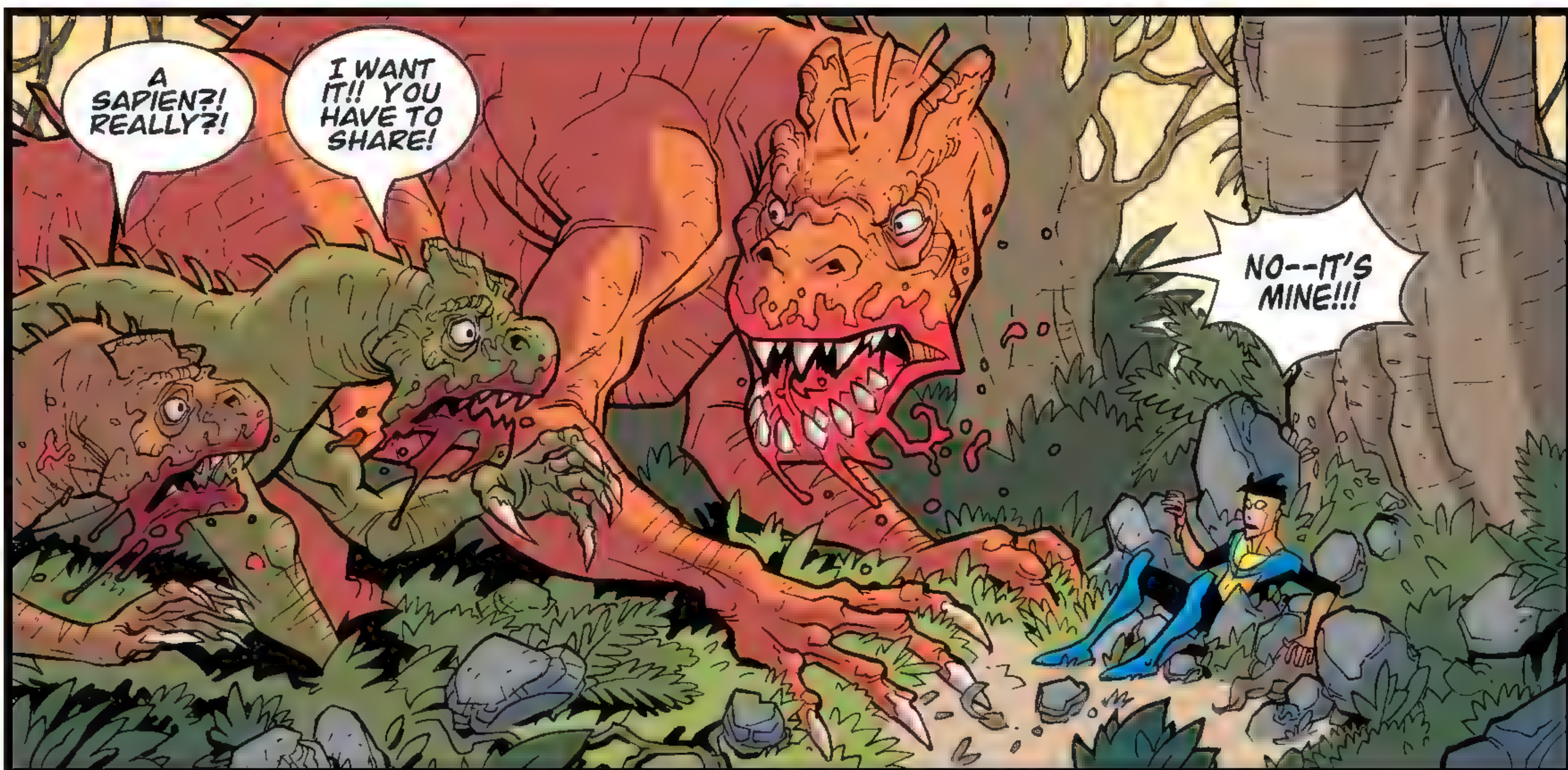
WRAAAA!!!

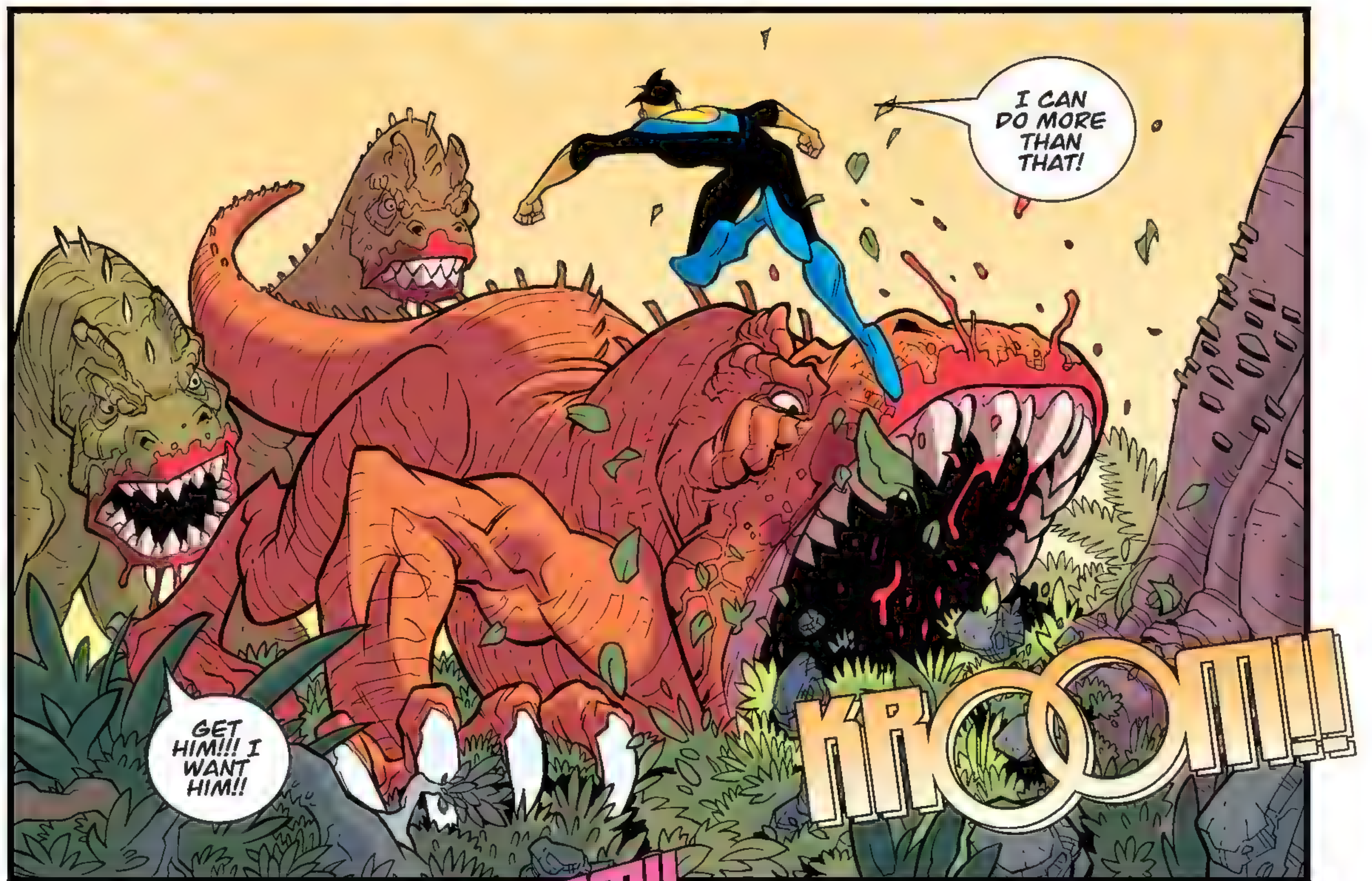
BECAUSE OF YOU!

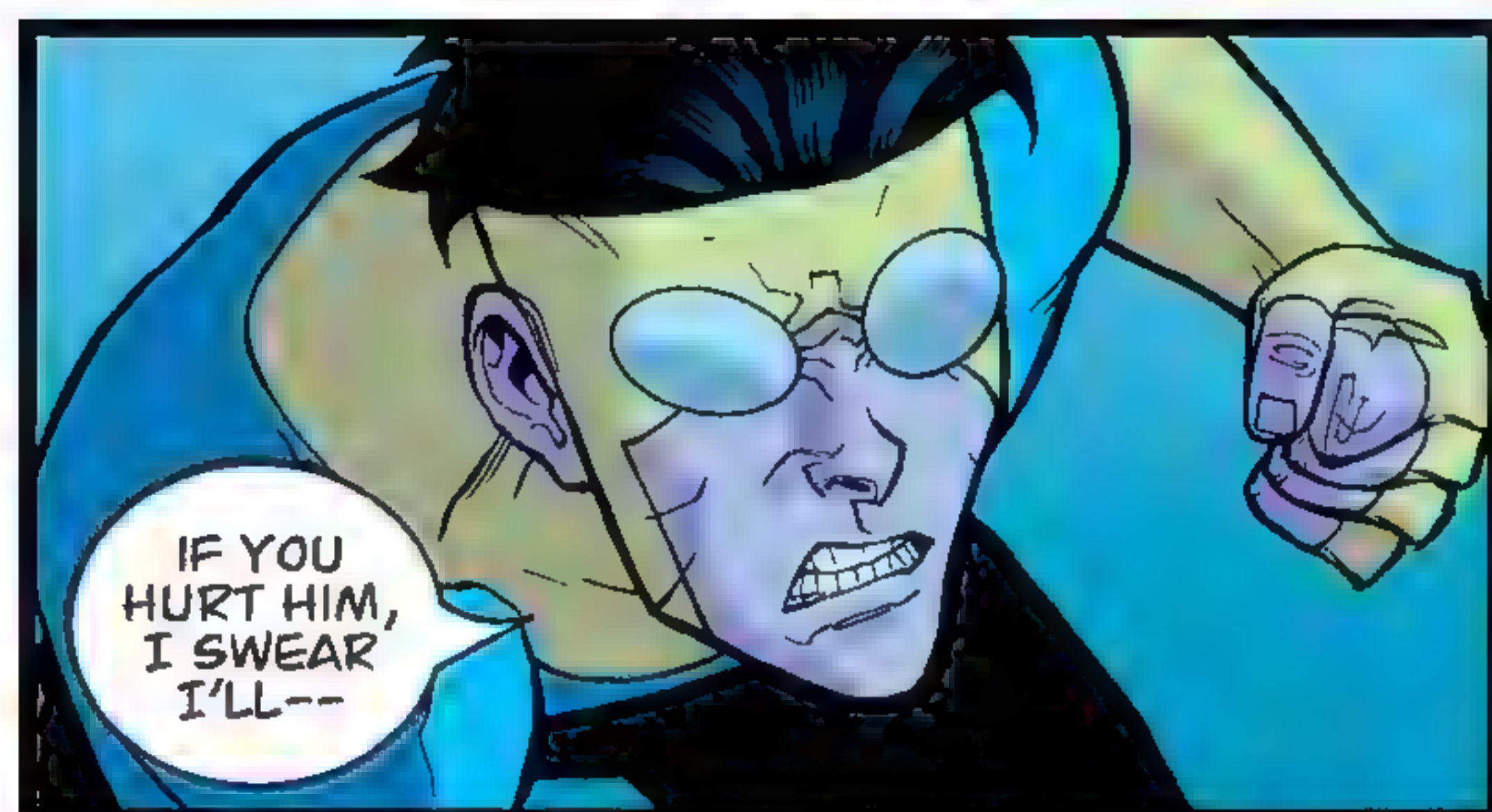
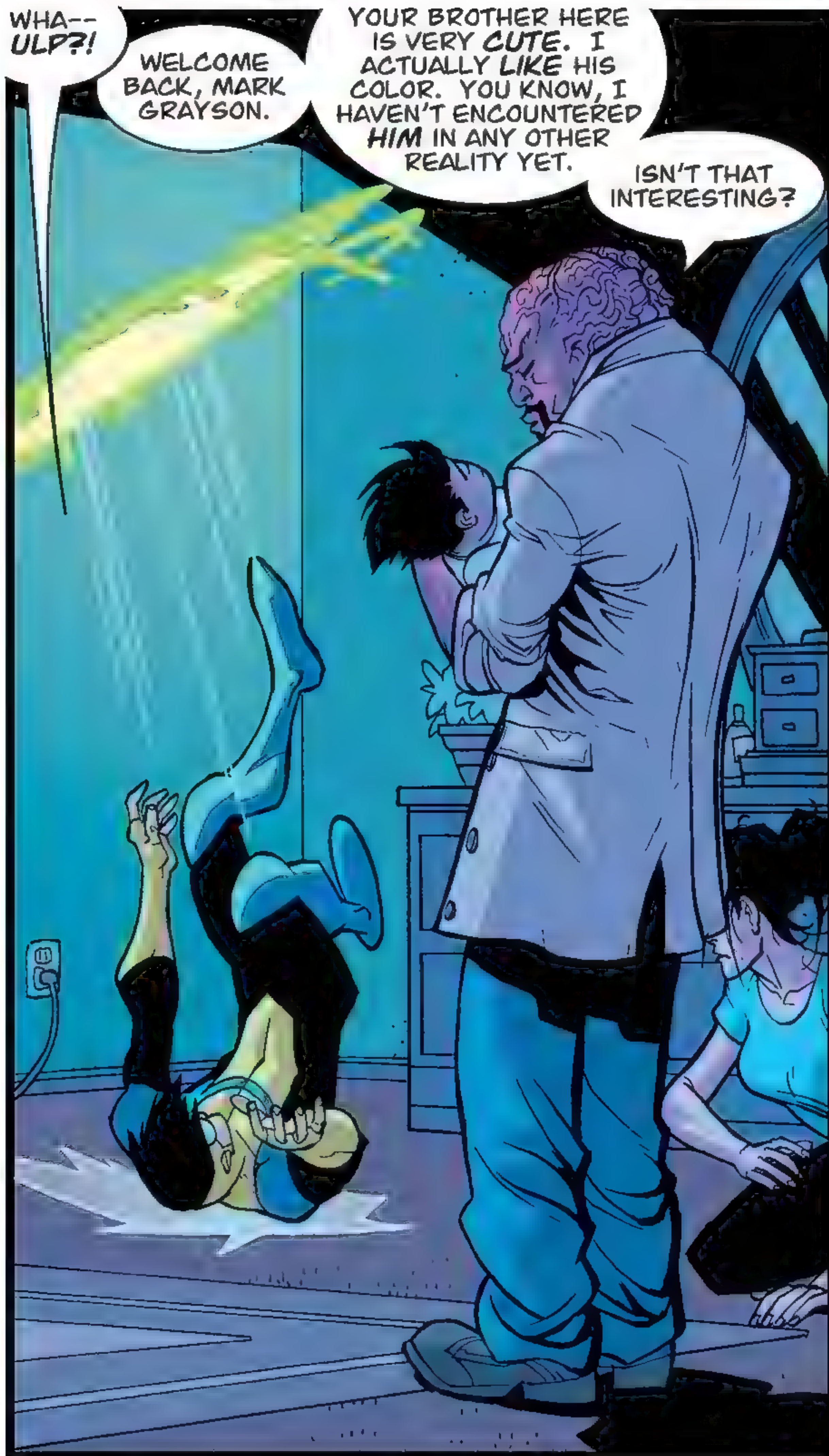


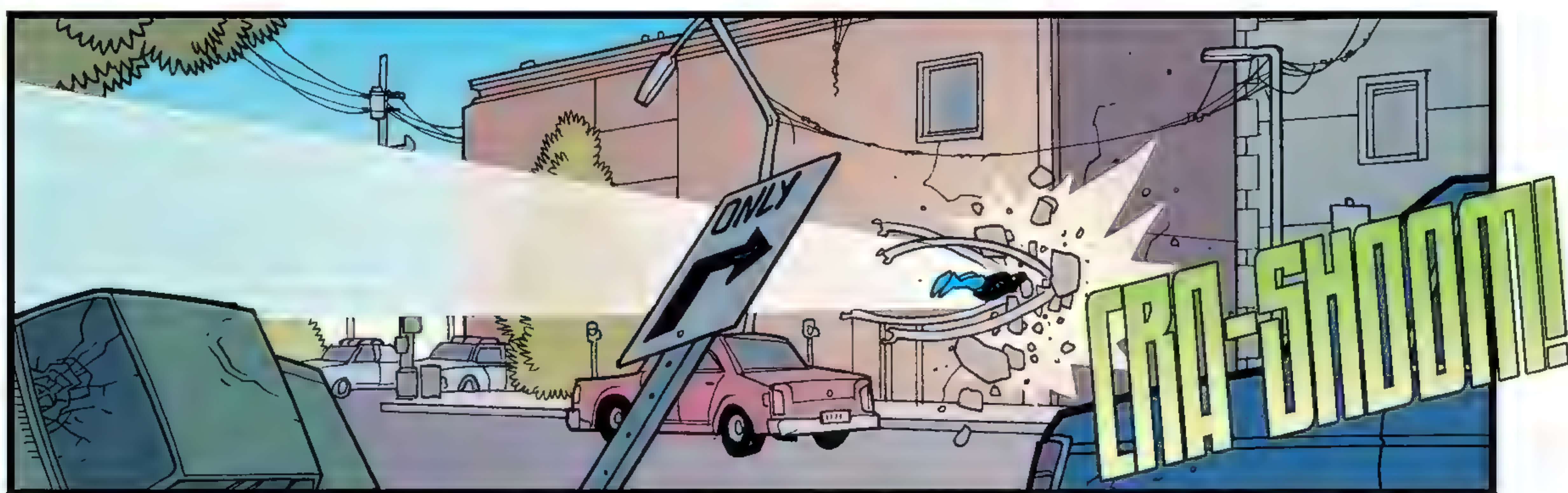


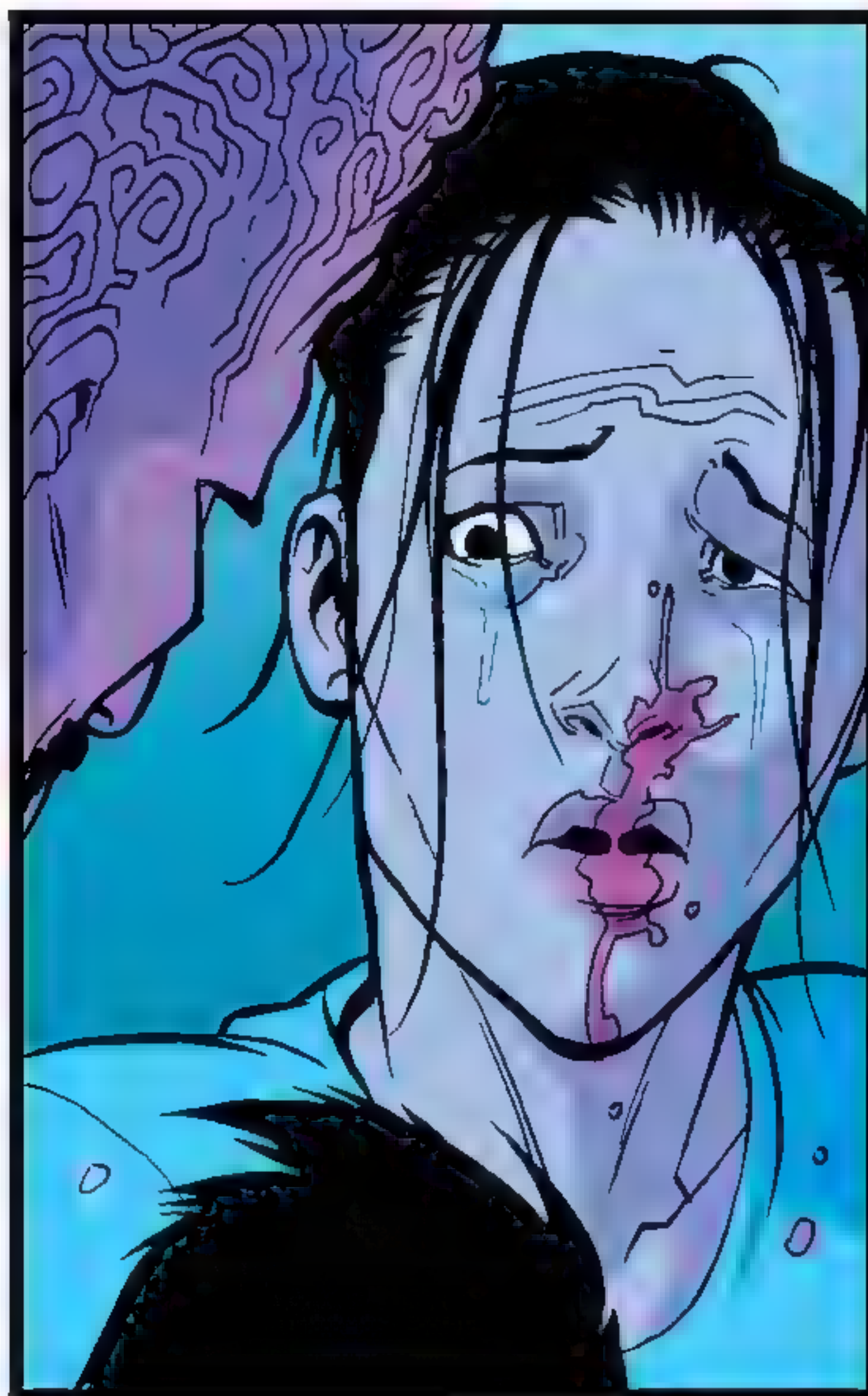
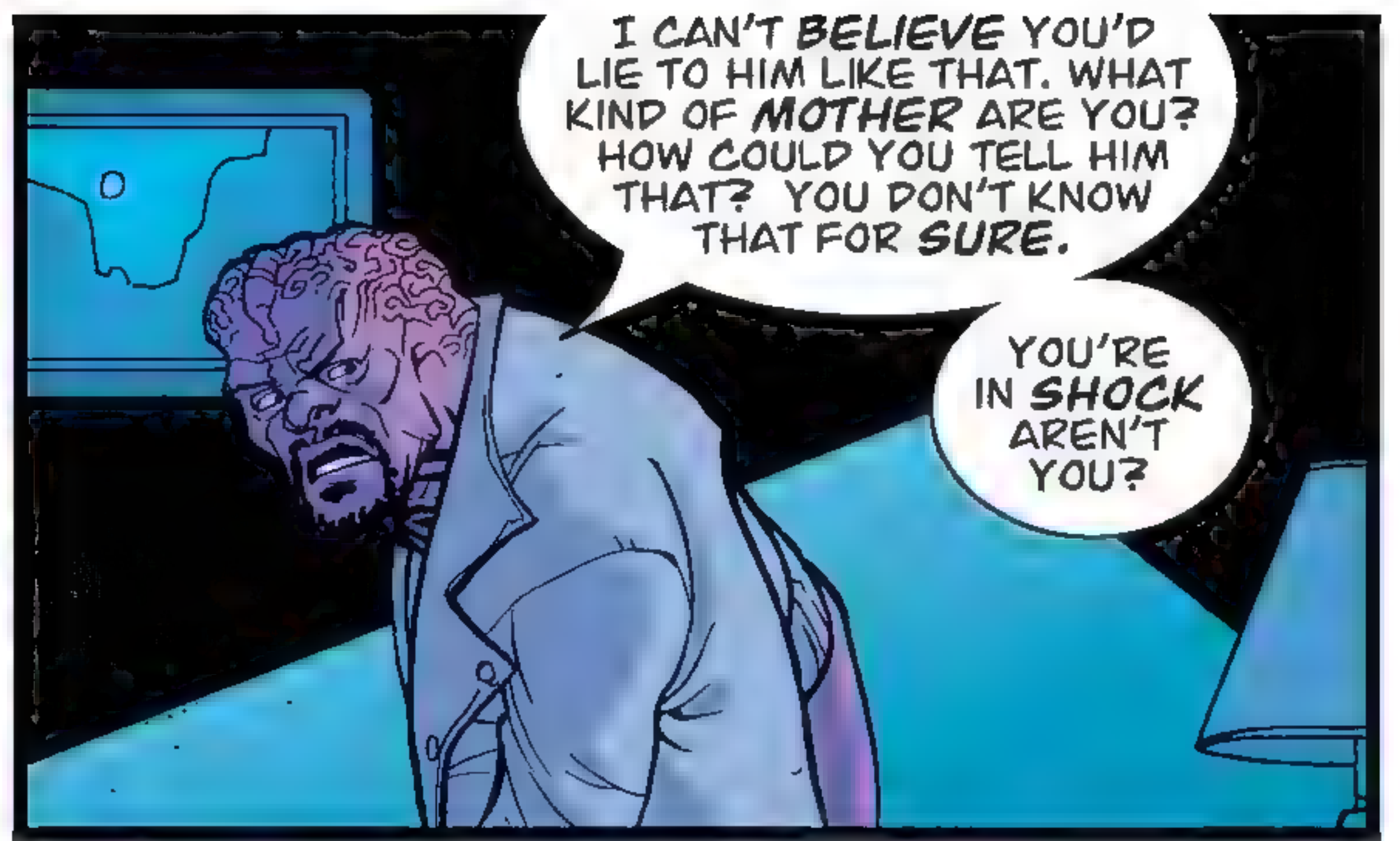
WHOA!!













HOW DARE YOU! I HAVE LONGED FOR YOUR DEATH FOR MONTHS. I WOULD NEVER HAVE INTERFERED WITH AN ATTEMPT ON YOUR LIFE.

YOU NEED TO PREPARE A BETTER LIE!



FINE! YOU'RE CRAZY! I GET IT!

JUST LET THEM GO. LET THEM GO AND I'LL LET YOU TRY TO HURT ME. I'LL SURRENDER, JUST TAKE US SOMEWHERE THEY'RE NOT IN DANGER.



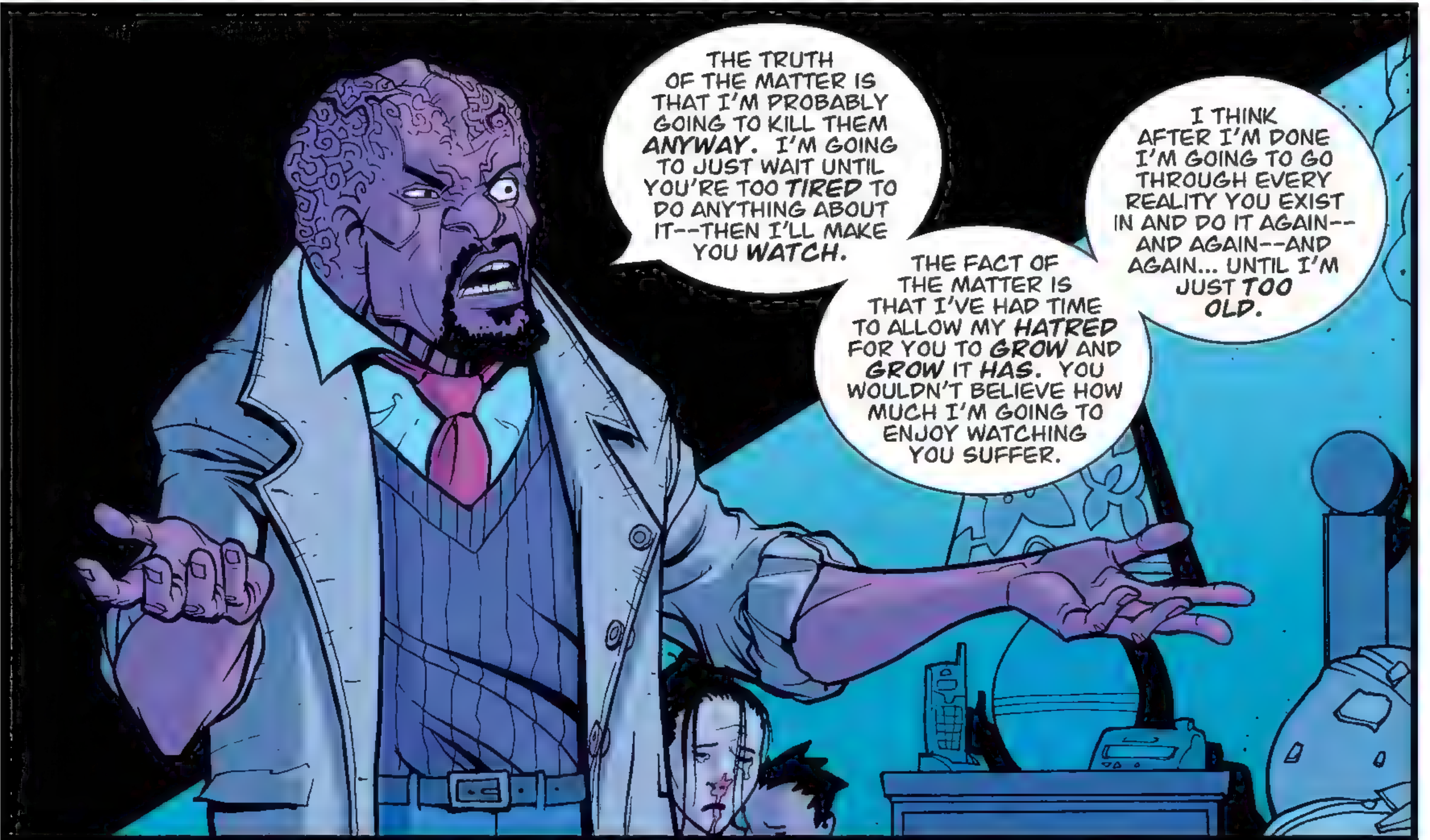
WHAT WOULD BE THE FUN IN THAT?



THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER IS THAT I'M PROBABLY GOING TO KILL THEM ANYWAY. I'M GOING TO JUST WAIT UNTIL YOU'RE TOO TIRED TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT--THEN I'LL MAKE YOU WATCH.

THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS THAT I'VE HAD TIME TO ALLOW MY HATRED FOR YOU TO GROW AND GROW IT HAS. YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE HOW MUCH I'M GOING TO ENJOY WATCHING YOU SUFFER.

I THINK AFTER I'M DONE I'M GOING TO GO THROUGH EVERY REALITY YOU EXIST IN AND DO IT AGAIN--AND AGAIN--AND AGAIN... UNTIL I'M JUST TOO OLD.

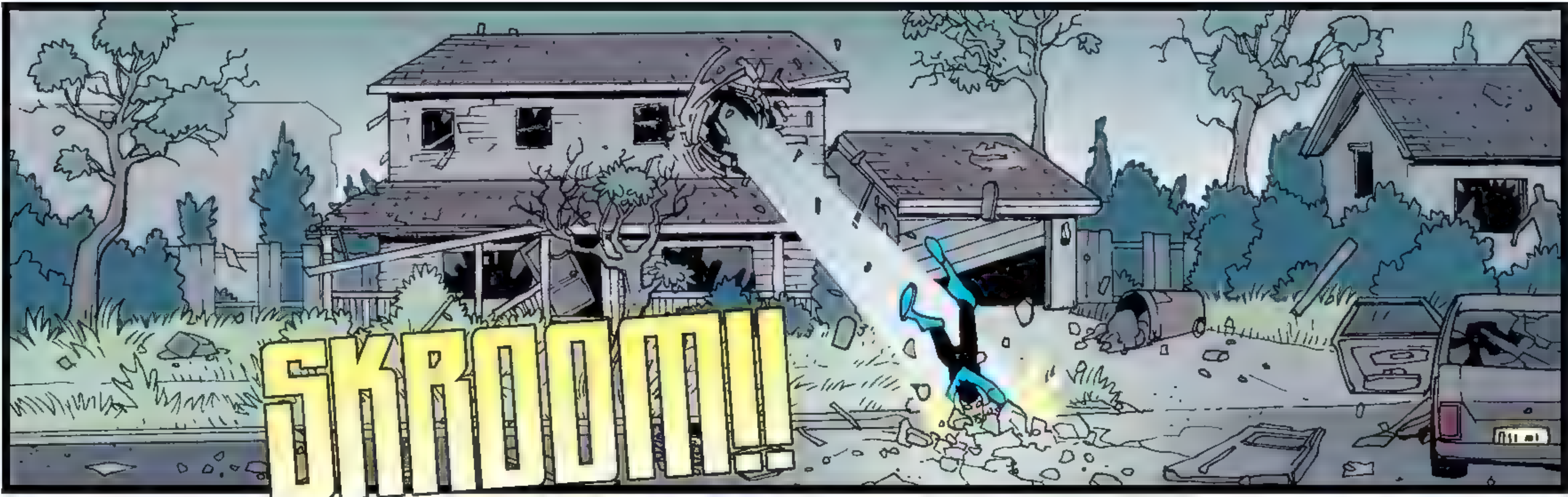


YOU SO MUCH AS ACT LIKE YOU'RE GOING TO HURT THEM AND I'LL--



THIS IS TOO EASY.







SOMETHING HAS
HAPPENED.

NOW HE OPENS
ANOTHER PORTAL AS
SOON AS I COME OUT
OF ONE. I DON'T EVEN
SEE HIM. I DON'T SEE
MY MOM OR MY BROTHER.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S
GOING ON.

I THINK HE'S
FINALLY REALIZING THIS
ISN'T WORKING. I HAVE TO
FIGURE OUT A WAY TO STOP
HIM WITHOUT HIM PUTTING A
PORTAL IN FRONT OF ME...
BEFORE HE DOES SOMETHING
DRASTIC TO THE PEOPLE I LOVE.



ACK!!

CRAP!

THWOOOM!!!



HOW
DID YOU
GET HERE?!
HOW?!

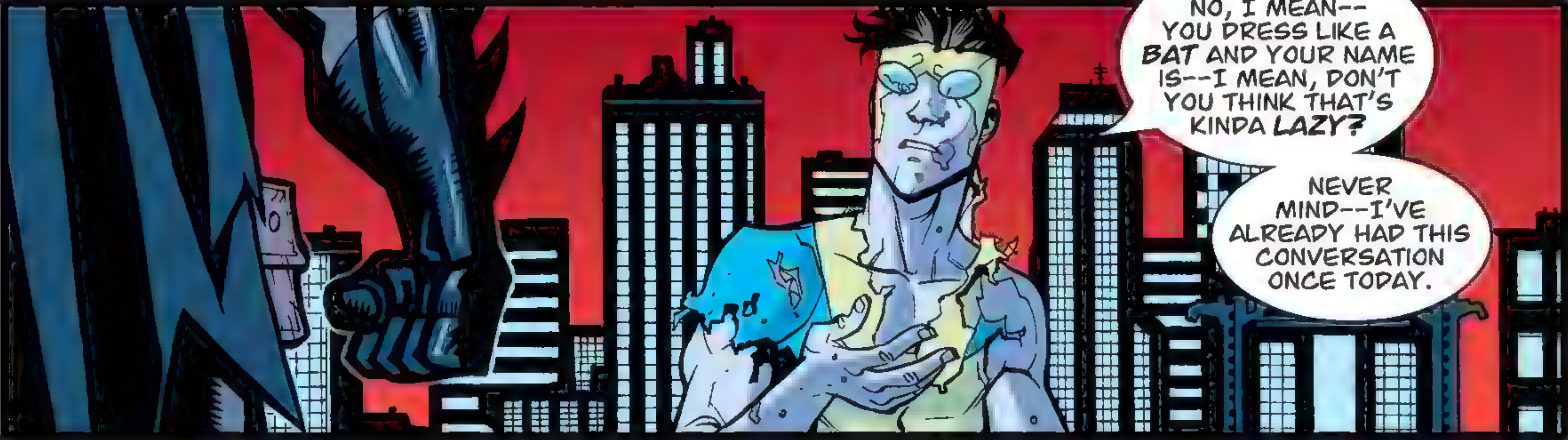
WHERE
DID YOU COME
FROM?!

WRROOOOM!!!

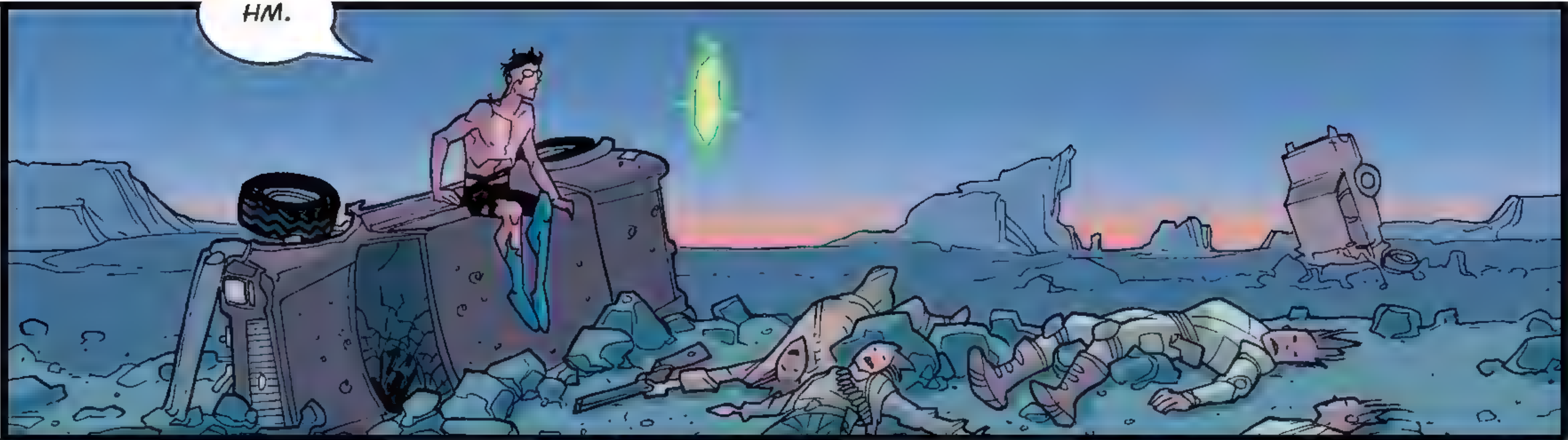


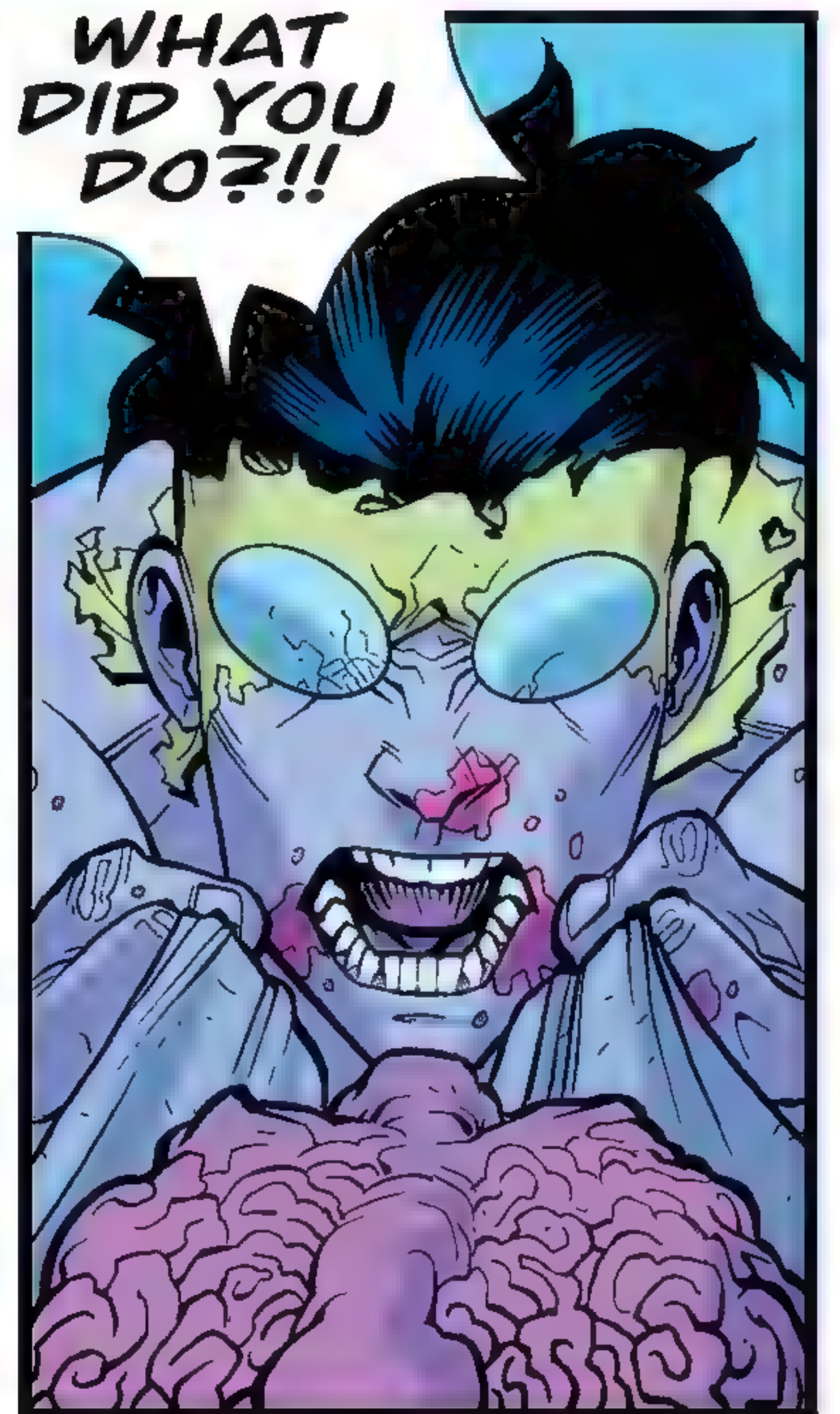
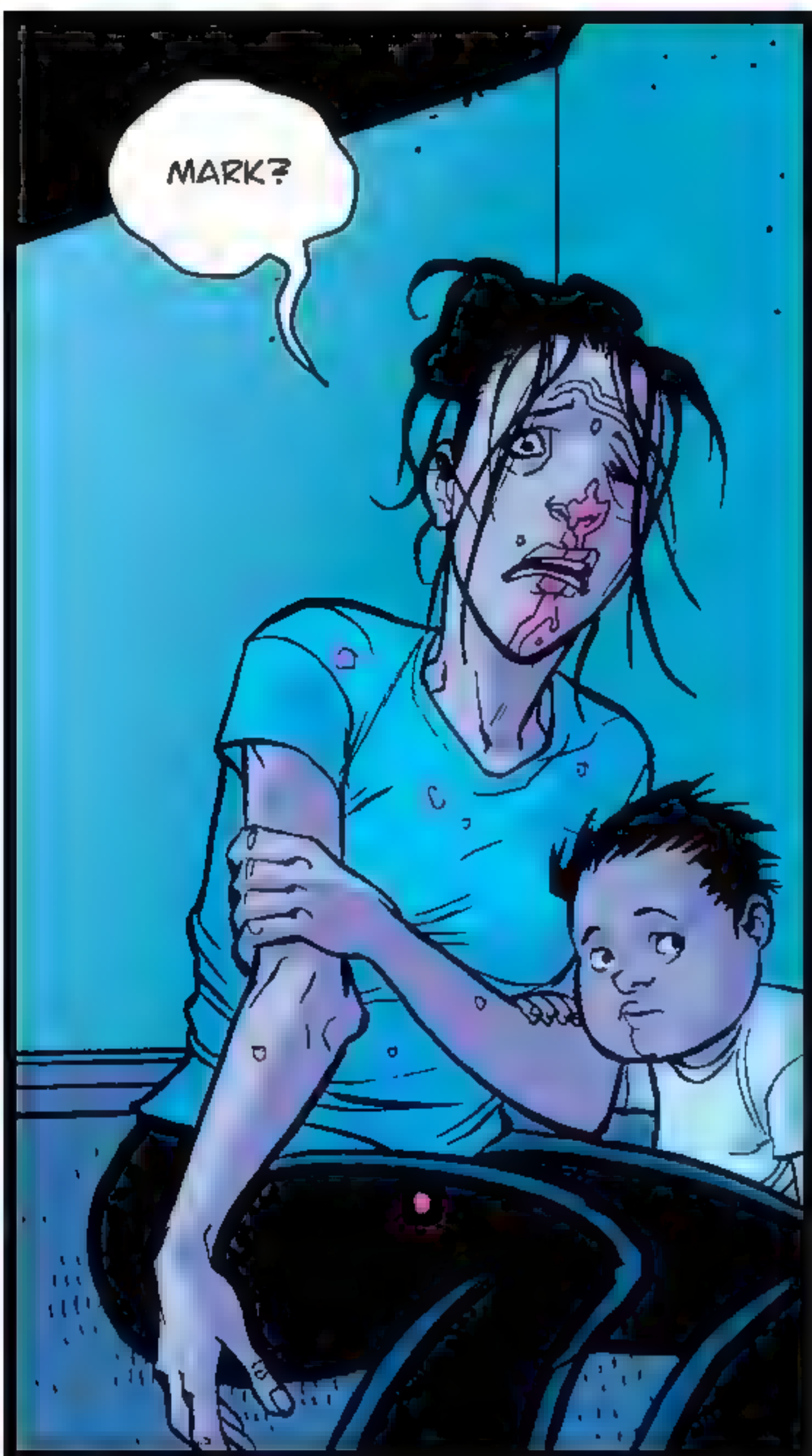
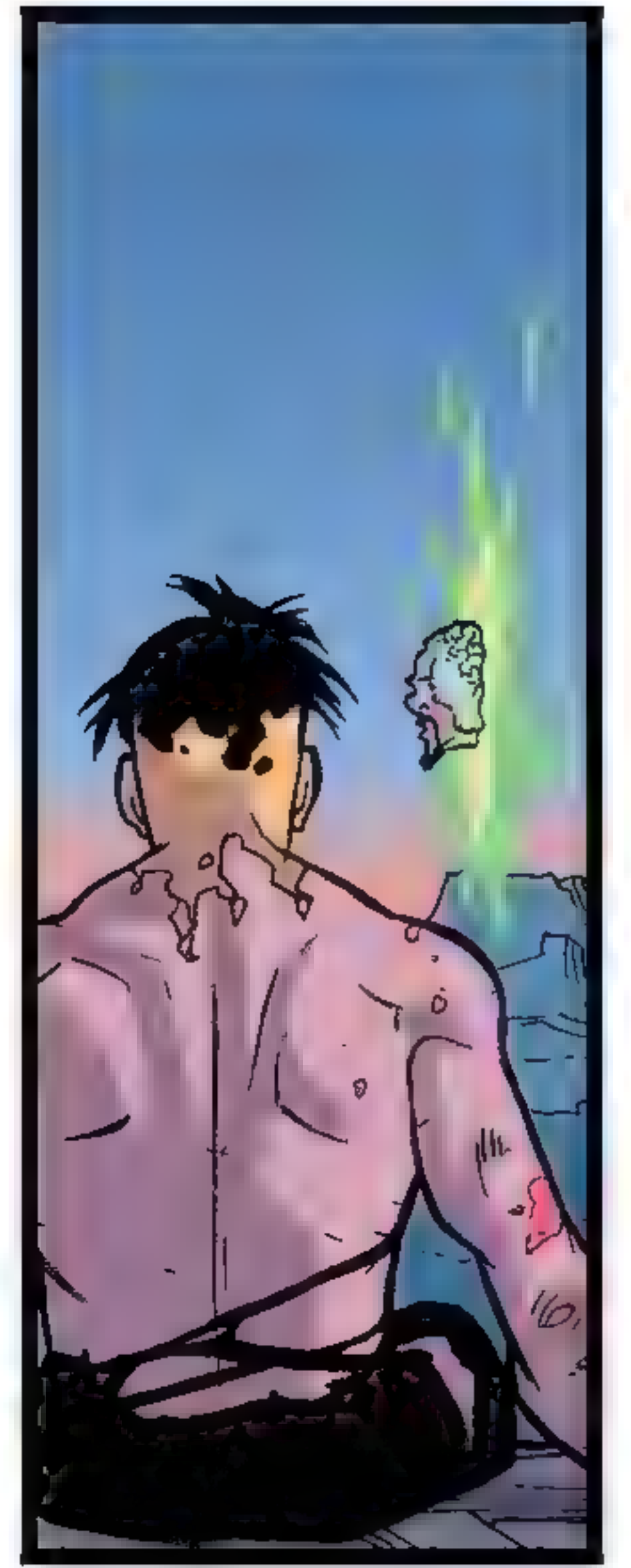
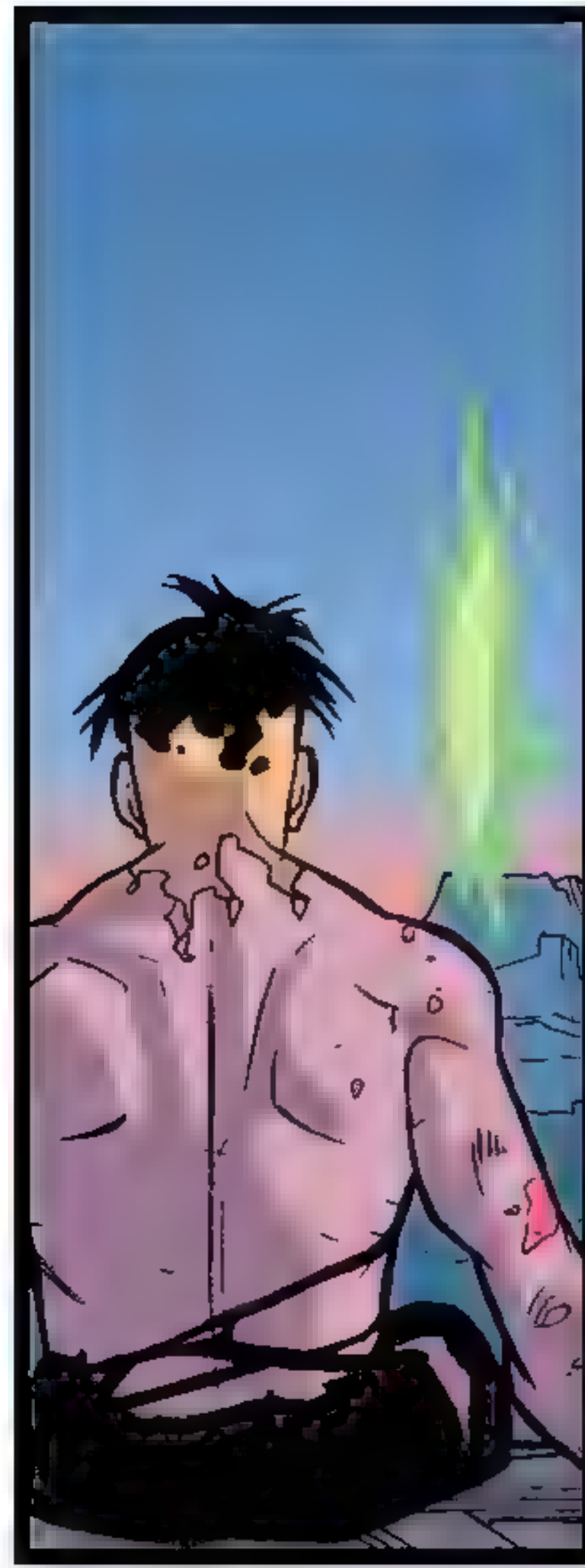
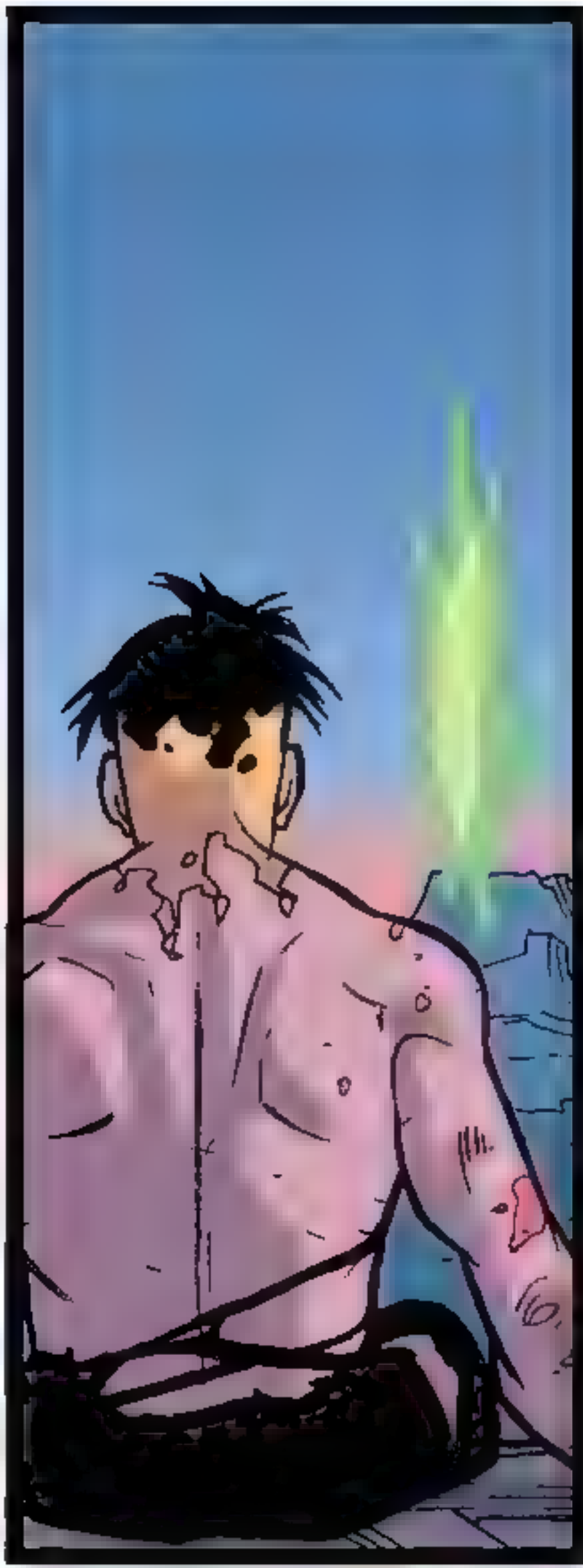
NO, I MEAN--
YOU DRESS LIKE A
BAT AND YOUR NAME
IS--I MEAN, DON'T
YOU THINK THAT'S
KINDA LAZY?

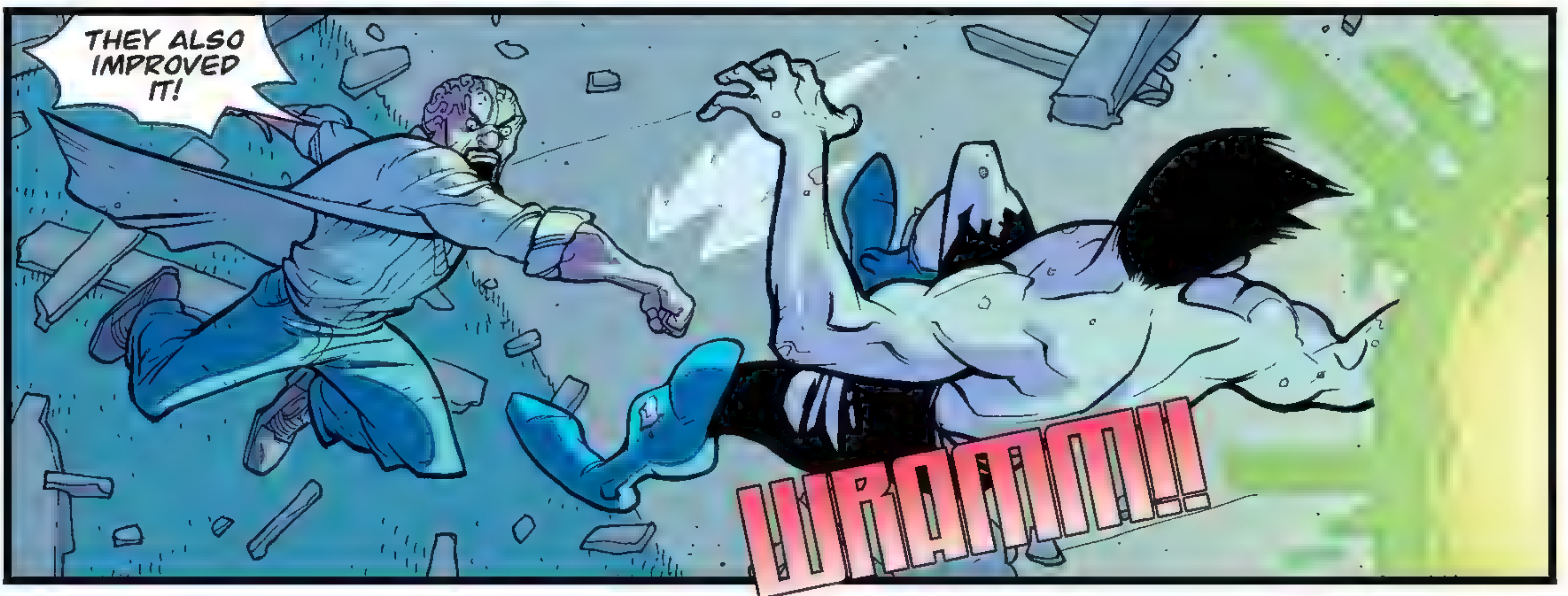
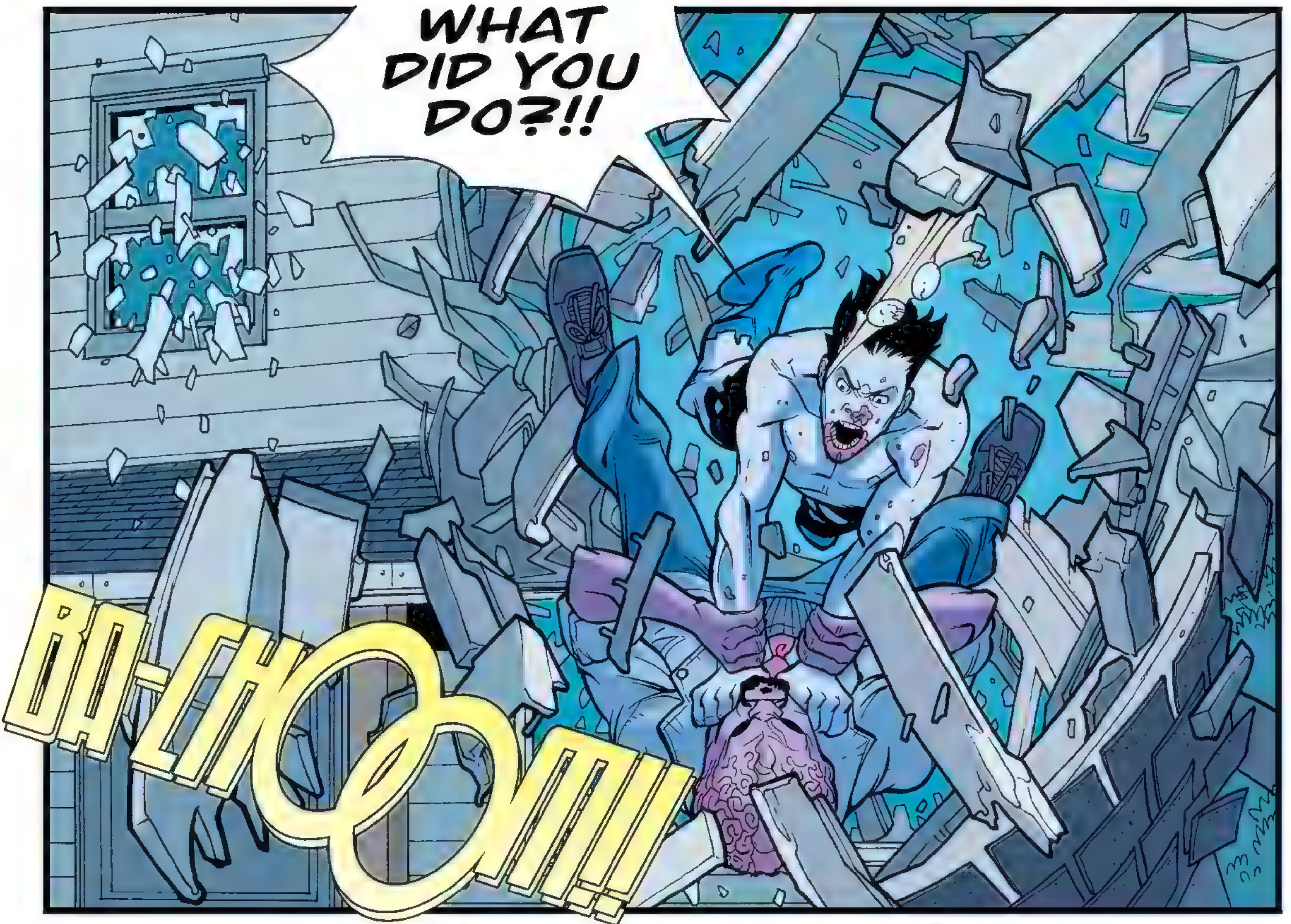
NEVER
MIND--I'VE
ALREADY HAD THIS
CONVERSATION
ONCE TODAY.

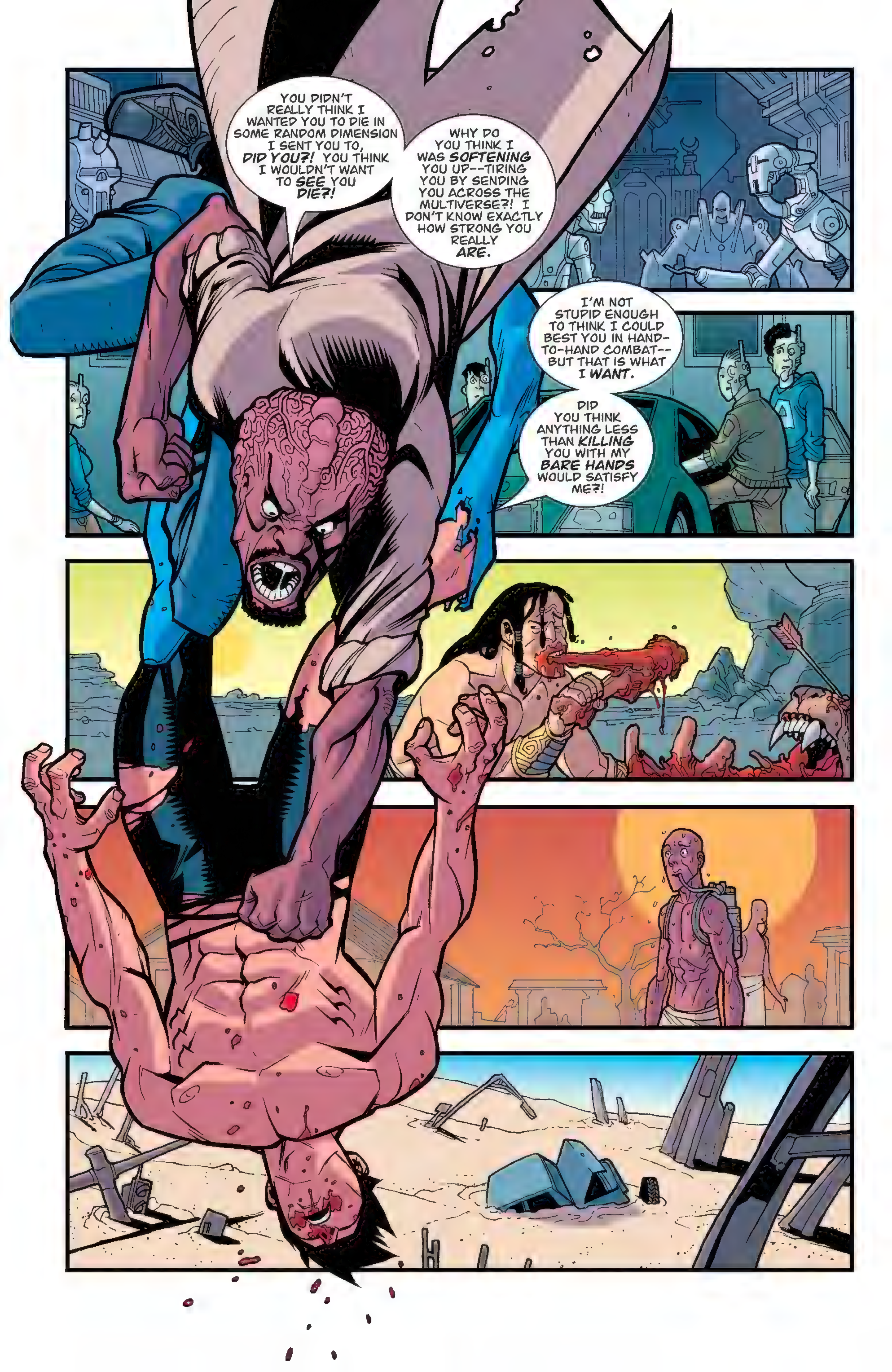


HM.







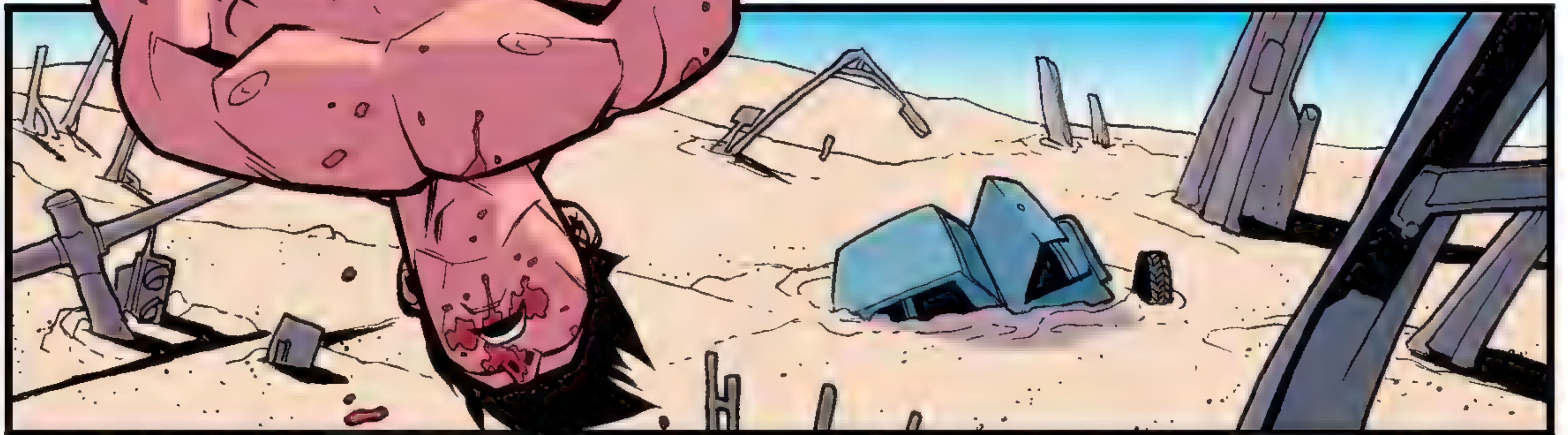
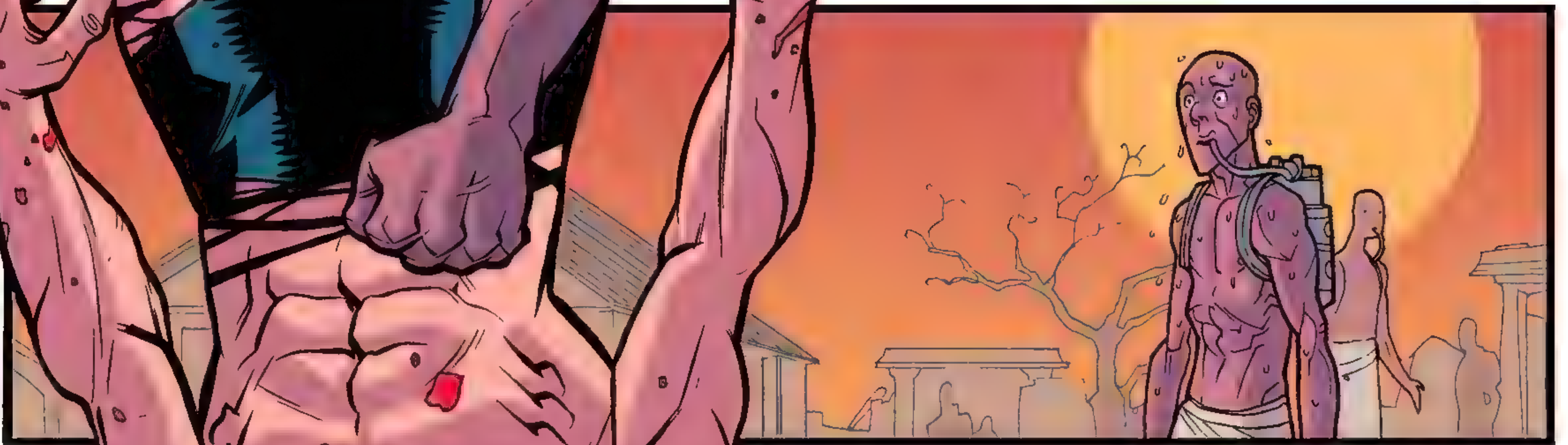
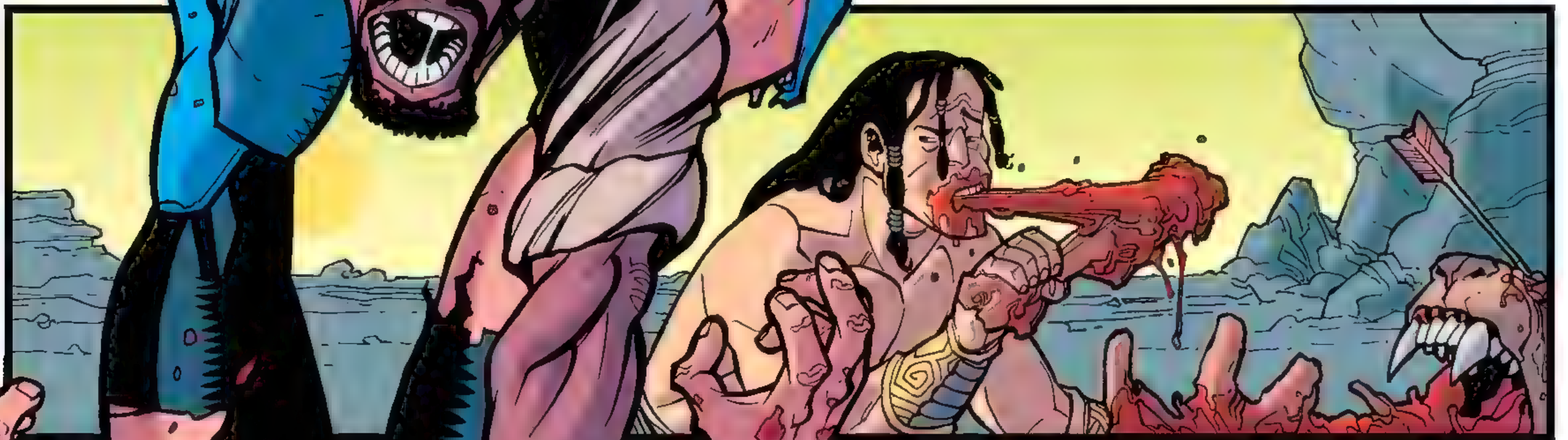


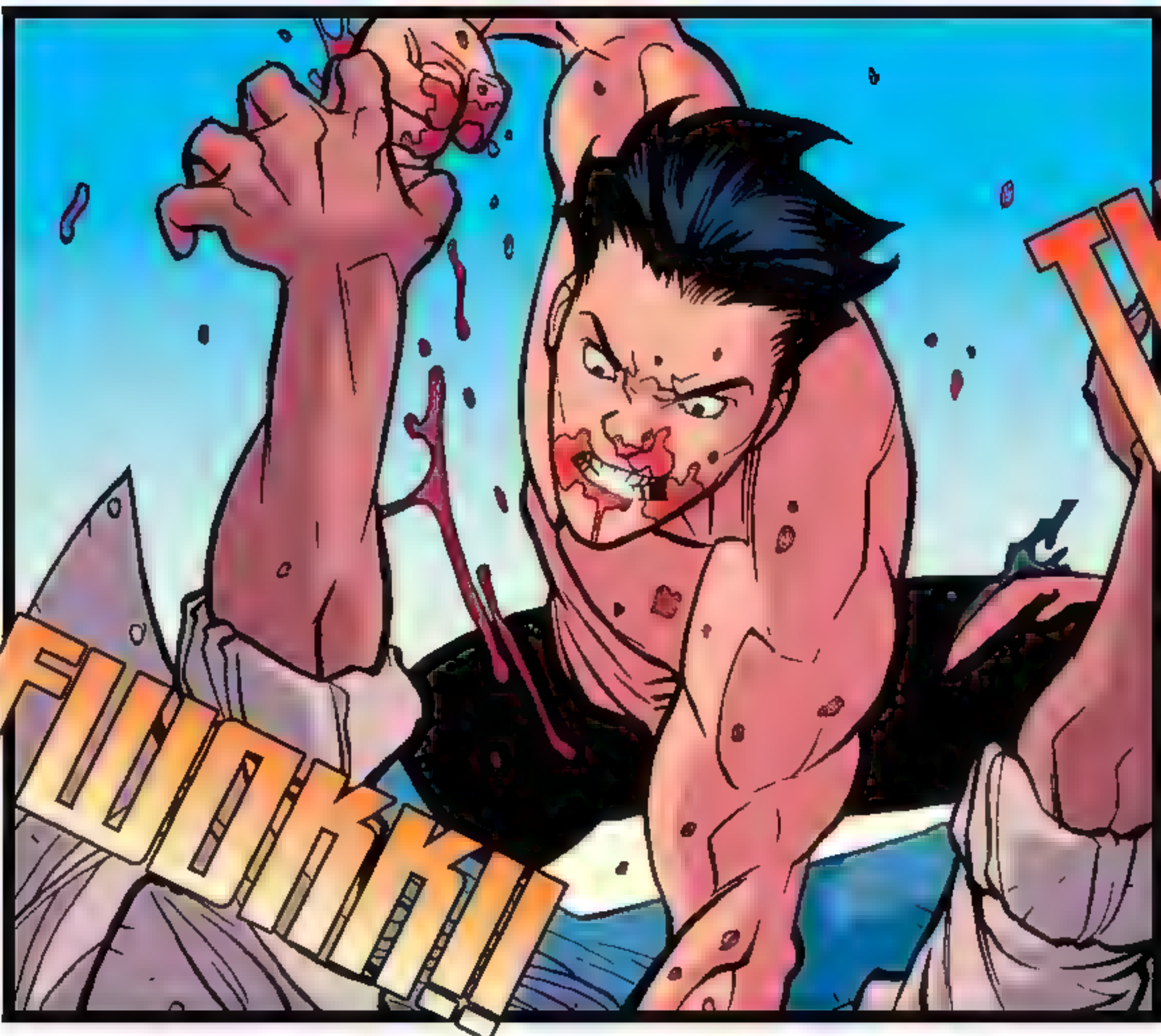
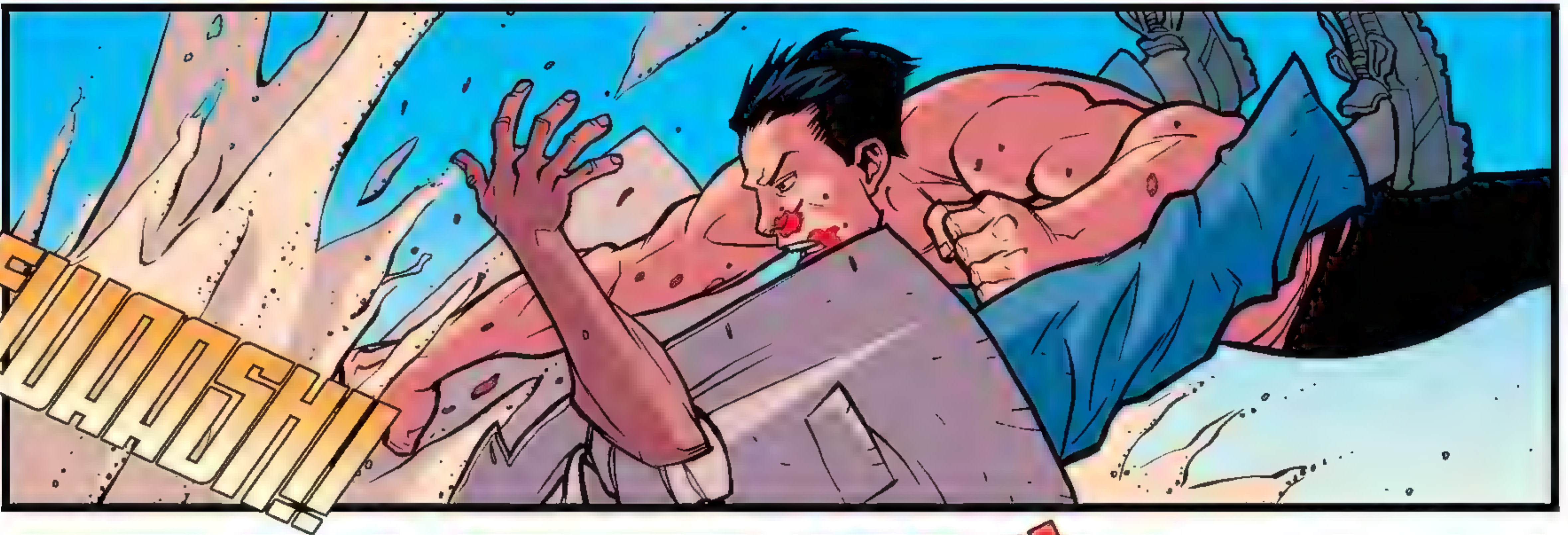
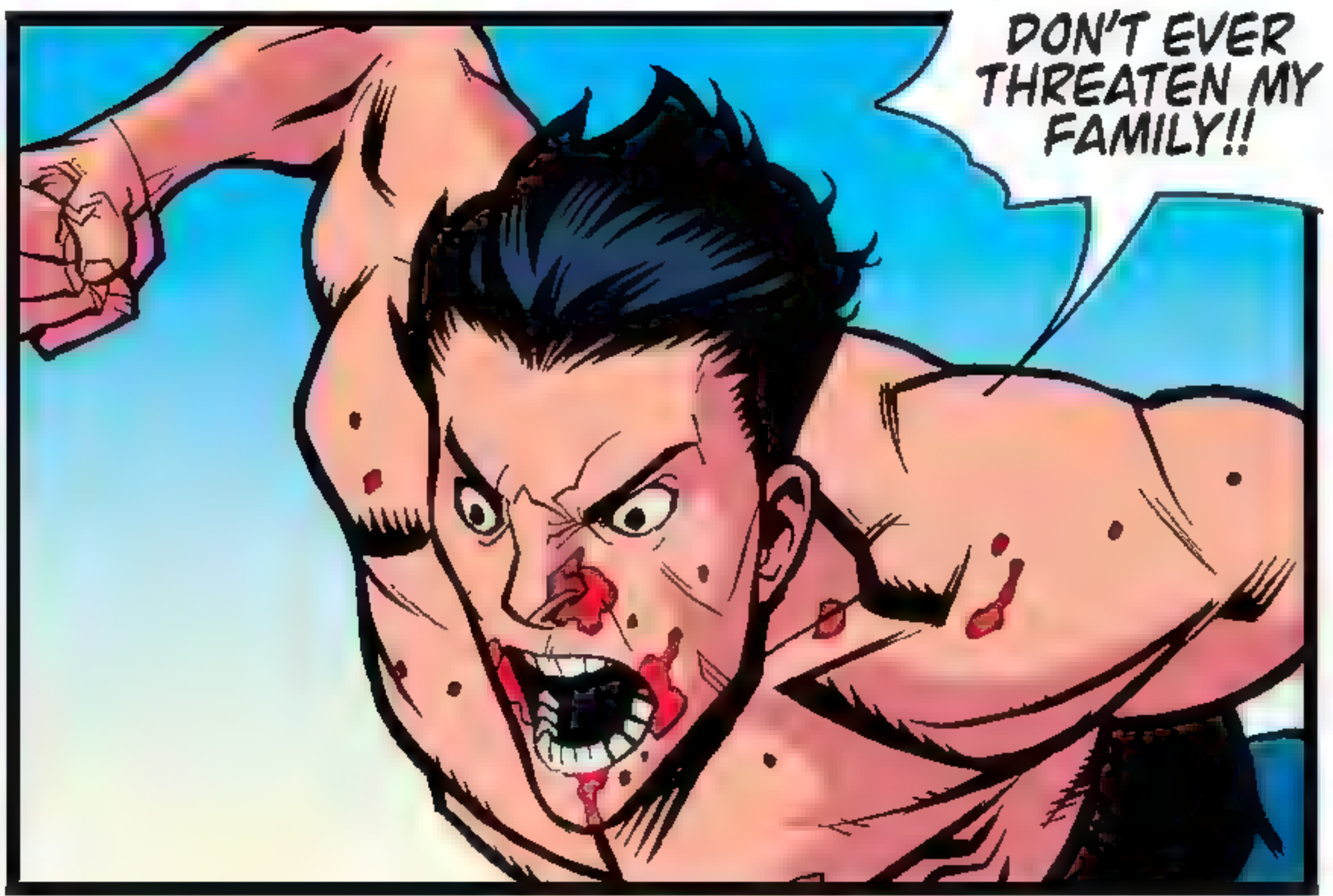
YOU DIDN'T
REALLY THINK I
WANTED YOU TO DIE IN
SOME RANDOM DIMENSION
I SENT YOU TO,
DID YOU?! YOU THINK
I WOULDN'T WANT
TO SEE YOU
DIE?!

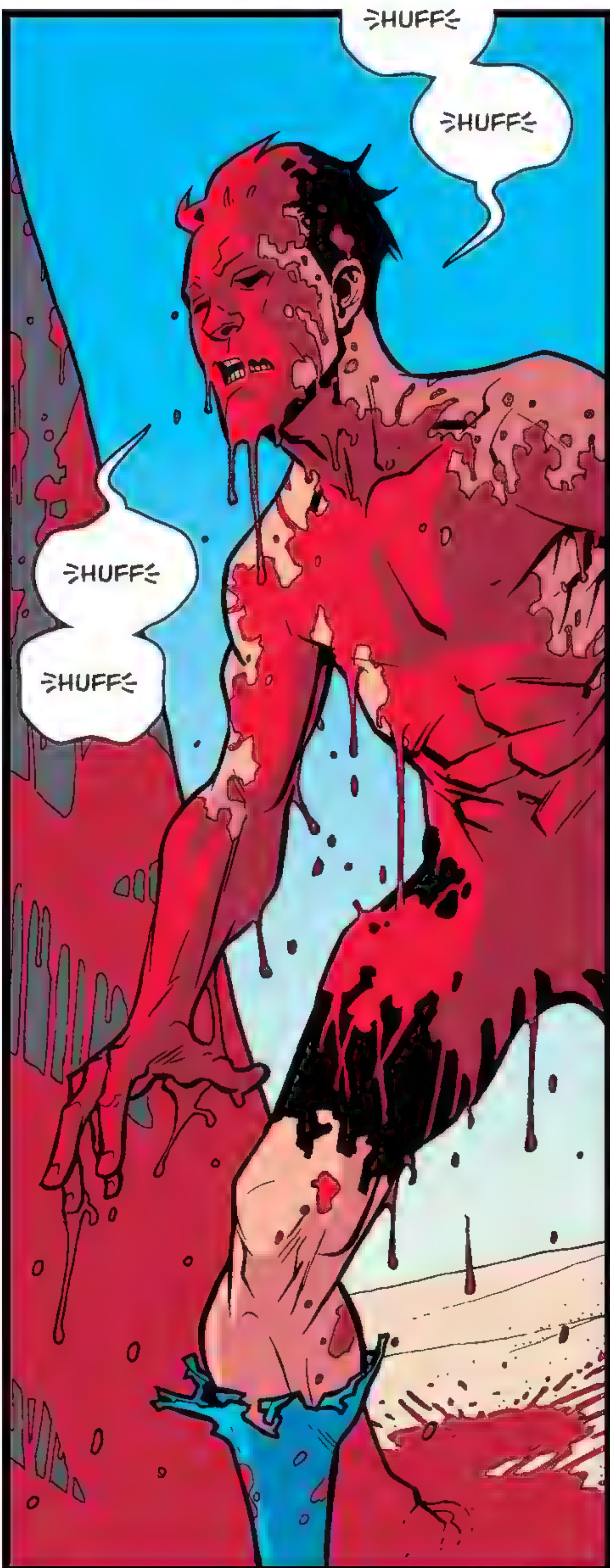
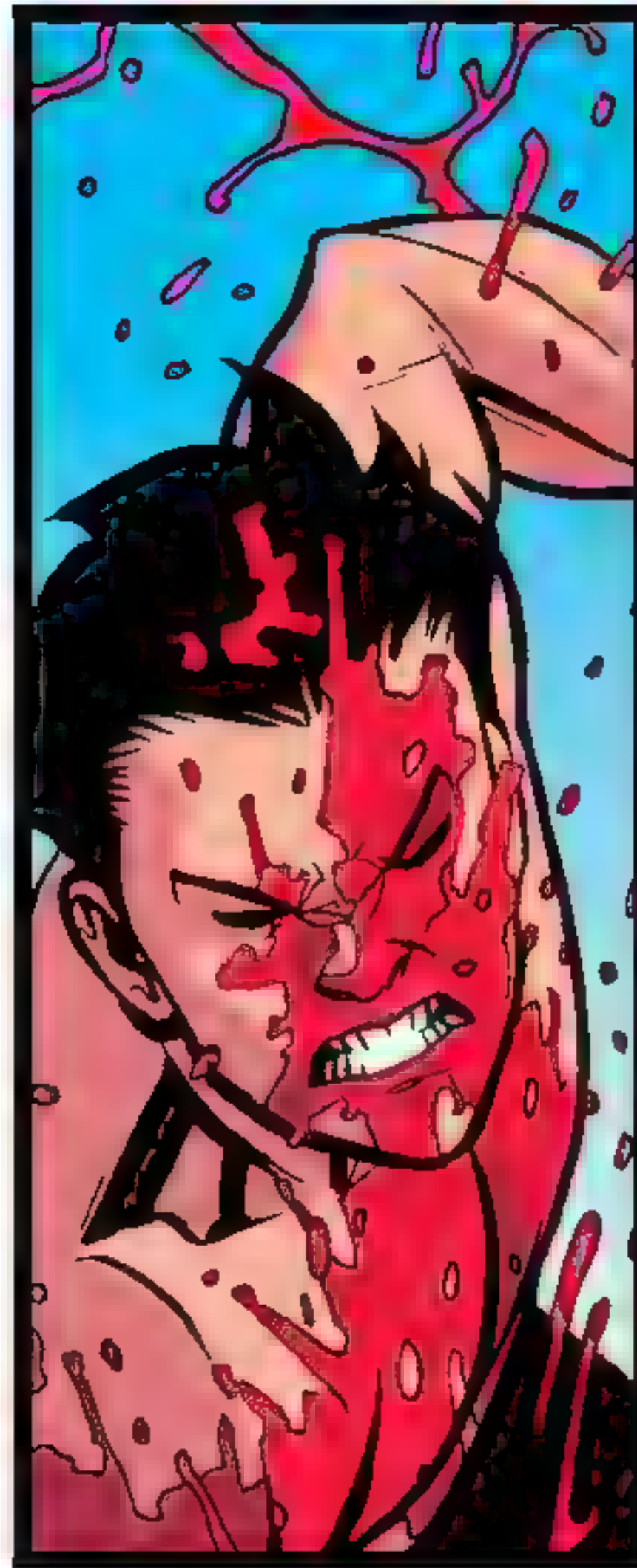
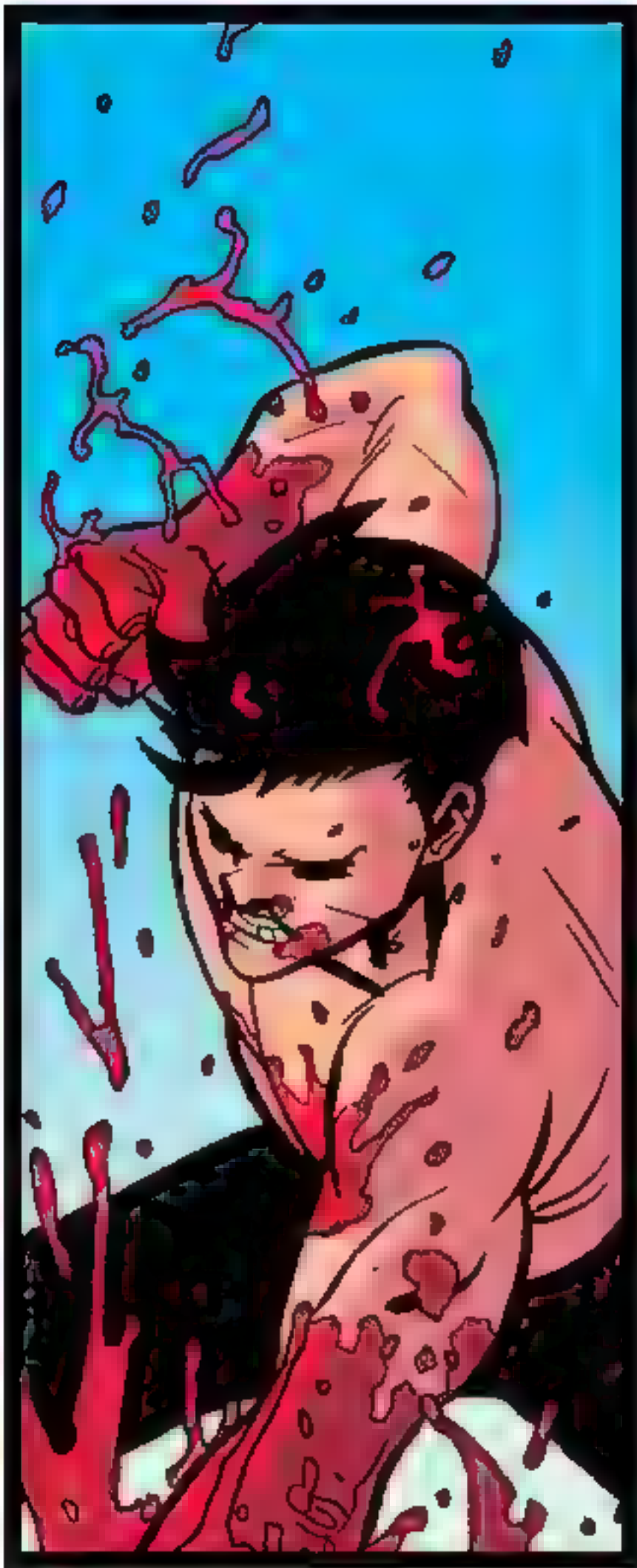
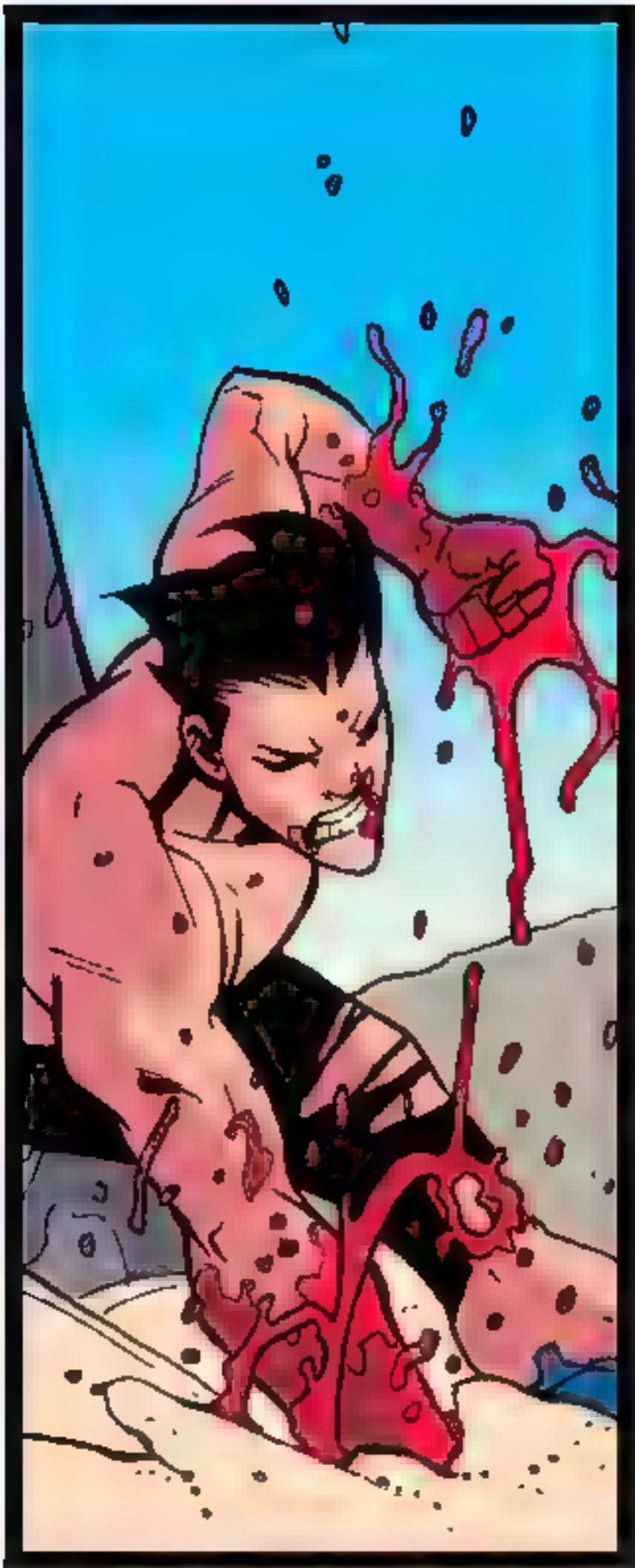
WHY DO
YOU THINK I
WAS **SOFTENING**
YOU UP--TIRING
YOU BY SENDING
YOU ACROSS THE
MULTIVERSE?! I
DON'T KNOW EXACTLY
HOW STRONG YOU
REALLY
ARE.

I'M NOT
STUPID ENOUGH
TO THINK I COULD
BEST YOU IN HAND-
TO-HAND COMBAT--
BUT THAT IS WHAT
I WANT.

DID
YOU THINK
ANYTHING LESS
THAN **KILLING**
YOU WITH MY
BARE HANDS
WOULD SATISFY
ME?!







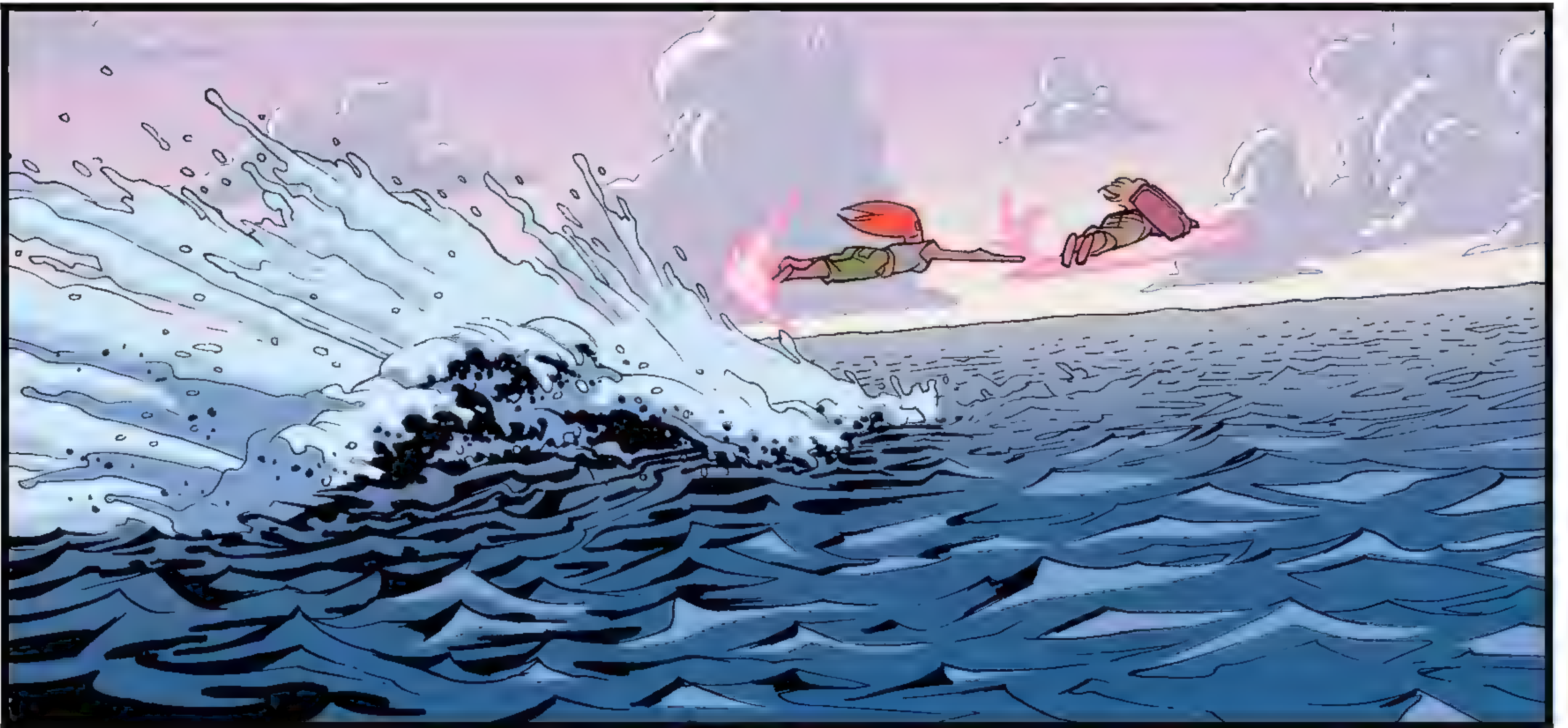
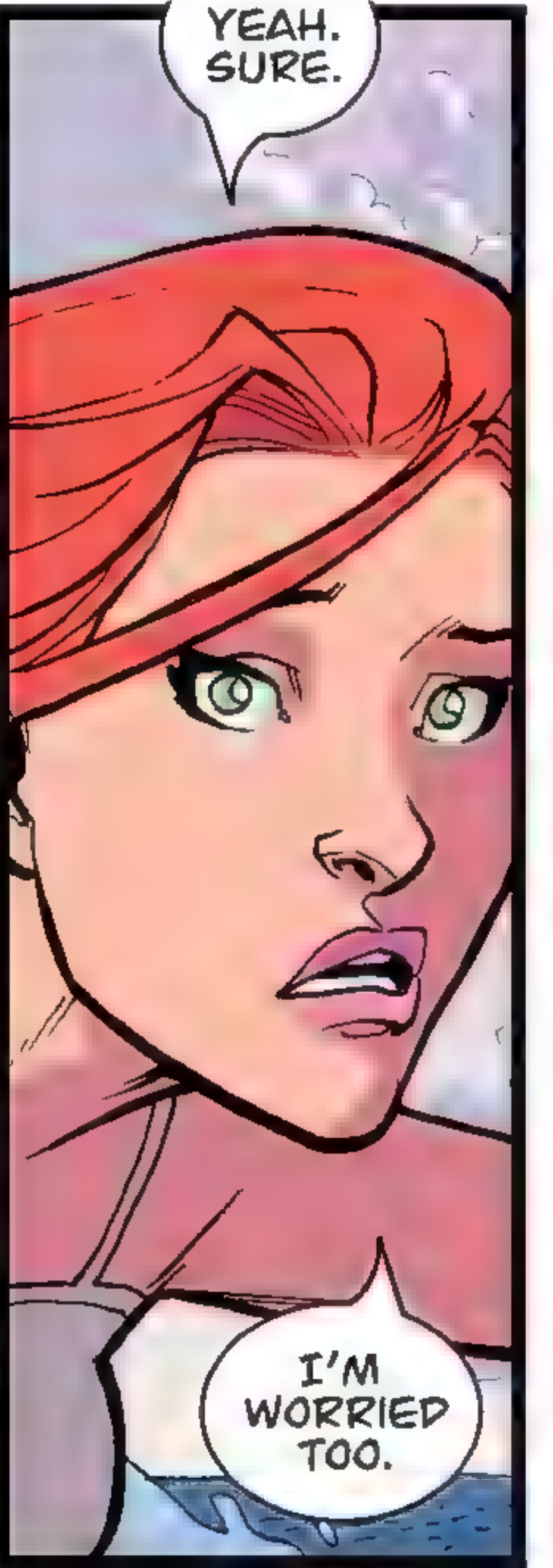
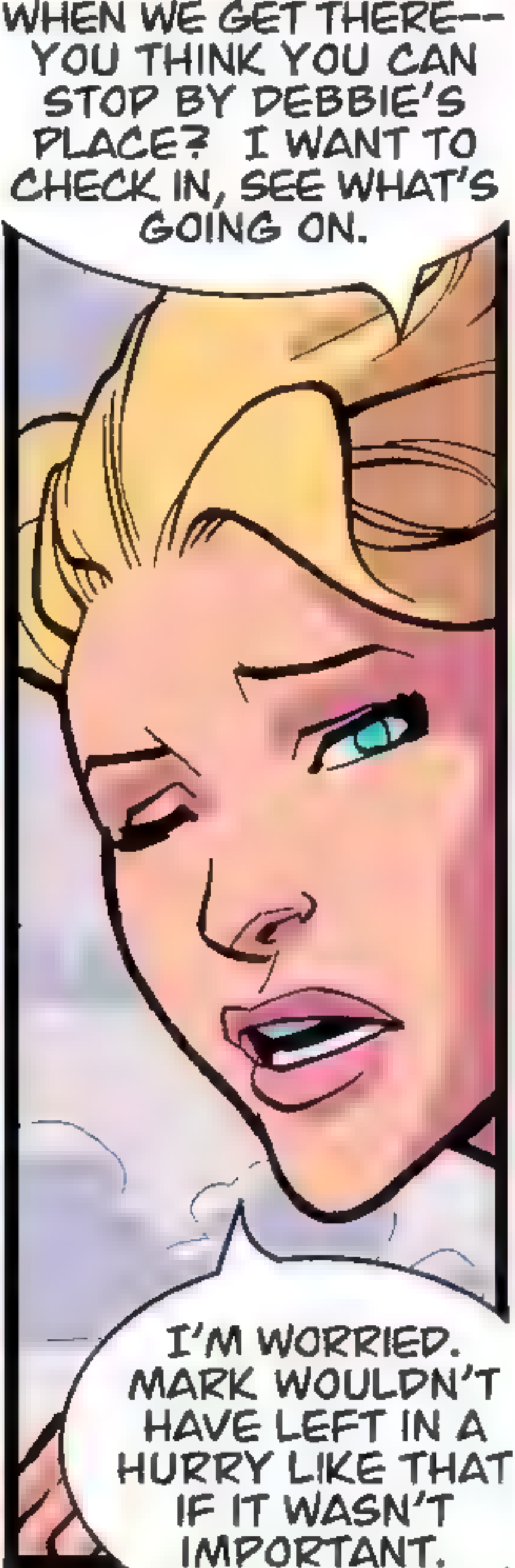
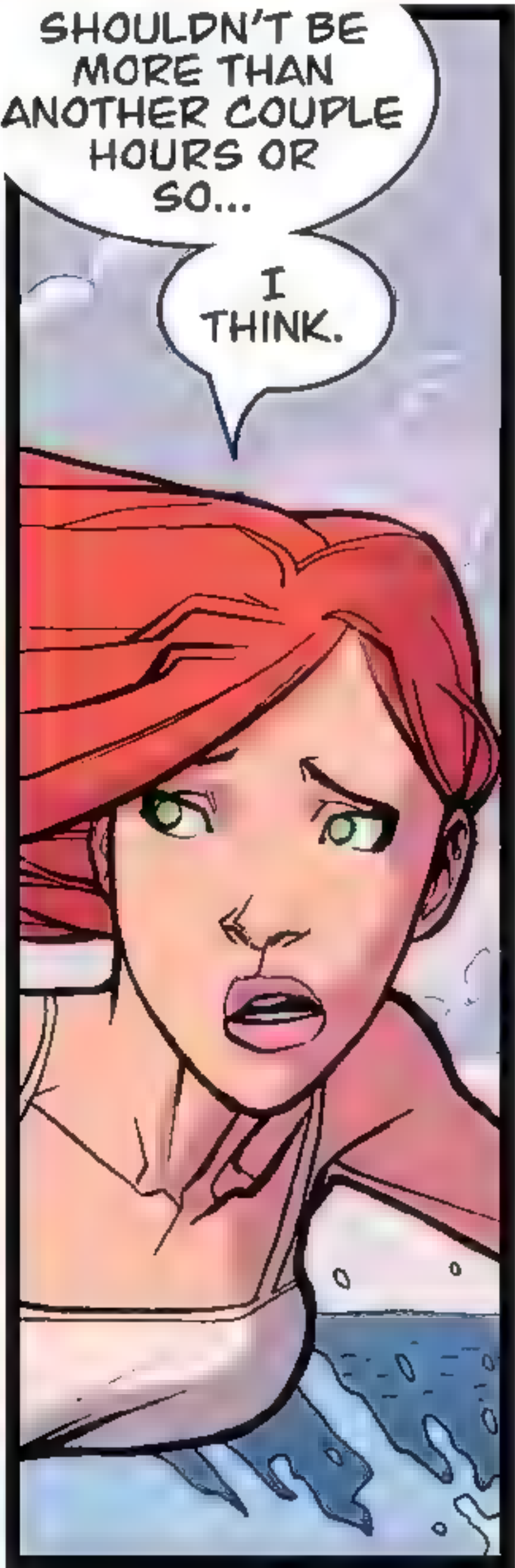
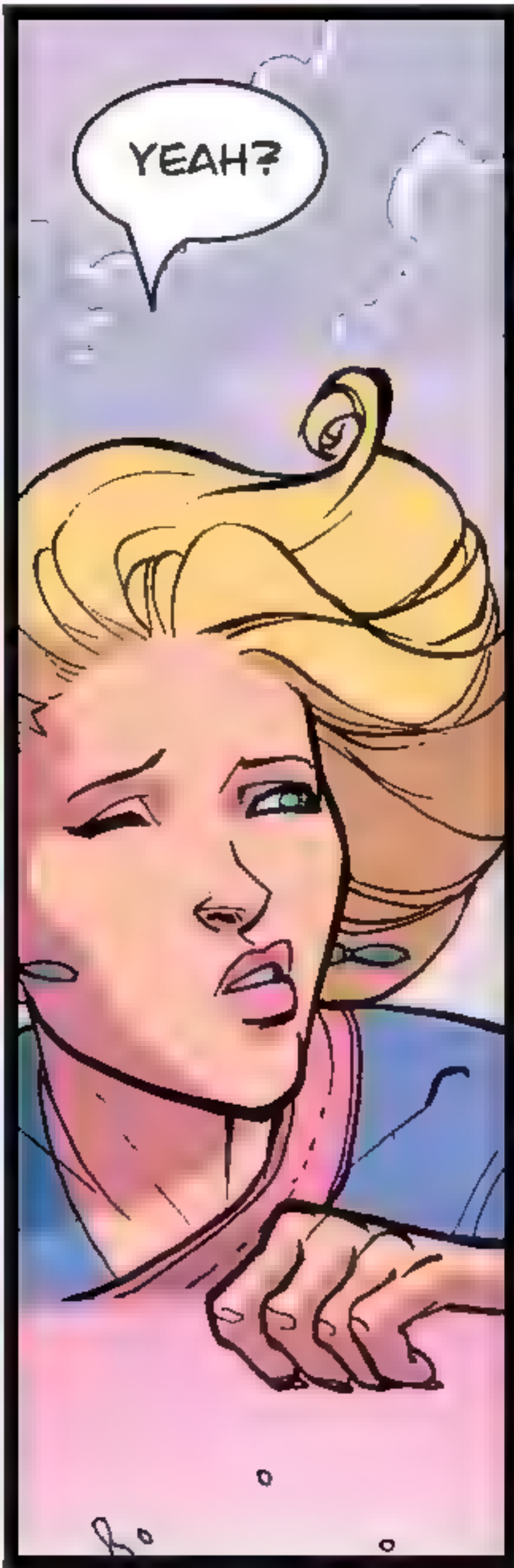
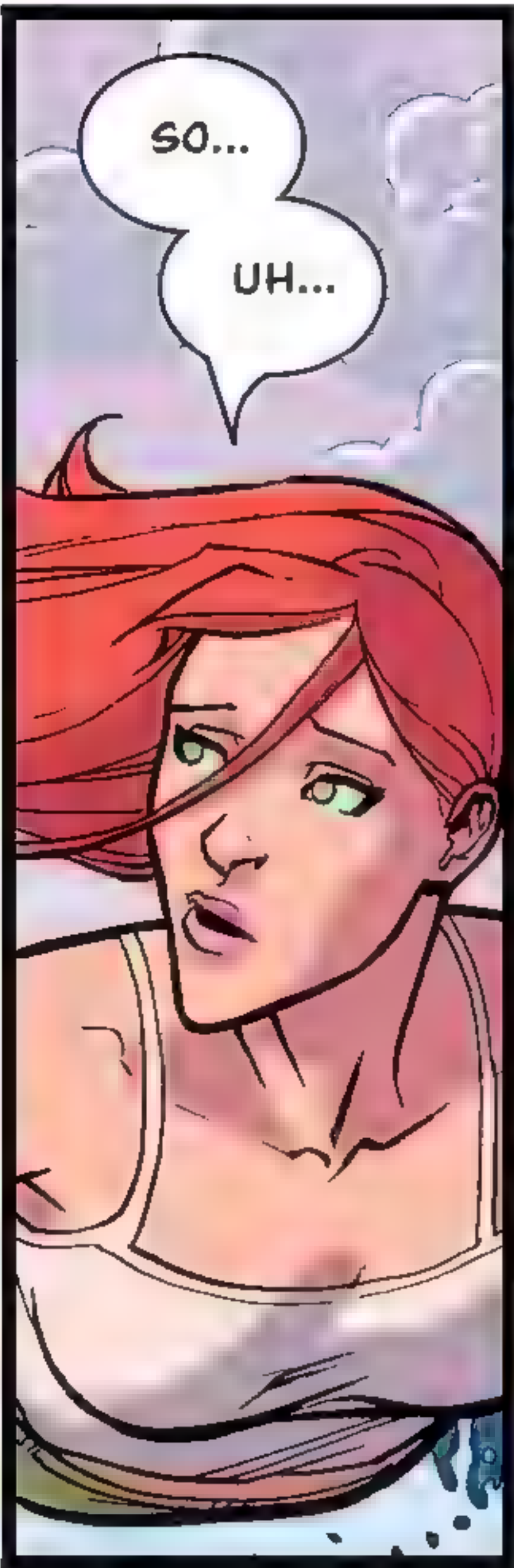
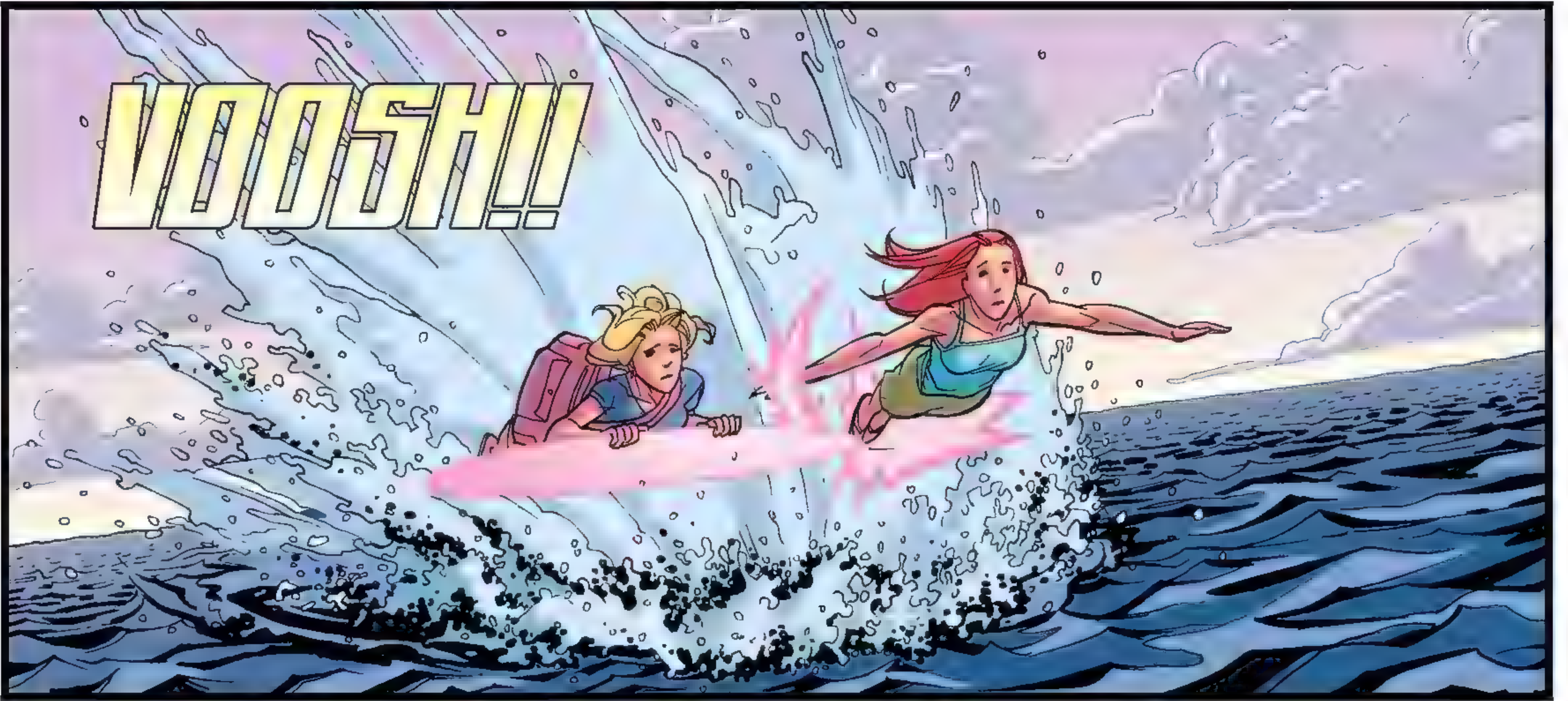


OH,
GOD...



ISSUE THIRTY-FOUR







OH,
GOD.

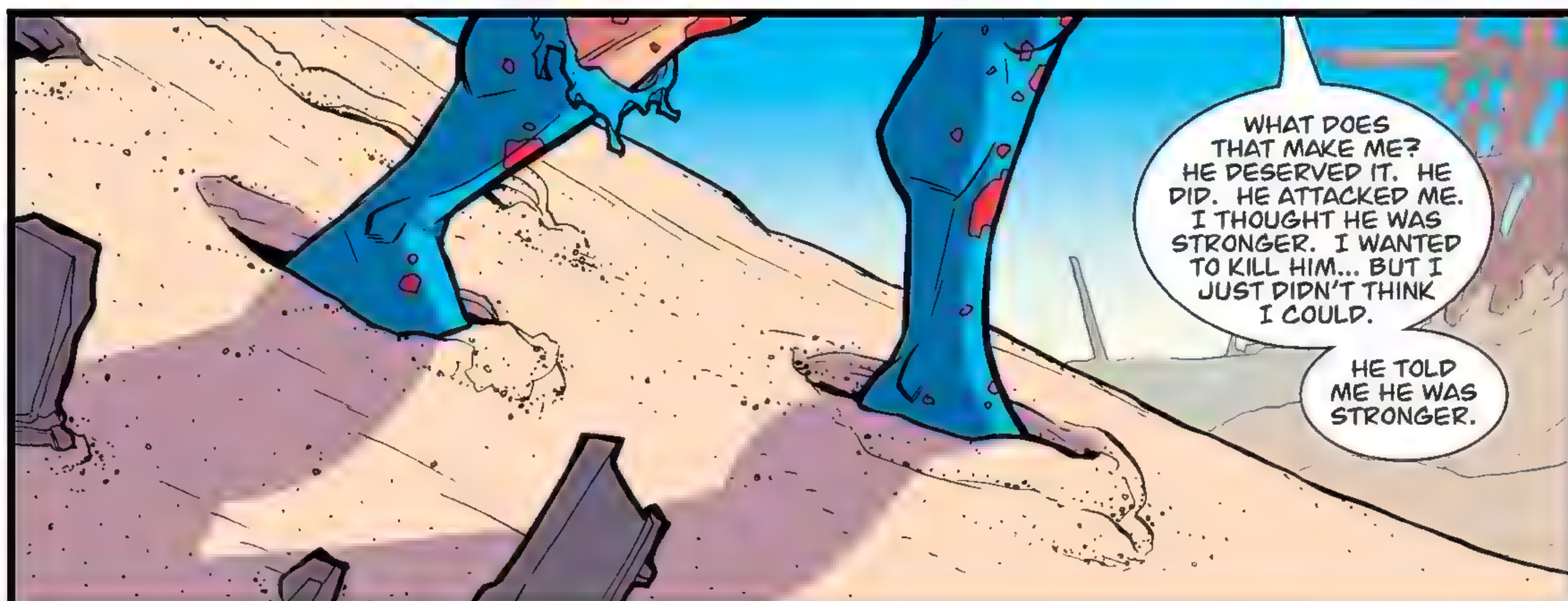
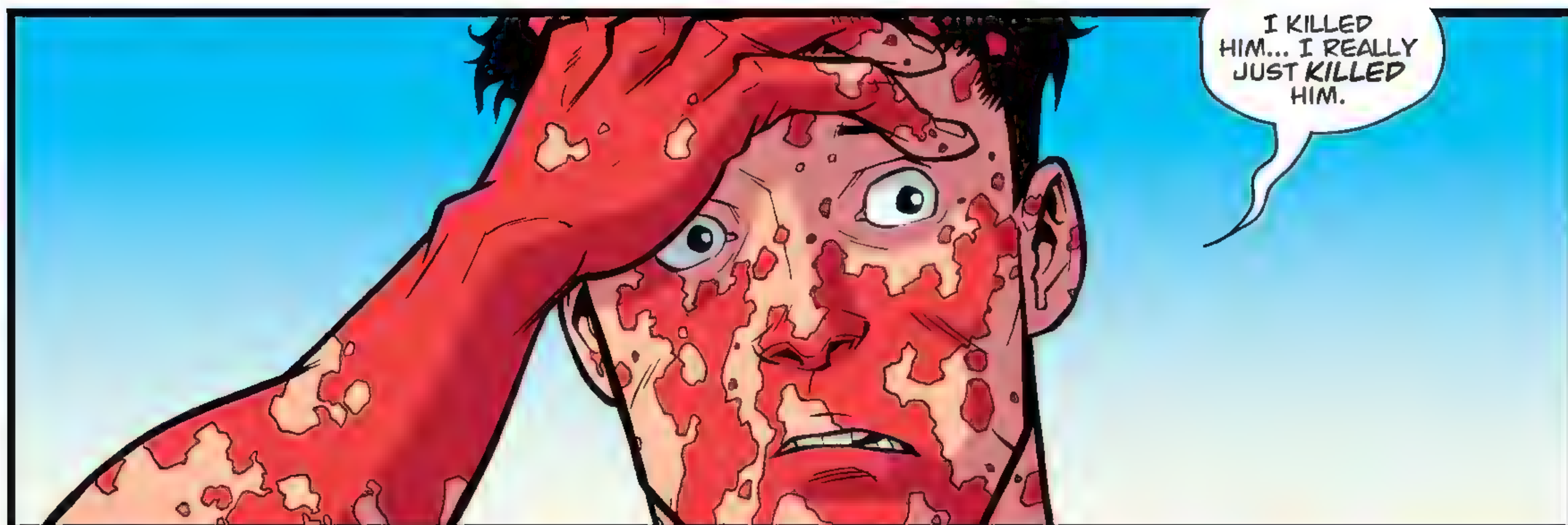
OH,
GOD.

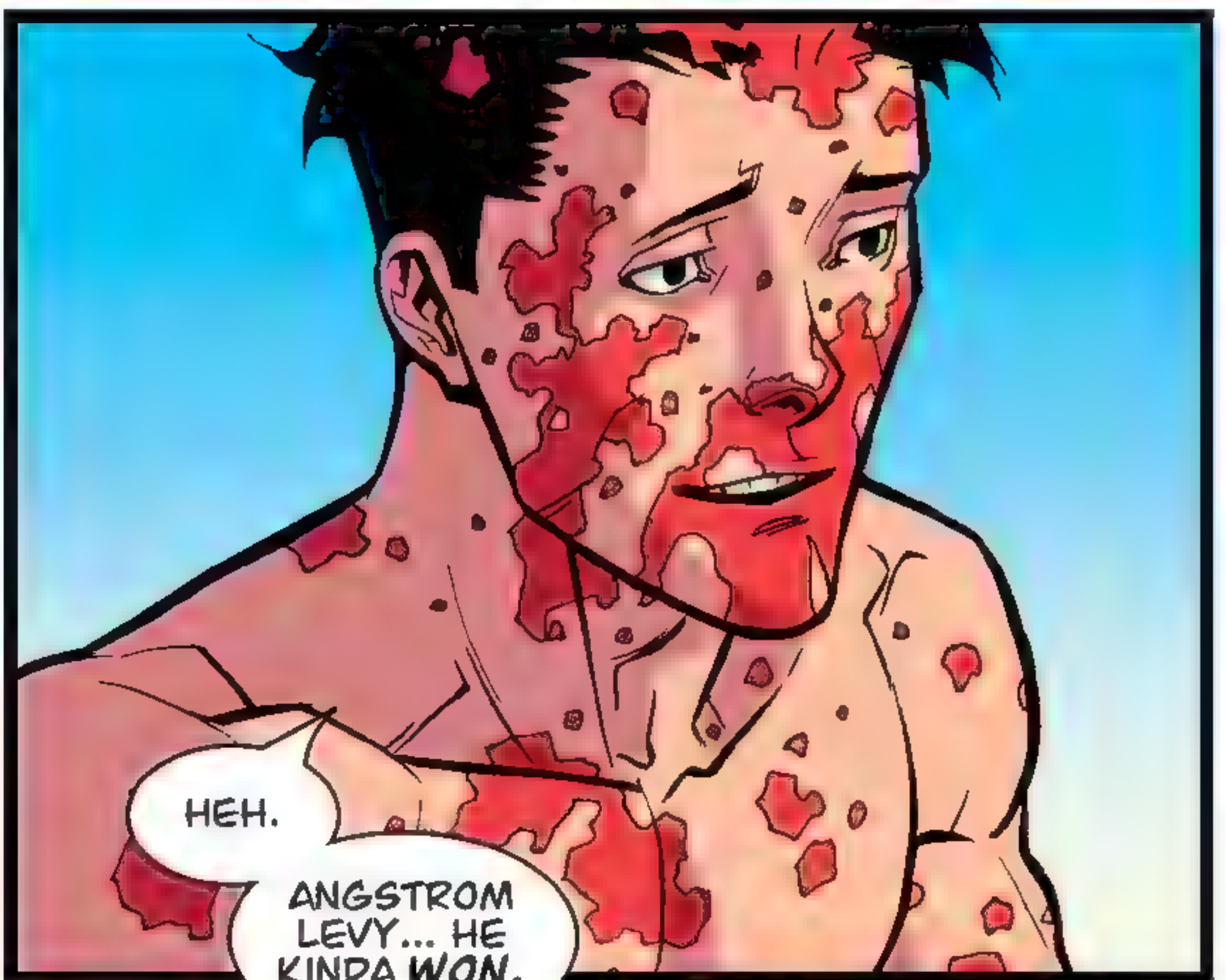
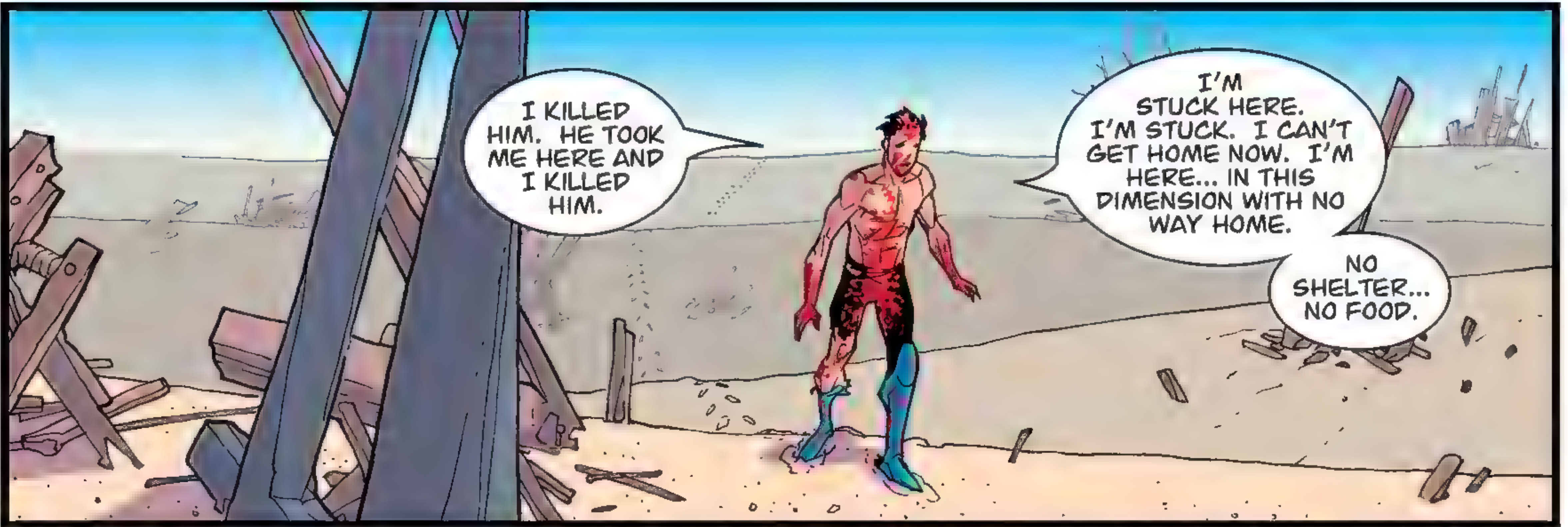
OH,
GOD.

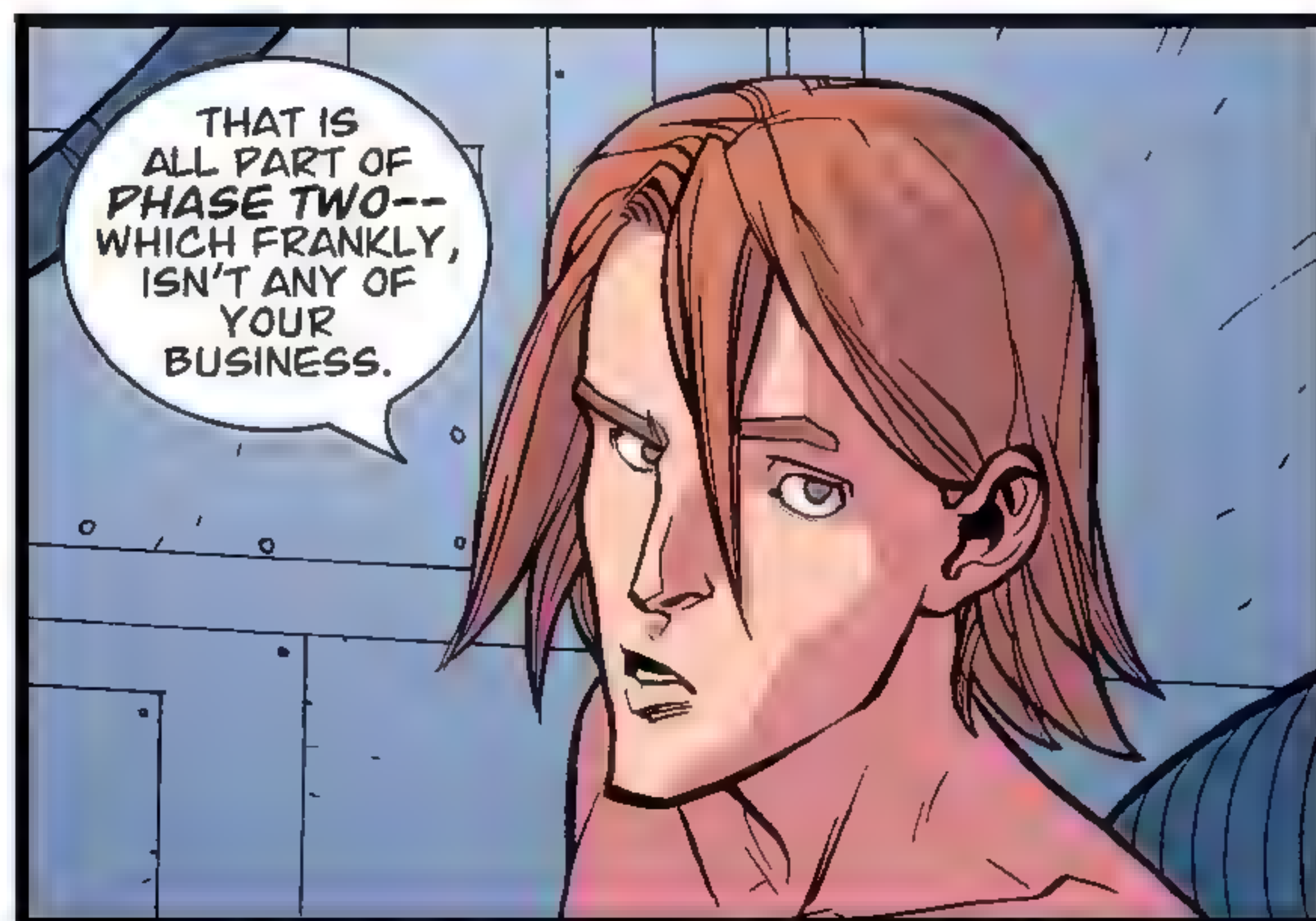
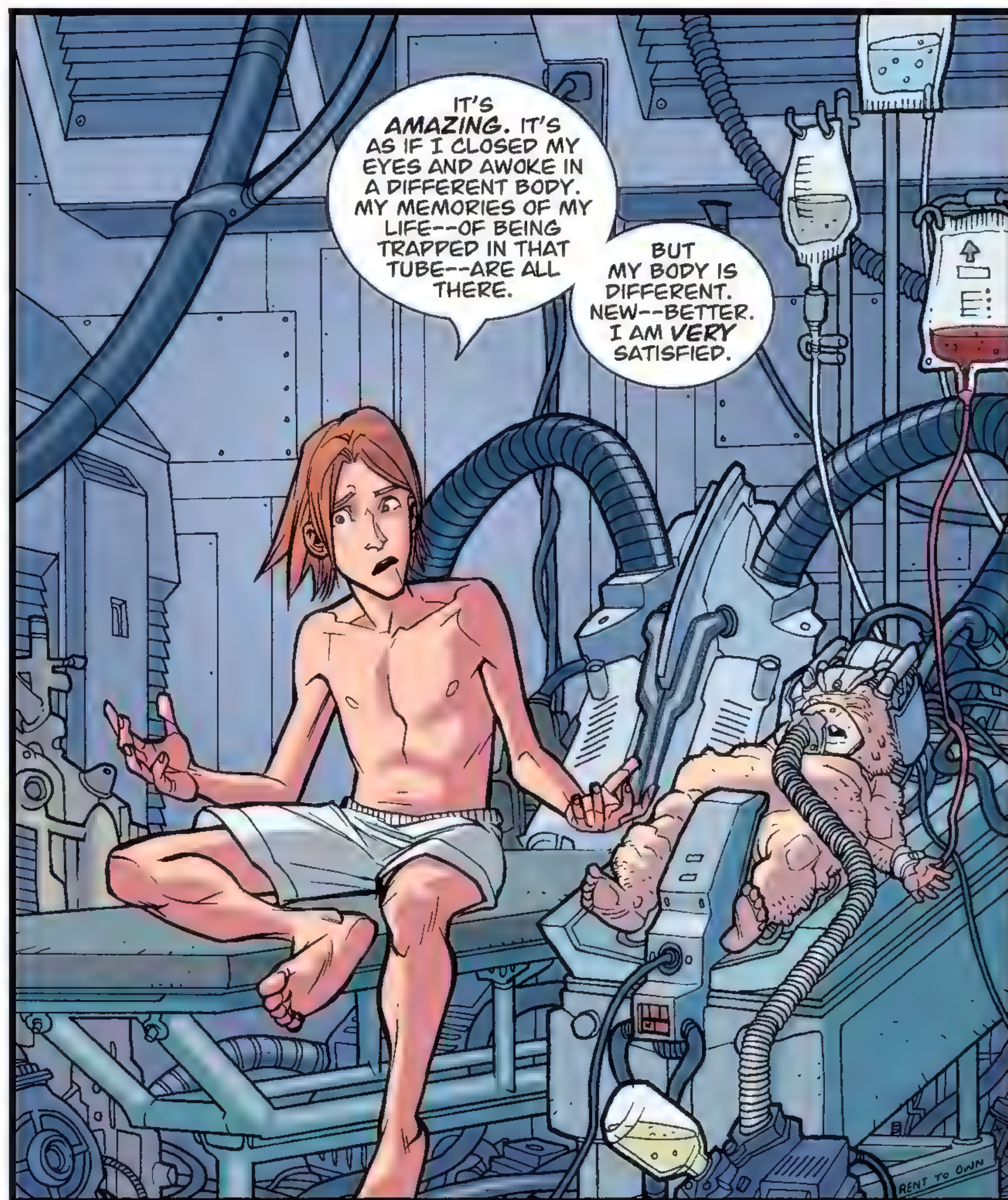
OH,
GOD.

OH,
GOD.

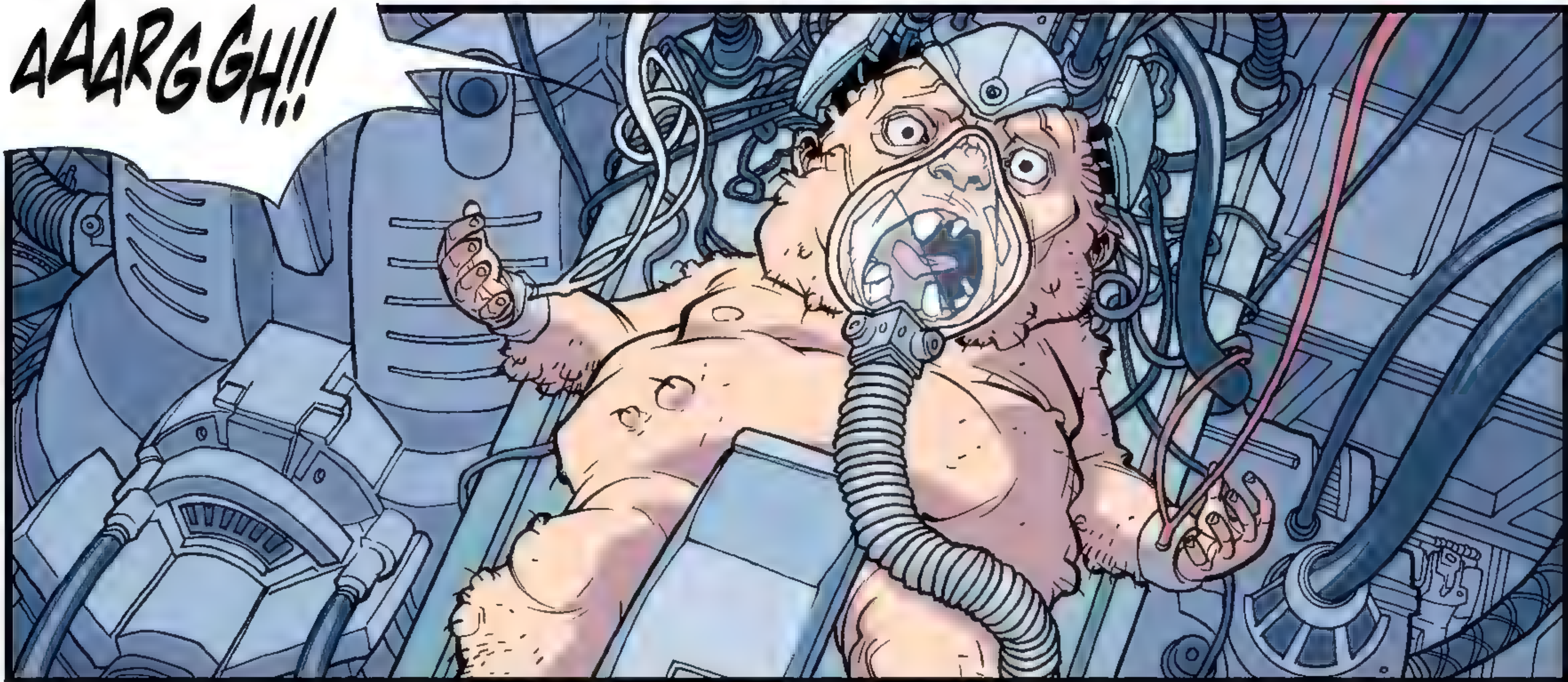
OH,
GOD.





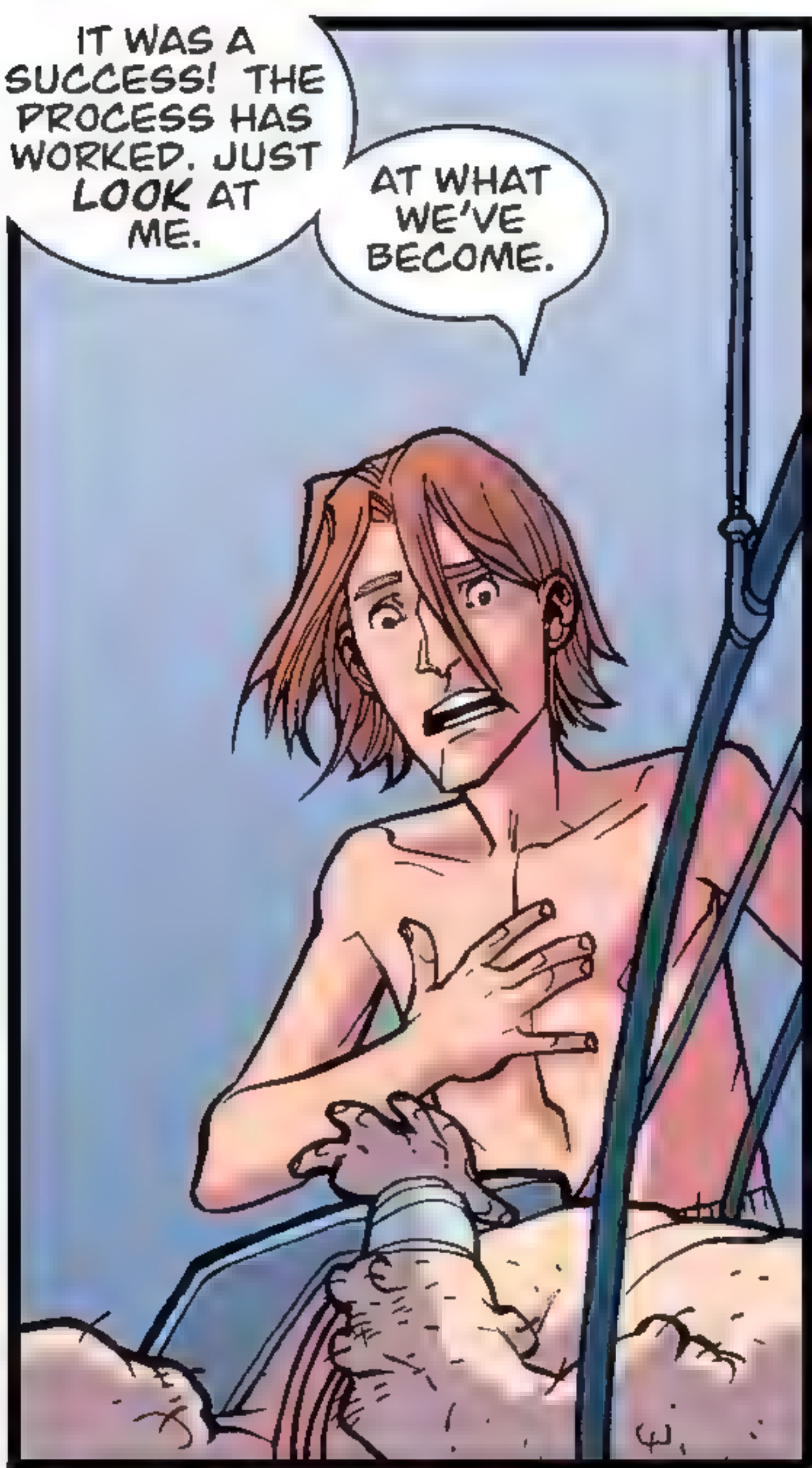


AAARGGH!!

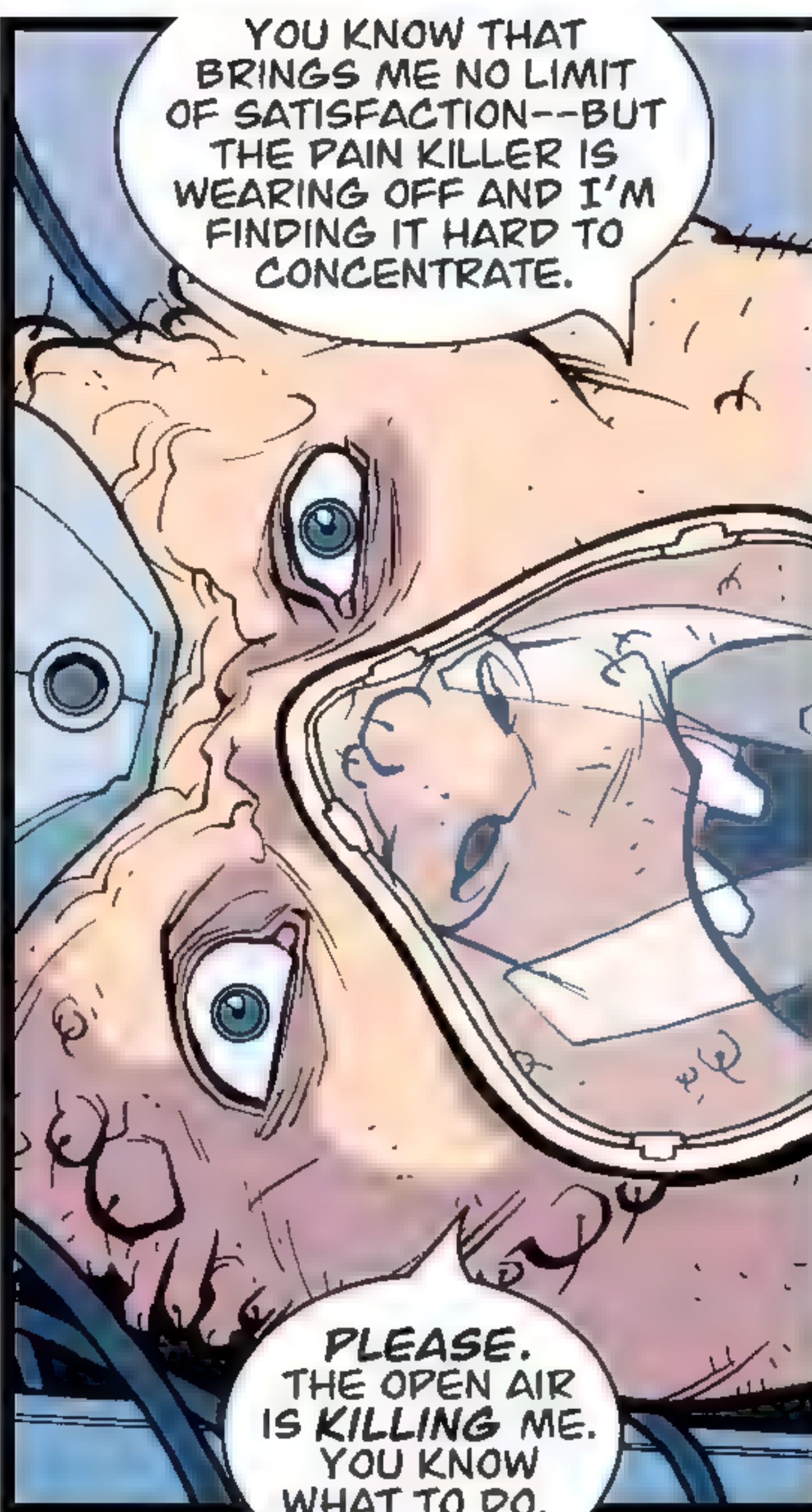


IT WAS A SUCCESS! THE PROCESS HAS WORKED. JUST LOOK AT ME.

AT WHAT WE'VE BECOME.



YOU KNOW THAT BRINGS ME NO LIMIT OF SATISFACTION--BUT THE PAIN KILLER IS WEARING OFF AND I'M FINDING IT HARD TO CONCENTRATE.



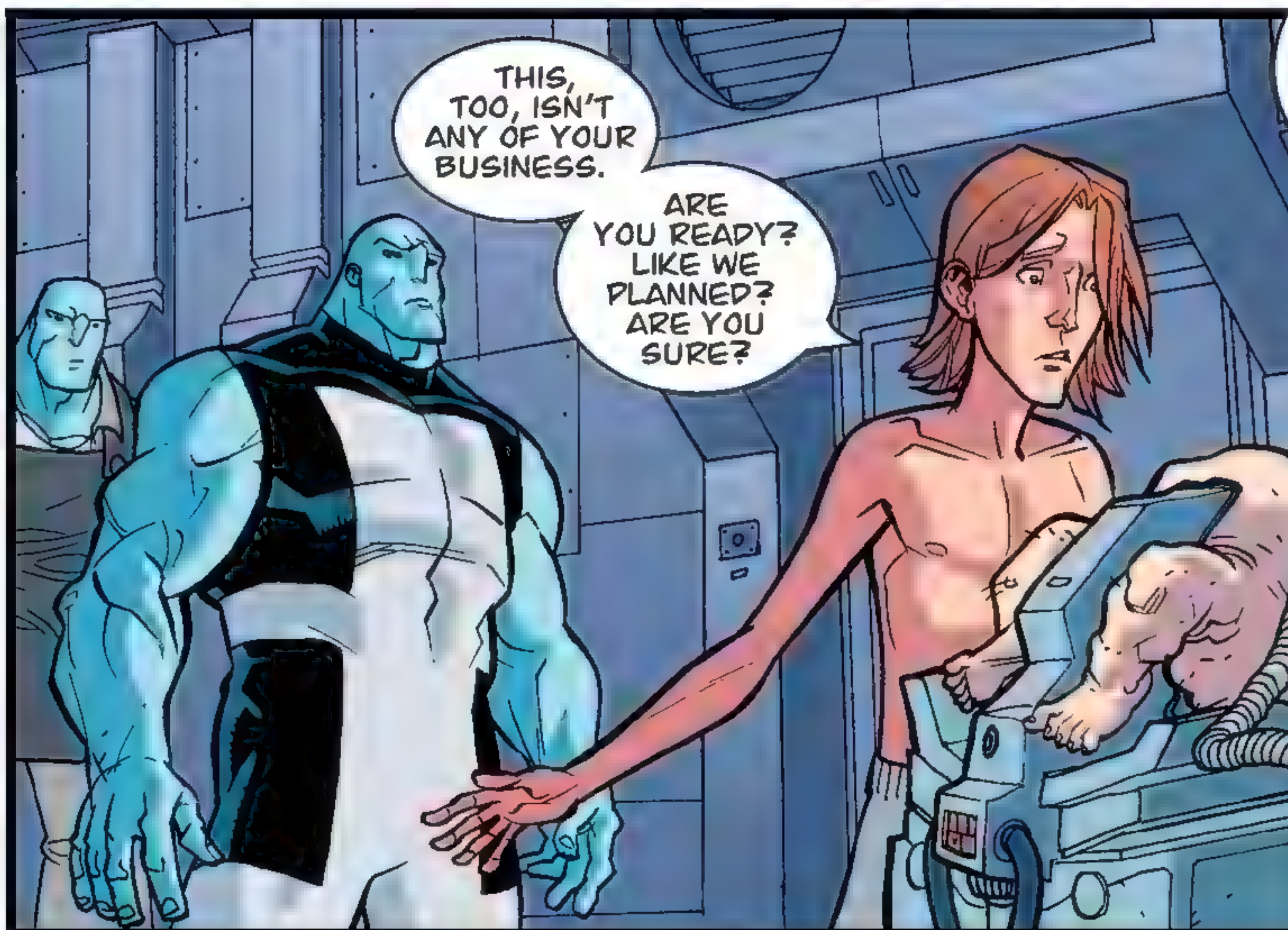
PLEASE. THE OPEN AIR IS KILLING ME. YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO.

WHAT IS HE TALKING ABOUT?



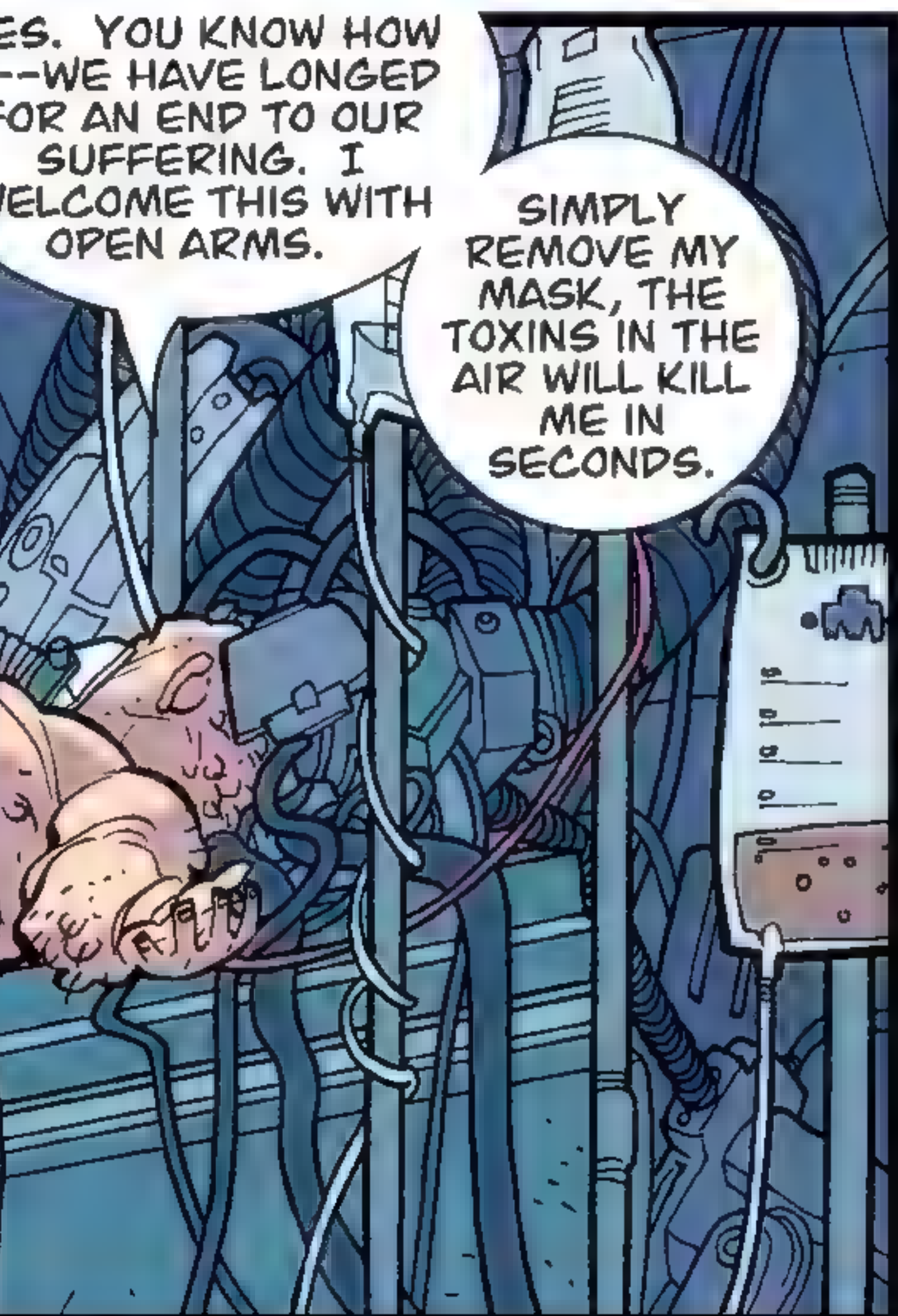
THIS, TOO, ISN'T ANY OF YOUR BUSINESS.

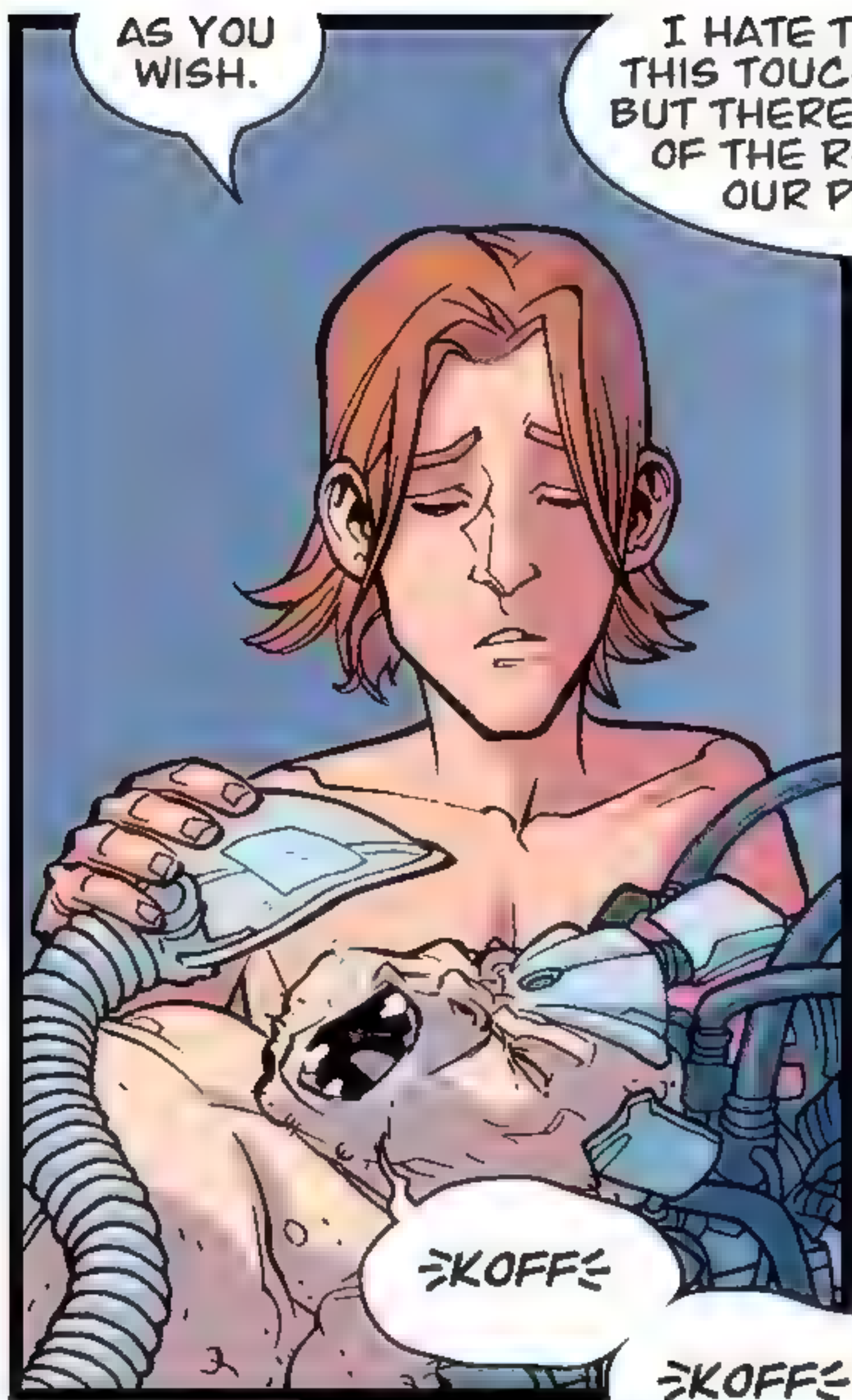
ARE YOU READY? LIKE WE PLANNED? ARE YOU SURE?

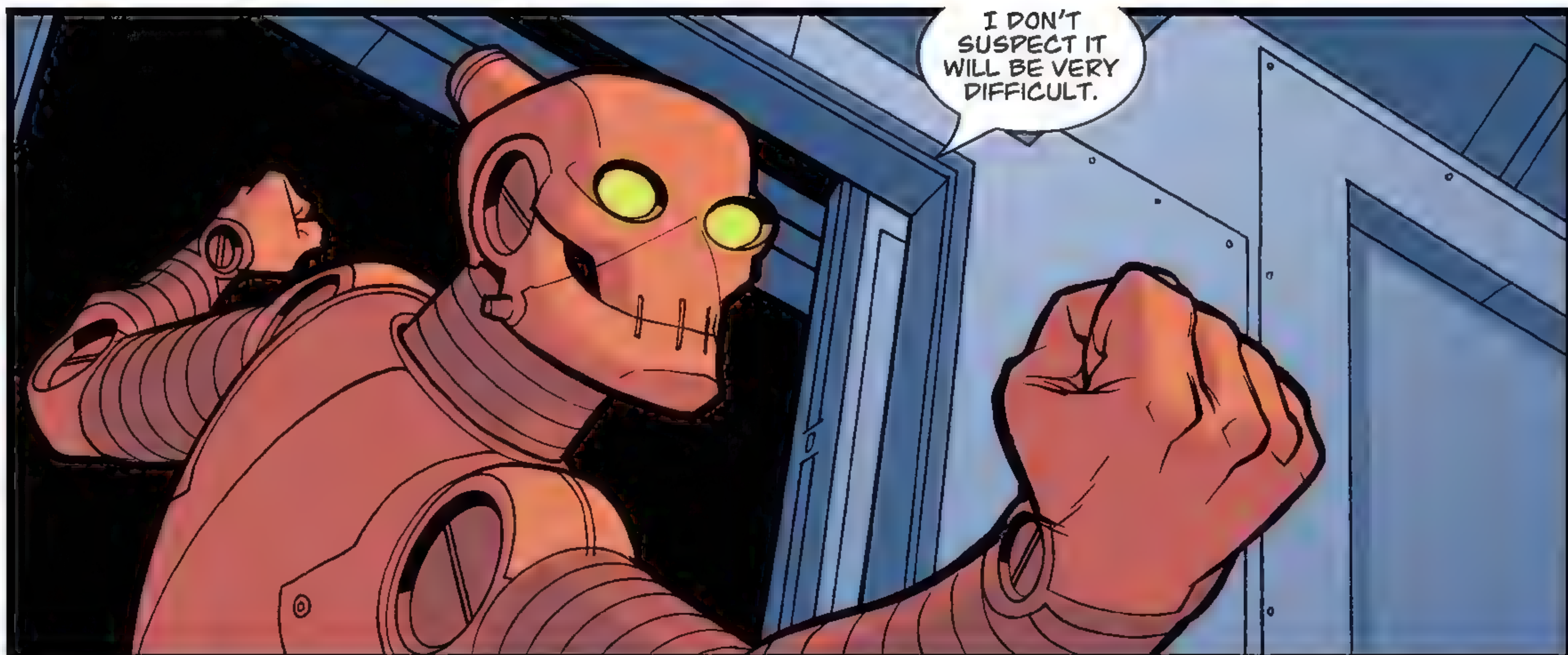


YES. YOU KNOW HOW I--WE HAVE LONGED FOR AN END TO OUR SUFFERING. I WELCOME THIS WITH OPEN ARMS.

SIMPLY REMOVE MY MASK, THE TOXINS IN THE AIR WILL KILL ME IN SECONDS.







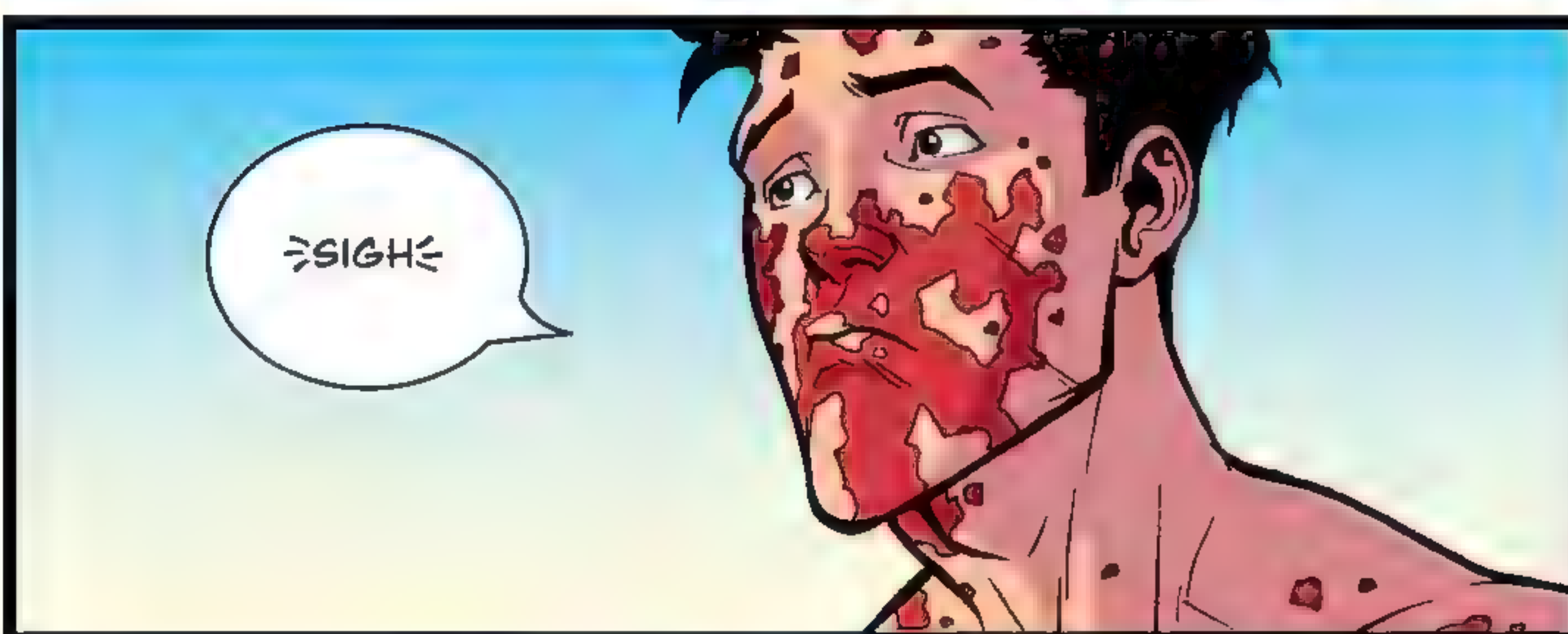
BACK TO MARK GRAYSON,
STRANDED IN ANOTHER
DIMENSION.



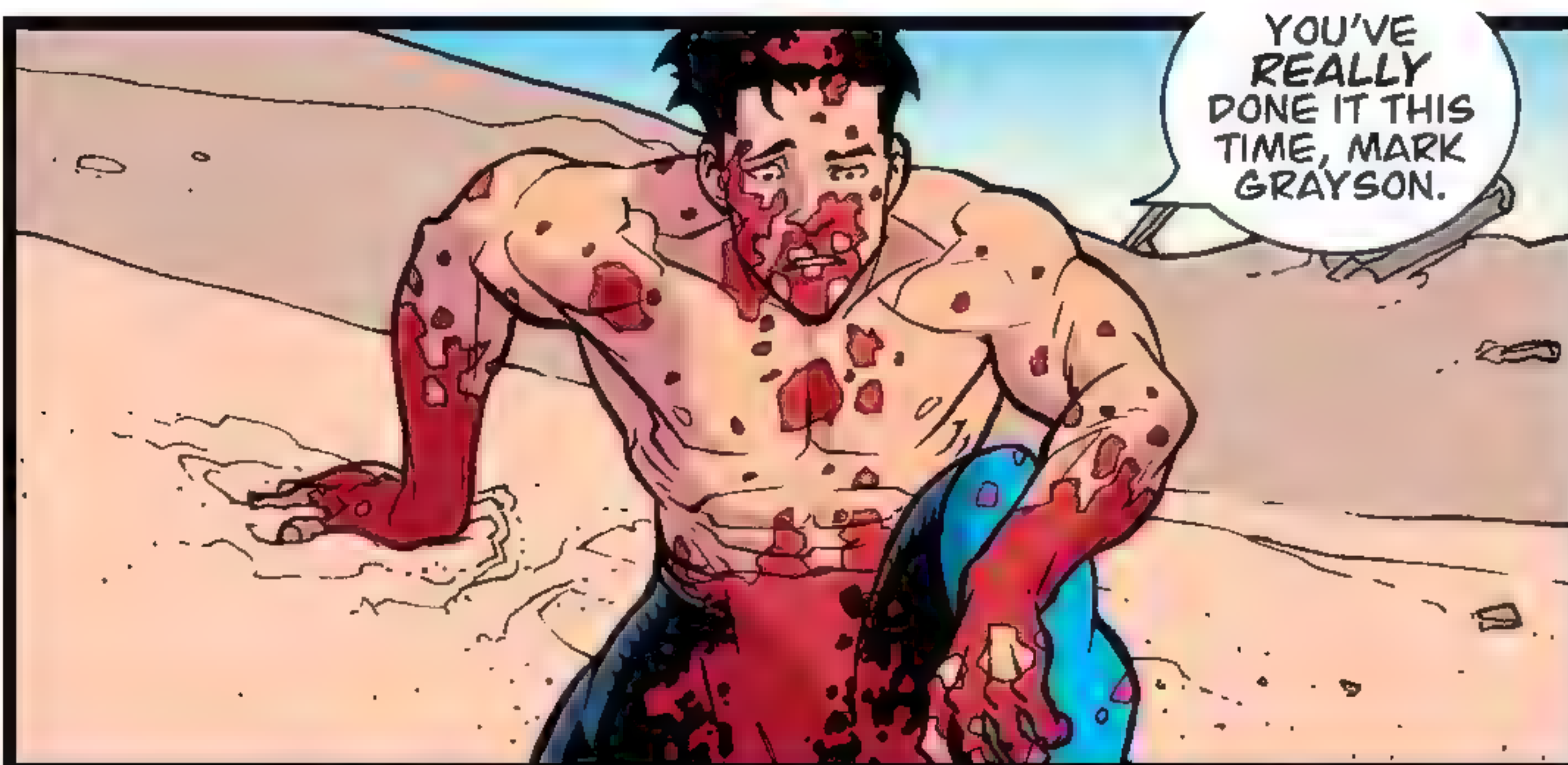
NOTHING.



AS FAR
AS THE EYE
CAN SEE...
NOTHING.



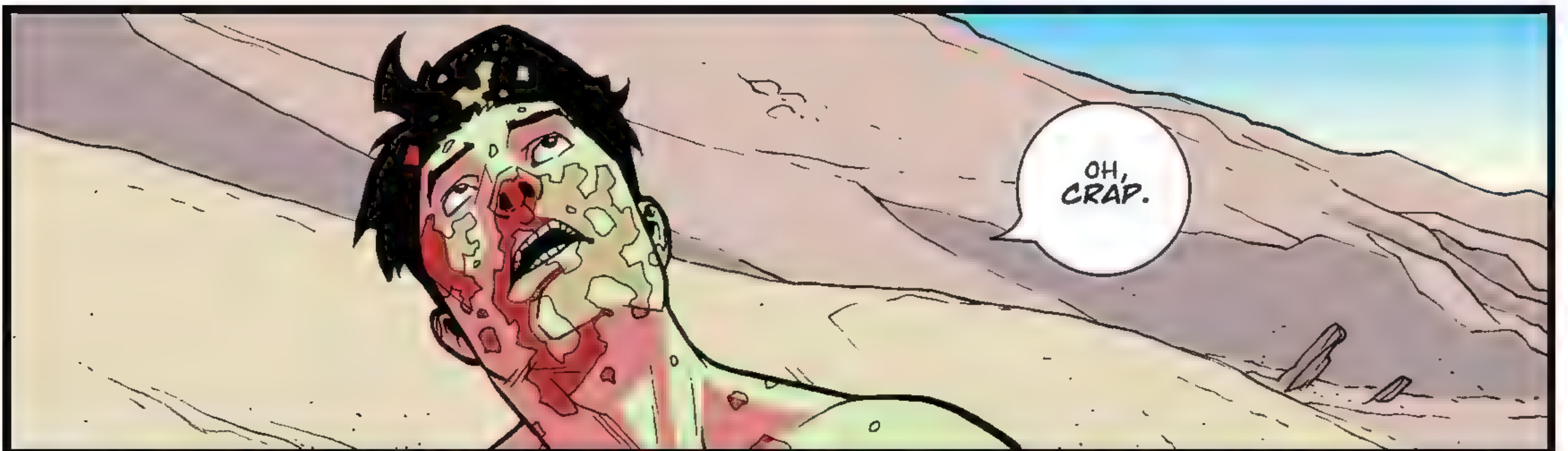
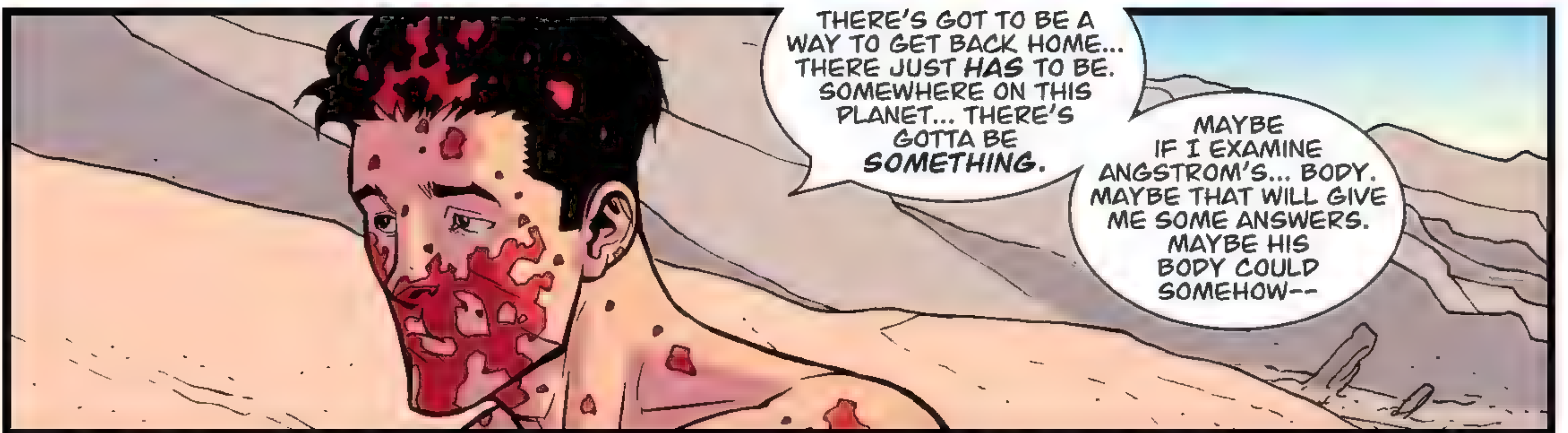
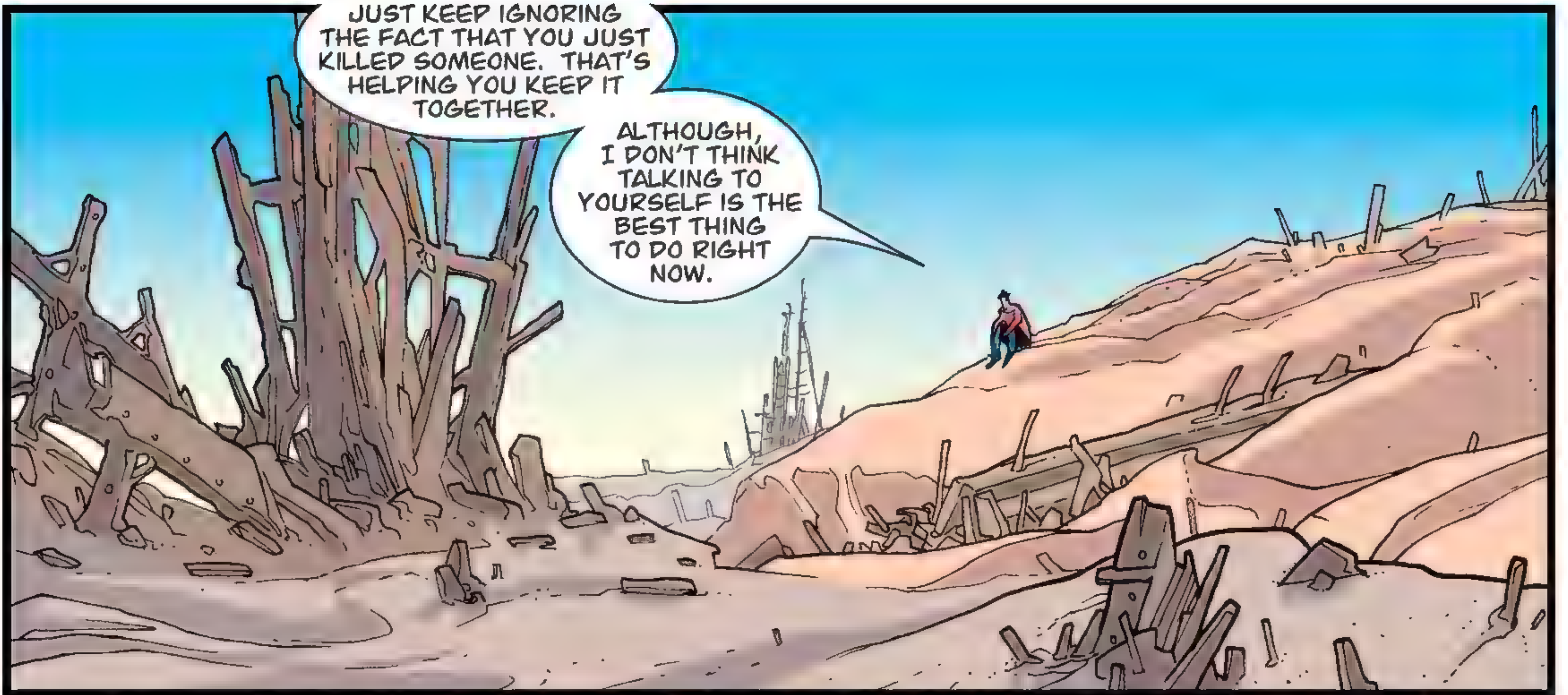
≡SIGHE≡



YOU'VE
REALLY
DONE IT THIS
TIME, MARK
GRAYSON.



YOU'RE
SCREWED.

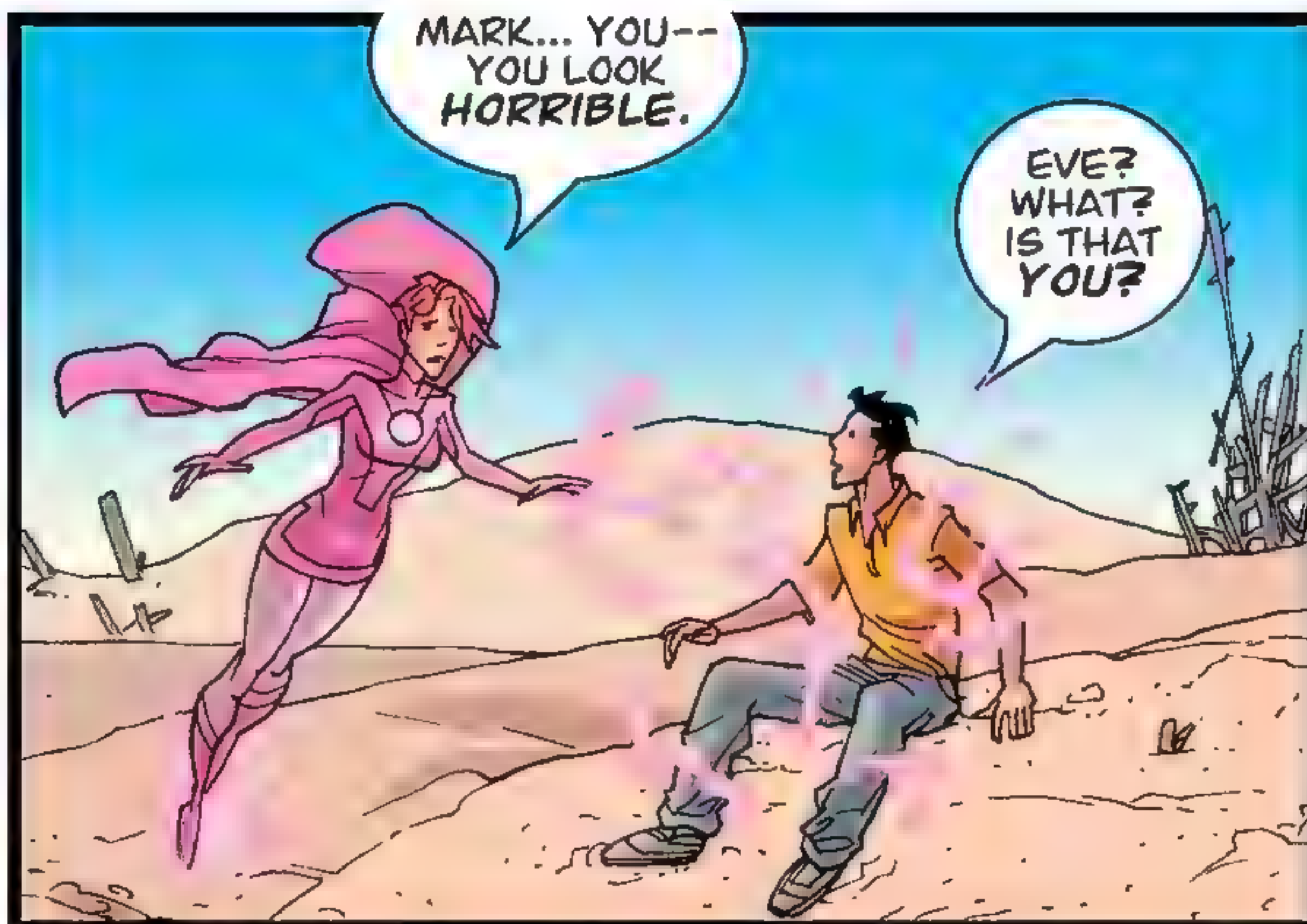




WHOA!



WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU GUYS?



MARK... YOU-- YOU LOOK HORRIBLE.

EVE? WHAT? IS THAT YOU?

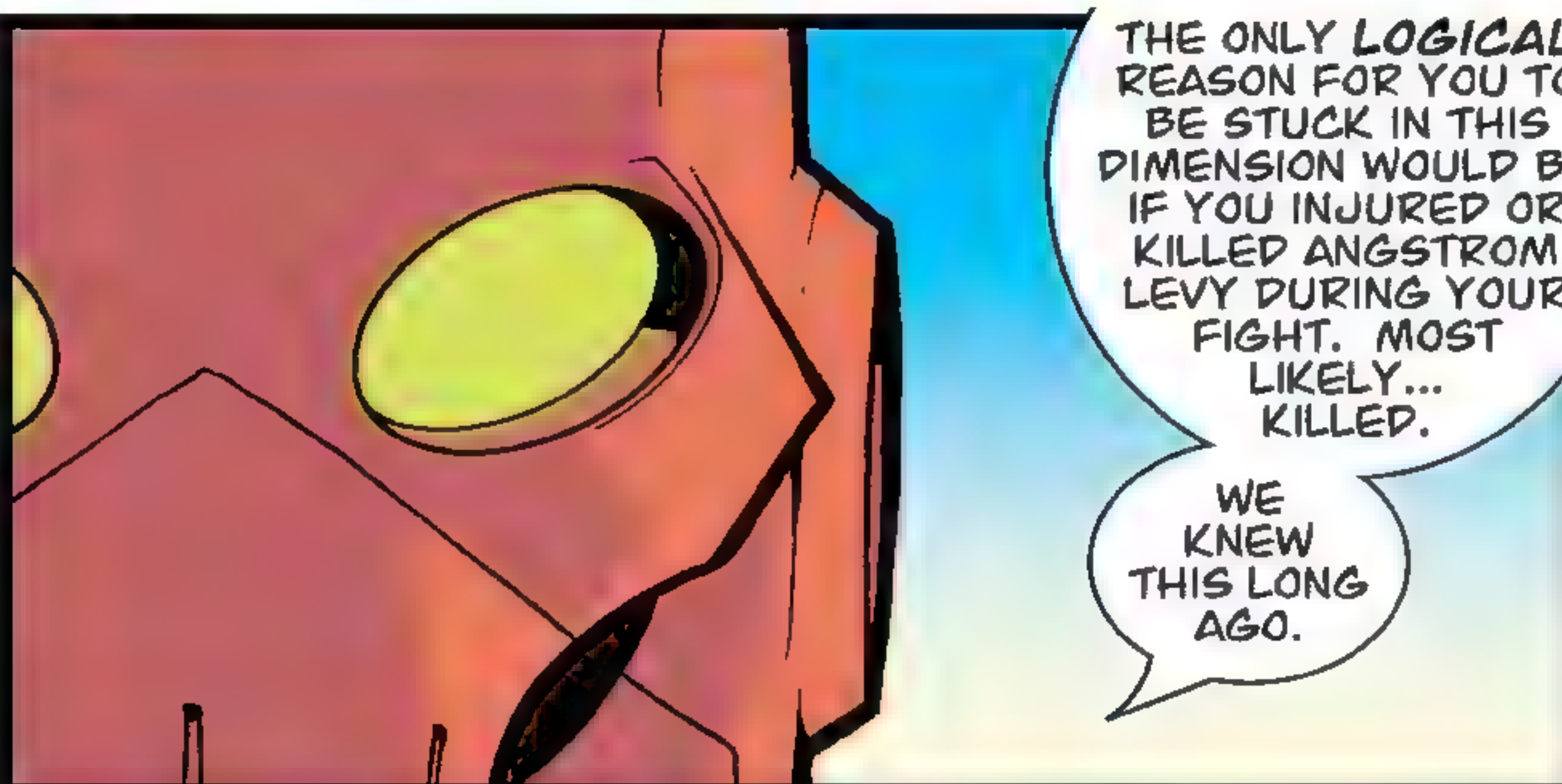


YEAH, IT'S ME... JUST NOT THE ME YOU KNOW. NOT ANYMORE AT LEAST.

I'M--I'M SORRY, I'M REALLY STILL A LITTLE DAZED HERE, I'M NOT FOLLOWING YOU.

I DID--I DID SOMETHING HORRIBLE.

YES, WE KNOW.



THE ONLY LOGICAL REASON FOR YOU TO BE STUCK IN THIS DIMENSION WOULD BE IF YOU INJURED OR KILLED ANGSTROM LEVY DURING YOUR FIGHT. MOST LIKELY... KILLED.

WE KNEW THIS LONG AGO.

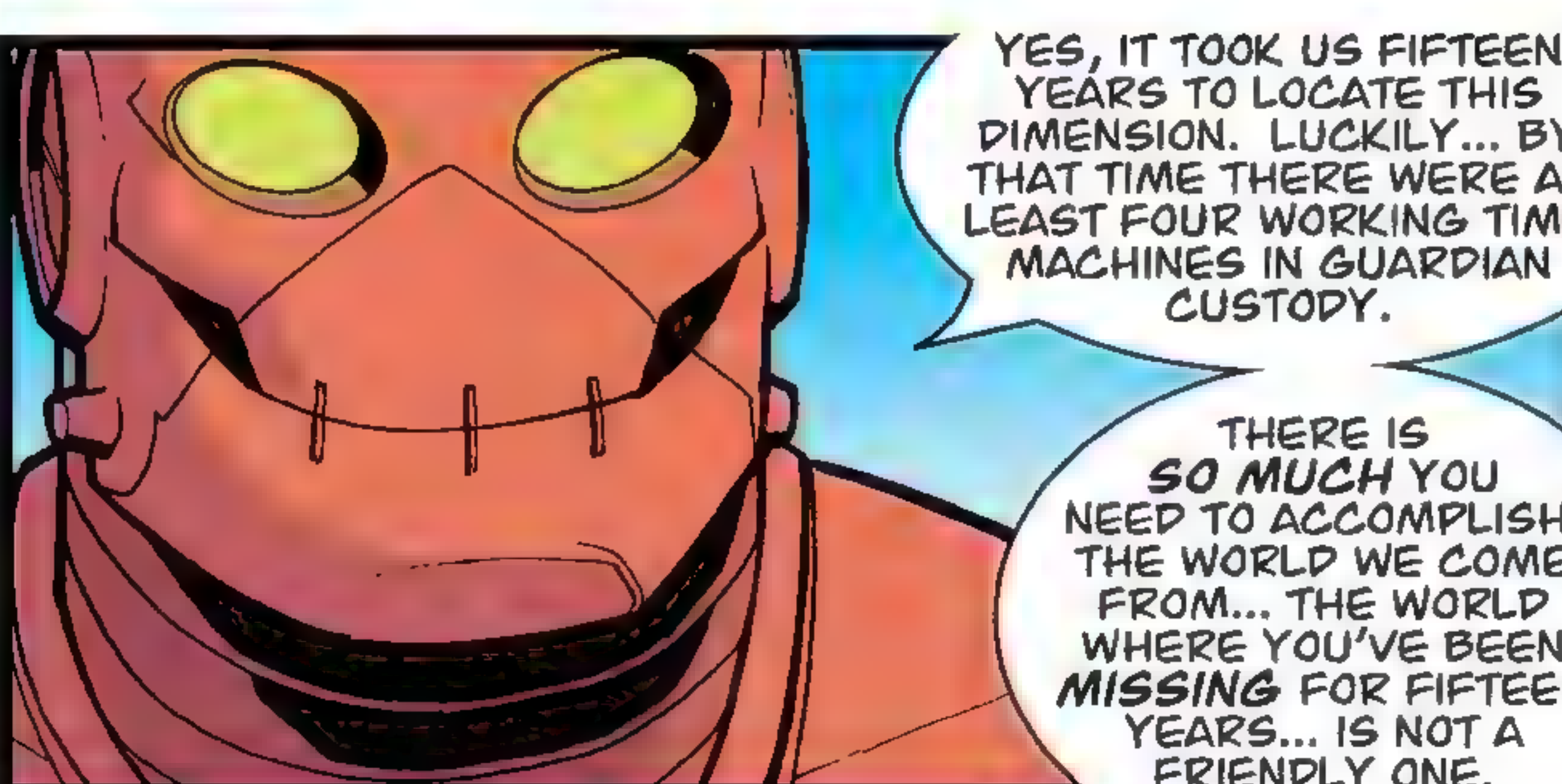


"LONG AGO?"

I JUST-- IT JUST HAPPENED LIKE... AN HOUR AGO.

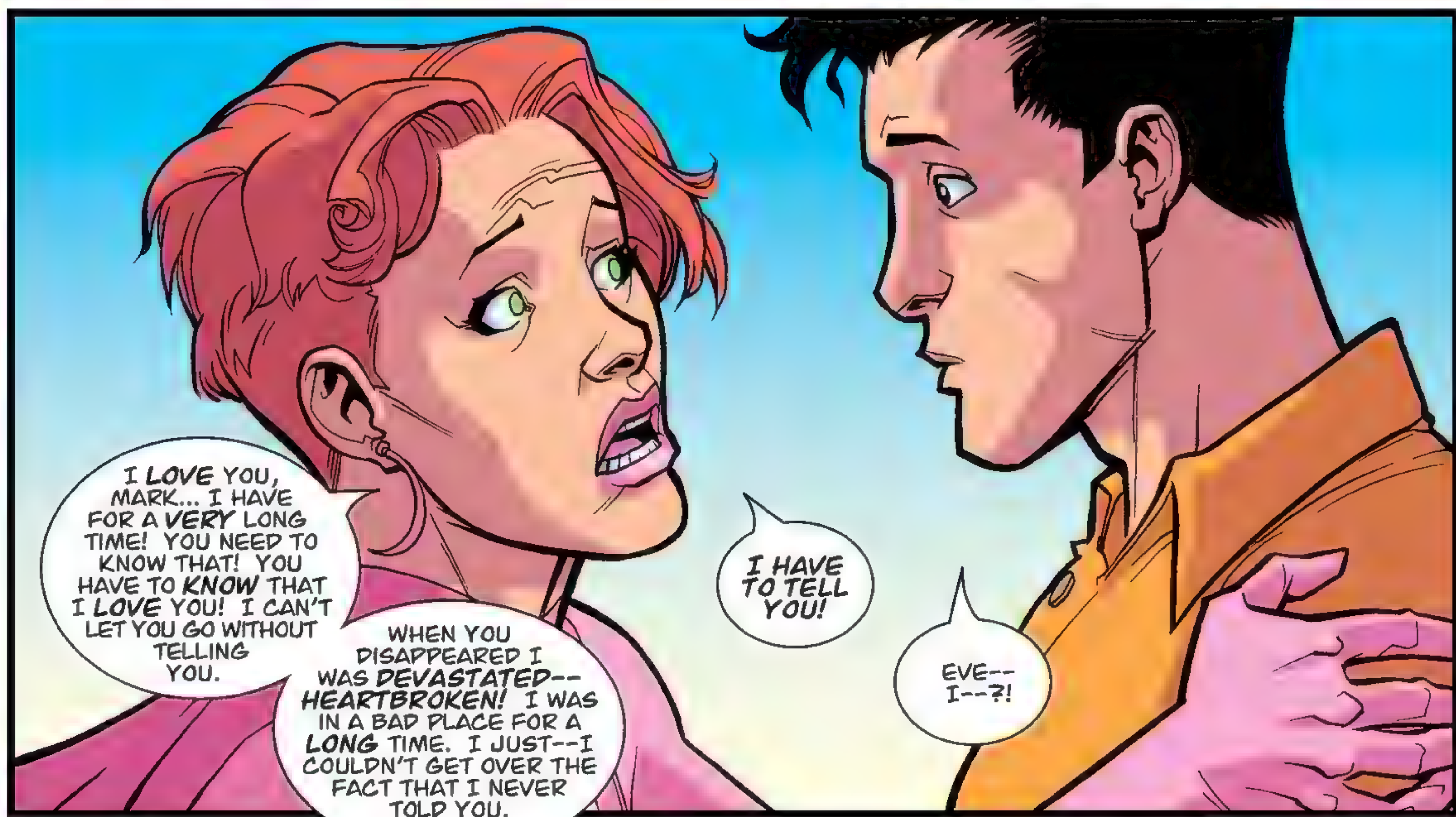
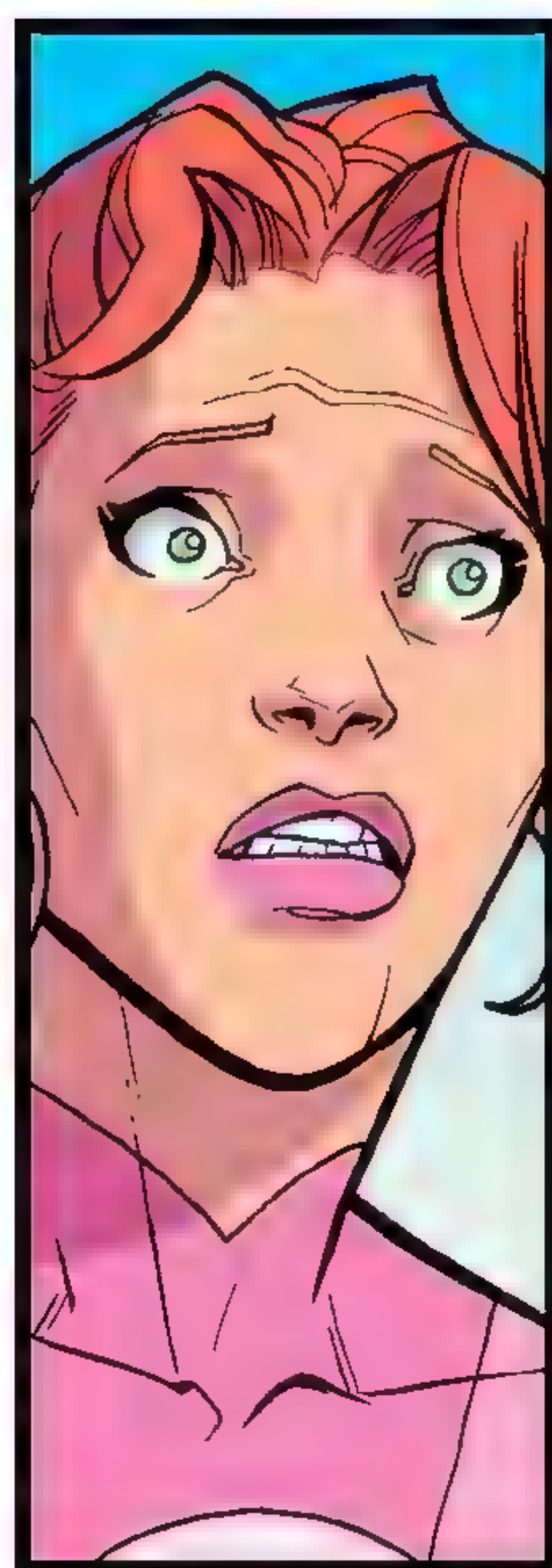


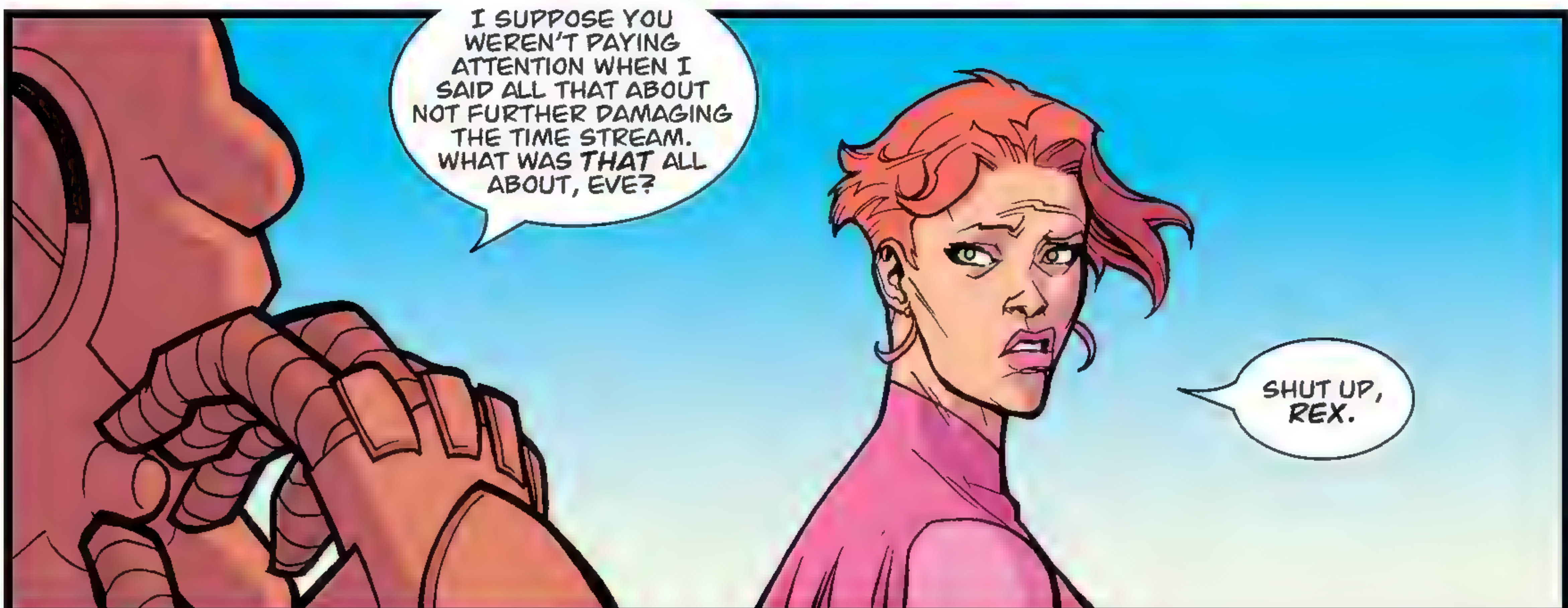
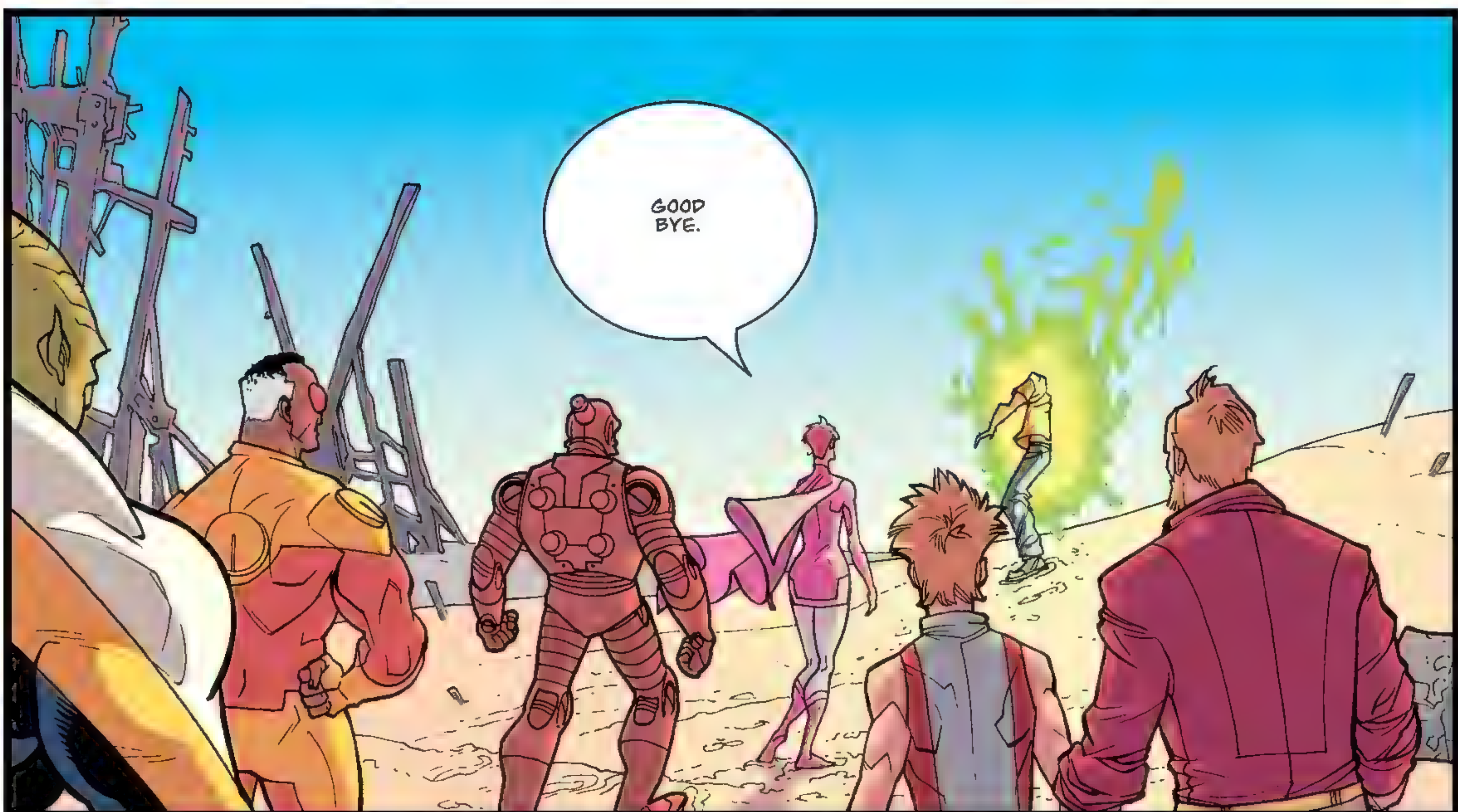
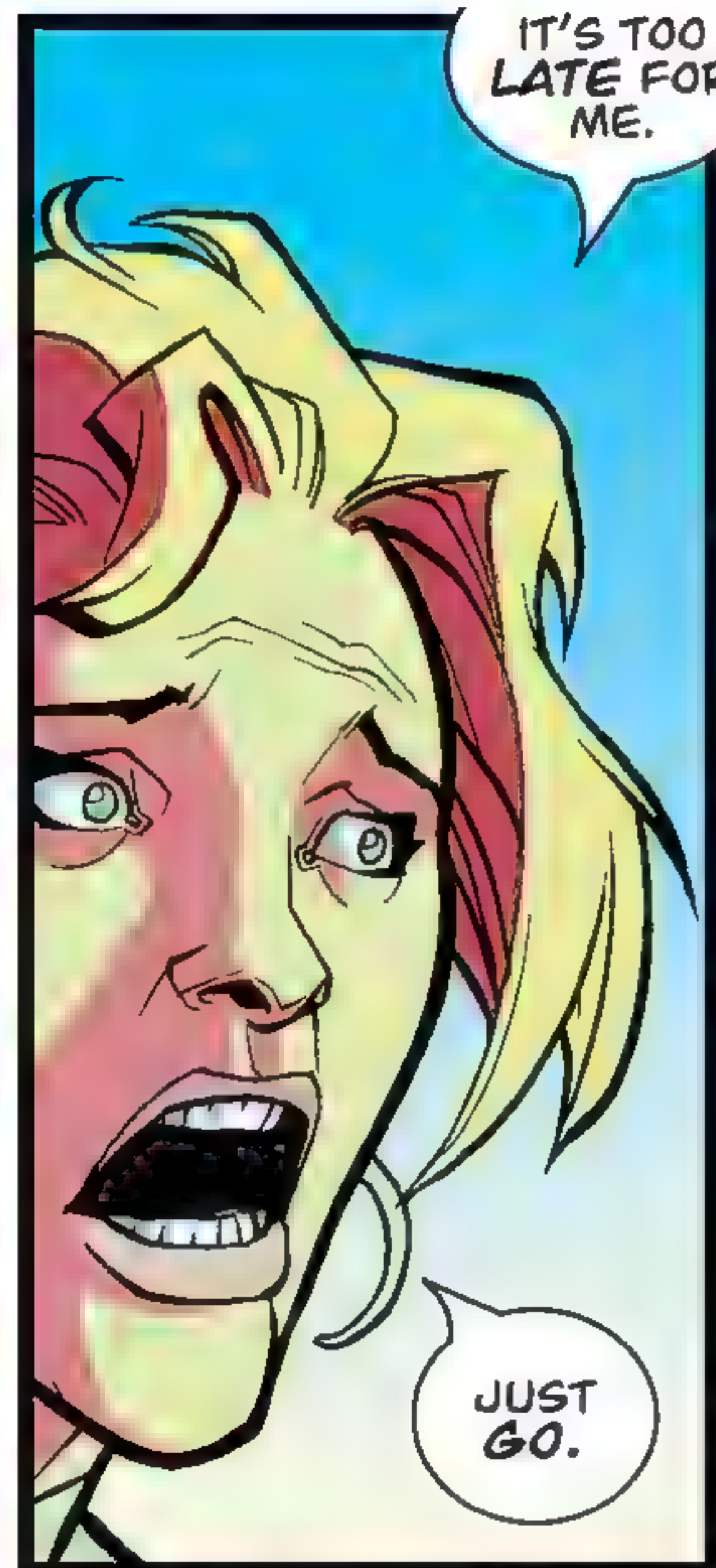
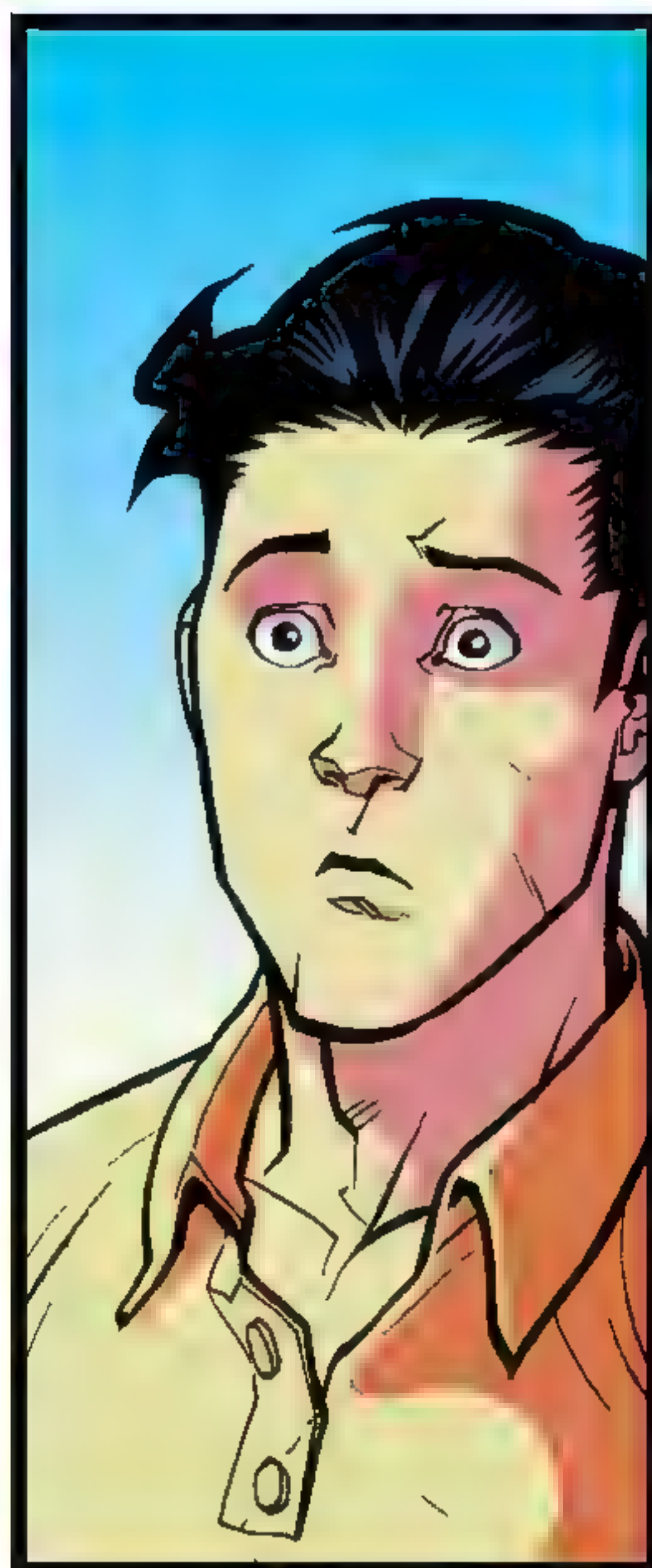
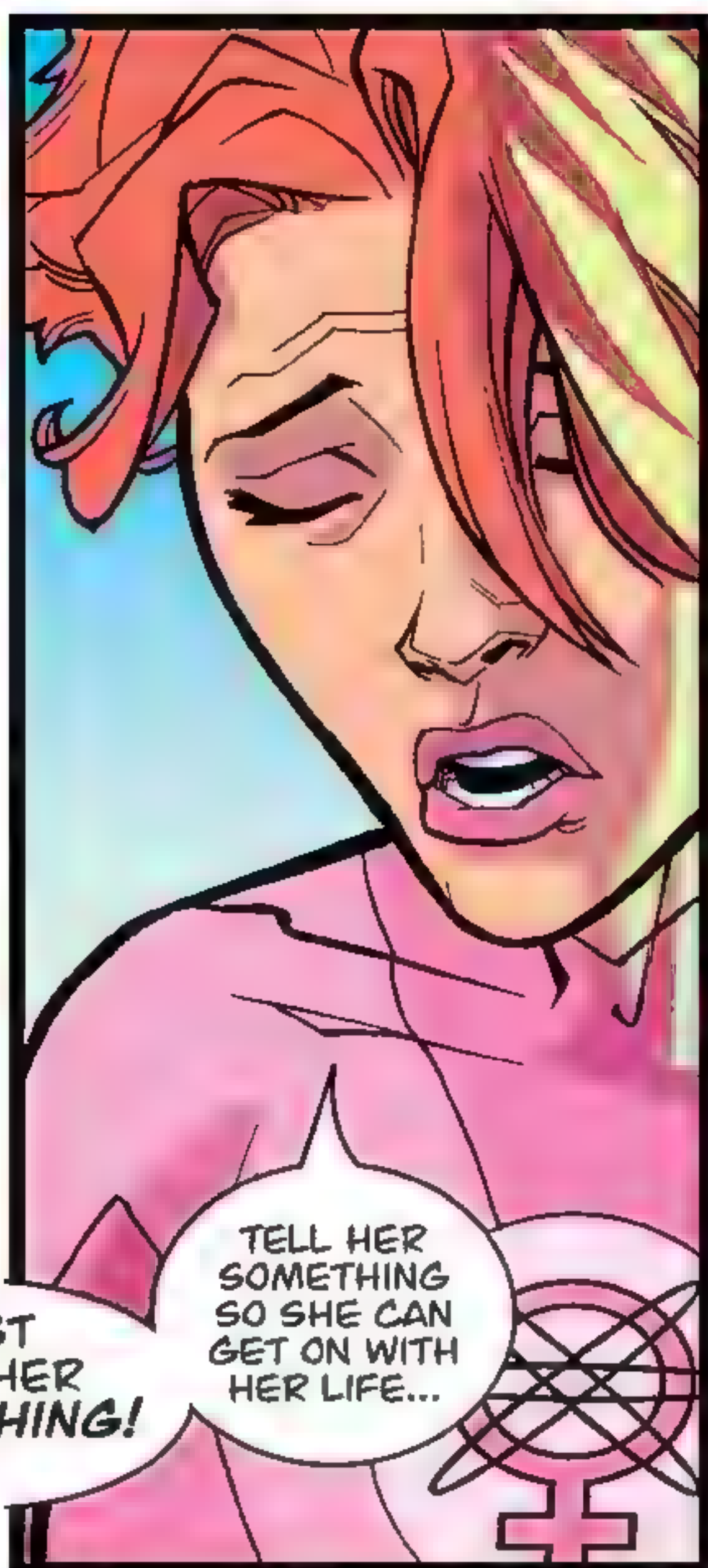
MAYBE FOR YOU BUT THESE EVENTS YOU SPEAK OF TOOK PLACE ABOUT FIFTEEN YEARS AGO FOR US.

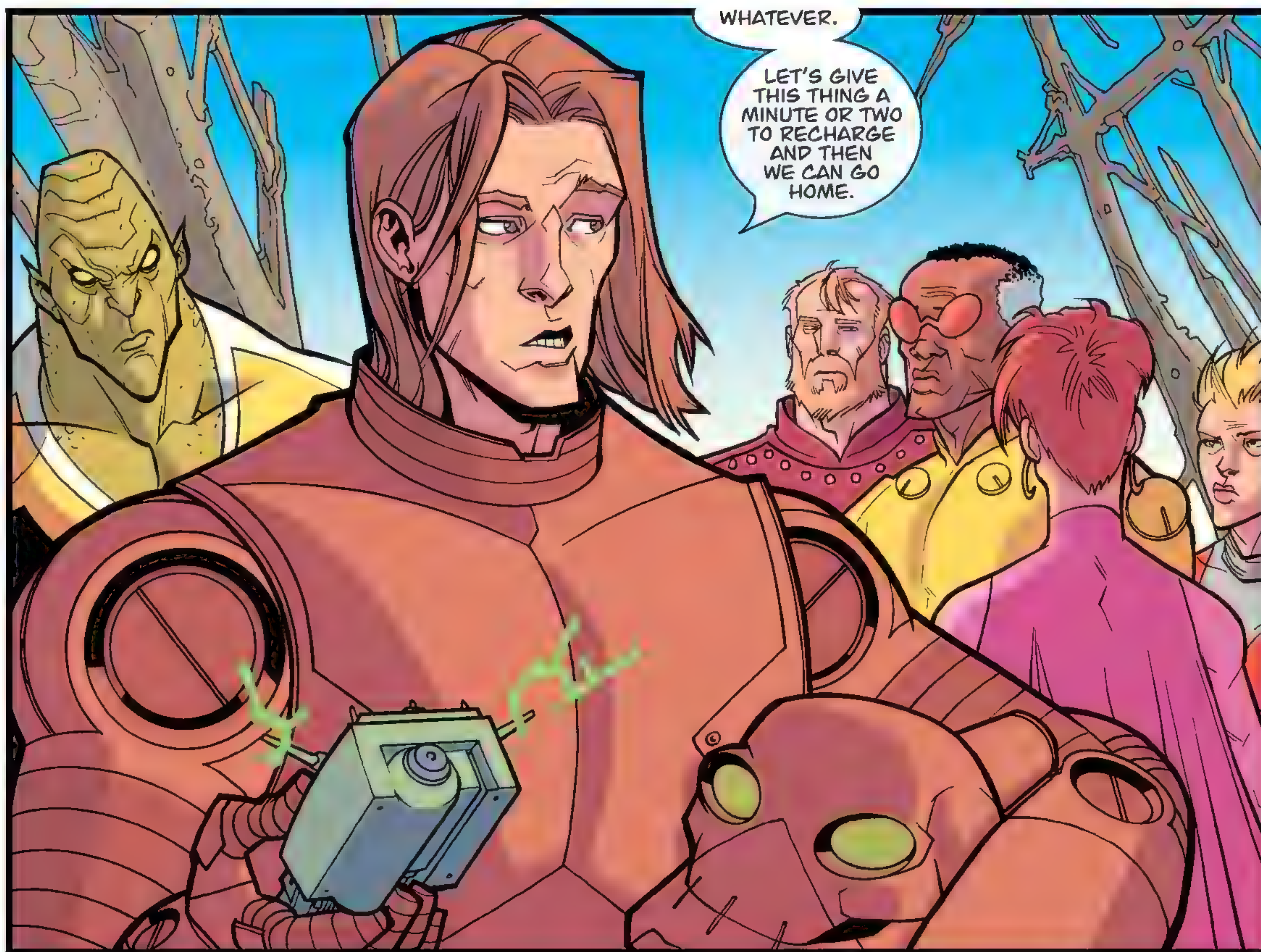


YES, IT TOOK US FIFTEEN YEARS TO LOCATE THIS DIMENSION. LUCKILY... BY THAT TIME THERE WERE AT LEAST FOUR WORKING TIME MACHINES IN GUARDIAN CUSTODY.

THERE IS SO MUCH YOU NEED TO ACCOMPLISH. THE WORLD WE COME FROM... THE WORLD WHERE YOU'VE BEEN MISSING FOR FIFTEEN YEARS... IS NOT A FRIENDLY ONE.



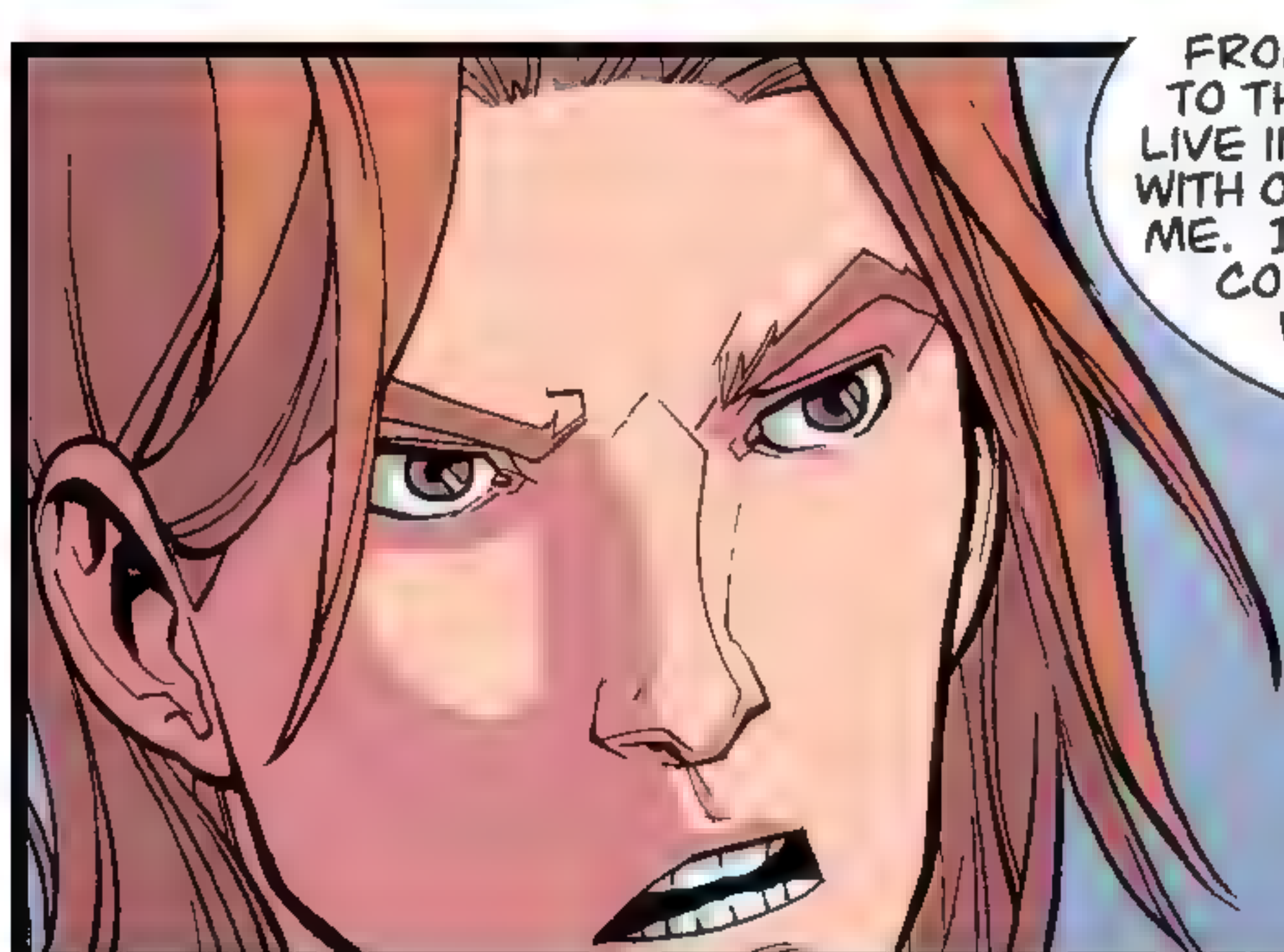




WHAT NOW, SHRIMP? WISHING WE HAD CLONED YOU A BIGGER, STRONGER BODY ABOUT RIGHT NOW, I'LL BET.

YOU GOT ANY MORE SUPERHEROES ON THE PAYROLL THAT YOU'D LIKE US TO KILL?

YOU HAVE ACCOMPLISHED NOTHING.



FROM BIRTH I WAS CONFINED TO THAT CHAMBER--UNABLE TO LIVE IN THE OPEN AIR. I WAS LEFT WITH ONLY MY INTELLECT TO OCCUPY ME. I WAS TOO HIDEOUS TO HAVE CONTACT WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD--SO I DEvised ANOTHER WAY.

A DRONE-- AN AUTOMATION THROUGH WHICH I COULD LIVE MY LIFE-- AS SOMEONE-- SOMETHING ELSE. SOMETHING FREE TO MOVE ABOUT THE WORLD AS IF I WAS NORMAL. FOR A TIME, THAT WAS ENOUGH.

THEN I WANTED MORE, I WANTED TO BE HUMAN. I CLONED THIS BODY-- ACQUIRED YOUR AID IN PLACING MY CONSCIOUSNESS IN IT. SO MAKE NO MISTAKE...

YOU HAVE NOT KILLED ROBOT, YOU FOOLS.

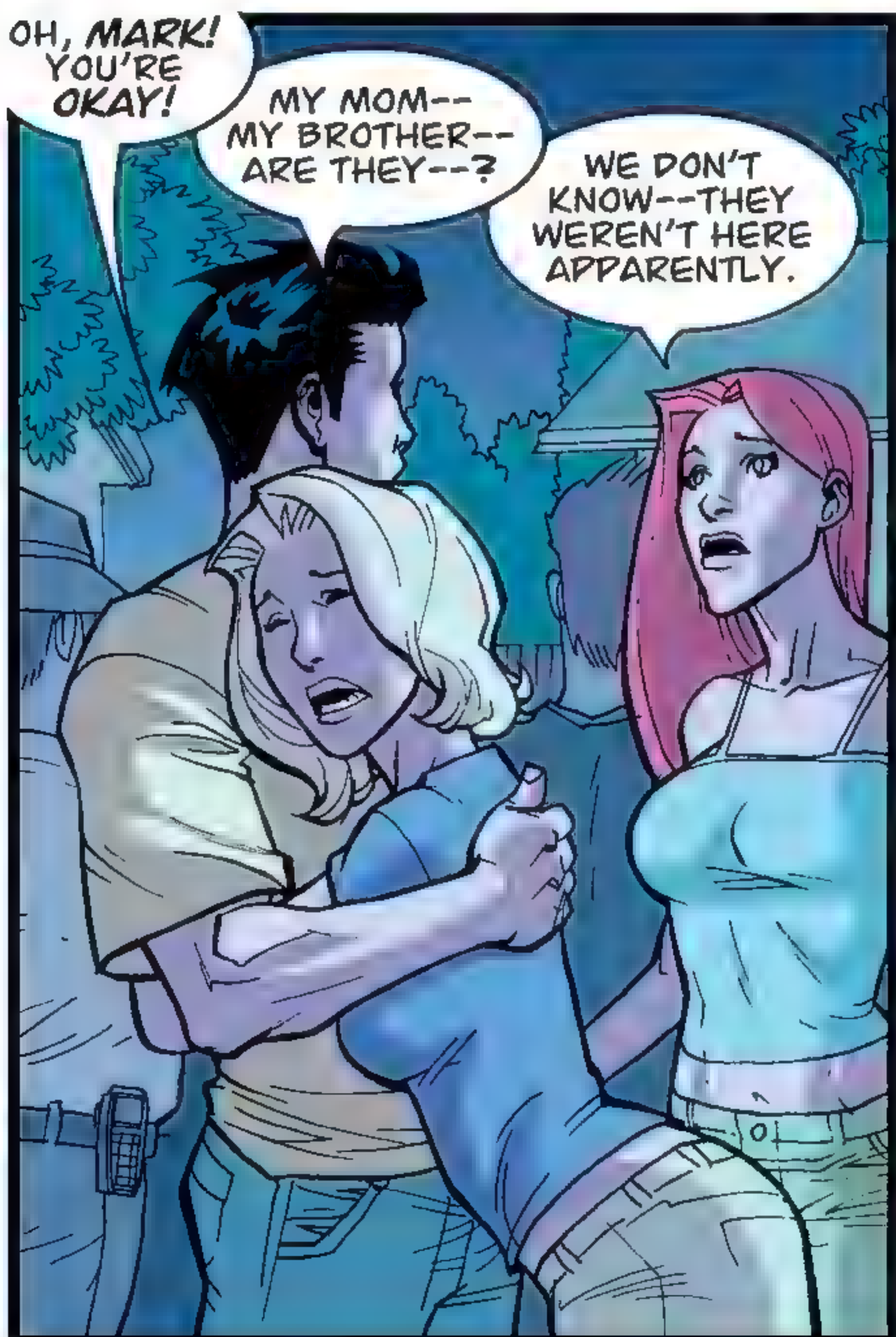
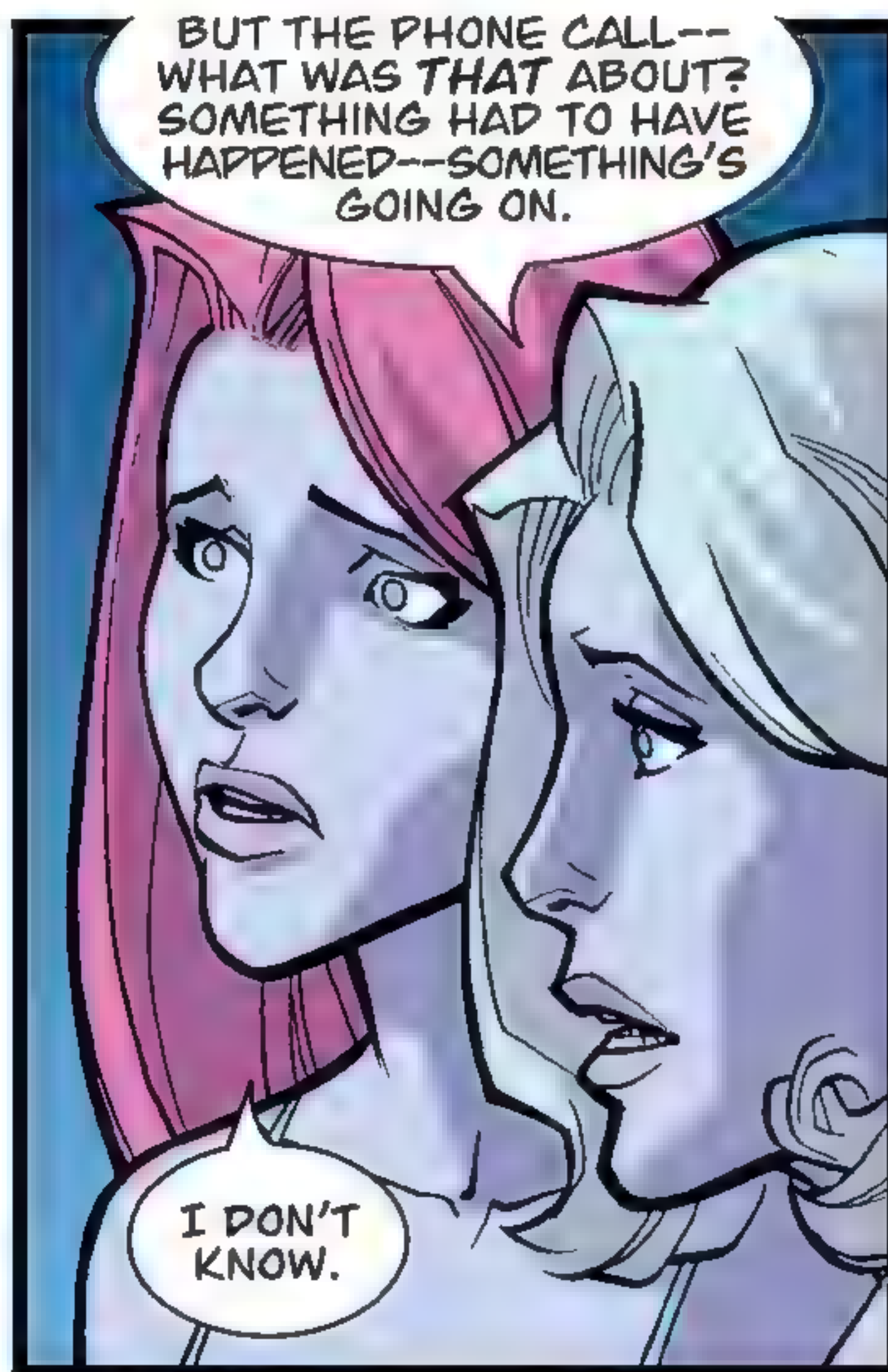
I AM ROBOT.

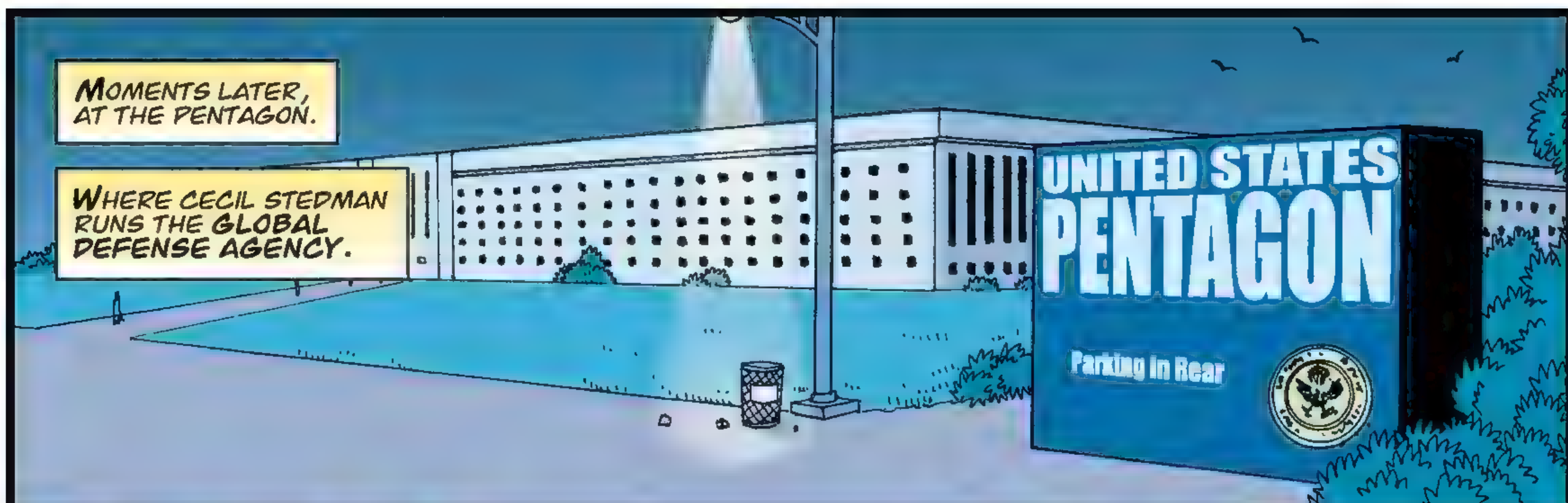


AND THAT WAS FAR FROM MY ONLY AUTOMATION WITH WHICH TO FIGHT YOU.

CRAP.

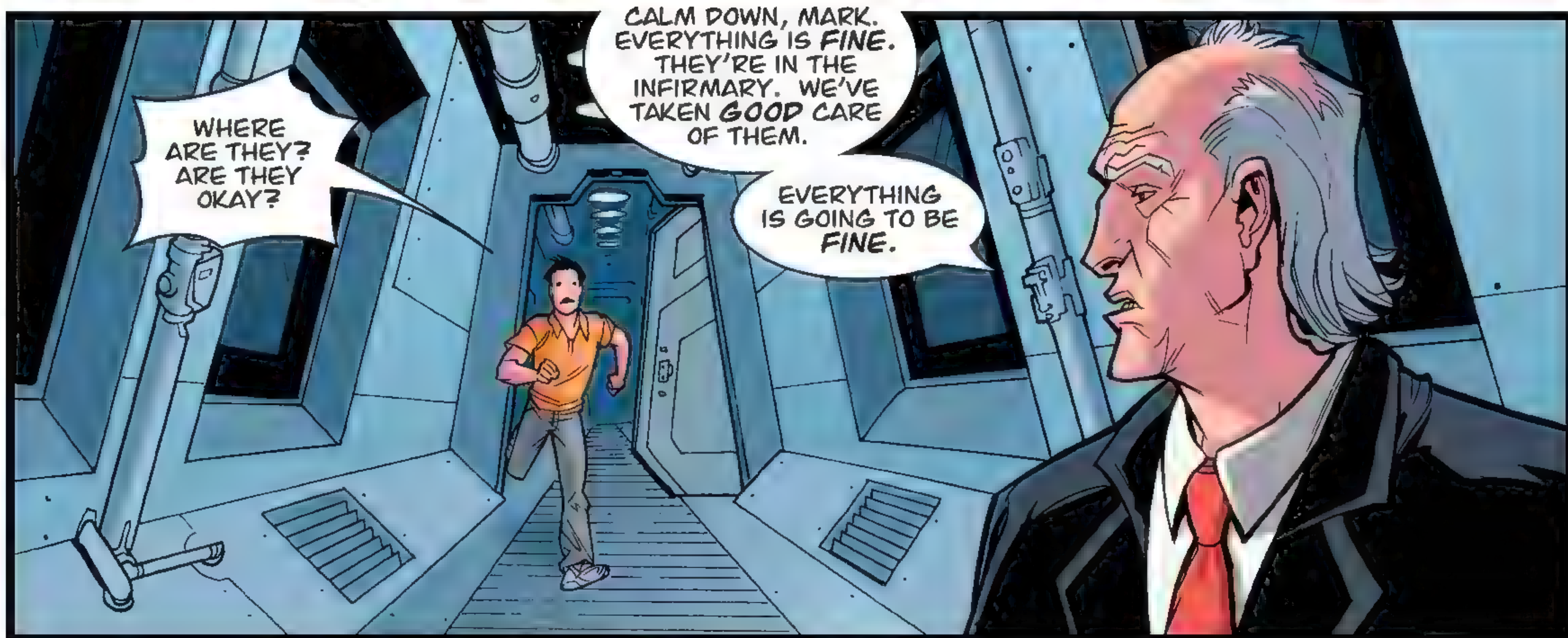






MOMENTS LATER,
AT THE PENTAGON.

WHERE CECIL STEDMAN
RUNS THE GLOBAL
DEFENSE AGENCY.



WHERE
ARE THEY?
ARE THEY
OKAY?

CALM DOWN, MARK.
EVERYTHING IS FINE.
THEY'RE IN THE
INFIRMARY. WE'VE
TAKEN GOOD CARE
OF THEM.

EVERYTHING
IS GOING TO BE
FINE.



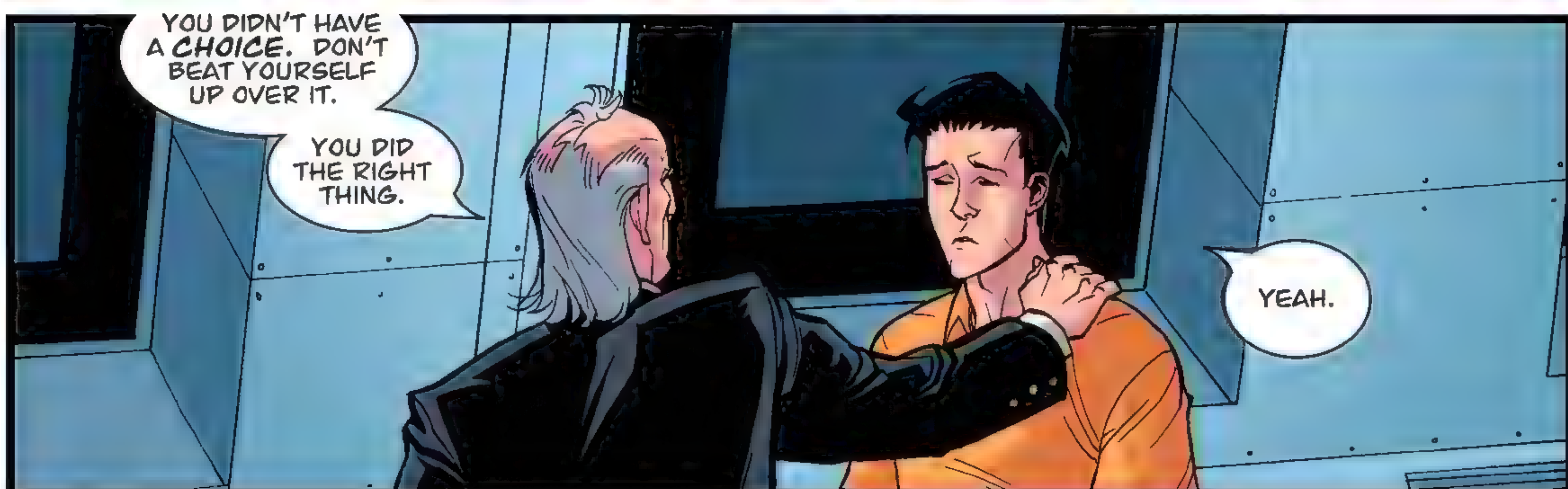
WE COVERED THE WHOLE
THING UP. LEAKED SOME
NONSENSE ABOUT A GAS
LINE BLOWING. LOCAL
AUTHORITIES SEEM TO
HAVE BOUGHT IT. SO
YOUR IDENTITY IS
CLEAR.

YOU CAN
SEE YOUR MOTHER
IN A MOMENT BUT
FIRST--ANGSTROM
LEVY, WHAT HAPPENED
TO HIM? HOW DID
YOU STOP
HIM?



I...

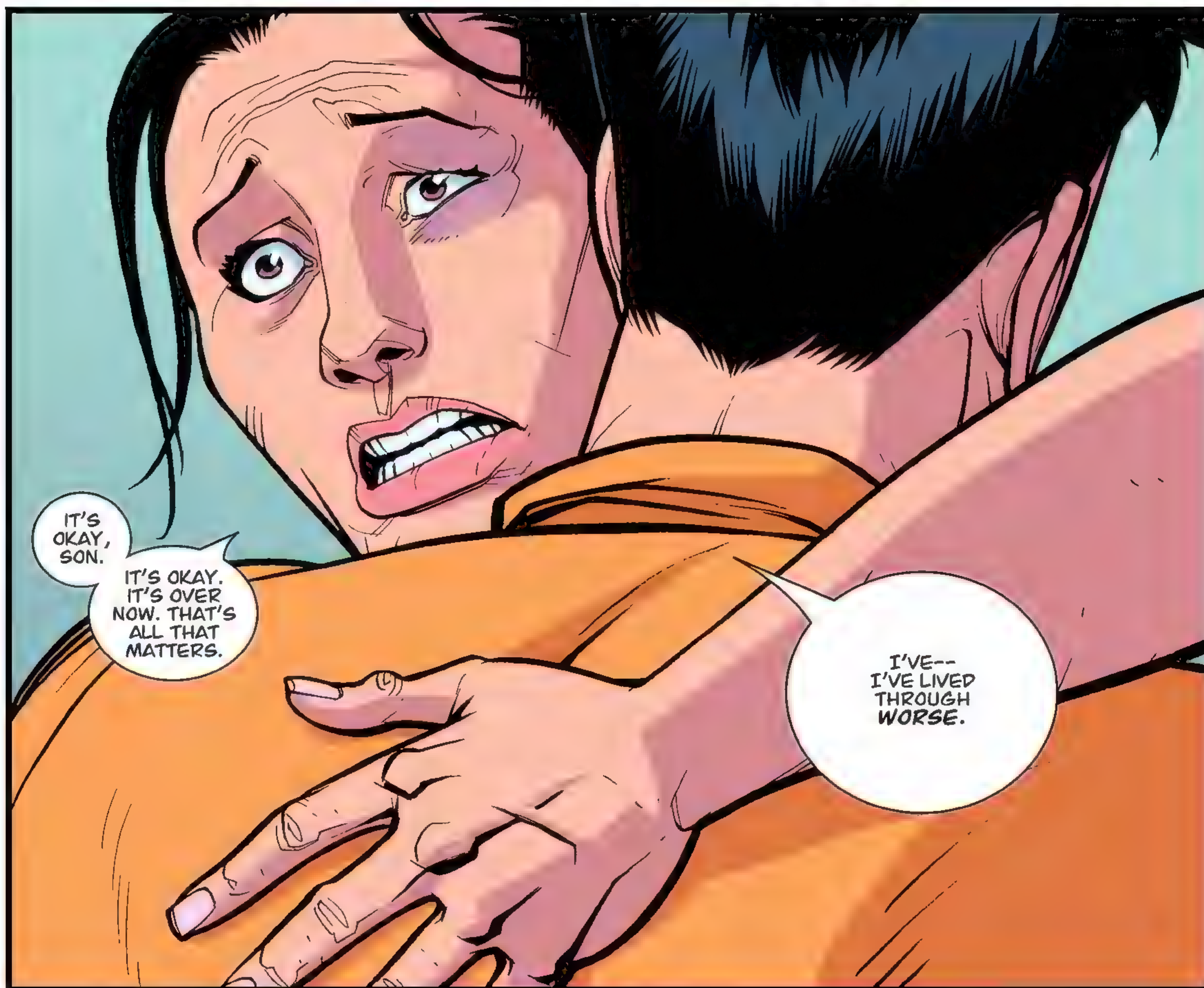
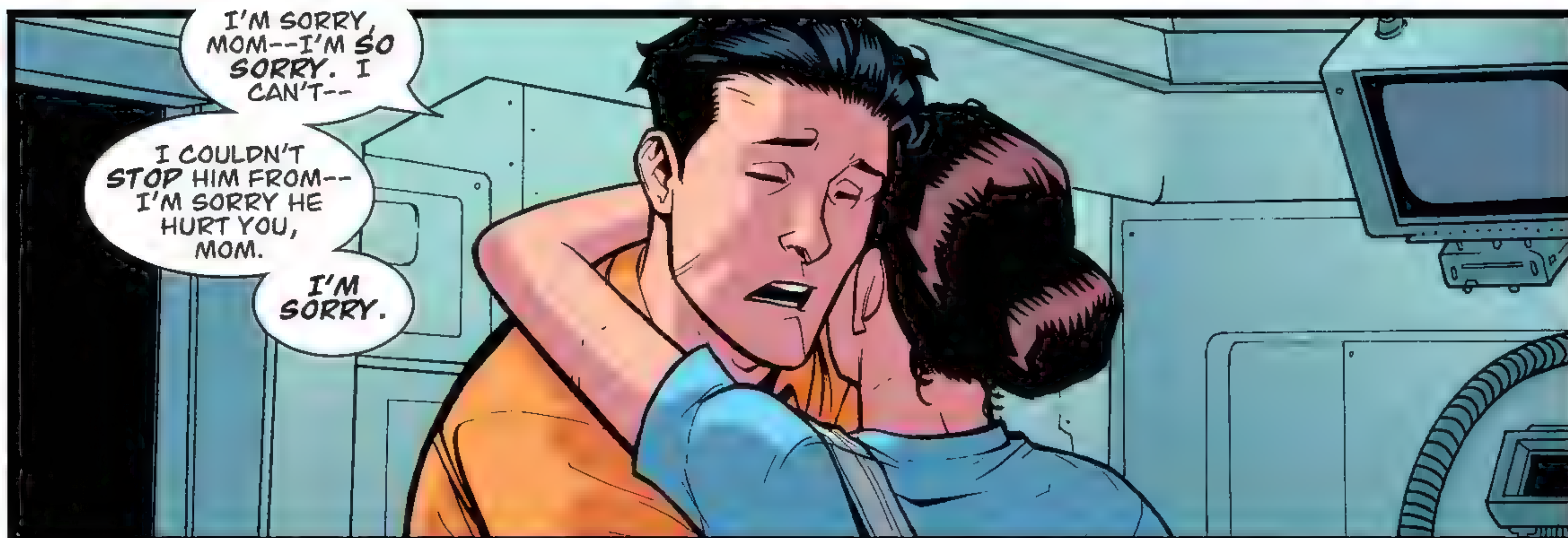
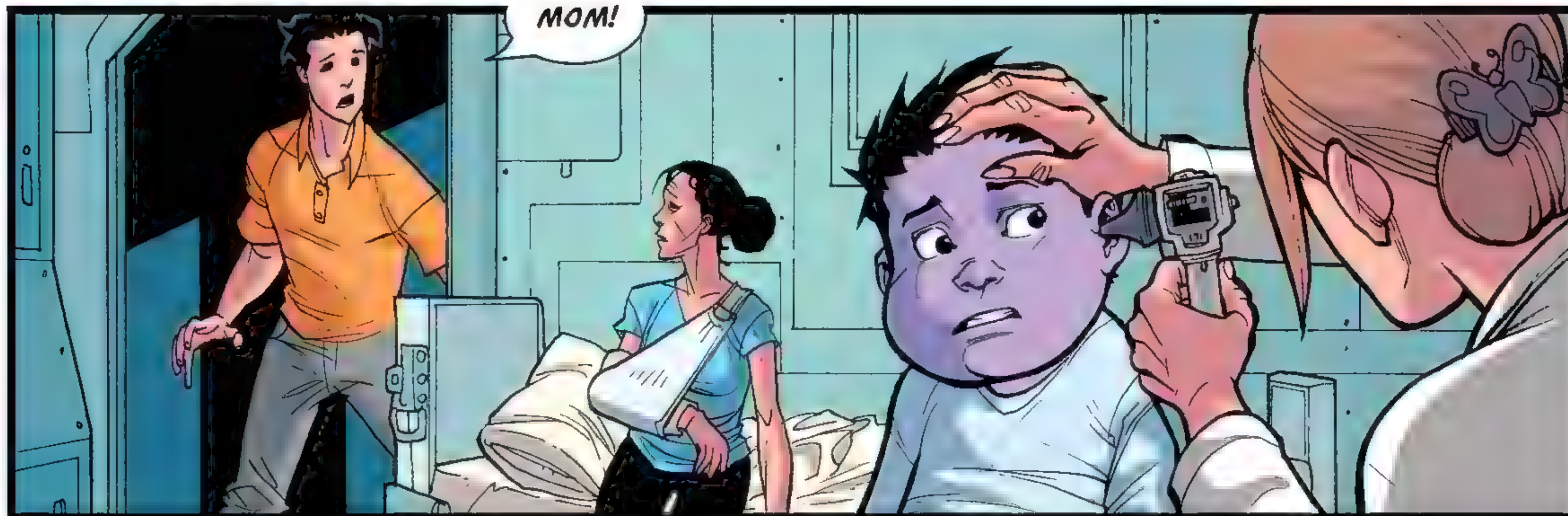
I THINK
I KILLED
HIM.

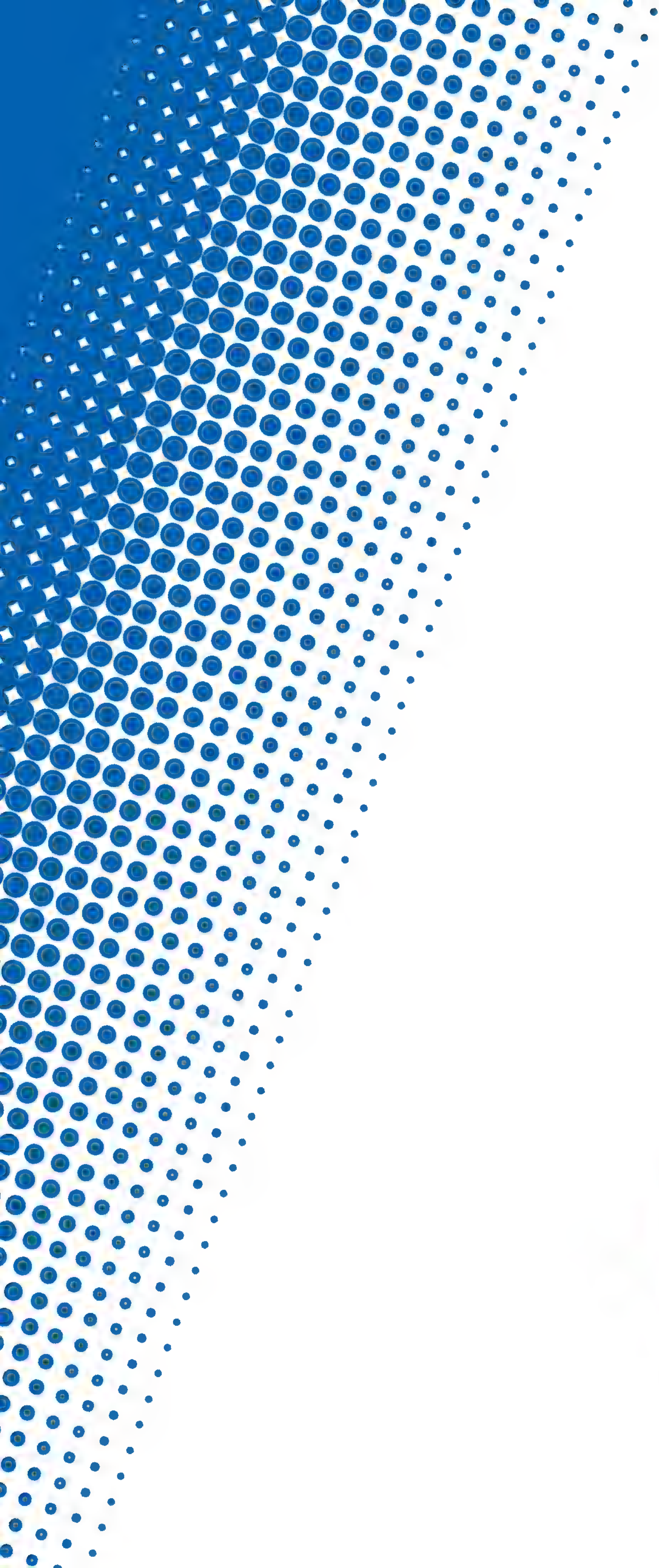


YOU DIDN'T HAVE
A CHOICE. DON'T
BEAT YOURSELF
UP OVER IT.

YOU DID
THE RIGHT
THING.

YEAH.





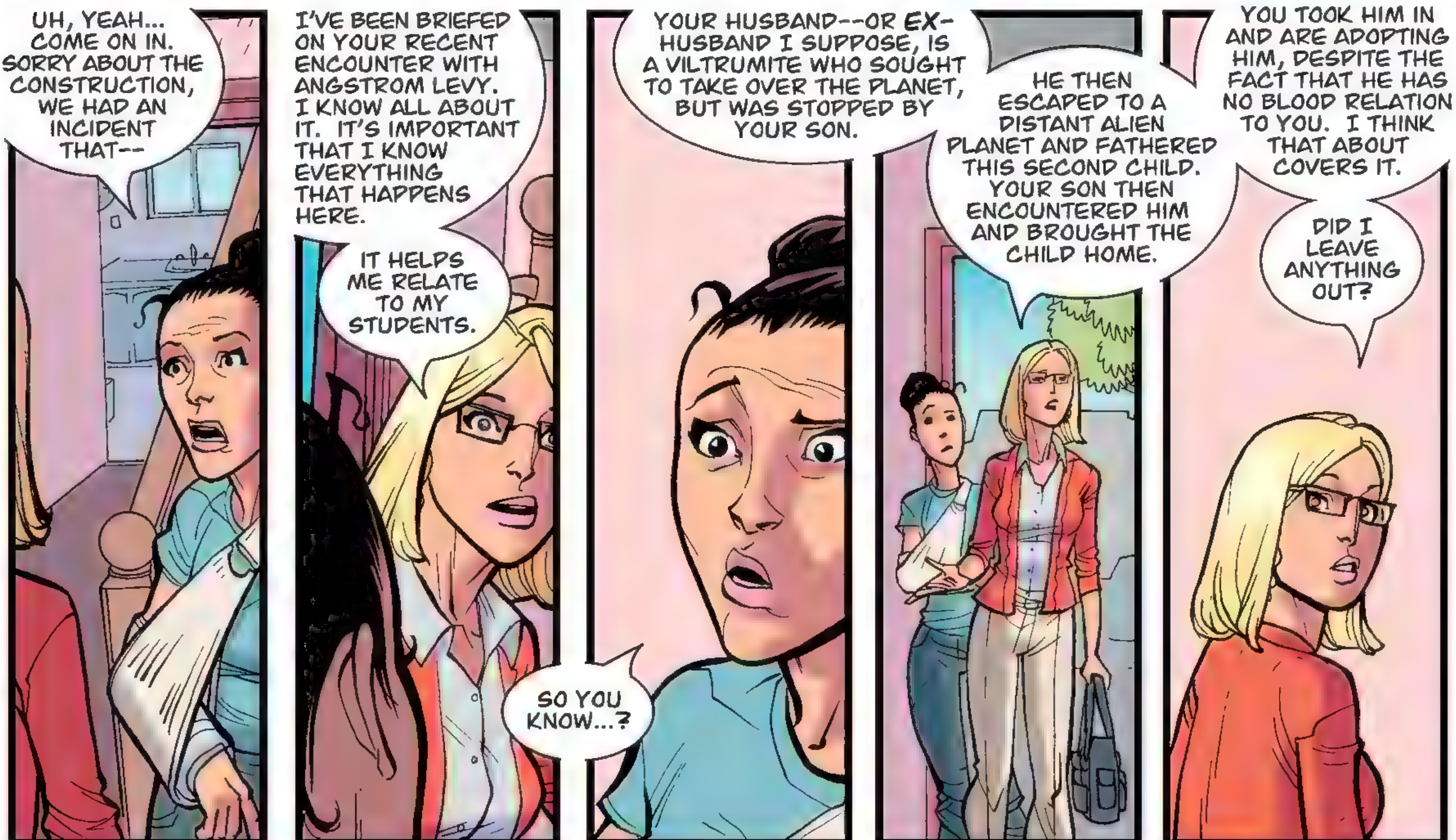
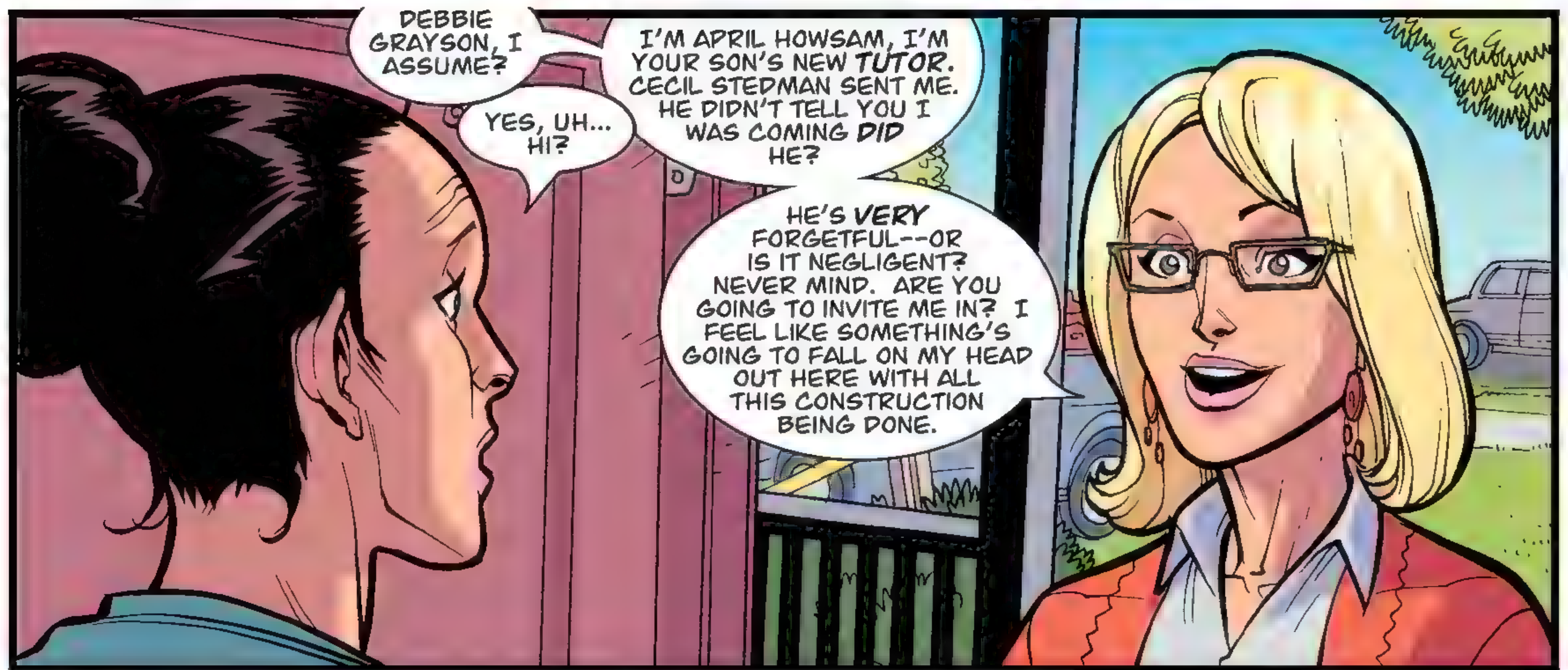
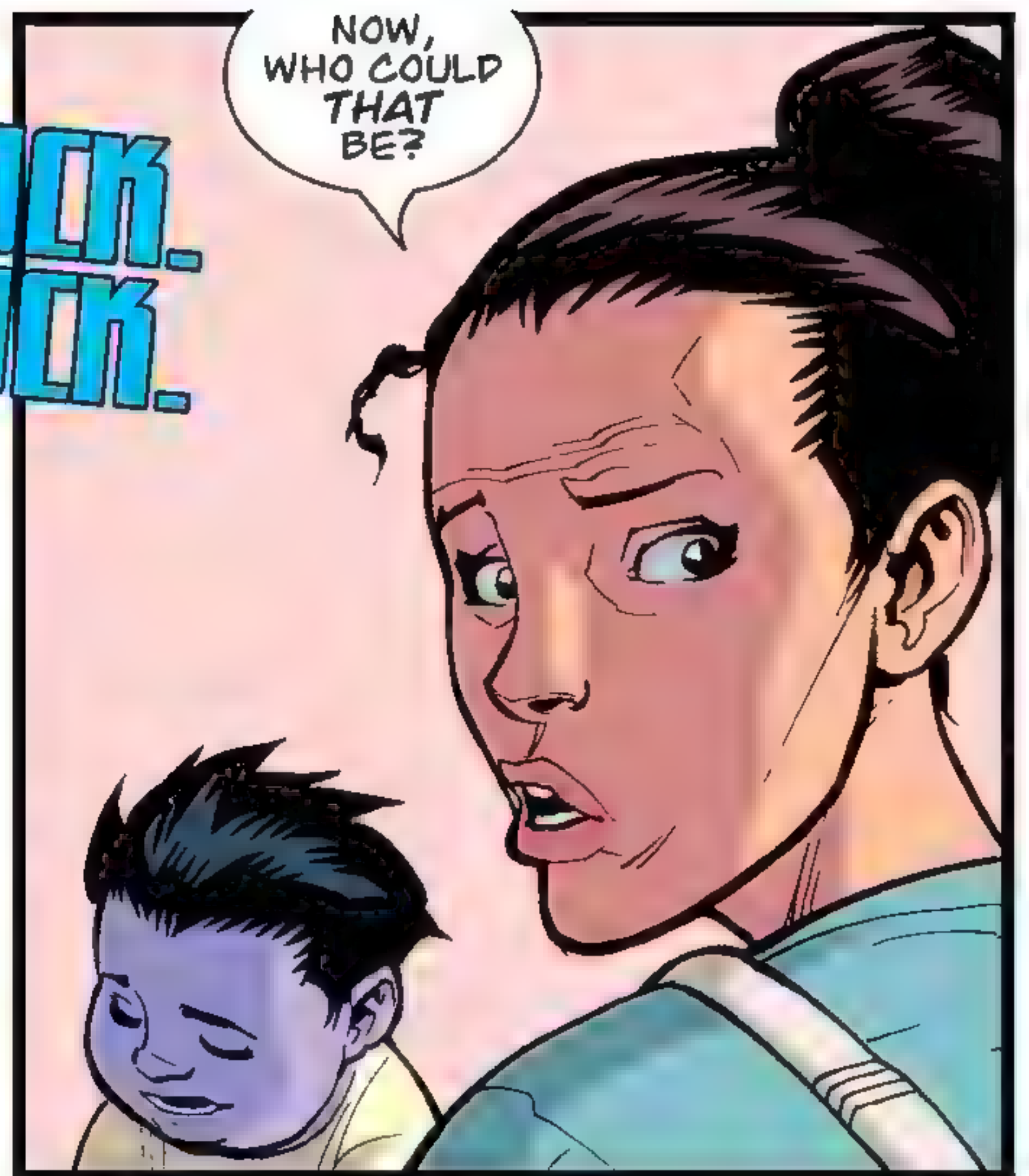
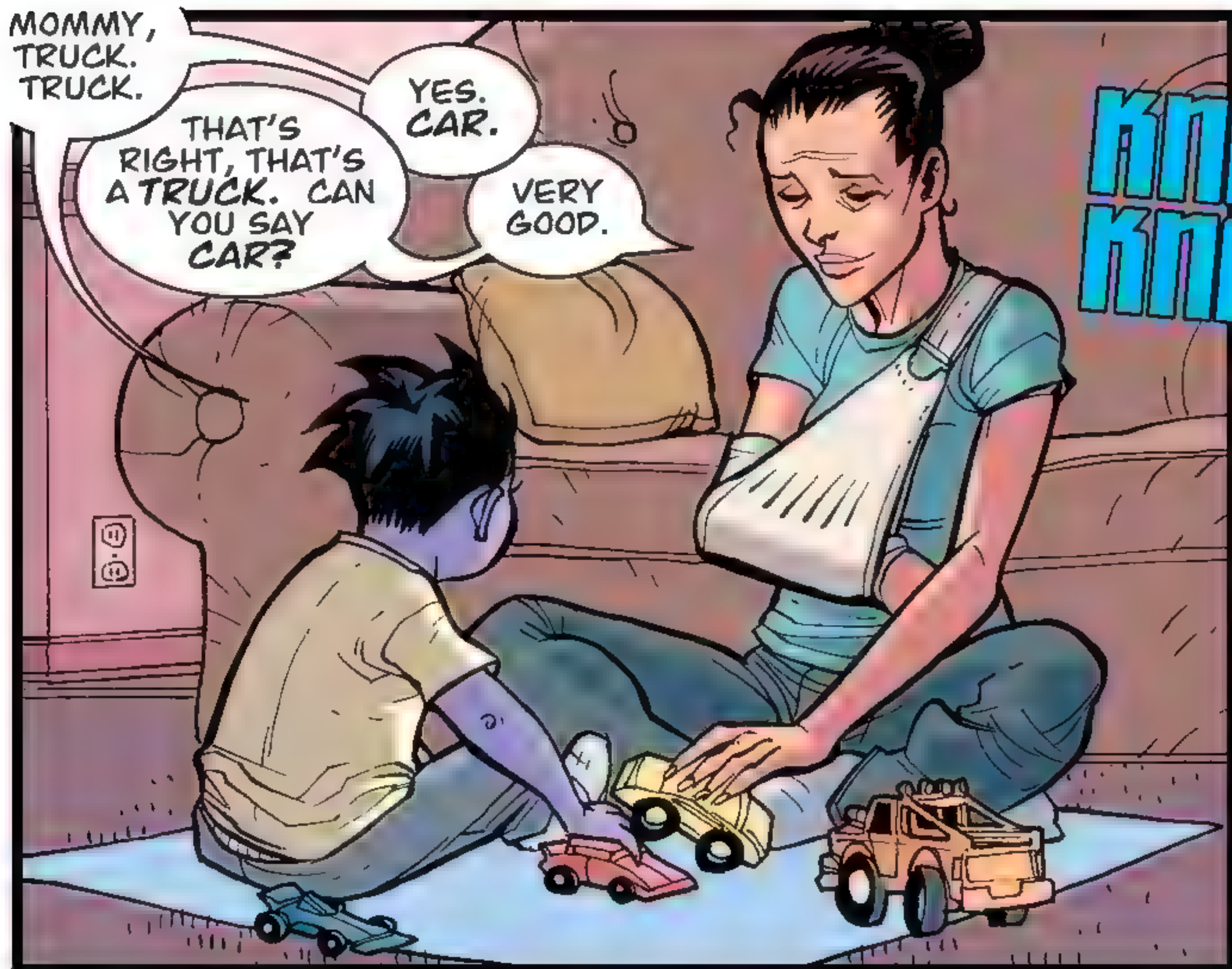


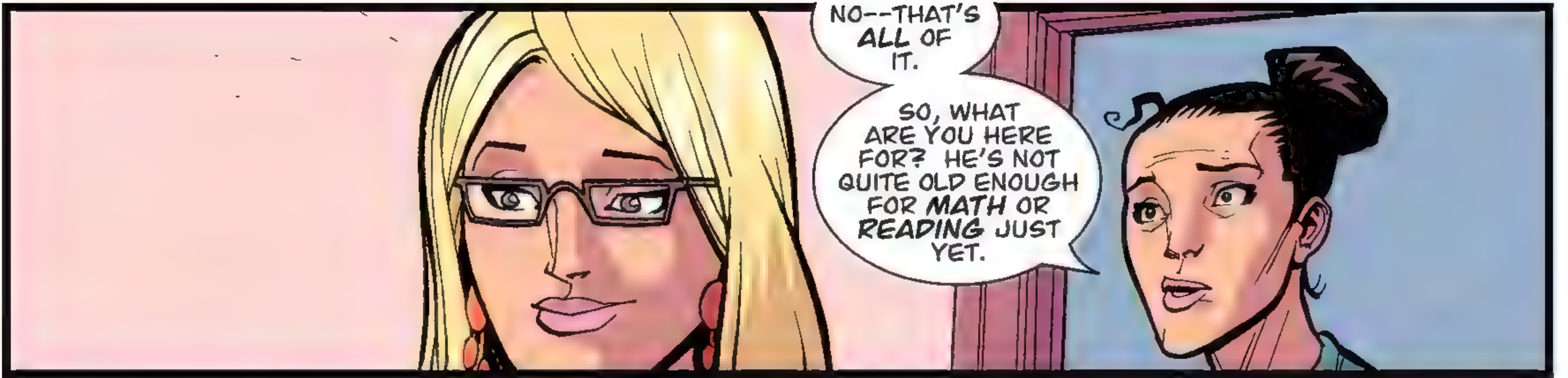
ISSUE THIRTY-FIVE



THE GRAYSON HOUSEHOLD---
CURRENTLY UNDER CONSTRUCTION
AFTER MARK GRAYSON'S BRUTAL
FIGHT WITH ANGSTROM LEVY.

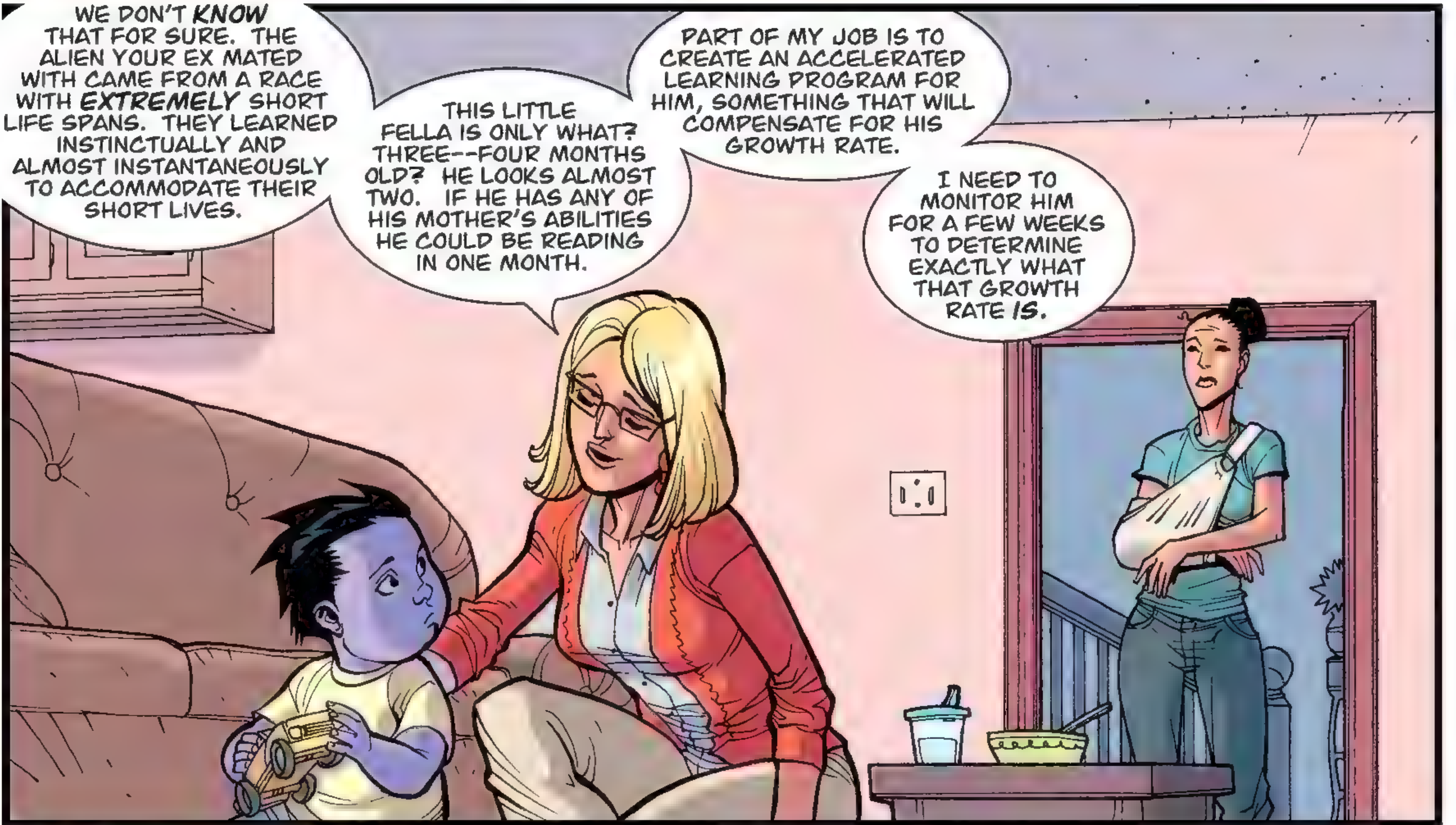






NO--THAT'S ALL OF IT.

SO, WHAT ARE YOU HERE FOR? HE'S NOT QUITE OLD ENOUGH FOR MATH OR READING JUST YET.



WE DON'T KNOW THAT FOR SURE. THE ALIEN YOUR EX MATED WITH CAME FROM A RACE WITH **EXTREMELY** SHORT LIFE SPANS. THEY LEARNED INSTINCTUALLY AND ALMOST INSTANTANEOUSLY TO ACCOMMODATE THEIR SHORT LIVES.

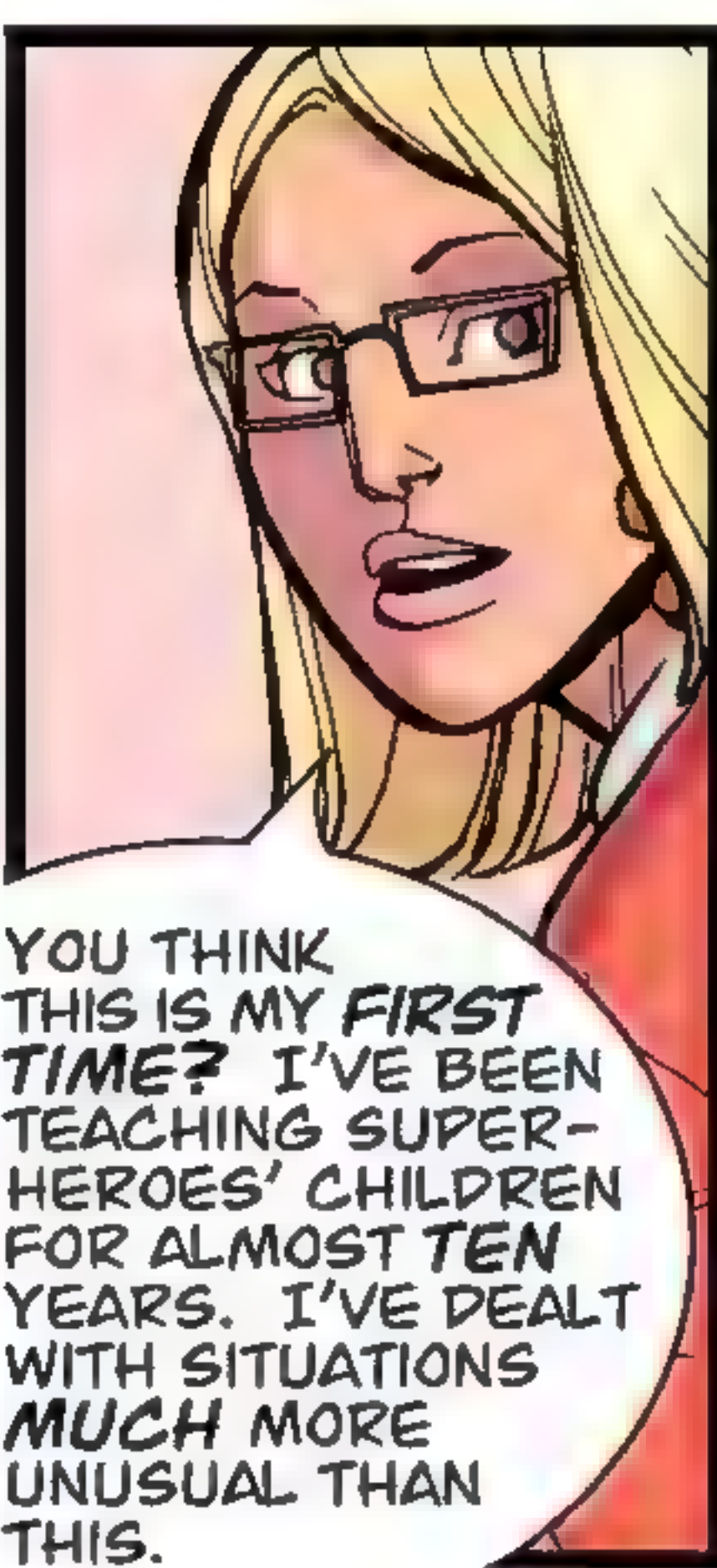
THIS LITTLE FELLA IS ONLY WHAT? THREE--FOUR MONTHS OLD? HE LOOKS ALMOST TWO. IF HE HAS ANY OF HIS MOTHER'S ABILITIES HE COULD BE READING IN ONE MONTH.

PART OF MY JOB IS TO CREATE AN ACCELERATED LEARNING PROGRAM FOR HIM, SOMETHING THAT WILL COMPENSATE FOR HIS GROWTH RATE.

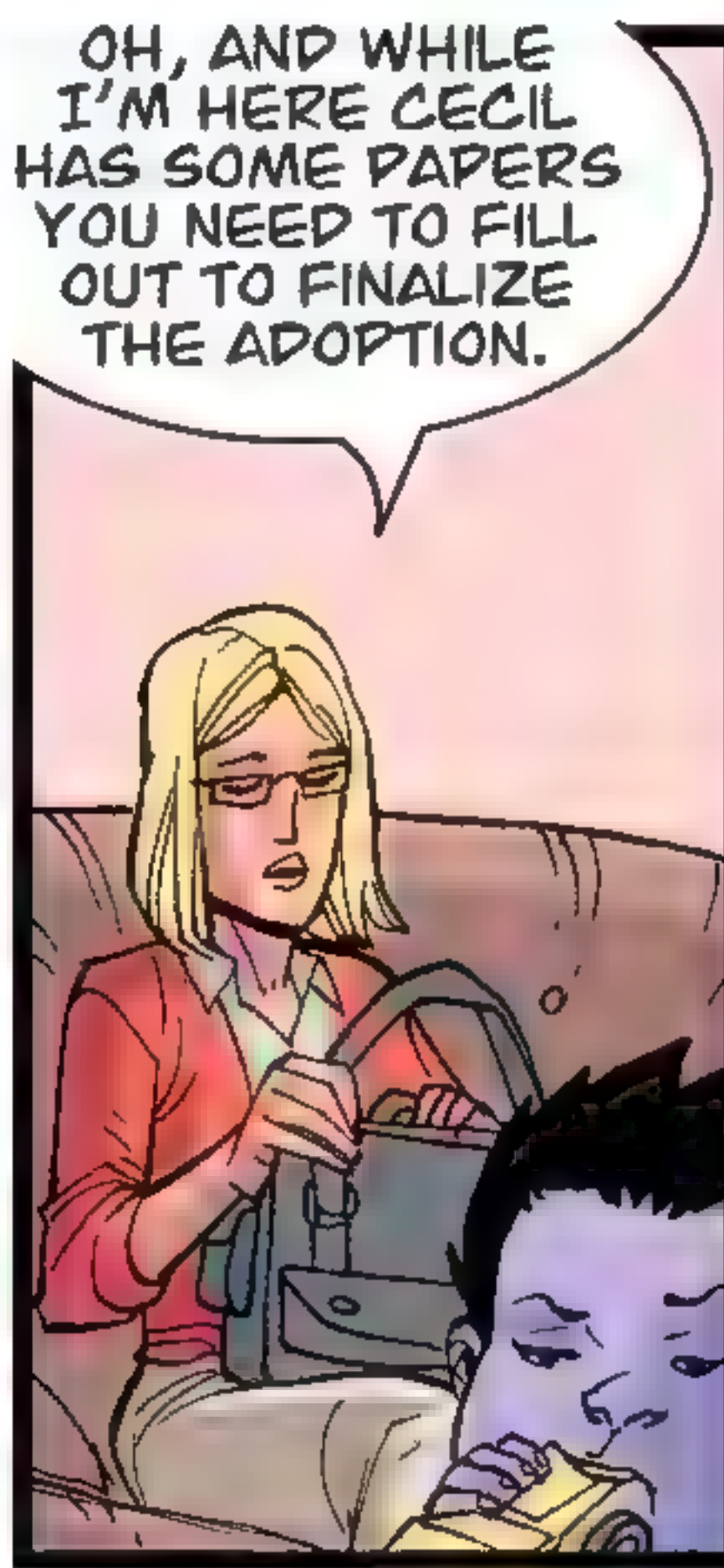
I NEED TO MONITOR HIM FOR A FEW WEEKS TO DETERMINE EXACTLY WHAT THAT GROWTH RATE IS.



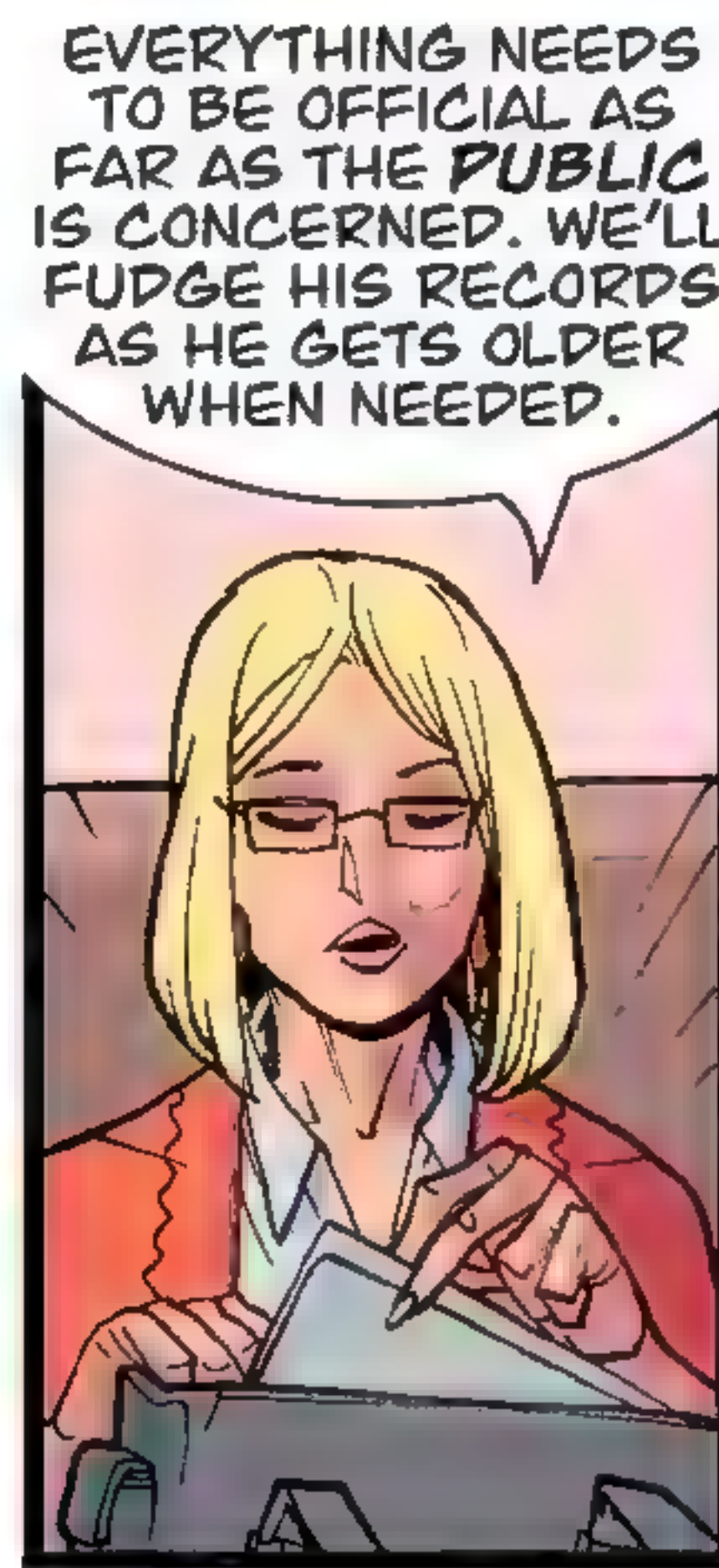
AND NONE OF THIS SEEMS **UNUSUAL** TO YOU?



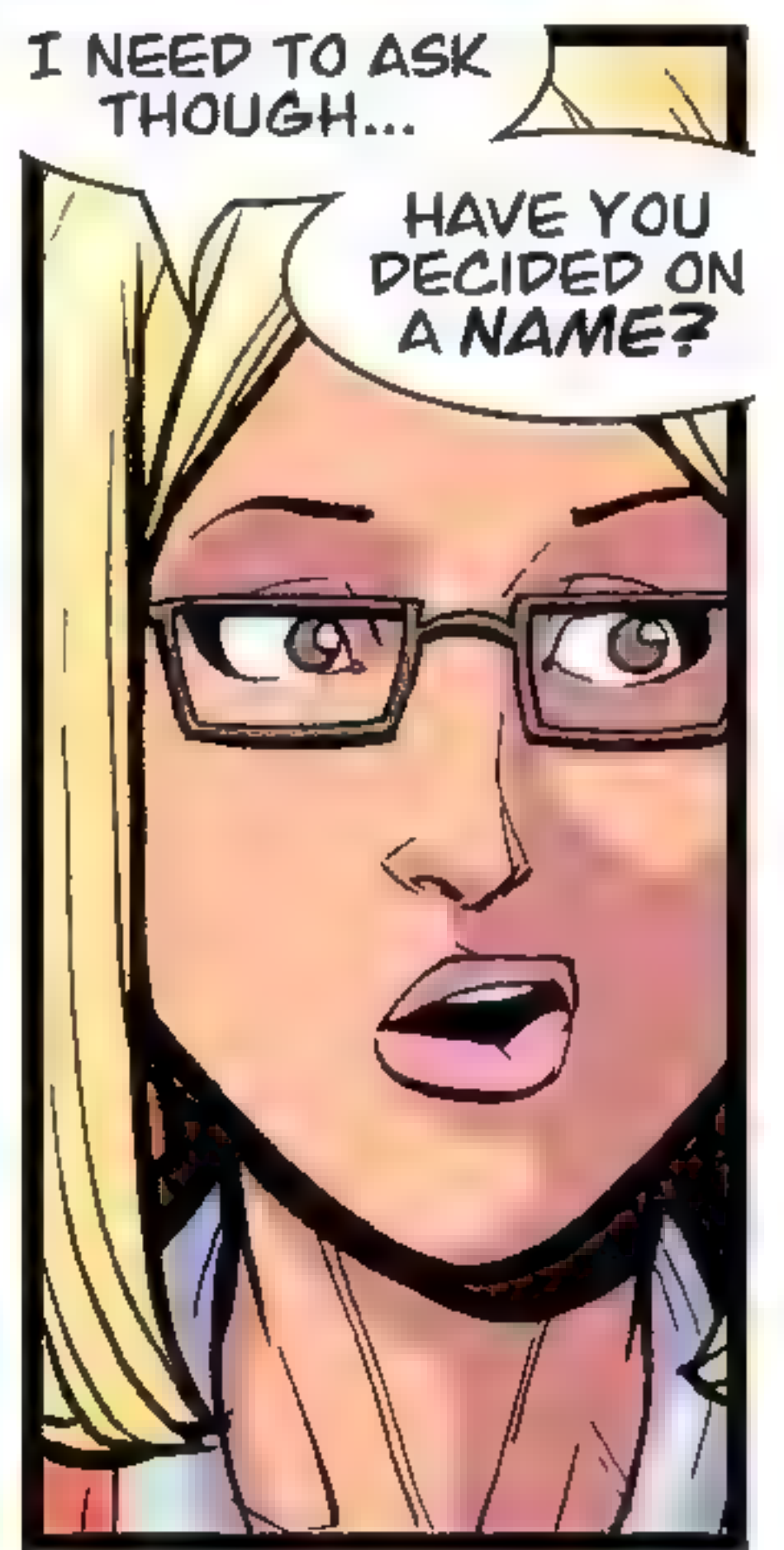
YOU THINK THIS IS MY **FIRST TIME**? I'VE BEEN TEACHING SUPER-HEROES' CHILDREN FOR ALMOST **TEN YEARS**. I'VE DEALT WITH SITUATIONS **MUCH MORE UNUSUAL** THAN THIS.



OH, AND WHILE I'M HERE CECIL HAS SOME PAPERS YOU NEED TO FILL OUT TO FINALIZE THE ADOPTION.

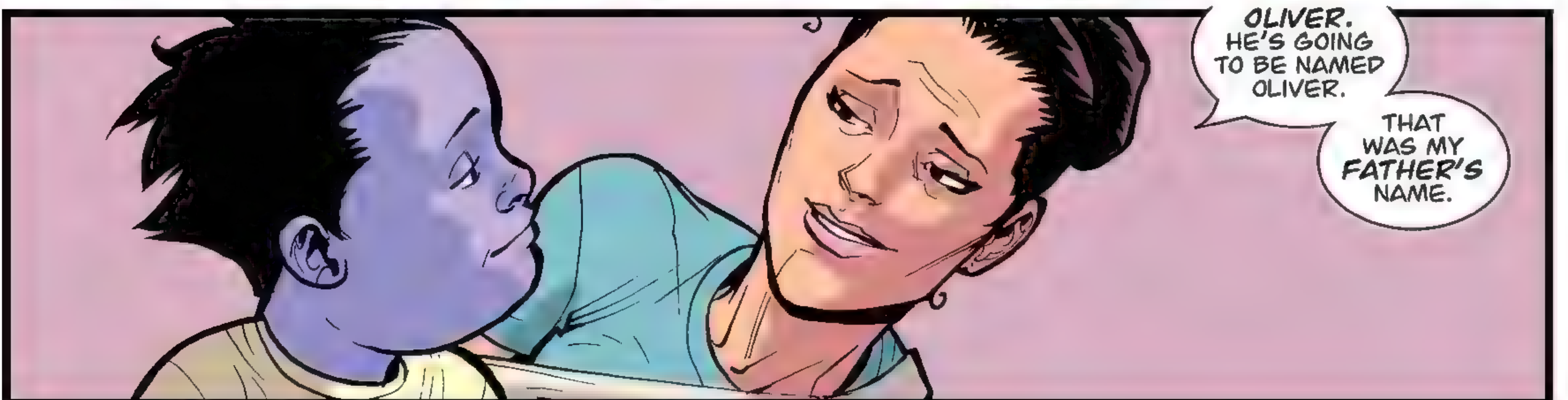


EVERYTHING NEEDS TO BE OFFICIAL AS FAR AS THE **PUBLIC** IS CONCERNED. WE'LL FUDGE HIS RECORDS AS HE GETS OLDER WHEN NEEDED.



I NEED TO ASK THOUGH...

HAVE YOU DECIDED ON A NAME?



OLIVER. HE'S GOING TO BE NAMED OLIVER.

THAT WAS MY FATHER'S NAME.



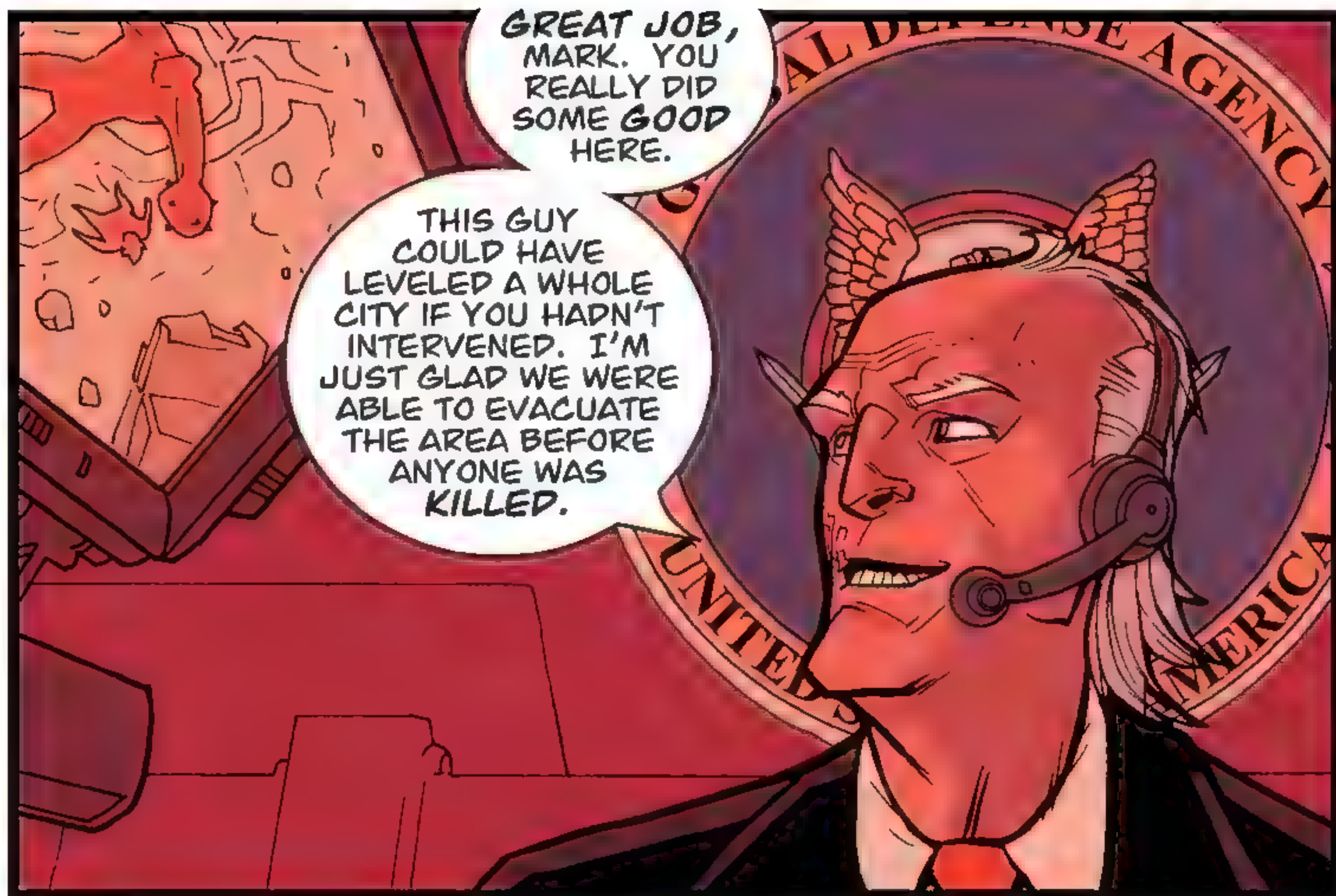
WAKO!!!

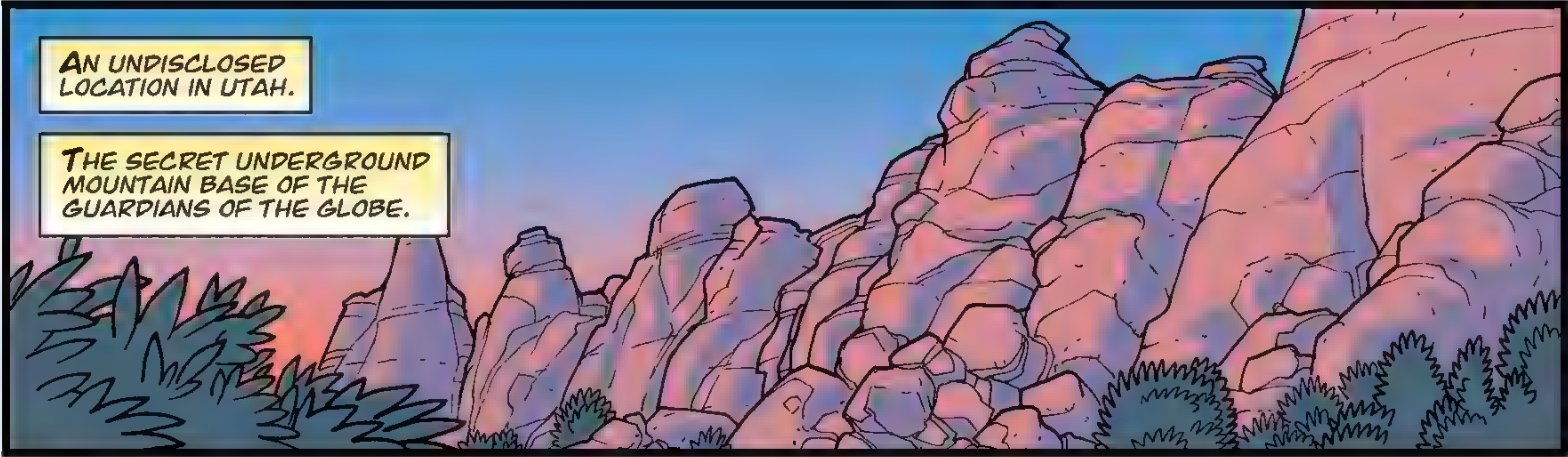
AS MUCH TROUBLE AS YOU'VE BEEN, I GOTTA ADMIT...

...RAMPAGE.

THAT'S JUST A COOL NAME.

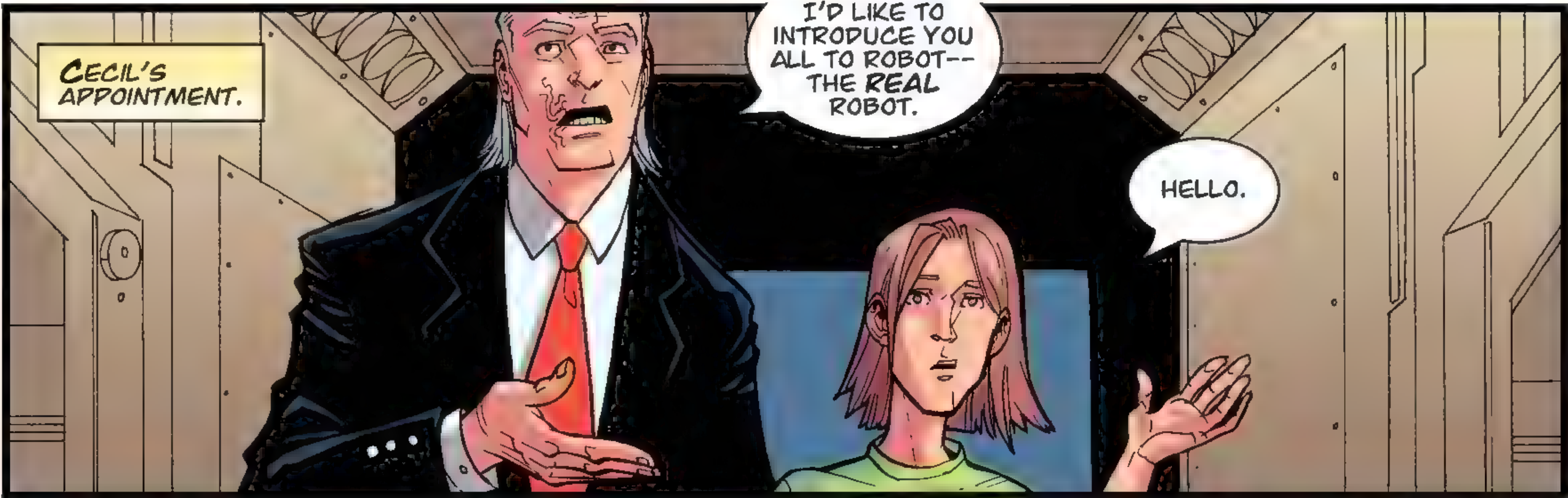
SOFA KING
LOW PRICES!!





AN UNDISCLOSED
LOCATION IN UTAH.

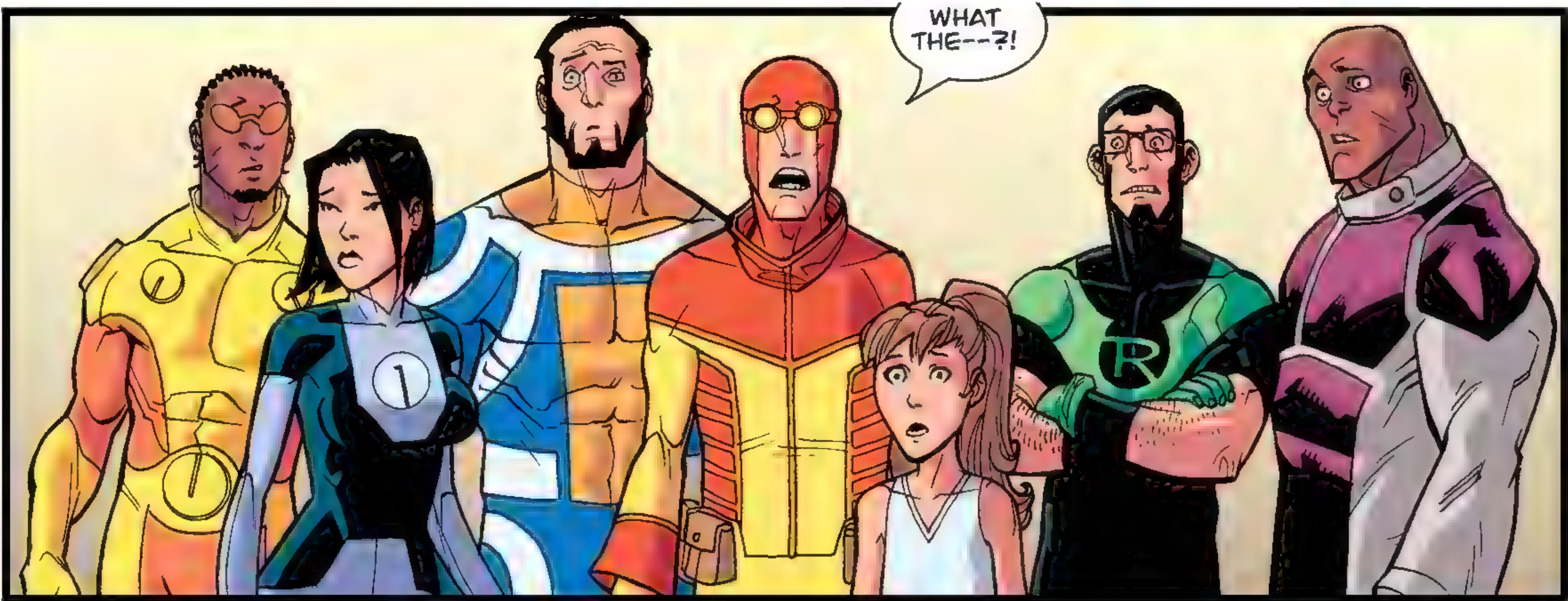
THE SECRET UNDERGROUND
MOUNTAIN BASE OF THE
GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.



CECIL'S
APPOINTMENT.

I'D LIKE TO
INTRODUCE YOU
ALL TO ROBOT--
THE REAL
ROBOT.

HELLO.



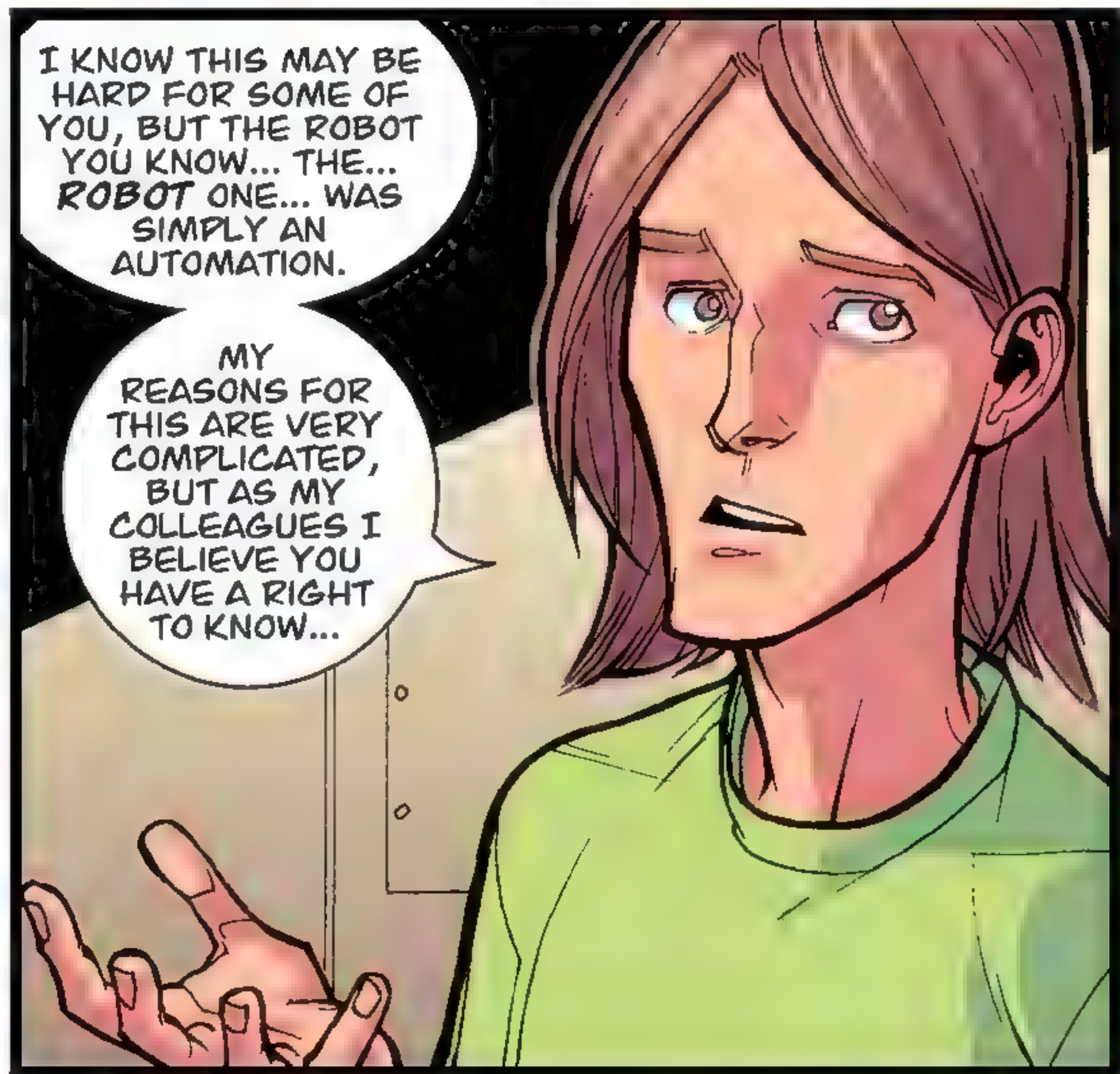
WHAT
THE---?!



I KNOW THIS IS GOING TO BE
A LITTLE HARD TO BELIEVE.
WE HAVE RUN SOME TESTS...
THIS IS LEGIT. REX, I KNOW
THIS WILL PROBABLY BE THE
MOST SHOCKING FOR YOU...
AS THIS IS ALSO A CLONED
VERSION OF YOUR BODY...
BUT PLEASE, HEAR
HIM OUT.

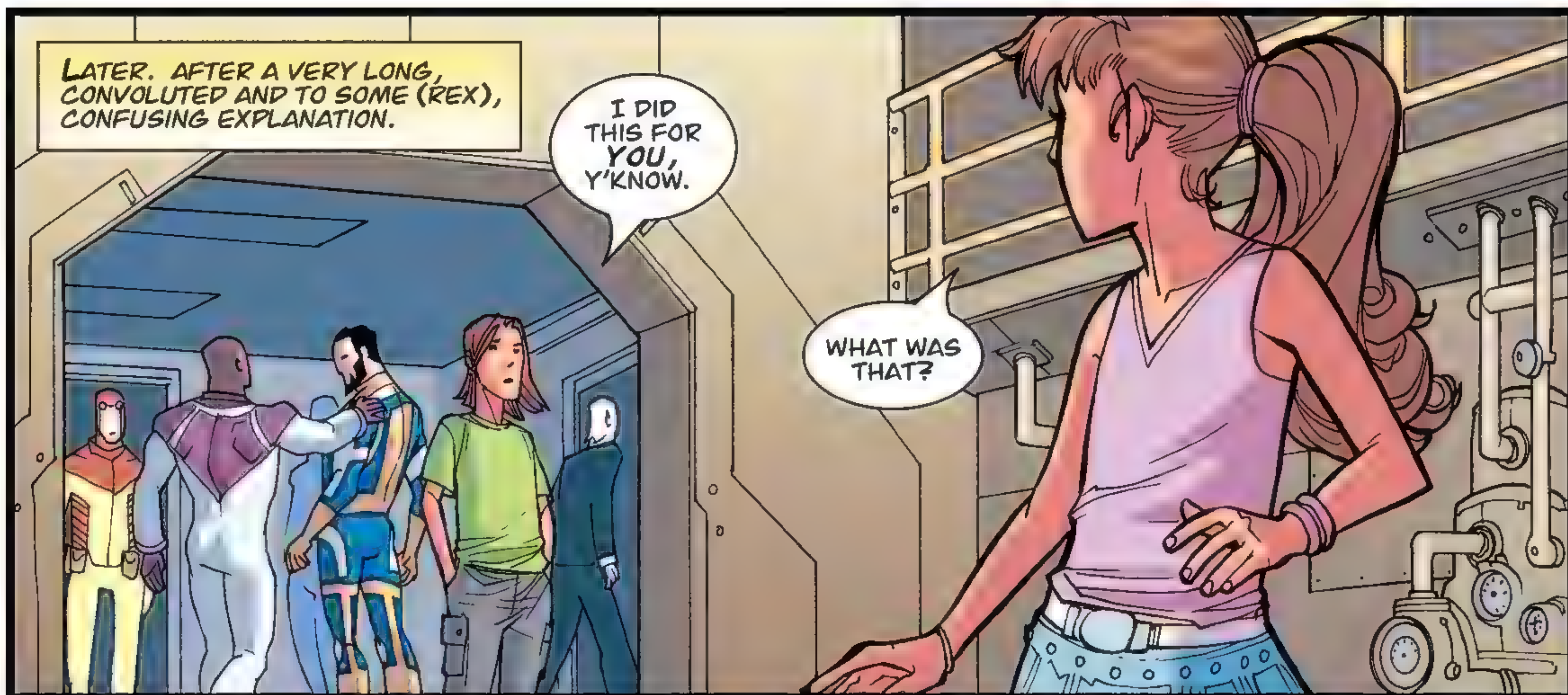
ROBOT,
IF YOU
WOULD.

OKAY.



I KNOW THIS MAY BE
HARD FOR SOME OF
YOU, BUT THE ROBOT
YOU KNOW... THE...
ROBOT ONE... WAS
SIMPLY AN
AUTOMATION.

MY
REASONS FOR
THIS ARE VERY
COMPLICATED,
BUT AS MY
COLLEAGUES I
BELIEVE YOU
HAVE A RIGHT
TO KNOW...



LATER. AFTER A VERY LONG, CONVOLUTED AND TO SOME (REX), CONFUSING EXPLANATION.

I DID THIS FOR YOU, Y'KNOW.

WHAT WAS THAT?

WHILE TRYING TO FIND A CURE FOR YOUR CONDITION... I BECAME ENAMORED WITH YOUR PLIGHT, WHICH MIRRORED MINE. IN GETTING TO KNOW YOU, I WAS FASCINATED BY YOUR ABILITY TO COPE... IT INSPIRED ME.

FOR SO LONG I HAD BEEN CONTENT TO LIVE LIFE THROUGH THOSE MECHANICAL EYES-- NEVER LONGING FOR ANYTHING MORE, UNTIL I MET YOU.

NO, I BARELY KNOW YOU-- THAT WOULD BE MORONIC AND I'M ONE OF THE SMARTEST PEOPLE ON THE PLANET. MY FEELINGS FOR YOU ARE SO MUCH MORE THAN THAT. RESPECT, ADMIRATION... YOU'VE MOVED ME.

IT'S TRUE THAT I CLONED REX SIMPLY BECAUSE HIS FORM WAS PLEASING TO YOUR EYE--BUT I WOULD NEVER PRESUME SOMETHING LIKE THAT WOULD BE THE PRETEXT TO A RELATIONSHIP.

I'M NOT CRAZY. I'M A GENIUS.

YOU'RE NOT GOING TO TELL ME YOU LOVE ME, RIGHT? I MEAN, THAT WOULD BE TOTALLY CREEPY.

GOOD, BECAUSE I'M NOT ATTRACTED TO CHILDREN--WHICH Y'KNOW, IS PART OF THE PROBLEM.

YOU ARE KINDA CUTE, THOUGH.

I GUESS WE COULD HANG OUT SOME TIME, IF YOU WANTED. THE TWO OF US COULD SPEND TIME TOGETHER WITHOUT TURNING ANY HEADS. IT COULD BE FUN.

IT'S NOT LIKE I HAVE ANY FRIENDS OR ANYTHING.

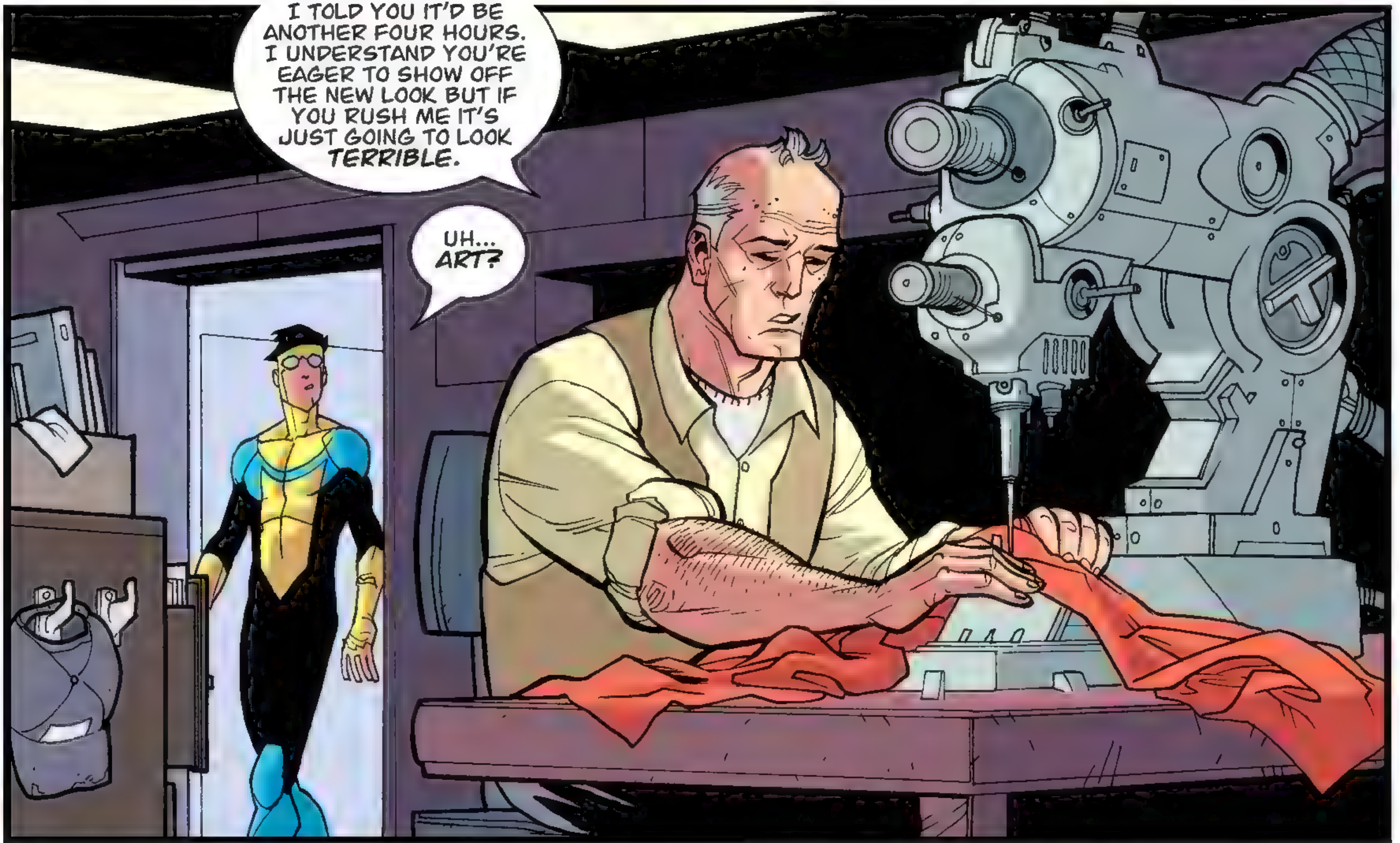
SOUNDS GOOD.

PHASE TWO IS UNDERWAY...



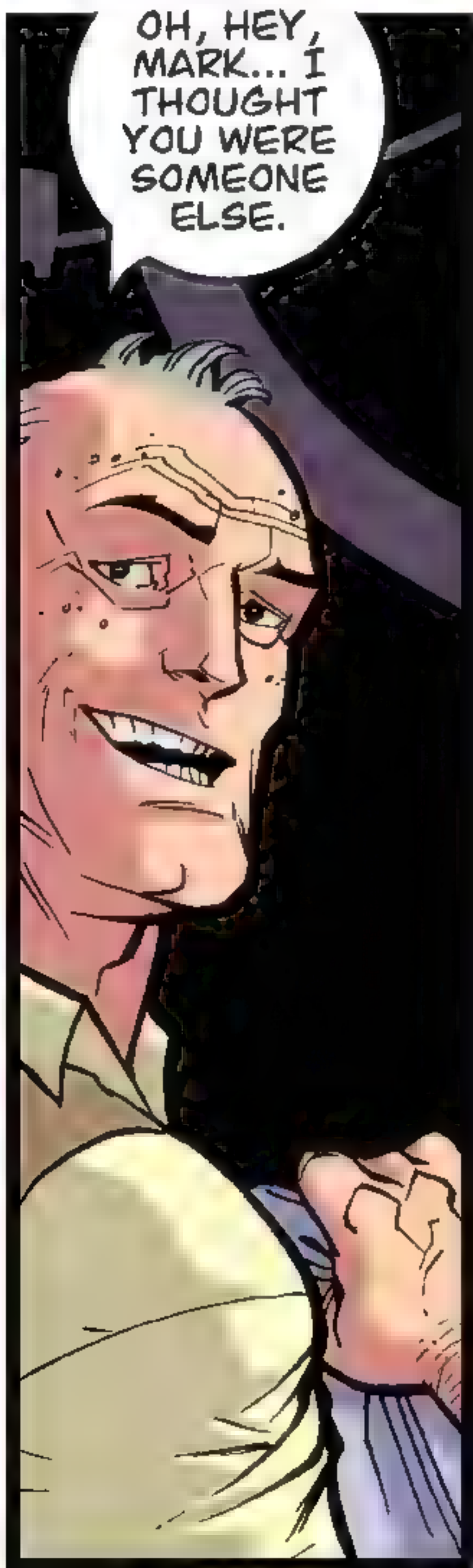
THE UNASSUMING TAILOR SHOP OF ARTHUR ROSENBAUM.

UNBEKNOWNST TO HIS CUSTOMERS, THE BULK OF ART'S INCOME IS GENERATED BY DESIGNING AND CREATING COSTUMES FOR SUPERHEROES.

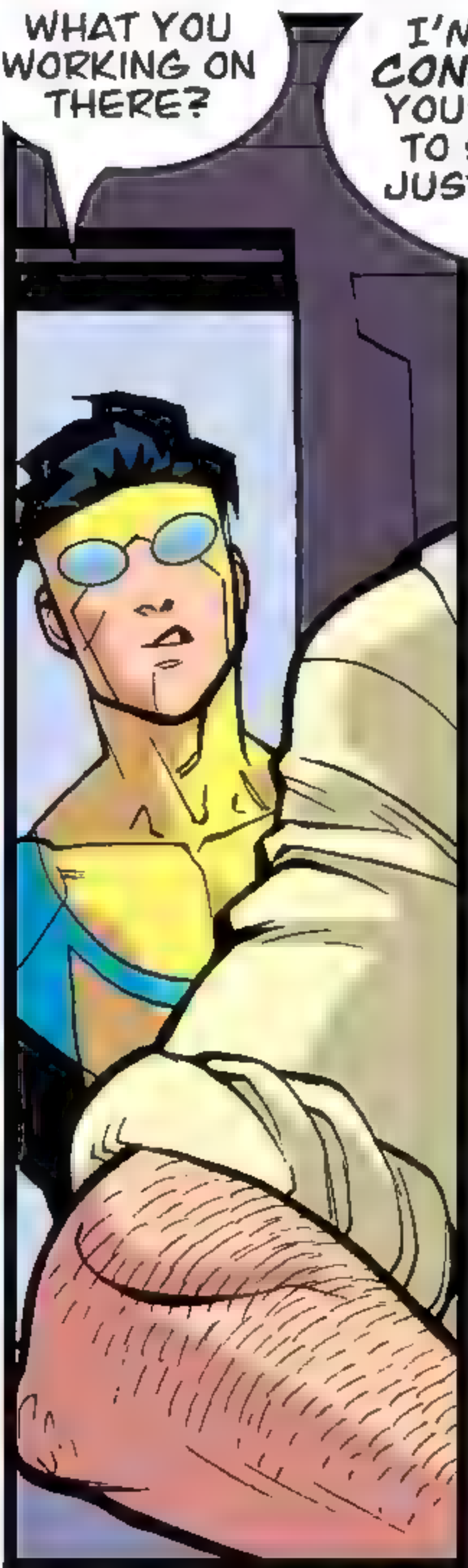


I TOLD YOU IT'D BE ANOTHER FOUR HOURS. I UNDERSTAND YOU'RE EAGER TO SHOW OFF THE NEW LOOK BUT IF YOU RUSH ME IT'S JUST GOING TO LOOK TERRIBLE.

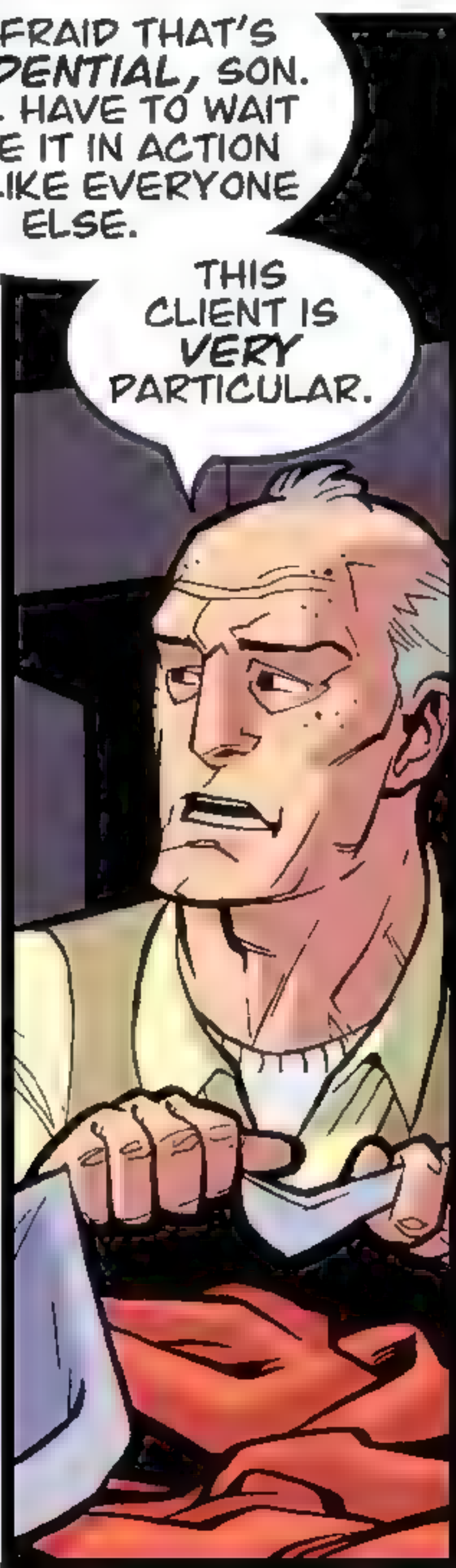
UH... ART?



OH, HEY, MARK... I THOUGHT YOU WERE SOMEONE ELSE.

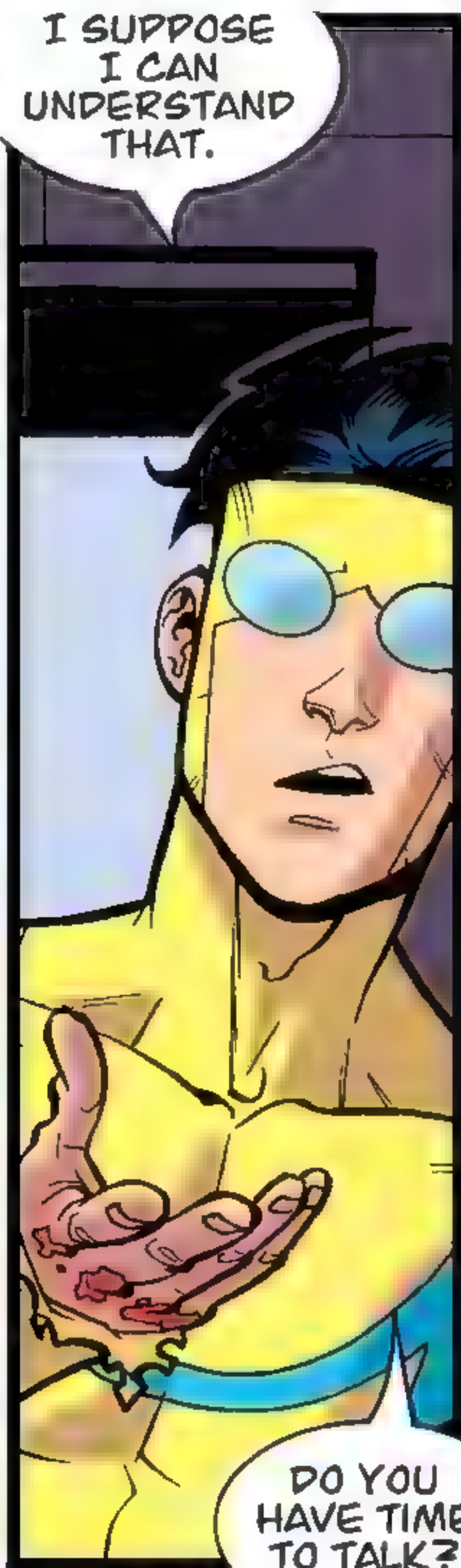


WHAT YOU WORKING ON THERE?



I'M AFRAID THAT'S CONFIDENTIAL, SON. YOU'LL HAVE TO WAIT TO SEE IT IN ACTION JUST LIKE EVERYONE ELSE.

THIS CLIENT IS VERY PARTICULAR.



I SUPPOSE I CAN UNDERSTAND THAT.

DO YOU HAVE TIME TO TALK?



FOR YOU? OF COURSE I DO.

WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

A BUNCH OF STUFF.
STUFF I CAN'T TALK TO
MY MOM ABOUT... AND
MY FRIEND WILLIAM IS
BEING A JERK RIGHT
NOW... SO YOU GOT
NOMINATED.

GOOD TO
KNOW I'M
THIRD.

UH... YEAH.
SO I REALLY DON'T
HAVE ANYONE ELSE
I COULD TALK TO.
I'D REALLY
APPRECIATE IT.

IT'S GIRL
STUFF.

MY
SPECIALTY.

LAY
IT ON
ME.

WELL, THERE
ARE THESE TWO
GIRLS...

AMBER, MY
GIRLFRIEND.

AND EVE,
MY FRIEND,
AND FELLOW
SUPERHERO.

WHOA, THERE!
TREAD CAREFULLY
FROM HERE ON OUT.
CERTAIN DETAILS
COULD BE
HAZARDOUS TO
MY AGING
HEART.

SHE CAN
ONLY BEAT
SO FAST,
Y'KNOW.

UH... I DON'T HAVE
DETAILS LIKE THAT.
IT'S NOTHING LIKE
THAT... REALLY.

IT'S JUST...
THEY BOTH
KINDA LIKE
ME, Y'KNOW...
IN THAT WAY.

I THOUGHT
YOU SAID YOU
HAVE GIRL
PROBLEMS.

I DON'T HEAR
THE PROBLEM. YOU
JUST NEED TO PICK
ONE AND MOVE
ON.

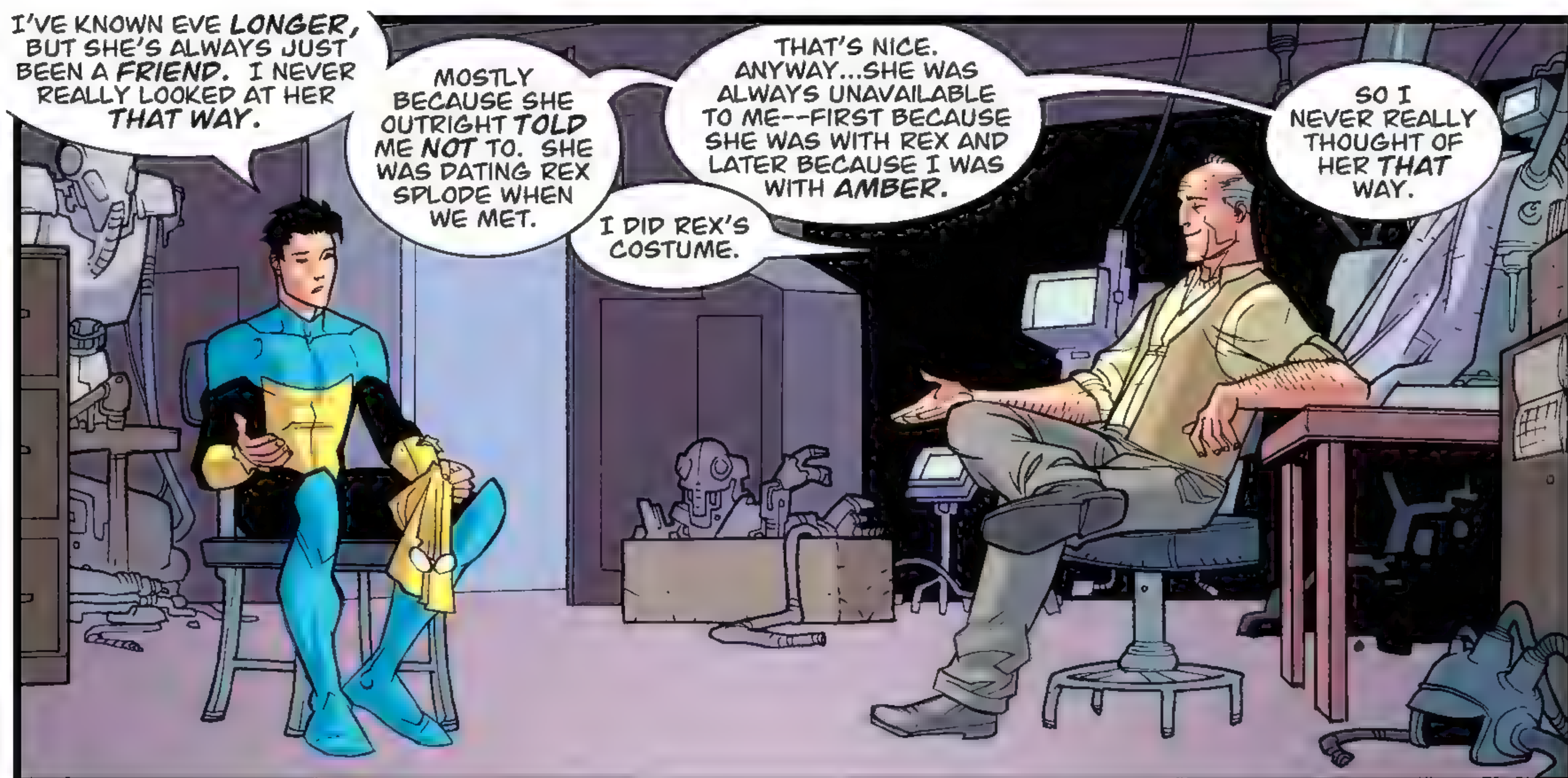
HOW IS
IT NOT THAT
SIMPLE?

IT'S
NOT THAT
SIMPLE.

WELL,
THAT IS A
PROBLEM.

I KINDA
LIKE THEM
BOTH.

I TOLD
YOU.



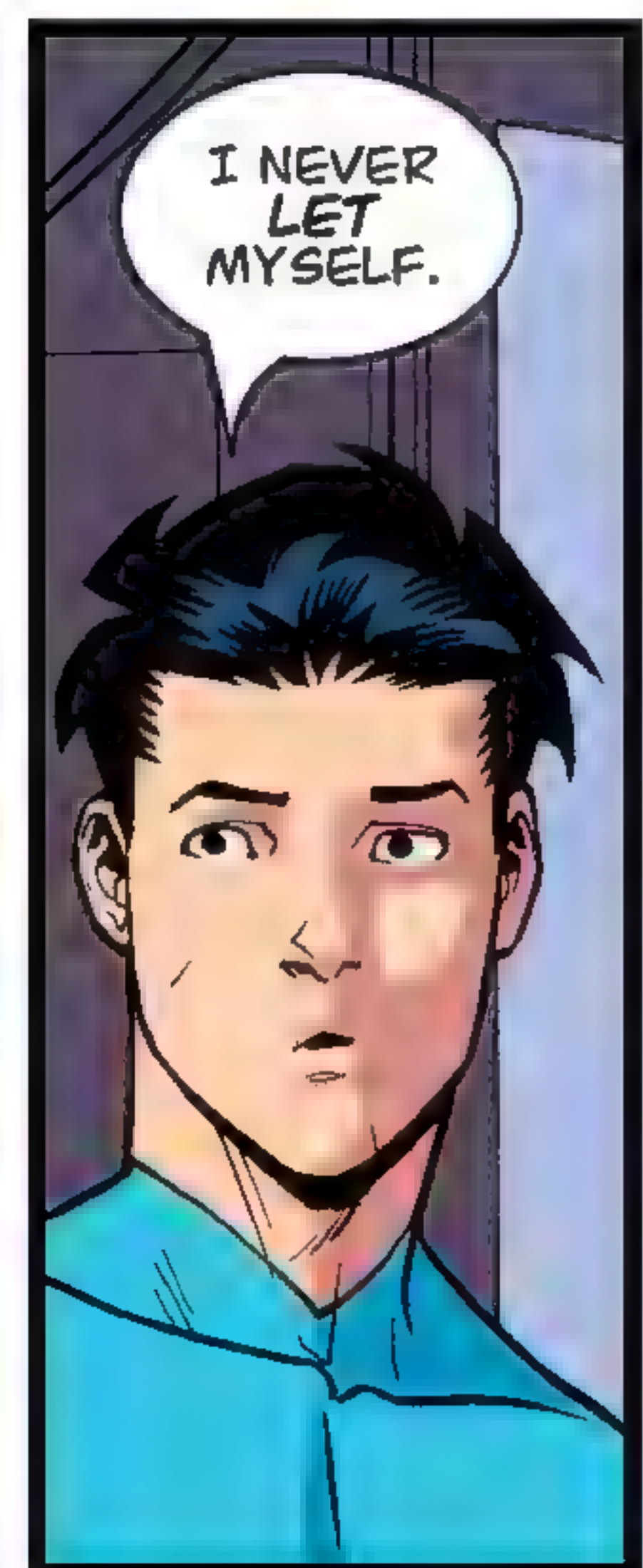
I'VE KNOWN EVE LONGER, BUT SHE'S ALWAYS JUST BEEN A FRIEND. I NEVER REALLY LOOKED AT HER THAT WAY.

MOSTLY BECAUSE SHE OUTRIGHT TOLD ME NOT TO. SHE WAS DATING REX SPLODE WHEN WE MET.

I DID REX'S COSTUME.

THAT'S NICE. ANYWAY...SHE WAS ALWAYS UNAVAILABLE TO ME--FIRST BECAUSE SHE WAS WITH REX AND LATER BECAUSE I WAS WITH AMBER.

SO I NEVER REALLY THOUGHT OF HER THAT WAY.



I NEVER LET MYSELF.

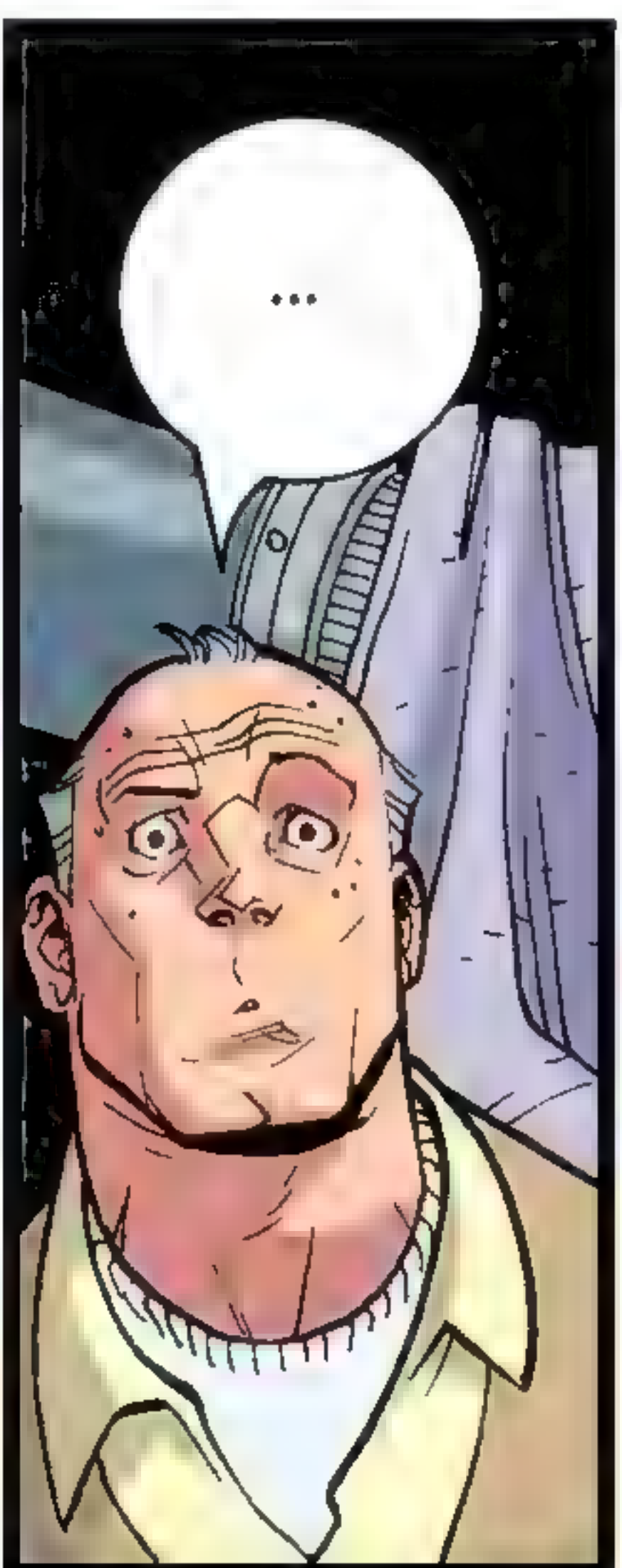


BUT I NEVER EVEN THOUGHT SHE LIKED ME... THERE WERE SIGNS, BUT AT THE TIME I DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE.

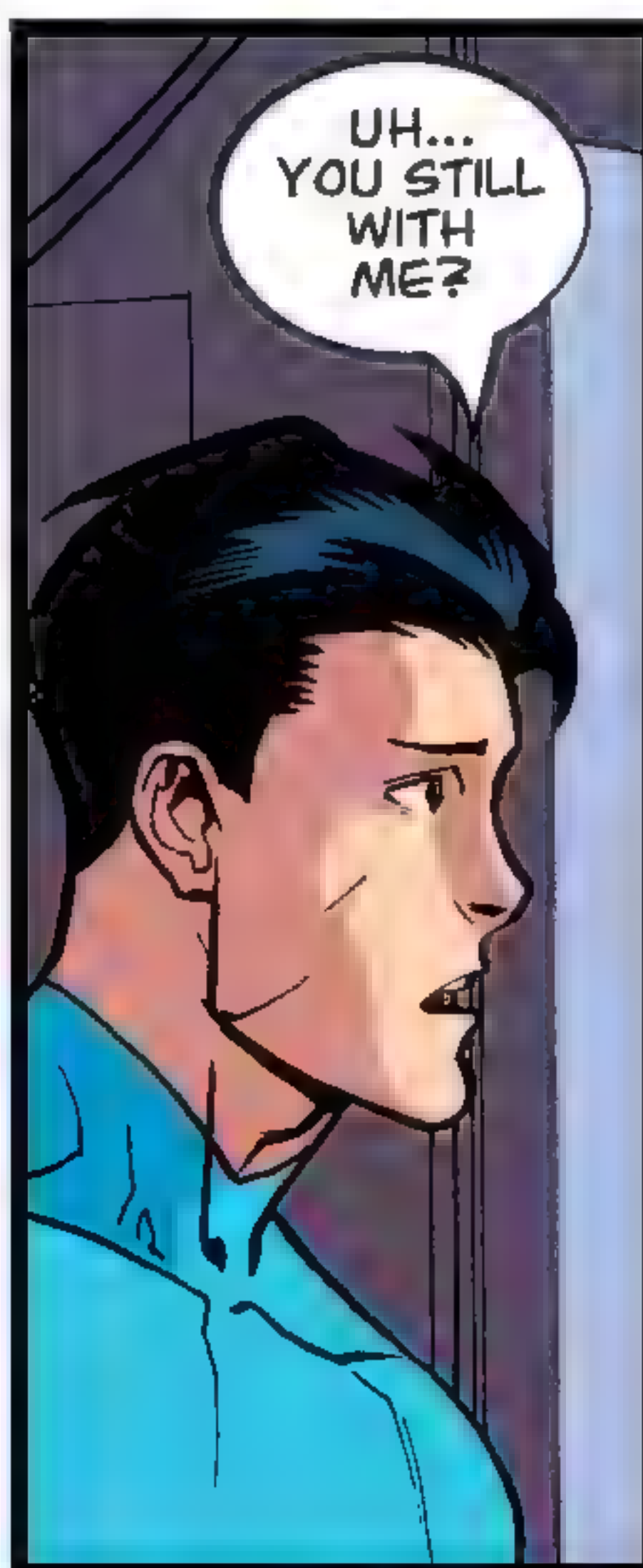
THE OTHER DAY... SHE TOLD ME SHE LIKED ME.



OR RATHER... AN OLDER VERSION OF HER FROM THE FUTURE TOLD ME.



...



UH... YOU STILL WITH ME?

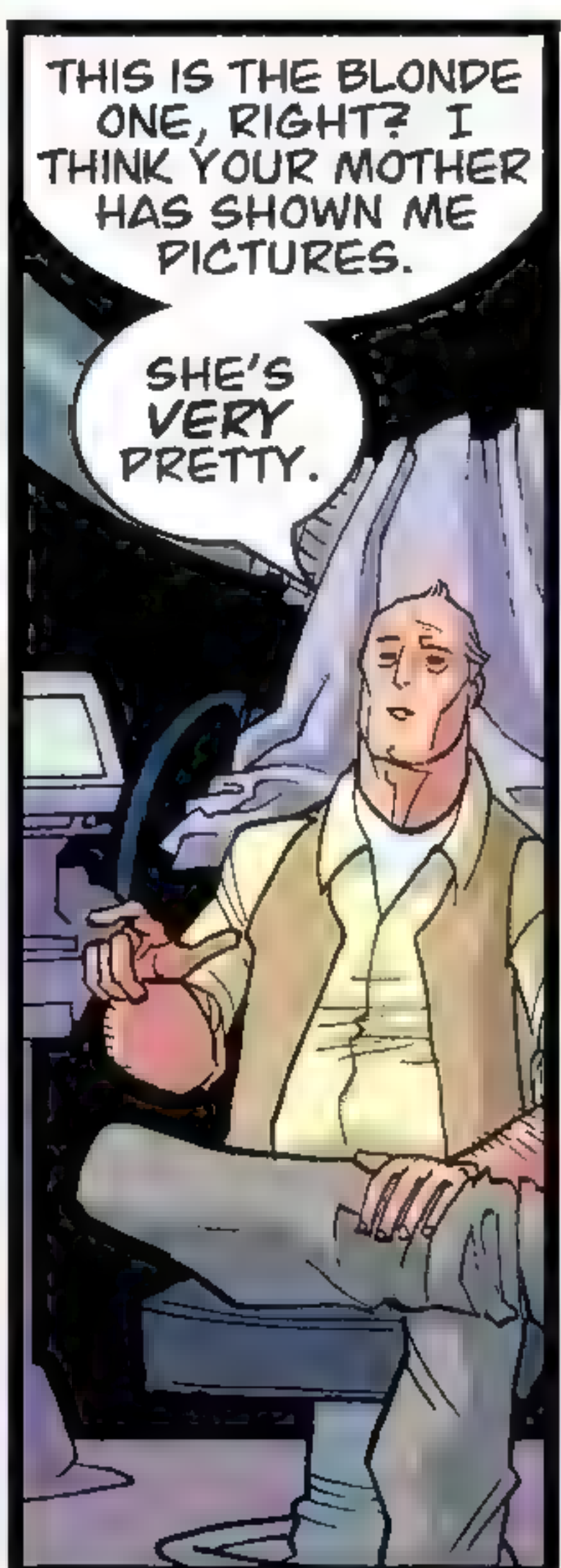


YEAH... KEEP GOING.



SO THAT'S THE THING... I KNOW EVE LIKES ME... APPARENTLY A LOT... BUT SHE DOESN'T KNOW THAT I KNOW.

AND THEN THERE'S AMBER.



THIS IS THE BLONDE ONE, RIGHT? I THINK YOUR MOTHER HAS SHOWN ME PICTURES.

SHE'S VERY PRETTY.

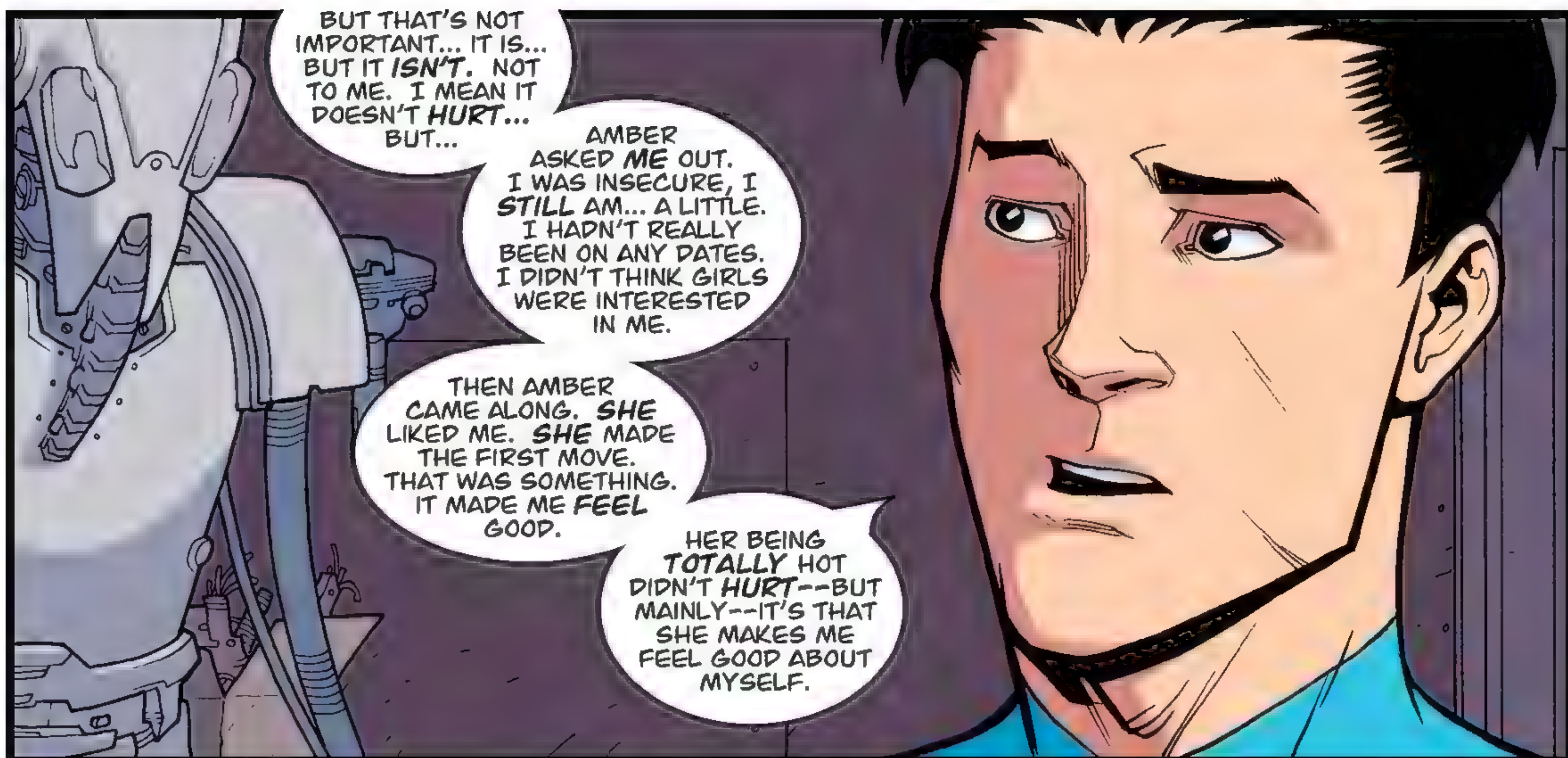


YEAH...

SHE REALLY IS.



THAT'S NOT A BAD THING.



BUT THAT'S NOT IMPORTANT... IT IS... BUT IT *ISN'T*. NOT TO ME. I MEAN IT DOESN'T HURT... BUT...

AMBER ASKED ME OUT. I WAS INSECURE, I *STILL* AM... A LITTLE. I HADN'T REALLY BEEN ON ANY DATES. I DIDN'T THINK GIRLS WERE INTERESTED IN ME.

THEN AMBER CAME ALONG. SHE LIKED ME. SHE MADE THE FIRST MOVE. THAT WAS SOMETHING. IT MADE ME *FEEL* GOOD.

HER BEING *TOTALLY* HOT DIDN'T HURT--BUT MAINLY--IT'S THAT SHE MAKES ME *FEEL* GOOD ABOUT MYSELF.

BUT IT'S NOT LIKE THAT'S ALL I LIKED ABOUT HER. I DIDN'T LIKE HER JUST BECAUSE SHE LIKED ME. SHE'S GREAT.

AMBER AND I *REALLY* GET ALONG.

BUT SHE'S NOT A SUPERHERO?

NO. SHE'S NOT.

BUT IS THAT SUCH A BIG DEAL? I DON'T KNOW. I MEAN, MY IDENTITY IS *SECRET*--FOR THE MOST PART. MY TWO LIVES ARE VERY SEPARATE.

I DON'T THINK I'M GOING TO GET HER HURT.

HECK, I EVEN *SAVED* HER ONCE WHEN SHE *WOULD* HAVE BEEN HURT IF I HADN'T BEEN THERE.

I DON'T KNOW...

PART OF ME THINKS IT'S JUST NOT *FAIR* TO BE WITH AMBER. NOT FAIR TO *HER*. SHE'S IN COLLEGE, SHE'S STILL YOUNG, SHE'S GOT HER WHOLE LIFE AHEAD OF HER.

SHE DIDN'T *KNOW* I WAS A SUPERHERO WHEN WE GOT TOGETHER. SHE JUST LIKED ME, MARK GRAYSON. THEN I SPRING IT ON HER... I'M *INVINCIBLE*.

NOW SHE GETS TO SIT AROUND FOR A MONTH WHILE I'M ON ANOTHER PLANET. SHE GETS TO WATCH ME GET THE *SNOT* BEATEN OUT OF ME ON TV. SHE GETS TO HAVE ME RUN OFF IN THE MIDDLE OF OUR DATES--IF I EVEN BOTHER TO SHOW UP AT ALL.

DOES THAT SEEM FAIR?



THAT'S REALLY UP TO HER, MARK. SHE DIDN'T KNOW BEFORE BUT SHE KNOWS NOW AND SHE'S STILL WITH YOU.

IF YOU LIKE EVE BETTER, IF YOU FEEL MORE CONNECTED TO HER, IF YOU'LL BE HAPPIER WITH HER, THAT'S ONE THING.

BUT YOU JUST DON'T BREAK UP WITH A GIRL BECAUSE YOU THINK SHE COULD DO BETTER. THAT SHOULD BE UP TO HER. LET HER MAKE THAT DECISION.



THAT MAKES MORE SENSE.



I LOVE AMBER... I OUTRIGHT LOVE HER. I DO.

SO THERE'S THAT.



THEN I THINK BACK ABOUT THAT LOOK ON EVE'S FACE... THE ONE FROM THE FUTURE... WHEN SHE TOLD ME SHE LOVED ME.

THE DESPERATION... THE SORROW.



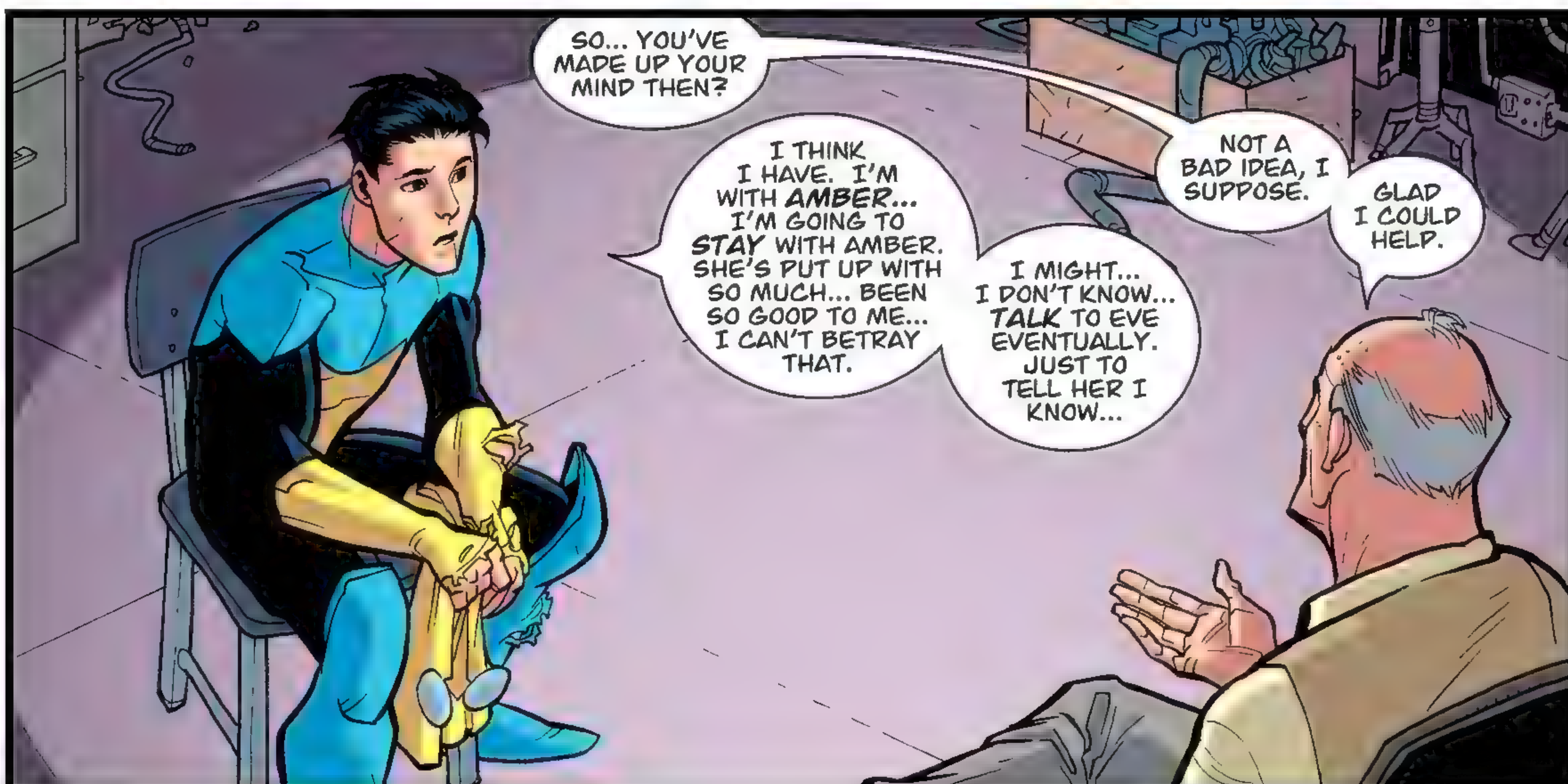
EVE'S MY FRIEND. TO THINK THAT SHE'S GOING THROUGH THAT... OVER ME.

AND I DO LIKE HER... I AM ATTRACTED TO HER. I CAN ADMIT THAT... I AM. WHO WOULDN'T BE?



BUT IT JUST WOULDN'T BE FAIR TO AMBER. I CAN'T BREAK HER HEART BECAUSE EVE FELL FOR ME WHILE SHE WAS PUSHING ME AWAY.

I LOVE AMBER.



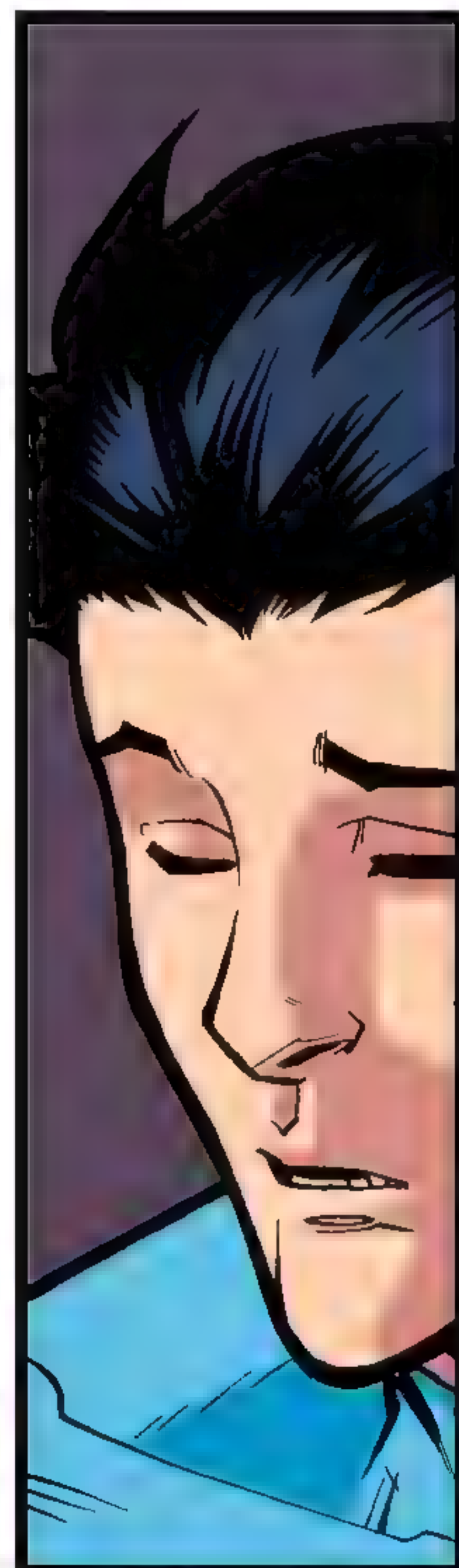
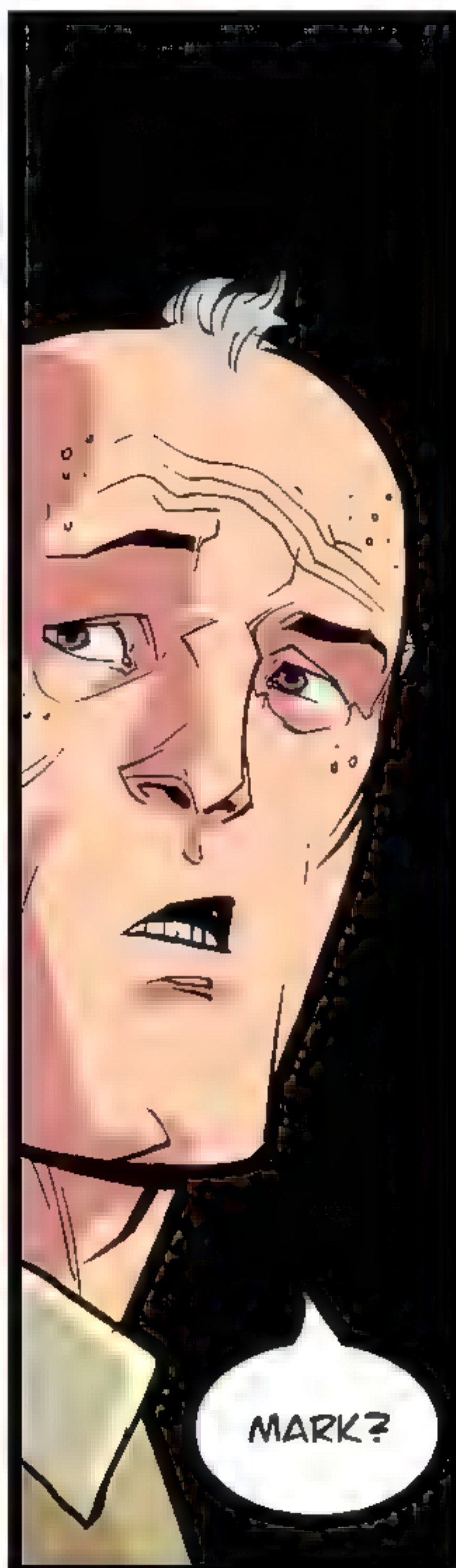
SO... YOU'VE MADE UP YOUR MIND THEN?

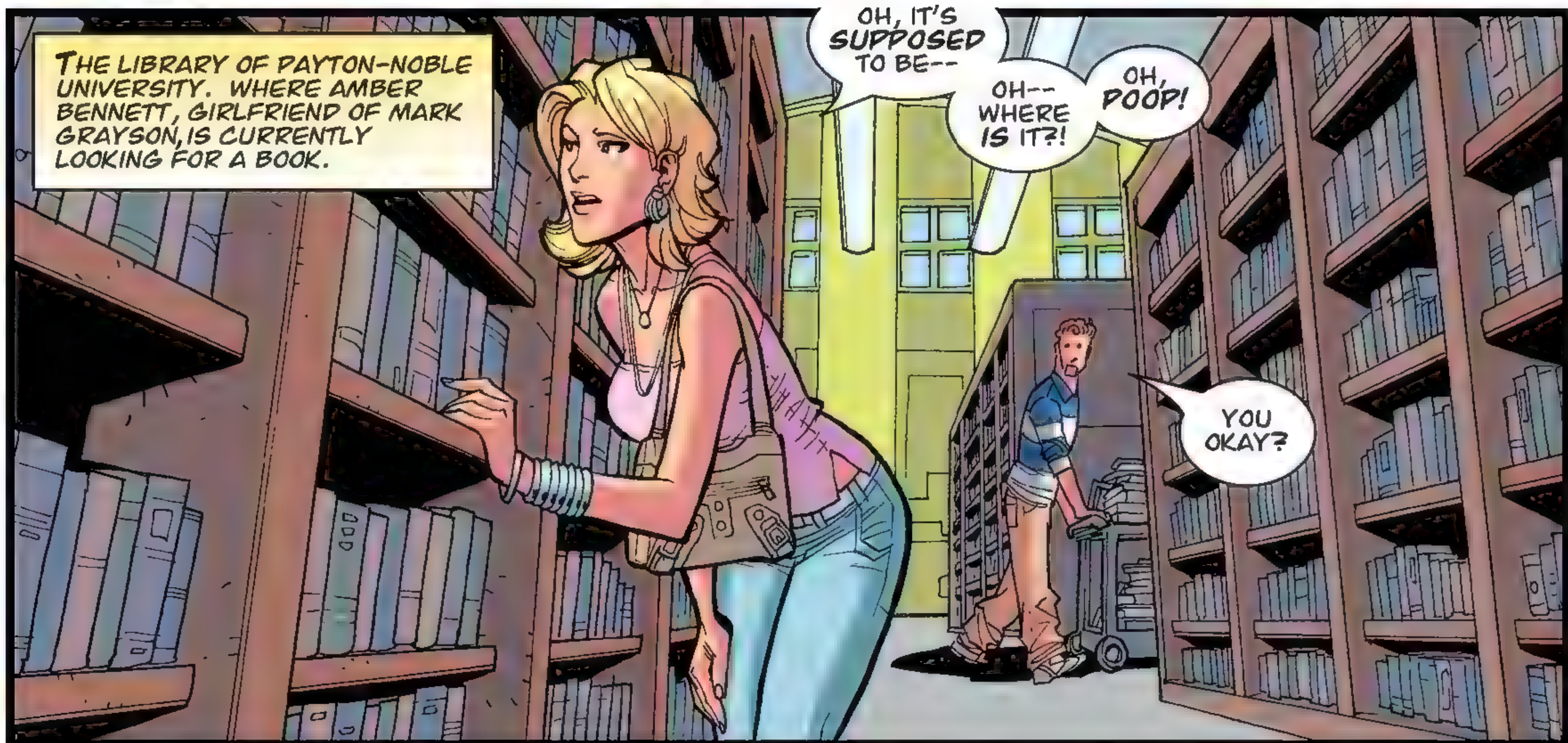
I THINK I HAVE. I'M WITH AMBER... I'M GOING TO STAY WITH AMBER. SHE'S PUT UP WITH SO MUCH... BEEN SO GOOD TO ME... I CAN'T BETRAY THAT.

I MIGHT... I DON'T KNOW... TALK TO EVE EVENTUALLY. JUST TO TELL HER I KNOW...

NOT A BAD IDEA, I SUPPOSE.

GLAD I COULD HELP.





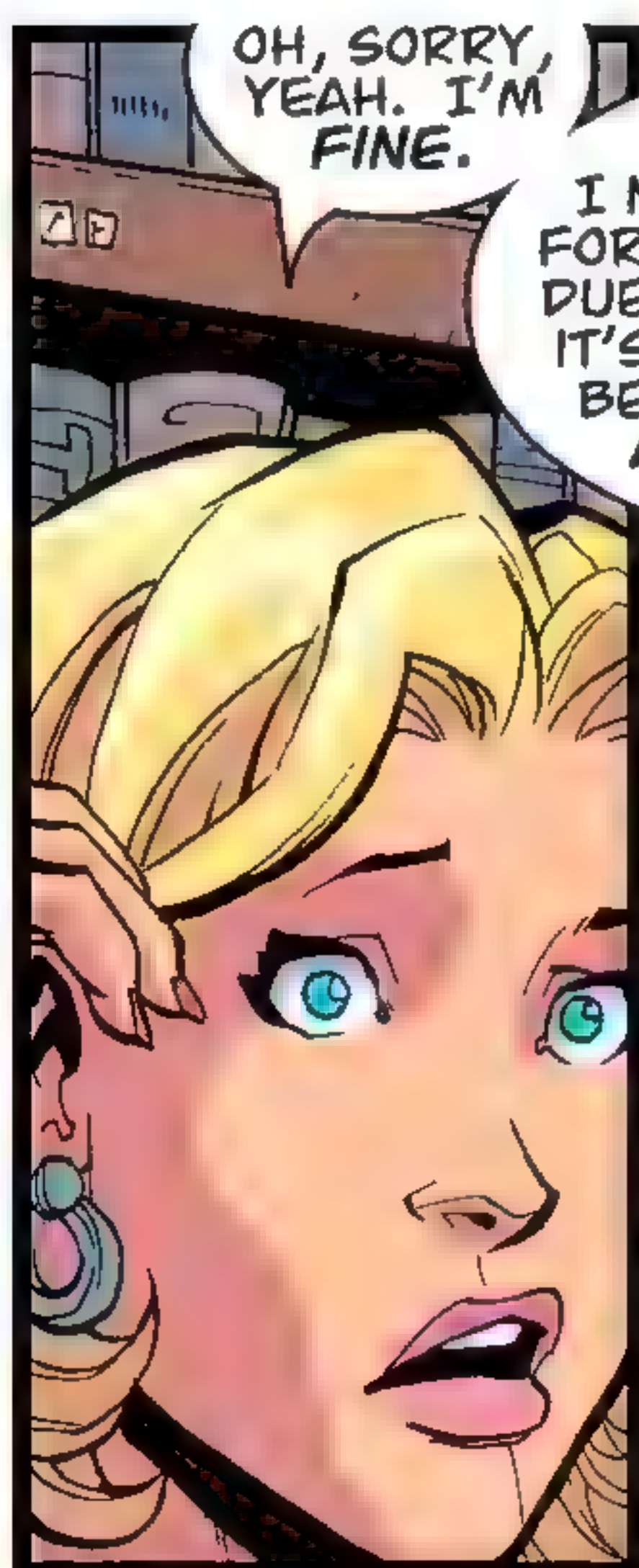
THE LIBRARY OF PAYTON-NOBLE UNIVERSITY. WHERE AMBER BENNETT, GIRLFRIEND OF MARK GRAYSON, IS CURRENTLY LOOKING FOR A BOOK.

OH, IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE--

OH-- WHERE IS IT?!

OH, POOP!

YOU OKAY?

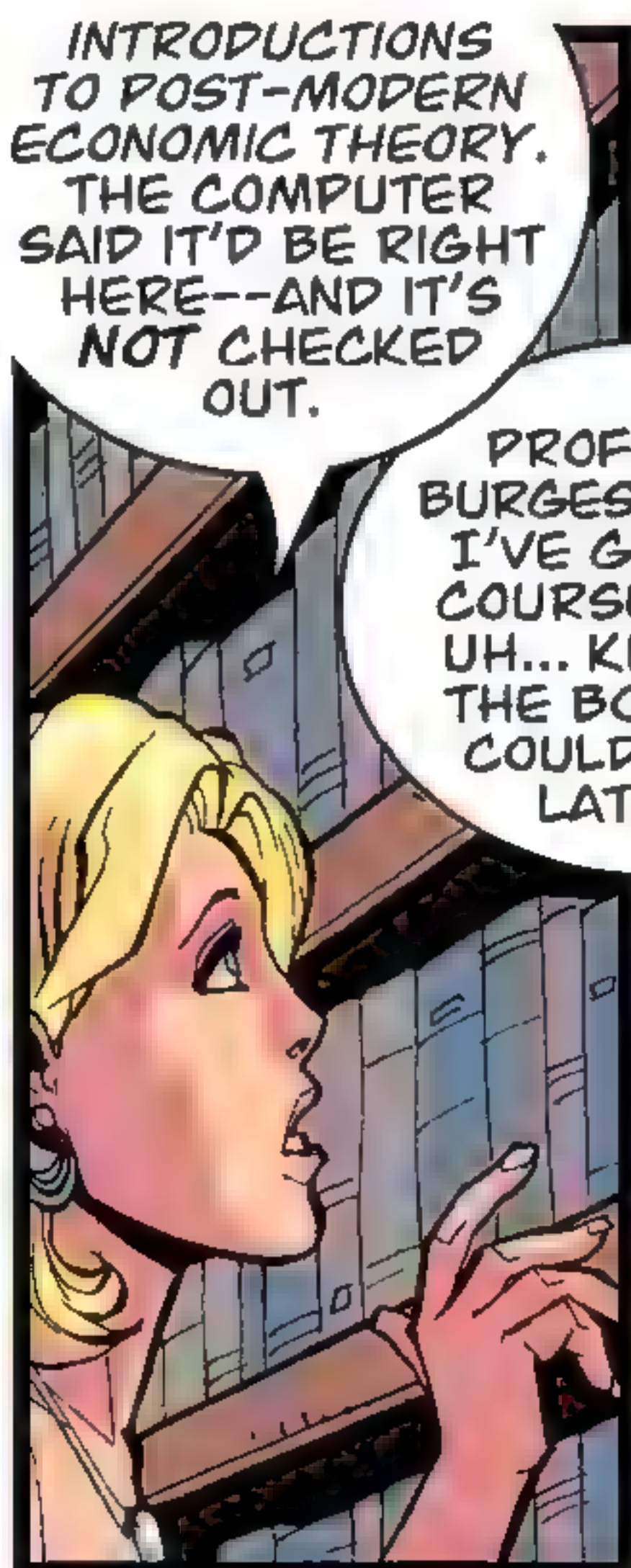


OH, SORRY, YEAH. I'M FINE.

I'M JUST-- I NEED THIS BOOK FOR A PAPER THAT'S DUE NEXT WEEK AND IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE RIGHT HERE-- AND IT'S NOT.

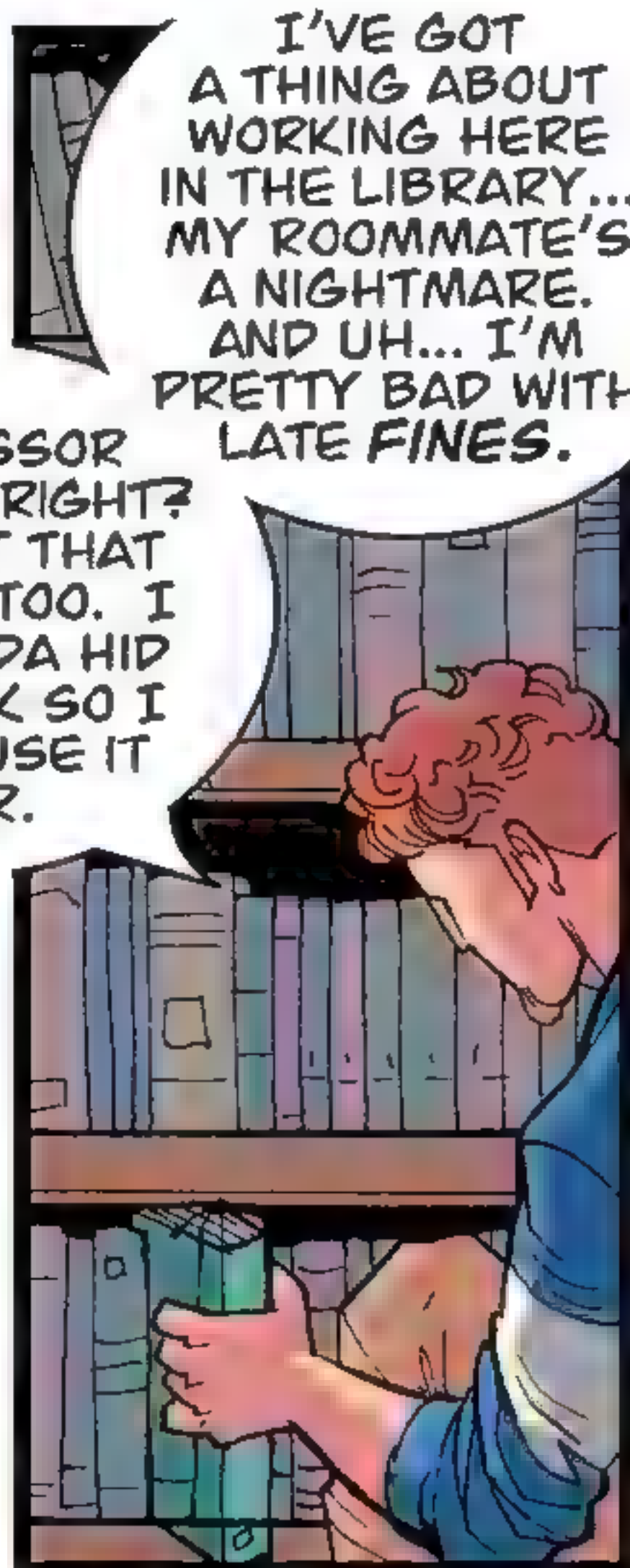


WELL, MAYBE I CAN HELP. WHAT BOOK IS IT?

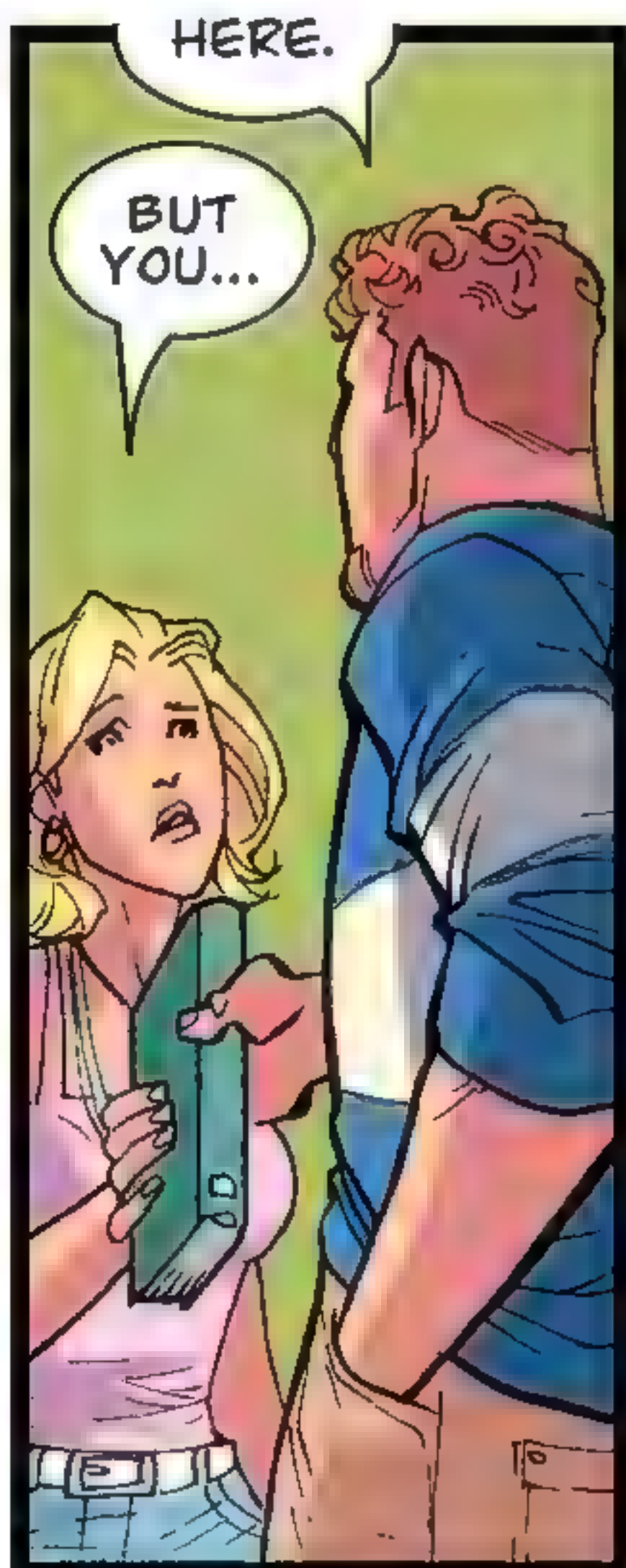


INTRODUCTIONS TO POST-MODERN ECONOMIC THEORY. THE COMPUTER SAID IT'D BE RIGHT HERE--AND IT'S NOT CHECKED OUT.

PROFESSOR BURGESS RIGHT? I'VE GOT THAT COURSE TOO. I UH... KINDA HID THE BOOK SO I COULD USE IT LATER.



I'VE GOT A THING ABOUT WORKING HERE IN THE LIBRARY... MY ROOMMATE'S A NIGHTMARE. AND UH... I'M PRETTY BAD WITH LATE FINES.



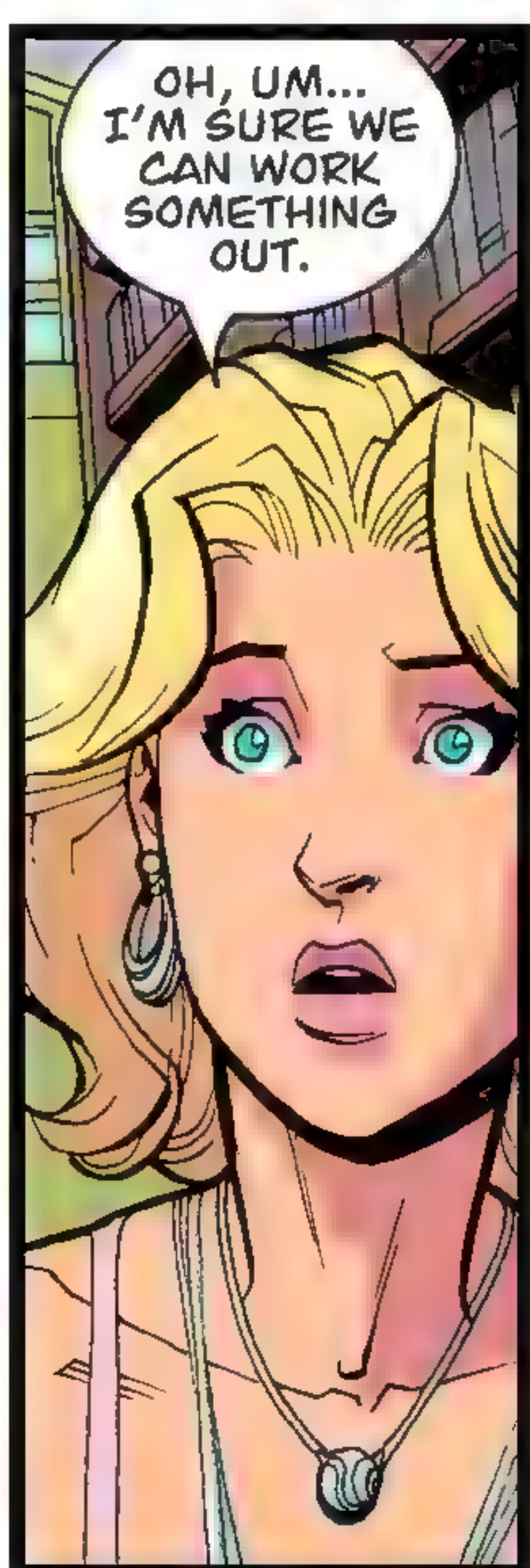
HERE.

BUT YOU...

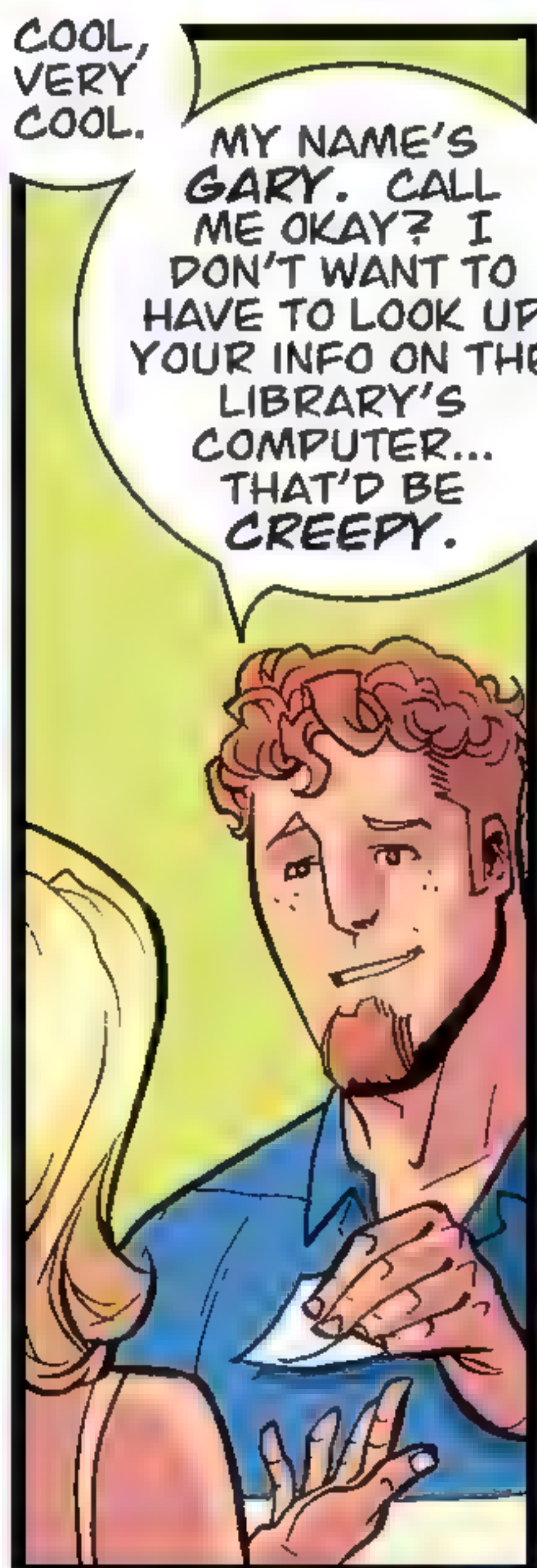


JUST... I DON'T KNOW, CALL ME WHEN YOU'RE DONE WITH IT? OR MAYBE WE COULD MEET SOMEWHERE AND SHARE IT?

I REALLY NEED THAT BOOK.

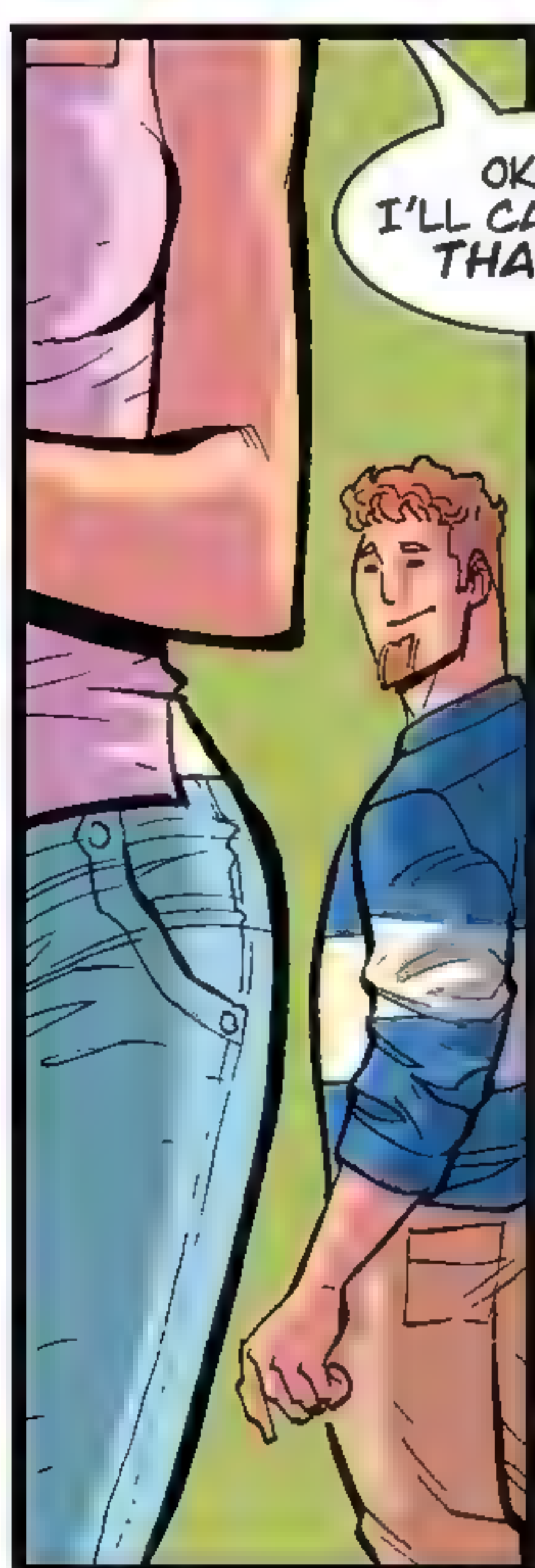


OH, UM... I'M SURE WE CAN WORK SOMETHING OUT.



COOL, VERY COOL.

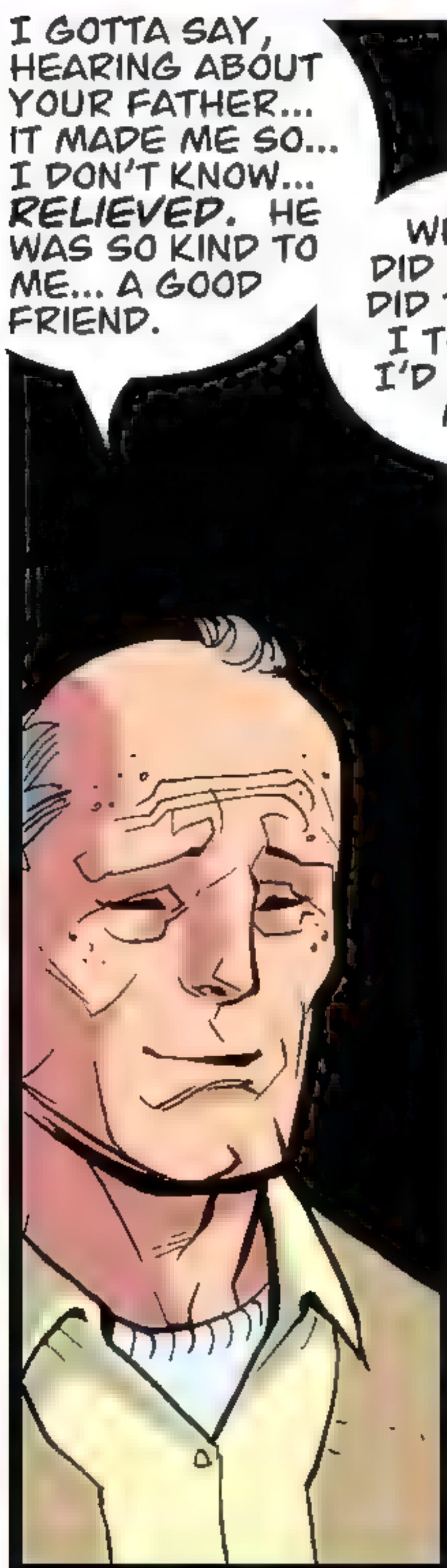
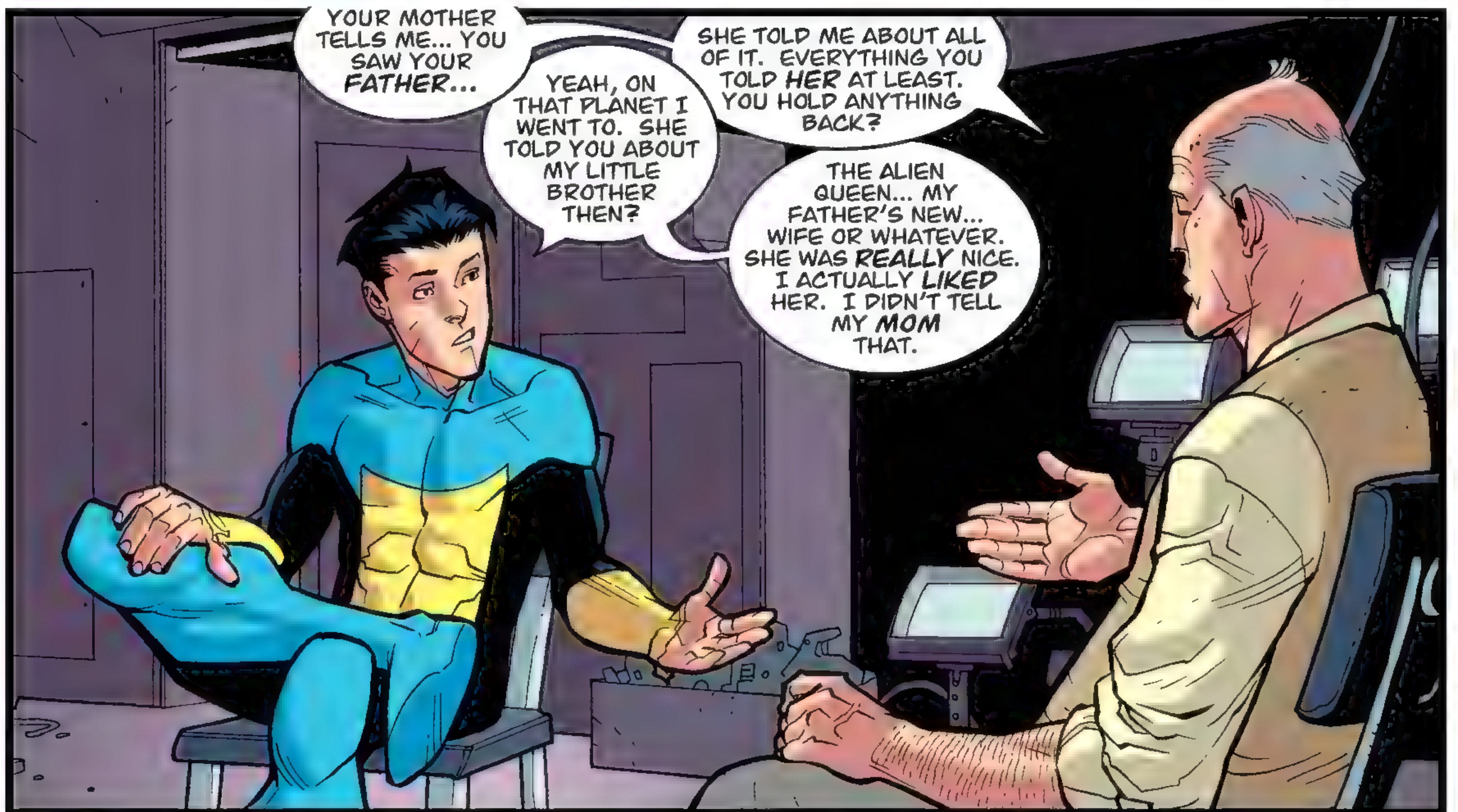
MY NAME'S GARY. CALL ME OKAY? I DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO LOOK UP YOUR INFO ON THE LIBRARY'S COMPUTER... THAT'D BE CREEPY.



OKAY, I'LL CALL YOU. THANKS.



NO PROBLEM.





IT SOUNDED IMPORTANT... LIKE IT WAS SOMETHING I REALLY NEEDED TO DO.

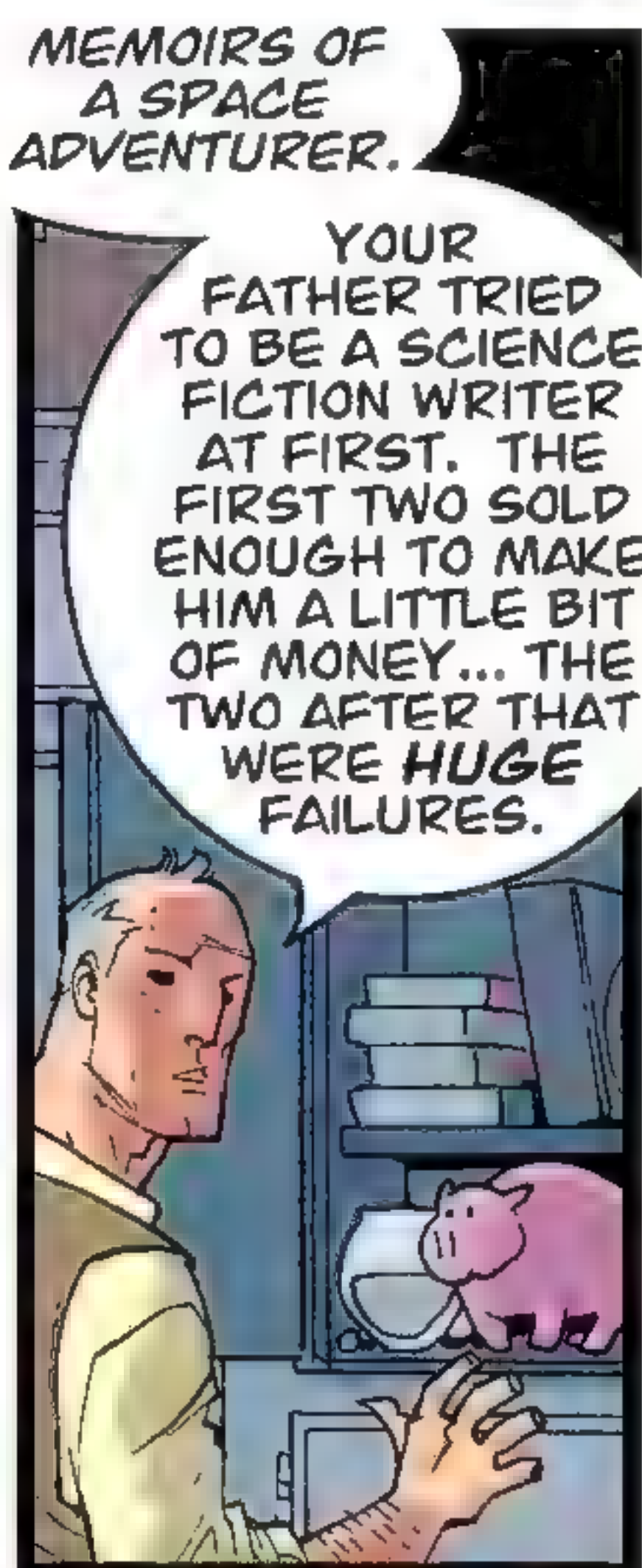
BUT MY DAD WROTE TRAVEL BOOKS RIGHT? WE'VE GOT THEM ALL AT THE HOUSE. WHY WOULD HE WANT ME TO READ THOSE?

YOU FATHER DIDN'T ALWAYS WRITE TRAVEL BOOKS.

I THINK I'VE GOT HIS "DIRTY LITTLE SECRET" STASHED IN ONE OF THESE CABINETS OVER HERE. THEY DIDN'T TAKE OFF, THEY SOLD BARELY JUST ENOUGH FOR HIM TO DO A FEW OF THEM... BUT I WAS A FAN.



WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?



MEMOIRS OF A SPACE ADVENTURER.

YOUR FATHER TRIED TO BE A SCIENCE FICTION WRITER AT FIRST. THE FIRST TWO SOLD ENOUGH TO MAKE HIM A LITTLE BIT OF MONEY... THE TWO AFTER THAT WERE HUGE FAILURES.



SO THEN HE STARTED WRITING TRAVEL BOOKS?

RIGHT.



FOR WHATEVER REASON HE DIDN'T LIKE TO TALK ABOUT THESE BOOKS. HE WAS EMBARRASSED BY THEM... OR SOMETHING. LIKE I SAY, I REALLY LIKED THEM, SO I KEPT THEM.



OH, THIS IS WEIRD.

CAN I--?



HE WAS YOUR FATHER, MARK.

THEY'RE YOURS, TAKE THEM.



THESE LOOK SILLY.

WHY WOULD HE WANT ME TO READ THESE?



I MEAN, LOOK AT THESE TITLES.

LOST INSIDE THE CHASM TO OBLIVION.

HATE TRIBES ON THE PLANET WREKK.



AND THIS ONE...

THE MAN WITH THE INVINCIBLE GUN.



I GOTTA READ THIS.



how he obtained the weapon, or where it came from. The origins of the weapon are completely unknown to the empire. All that is known are its capabilities.

The information was gathered from thousands of sources. Sketchy eyewitness accounts, damaged artifacts--evidence of the weapon's power--everything points to the same conclusion. This weapon--the infinity ray--emitted an energy wave that was unstoppable. It was said that blasts from this infinity ray still race through the cosmos, blasting a path through anything they encounter. Planets, Stars, Ships--anything in their path is destroyed. Again, this is only a theory. No one has ever gotten close enough to study the infinity ray for themselves. The Space Rider made sure of that.

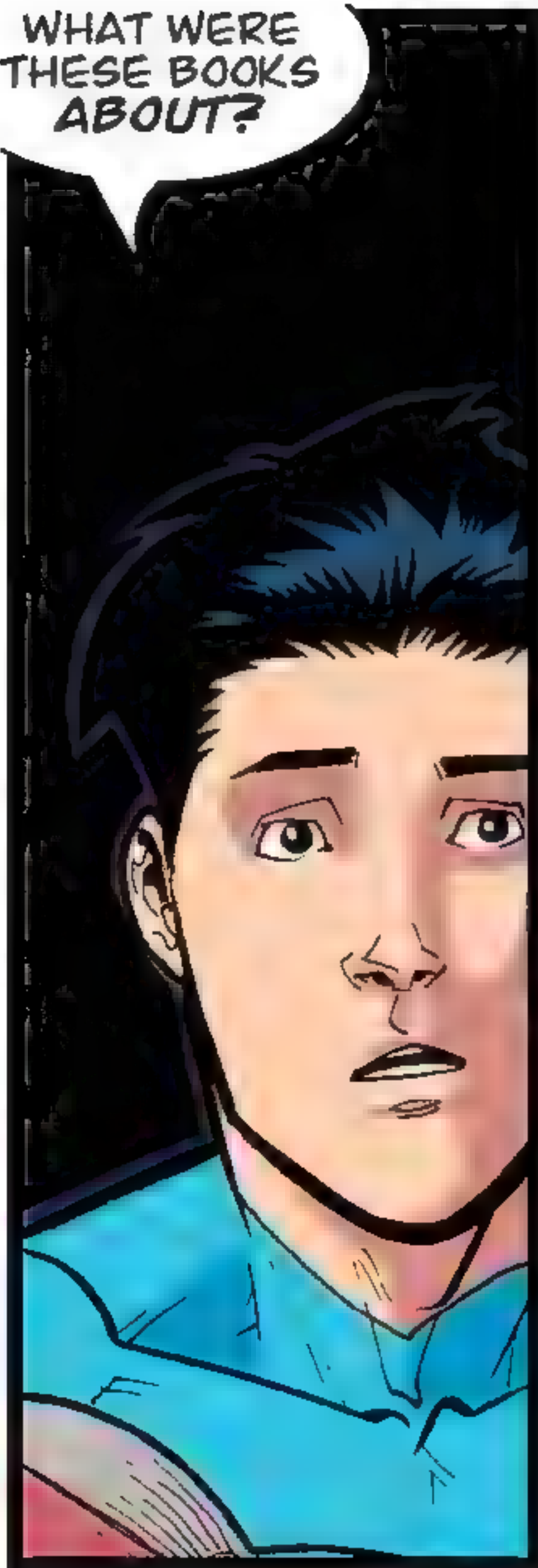
Whether the story was true or not, I had my mission. I was to hunt down the Space Rider, determine whether or not the stories of his weapon were true and if so, arrest him. He was to stand trial for offenses against the empire. Were his weapon as powerful as it was fabled to be he was a huge threat. I left at once.

Little was known about the Space Rider, where he lived, what quadrant of space he operated in, all was a mystery. He had become the stuff of legend. Stories of him stretch across the twelve galaxies. He was said to be in two places at once. Stories were conflicting with each other. Finding him would be no easy task. Yet it was a task I had to complete. I dare not fail my people. I knew what was at stake. Our very way of life.

At first, I studied the stories for similarities, common elements. Anything that made it possible for me to tell fact from fiction--if there was any fact to these stories. In time I would find that the Space Rider and his weapon were very real--and as far fetched as they were, its capabilities were that of tall tales. But it would take me nearly fifteen years to discover this.

The first clue came when I was contacted by a former subordinate of The Space Rider who was willing to inform me of his possible whereabouts. With

WHAT WERE THESE BOOKS ABOUT?



OH, UH... SOME SPACE ALIEN DUDE IS HUNTING DOWN ENEMIES OF HIS GOVERNMENT OR SOMETHING. ELIMINATING THEM. EACH BOOK HAS HIM GOING AFTER ONE OR TWO THREATS TO THEIR EMPIRE OR SOMETHING.



IT WAS COOL STUFF.



YOU MEAN...IT'S ABOUT A GUY FROM AN ALIEN PLANET HUNTING DOWN ENEMIES OF HIS EMPIRE?



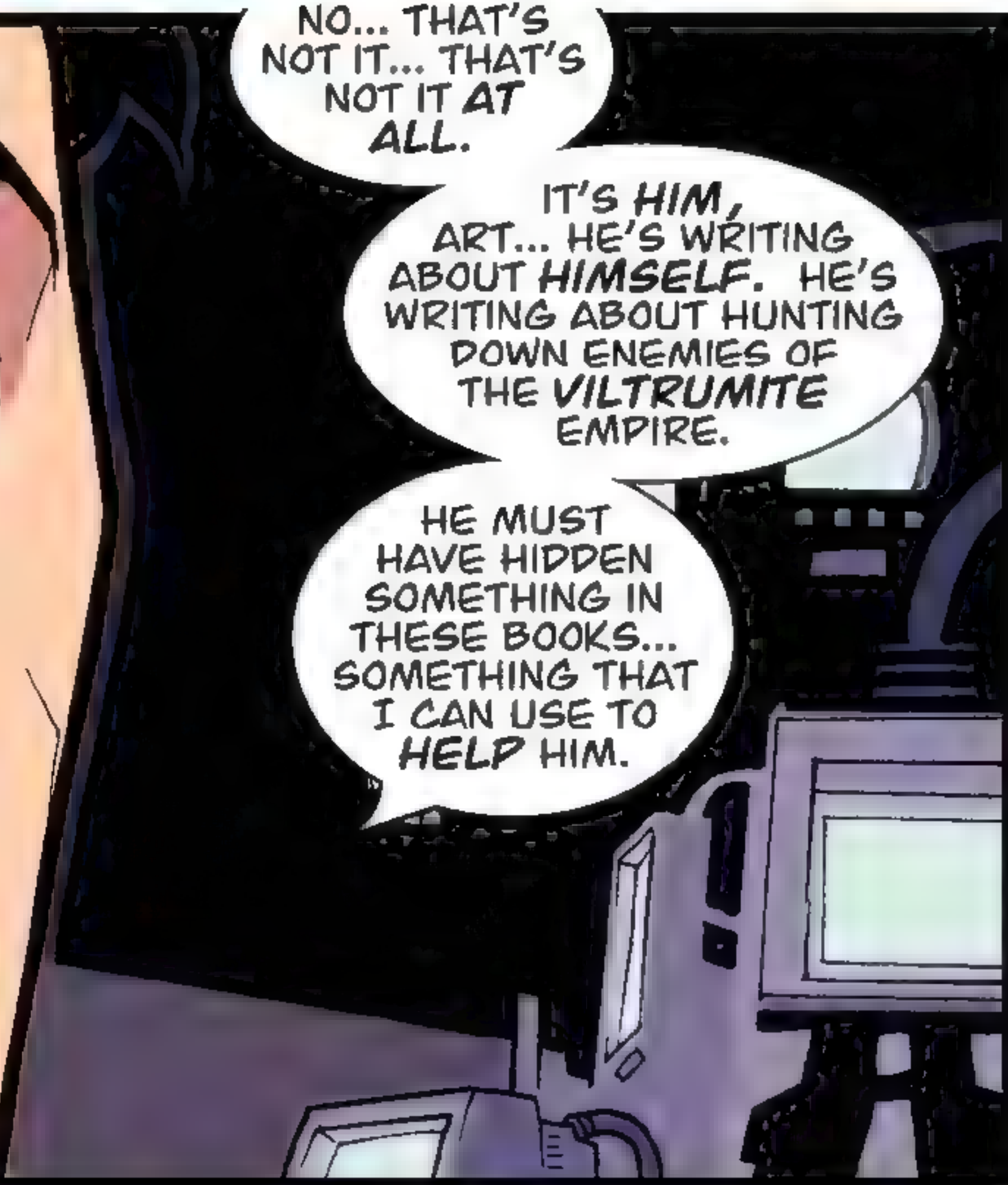
YEAH. YOU KNOW, I NEVER REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT IT, BUT I WONDER IF THESE WERE LIKE VILTRUMITE FOLK LORE OR SOMETHING THAT HE WAS JUST RETELLING HERE.



NO... THAT'S NOT IT... THAT'S NOT IT AT ALL.

IT'S HIM, ART... HE'S WRITING ABOUT HIMSELF. HE'S WRITING ABOUT HUNTING DOWN ENEMIES OF THE VILTRUMITE EMPIRE.

HE MUST HAVE HIDDEN SOMETHING IN THESE BOOKS... SOMETHING THAT I CAN USE TO HELP HIM.



BUT WHAT COULD IT BE? WHAT COULD HE HAVE HIDDEN HERE?



SAVAGE PLANET, SAVAGE BEASTS?

WHAT IS THIS ONE ABOUT?





and at once, I knew I had made a grave mistake. In an instant I was surrounded, swarmed, overwhelmed. It was unclear if I would make it out alive. I had grossly underestimated the situation.

The mission was clear, investigate the inhabitants of this harsh planet, determine their exact threat level to the empire, and then report back for further instructions. It appeared then that I might not make it back to receive those instructions. It was clear the threat level was high. With almost minimal effort I was quickly injured. These creatures were fast. They seemed to come out of nowhere. I did not have time to react. My life was immediately in danger.

The size of these beasts was deceiving. They were barely twice my size. I've battled creatures ten times their size with infinitely less effort. The planet they inhabit caused them to evolve into such tough creatures. The gravitational quotient on this unnamed planet was so severe they had to be stronger than most to simply be able to move. They were remarkable creatures. In hindsight I can look at them scientifically and I find a tremendous respect for them.

At the time I felt differently. I just wanted to survive, if that meant wiping out the entire race, I would have done it, as harsh as that sounds.

With every attempt to reach the sky and escape to the stars, I was thwarted, pulled back into the heap, ravaged all over again. While these creatures did not possess the ability to fly they could jump long distances and high into the air with their powerful legs. Any attempt to fly was met with a swift attack from one or more that resulted in my falling back to the planet's surface. It was clear that strategy was not going to work.

I began trying to fight my way through the horde. If I could push through them, maybe I could get far enough away from them fast enough to make my escape. The problem with that strategy was that I was under constant attack. I could feel the flesh being ripped from my bones as I pressed on. This method of escape was not going



OH,
GOD... OH,
MAN...



WHAT IS IT,
MARK?

THESE
BOOKS, THEY--
I CAN'T
BELIEVE
HOW...



YEAH, THE
THINGS MY DAD
WROTE ABOUT
HERE ARE REAL,
THEY HAVE
TO BE...

AND IT'S
NOT JUST ABOUT
ENEMIES OF THE
VILTRUMITES... IT'S
ABOUT ELIMINATING
THINGS THAT CAN
HURT THEM.

THINGS
THAT CAN **HURT**
VILTRUMITES...

MY DAD
IS TELLING
ME HOW
TO **BEAT**
THEM.



CHECK IT OUT! INVINCIBLE, SHADOWHAWK, FIREBREATHER, AND ZEPHYR TOGETHER IN

THE PACT

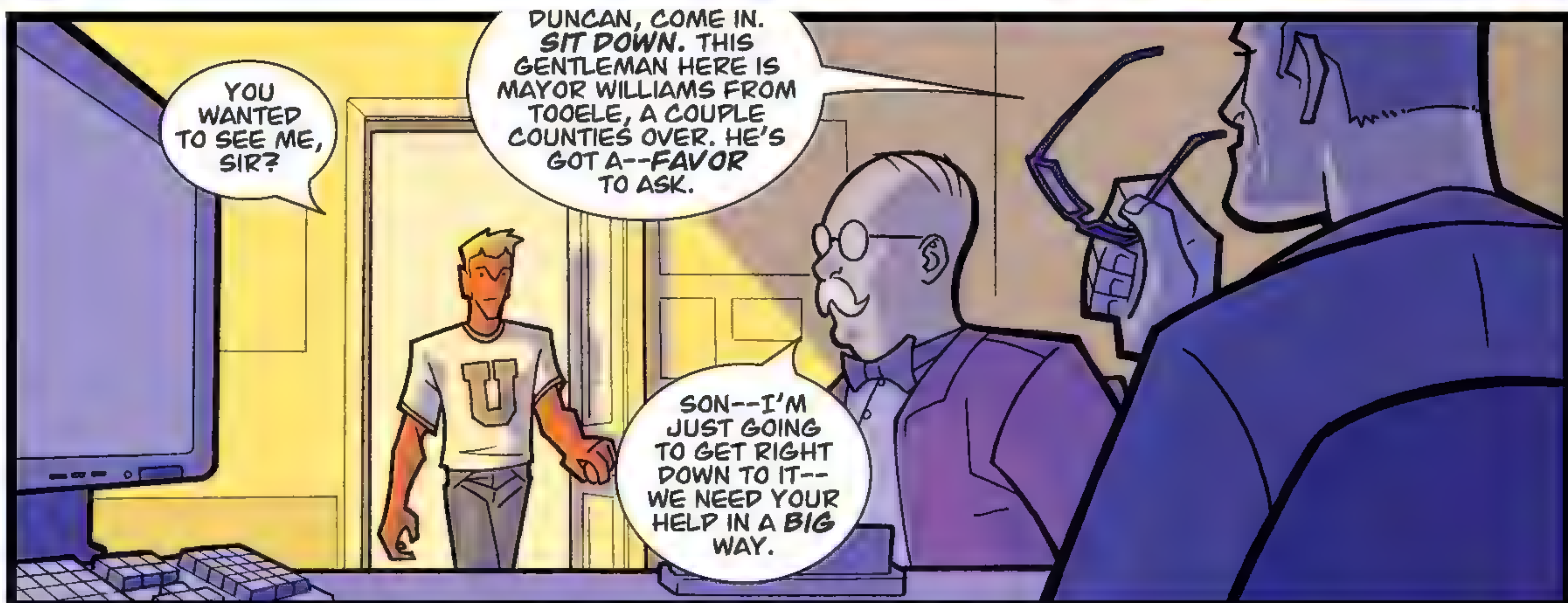
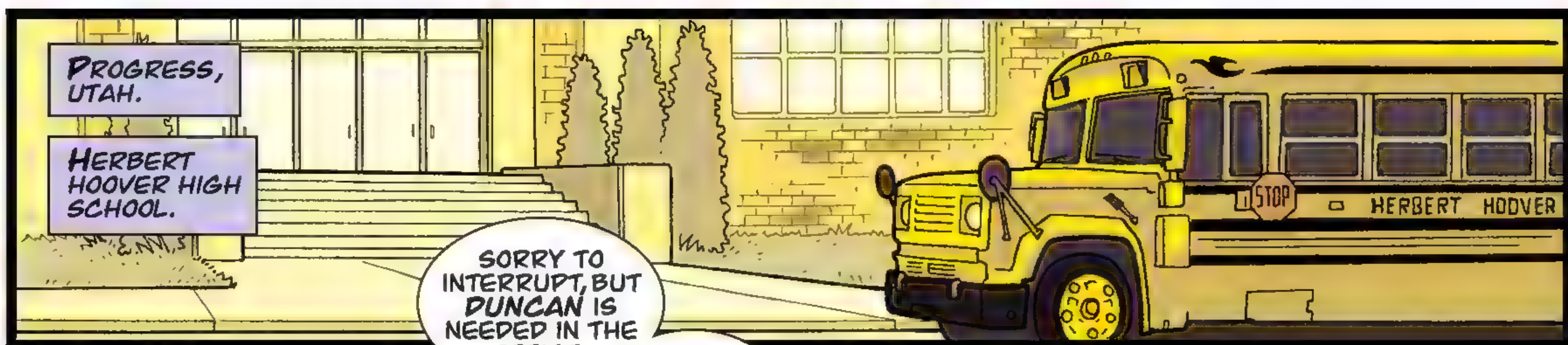


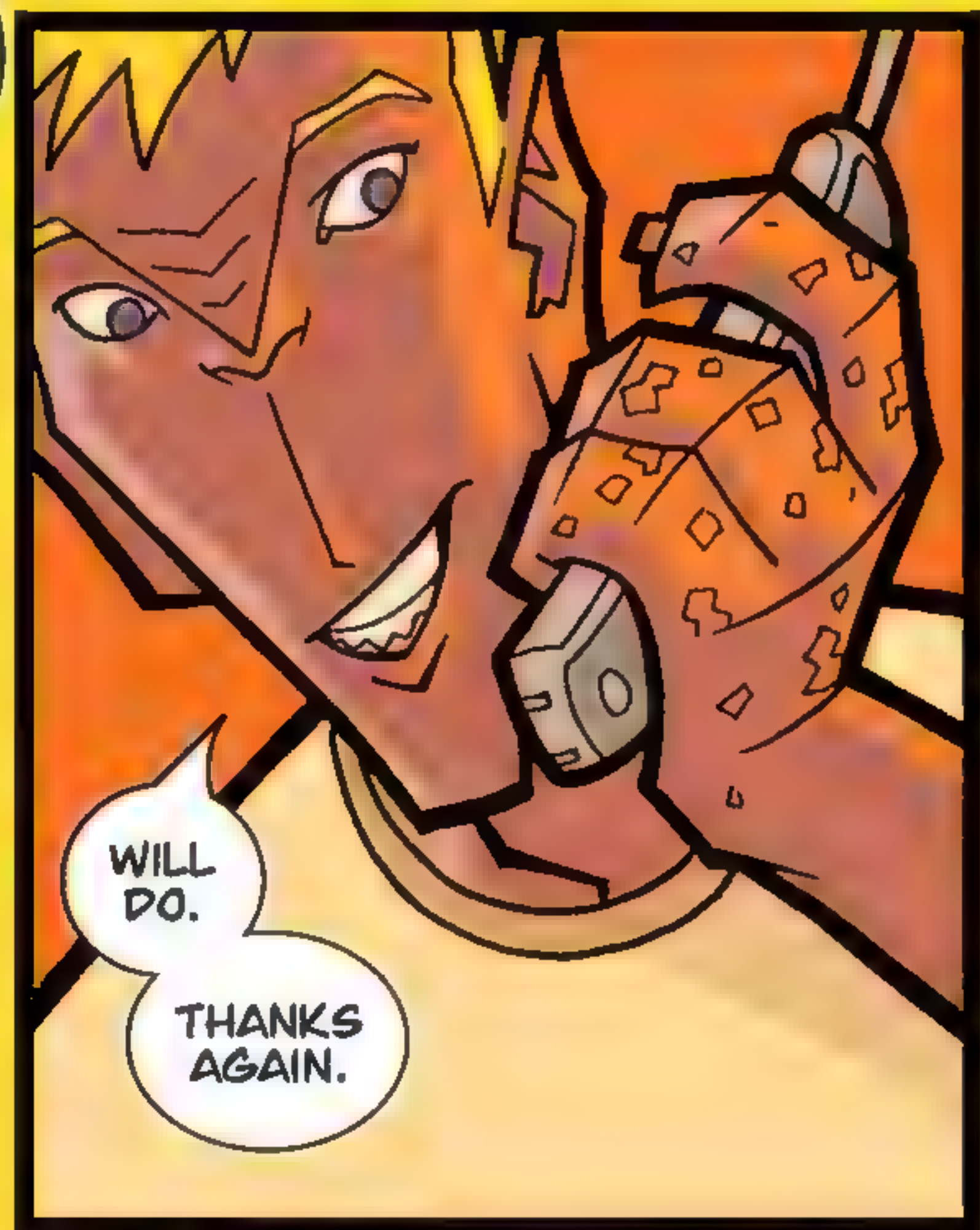
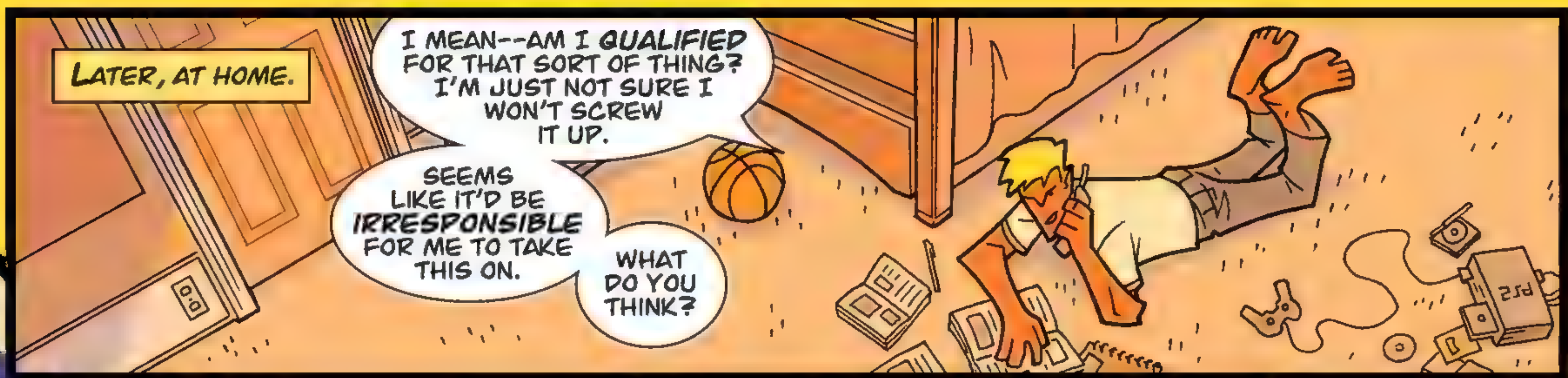
HURRY UP WITH YOUR GRAVES, FIREBREATHER AND ZEPHYR! I'D FINISH YOU MYSELF, BUT... HA, HA... I HAVE A CODE AGAINST KILLING...

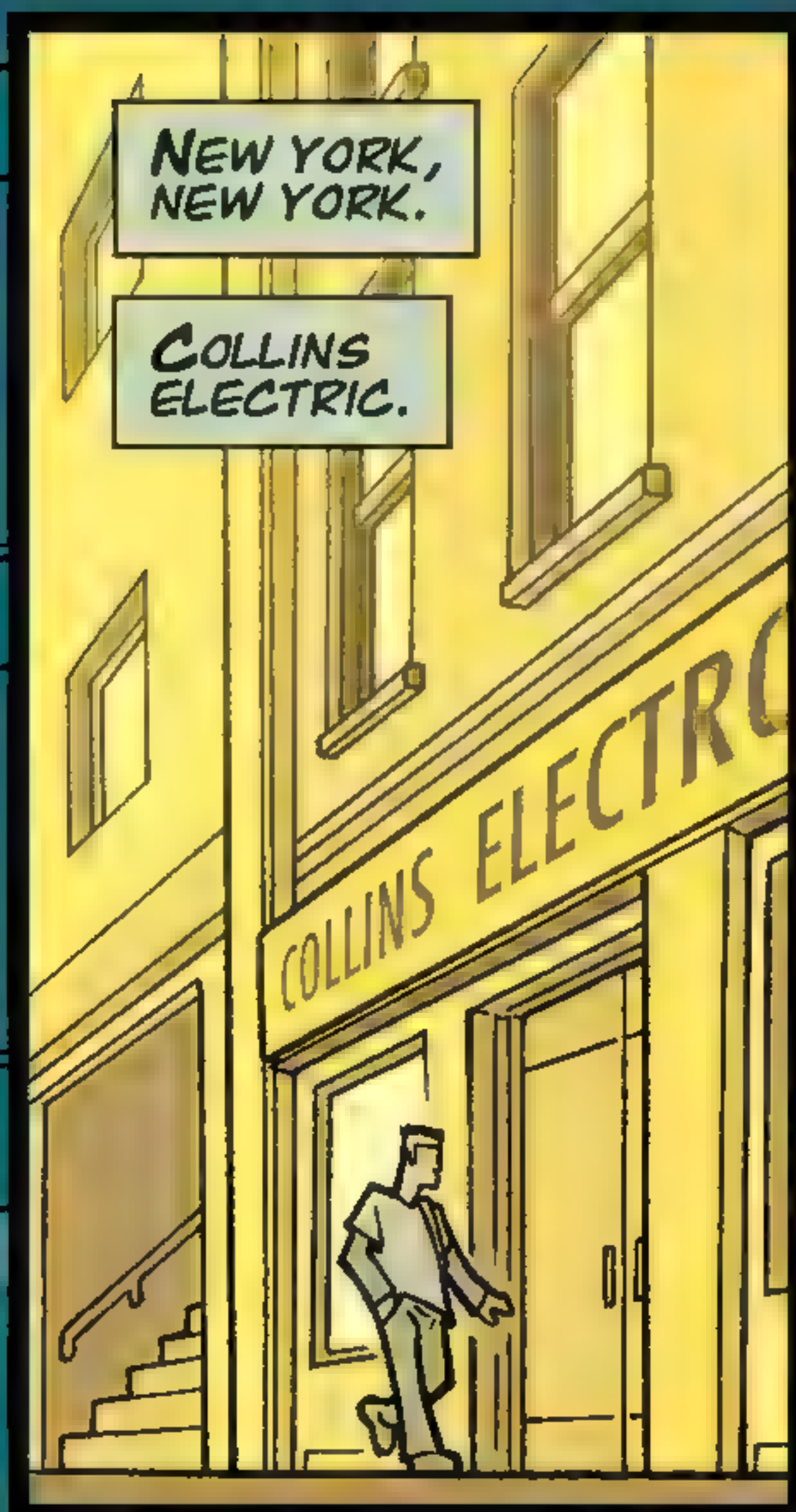
...SO I'LL DO THE JOB, BOYS!

"DIG NOW, DIE LATER!"

JASON RIF HOWARD
AFTER WF 195







AREN'T YOU A LITTLE LATE? YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE HERE AN HOUR AGO.

I WAS--- WELL---

OUT PATROLLING?



YEAH-- ACTUALLY, YEAH.



EDDIE, JEEZ-- DON'T YOU HAVE HOMEWORK TO DO? YOU CAN'T SPEND ALL YOUR FREE TIME OUT THERE PLAYING HERO.



I KNOW-- IT'S JUST THAT--

I'VE HEARD IT ALL BEFORE, EDDIE. JUST GET STARTED ON YOUR HOMEWORK.



OH MY GOD-- FIREBREATHER CALLED?! WHAT DID HE WANT?!

WELL, IF YOU HAD BEEN HERE YOU COULD HAVE ASKED HIM.

OH, I ALMOST FORGOT--YOUR FRIEND DUNCAN CALLED.

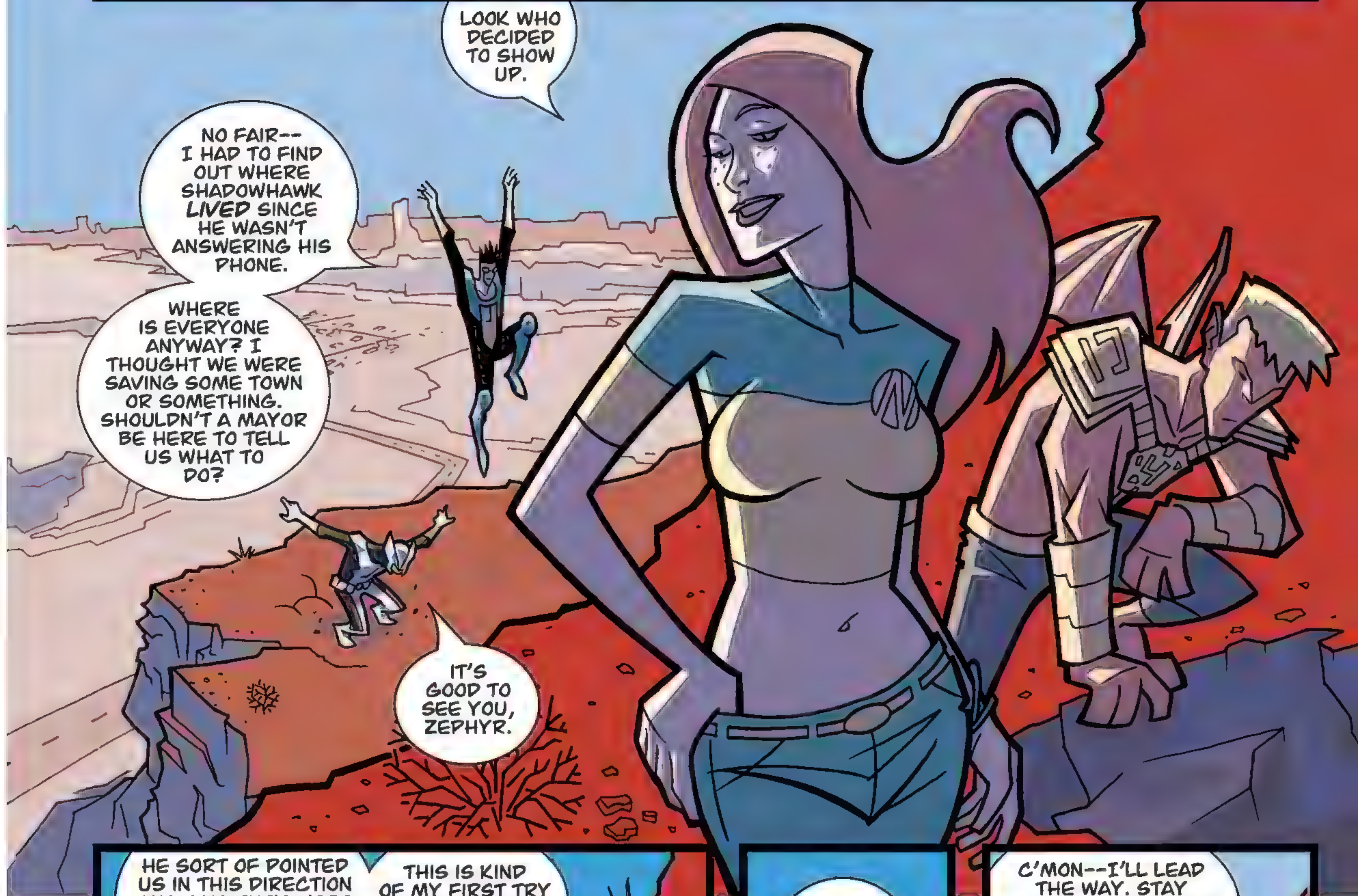




AFTER A SHORT FLIGHT ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

THEY SHOULD BE AROUND HERE SOMEWHERE. AT LEAST--THAT'S WHAT DUNCAN SAID...

THERE-- IS THAT THEM?



LOOK WHO DECIDED TO SHOW UP.

NO FAIR-- I HAD TO FIND OUT WHERE SHADOWHAWK LIVED SINCE HE WASN'T ANSWERING HIS PHONE.

WHERE IS EVERYONE ANYWAY? I THOUGHT WE WERE SAVING SOME TOWN OR SOMETHING. SHOULDN'T A MAYOR BE HERE TO TELL US WHAT TO DO?

IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU, ZEPHYR.



HE SORT OF POINTED US IN THIS DIRECTION AND SAID THEY WERE COMING OUT OF THIS HOLE. THEN THEY RAN FOR THE HILLS.

THIS IS KIND OF MY FIRST TRY AT SUPERHERO WORK. ANY IDEAS?

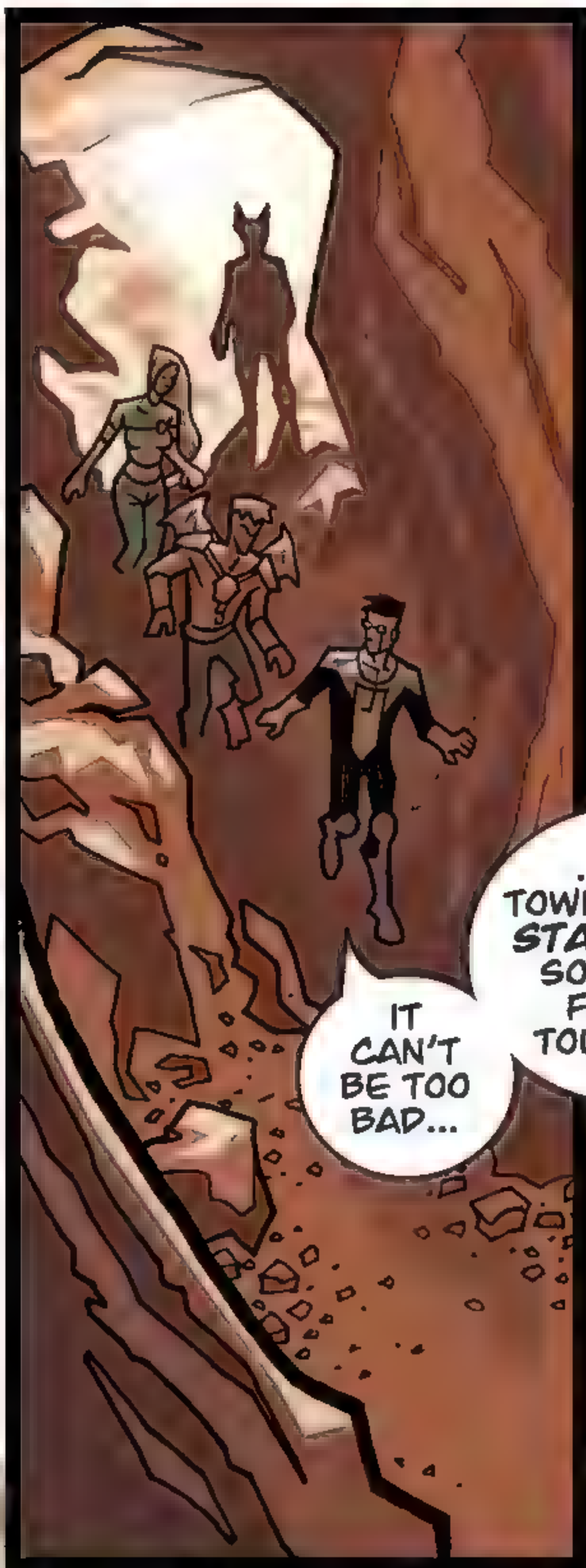


DON'T LOOK AT ME. I'M A FOLLOWER, NOT A LEADER.



C'MON--I'LL LEAD THE WAY. STAY BEHIND ME. ANYTHING THAT HITS US BY SURPRISE SHOULD BOUNCE OFF.

EVEN IF IT KNOCKS ME OUT IN THE PROCESS.

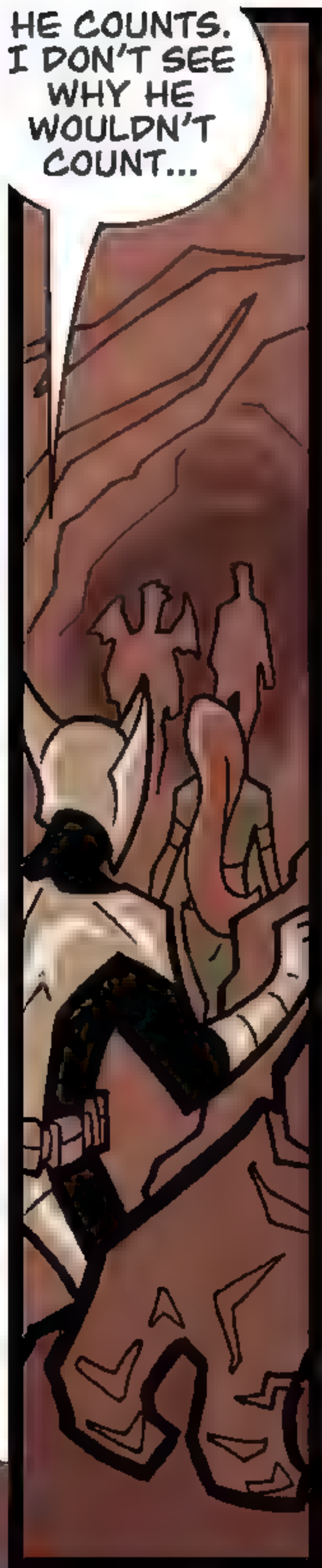


IT CAN'T BE TOO BAD...

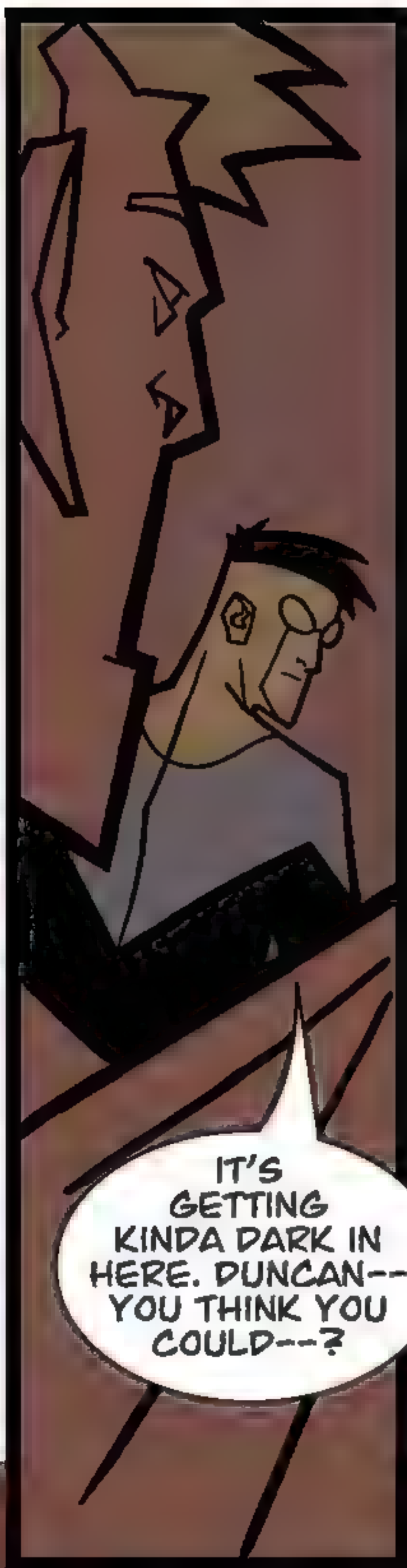
...THE TOWN'S STILL STANDING, SO WE'VE FACED TOUGHER.



YOU'RE COUNTING MY FATHER AREN'T YOU? WHY WOULD YOU COUNT HIM?



HE COUNTS. I DON'T SEE WHY HE WOULDN'T COUNT...



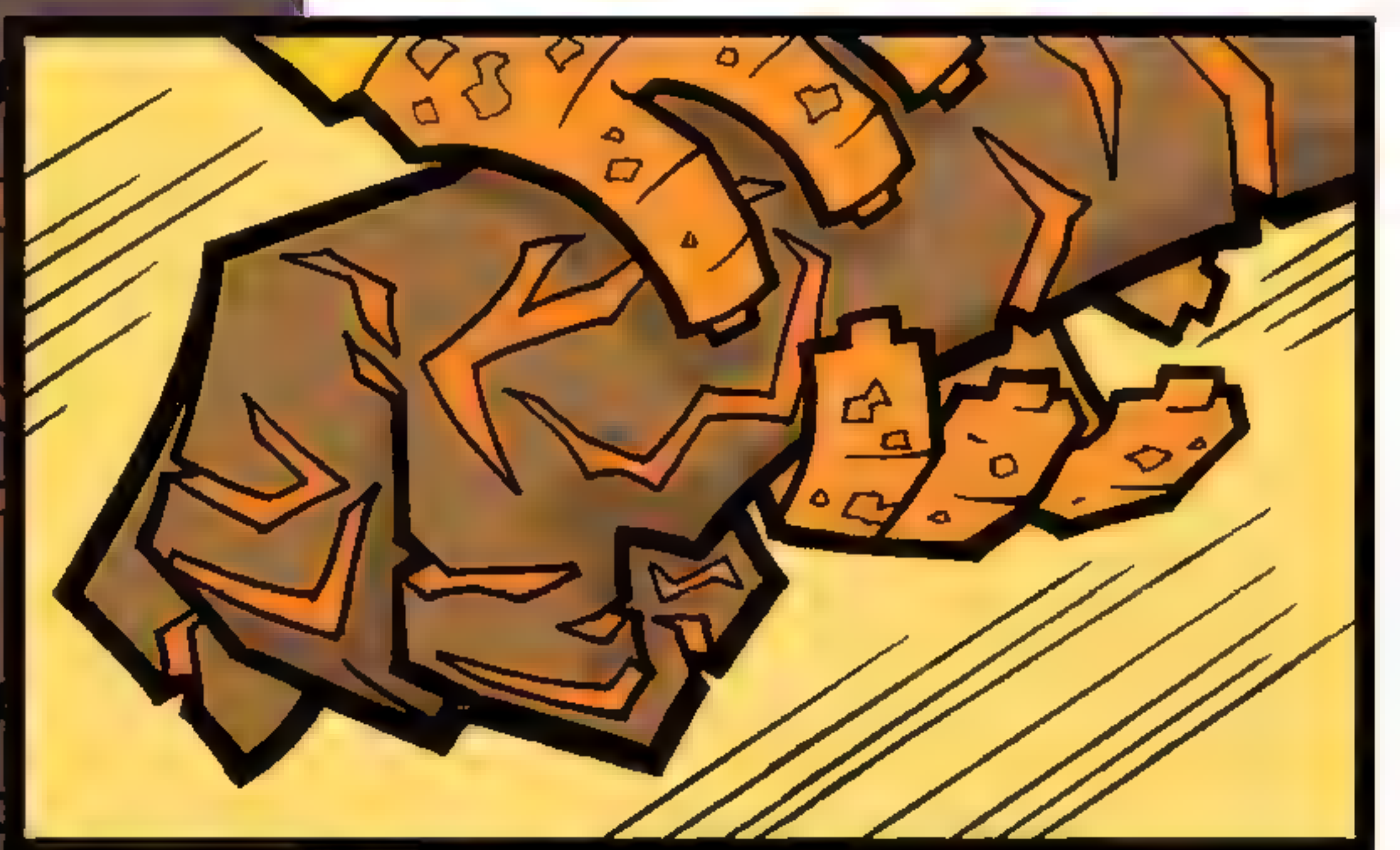
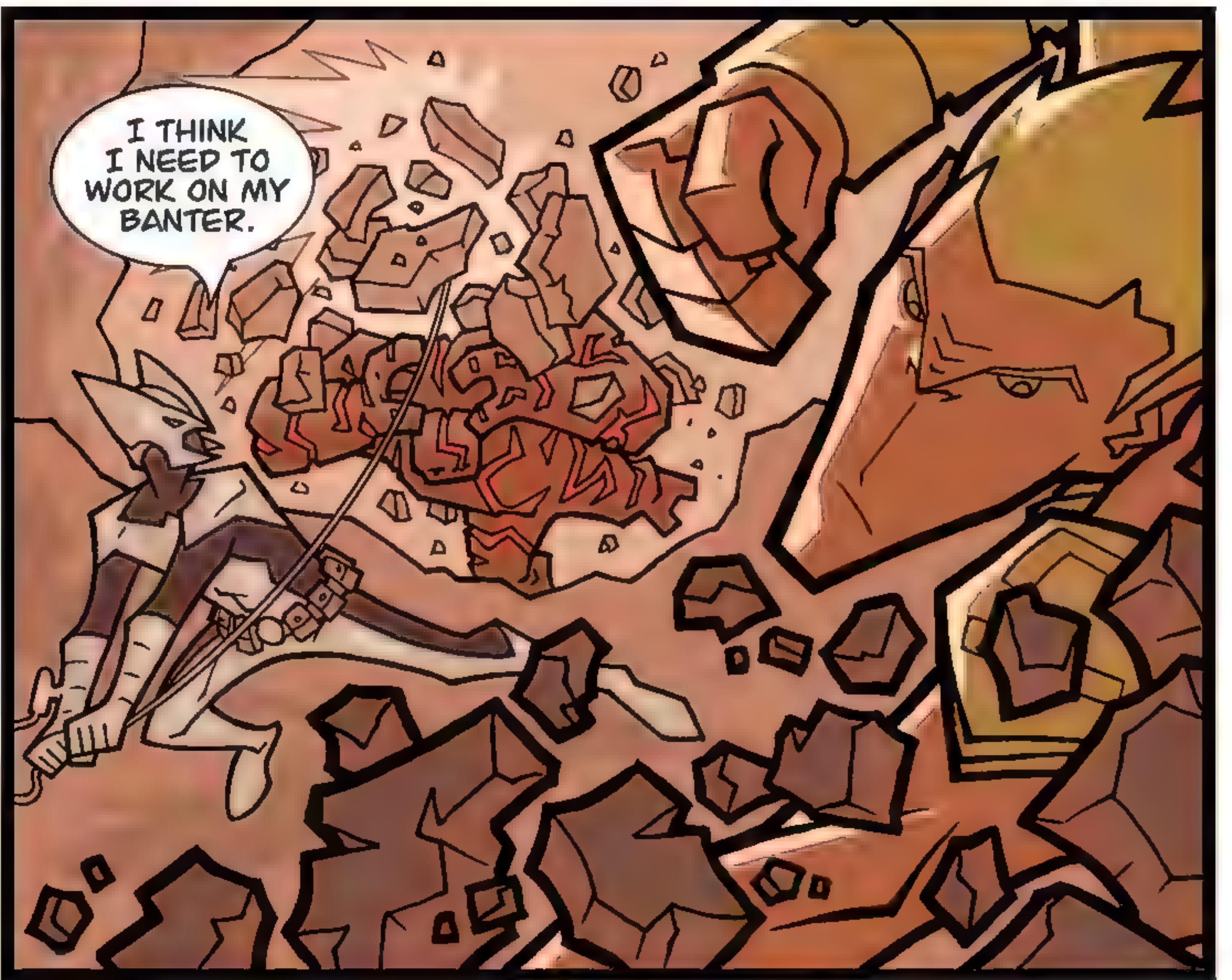
IT'S GETTING KINDA DARK IN HERE. DUNCAN-- YOU THINK YOU COULD---



CHECK IT OUT-- LAVA PEOPLE.

THAT DIDN'T TAKE LONG!









UH.



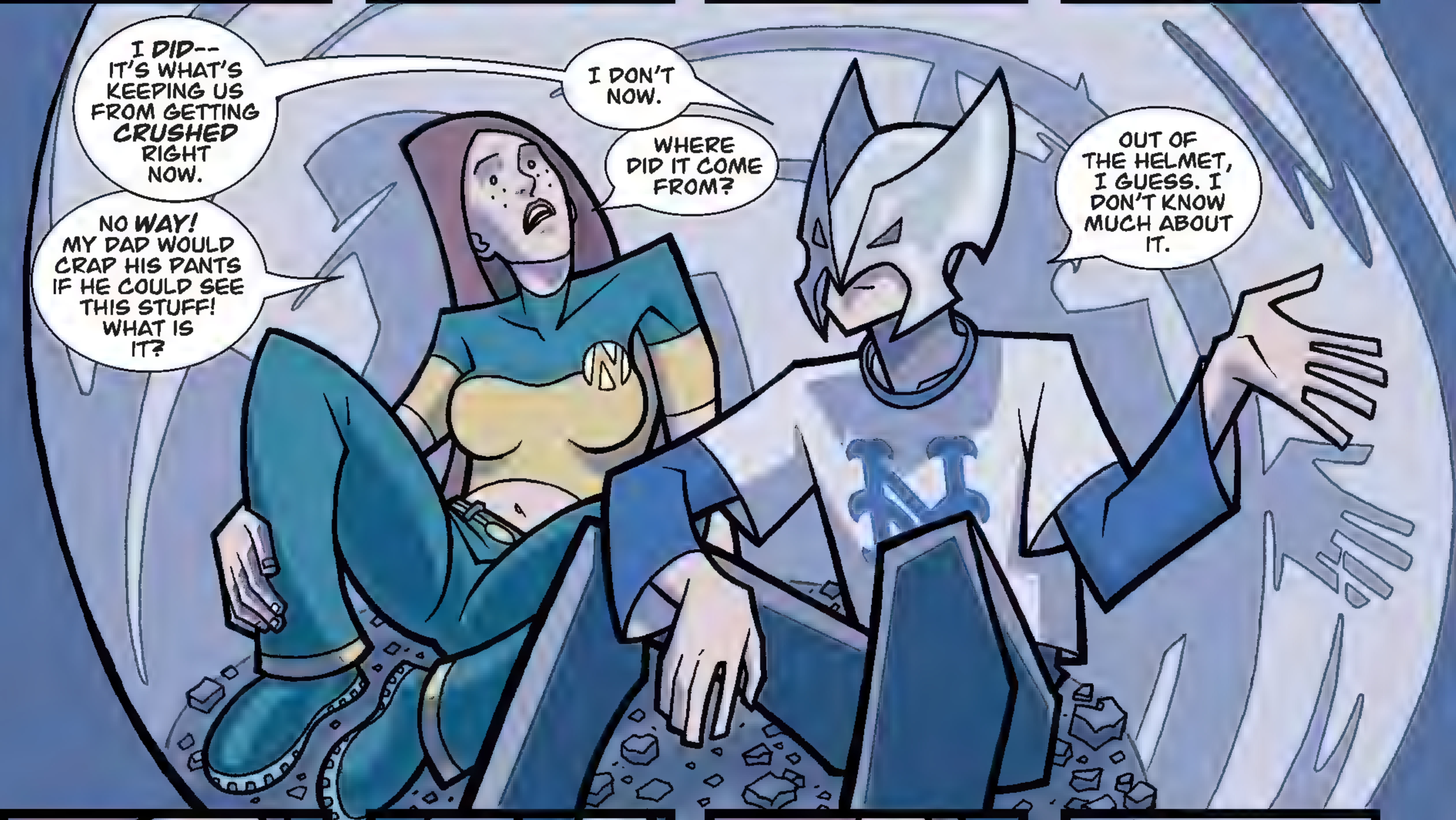
WE'RE
NOT
DEAD?



NOPE--
WE'RE
OKAY...
SO FAR.



WHERE DID YOUR
COSTUME GO?
YOU WEREN'T
WEARING THAT
BEFORE WERE
YOU? I THOUGHT
YOU HAD A
COSTUME.



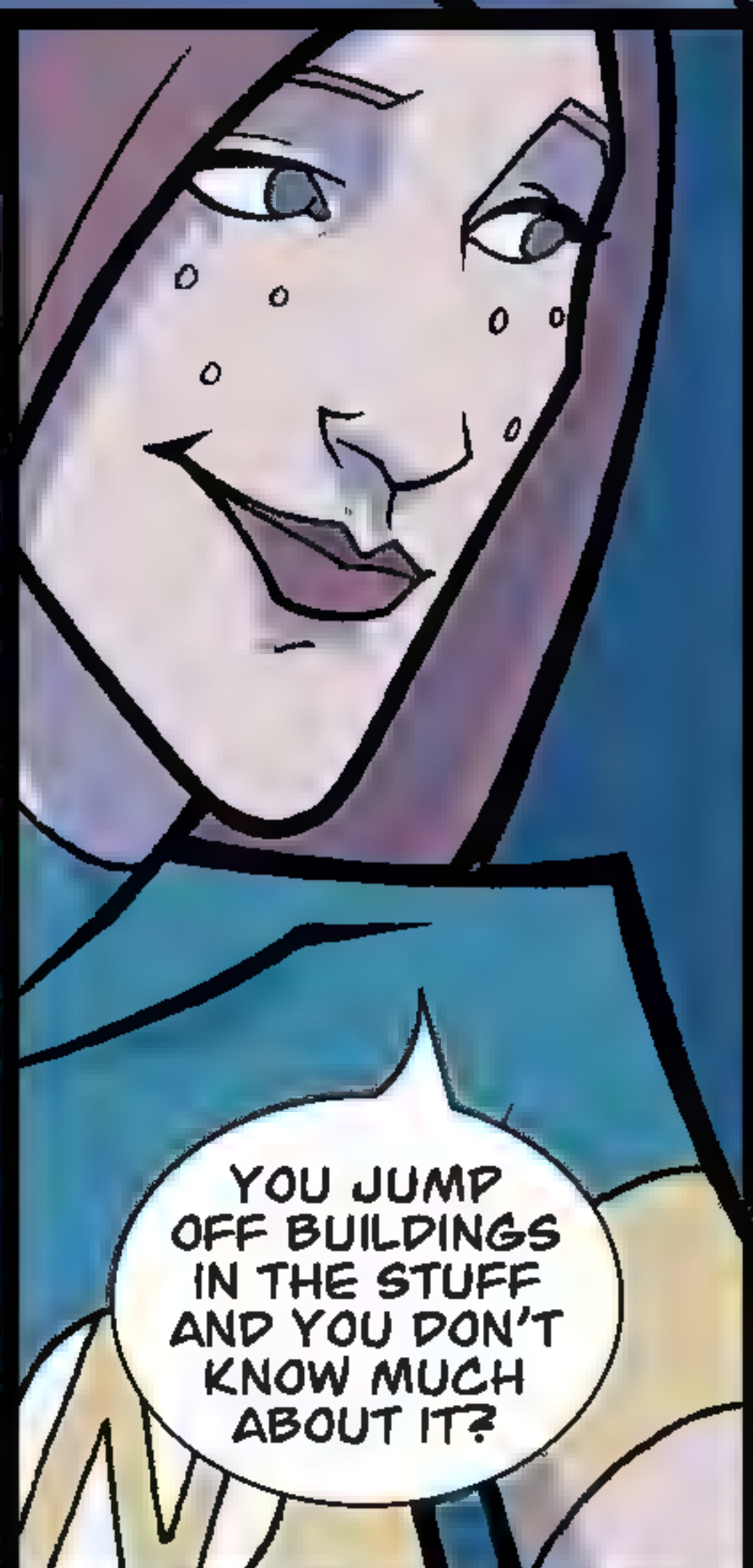
I DID--
IT'S WHAT'S
KEEPING US
FROM GETTING
CRUSHED
RIGHT
NOW.

NO WAY!
MY DAD WOULD
CRAP HIS PANTS
IF HE COULD SEE
THIS STUFF!
WHAT IS
IT?

I DON'T
NOW.

WHERE
DID IT COME
FROM?

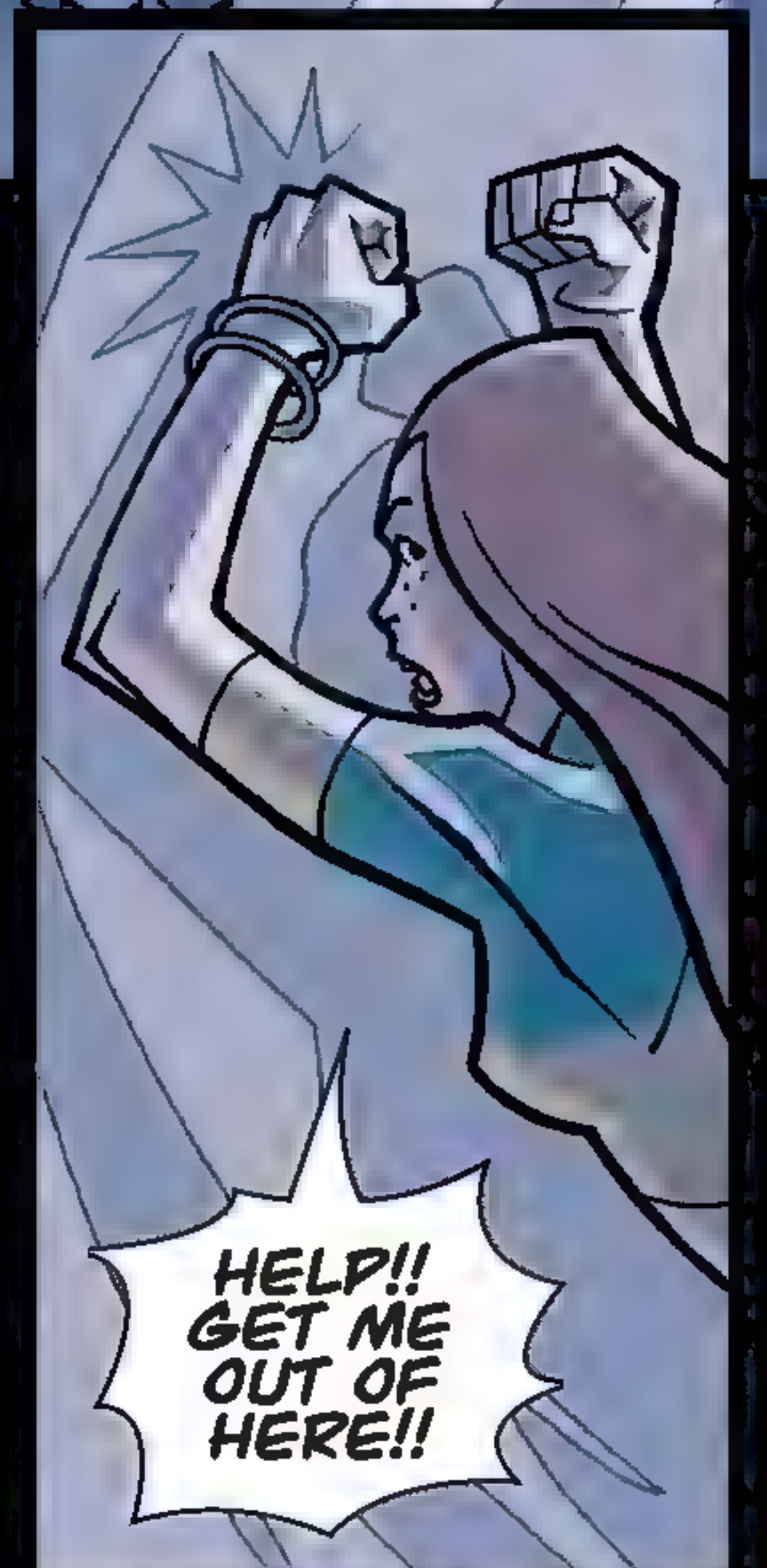
OUT OF
THE HELMET,
I GUESS. I
DON'T KNOW
MUCH ABOUT
IT.



YOU JUMP
OFF BUILDINGS
IN THE STUFF
AND YOU DON'T
KNOW MUCH
ABOUT IT?



I'VE, UH--
GOT THE VOICES
OF THE **PAST**
SHADOWHAWKS IN
MY HEAD TO TELL
ME WHAT TO DO.
THEY KNOW MORE
ABOUT THIS STUFF
THAN I DO.



**HELP!!
GET ME
OUT OF
HERE!!**

WHAT!
WHAT!

GET
ME AWAY
FROM THIS
GUY!

I'M
TRYING NOT
TO TAKE
OFFENSE
TO THIS.

SOMEONE'S
KNOCKING
FROM THE
OTHER SIDE.

OH,
GOOD---
WE'RE NOT
GOING TO
SUFFOCATE,
NOW.

ARE
YOU GUYS
OKAY?

WE ARE
NOW.

SORRY
ABOUT
THAT.

IT'S
OKAY. I
DIDN'T KNOW
MY SUIT COULD
DO THAT UNTIL
NOW. THANKS,
I GUESS.

WHERE'RE
THE LAVA
MONSTERS?

WE DON'T KNOW.
THEY KINDA
RETRACTED AFTER
DUNCAN WENT
BERSERK. MAYBE
WE SCARED
THEM AWAY.

MAYBE
THEY WON'T
GO TO THE
SURFACE AGAIN--
MAYBE WE'RE
DONE.

DON'T
COUNT
ON IT!!

I SEE YOU'VE MET MY BELOVED MAGMANITES! SUCH GENTLE CREATURES-- UNLESS YOU CROSS THEM!

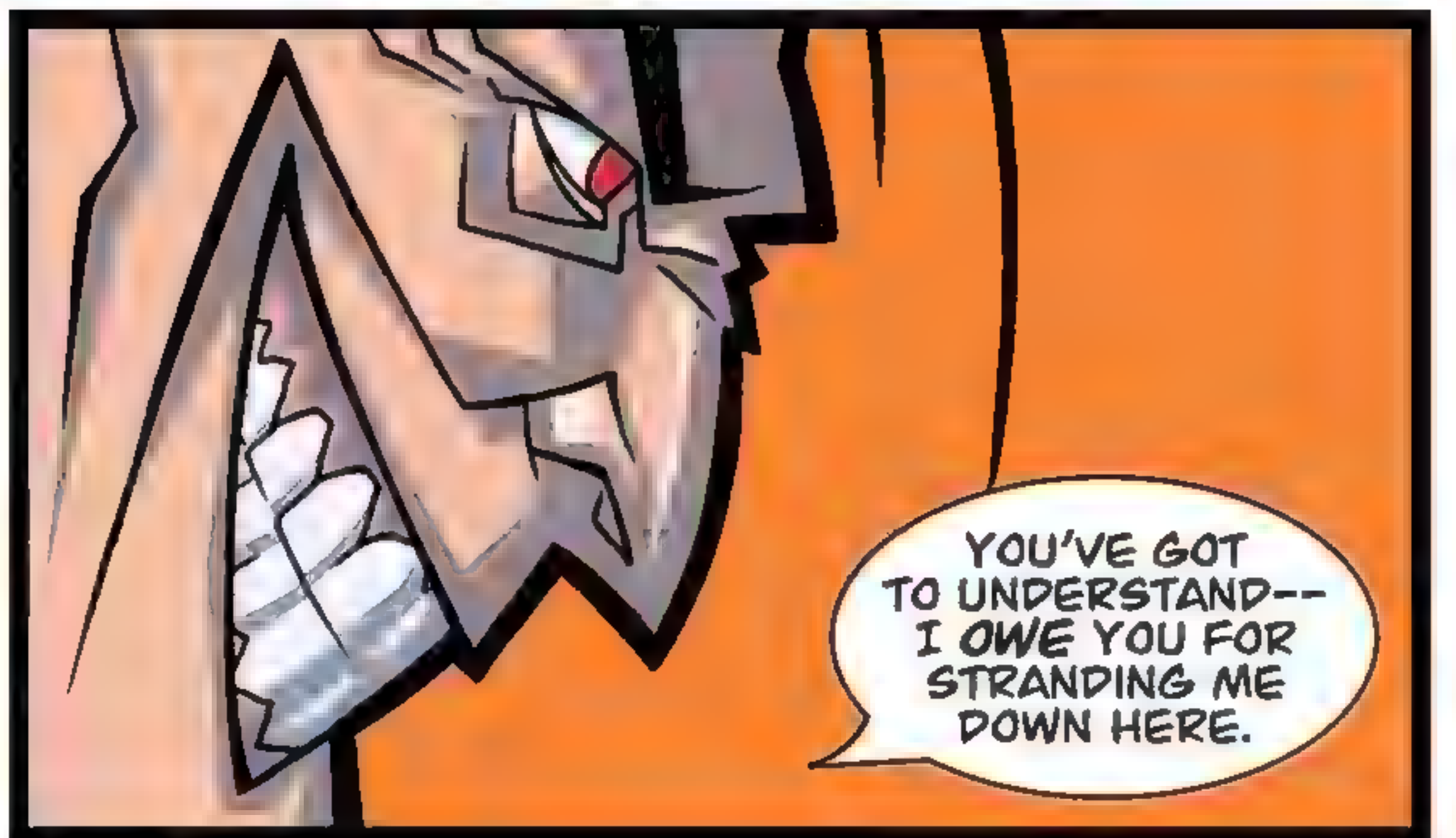
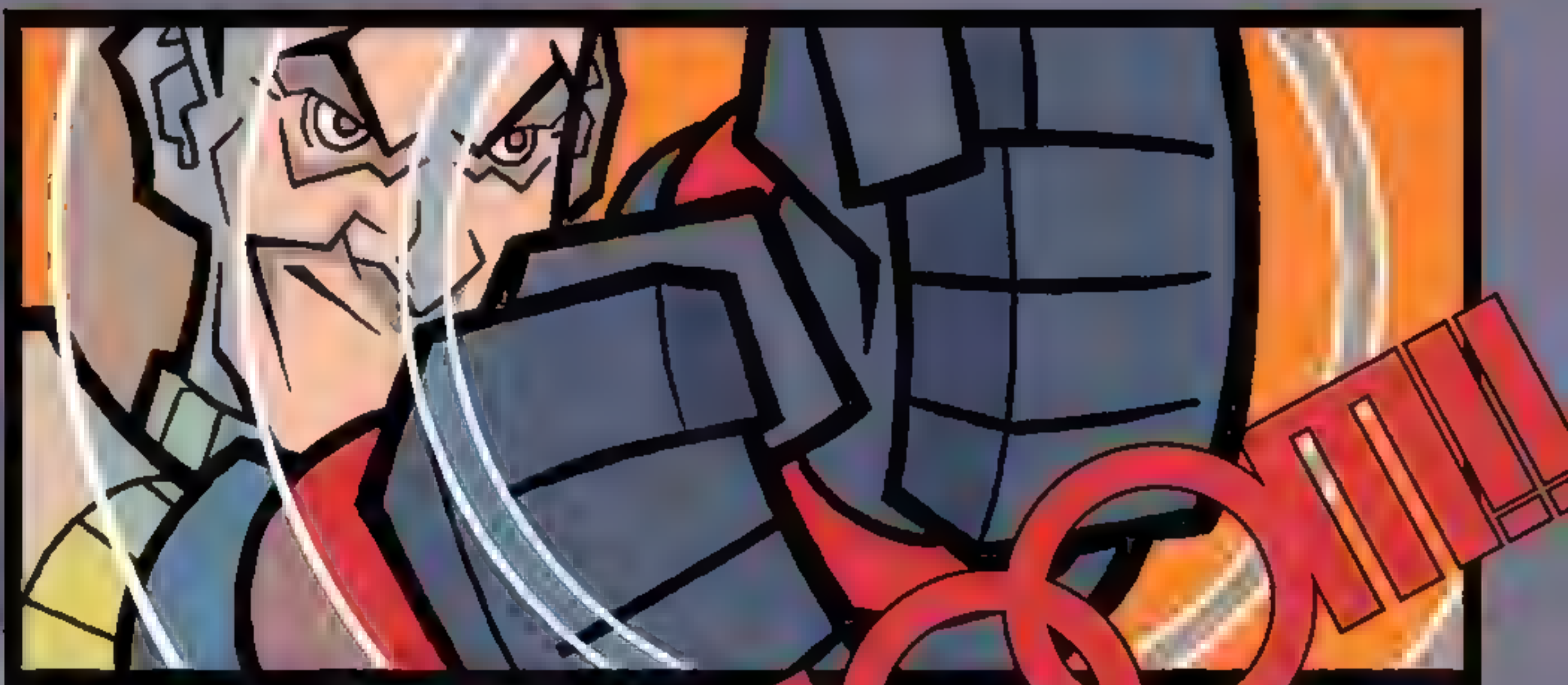
DID YOU EVER THINK YOU'D SEE ME AGAIN, INVINCIBLE?! DID YOU THINK I WOULD SURVIVE AFTER YOU LET ME FALL TO MY DEATH?!

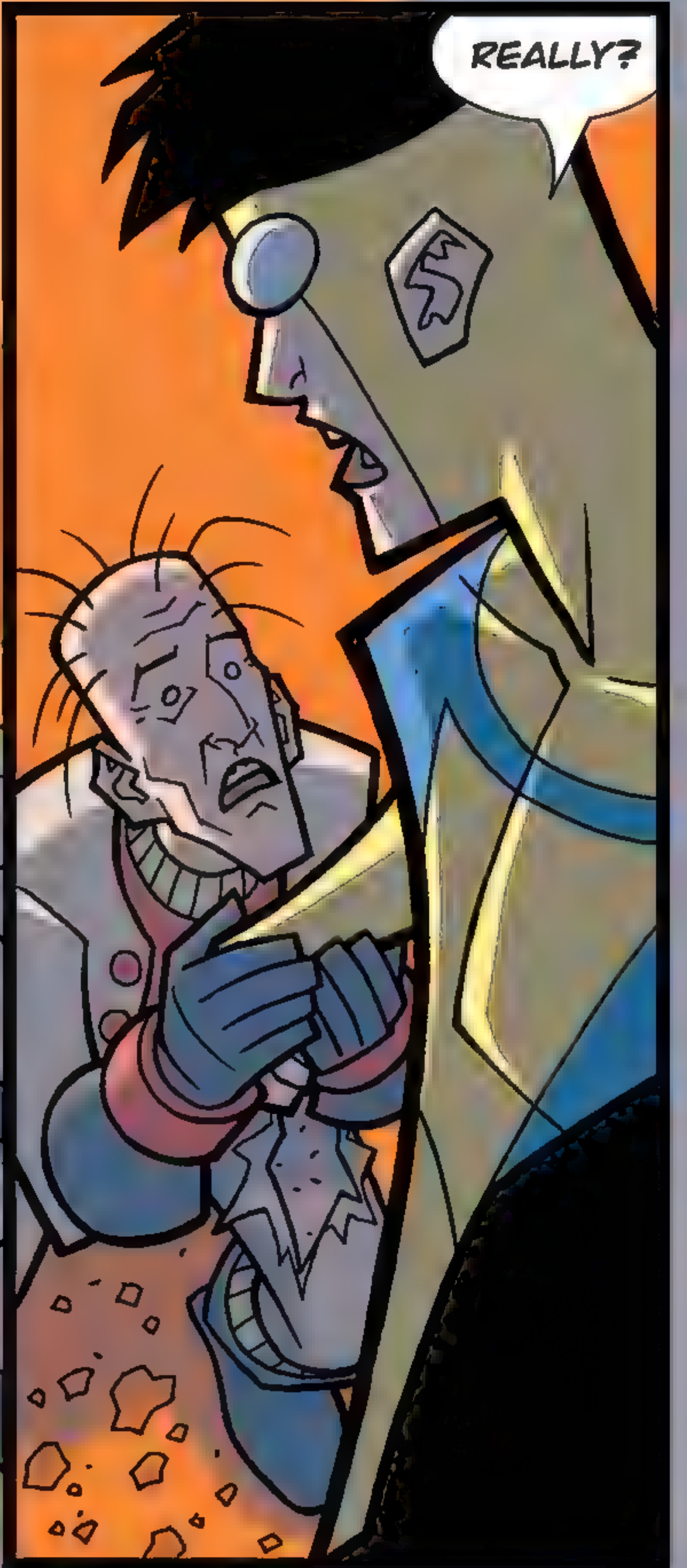
WELL---I SURVIVED--- EVEN THRIVED DOWN HERE. SURPRISED?

ARE YOU SURPRISED BY THE RETURN OF **DOC SEISMIC?!**

*SEE INVINCIBLE ISSUE #10.









I WAS OVER THE HILL, PAST MY PRIME-- ALL THAT. MY GLORY DAYS WERE GONE. I KNEW IT. I WAS VERY BITTER ABOUT IT. I DIDN'T WANT TO ACCEPT IT.

THE FACT IS--I WOULD NEVER RULE A SMALL COUNTRY, HAVE A HORDE OF MINIONS, BE RESPECTED IN MY TWILIGHT YEARS THE WAY I THOUGHT I DESERVED TO BE.

OR RATHER-- I WOULDN'T HAVE--IF YOU HADN'T COME ALONG.



MY COMING DOWN HERE WAS A GIFT FROM HEAVEN. I CAN'T COME UP WITH ANY OTHER WAY TO DESCRIBE IT. I AM BLESSED.

I HAVE EVERYTHING I COULD EVER WANT.



NOW I HAVE MY UNDERGROUND KINGDOM. I TRULY AM ROYALTY DOWN HERE. AND I HAVE MY LOYAL SUBJECTS...

...MY MAGMANITES.

AND IF I EVER NEED ANYTHING--I SIMPLY SEND THEM UP TO THE SURFACE TO TAKE IT. FOOD, MONEY, JEWELRY, WHATEVER.

I AM TRULY HAPPY HERE. I JUST WANT TO THANK YOU FOR THAT.



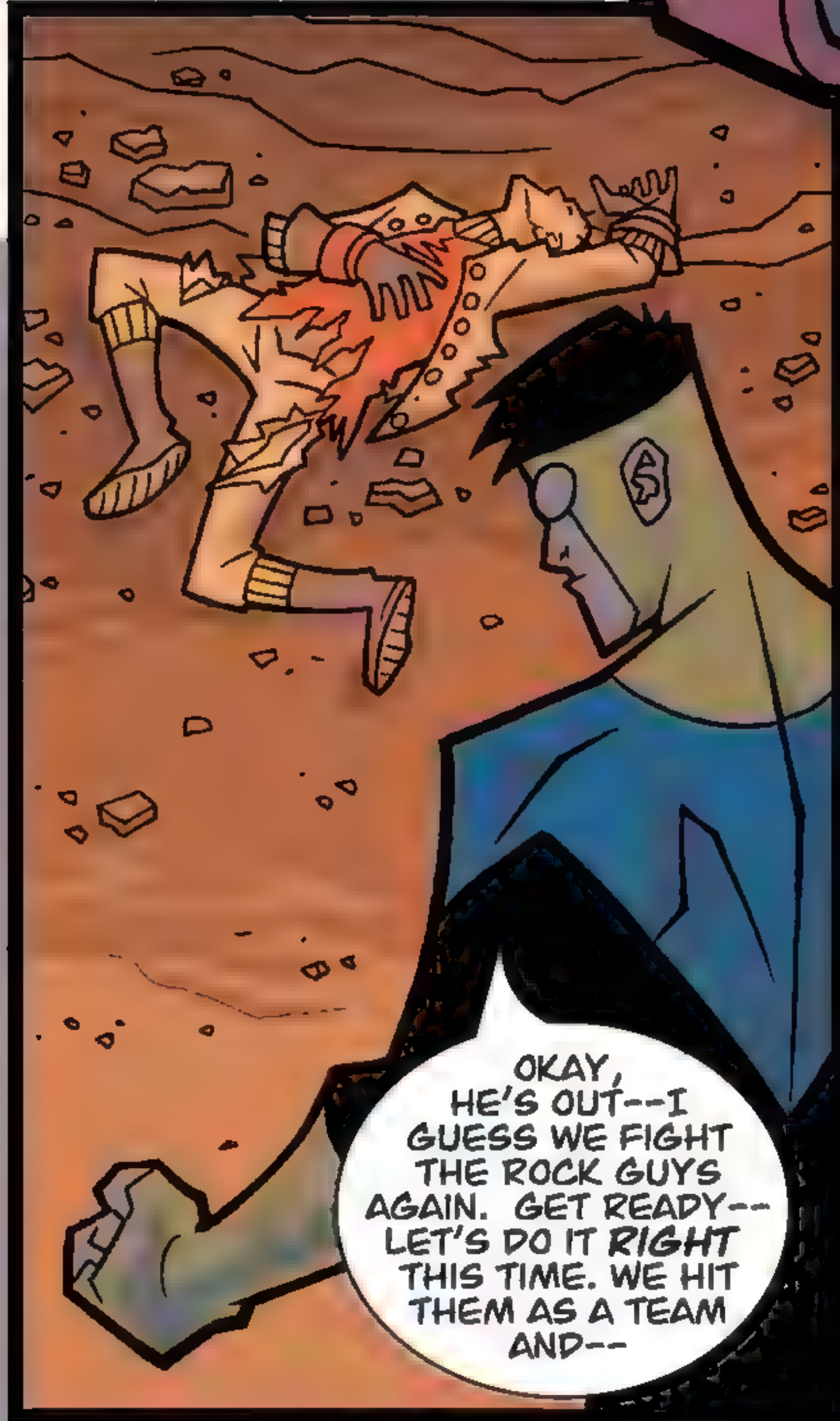
WOW.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY. REALLY. JUST WOW.

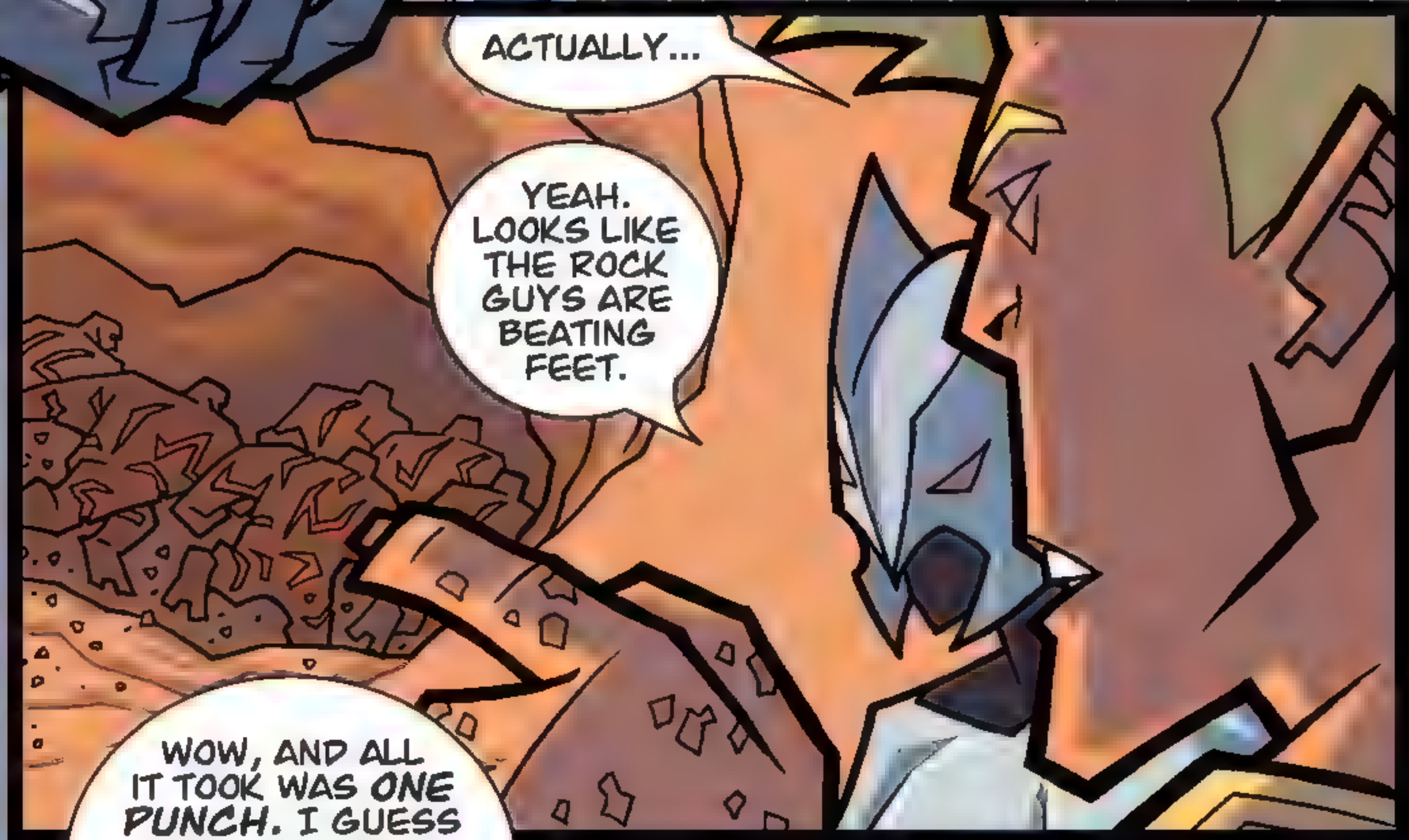
I THINK THE ONLY WAY TO RESPOND TO THAT IS WITH A GOOD OLD-FASHIONED...



...INVINCIBLE
PUNCH!



OKAY,
HE'S OUT--I
GUESS WE FIGHT
THE ROCK GUYS
AGAIN. GET READY--
LET'S DO IT RIGHT
THIS TIME. WE HIT
THEM AS A TEAM
AND--



ACTUALLY...

YEAH.
LOOKS LIKE THE
ROCK GUYS ARE
BEATING FEET.



WOW, AND ALL
IT TOOK WAS ONE
PUNCH. I GUESS
THEY FIGURE IF
YOU'LL DECK AN
OLD MAN LIKE THAT
YOU'RE CAPABLE
OF ANYTHING.

MAYBE
THEY'RE
SMARTER
THAN WE
THOUGHT.

HEY, YOU GUYS DIDN'T FIGHT THIS GUY BEFORE. HE'S CRAZY, TRUST ME. HE WOULD HAVE BROUGHT THIS WHOLE CAVE DOWN ON US ONCE HE REALIZED I WASN'T GOING TO PAT HIM ON THE HEAD AND ALLOW HIM TO KEEP TERRORIZING THAT TOWN UP ABOVE.

THIS COULD HAVE GONE BADLY IF I HADN'T SUCKER PUNCHED HIM. WE COULD HAVE ALL BEEN HURT.

IF YOU SAY SO "INVINCIBLE."

WHATEVER. LET'S GET HIM UP TO THE SURFACE BEFORE HE WAKES UP. I'VE GOT TO GET HOME.

HEH. "INVINCIBLE PUNCH"?

YOU DON'T LIKE IT? I THOUGHT IT WAS APPROPRIATE.

≡SIGH≡

I THINK I'M GOING TO HAVE TO RETIRE THAT, AFTER ALL. I THINK I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO THINKS IT'S COOL.

YOU THINK IT'S COOL?

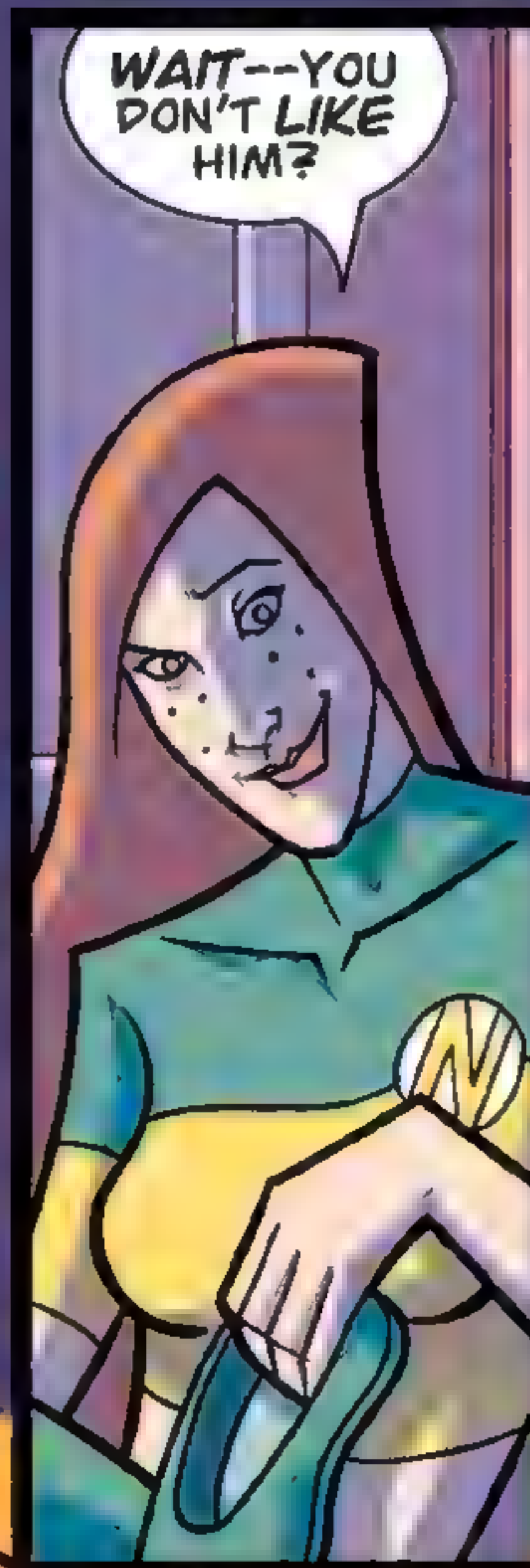
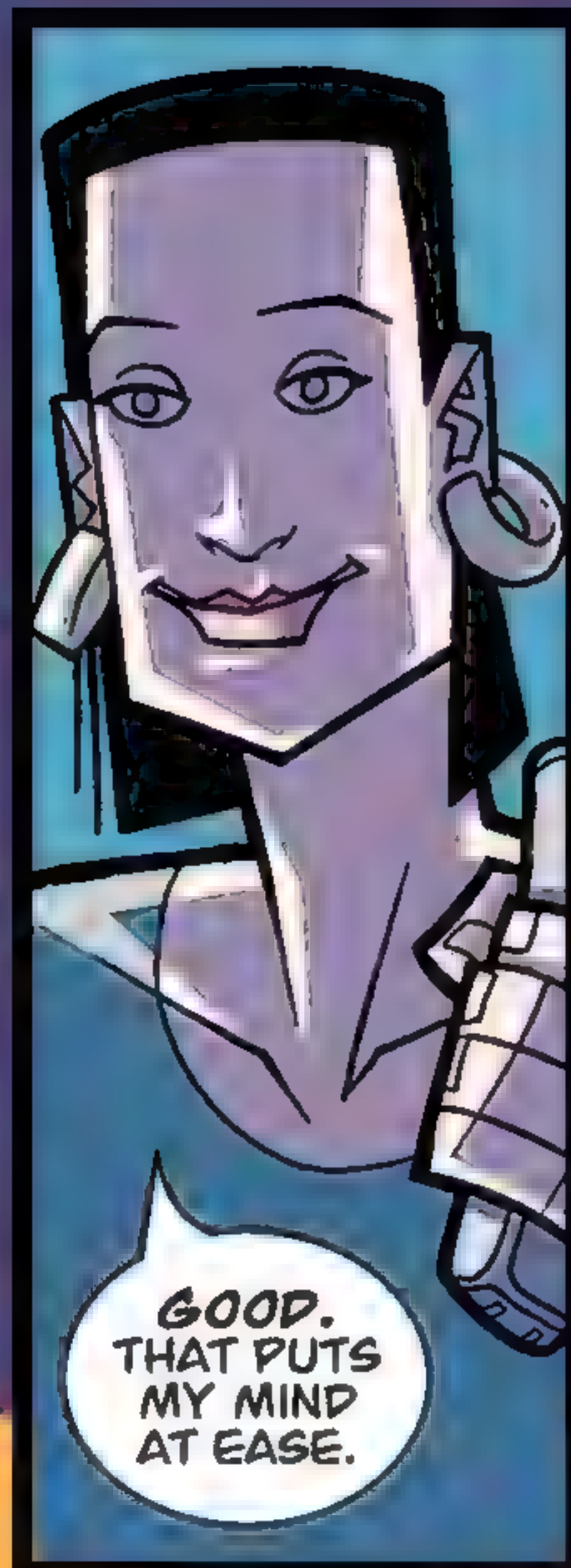
SHUT UP.

I DON'T MEAN TO BE FORWARD OR ANYTHING, BUT... DO YOU MIND IF I CALL YOU? I MEAN, EVEN IF THERE ISN'T ANYTHING WE NEED TO GO FIGHT.

UH... SURE.

THAT'D BE OKAY... I GUESS.

LATER THAT NIGHT.



Coming in the next issue of-

THE PACT

NOT A DREAM--
NOT A HOAX--
THE
DEATH
OF INVINCIBLE!

WHAT'S
WITH THE
WATERWORKS,
POPS? DIDN'T YOU
NEARLY BEAT HIM TO
DEATH ONCE,
YOURSELF?

IT'S
COMPLICATED.



This is an ad for a fake next issue of The Pact that ran as the back cover for issue 4. Jason Howard came up with the stuff on the tombstone. He's a witty fellow, that one.

ISSUE THIRTY-SIX



AN UNDISCLOSED
LOCATION IN UTAH.

THE SECRET MOUNTAIN
BASE OF THE GUARDIANS
OF THE GLOBE.

I JUST--UGH--
I CAN'T BELIEVE
THEY'RE GETTING
MARRIED.

DON'T LET IT UPSET YOU,
MAN. THEY'RE IN LOVE.
IT'S A GREAT THING WHEN
TWO PEOPLE FIND
EACH OTHER.

I'M HAPPY
FOR THE
IMMORTAL AND
DUPLI-KATE.

WHATEVER.

I DON'T KNOW--I
JUST DON'T GET WHAT
HE SEES IN HER. SHE
HARDLY EVER TALKS
AND ALL SHE EVER
WANTS TO DO
IS--

YOU
KNOW.

ISN'T THAT
WHAT YOU
SAW IN
HER?

WELL YEAH--
BUT I WASN'T
GOING TO
MARRY
HER.

NO WAY...
IF I WAS
GOING TO MARRY
SOMEONE... THEY'D
HAVE TO BE
MORE LIKE...

...EVE.

OH, PLEASE
DON'T START
ON THAT
AGAIN.

I
HEARD
HOW THAT
ALL WENT
DOWN.

BREFT! BREFT!

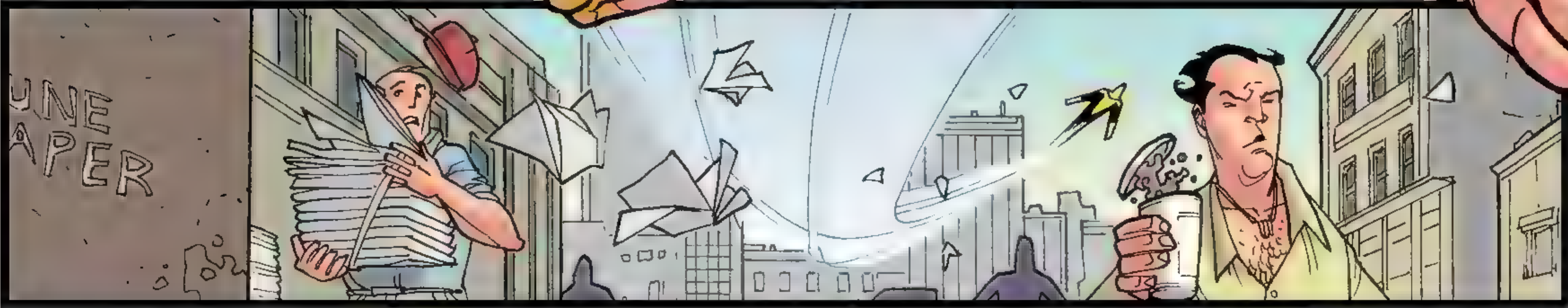
OKAY,
FINE---I'LL
ADMIT I
MADE A
MIS--

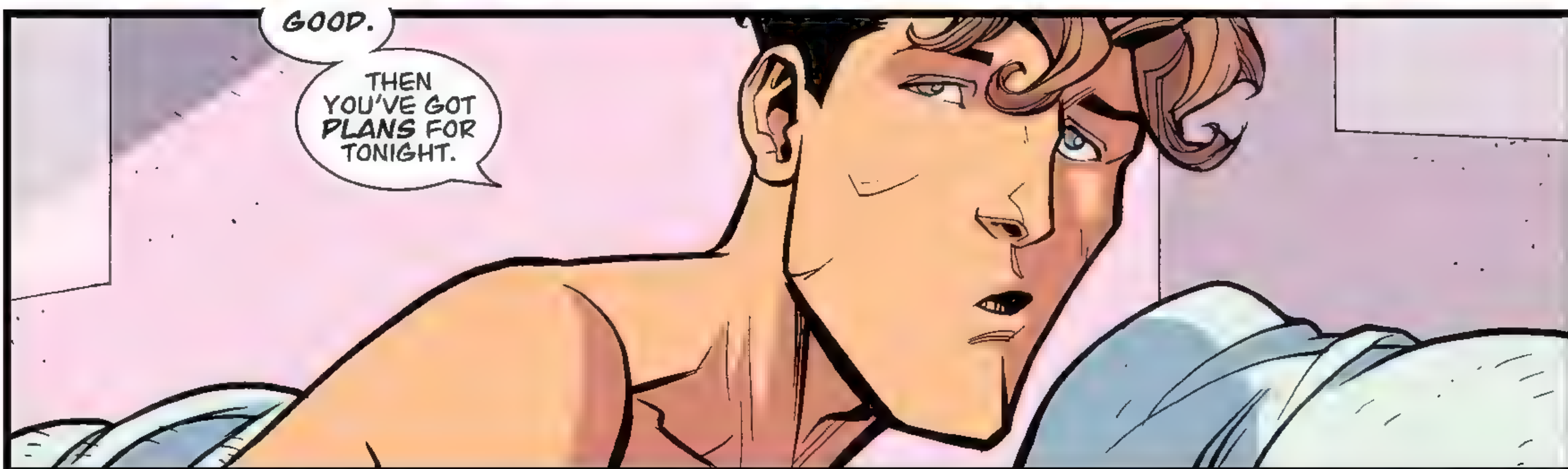
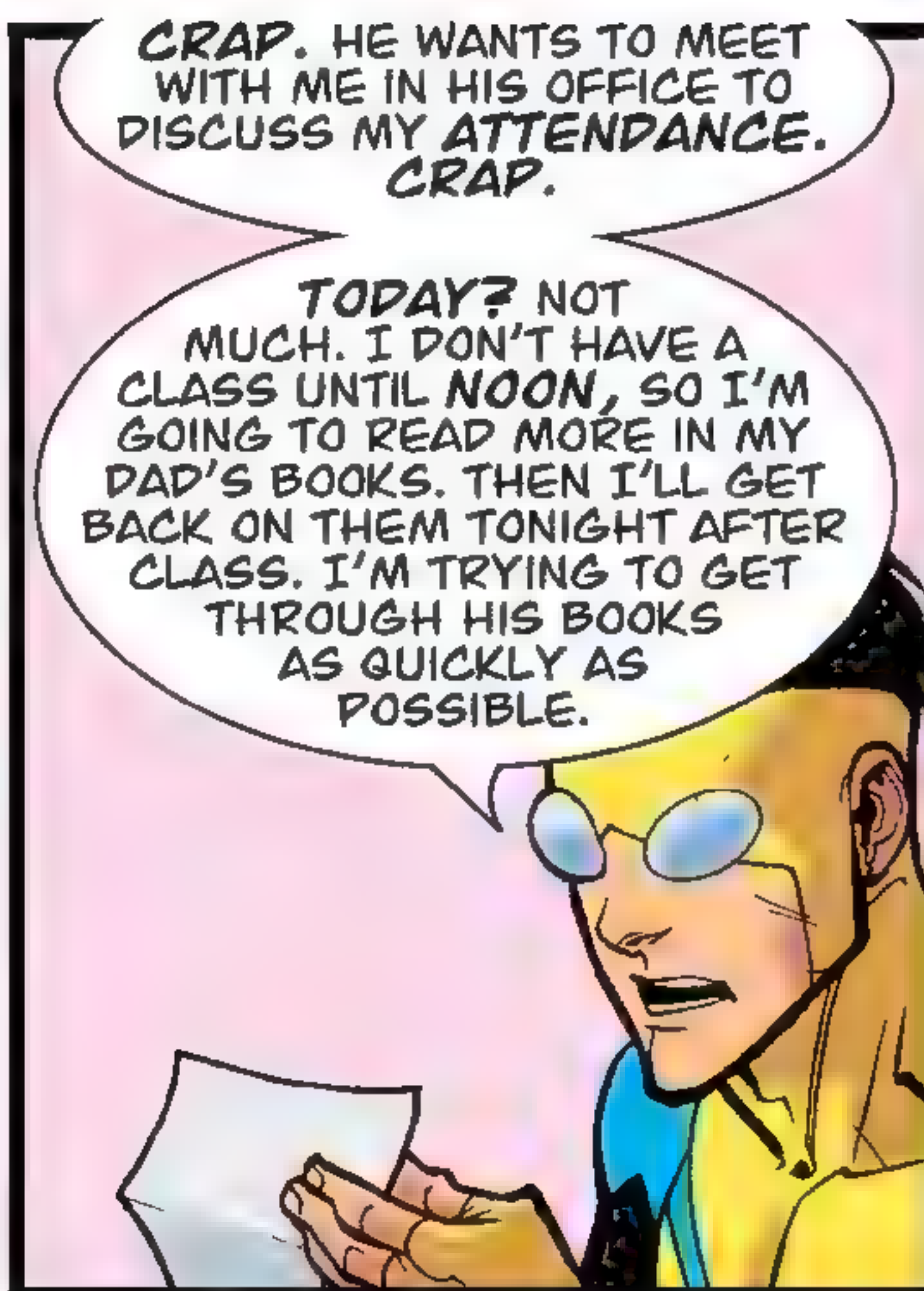
BREFT! BREFT!

DUTY
CALLS!



WY92





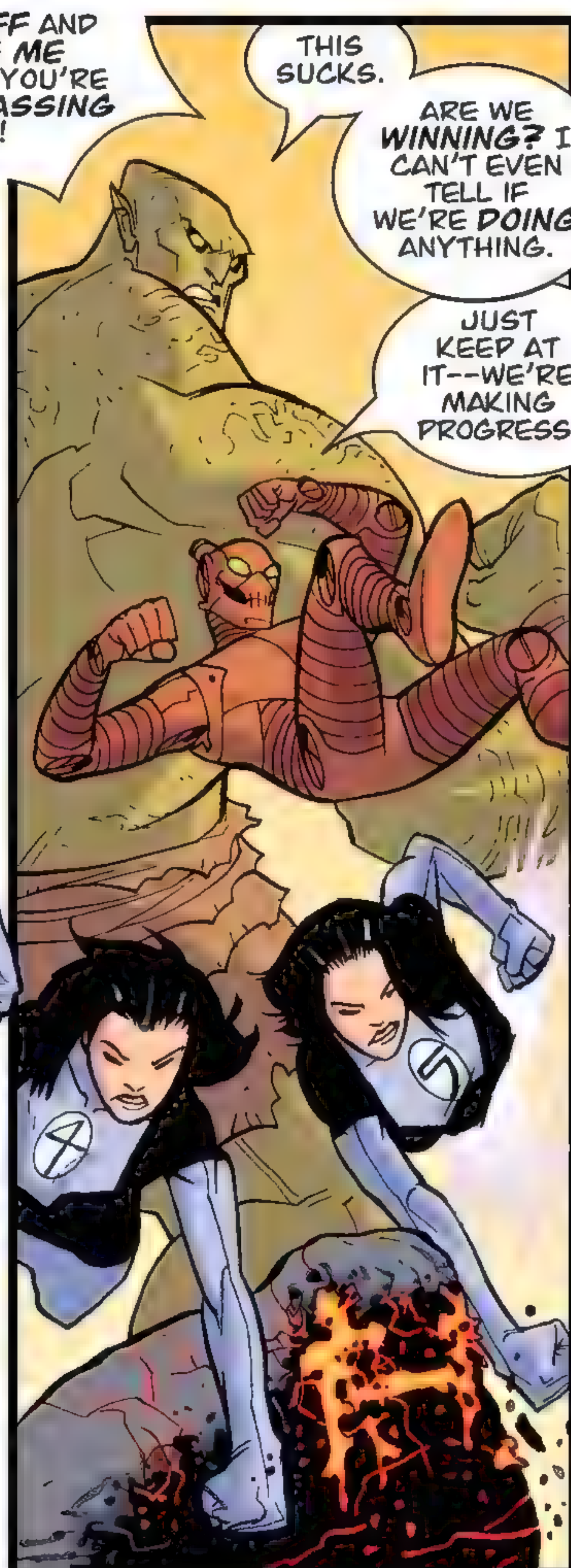


FOOLS!!

DOC SEISMIC
COMMANDS THE
LEGIONS OF
UNDEREARTH!! MY
TIME UNDERGROUND
ALLOWED ME TO
BECOME THE RULER
OF ALL DIRT
DWELLERS!

YOU
SOUGHT TO
IMPRISON
ME?!

MY POWER
CANNOT BE
CONTAINED!!



I HAVE NOTHING TO PROVE HERE! KILLING EVERY ONE OF YOU WOULD BRING ME NO MEASURE OF JOY!

HEAR ME, MINIONS! OUR TIME HERE IS DONE!

DIVE!!

THEY'RE ESCAPING? I MEAN--THAT SUCKS AND ALL BUT--WHATEVER.

LESS BROKEN BONES FOR ME.

YOU ARE THE WORST SUPERHERO EVER.



WE'RE NOT STOPPING. WE NEED TO PURSUE HIM. HE SIMPLY CAN'T BE ALLOWED TO ESCAPE.

WE'LL SEND A PROBE DOWN THE TUNNEL TO TRACK THEM. WE'LL BE ABLE TO FIND HIM--HE WON'T GET AWAY.

I'M MORE CONCERNED WITH THE SUPER VILLAINS THAT WERE LET LOOSE DURING DOC SEISMIC'S ESCAPE.

HM. LOOKS LIKE ALL OF THEM HAVE ALREADY ESCAPED.



UM... NOT ALL OF THEM.

I'D KINDA LIKE TO TURN MYSELF IN.

REALLY?



NO--NOT
REALLY.

I'M JUST
KIDDING.

BUT I WAS ABLE
TO POSE AS ONE OF
THOSE **MAGMANITES**
AND FOLLOW THEM
DOWN THAT HOLE AND
NAB THIS GUY.

THAT'S
COOL,
RIGHT?

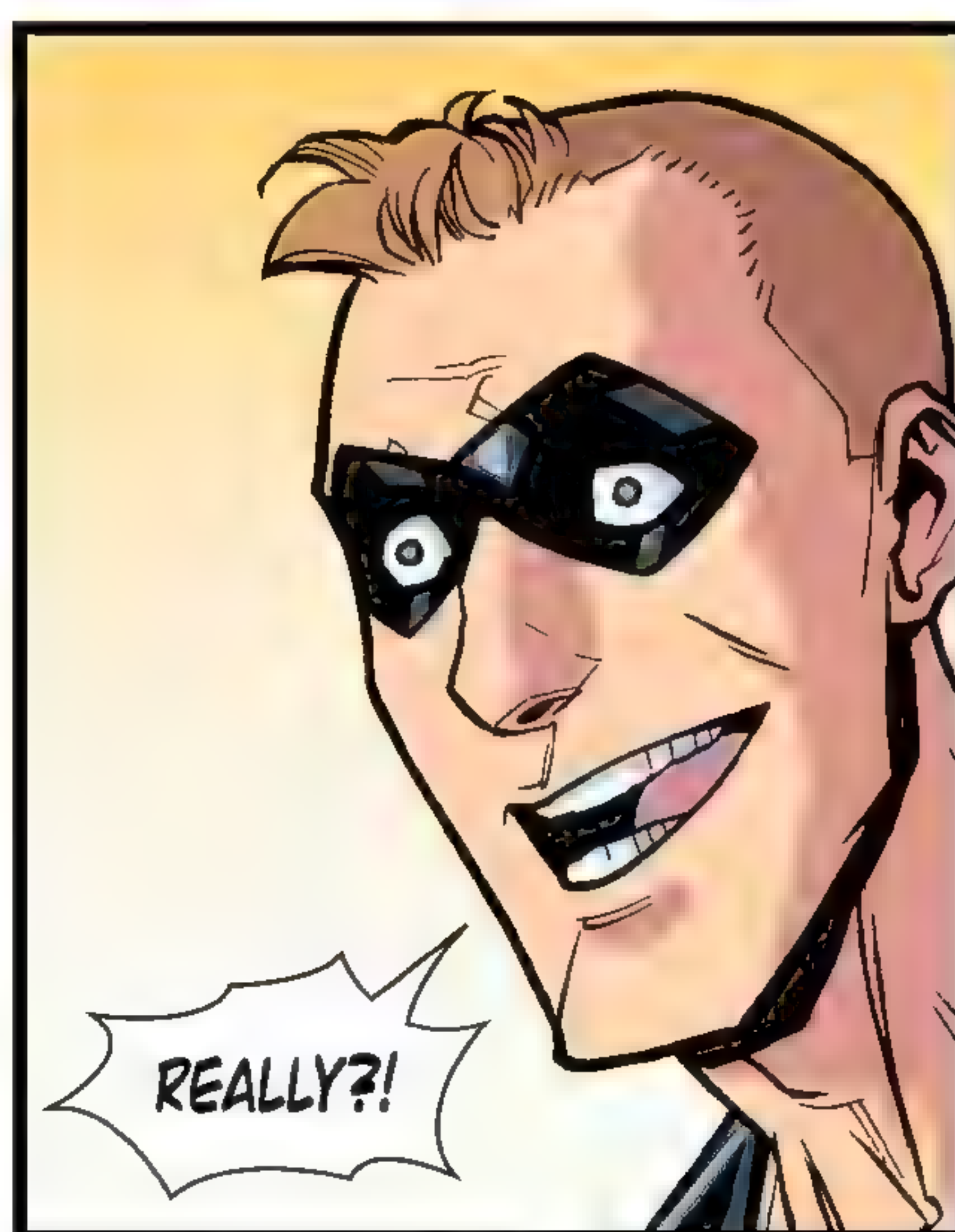


NICE WORK,
STRANGER. I'M
IMPRESSED AND
THAT DOESN'T
HAPPEN OFTEN.
FEEL PROUD.

ARE YOU
LOOKING FOR
WORK? WE'VE GOT
ROOM FOR YOU IN
THE **GUARDIANS
OF THE
GLOBE**.



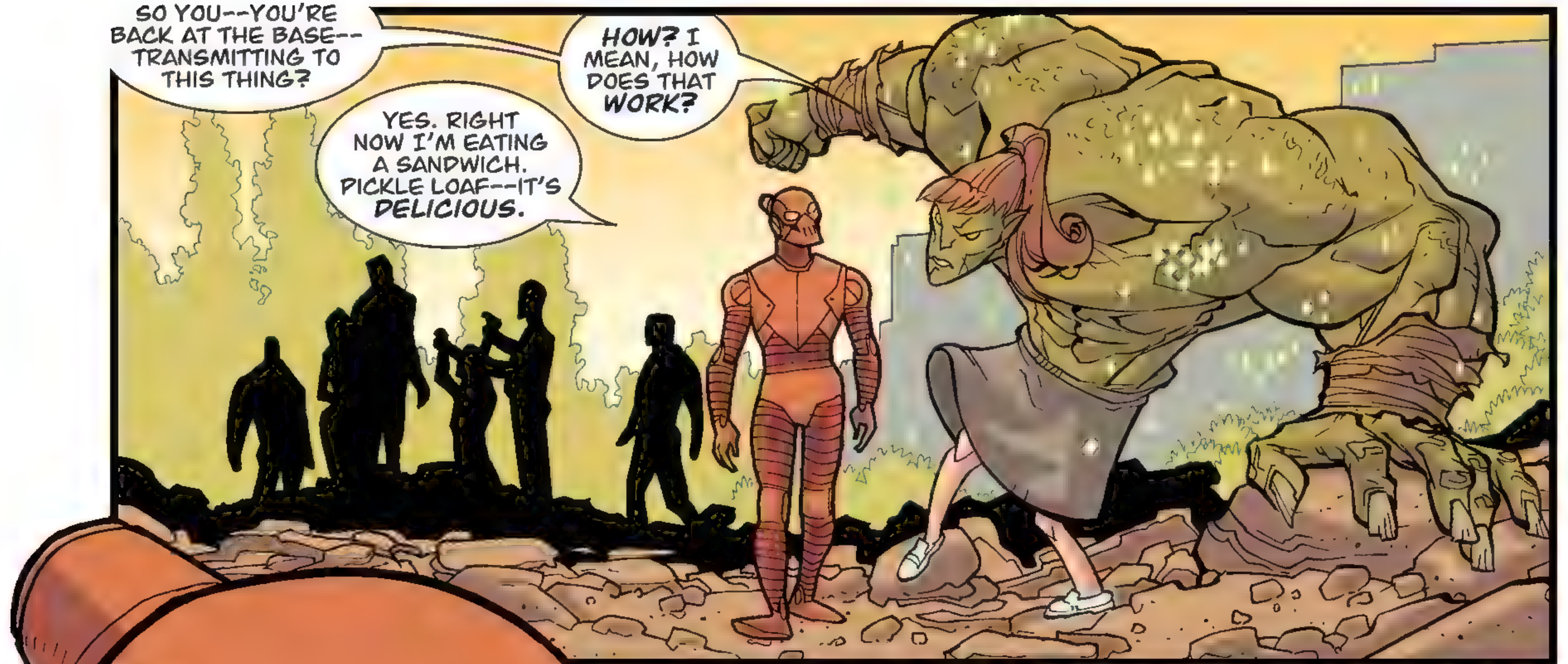
REALLY?!



SO YOU--YOU'RE BACK AT THE BASE--TRANSMITTING TO THIS THING?

YES. RIGHT NOW I'M EATING A SANDWICH. PICKLE LOAF--IT'S DELICIOUS.

HOW? I MEAN, HOW DOES THAT WORK?



BEFORE I WAS IN MY NEW BODY--I LIVED IN A TANK OF FLUIDS THAT KEPT THE OUTSIDE AIR FROM AGITATING MY DELICATE SKIN, AS YOU ALREADY KNOW. THAT TANK HAD AN APPARATUS THAT TRANSMITTED MY THOUGHTS INTO THIS CONSTRUCT.

WHEN I MADE THE REX CLONE I INHABIT NOW, I INSERTED MACHINERY INTO THE BRAIN SO THAT BODY COULD CONTROL THE CONSTRUCT WITHOUT ANY ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT.

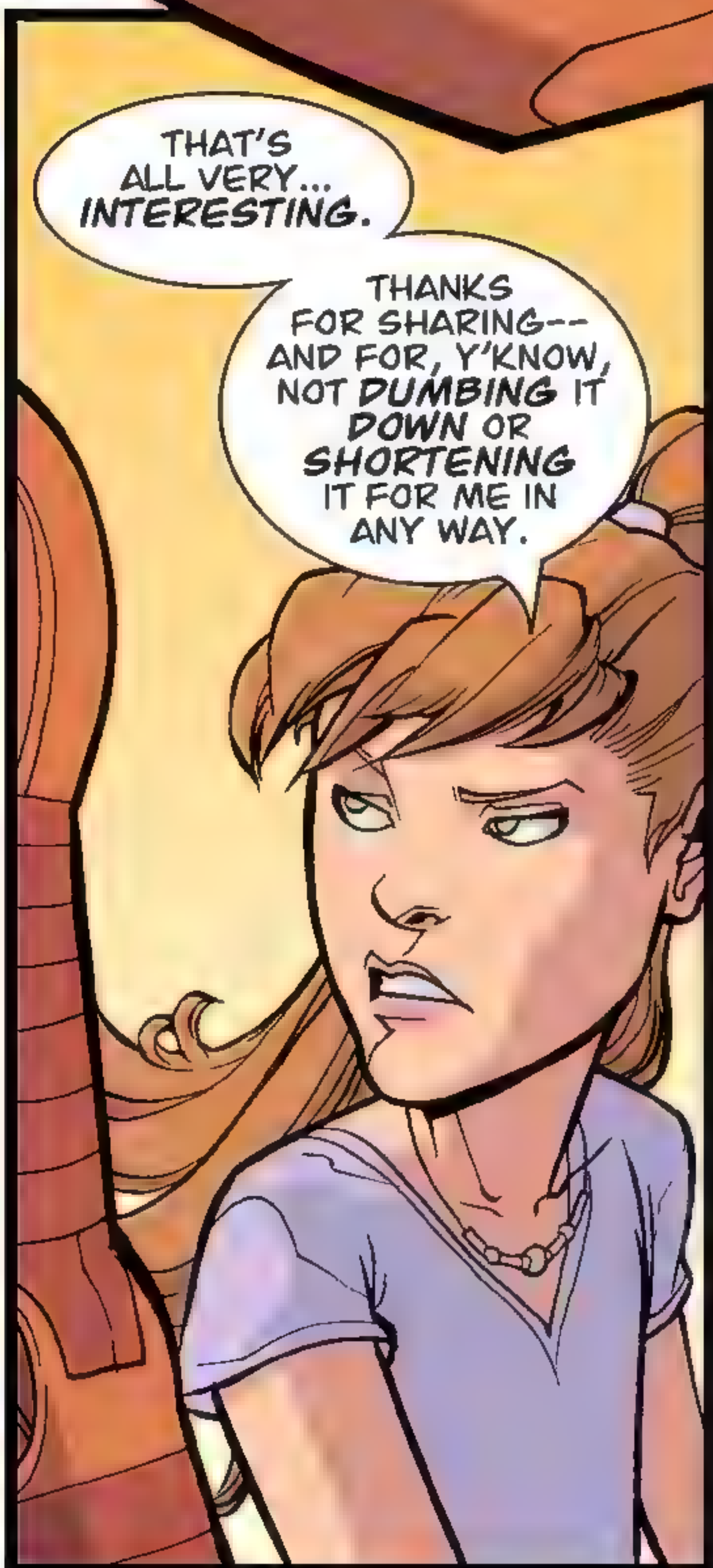
IT'S MUCH EASIER NOW.

I WAS GIFTED WITH PROFOUND INTELLECT, AS I'M SURE YOU'RE ALREADY AWARE. IT'S A SIMPLE TASK FOR ME TO PARTITION OFF MY THOUGHTS AND CONTROL TWO BODIES DOING TWO SEPARATE TASKS AT ONCE.

I EVEN SEE IN DOUBLE VISION. WHICH, I'LL ADMIT, TOOK A LONG TIME TO GET USED TO.

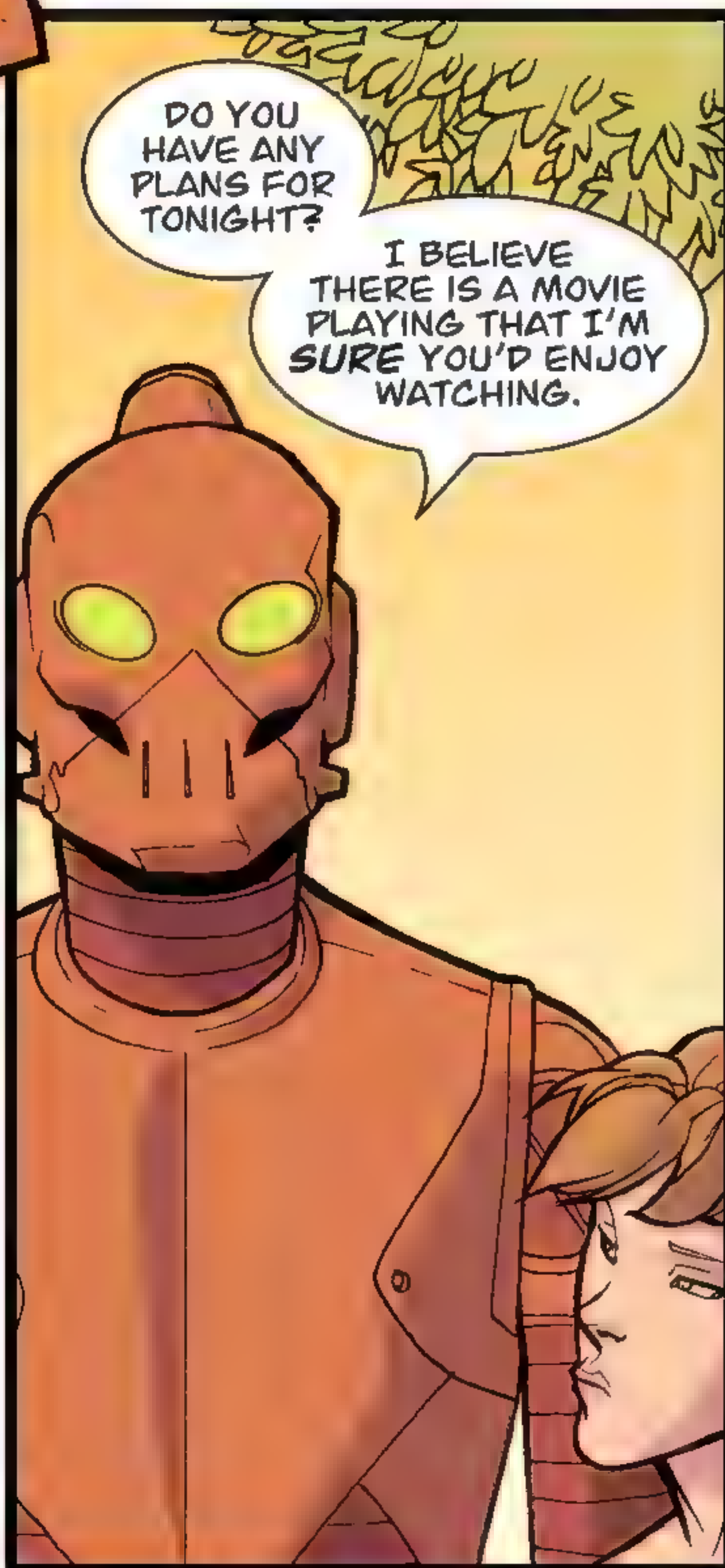
THAT'S ALL VERY... INTERESTING.

THANKS FOR SHARING--AND FOR, Y'KNOW, NOT DUMBING IT DOWN OR SHORTENING IT FOR ME IN ANY WAY.



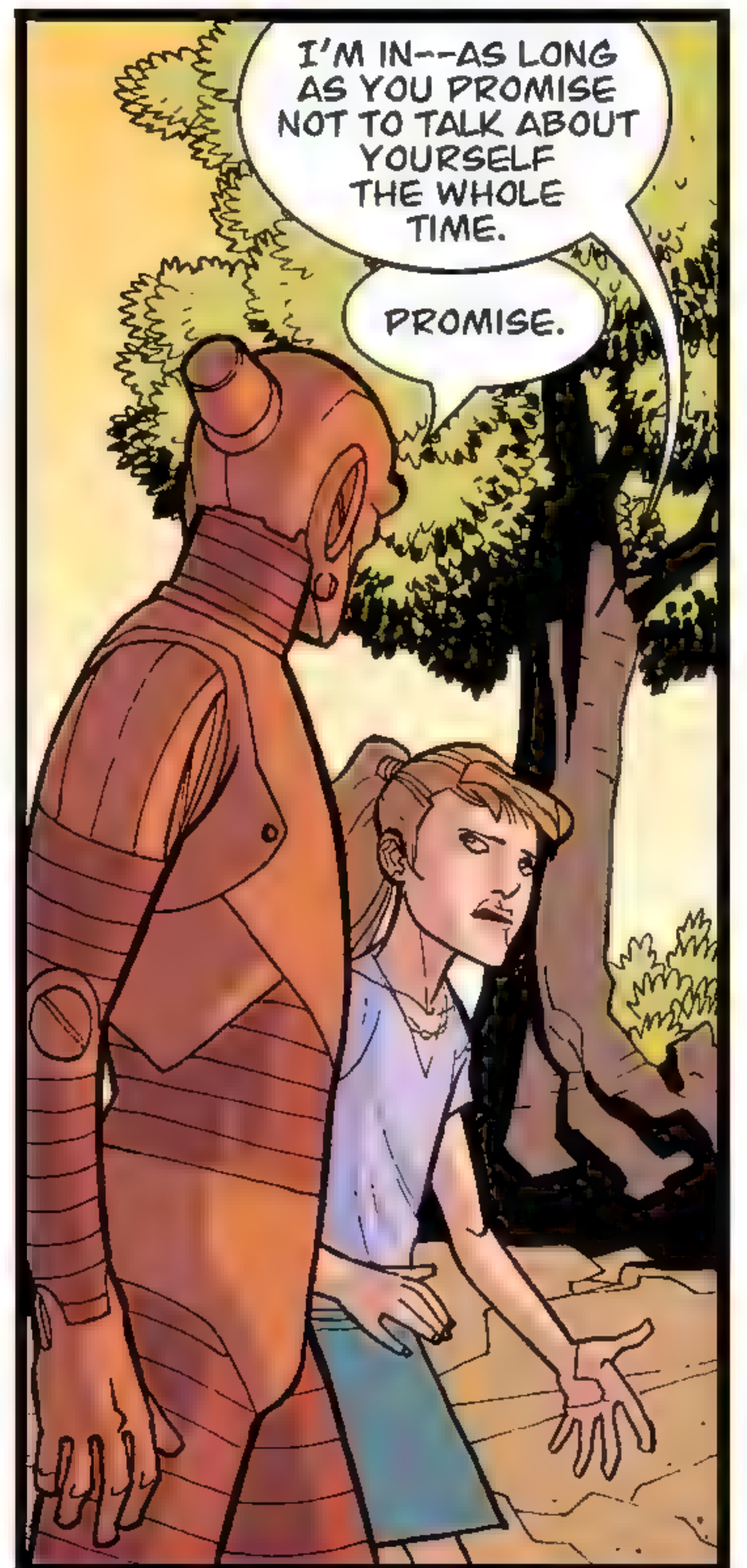
DO YOU HAVE ANY PLANS FOR TONIGHT?

I BELIEVE THERE IS A MOVIE PLAYING THAT I'M SURE YOU'D ENJOY WATCHING.



I'M IN--AS LONG AS YOU PROMISE NOT TO TALK ABOUT YOURSELF THE WHOLE TIME.

PROMISE.





UPSTATE UNIVERSITY.
THE COLLEGE WHERE MARK
GRAYSON AND WILLIAM
CLOCKWELL ARE CURRENTLY
ENROLLED AS STUDENTS.



THIS IS STUPID, WILLIAM.
TOTALLY STUPID. THIS
IS NEVER GOING TO
WORK.

DUDE, LISTEN
TO ME. I TOLD YOU
THERE WAS A REPORT
ON THE LOCAL NEWS
ABOUT ALL THESE
MISSING BUMS AROUND
CAMPUS. HOMELESS
DUDES ARE GETTING
PRETTY SCARCE
AROUND HERE.

MOST OF
THEM STOLEN
RIGHT OUT
OF THIS
PARK.

THIS PARK--
THAT IS RIGHT
ACROSS FROM
RICK'S DORM--
THE LAST PLACE
ANYONE SAW
HIM.



YEAH--BUT
THIS ISN'T
GOING TO
WORK.

WHAT ARE
YOU TALKING
ABOUT?! THIS
IS SO GOING
TO WORK.

I'LL
PRETEND TO
FALL ASLEEP HERE--
THEY'LL THINK I'M
A BUM--AND YOU'LL
FOLLOW THEM BACK
TO THEIR LAIR WHEN
THEY ABDUCT ME.



THEY'VE GOT A
LAIR NOW? WHO'S
STEALING THESE
BUMS... COUNT
DRACULA?

SHUT
UP.



JUST--JUST PUT ME
DOWN AND GO HIDE IN
A TREE OF SOMETHING.
I THINK IT'S DARK
ENOUGH NOW.

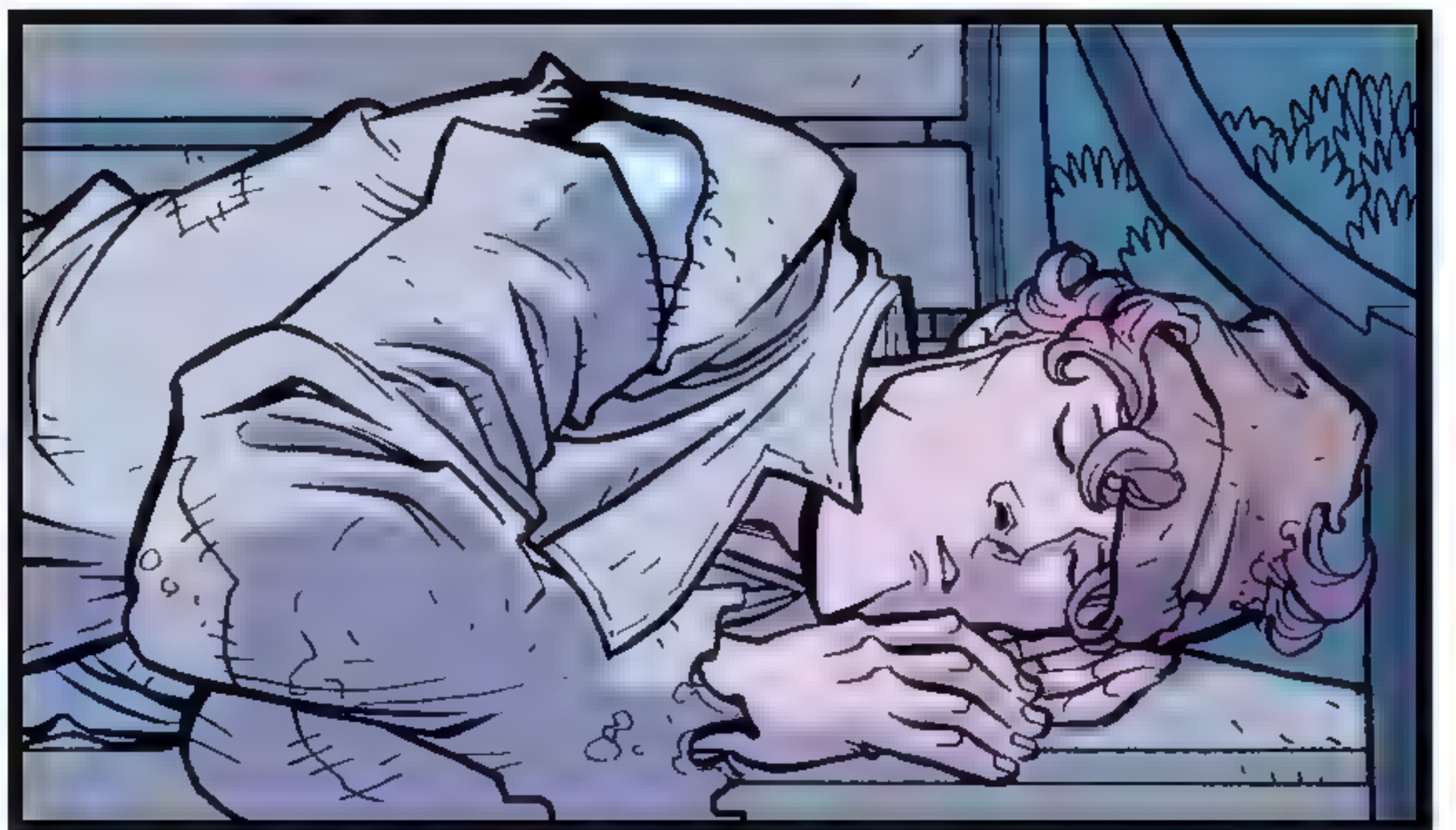
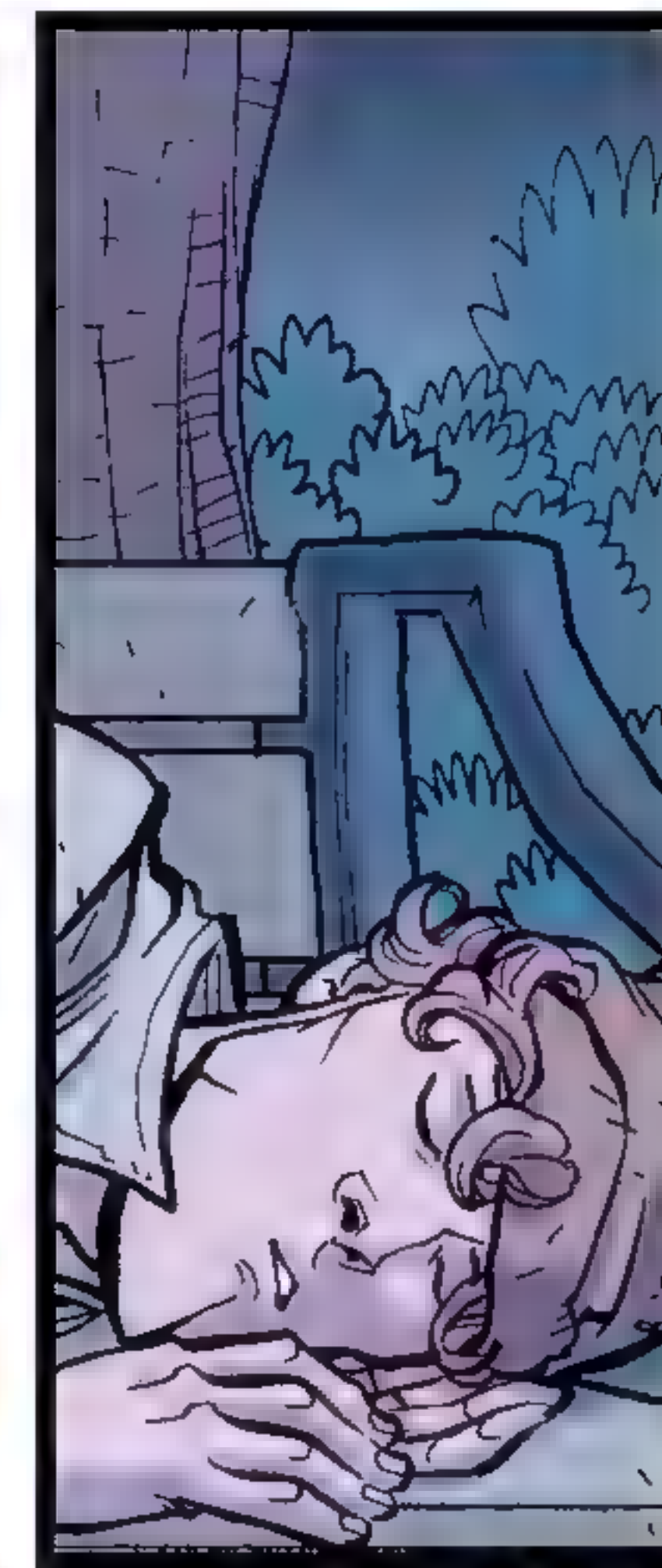
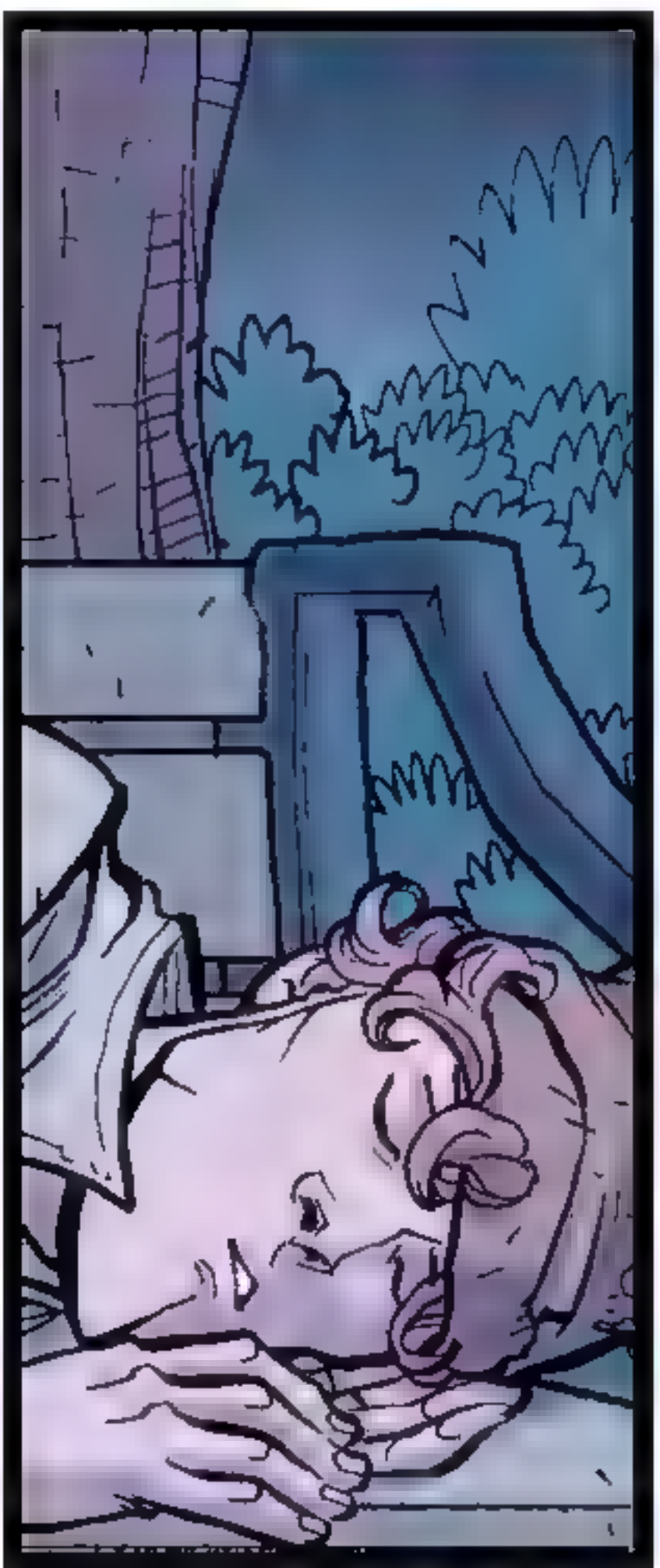
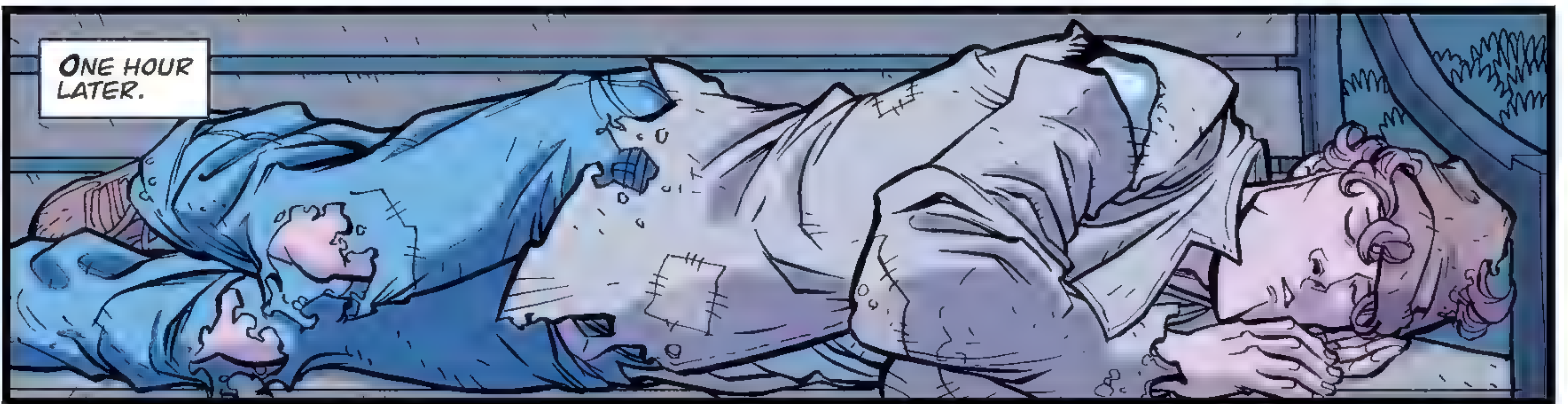
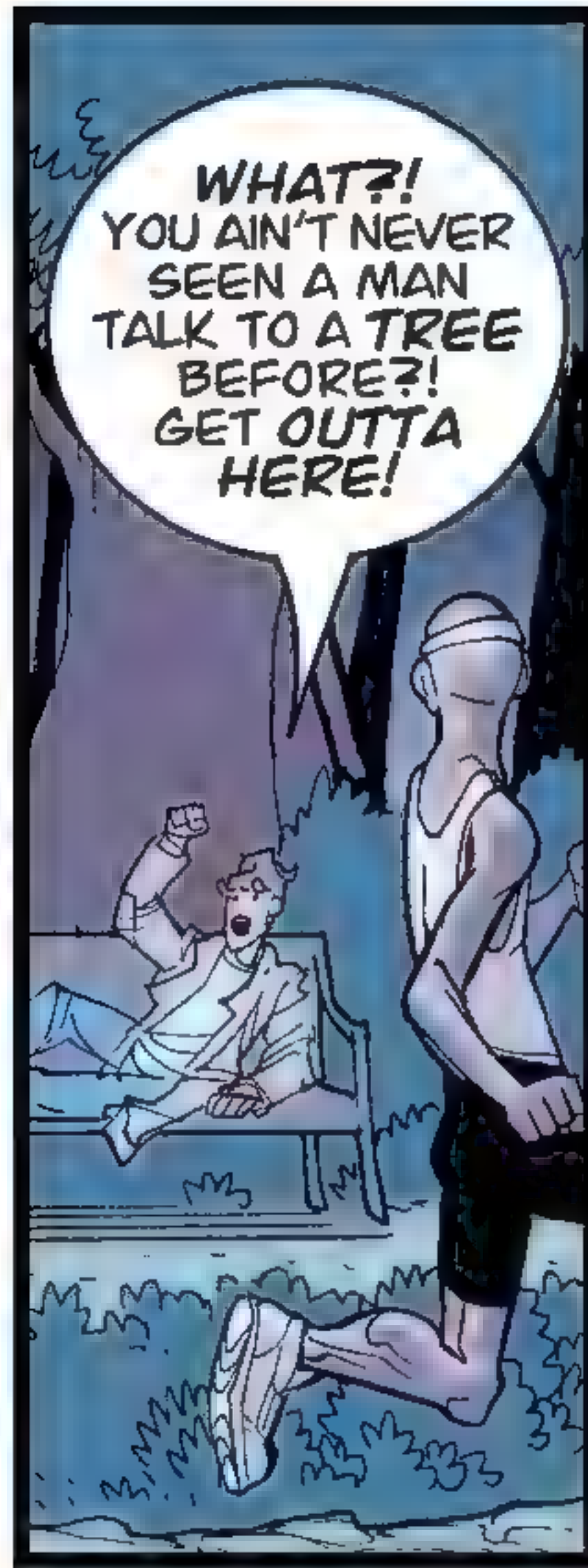
OKAY--BUT
THINK ABOUT THIS,
WILLIAM--THIS
COULD BE
DANGEROUS.

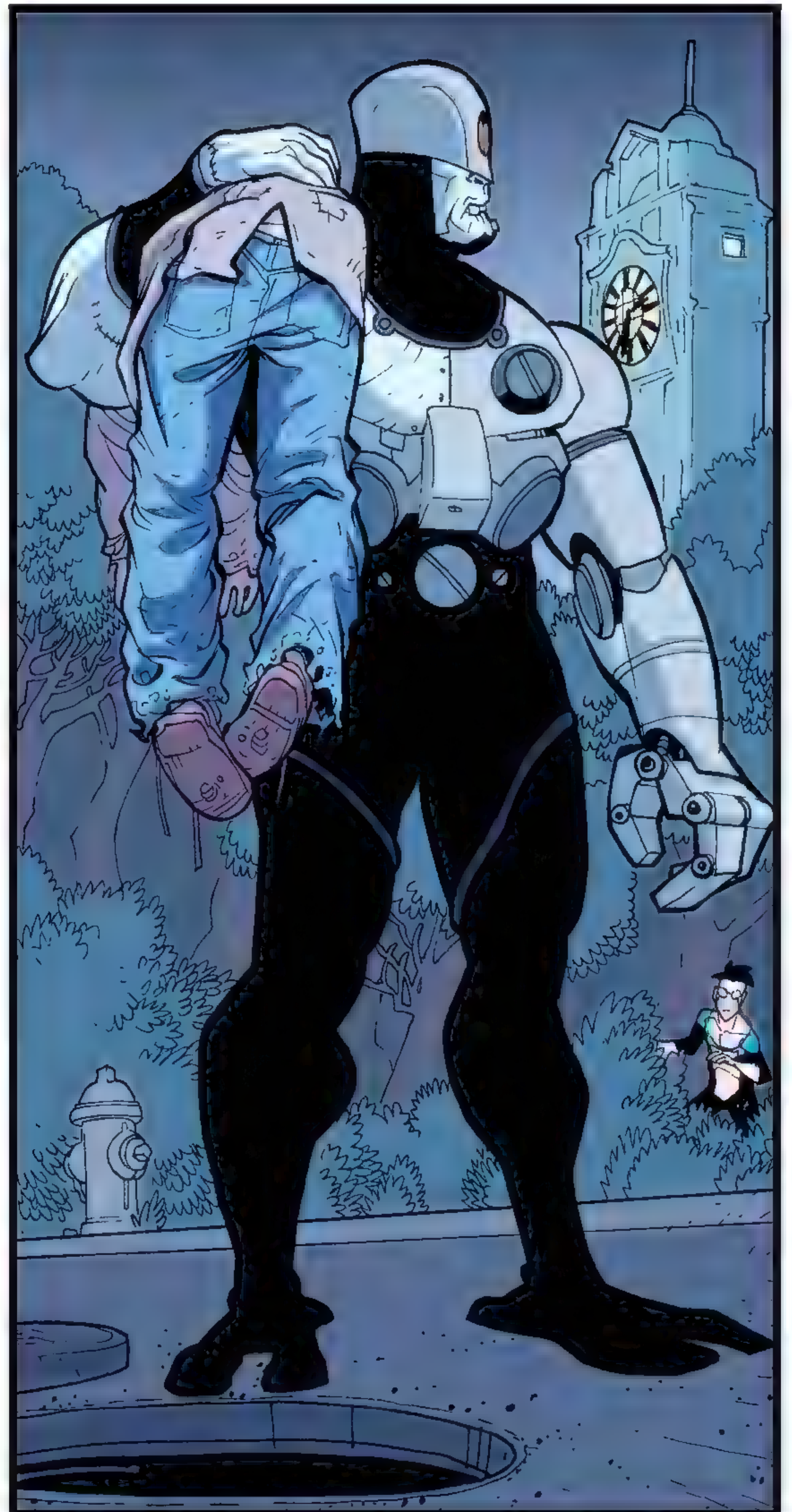
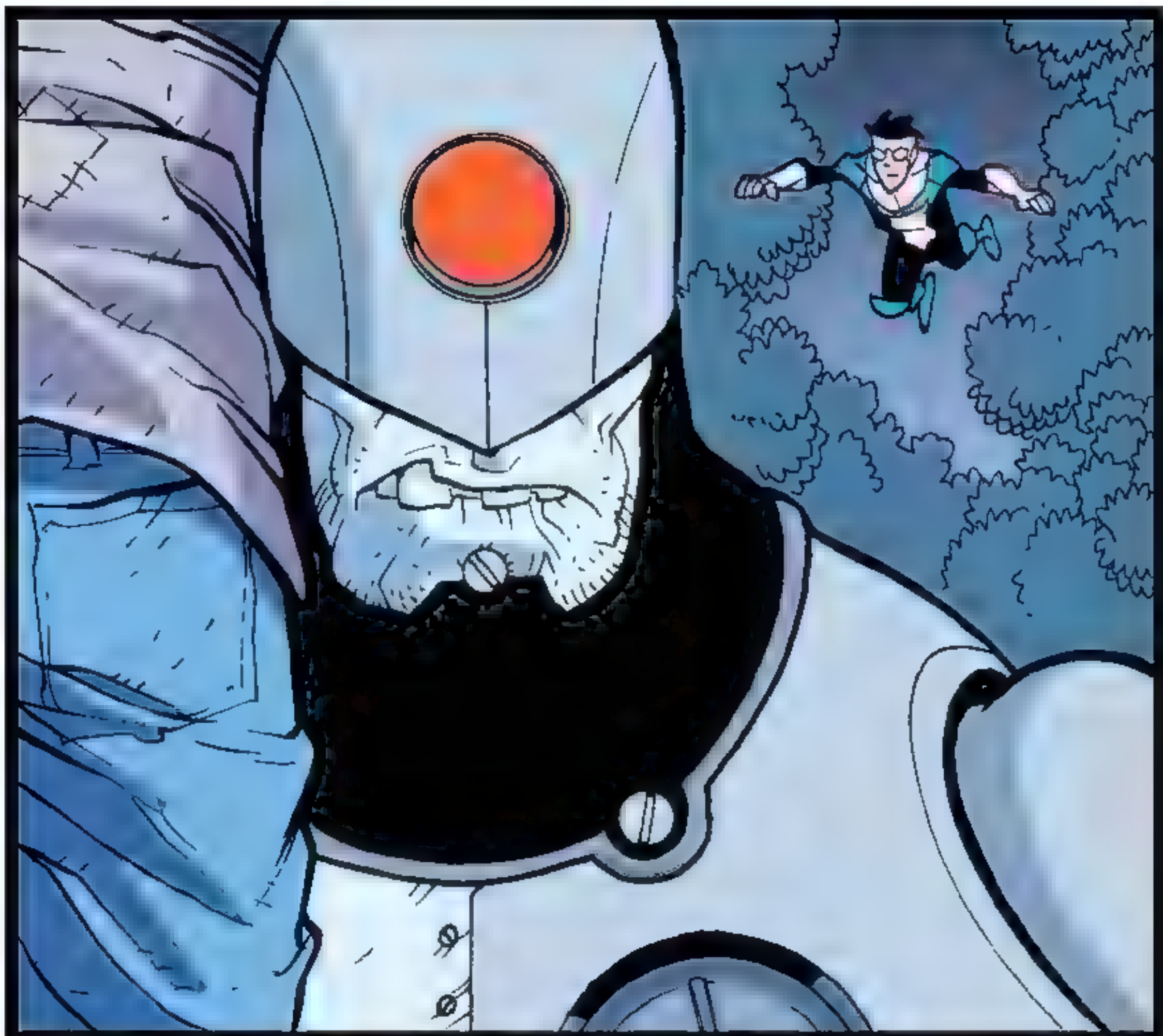
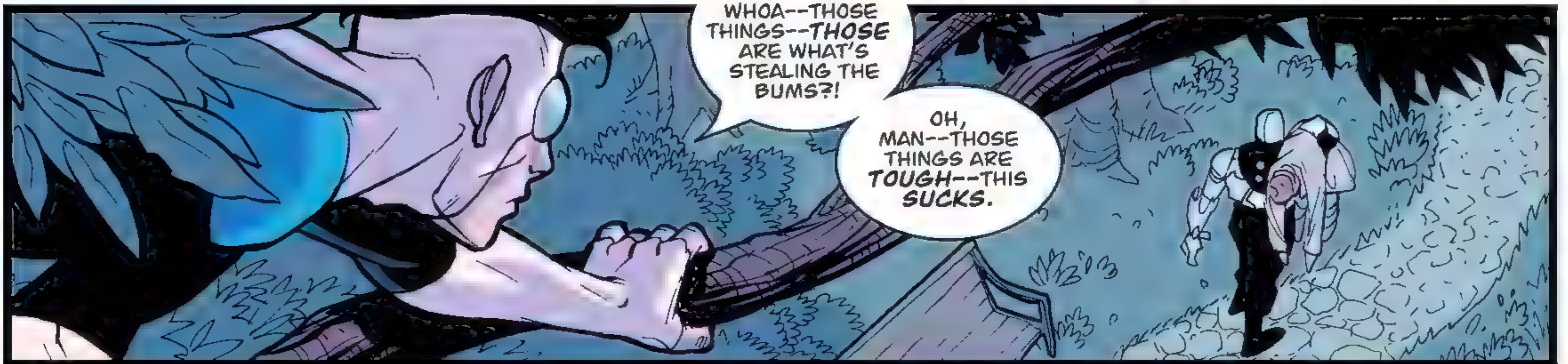


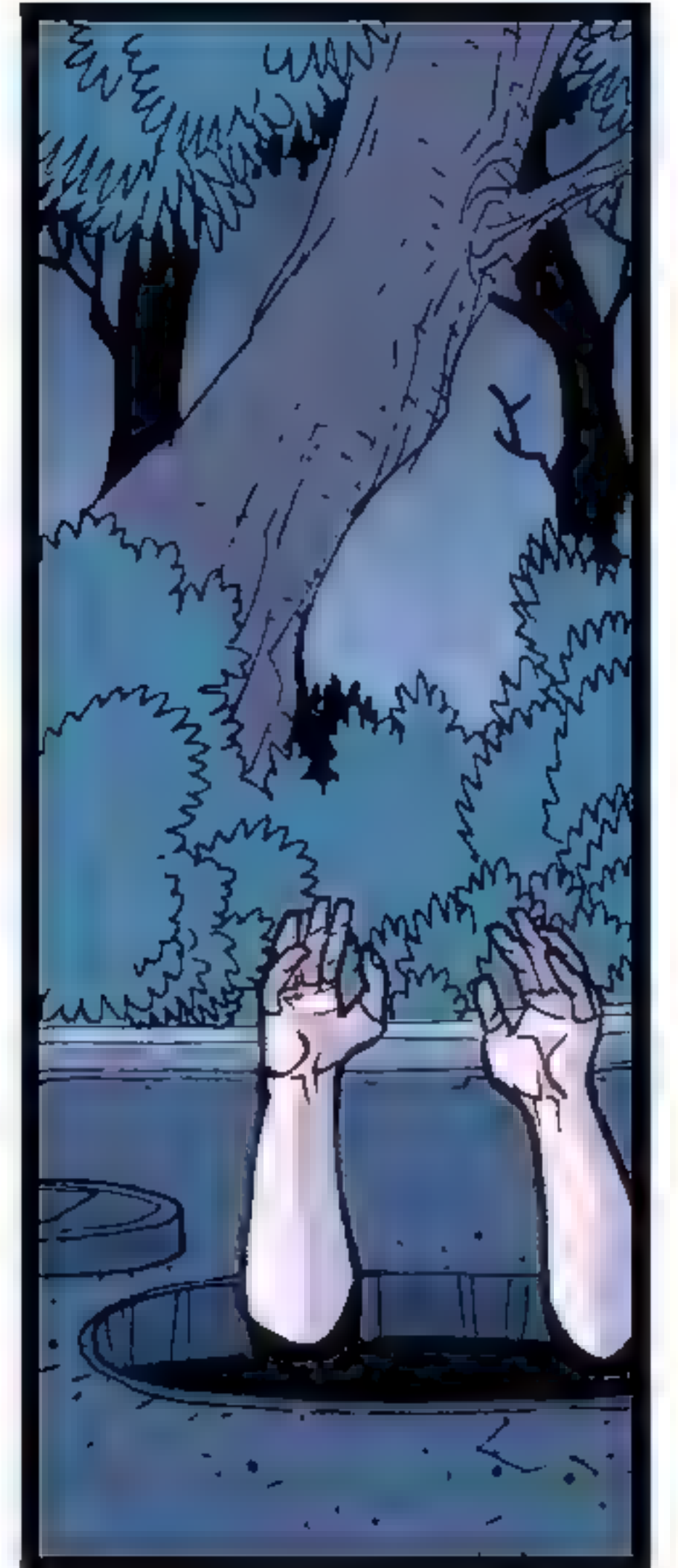
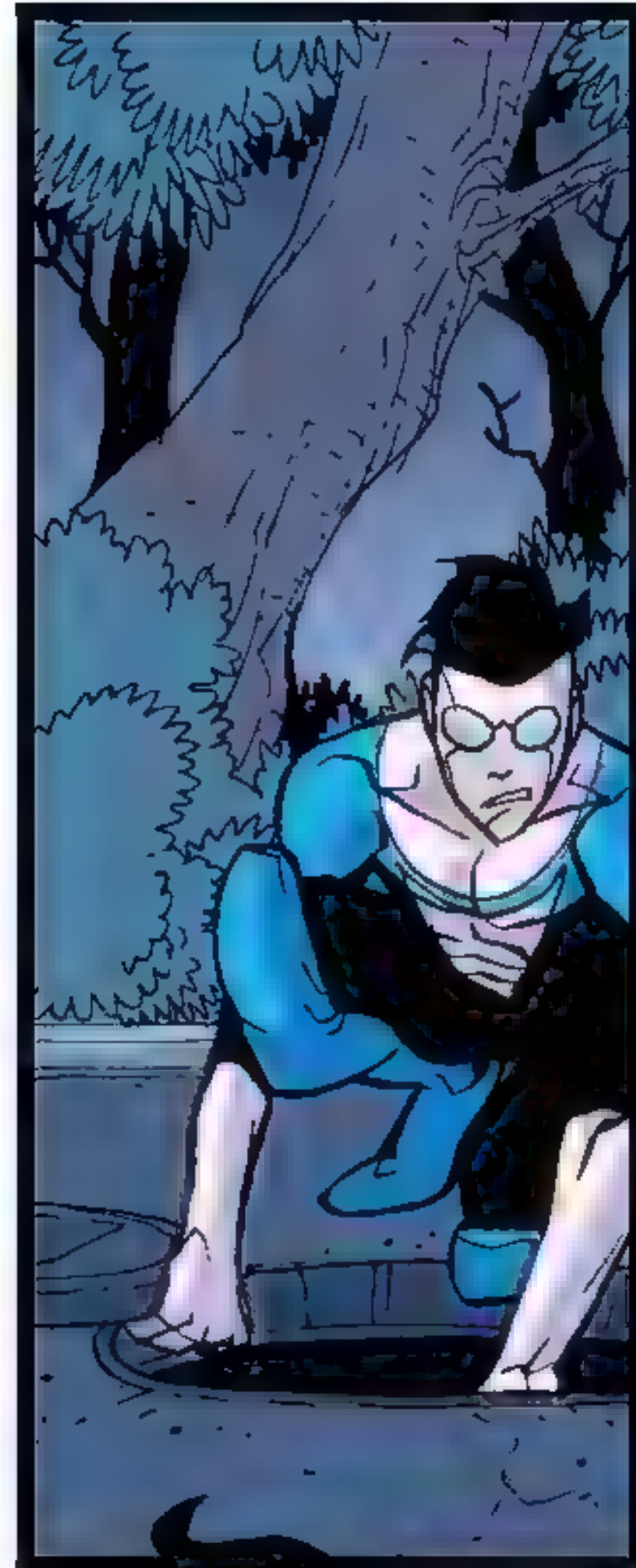
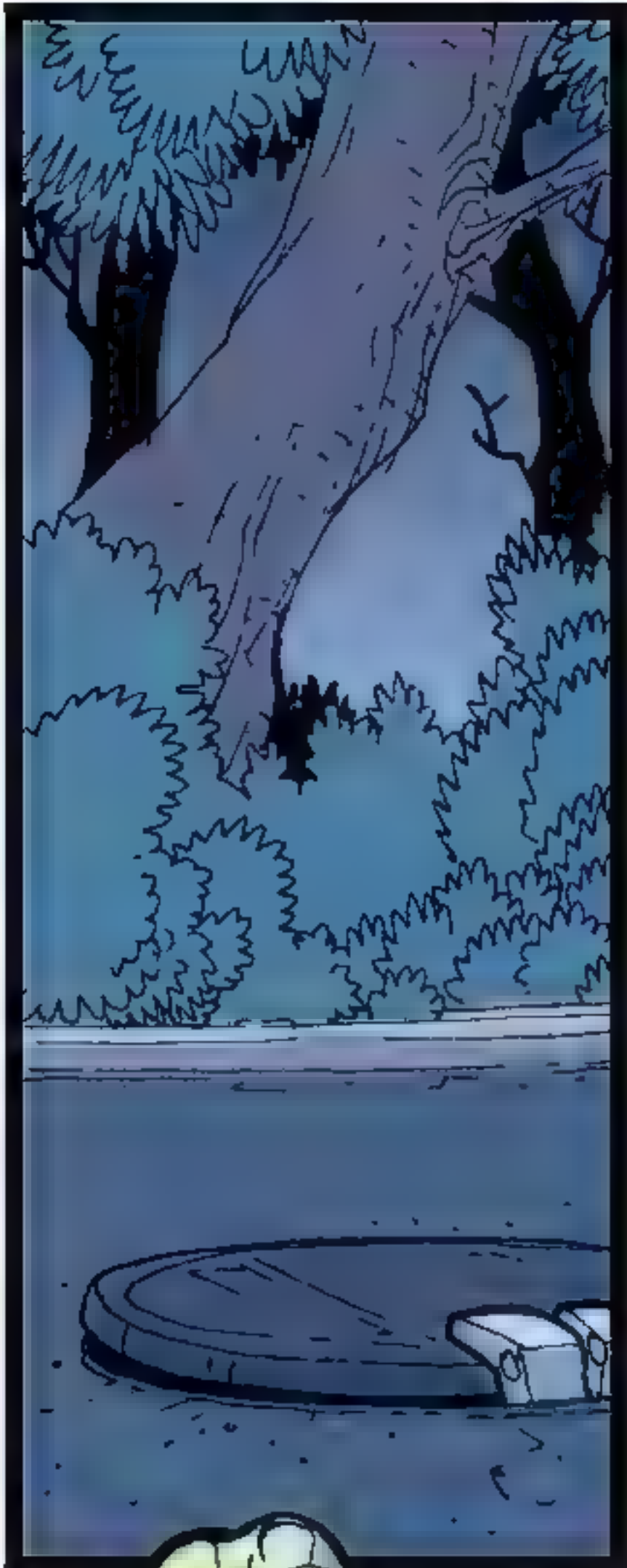
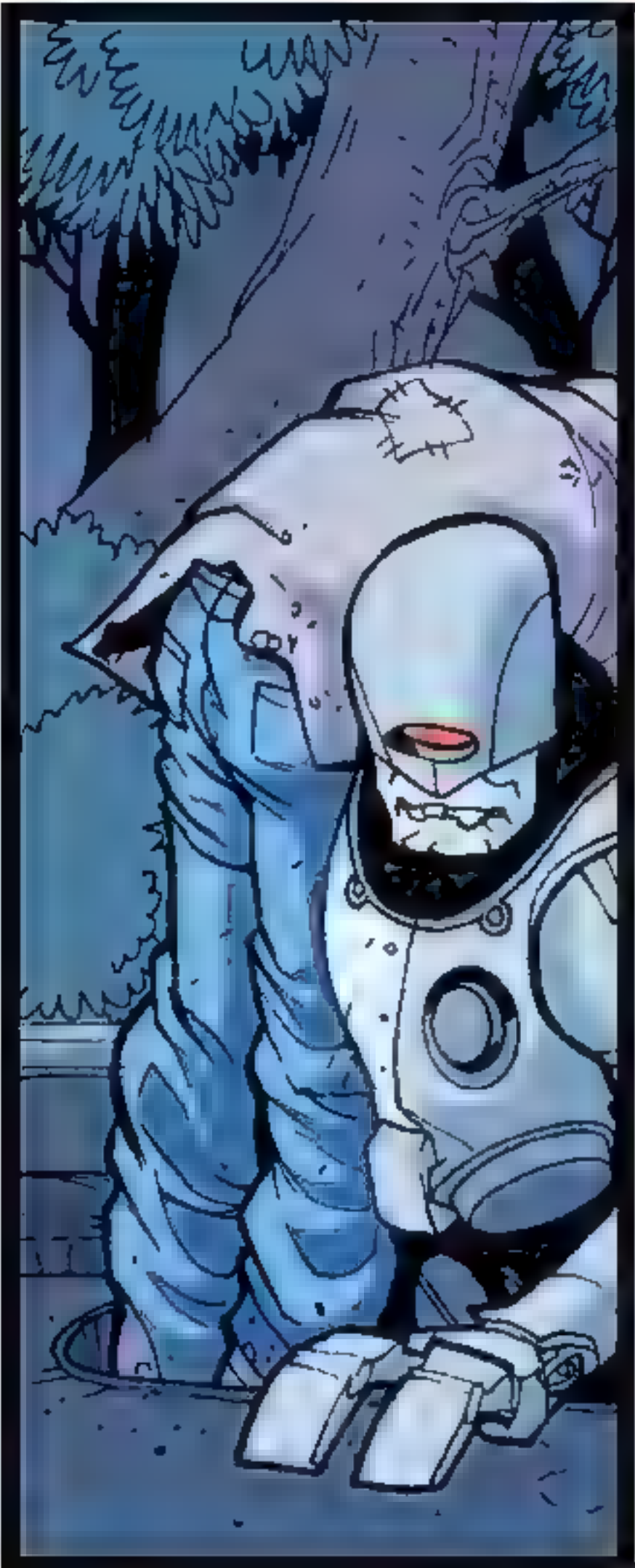
THIS IS ABOUT RICK,
MAN--WE GOTTA GET
HIM BACK--JUST GO
HIDE IN THOSE TREES.
IF SOMEONE SEES
YOU THIS IS ALL
OVER.

CRAP! I
FORGOT TO
BRING SOME
OLD NEWSPAPER
TO COVER
UP WITH.

OH,
WELL...





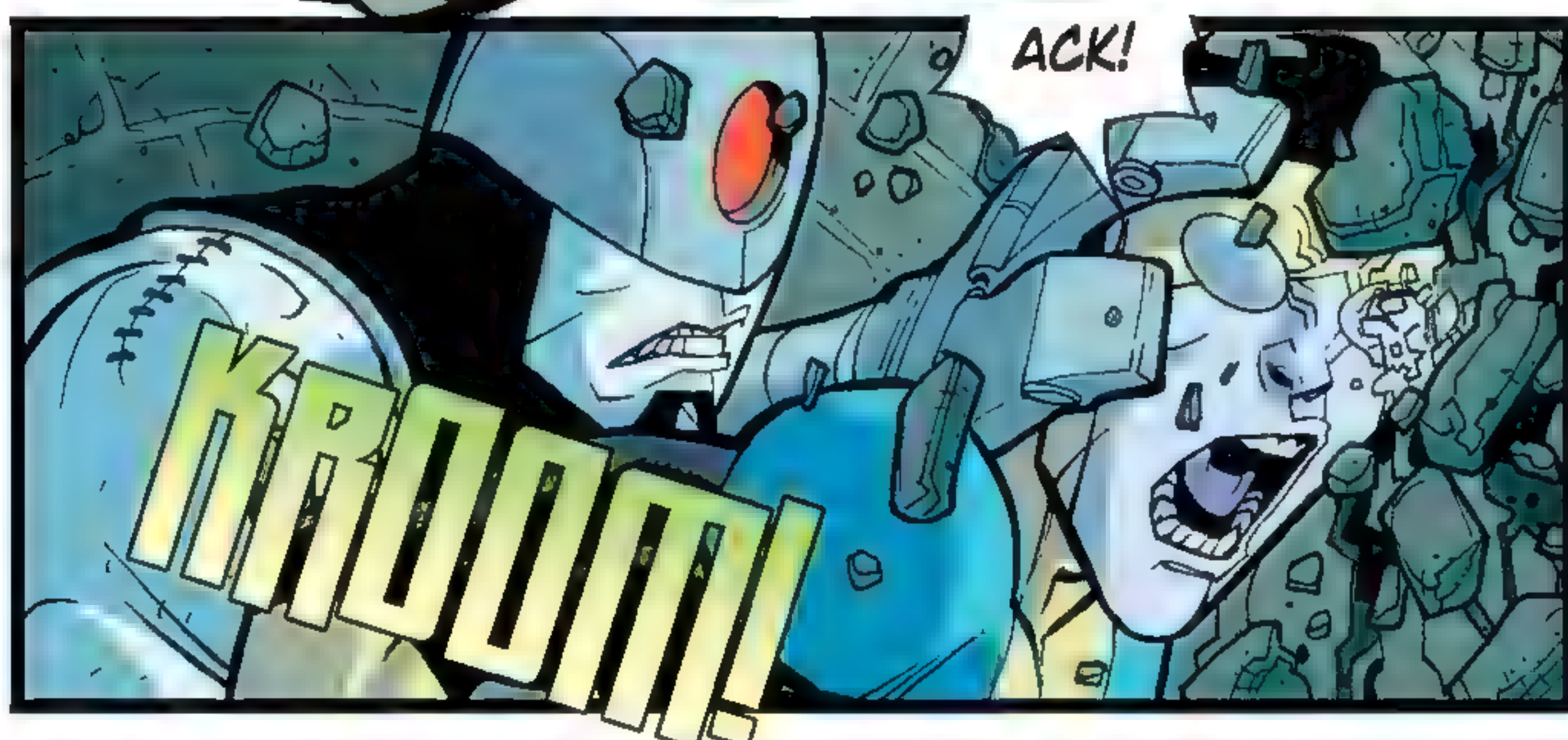
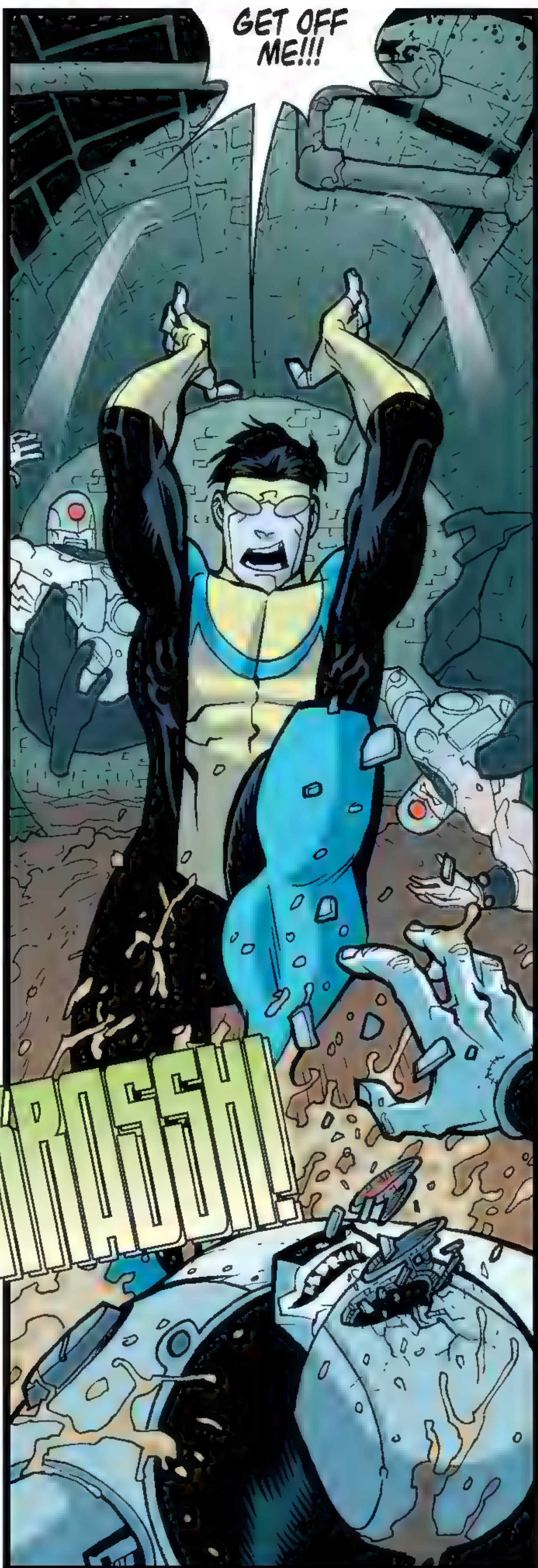
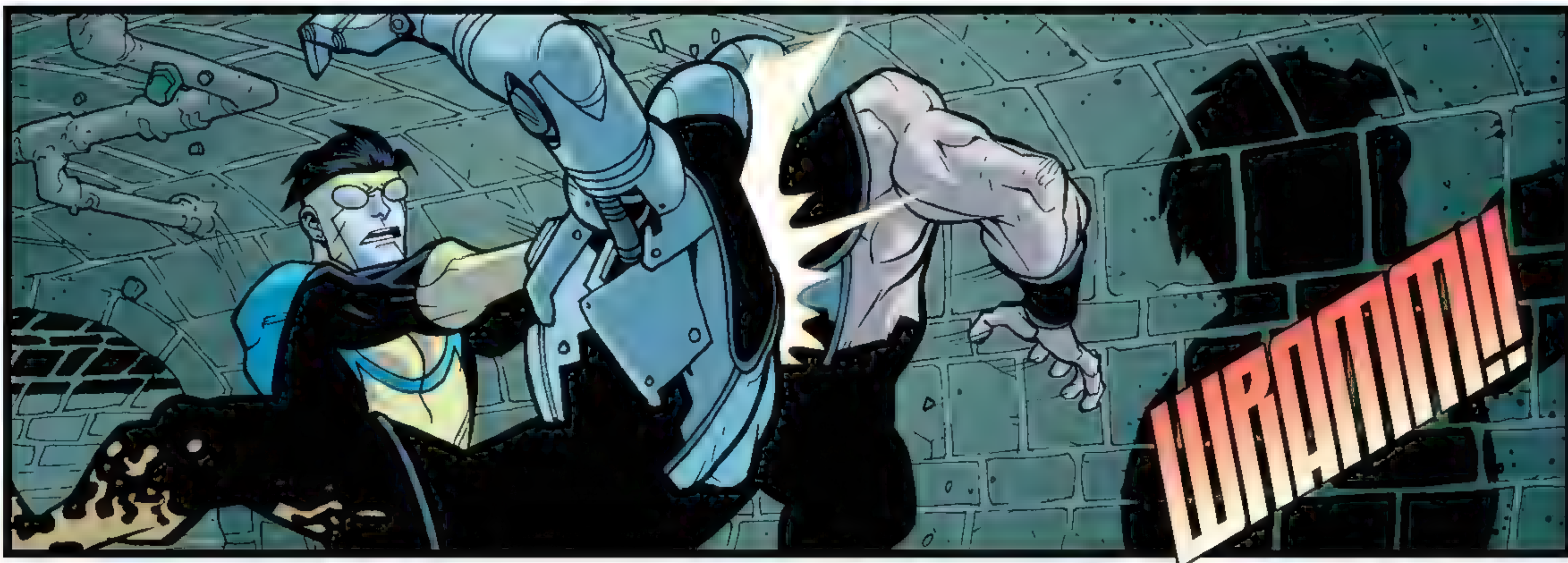


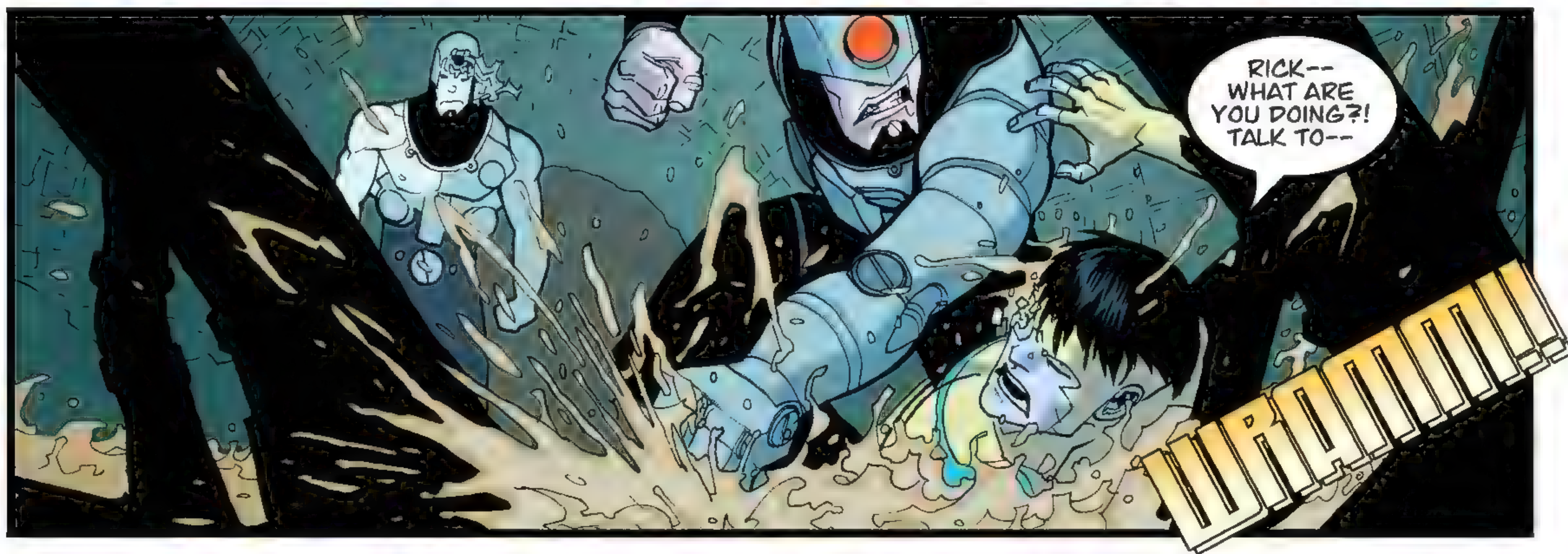
WHOA
HEY--WHAT
GIVES?!

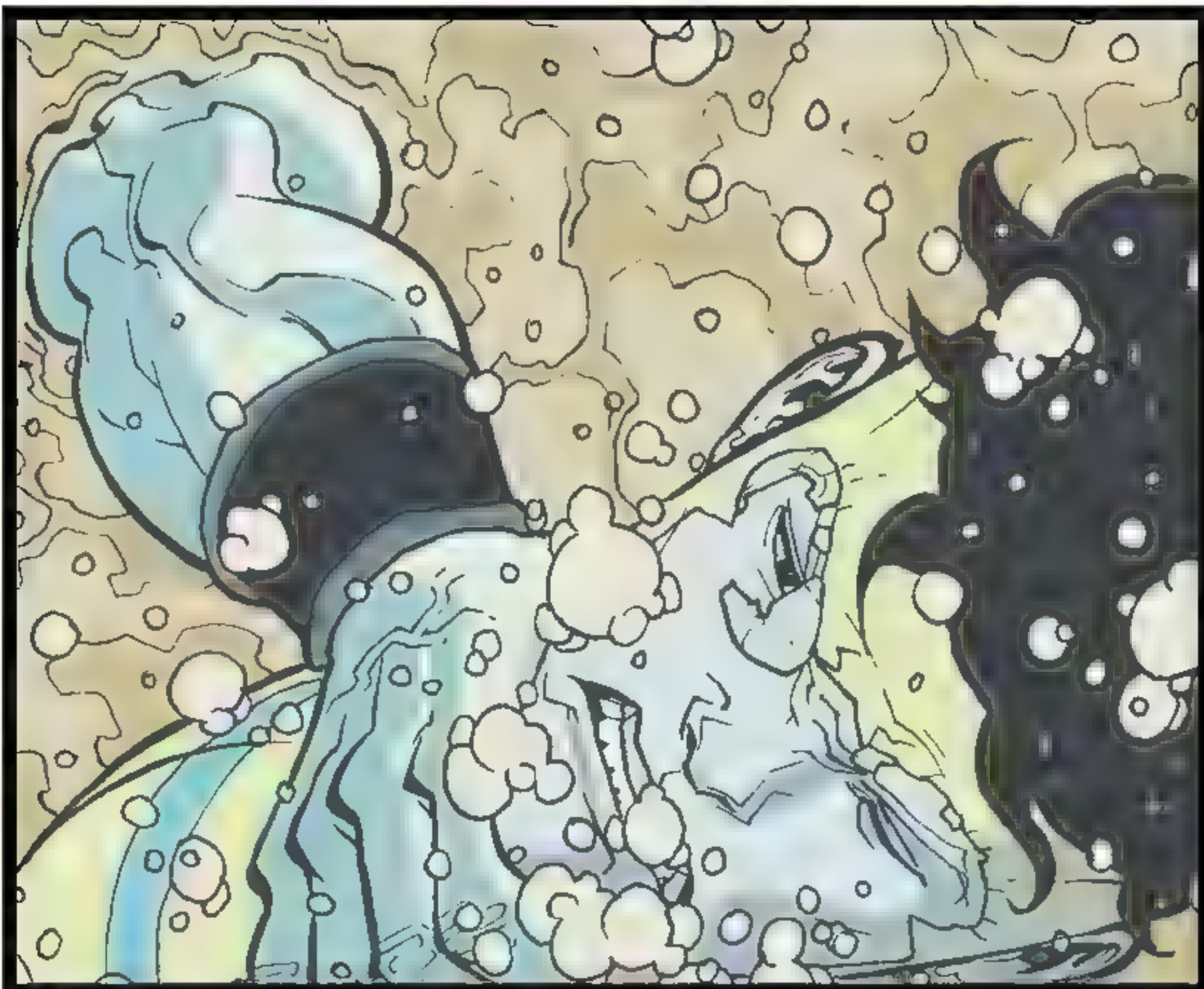


MARK!!











AT THAT VERY MOMENT, MERE YARDS AWAY--AT THE SECRET CLOCK TOWER LAIR OF D.A. SINCLAIR, CREATOR OF THE REANIMEN.

I SEE WHAT YOU WERE AFTER, NOW. HAD A BUDDY FOLLOW YOU, HUH--YOU'RE OUT TO STOP ME, AREN'T YOU?

WELL--I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE-- I DO RECOGNIZE YOUR FRIEND IN THE COSTUME, THOUGH--BUT IT DOESN'T MATTER, IT'S NOT GOING TO WORK. I'M GOING TO CUT INTO YOU AND TRANSFORM YOU INTO SOMETHING NEW--SOMETHING BETTER!

YOU'RE CRAZY! YOU'RE NOT GOING TO DO ANYTHING TO ME!



ACTUALLY, I'M GOING TO DO WHATEVER I WANT AND I'M GOING TO ENJOY IT.

MOST OF MY CAPTIVES HAVE BEEN TOO DRUNK OR INSANE TO PROVIDE ME WITH ANY AMUSEMENT--BUT I THINK YOU'LL SCREAM PLENTY.

WON'T YOU?

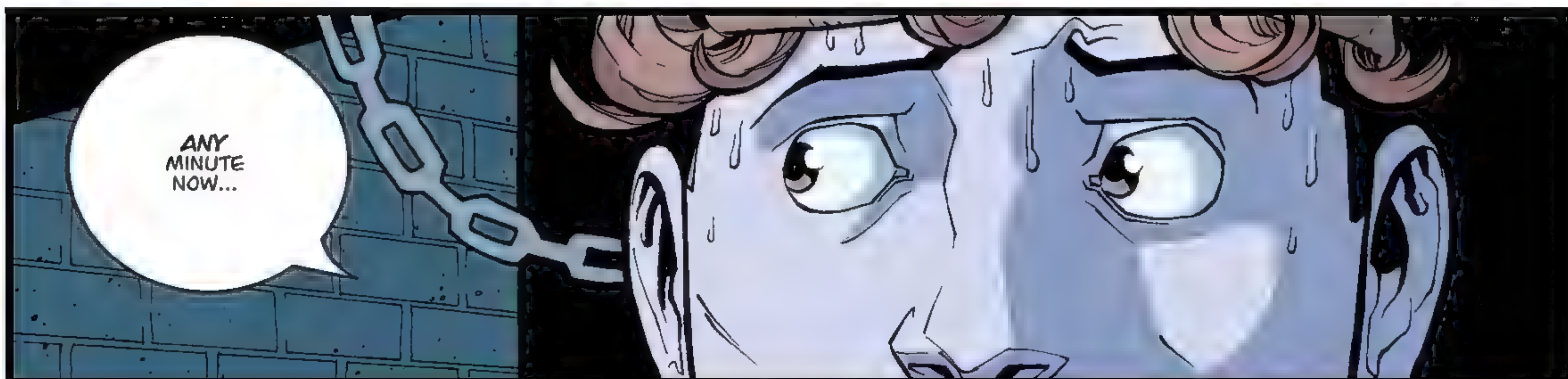


WHATEVER, MAN! MY BUDDY'S A SUPER-HERO! HE'S GOT ALL KINDS OF POWERS!

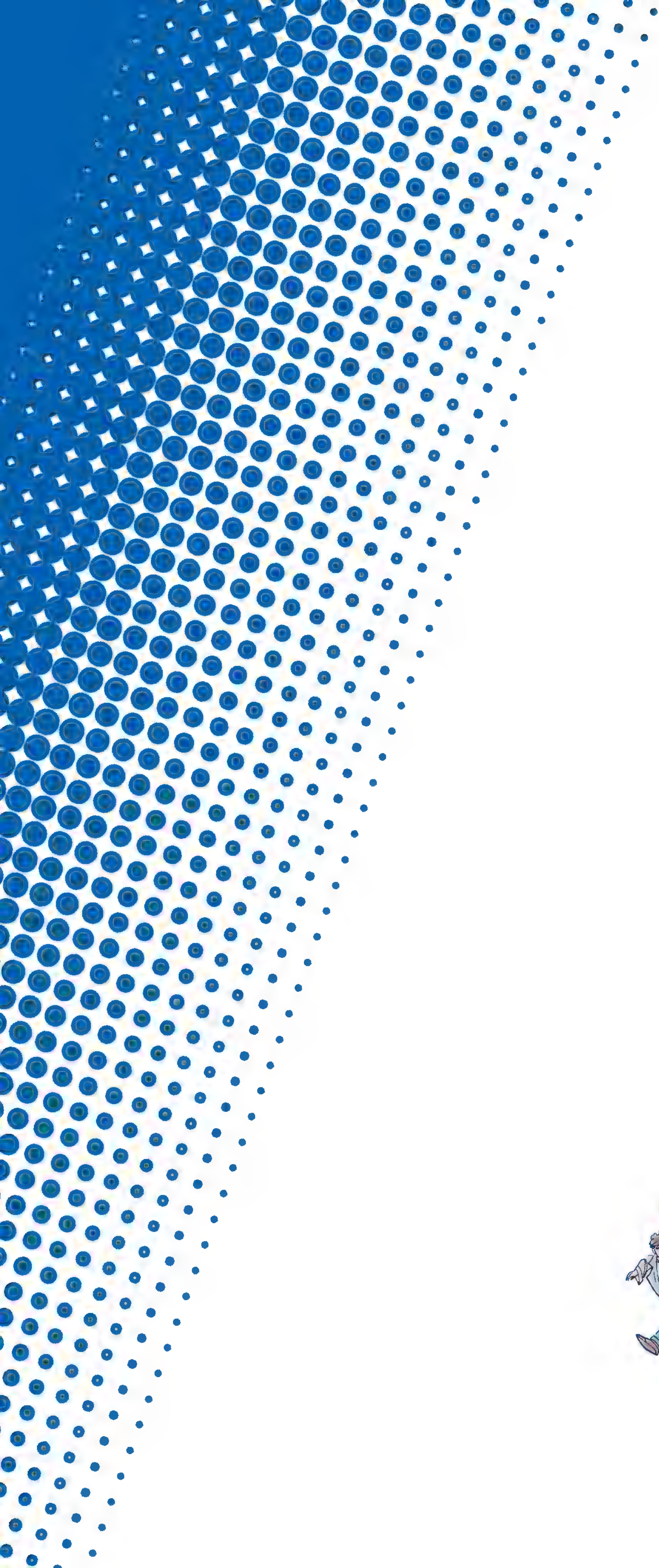
HE'S GOING TO BUST THROUGH THAT WALL ANY MINUTE NOW AND SAVE ME.



ANY MINUTE NOW...

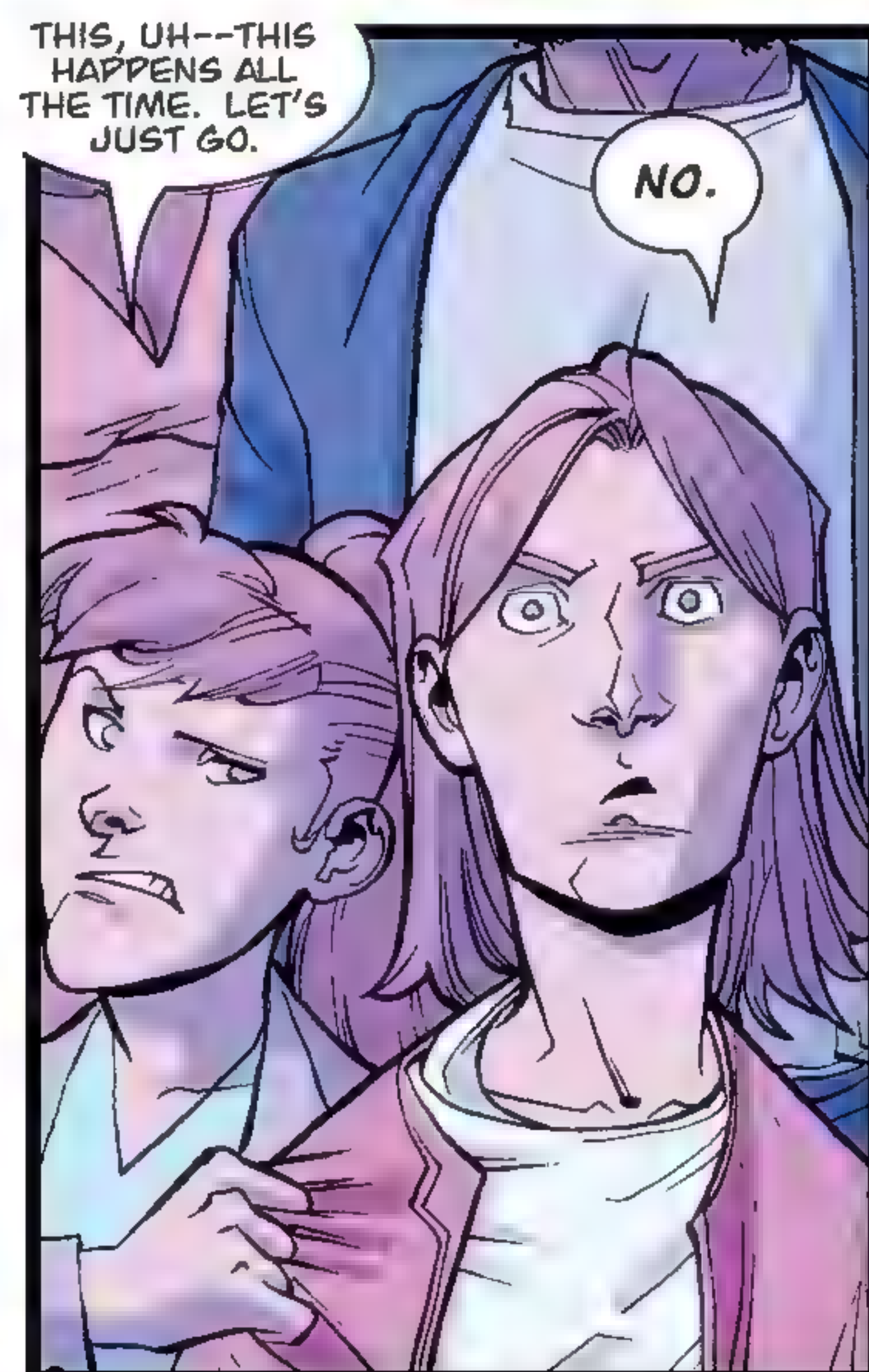
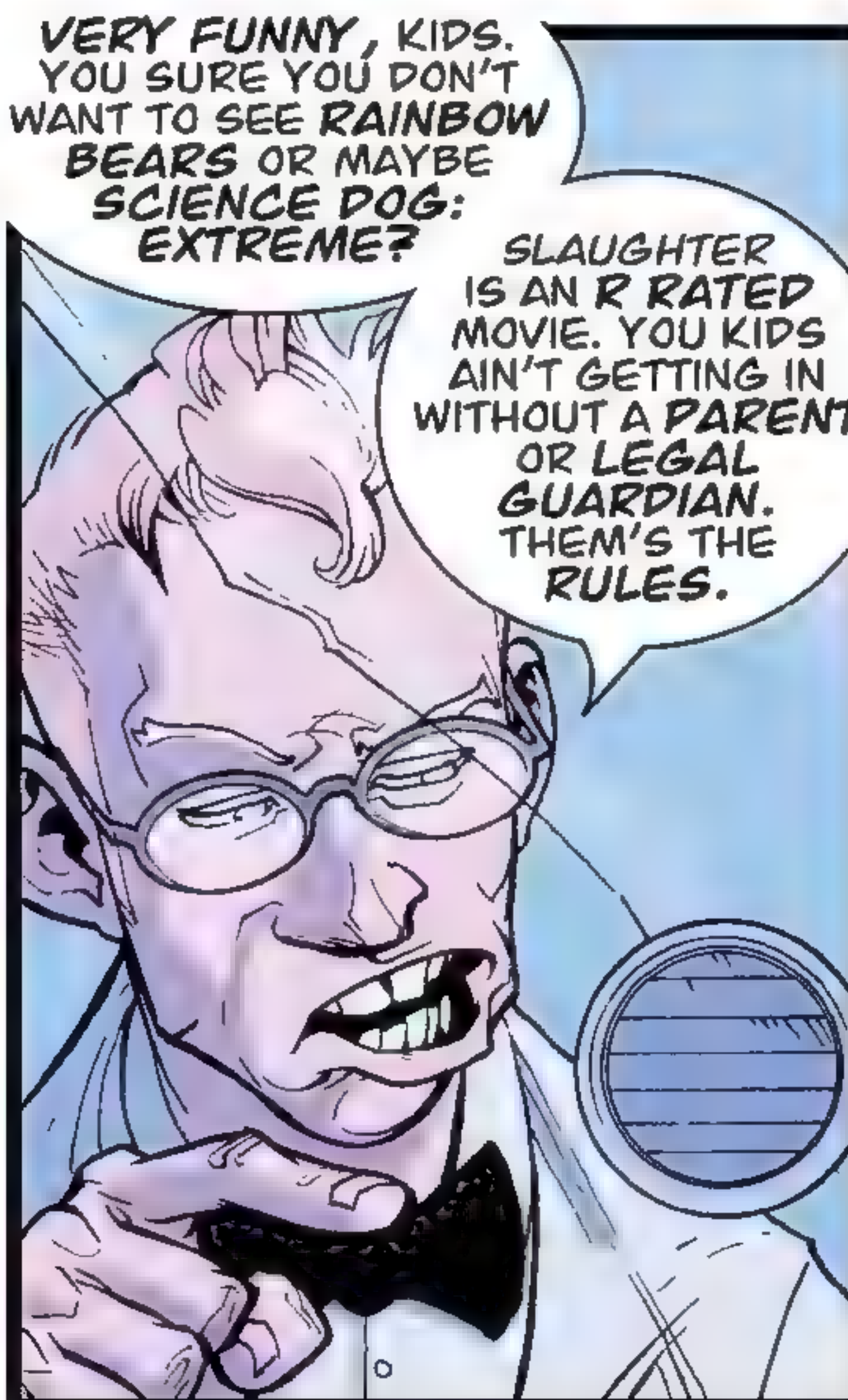
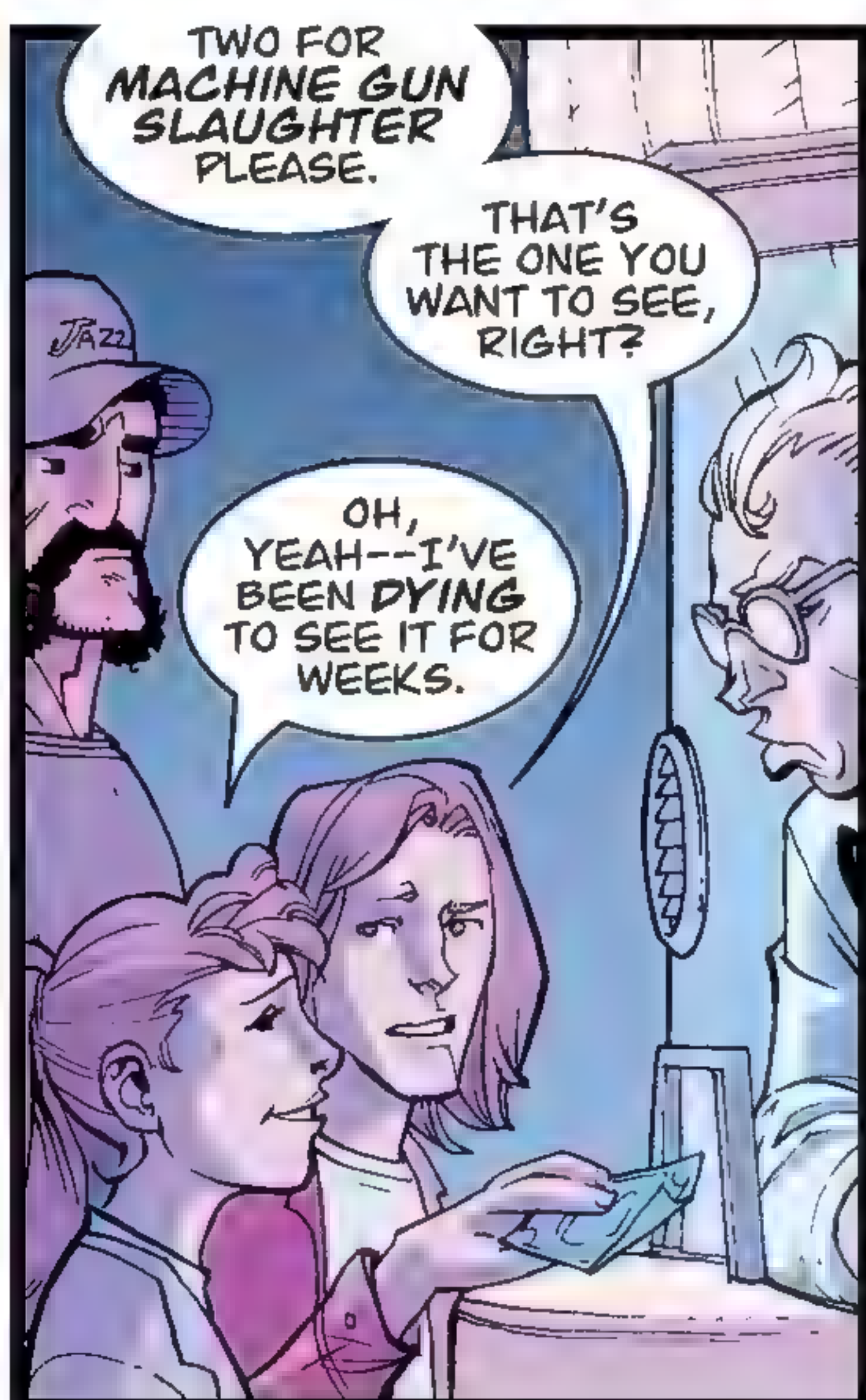
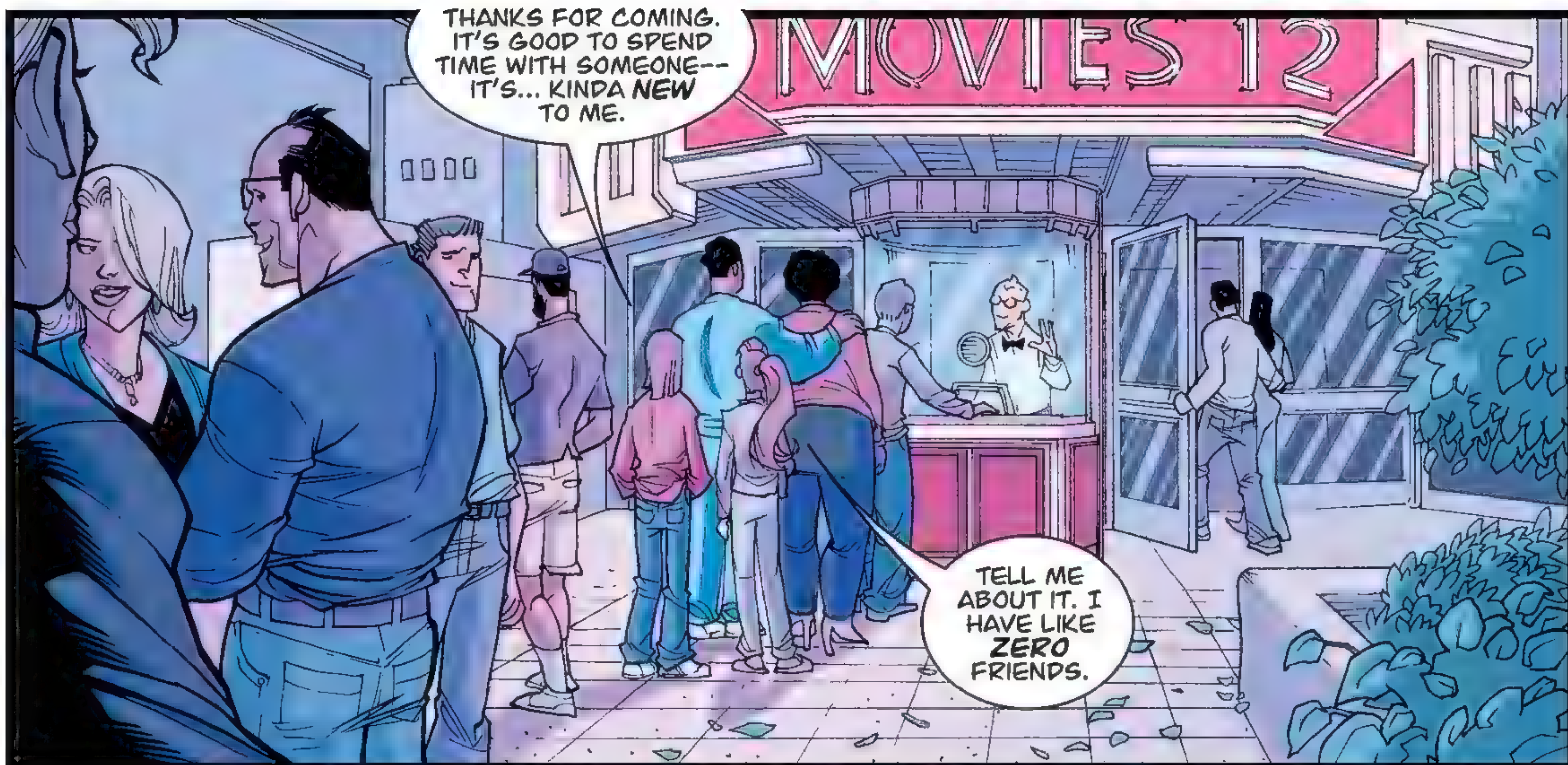


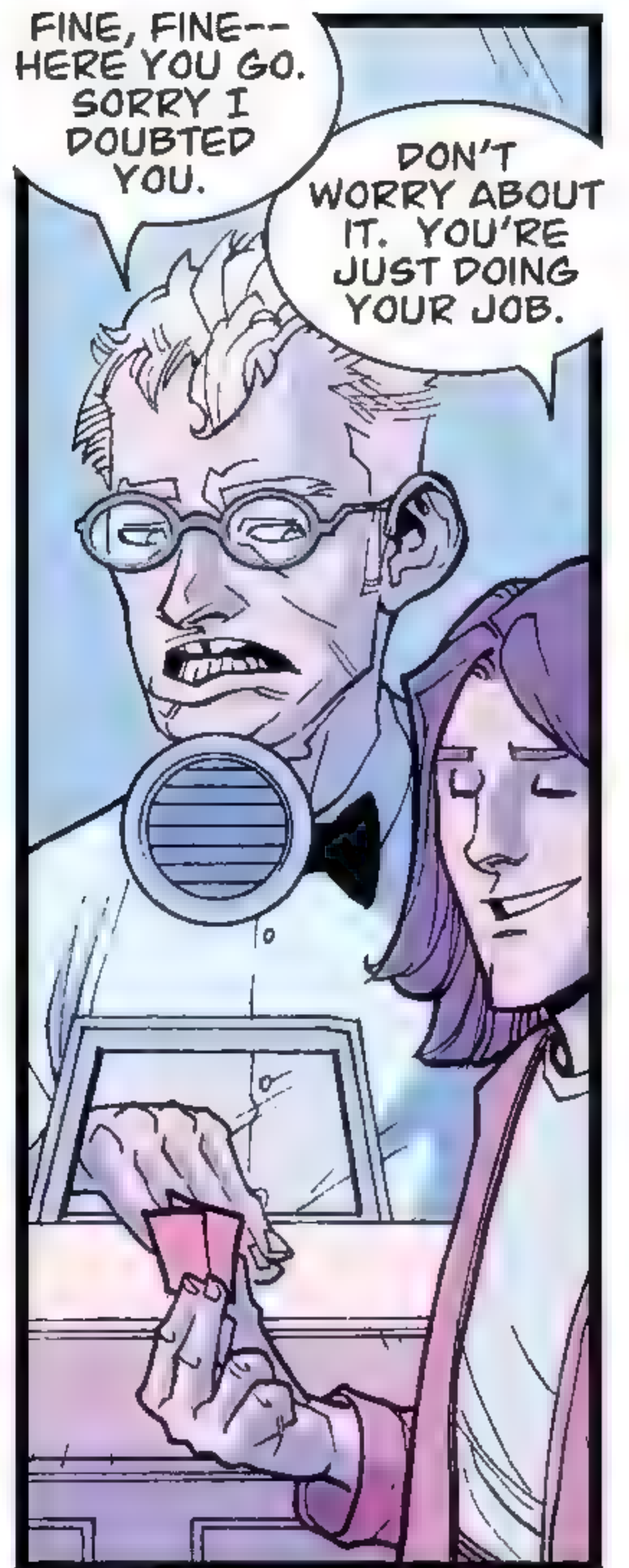
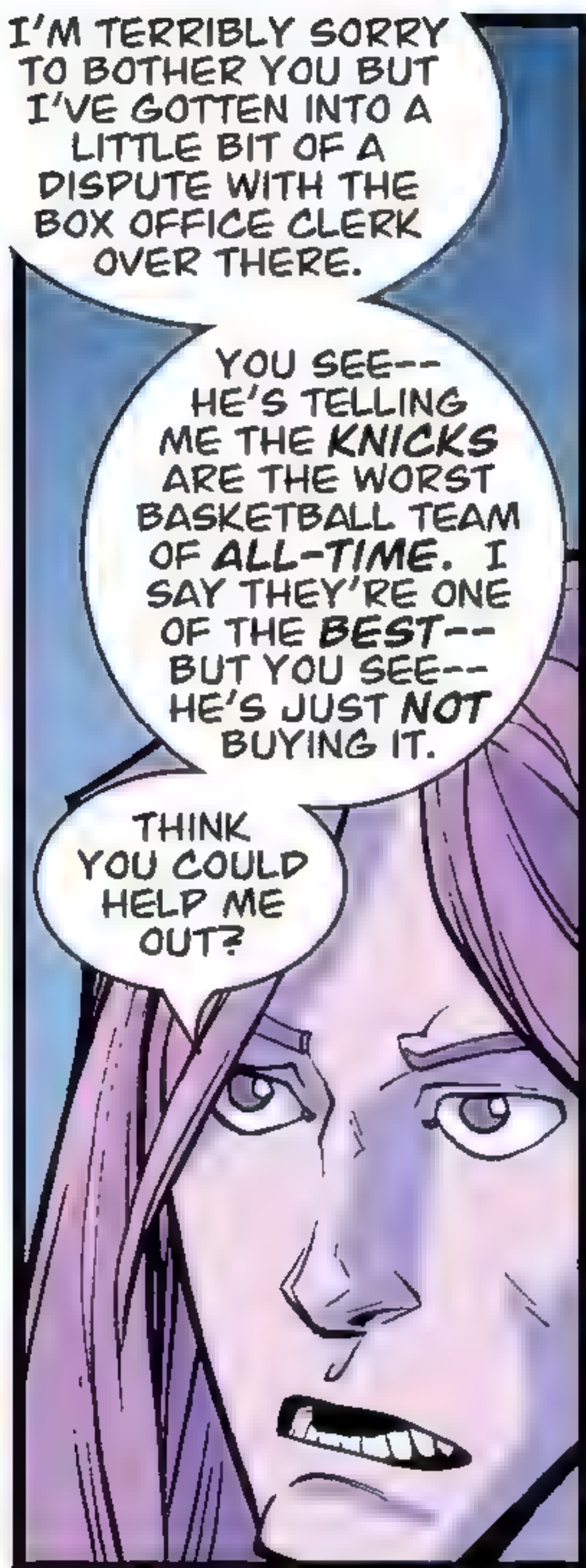
ANY MINUTE NOW...



ISSUE THIRTY-SEVEN







ANY MINUTE NOW...
HE'S GOING TO
TOTALLY COME
BUSTING THROUGH
THAT WALL AND
SAVE ME...



...



I'M
SCREWED.



YES, BUT
IT'S FOR
A GOOD
CAUSE.

THIS
WILL KEEP
YOU IMMOBILE
WHILE I SEVER
YOUR VOCAL CORDS.
I WOULDN'T WANT
YOUR SQUIRMING
TO CAUSE ME TO
PIERCE YOUR
JUGULAR OR
ANYTHING.

I'D PUMP
YOU FULL OF
PAIN-KILLERS SO
YOU WOULDN'T HAVE
TO SCREAM SO MUCH
IN THE FIRST PLACE
BUT FRANKLY THIS IS
INFINITELY CHEAPER
AND I'M ON A
COLLEGE STUDENT'S
BUDGET.



MARK!!

THIS
GUY IS
CRAZY!!
SAVE
ME!!



MARK!!

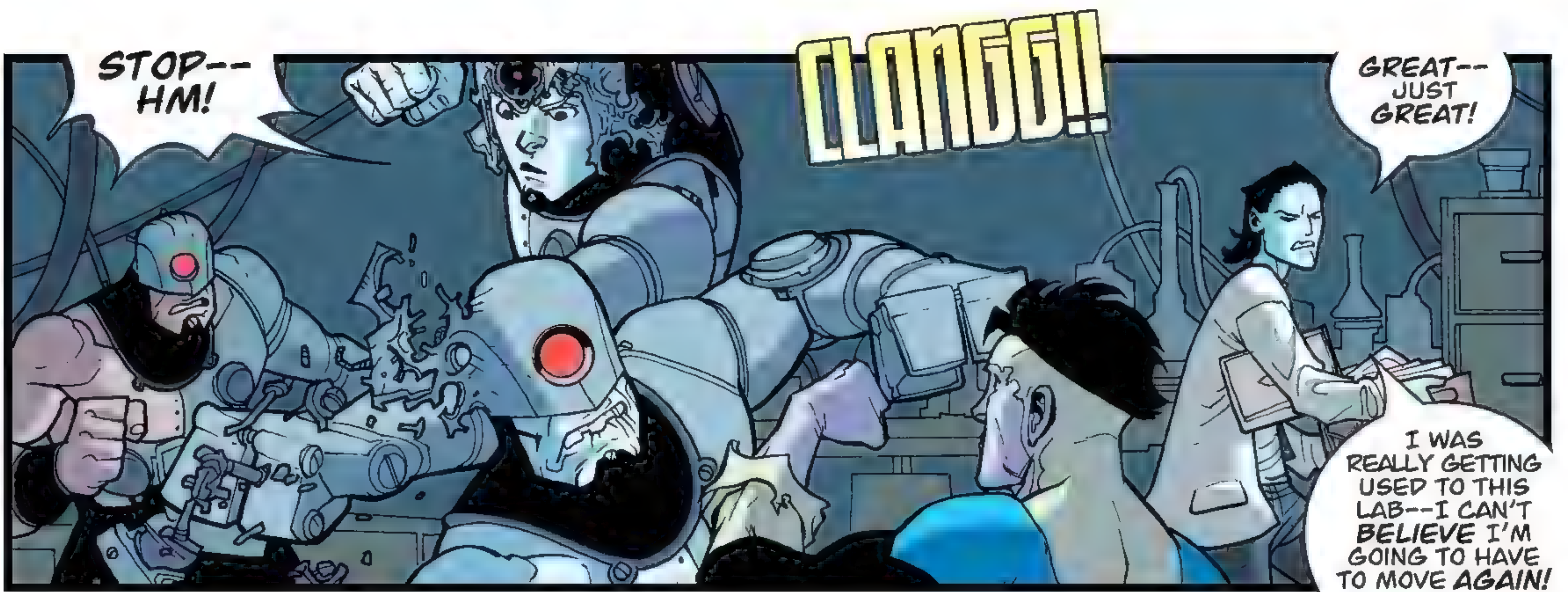
WHO'S
MARK?













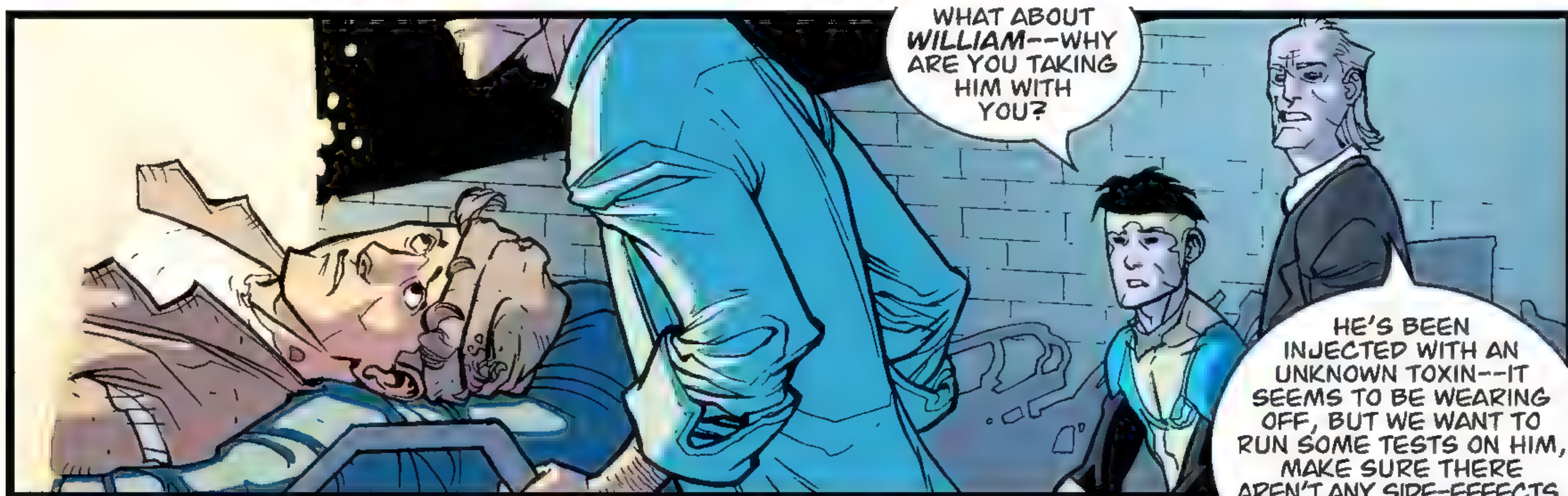


SOME TIME LATER.

I'M
SORRY--I
LOST IT--THAT
GUY--THE THINGS
HE DID. I JUST
LOST IT.

IT'S OKAY.
YOU DID GOOD
HERE. YOU
SAVED THESE
PEOPLE. YOU
DID YOUR
JOB.

JUST
DON'T FORGET
WHAT HAPPENED
THE LAST TIME
YOU LOST YOUR
TEMPER.



WHAT ABOUT
WILLIAM--WHY
ARE YOU TAKING
HIM WITH
YOU?

HE'S BEEN
INJECTED WITH AN
UNKNOWN TOXIN--IT
SEEMS TO BE WEARING
OFF, BUT WE WANT TO
RUN SOME TESTS ON HIM,
MAKE SURE THERE
AREN'T ANY SIDE-EFFECTS.



AND
HIM?

OUR BEST GUYS ARE
GOING TO WORK ON
HIM--RESTORE HIM.
WHEN WE'RE DONE...
YOU WON'T BE ABLE
TO TELL ANYTHING
WAS EVER DONE
TO HIM.

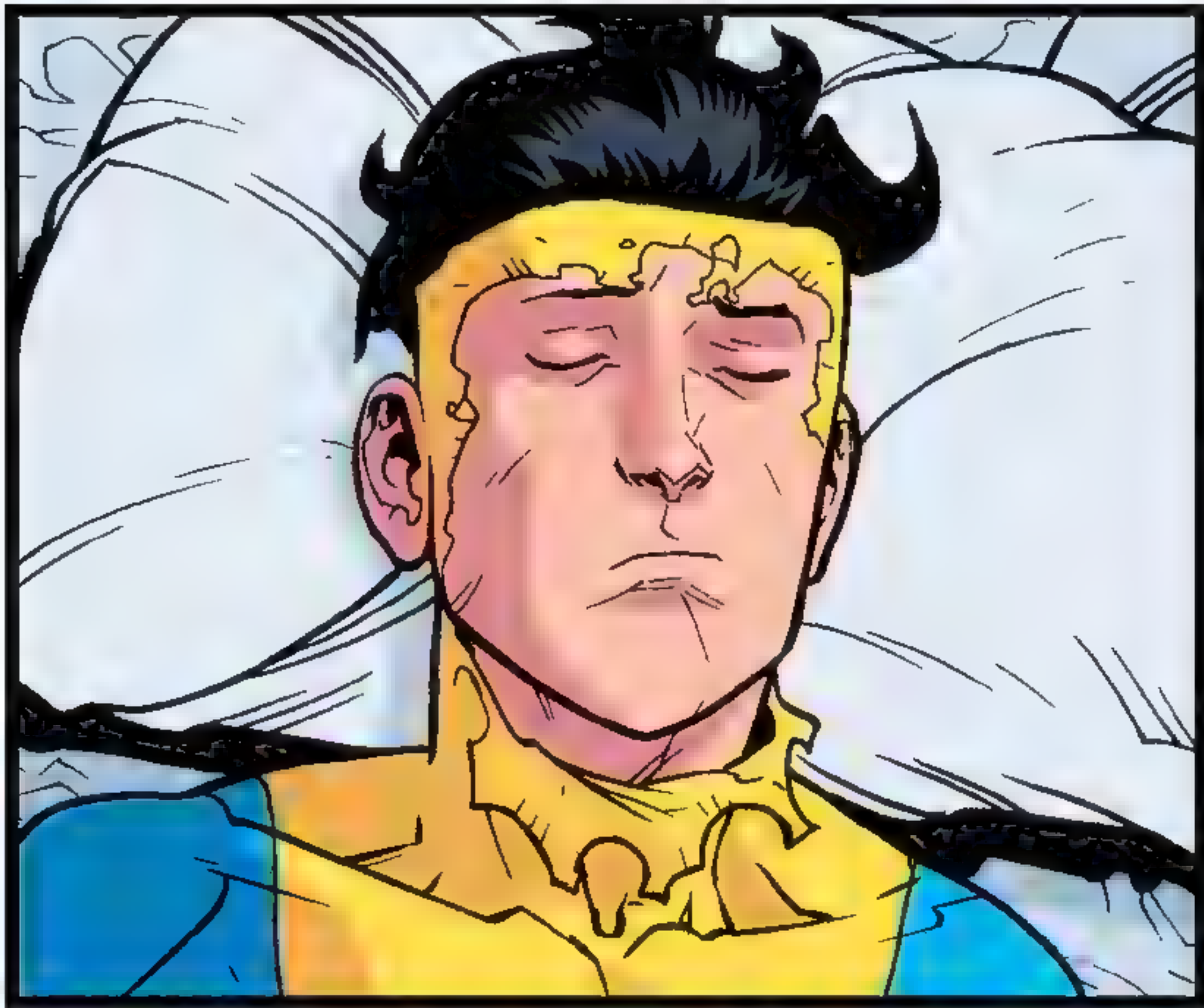
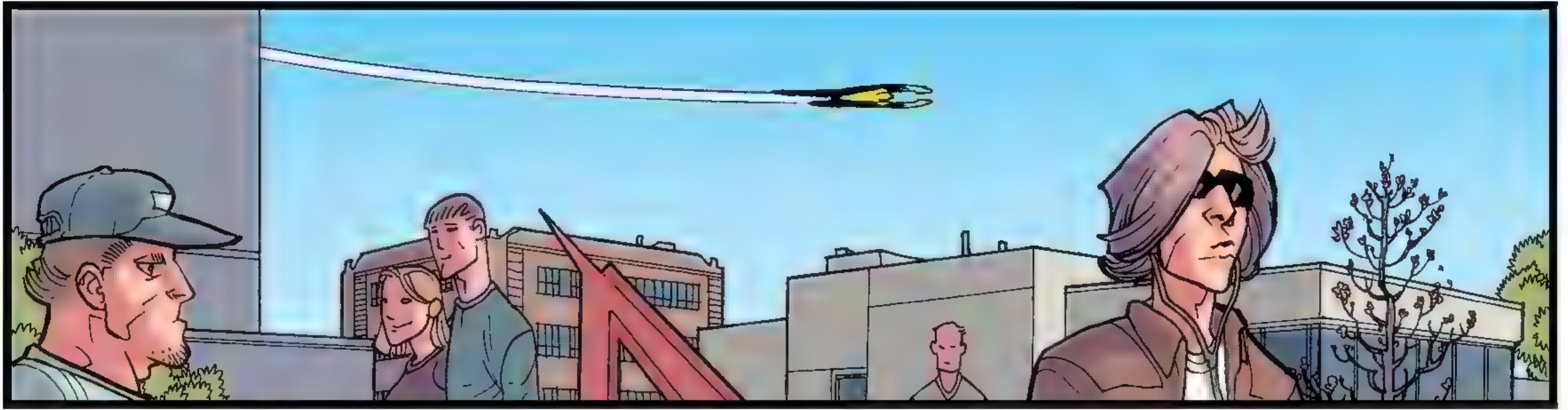
BUT HE'LL
REMEMBER.



I JUST--
I FEEL
TERRIBLE
ABOUT ALL
THIS.

YOU'VE
BEEN UP ALL
NIGHT, KID.
THERE'S NOTHING
YOU CAN DO HERE.
GO HOME--GET
SOME REST.

YEAH,
YOU'RE
RIGHT.





I APPRECIATE YOU COMING DOWN HERE, MARK--AND SO **SOON** AFTER I CALLED, TOO.

SORRY I WAS LATE.

WELL, IT'S FUNNY YOU SHOULD SAY THAT, YOU SEE... THAT'S WHY I ASKED YOU HERE. YOU SEE, I DON'T USUALLY GET THIS "HANDS-ON" WITH THE STUDENTS. IT'S JUST NOT **POSSIBLE** WITH THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS HERE.

BUT YOU, MARK, YOU'RE ONE OF MY BOYS. IT'S ALMOST LIKE WHEN YOU GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL, I GRADUATED TOO. SO I'VE ALWAYS HAD A SOFT SPOT FOR YOU.

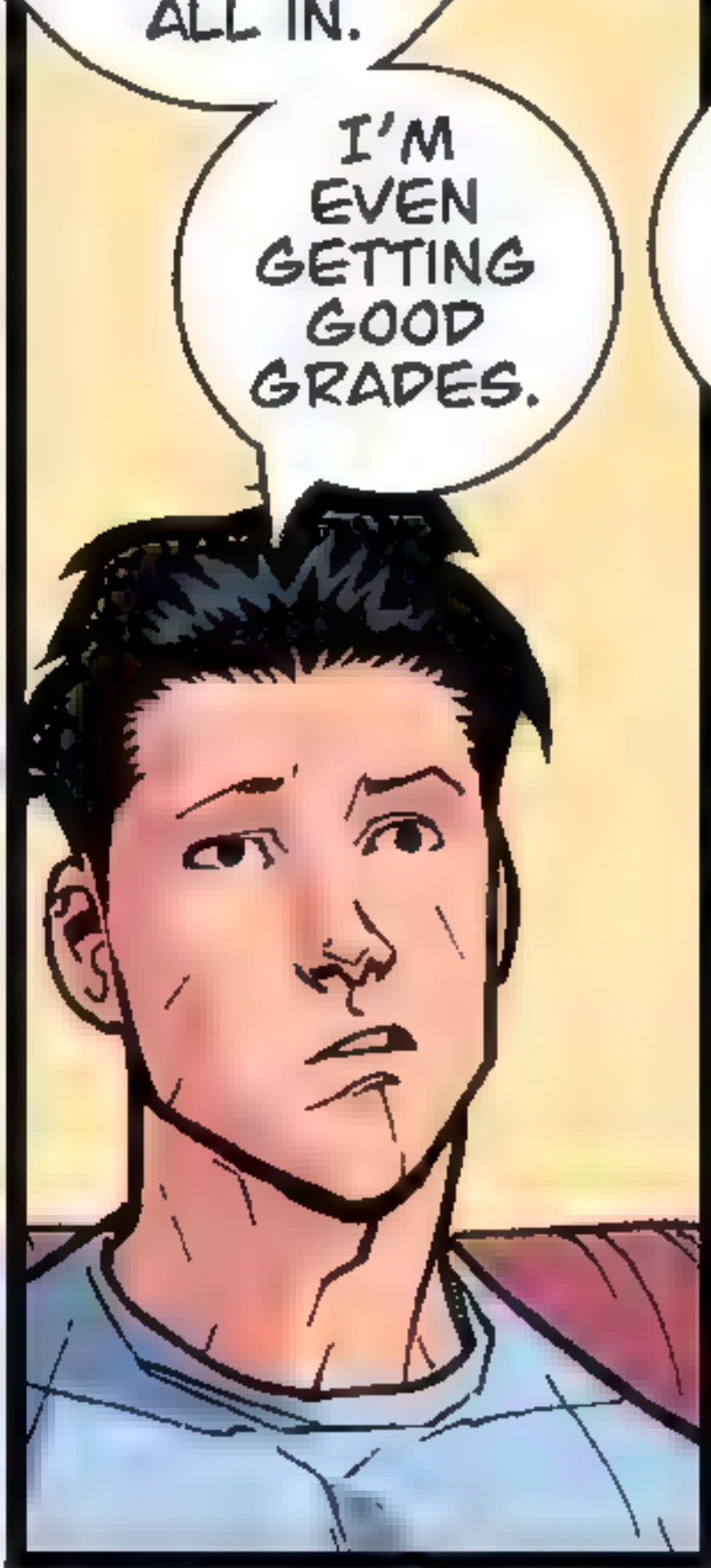


WHICH IS WHY I'VE TAKEN A PERSONAL INTEREST IN YOU--AND SON, I'VE GOT TO TELL YOU. YOUR ATTENDANCE **SUCKS**. YOU'VE MISSED **EIGHTY PERCENT** OF YOUR CLASSES THIS SEMESTER.

DO YOU REALIZE IF YOU WERE ANYONE ELSE YOU'D BE EJECTED FROM SCHOOL WITH A RECORD LIKE THIS?



BUT I DO TURN IN ALL MY WORK. LATE IN SOME CASES, SURE-- BUT I'VE TURNED IT ALL IN.



I'M EVEN GETTING GOOD GRADES.

AND WHEN YOU'RE DOCKED FOR LATENESS YOUR GRADES DROP DRAMATICALLY. YOU'RE STRUGGLING TO MAINTAIN A D AVERAGE RIGHT NOW... AND THAT JUST WON'T CUT IT.

WHAT'S THE **PROBLEM** HERE? WHAT'S KEEPING YOU OUT OF CLASS?



IS IT **DRUGS**?

LORD, NO!



I **SWEAR**!

IT'S SOMETHING AND WHATEVER IT IS, ALCOHOL, GIRLS, TELEVISION-- **WHATEVER**. IT'S SERIOUSLY HURTING YOU, MARK.

IT'S HURTING YOUR **FUTURE**.

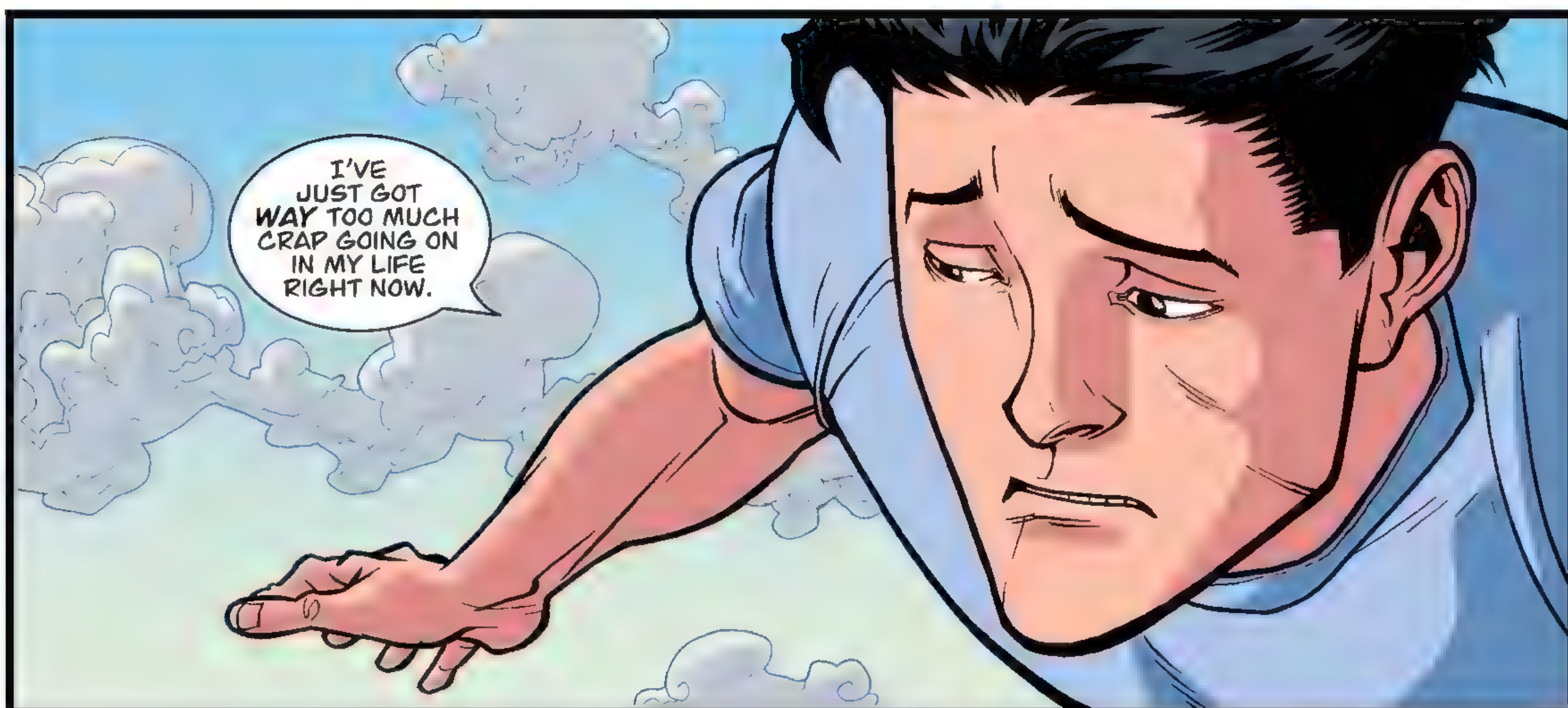


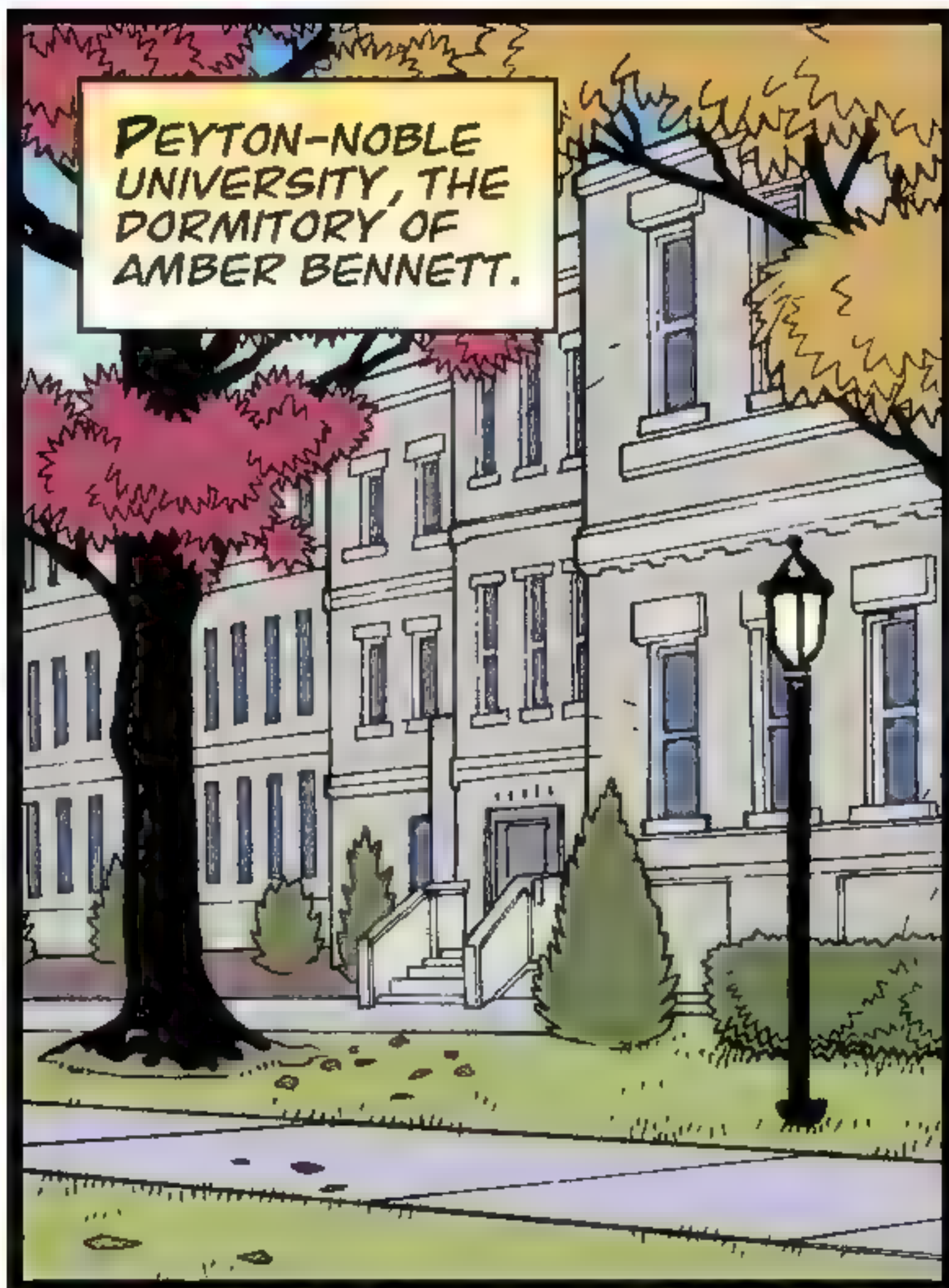
FRANKLY, MARK-- YOU'RE JUST NOT LIVING UP TO YOUR POTENTIAL--AND THAT MAKES ME DISAPPOINTED.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS THAT'S DISTRACTING YOU SO MUCH--MAKING YOU MISS SO MUCH CLASS, BUT YOU NEED TO FIGURE OUT A WAY TO **STOP IT**.

OR YOU'RE NEVER GOING TO LAST HERE AT UPSTATE UNIVERSITY. DO YOU UNDERSTAND?

YES, SIR. I **DO**, SIR. I'LL MAKE AN IMPROVEMENT. I PROMISE.





PEYTON-NOBLE UNIVERSITY, THE DORMITORY OF AMBER BENNETT.

OH, MY GOD--SHE DOES THAT IN YOUR CLASS TOO? MAN, PROFESSOR BURGESS IS A TRIP, HUH? WHO WOULD'VE THOUGHT AN ECONOMICS CLASS WOULD BE SO ENTERTAINING.

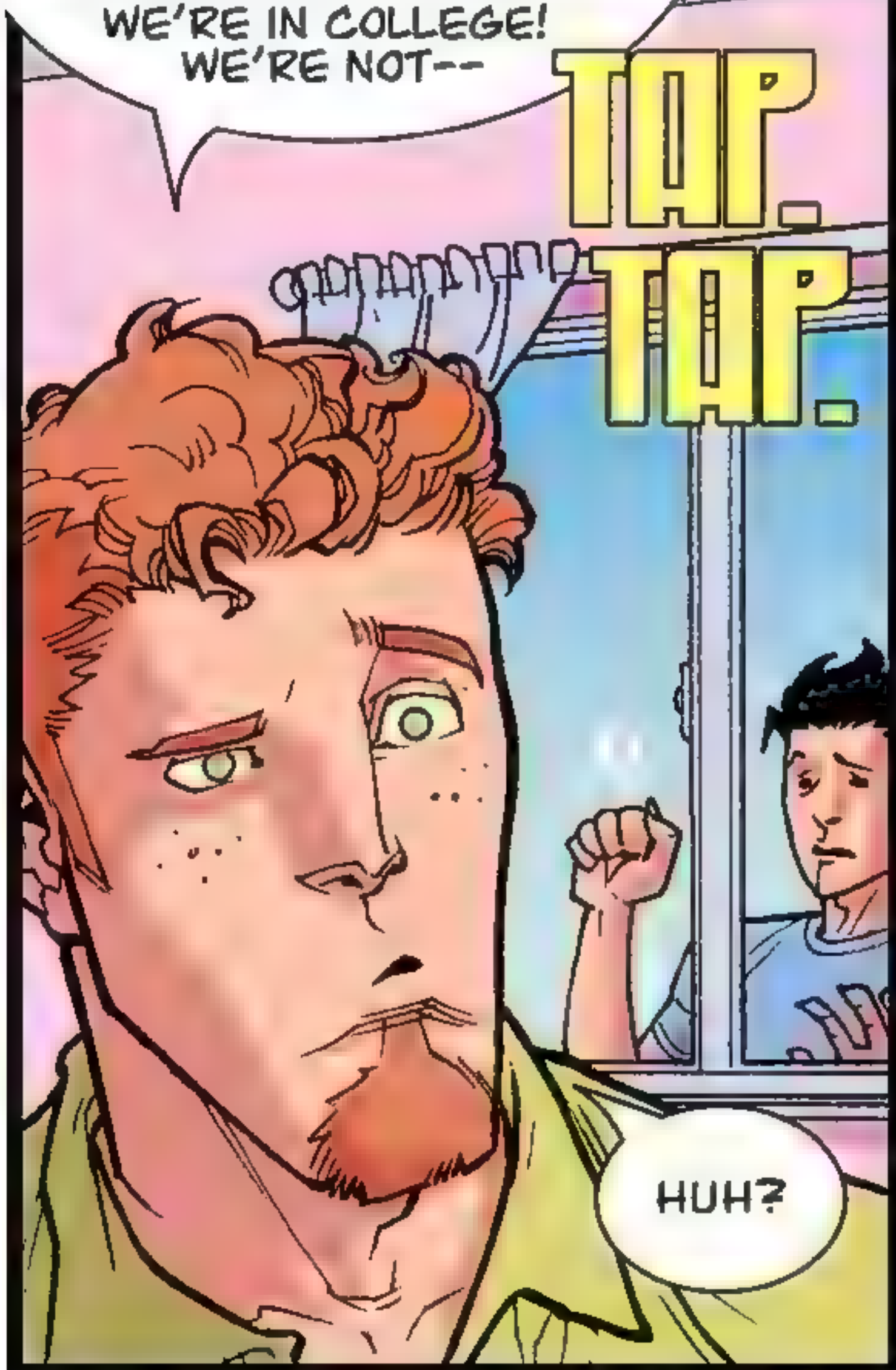
I KNOW, RIGHT? I WAS READY FOR A SNOOZE FEST BUT THEN SHE CAME IN ON THE FIRST DAY WITH ONE OF THOSE PREPARED SPEECHES SHE WRITES FOR HERSELF--AND THEN PROCEEDS TO MESS UP AND START OVER.

I DON'T KNOW HOW SHE GOT HIRED ON HERE. IT'S MADNESS--SHE MUST BE SOMEONE'S SISTER.



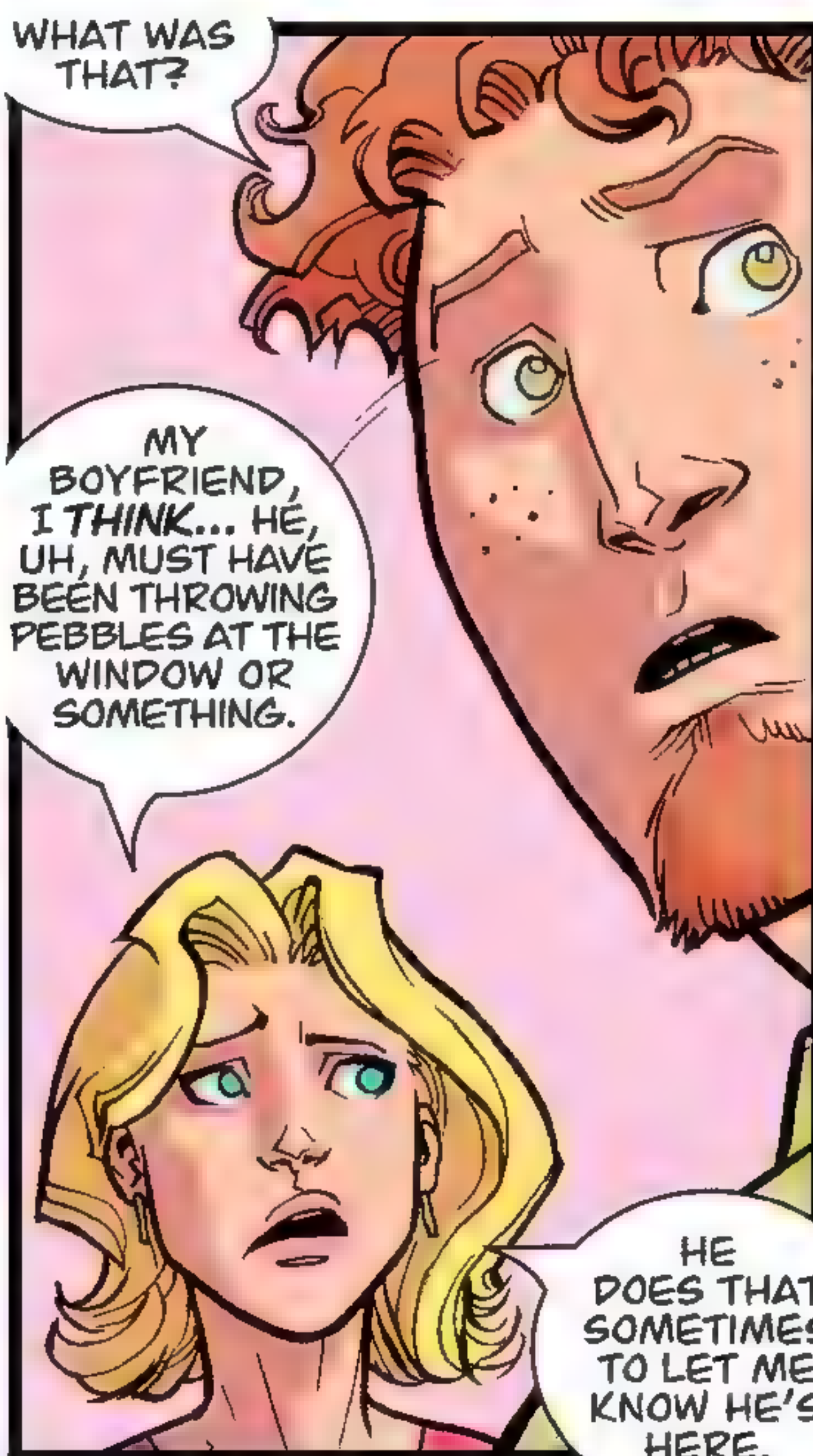
AND THEN THERE'S THE CANDY--CAN YOU BELIEVE SHE ACTUALLY GIVES US CANDY WHEN WE ANSWER QUESTIONS IN CLASS? WE'RE IN COLLEGE! WE'RE NOT--

TAP.
TAP.



HUH?

WHAT WAS THAT?



MY BOYFRIEND, I THINK... HE, UH, MUST HAVE BEEN THROWING PEBBLES AT THE WINDOW OR SOMETHING.

HE DOES THAT SOMETIMES TO LET ME KNOW HE'S HERE.



BOYFRIEND? I'M NOT GETTING YOU IN TROUBLE FOR HAVING ME HERE, AM I?

NO, OF COURSE NOT. I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.



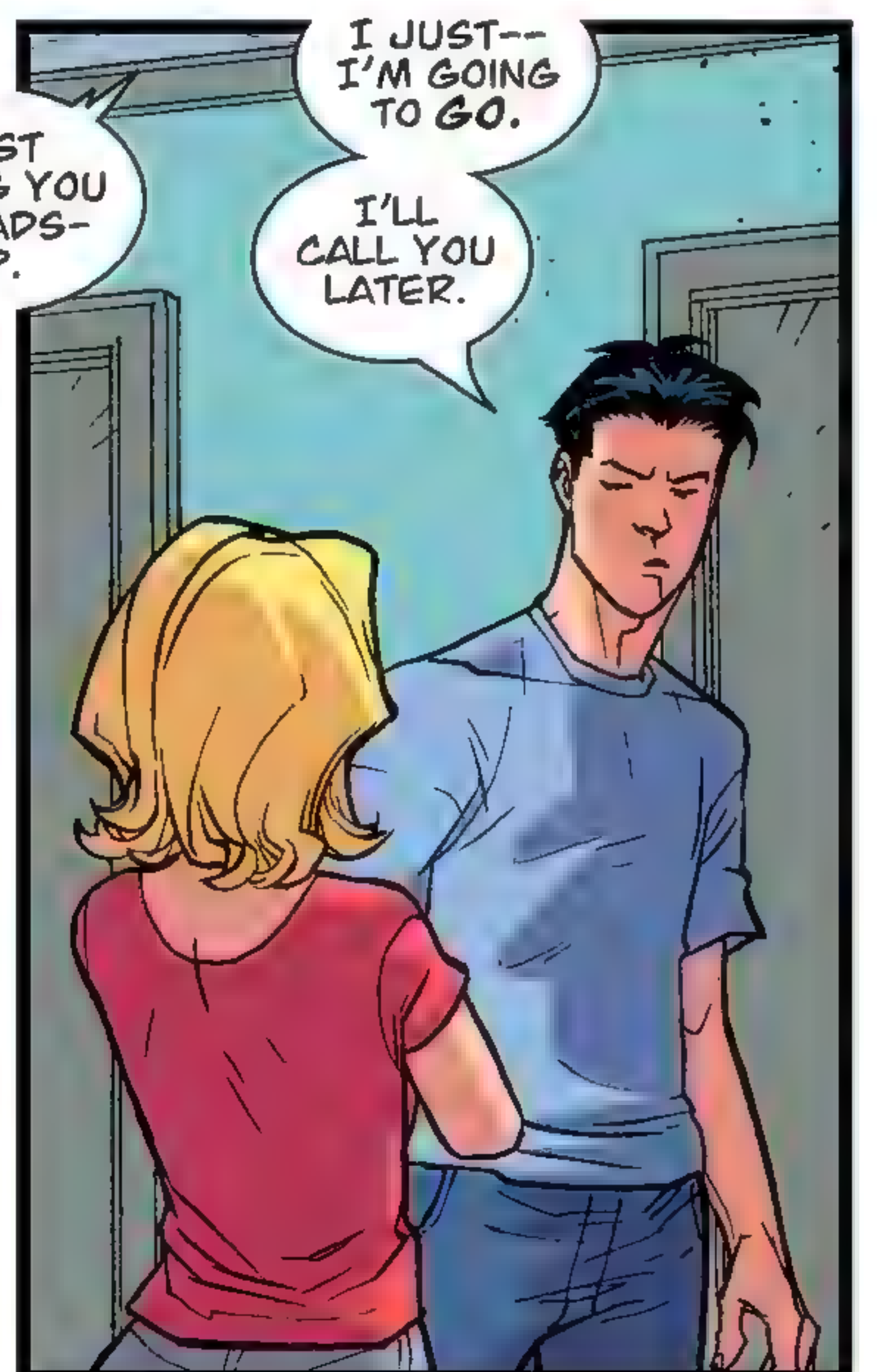
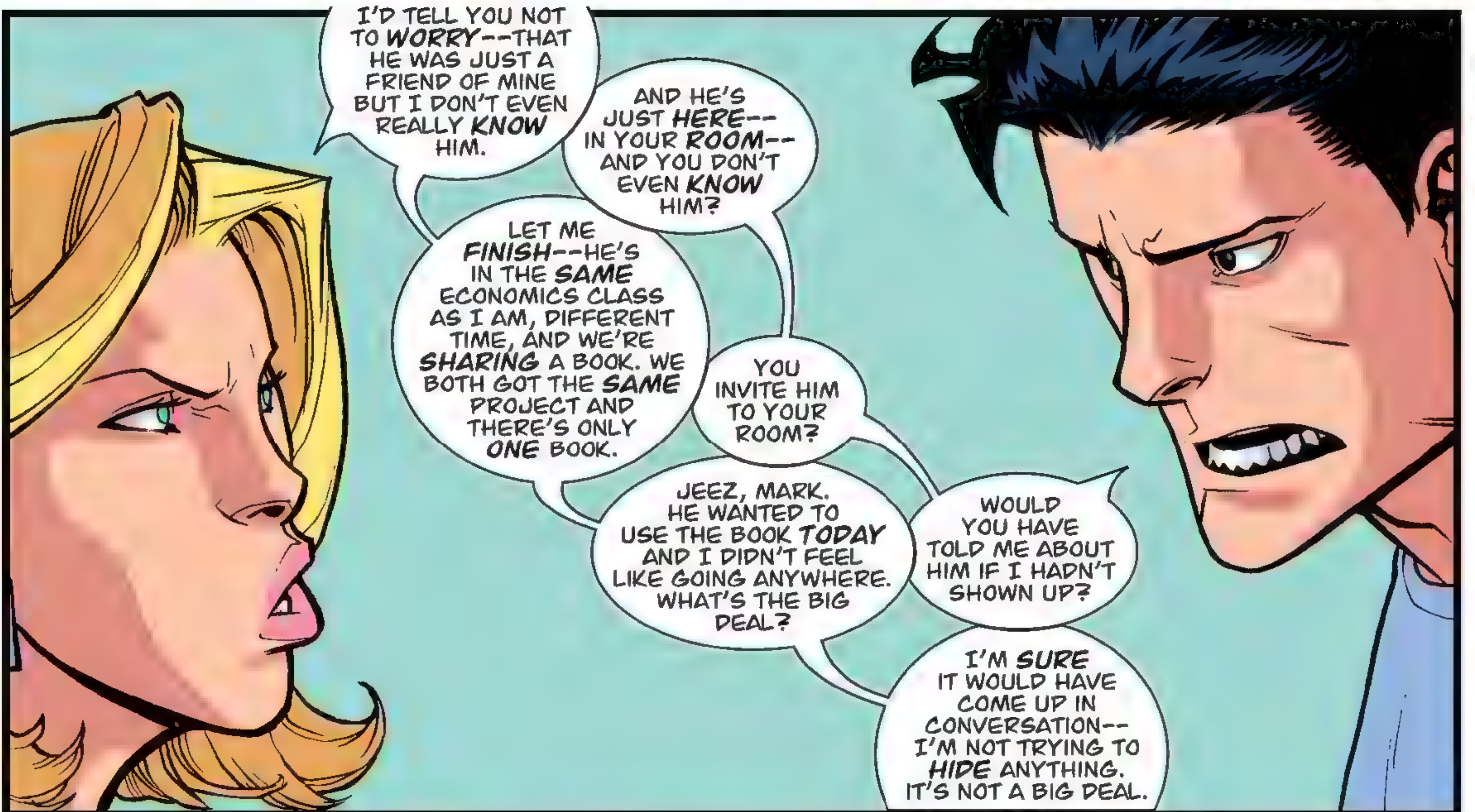
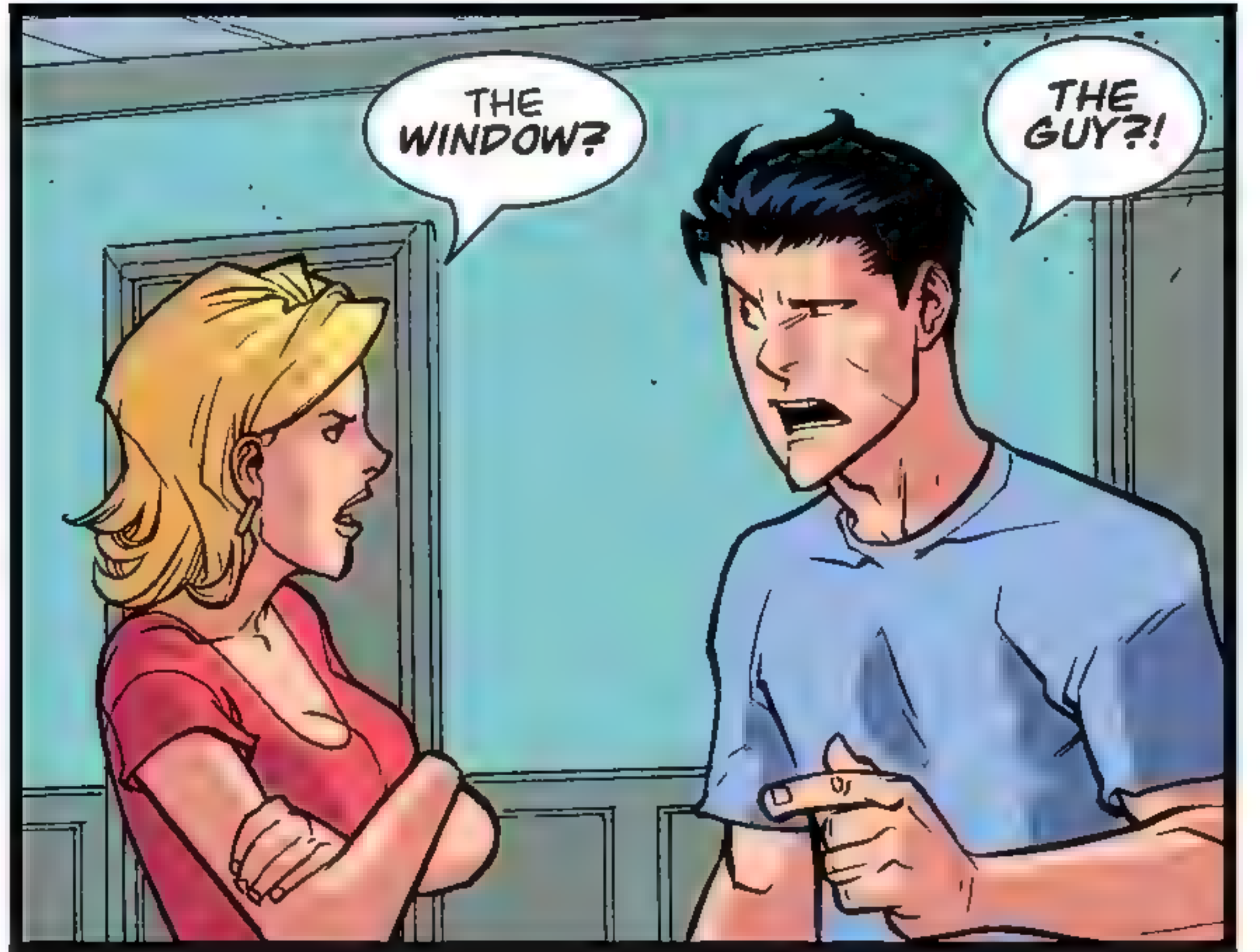
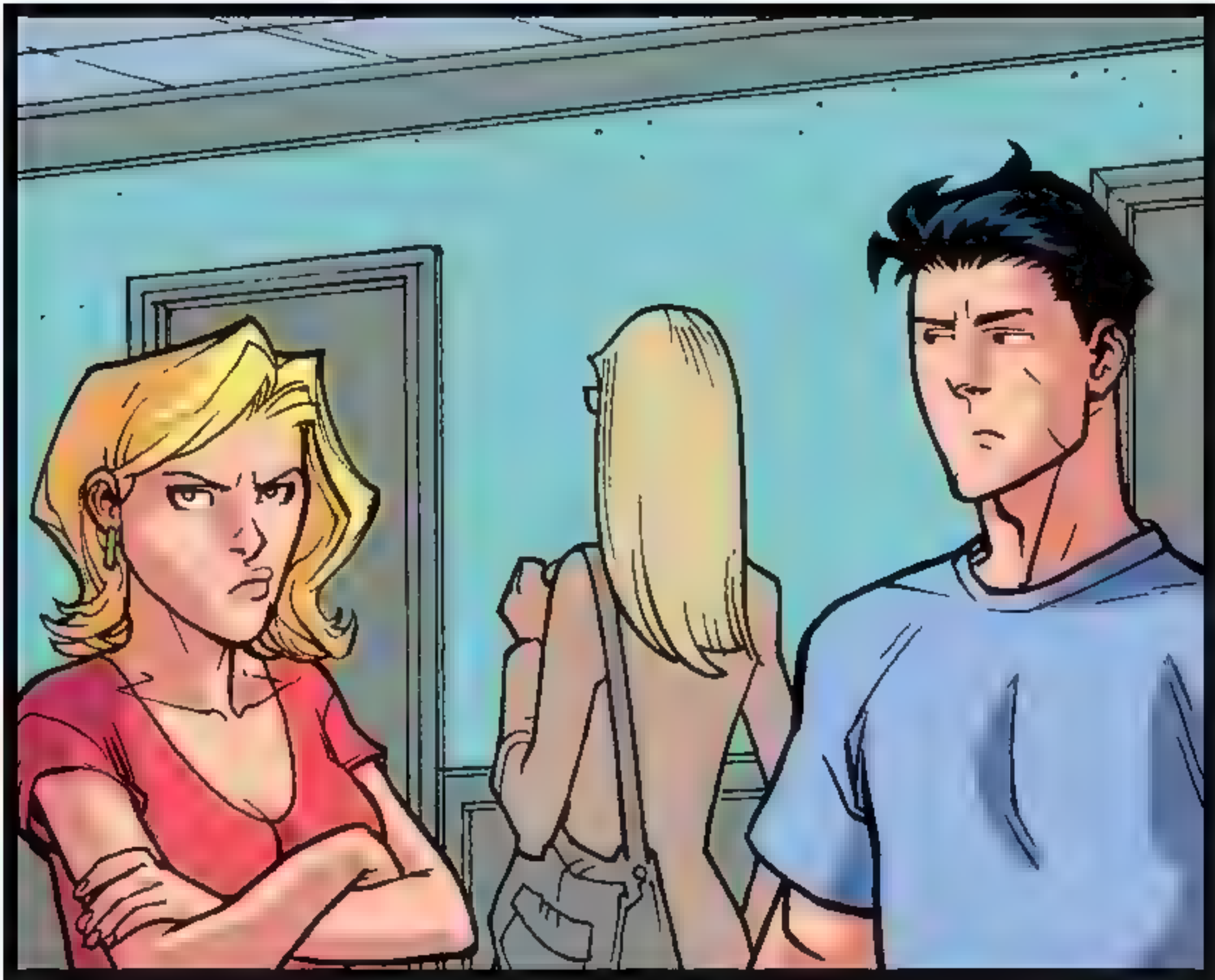
WHAT DID I TELL YOU ABOUT COMING TO THE WINDOW?

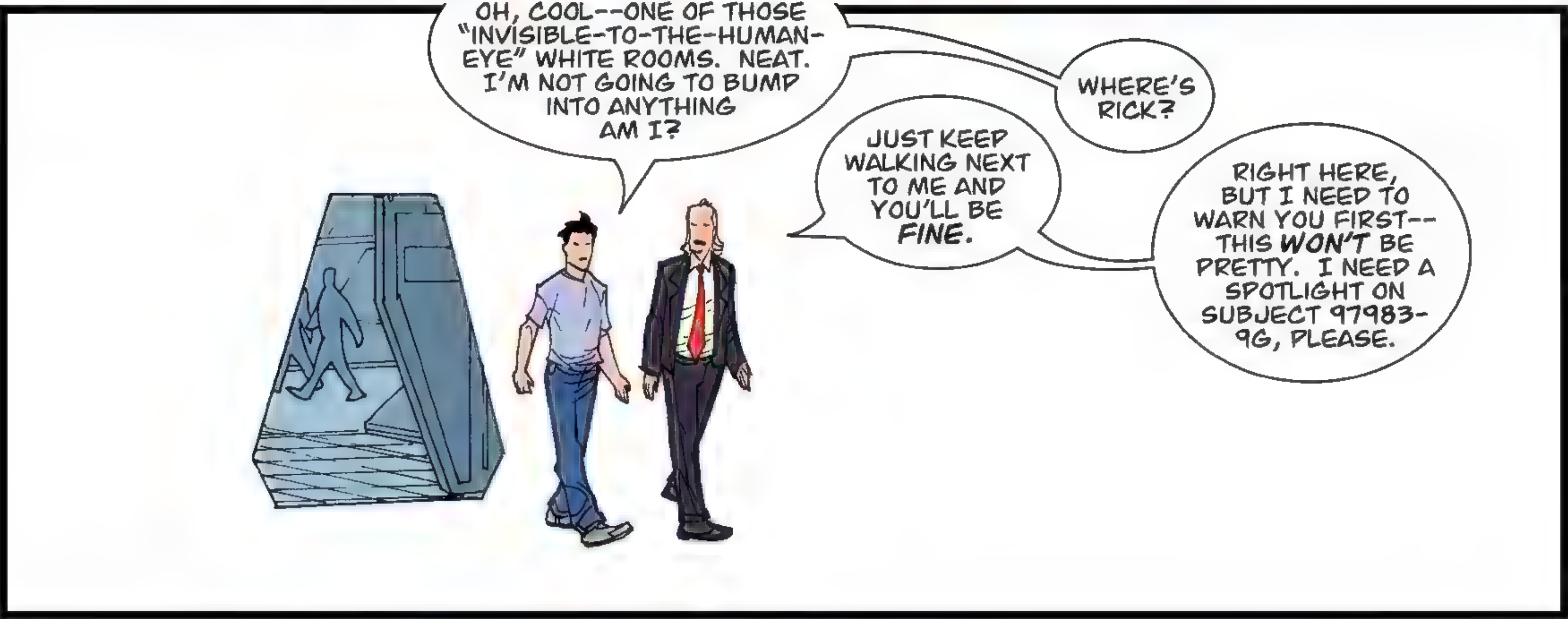
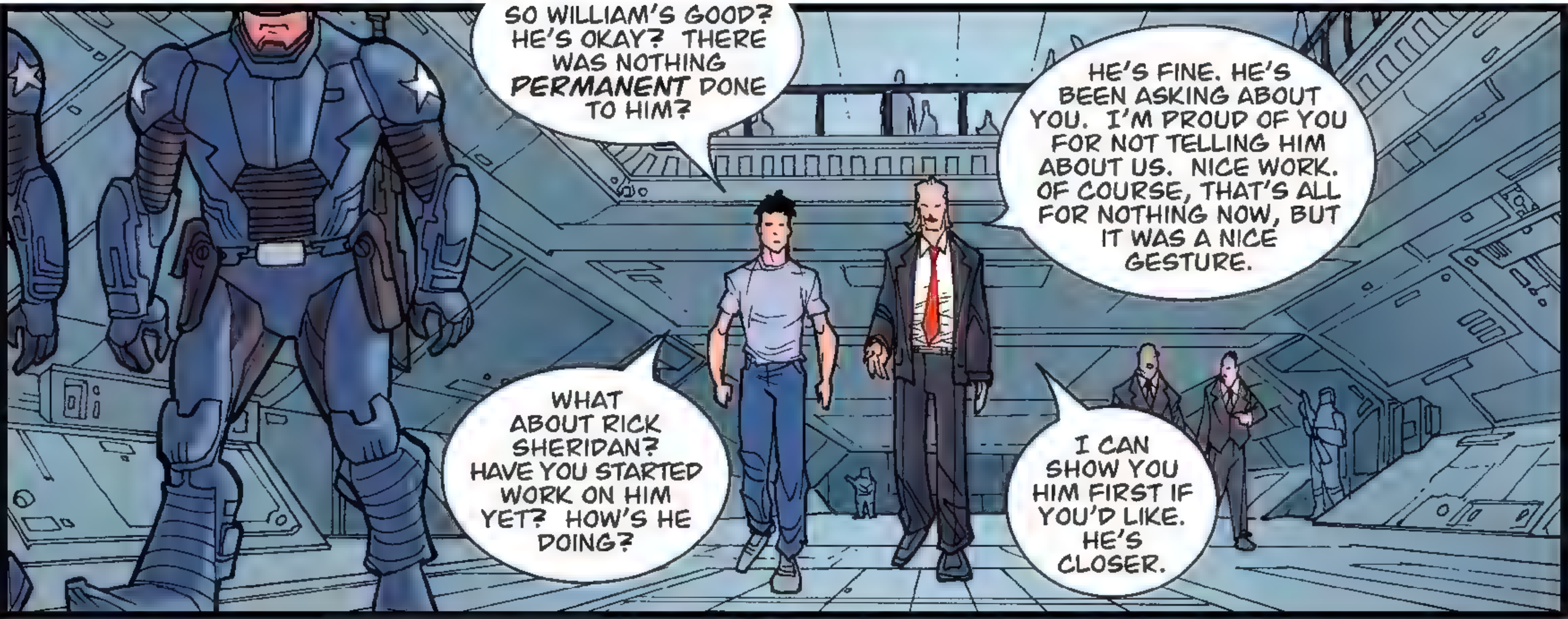
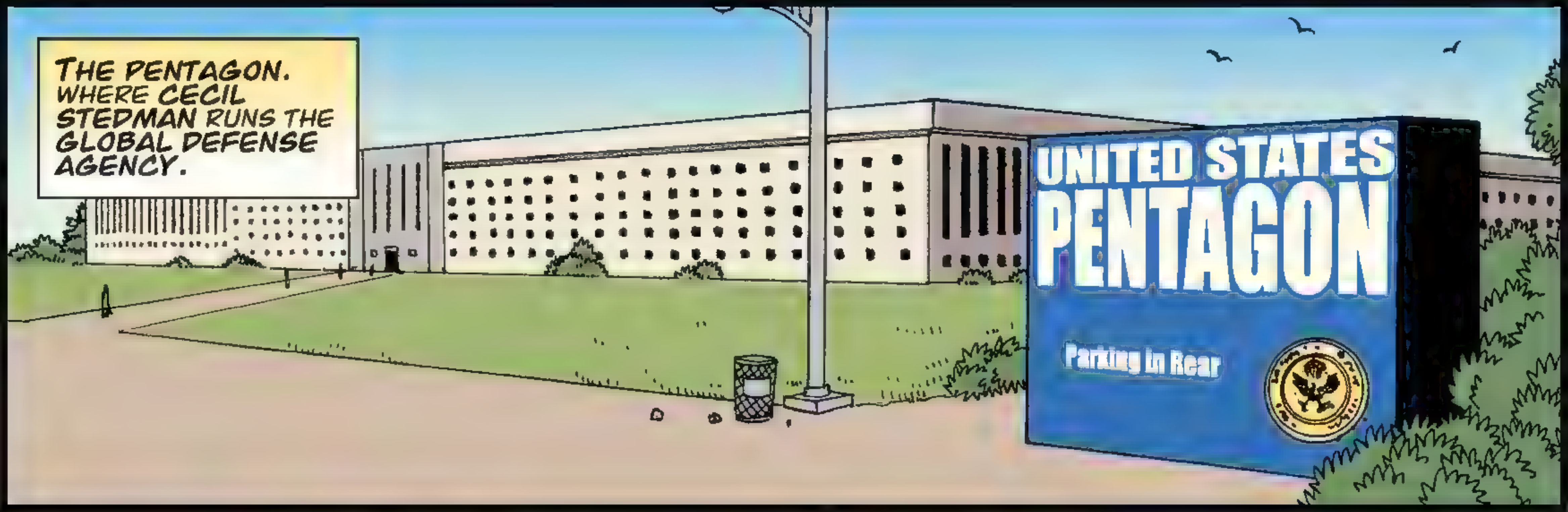
IS THAT A GUY IN THERE? WHO IS THAT?

IT'S YOUR STUPID SECRET--AND I'VE TOLD YOU PEOPLE COME INTO MY ROOM SOME TIMES--IT'S NOT SAFE-- BUT WHY AM I WORRIED ABOUT THAT WHEN YOU'RE NOT?!

THERE'S A GUY IN YOUR ROOM? HOW IS THAT COOL? WHY DO I NOT KNOW ABOUT THAT?

WHAT'S--?!



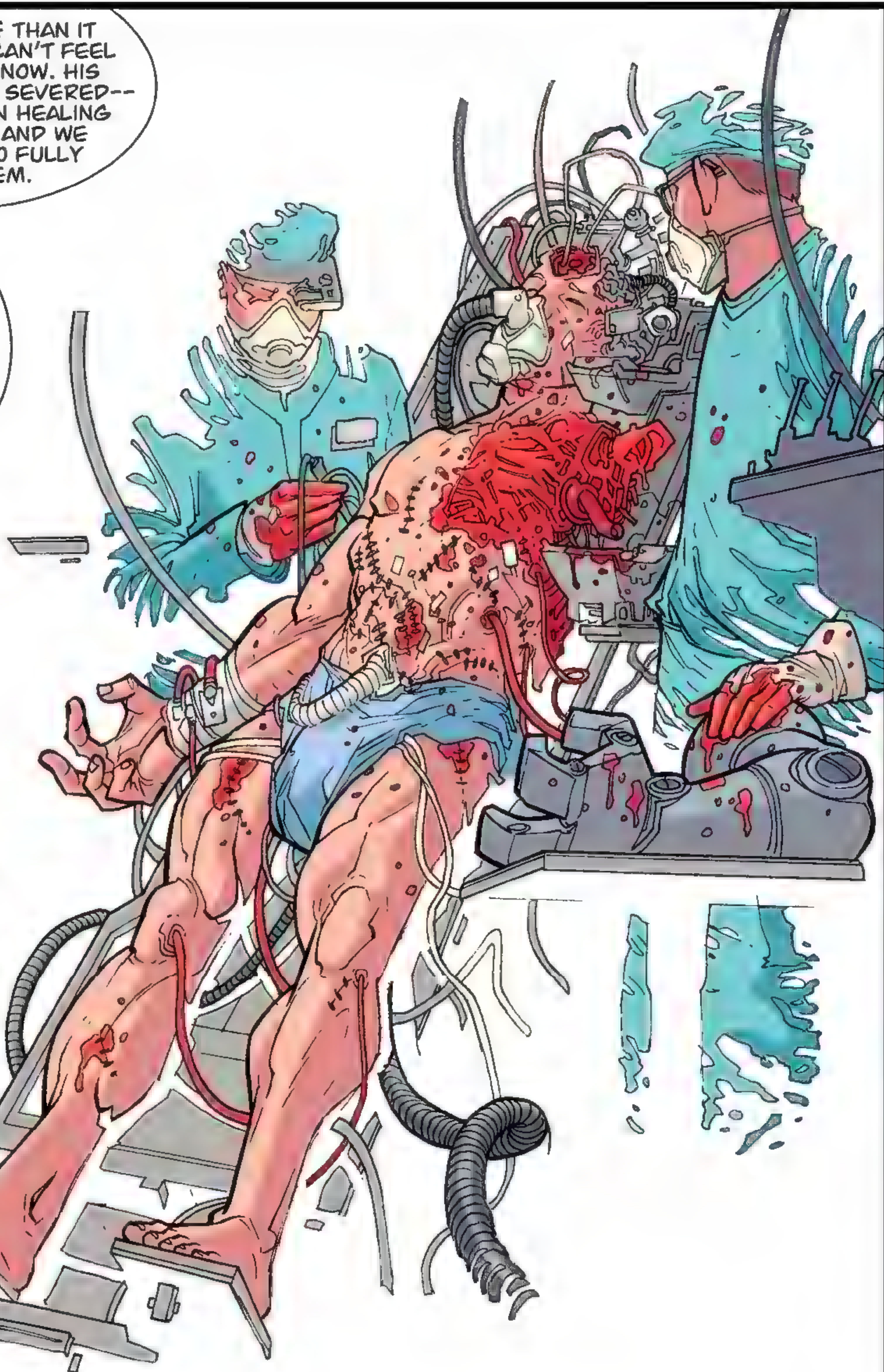


OH, MY
GOD!

IT LOOKS WORSE THAN IT
ACTUALLY IS. HE CAN'T FEEL
ANYTHING RIGHT NOW. HIS
VOCAL CORDS WERE SEVERED--
BUT THEY'VE BEEN HEALING
FOR SOME TIME AND WE
WILL BE ABLE TO FULLY
REPAIR THEM.

HIS LEFT
ARM HAS BEEN
SEVERED AND
DISCARDED, NOTHING
WE CAN DO BUT REPLACE
IT WITH CYBERNETICS--
BUT WHEN WE'RE DONE,
AS LONG AS HE DOESN'T
WALK THROUGH A METAL
DETECTOR--HE SHOULD
APPEAR ONE-
HUNDRED PERCENT
HUMAN.

KILL THE
SPOTLIGHT.



ARRGH!

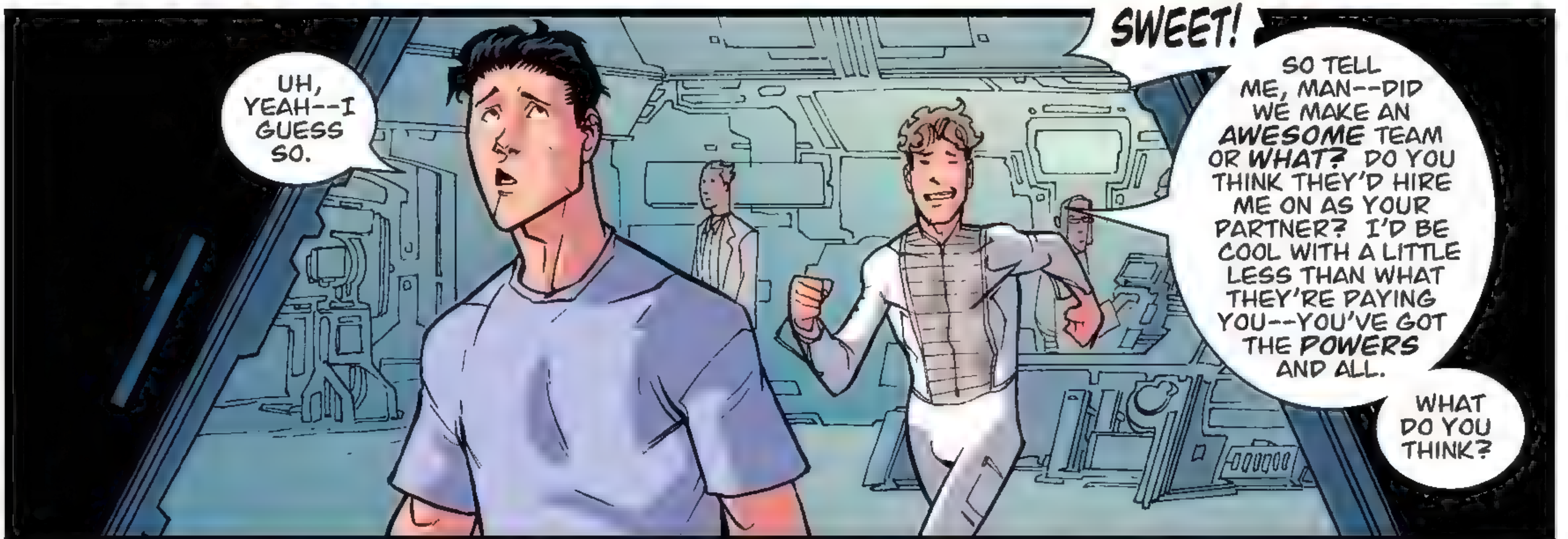
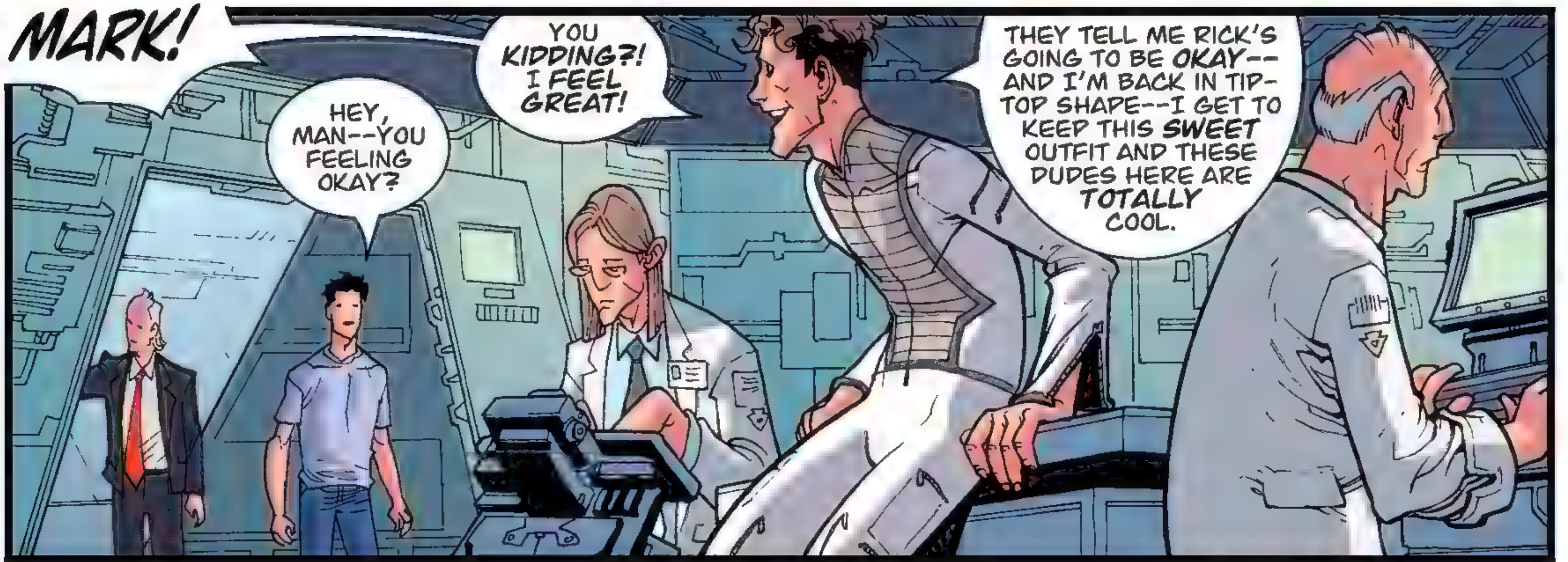
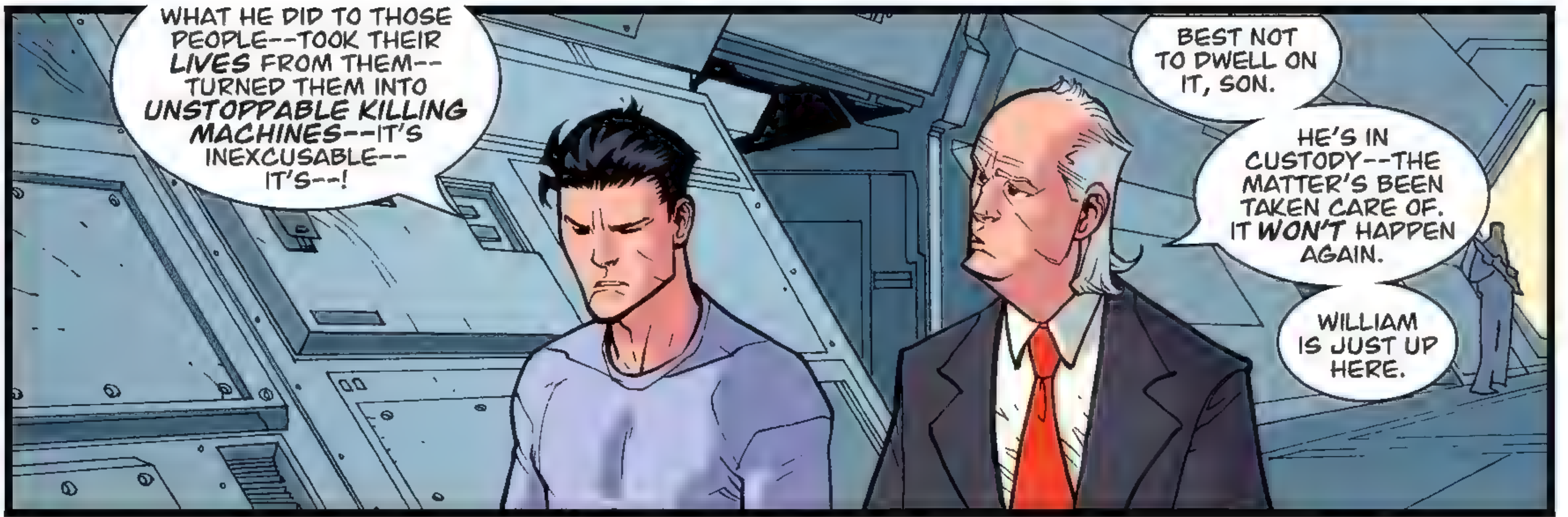
THAT--
MANIAC! I HOPE
HE FRIES FOR WHAT
HE'S DONE--RICK--
THOSE OTHER PEOPLE--
HE'S INSANE--HE'S
A MONSTER!

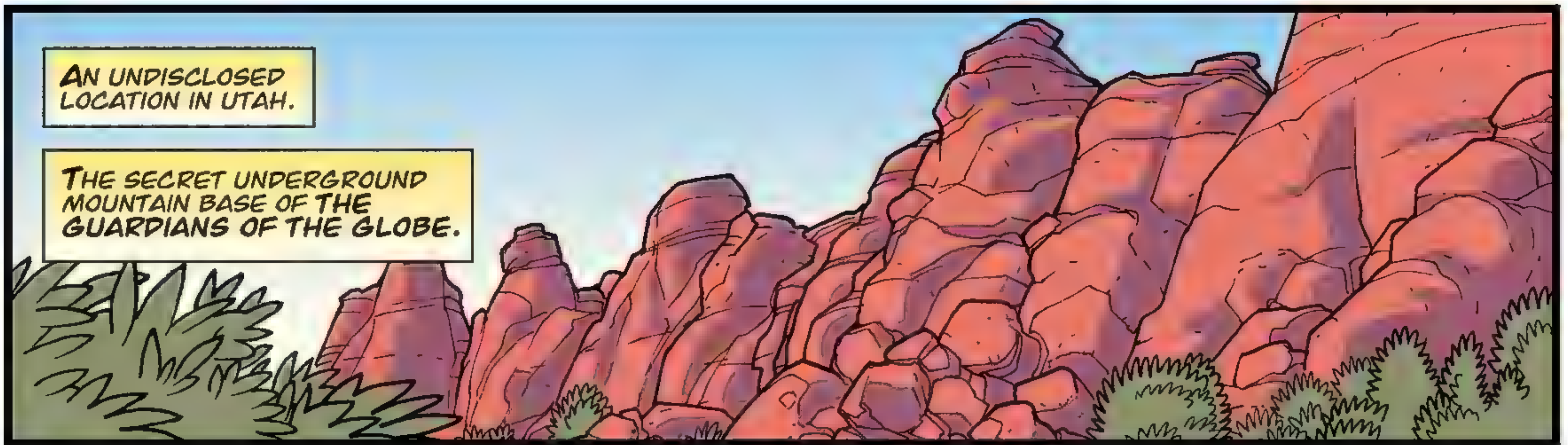
IF
YOU HADN'T
STOPPED
ME--

BE GLAD
I DID. A BROKEN
JAW IS ENOUGH
FOR HIM NOW.
DON'T WORRY,
MARK--HE'LL
GET WHAT HE
DESERVES.

COME ON--
I'LL TAKE YOU
TO WILLIAM.

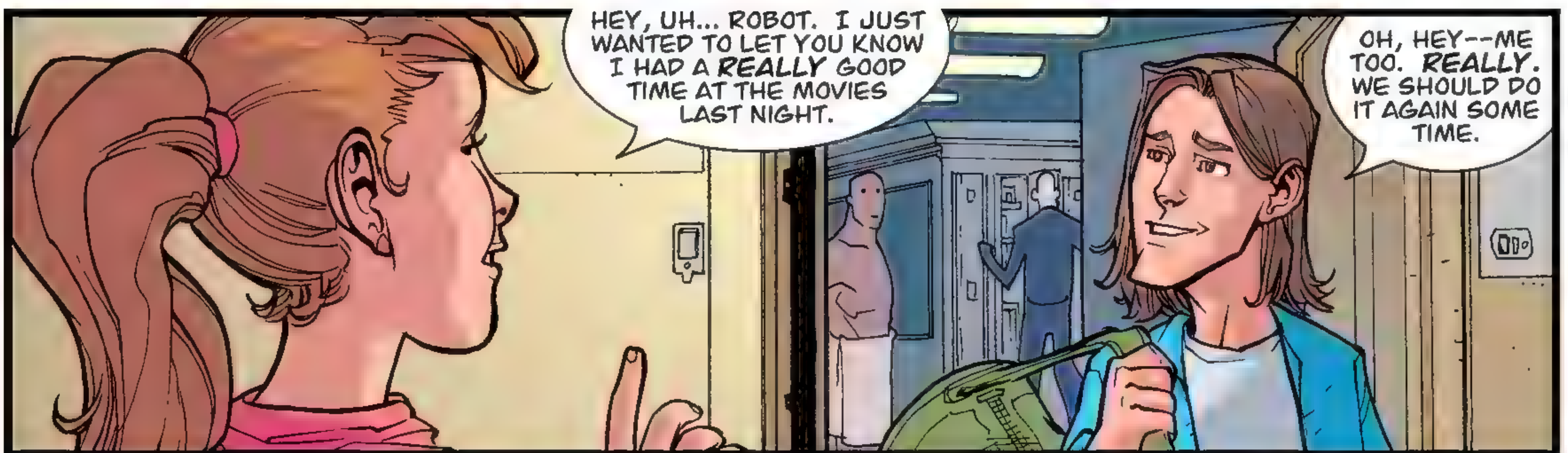






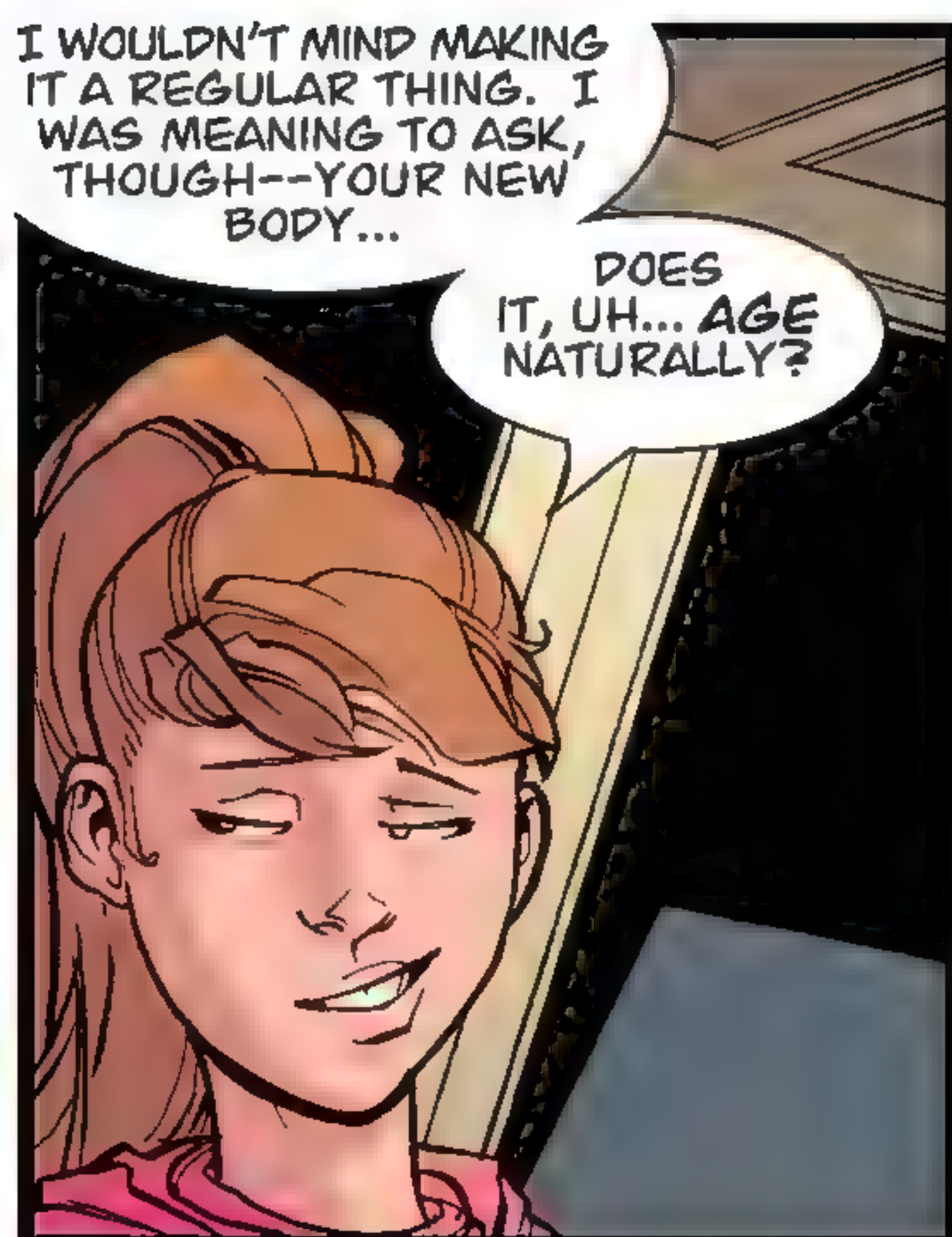
AN UNDISCLOSED
LOCATION IN UTAH.

THE SECRET UNDERGROUND
MOUNTAIN BASE OF THE
GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.



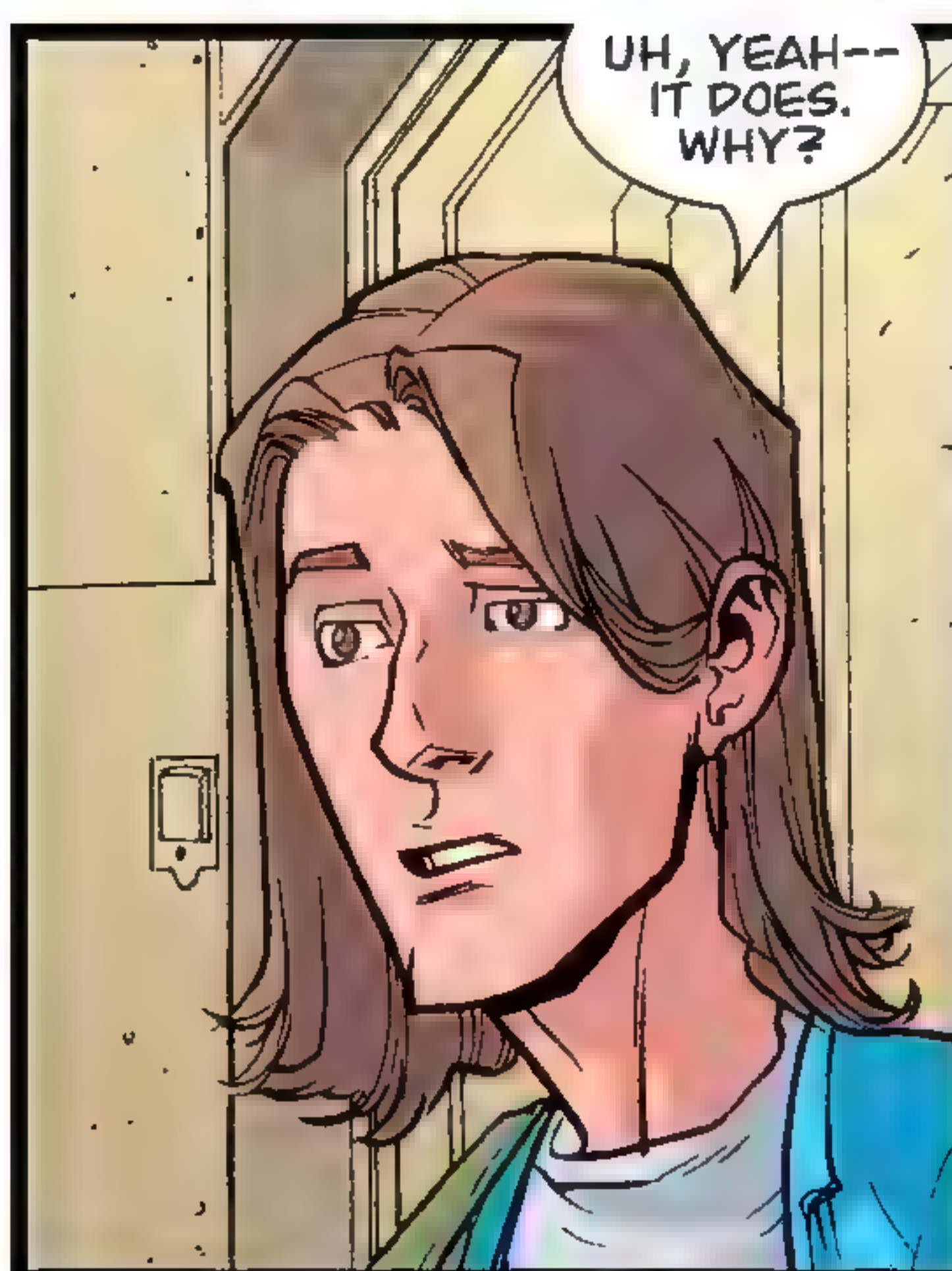
HEY, UH... ROBOT. I JUST
WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW
I HAD A REALLY GOOD
TIME AT THE MOVIES
LAST NIGHT.

OH, HEY--ME
TOO. REALLY.
WE SHOULD DO
IT AGAIN SOME
TIME.

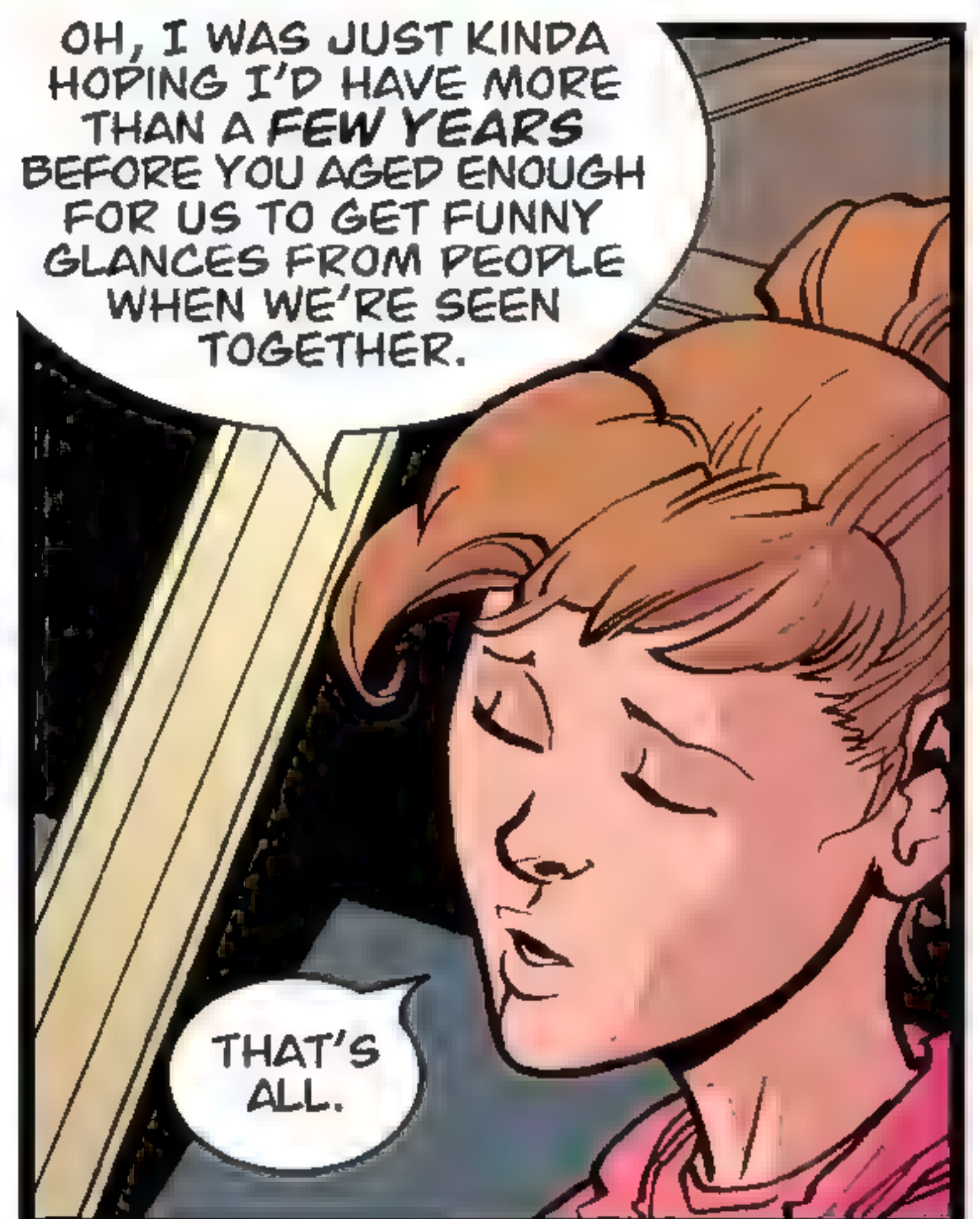


I WOULDN'T MIND MAKING
IT A REGULAR THING. I
WAS MEANING TO ASK,
THOUGH--YOUR NEW
BODY...

DOES
IT, UH... AGE
NATURALLY?

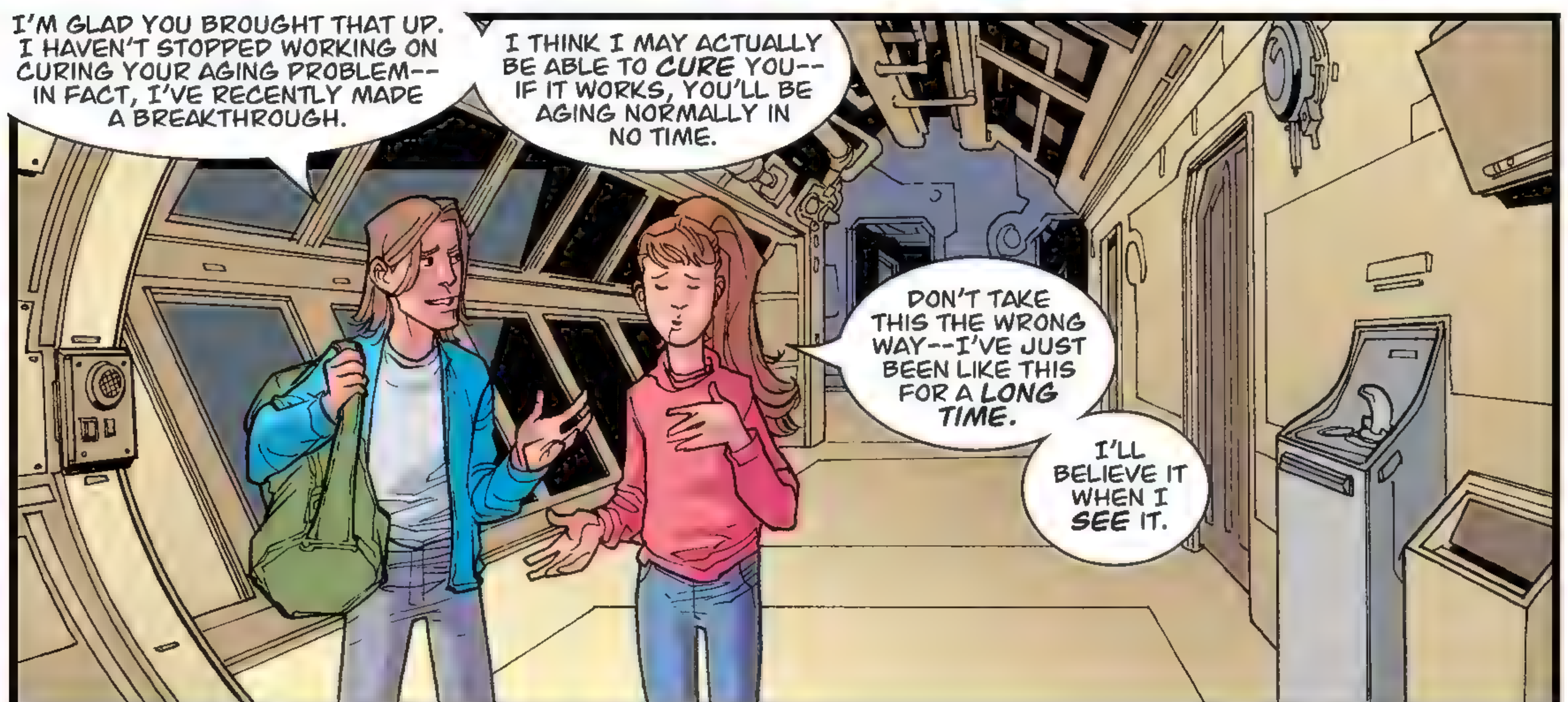


UH, YEAH--
IT DOES.
WHY?



OH, I WAS JUST KINDA
HOPING I'D HAVE MORE
THAN A FEW YEARS
BEFORE YOU AGED ENOUGH
FOR US TO GET FUNNY
GLANCES FROM PEOPLE
WHEN WE'RE SEEN
TOGETHER.

THAT'S
ALL.

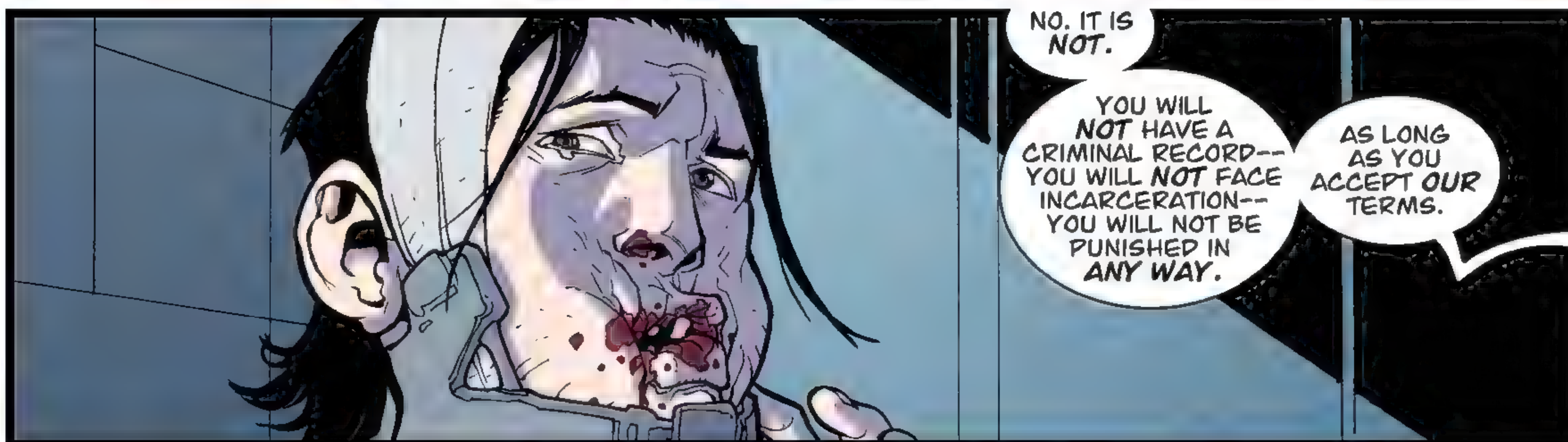
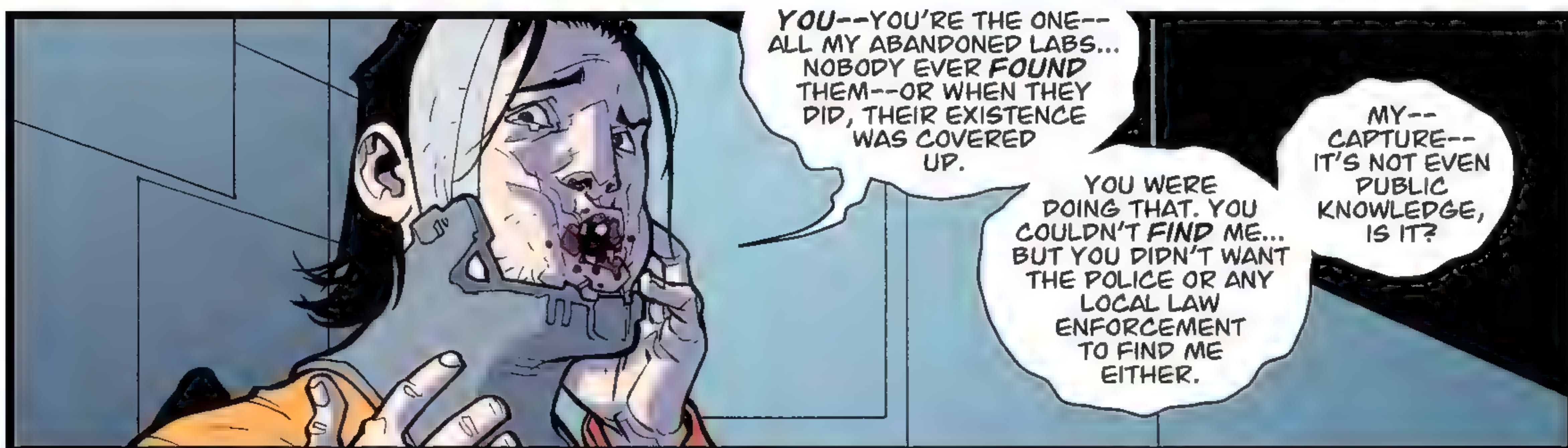
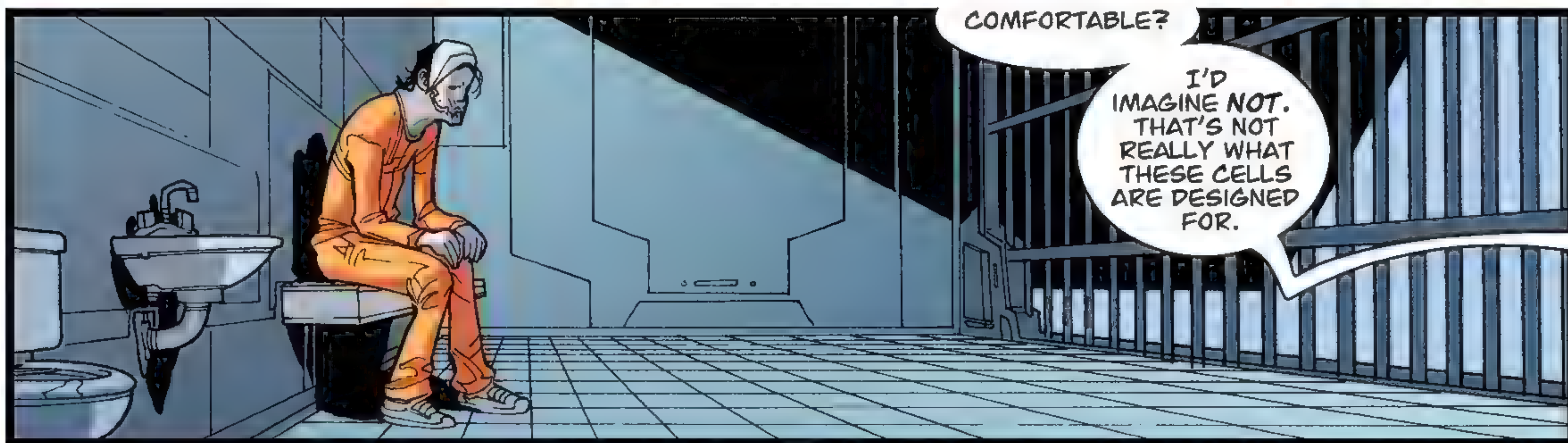
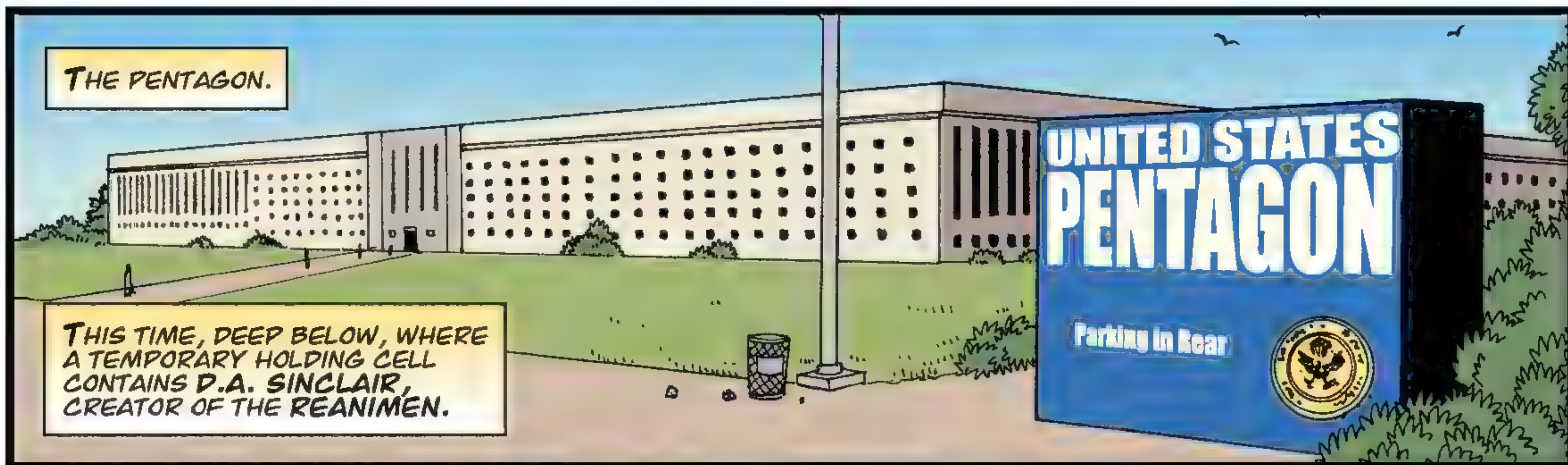


I'M GLAD YOU BROUGHT THAT UP.
I HAVEN'T STOPPED WORKING ON
CURING YOUR AGING PROBLEM--
IN FACT, I'VE RECENTLY MADE
A BREAKTHROUGH.

I THINK I MAY ACTUALLY
BE ABLE TO CURE YOU--
IF IT WORKS, YOU'LL BE
AGING NORMALLY IN
NO TIME.

DON'T TAKE
THIS THE WRONG
WAY--I'VE JUST
BEEN LIKE THIS
FOR A LONG
TIME.

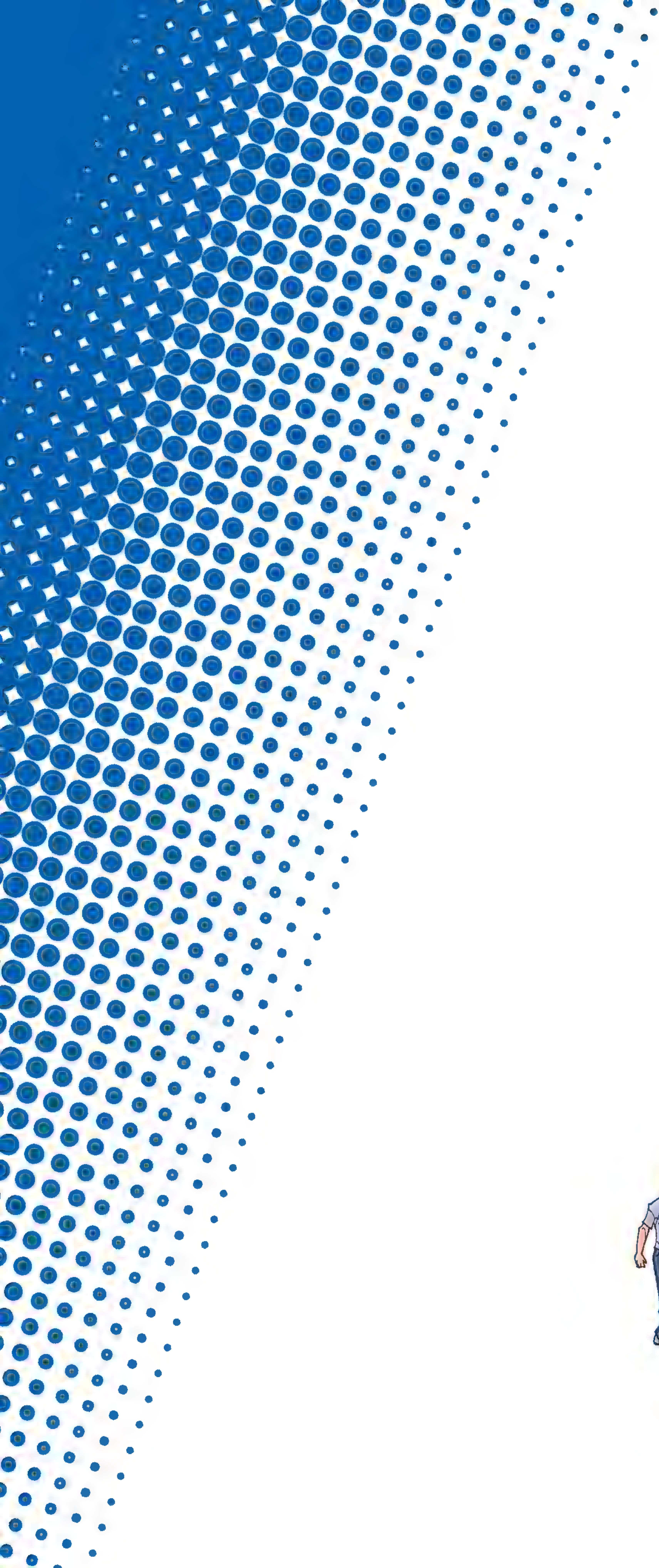
I'LL
BELIEVE IT
WHEN I
SEE IT.





D.A.
SINCLAIR...

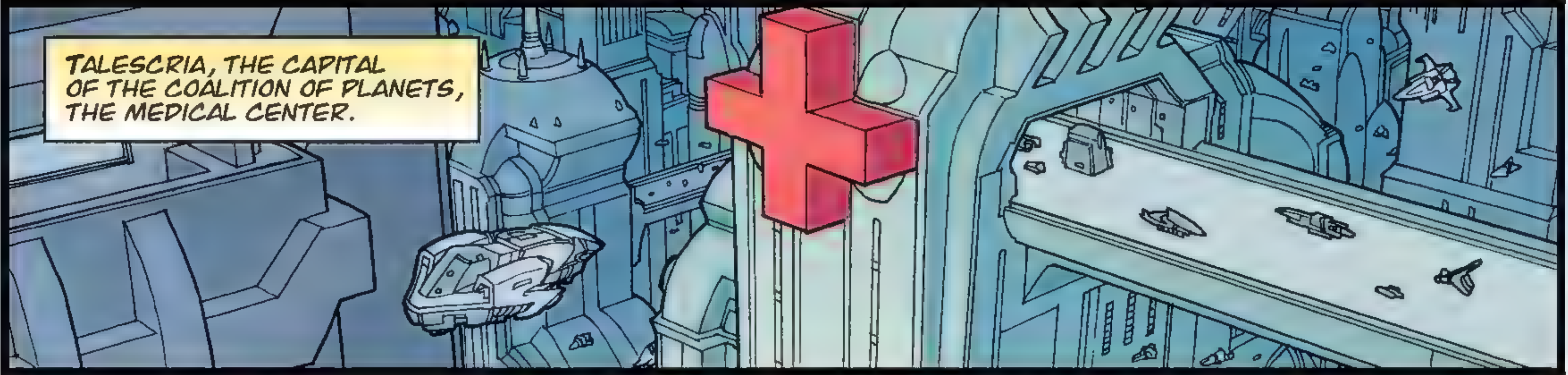
THE
UNITED STATES
GOVERNMENT
WOULD LIKE TO
OFFER YOU A
JOB.



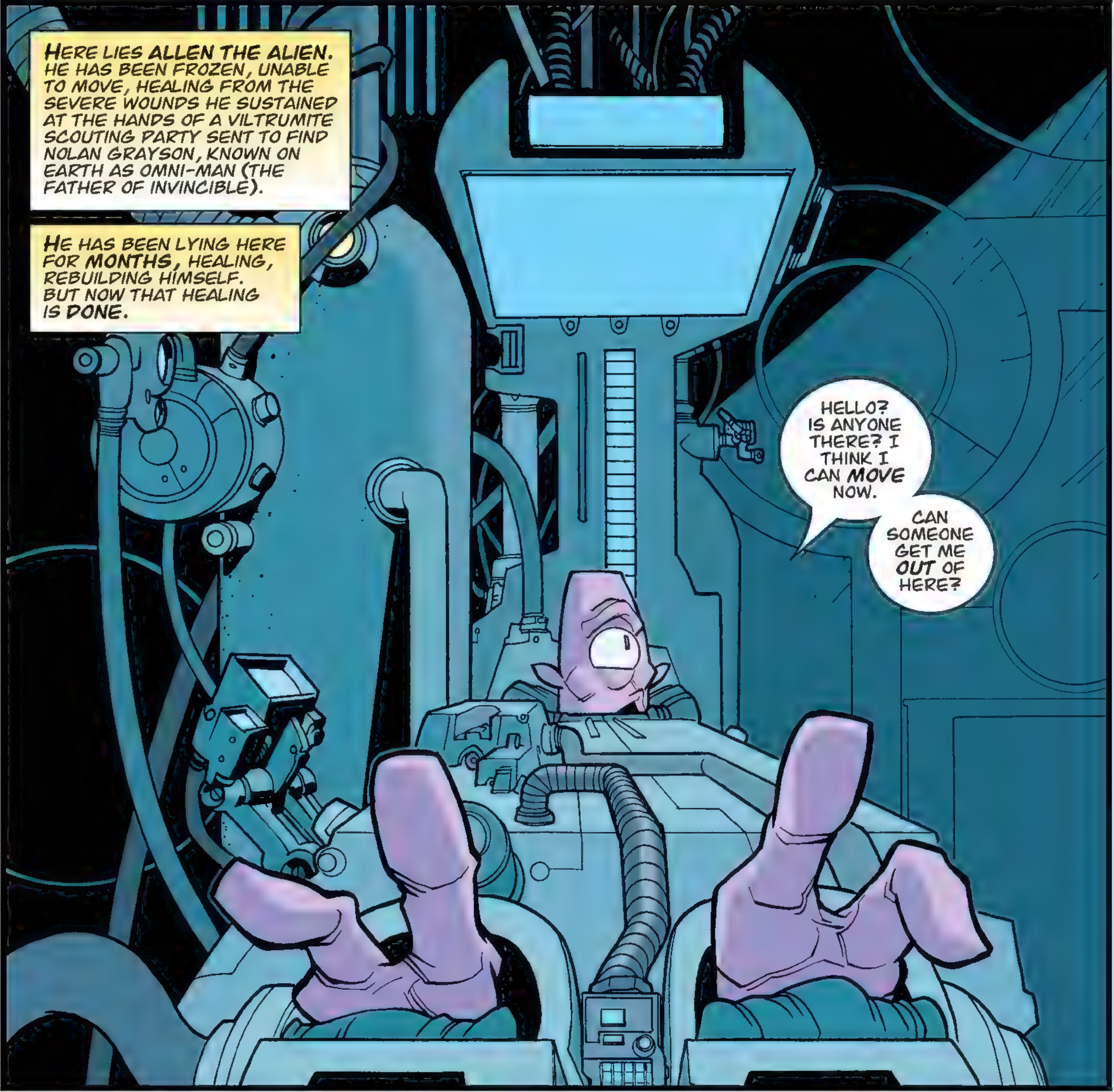
ISSUE THIRTY-EIGHT



Wyg2



TALESCRIA, THE CAPITAL OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS, THE MEDICAL CENTER.



HERE LIES ALLEN THE ALIEN. HE HAS BEEN FROZEN, UNABLE TO MOVE, HEALING FROM THE SEVERE WOUNDS HE SUSTAINED AT THE HANDS OF A VILTRUMITE SCOUTING PARTY SENT TO FIND NOLAN GRAYSON, KNOWN ON EARTH AS OMNI-MAN (THE FATHER OF INVINCIBLE).

HE HAS BEEN LYING HERE FOR MONTHS, HEALING, REBUILDING HIMSELF. BUT NOW THAT HEALING IS DONE.

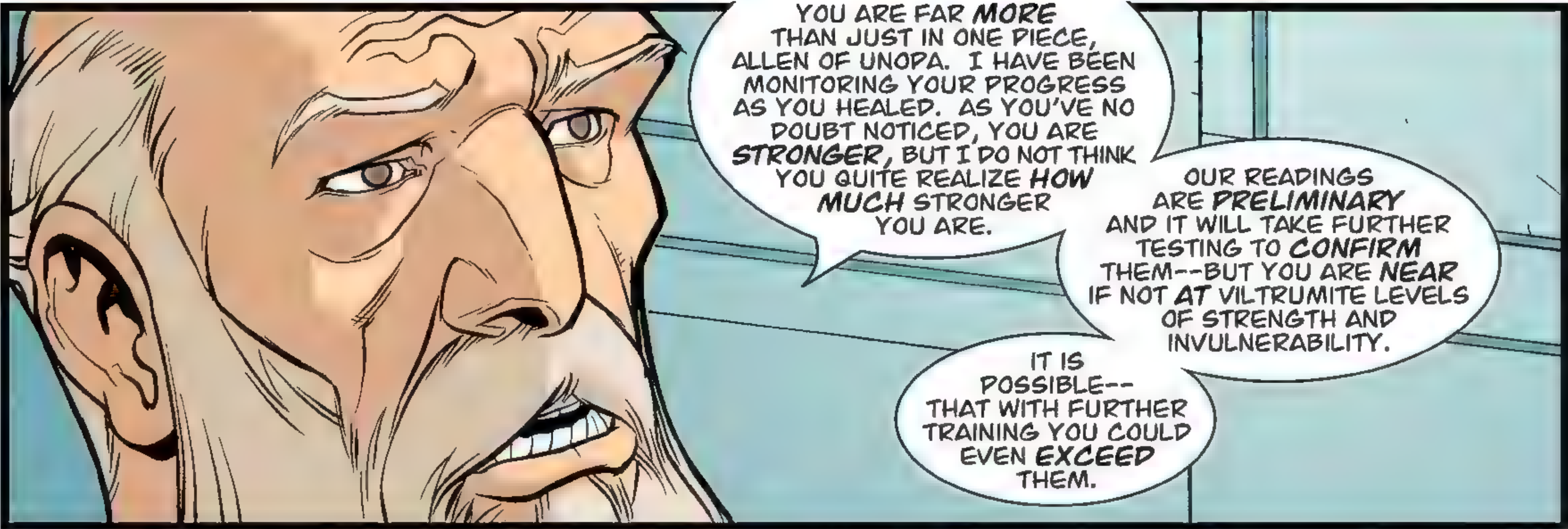
HELLO?
IS ANYONE
THERE? I
THINK I
CAN MOVE
NOW.

CAN
SOMEONE
GET ME
OUT OF
HERE?



SKRO-KOOM!



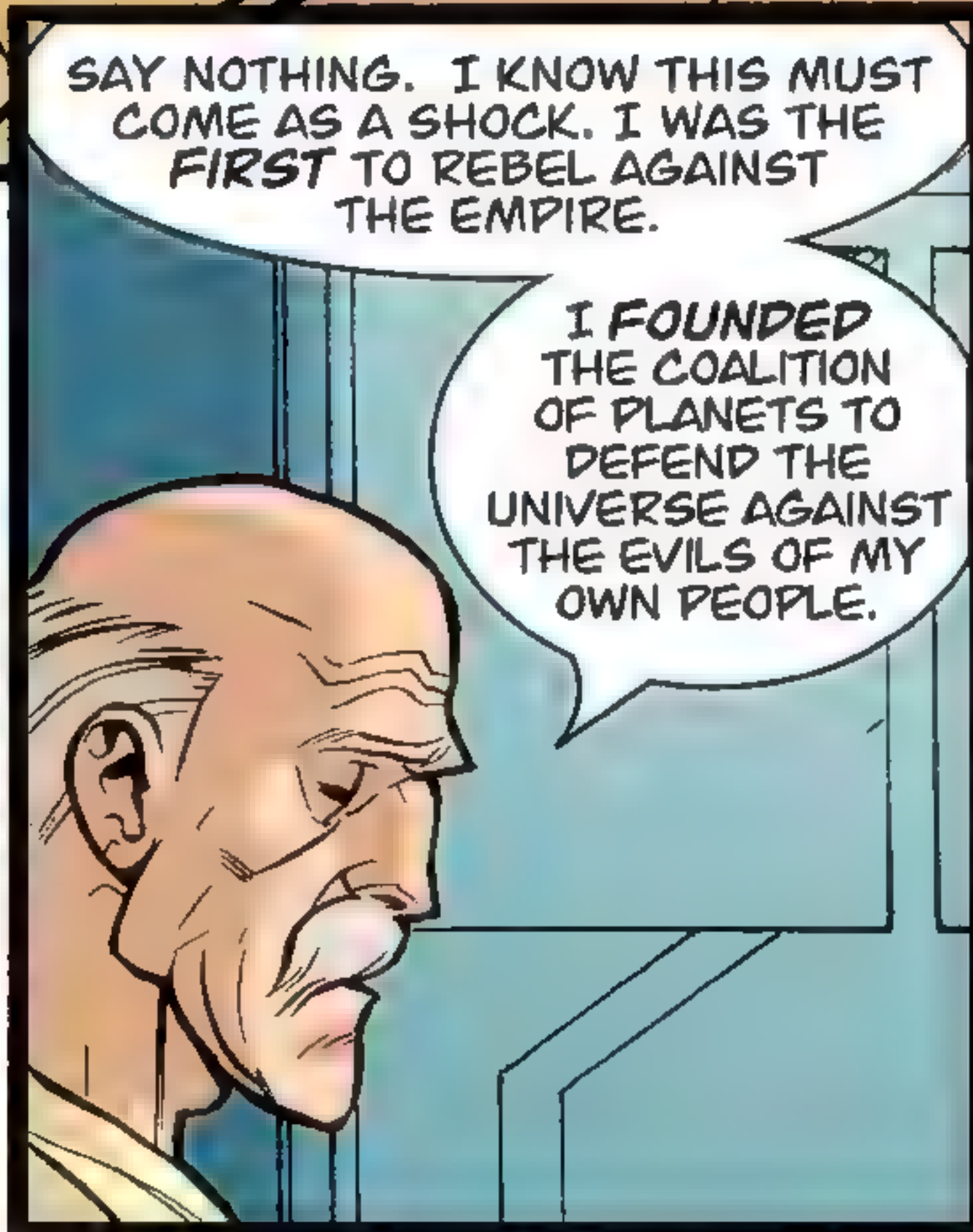




BECAUSE
I AM A
VILTRUMITE!

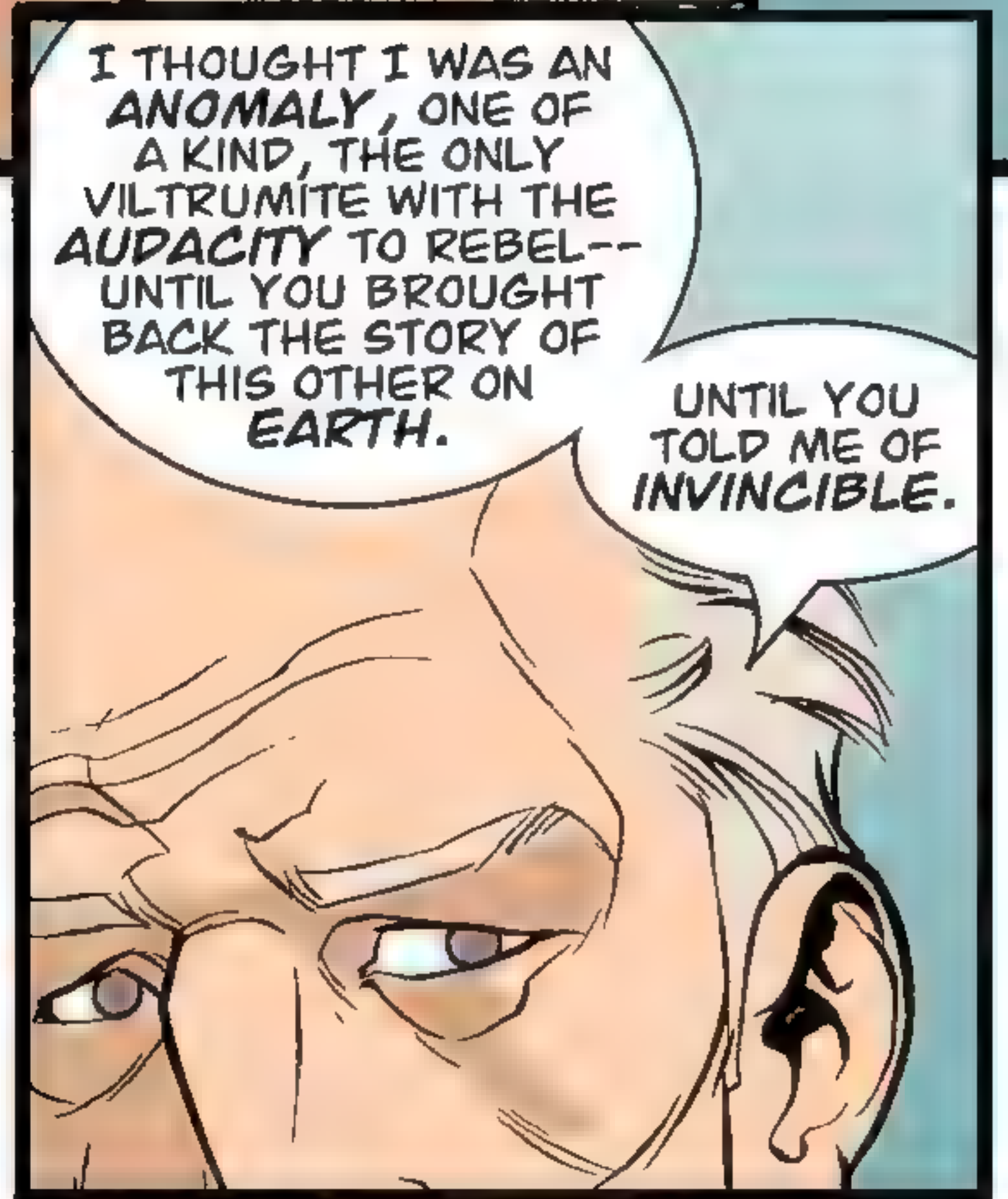


I--
I DON'T
KNOW WHAT
TO SAY.



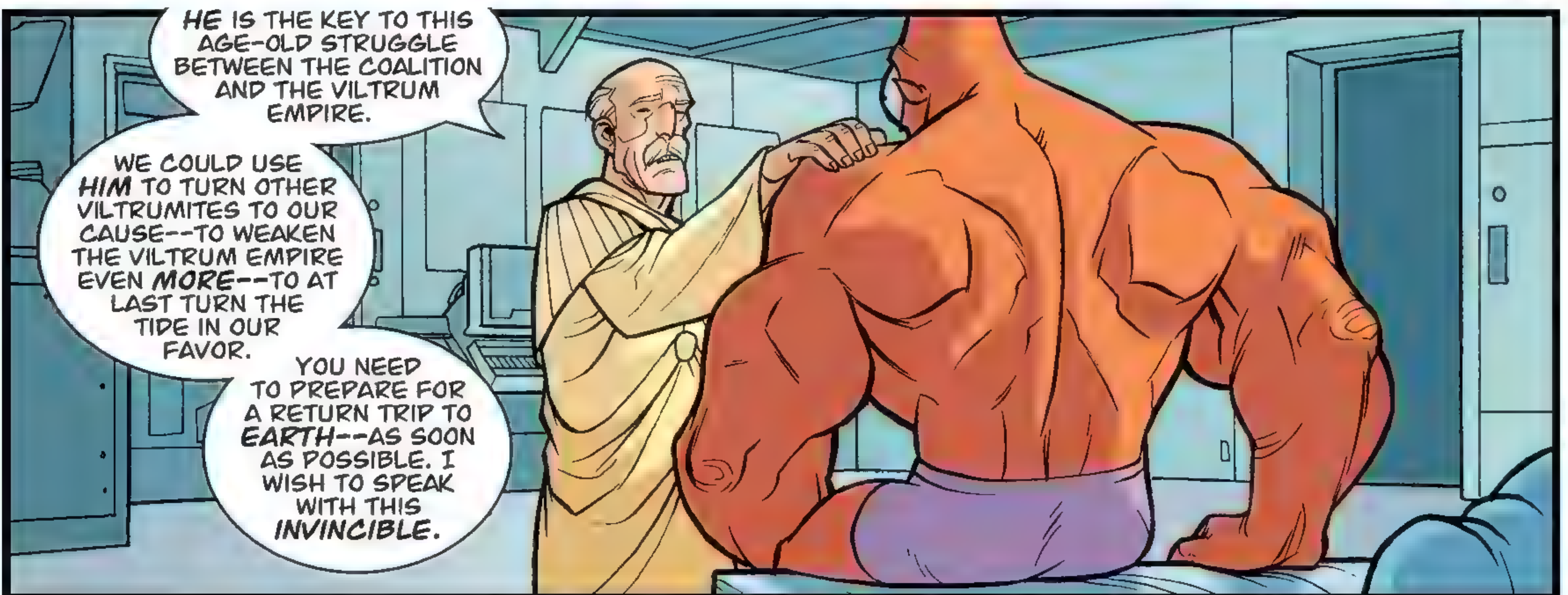
SAY NOTHING. I KNOW THIS MUST
COME AS A SHOCK. I WAS THE
FIRST TO REBEL AGAINST
THE EMPIRE.

I **FOUNDED**
THE COALITION
OF PLANETS TO
DEFEND THE
UNIVERSE AGAINST
THE EVILS OF MY
OWN PEOPLE.



I THOUGHT I WAS AN
ANOMALY, ONE OF
A KIND, THE ONLY
VILTRUMITE WITH THE
AUDACITY TO REBEL--
UNTIL YOU BROUGHT
BACK THE STORY OF
THIS OTHER ON
EARTH.

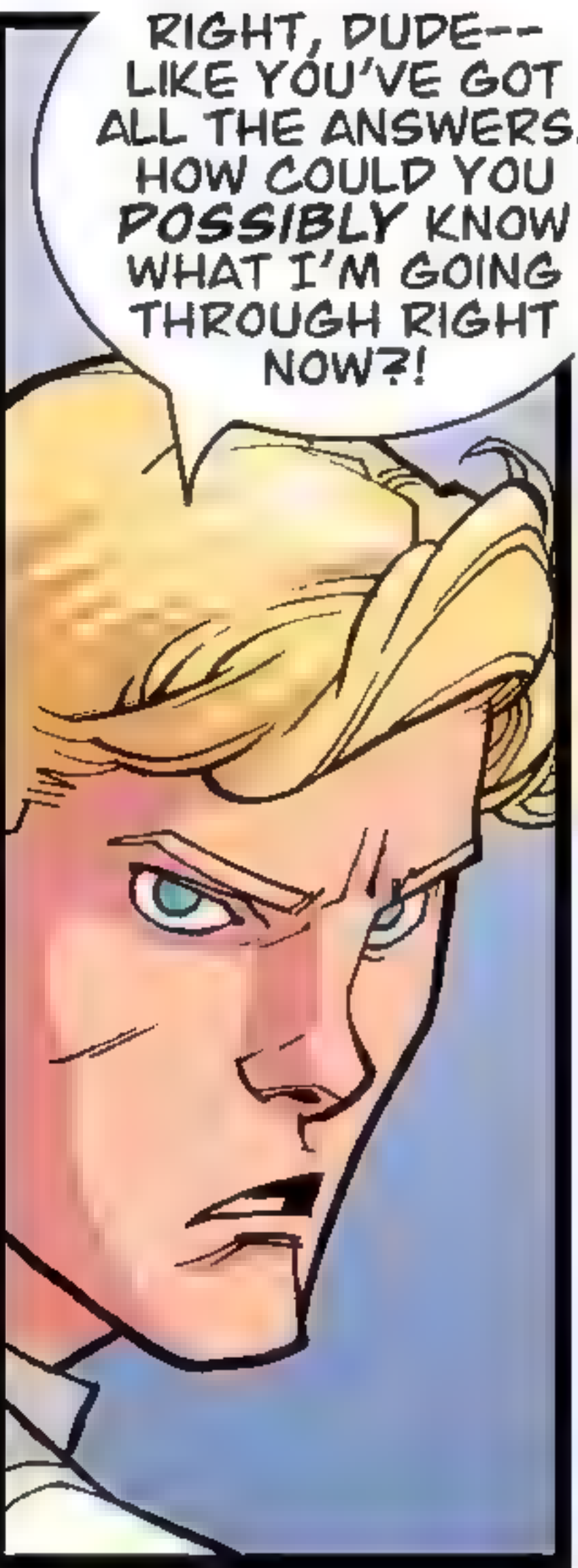
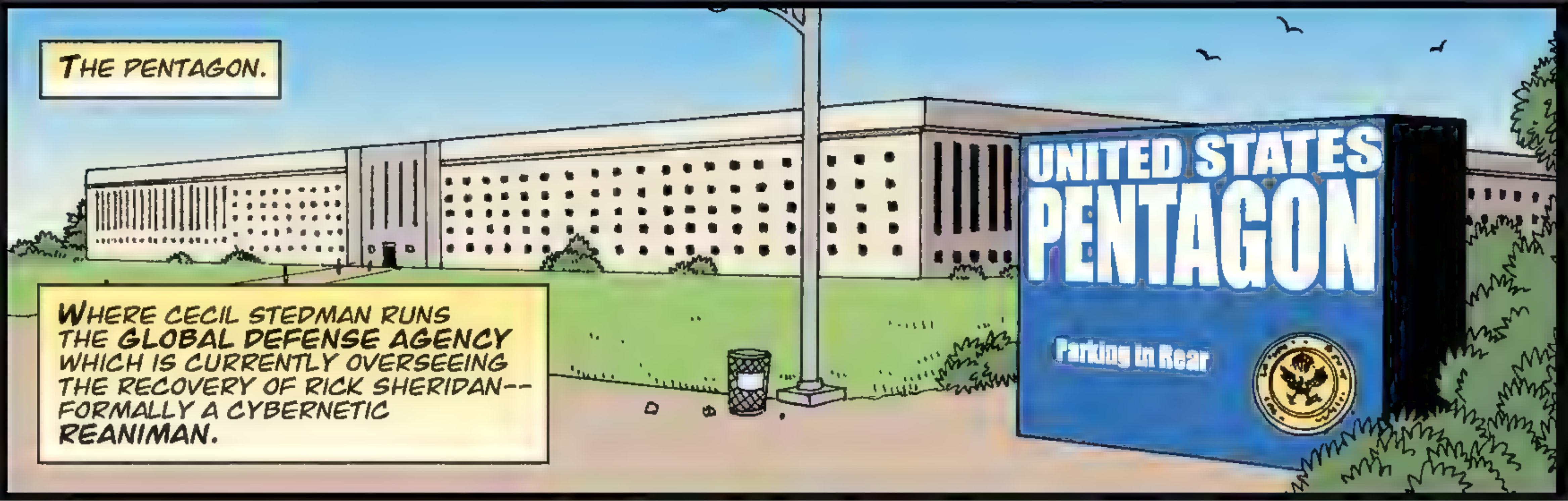
UNTIL YOU
TOLD ME OF
INVINCIBLE.

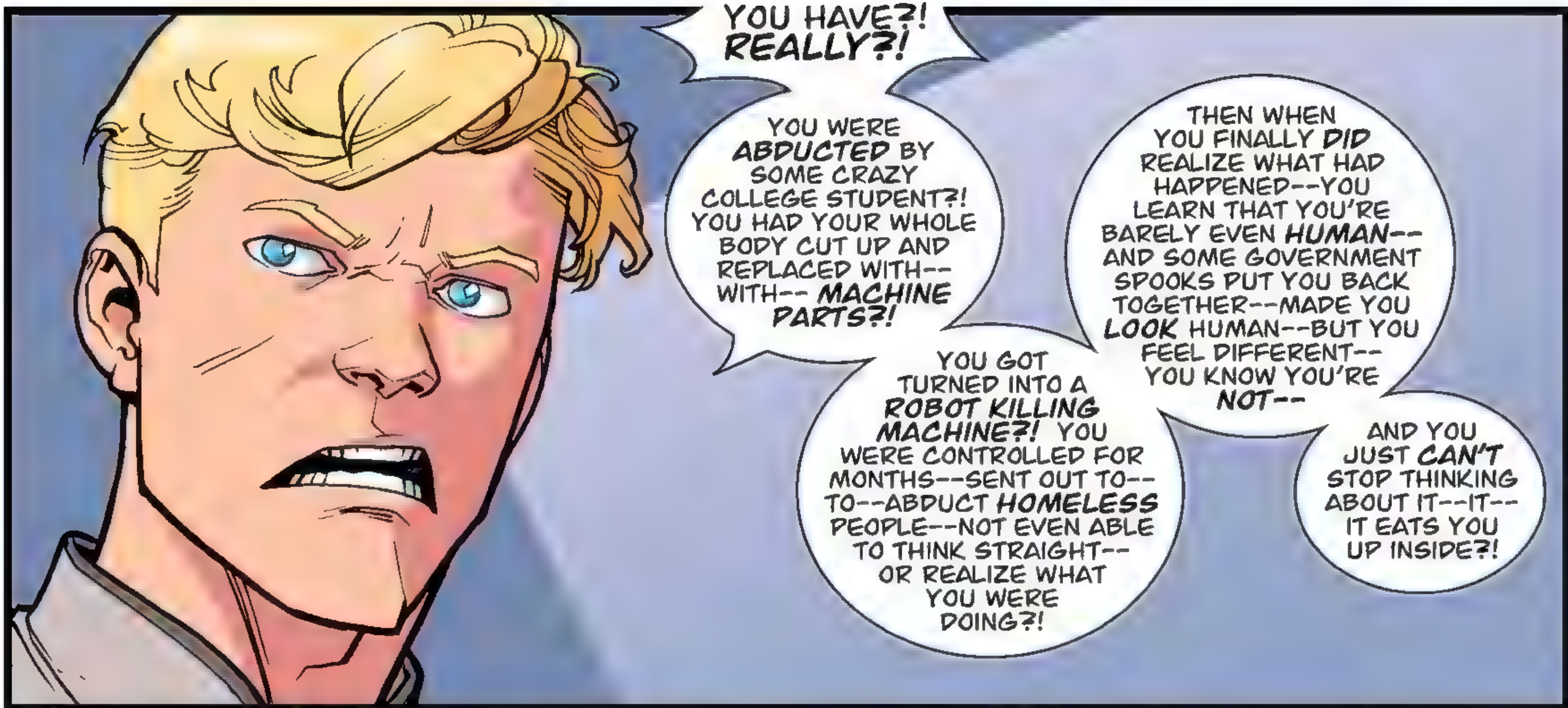


HE IS THE KEY TO THIS
AGE-OLD STRUGGLE
BETWEEN THE COALITION
AND THE VILTRUM
EMPIRE.

WE COULD USE
HIM TO TURN OTHER
VILTRUMITES TO OUR
CAUSE--TO WEAKEN
THE VILTRUM EMPIRE
EVEN **MORE**--TO AT
LAST TURN THE
TIDE IN OUR
FAVOR.

YOU NEED
TO PREPARE FOR
A RETURN TRIP TO
EARTH--AS SOON
AS POSSIBLE. I
WISH TO SPEAK
WITH THIS
INVINCIBLE.





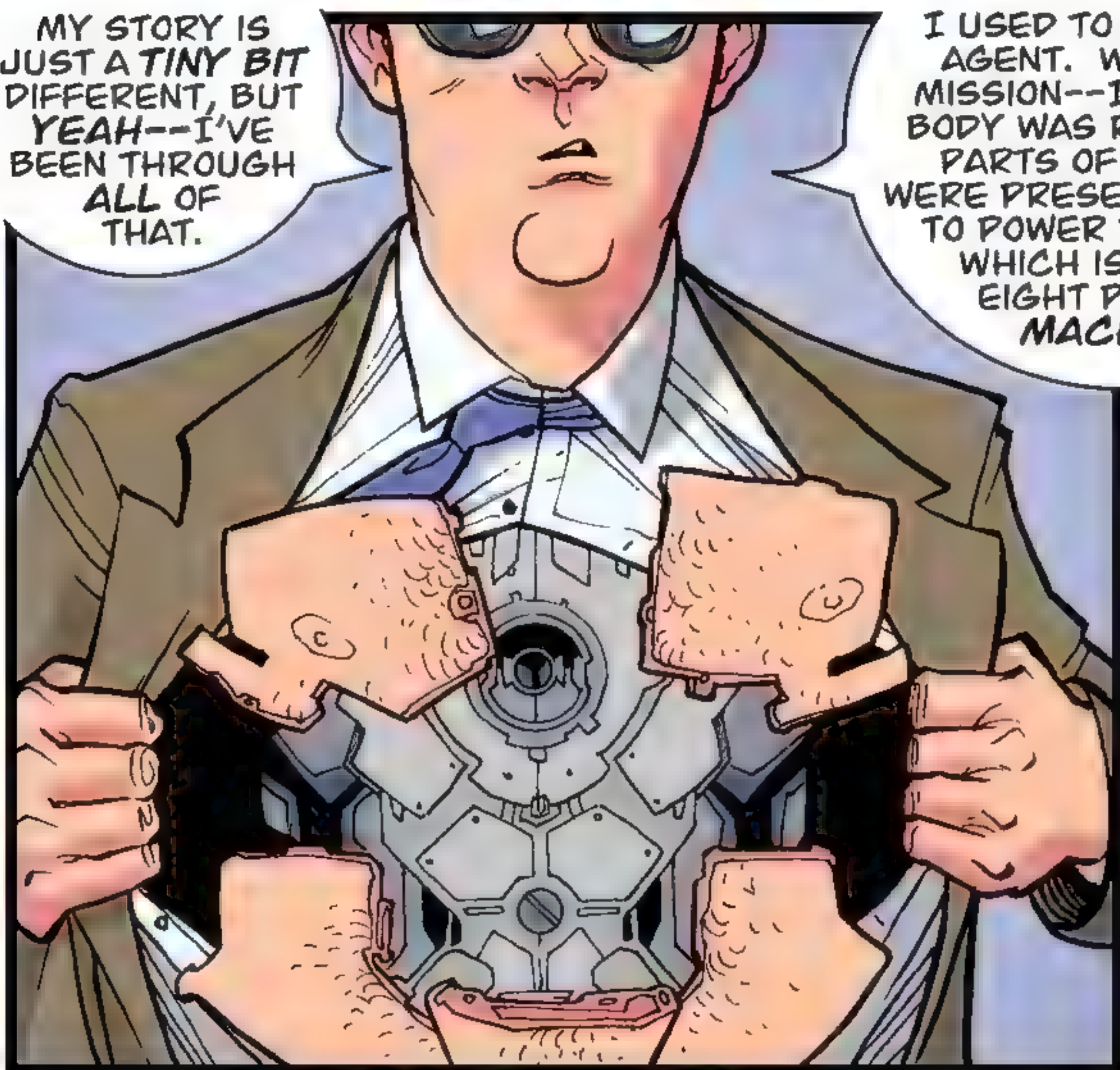
YOU HAVE?!
REALLY?!

YOU WERE
ABDUCTED BY
SOME CRAZY
COLLEGE STUDENT?!
YOU HAD YOUR WHOLE
BODY CUT UP AND
REPLACED WITH--
WITH-- MACHINE
PARTS?!

THEN WHEN
YOU FINALLY DID
REALIZE WHAT HAD
HAPPENED--YOU
LEARN THAT YOU'RE
BARELY EVEN HUMAN--
AND SOME GOVERNMENT
SPOOKS PUT YOU BACK
TOGETHER--MADE YOU
LOOK HUMAN--BUT YOU
FEEL DIFFERENT--
YOU KNOW YOU'RE
NOT--

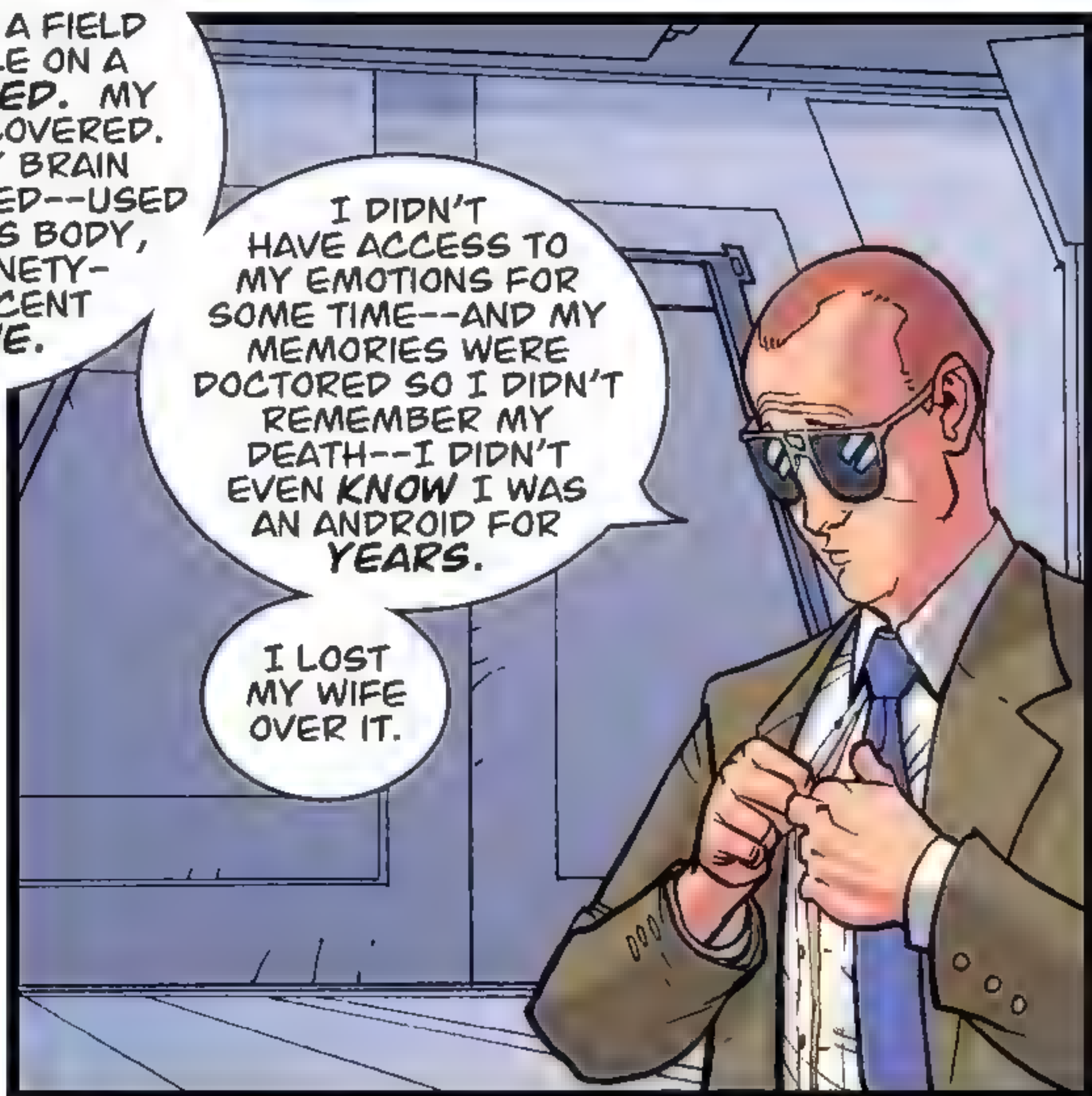
YOU GOT
TURNED INTO A
ROBOT KILLING
MACHINE?! YOU
WERE CONTROLLED FOR
MONTHS--SENT OUT TO--
TO--ABDUCT HOMELESS
PEOPLE--NOT EVEN ABLE
TO THINK STRAIGHT--
OR REALIZE WHAT
YOU WERE
DOING?!

AND YOU
JUST CAN'T
STOP THINKING
ABOUT IT--IT--
IT EATS YOU
UP INSIDE?!



MY STORY IS
JUST A TINY BIT
DIFFERENT, BUT
YEAH--I'VE
BEEN THROUGH
ALL OF
THAT.

I USED TO BE A FIELD
AGENT. WHILE ON A
MISSION--I DIED. MY
BODY WAS RECOVERED.
PARTS OF MY BRAIN
WERE PRESERVED--USED
TO POWER THIS BODY,
WHICH IS NINETY-
EIGHT PERCENT
MACHINE.

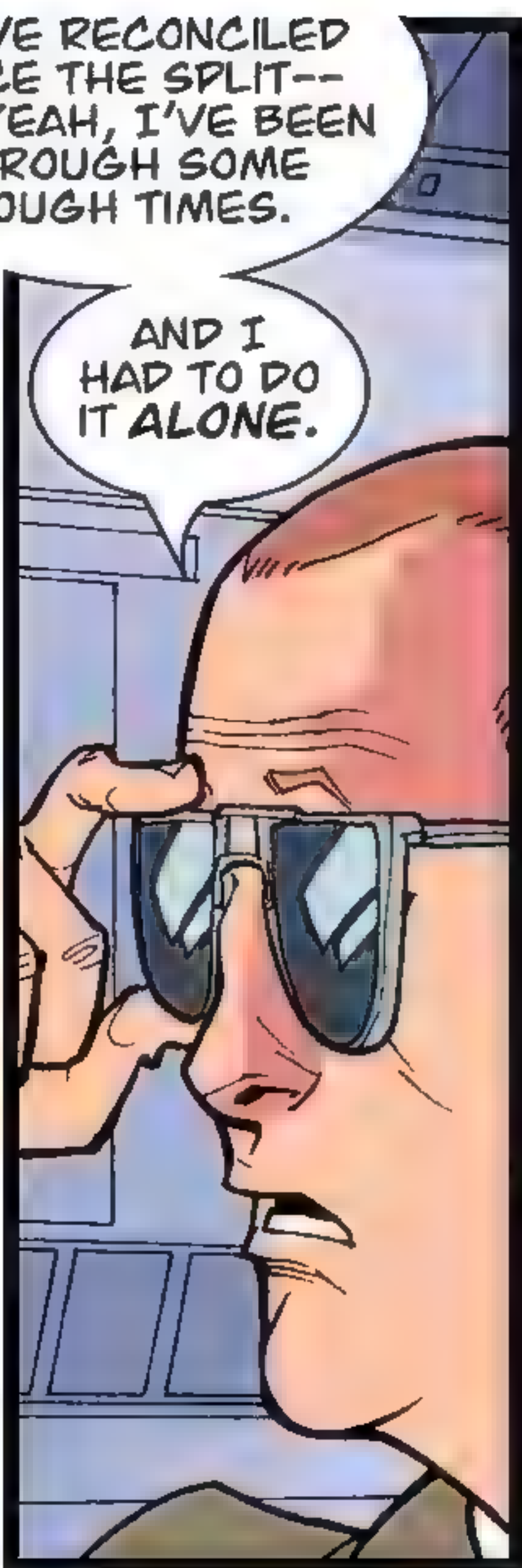


I DIDN'T
HAVE ACCESS TO
MY EMOTIONS FOR
SOME TIME--AND MY
MEMORIES WERE
DOCTORED SO I DIDN'T
REMEMBER MY
DEATH--I DIDN'T
EVEN KNOW I WAS
AN ANDROID FOR
YEARS.

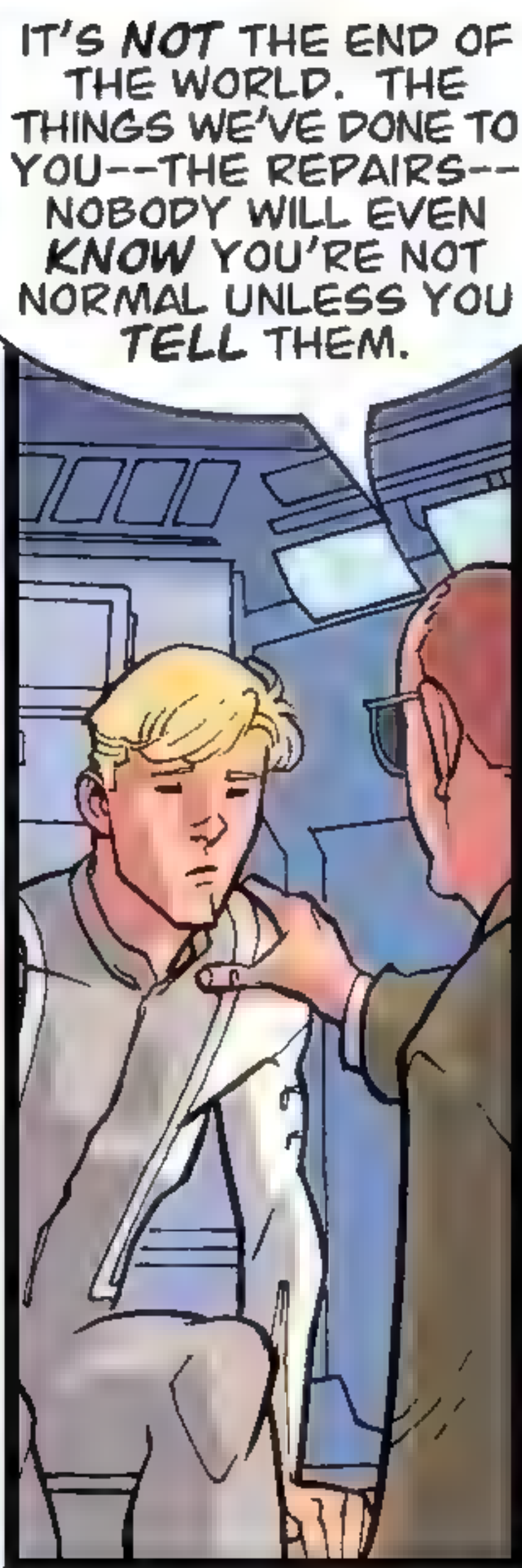
I LOST
MY WIFE
OVER IT.



OH,
MAN--I'M
SORRY.



AND I
HAD TO DO
IT ALONE.

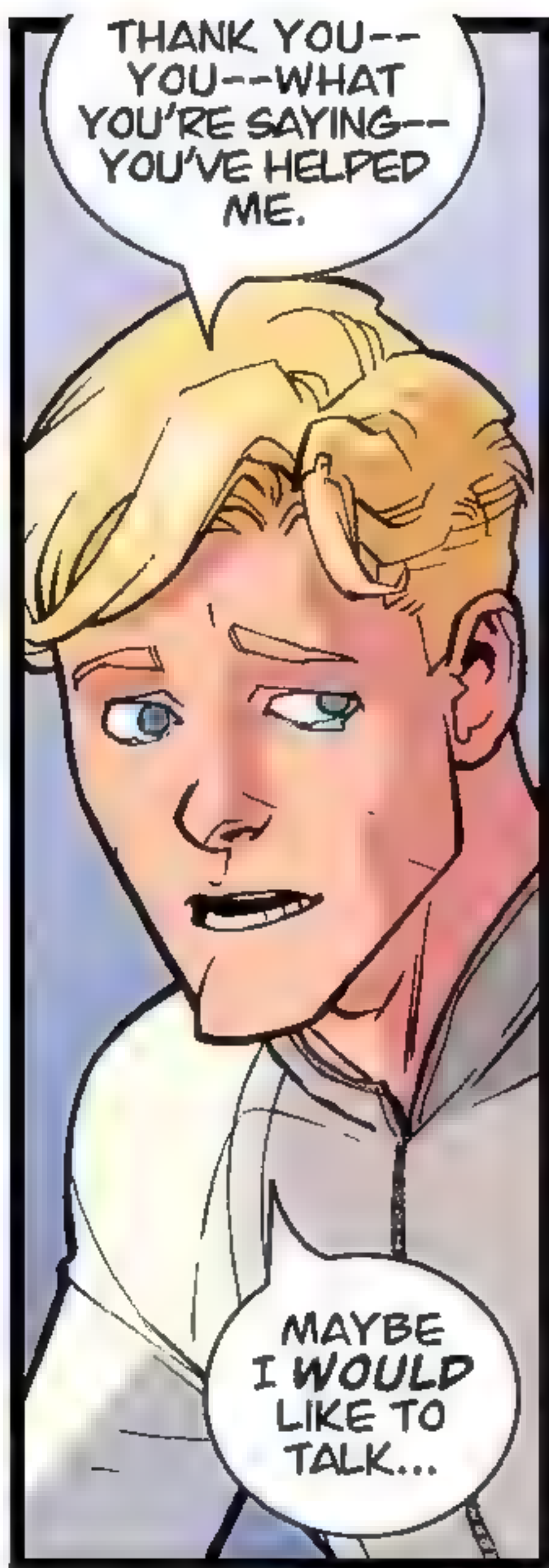


IT'S NOT THE END OF
THE WORLD. THE
THINGS WE'VE DONE TO
YOU--THE REPAIRS--
NOBODY WILL EVEN
KNOW YOU'RE NOT
NORMAL UNLESS YOU
TELL THEM.



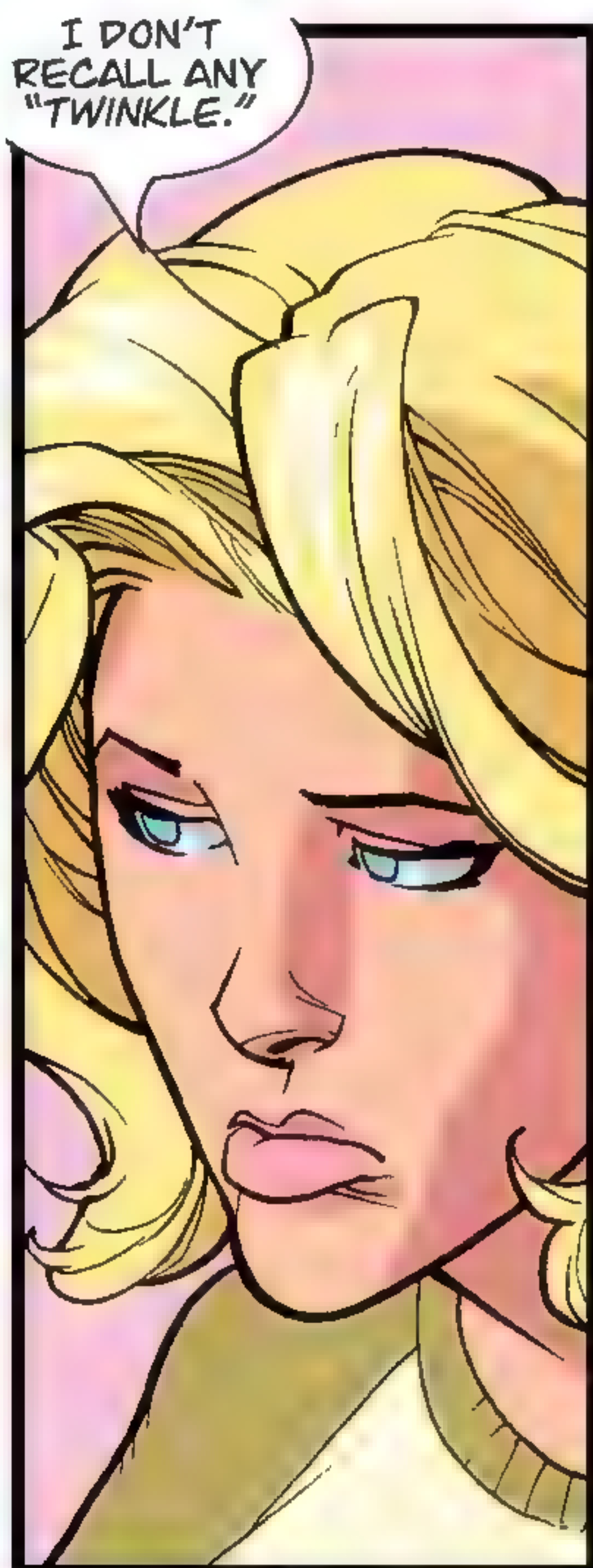
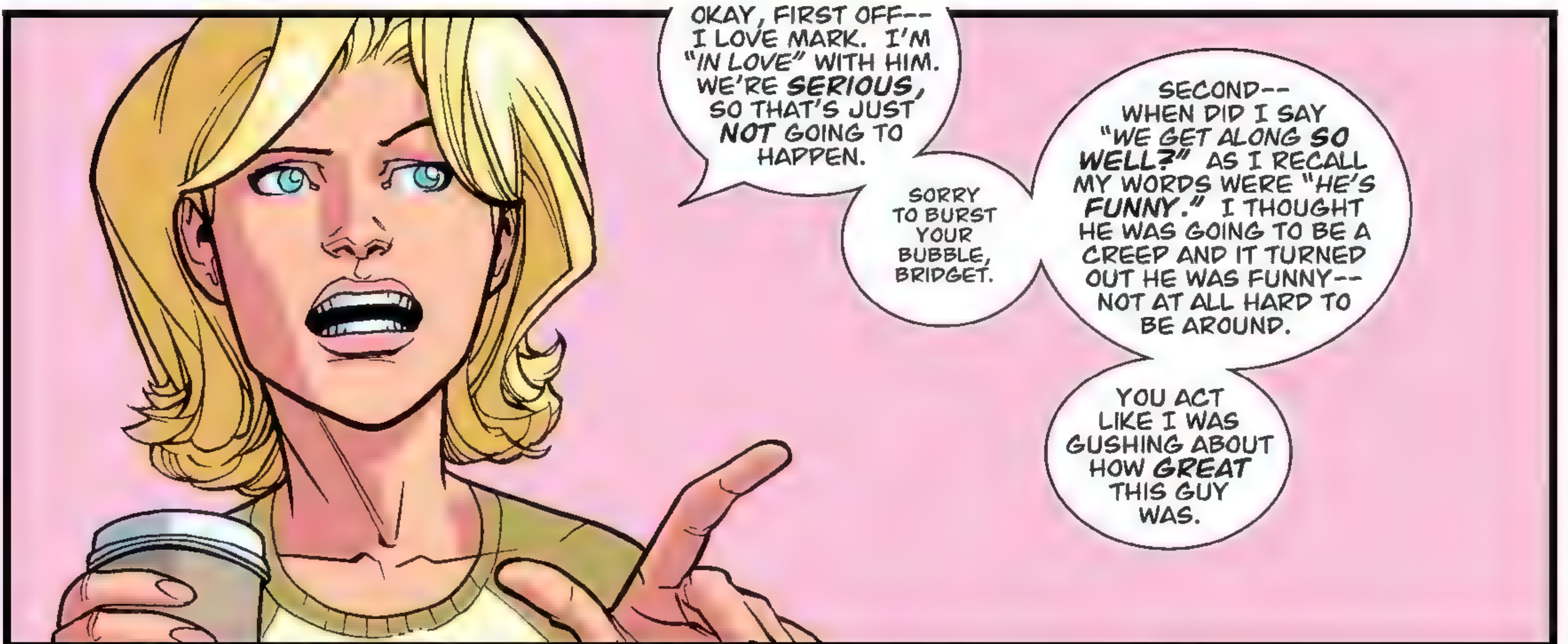
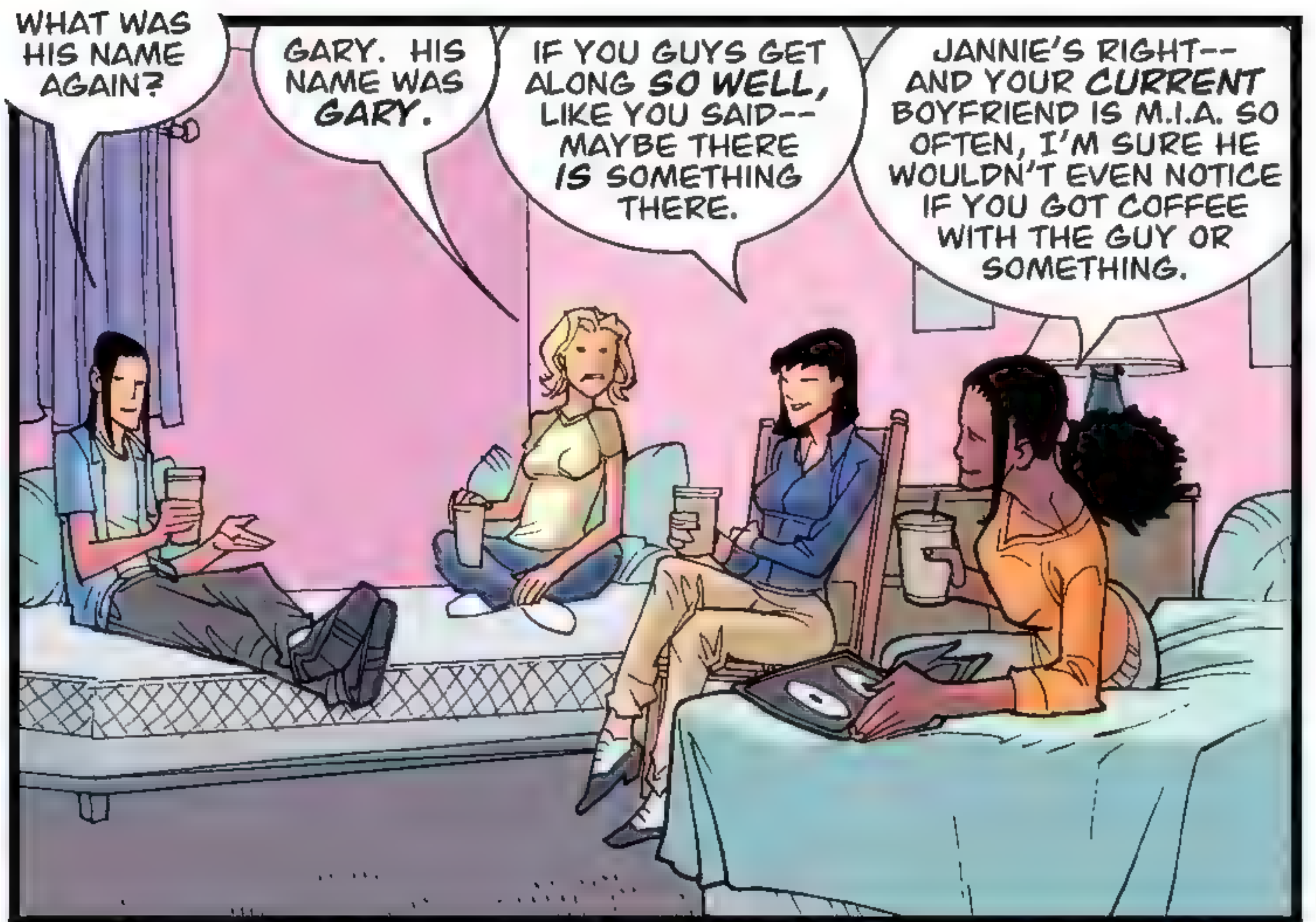
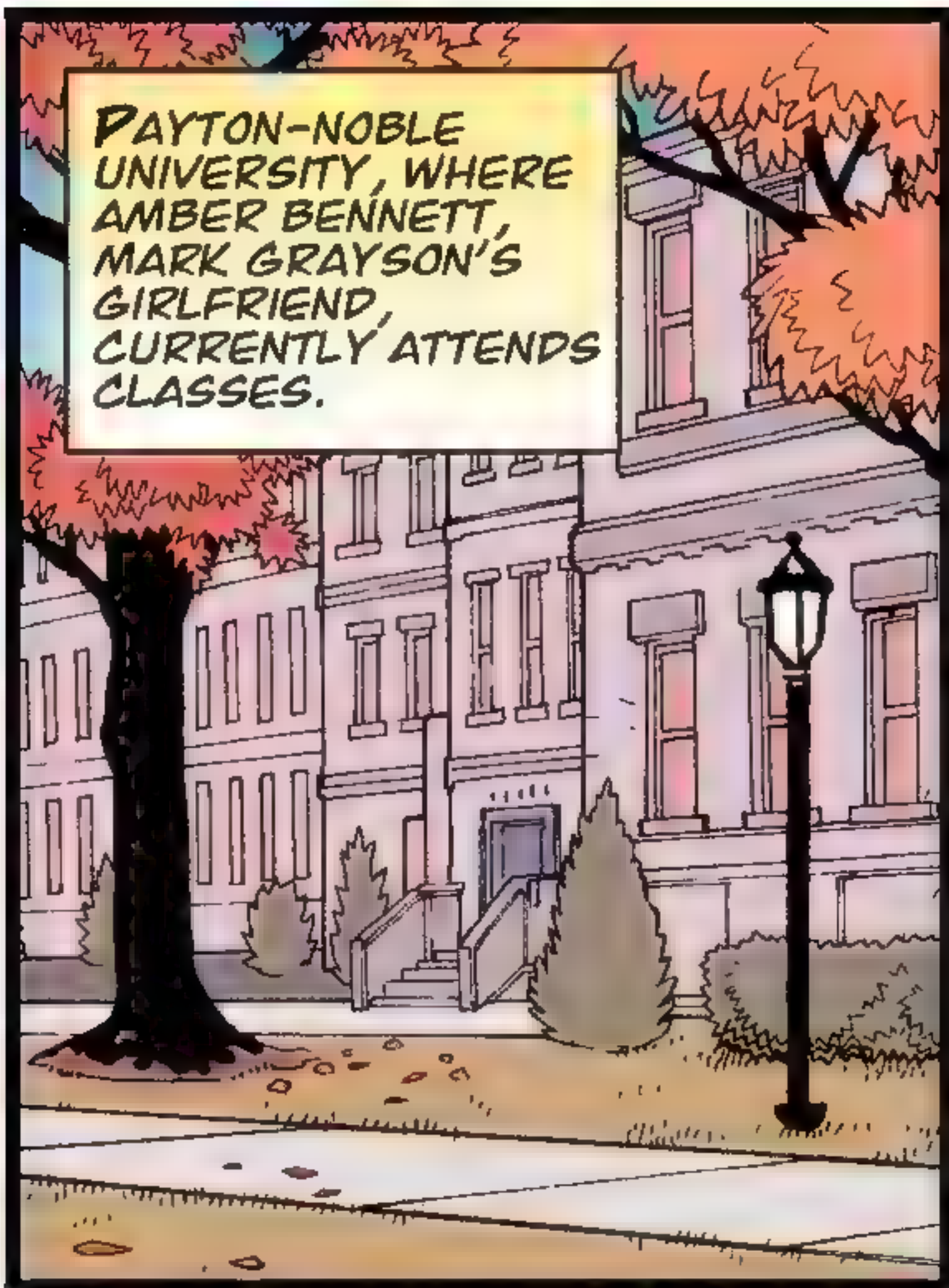
YOUR
GIRLFRIEND--
WIFE, YOUR
FAMILY--
NOBODY.

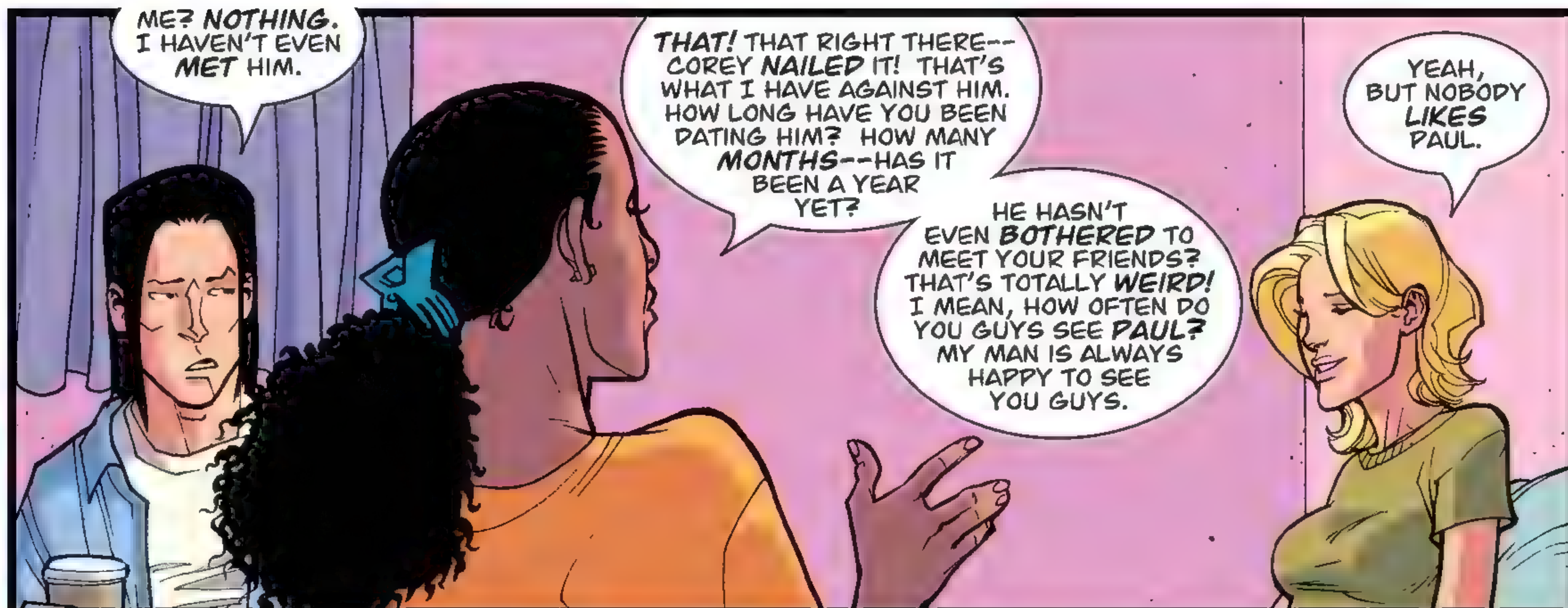
YOU CAN
STILL LIVE A
NORMAL LIFE IF
YOU WANT TO.

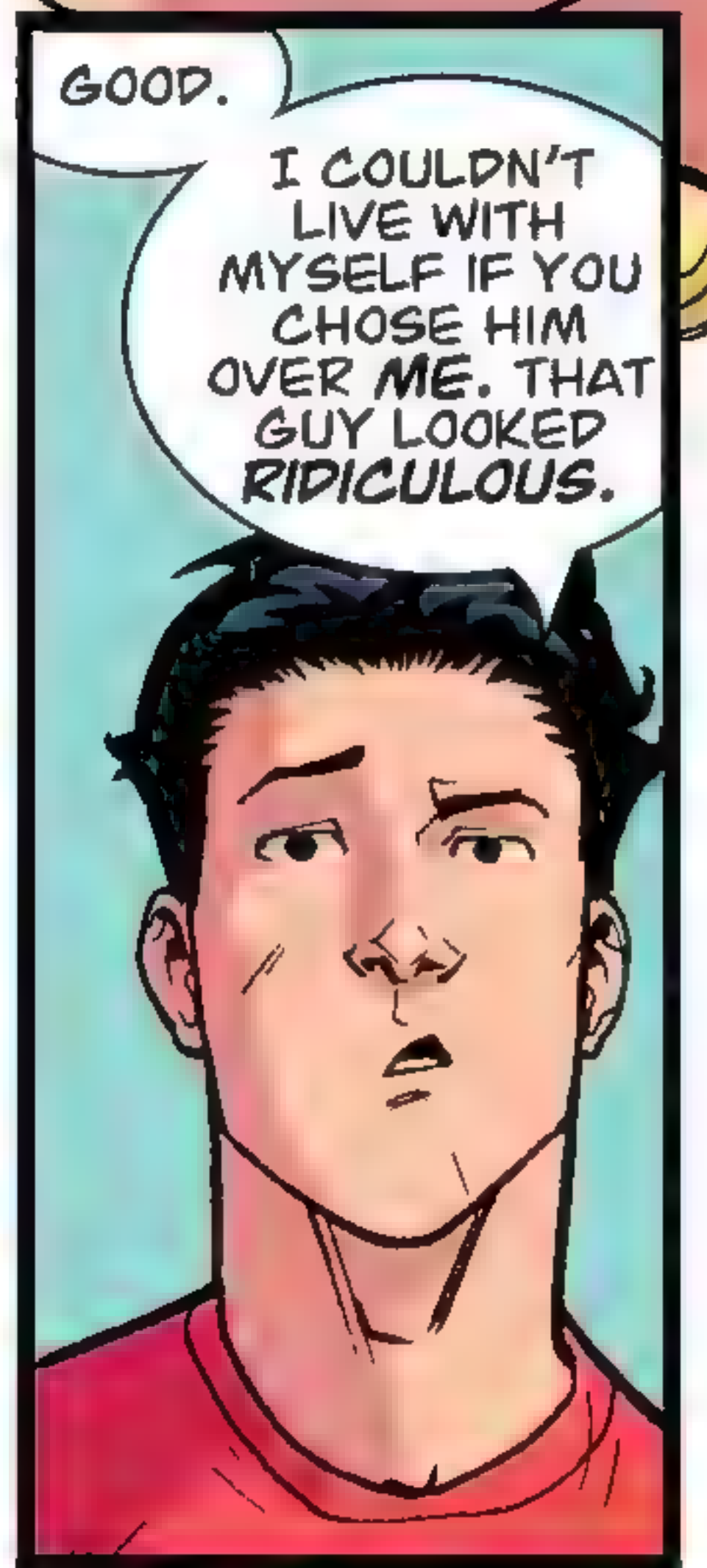
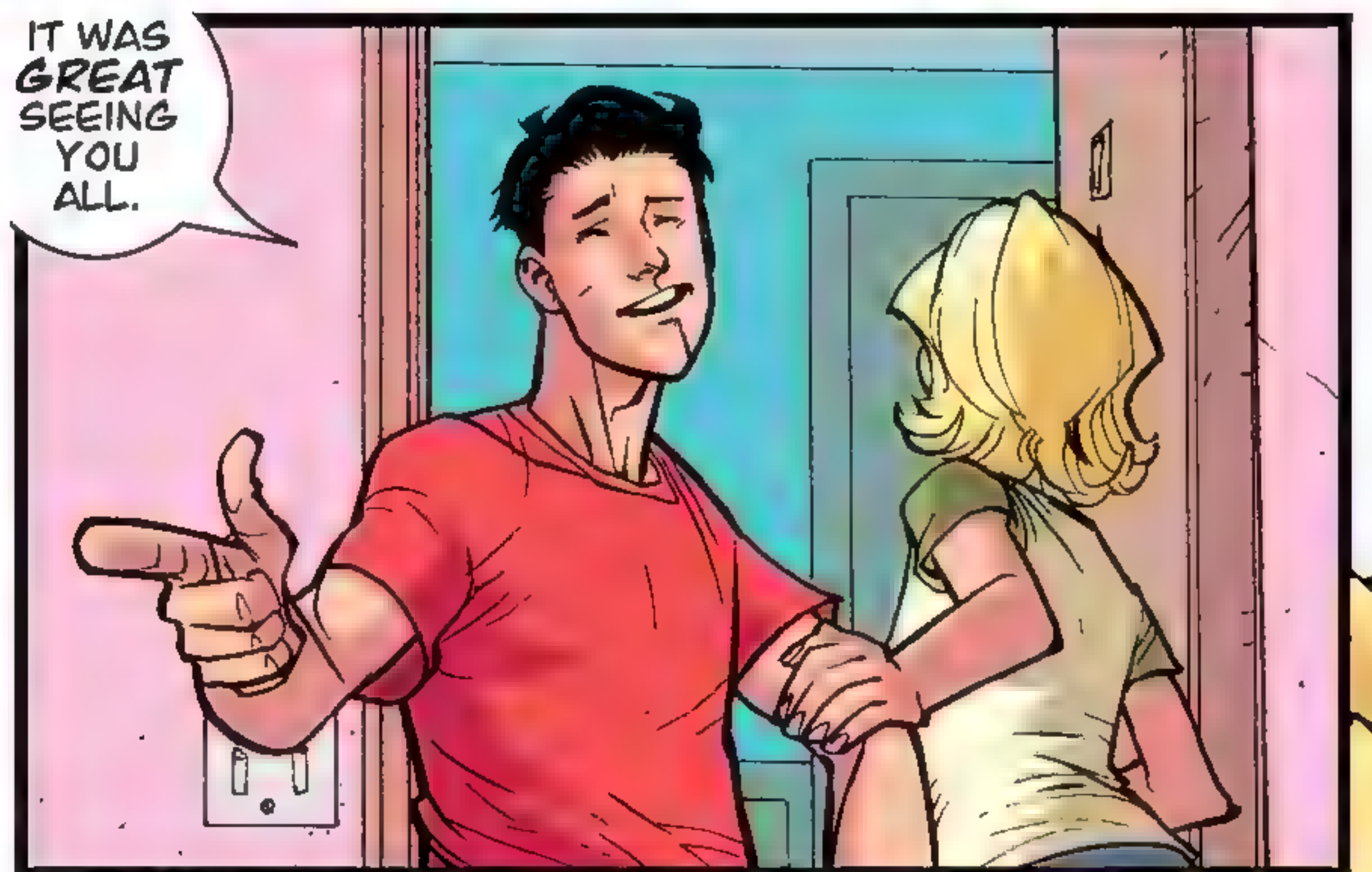
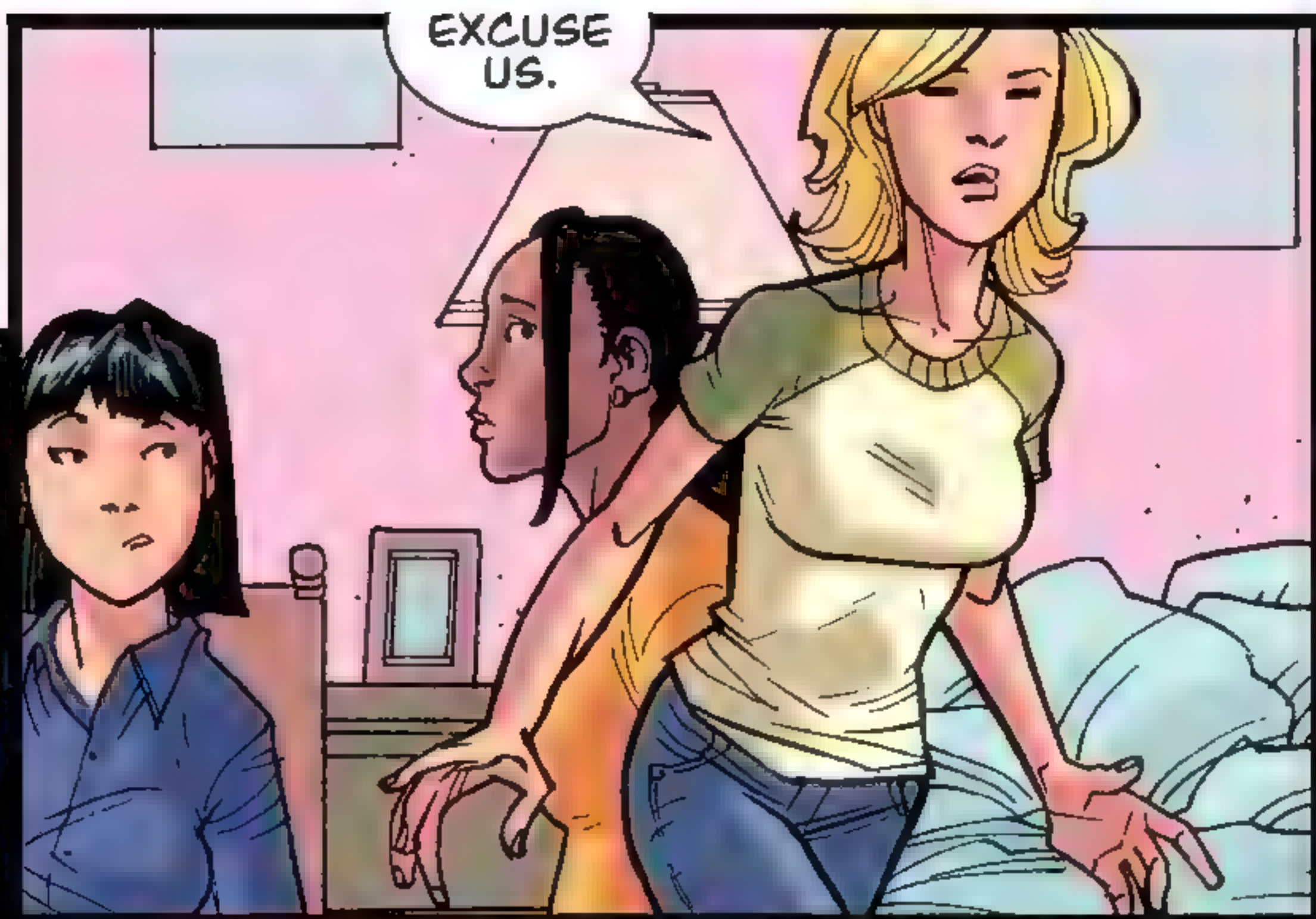
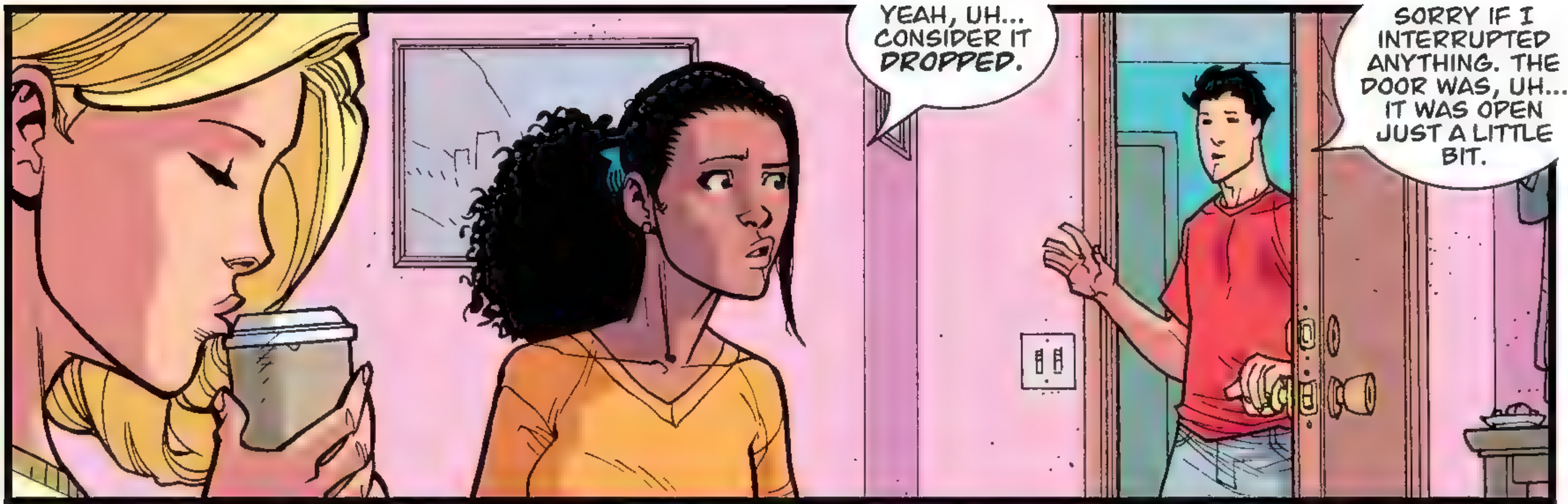


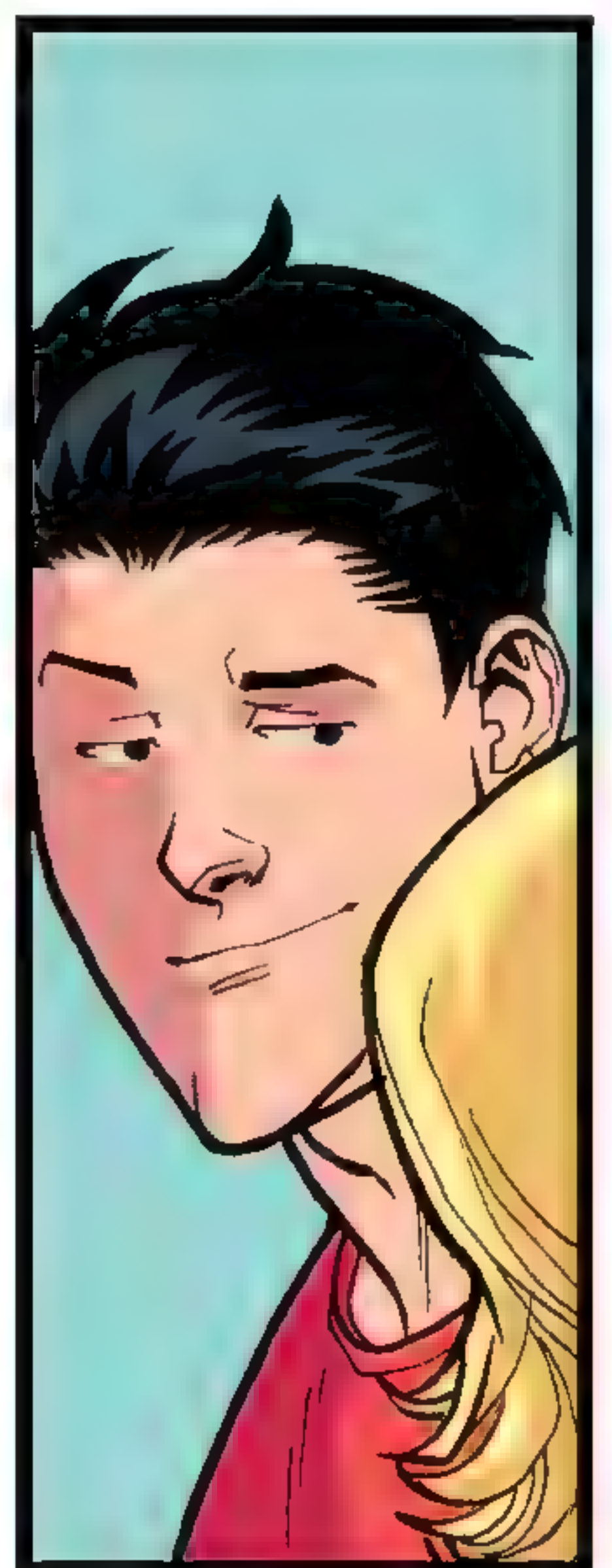
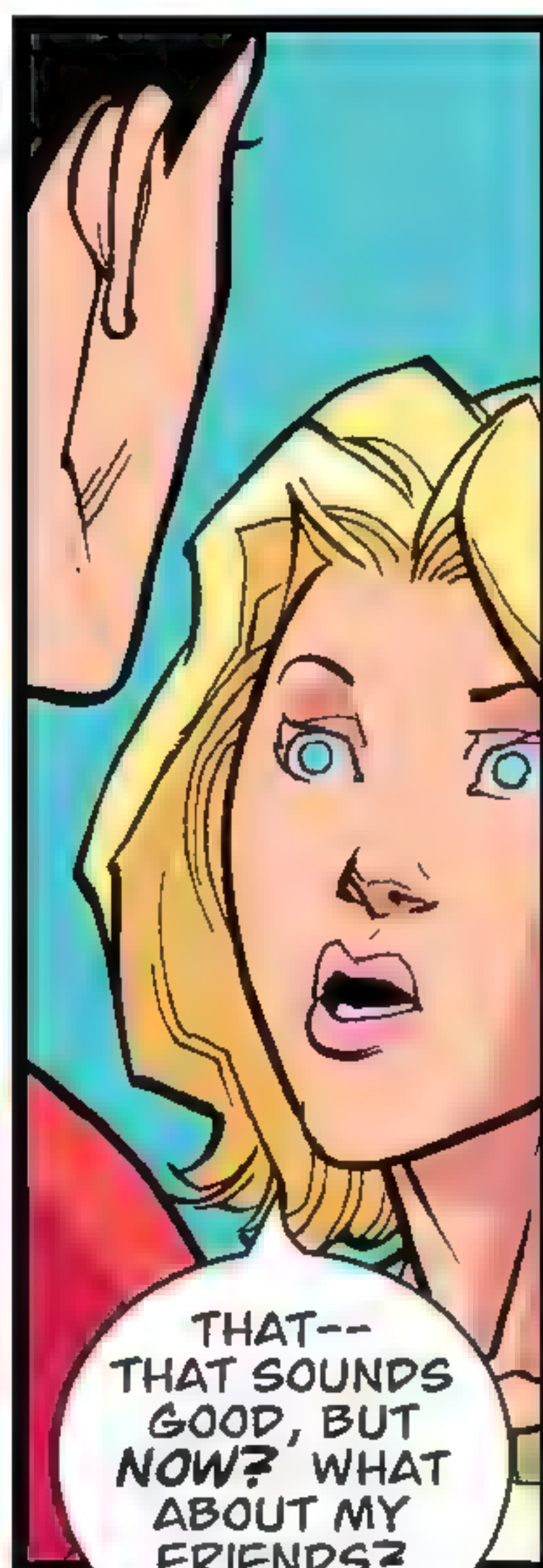
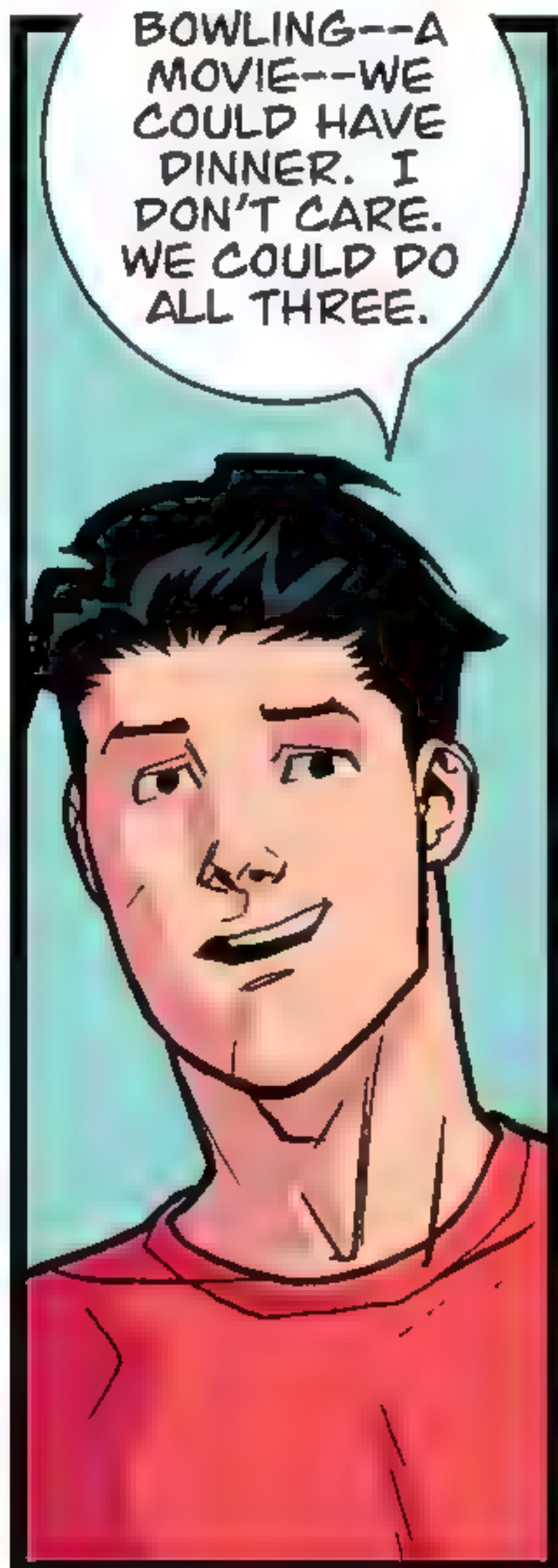
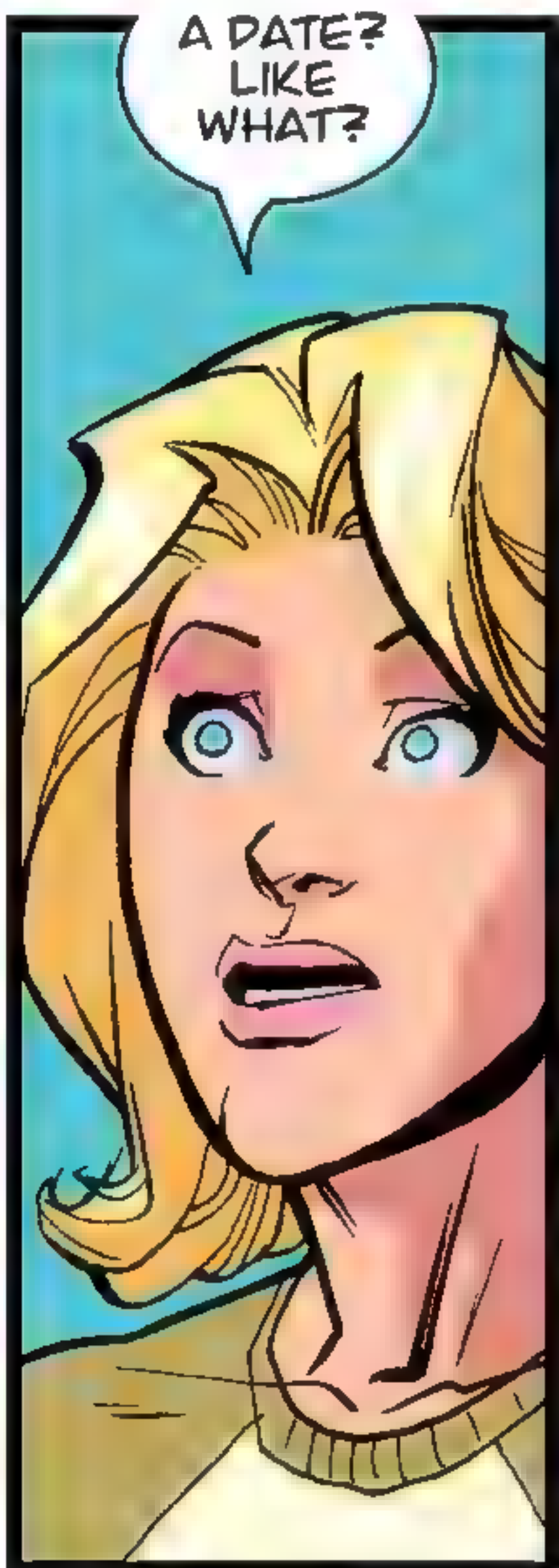
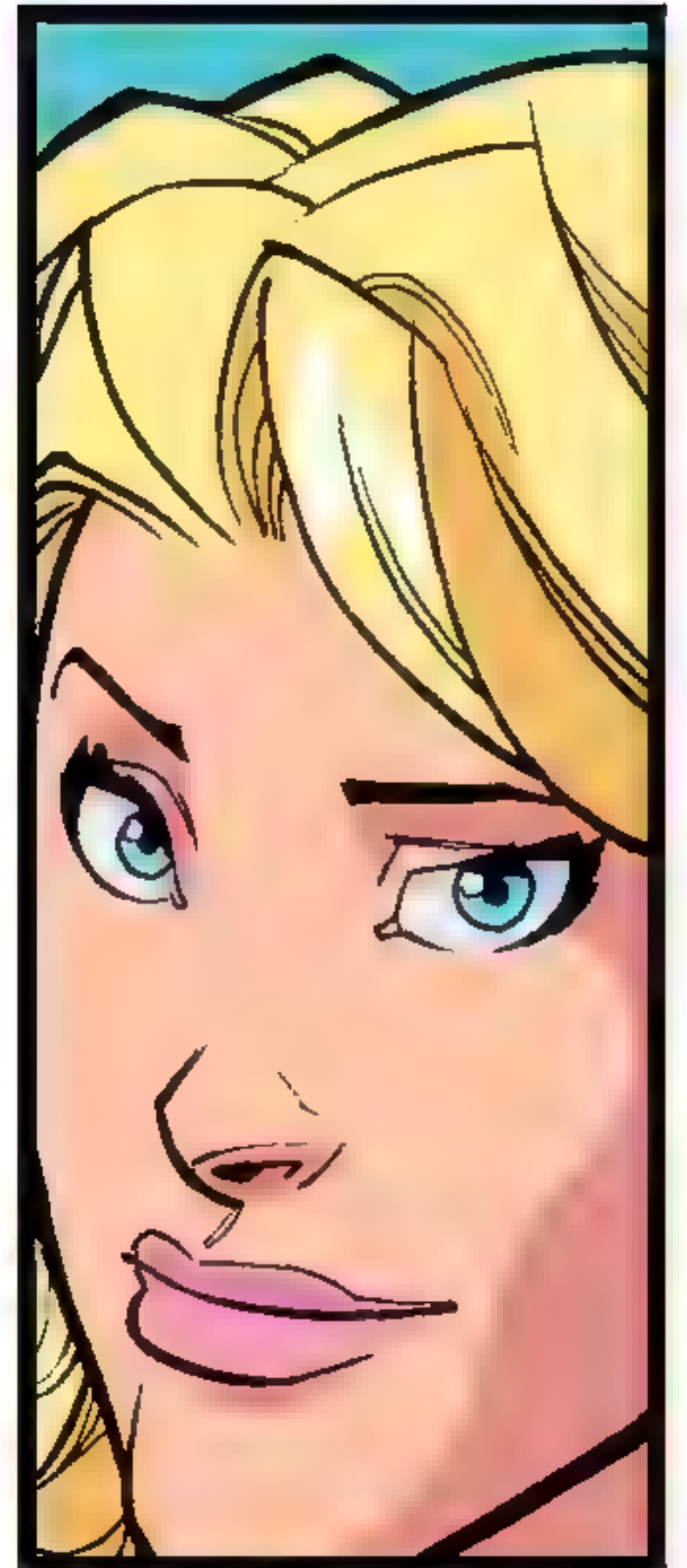
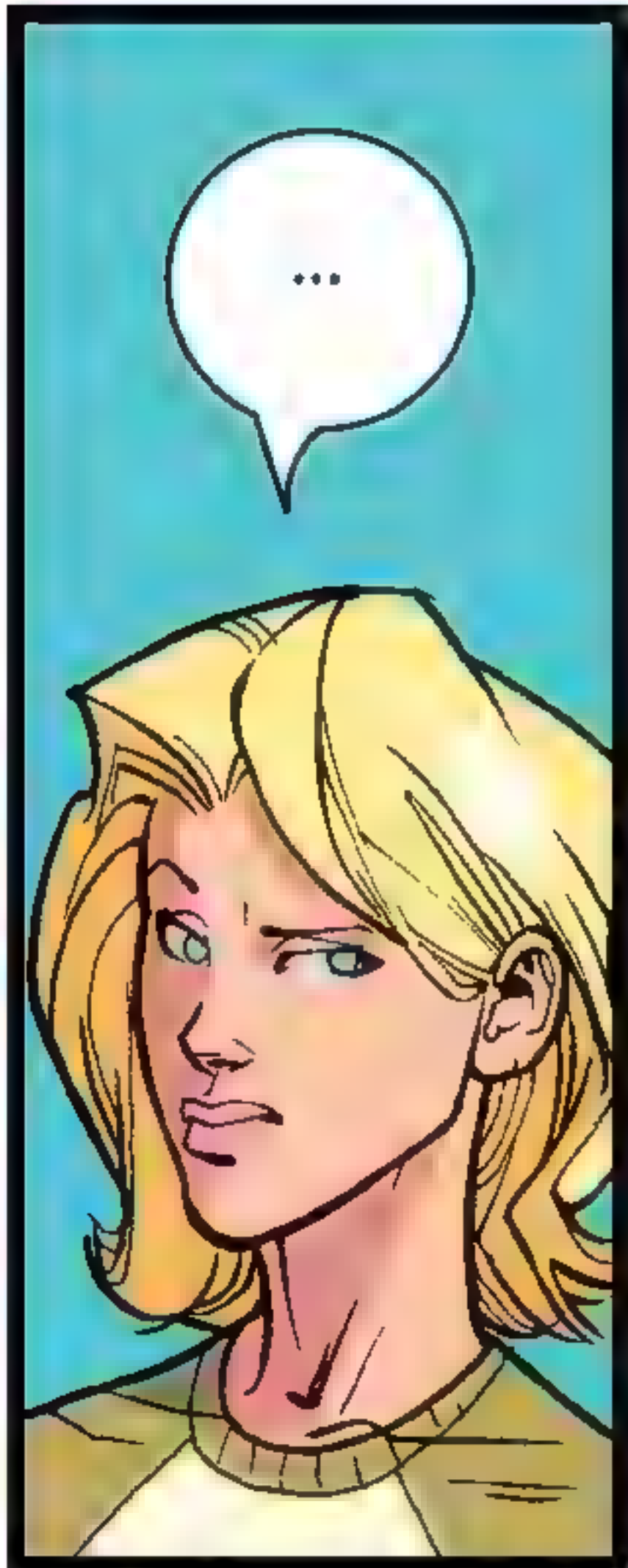
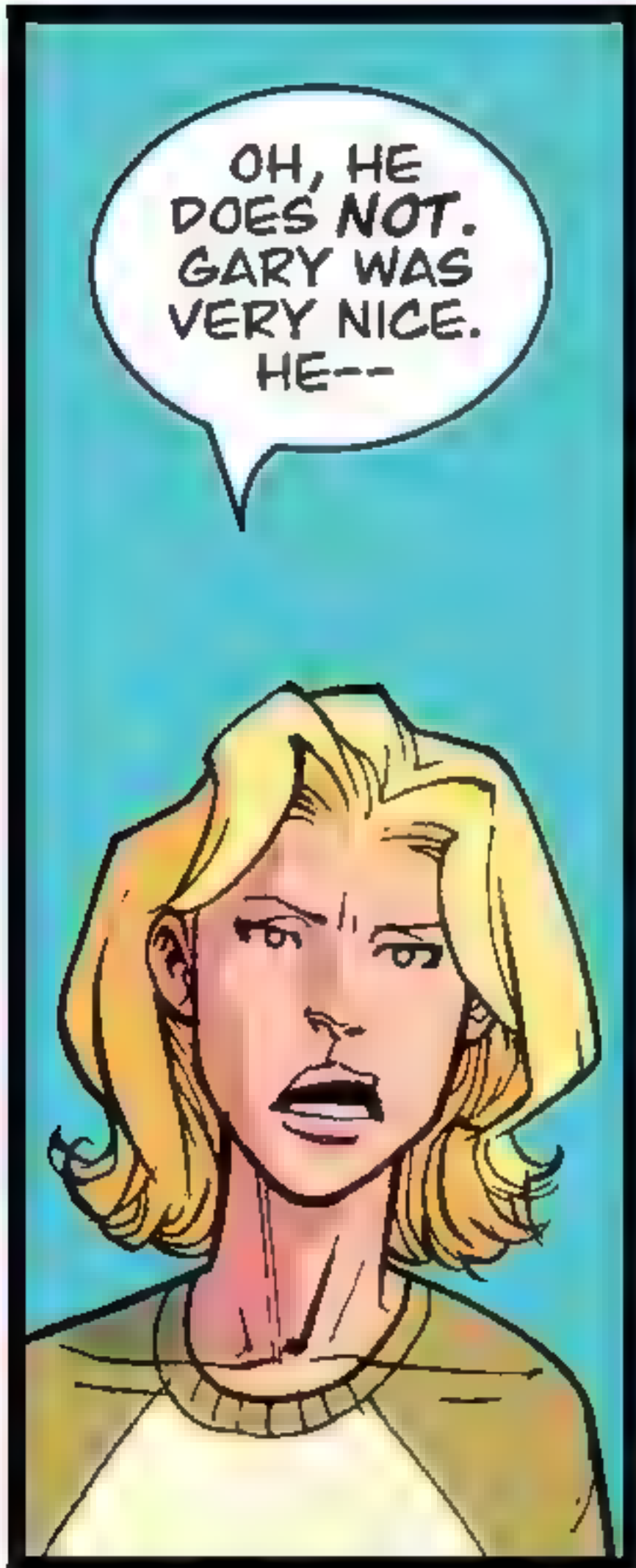
THANK YOU--
YOU--WHAT
YOU'RE SAYING--
YOU'VE HELPED
ME.

MAYBE
I WOULD
LIKE TO
TALK...

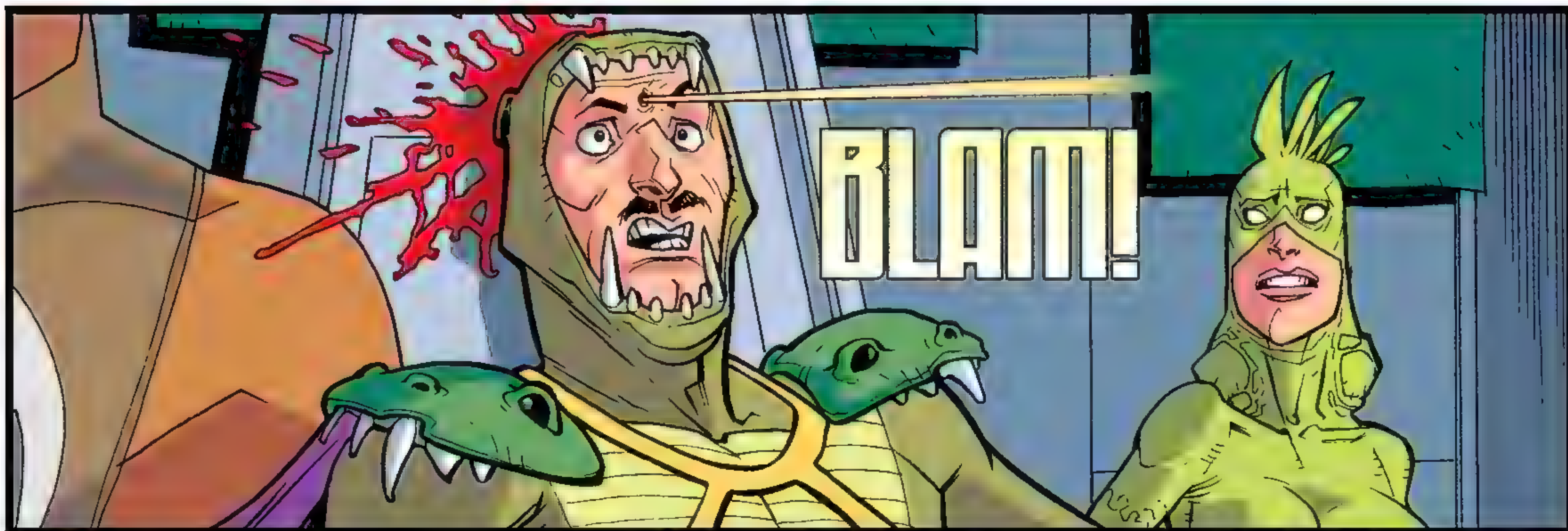














THE HOME OF DEBBIE GRAYSON, MOTHER OF MARK GRAYSON AND NEWLY ADOPTED OLIVER GRAYSON.

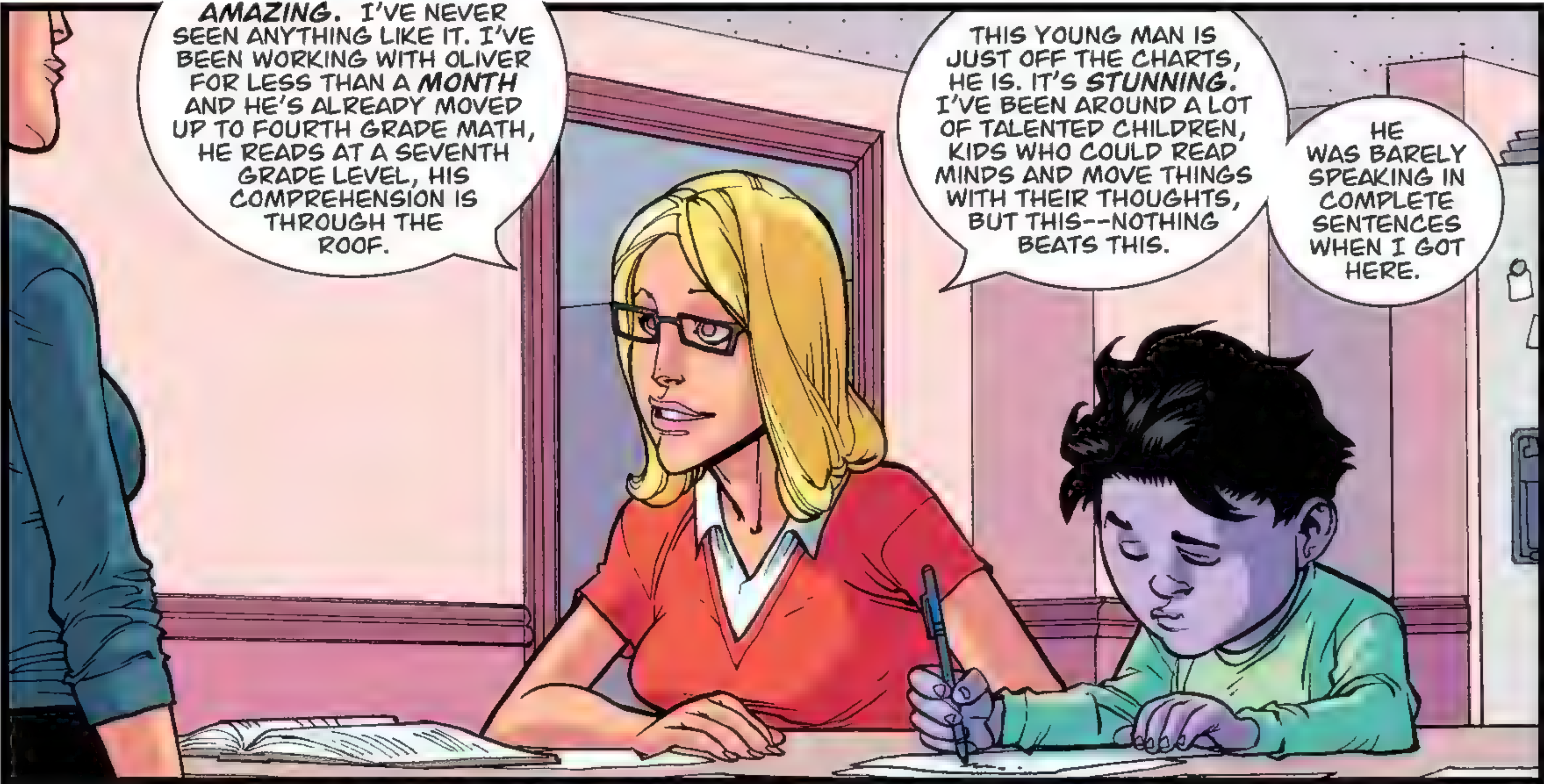


JUST SOLVE THE PROBLEM, OLIVER. JUST THIS LAST ONE AND YOU'LL BE DONE AND I CAN GO HOME.

I CAN'T, APRIL--- IT'S TOO HARD.

I KNOW IT'S HARD, BUT I ALSO KNOW THAT YOU CAN DO IT. DON'T MAKE A LIAR OUT OF ME. JUST THINK ABOUT IT. FOCUS.

HOW ARE THINGS GOING?



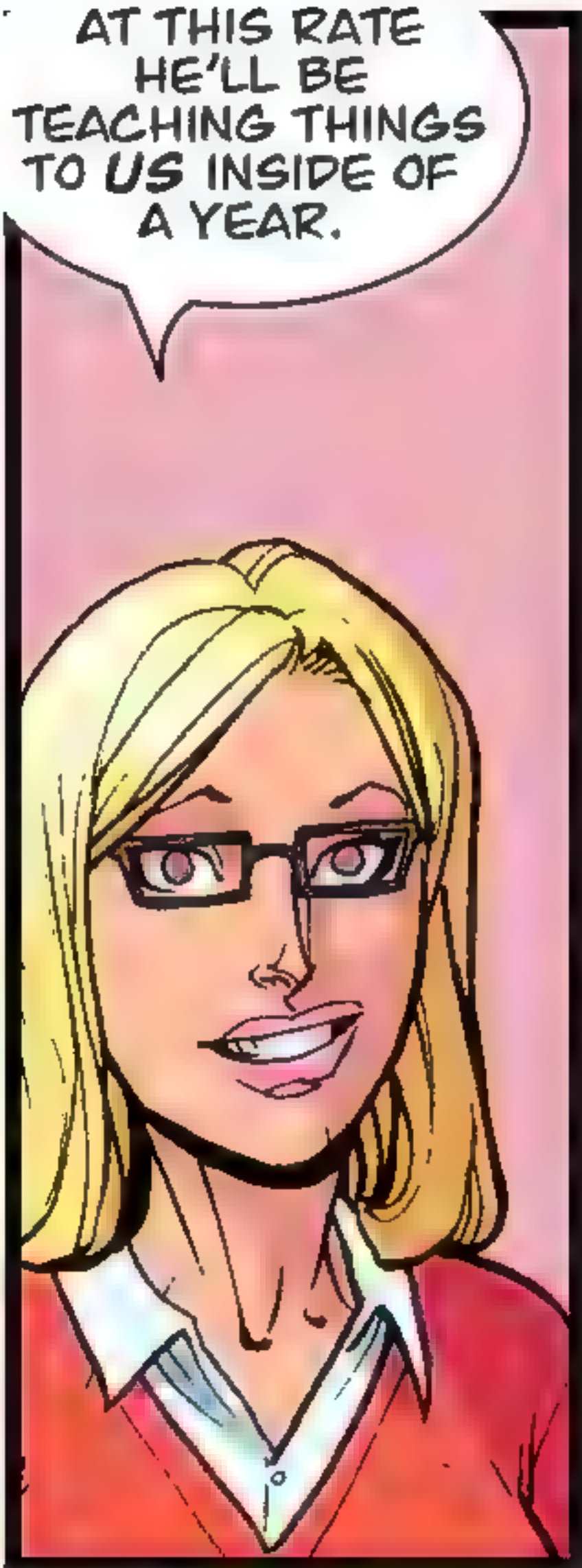
AMAZING. I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT. I'VE BEEN WORKING WITH OLIVER FOR LESS THAN A MONTH AND HE'S ALREADY MOVED UP TO FOURTH GRADE MATH, HE READS AT A SEVENTH GRADE LEVEL, HIS COMPREHENSION IS THROUGH THE ROOF.

THIS YOUNG MAN IS JUST OFF THE CHARTS, HE IS. IT'S STUNNING. I'VE BEEN AROUND A LOT OF TALENTED CHILDREN, KIDS WHO COULD READ MINDS AND MOVE THINGS WITH THEIR THOUGHTS, BUT THIS--NOTHING BEATS THIS.

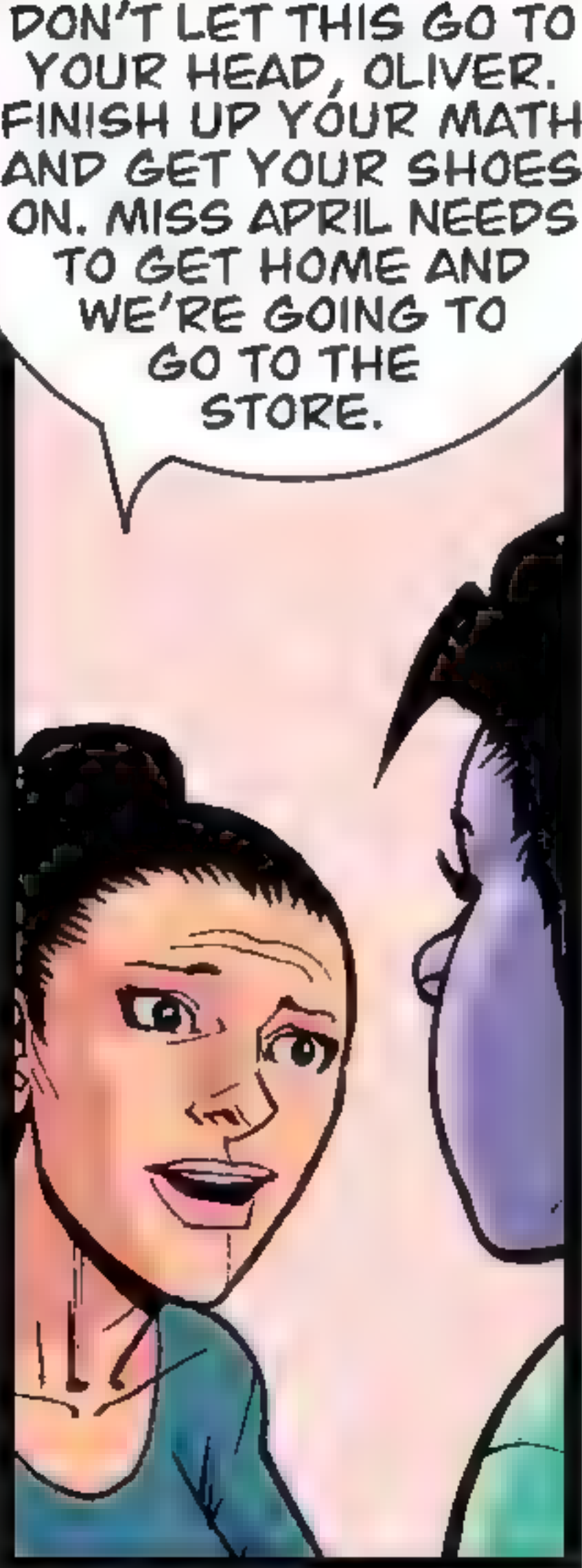
HE WAS BARELY SPEAKING IN COMPLETE SENTENCES WHEN I GOT HERE.



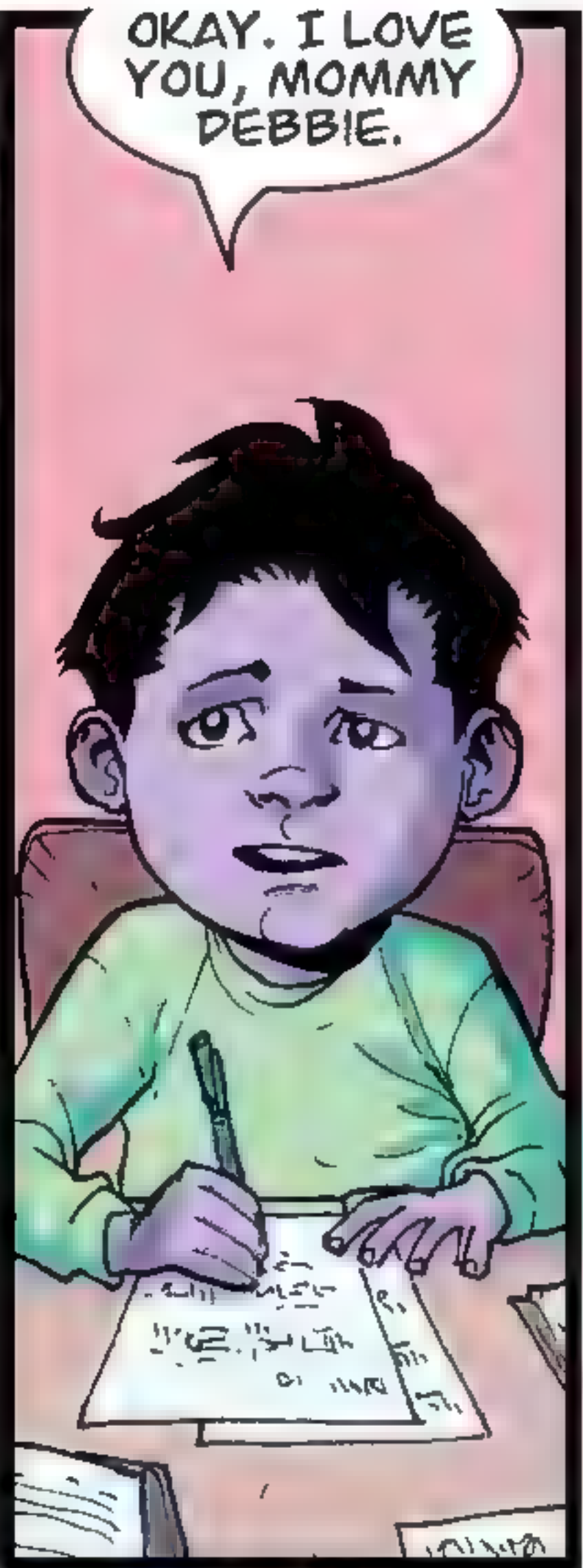
I'M AS BLOWN AWAY AS YOU ARE.



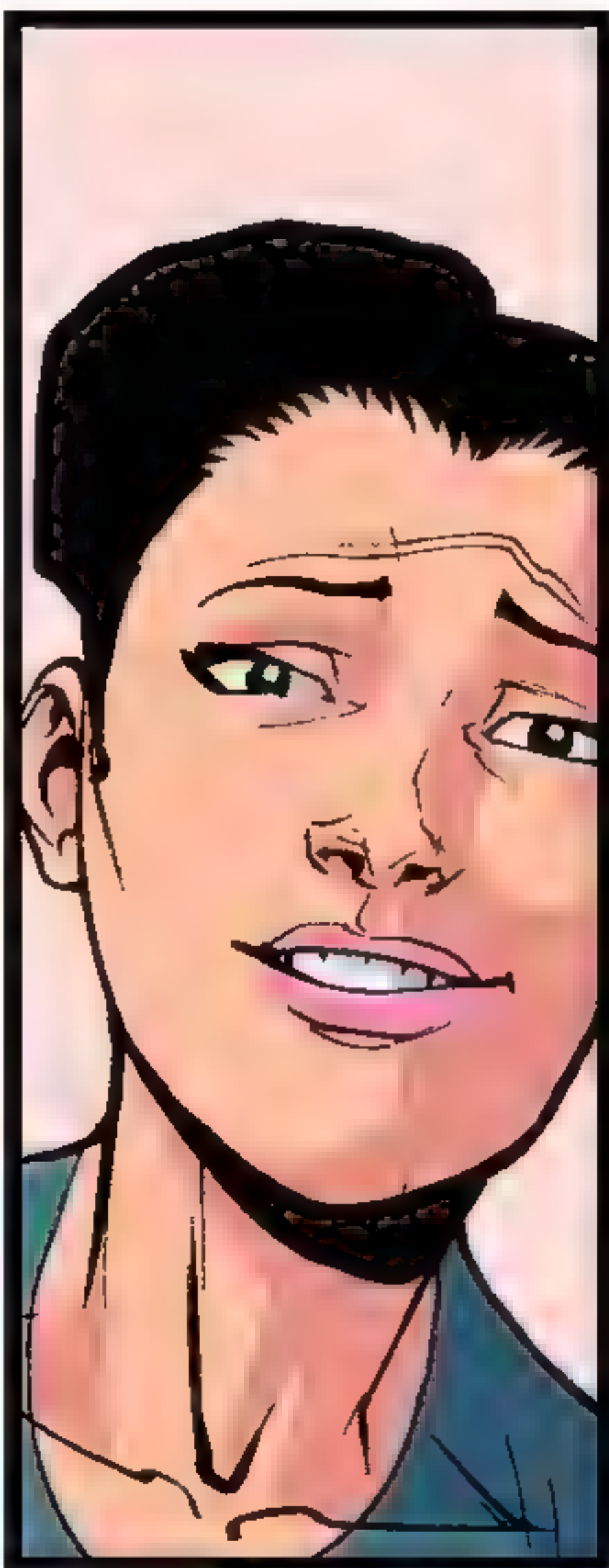
AT THIS RATE HE'LL BE TEACHING THINGS TO US INSIDE OF A YEAR.



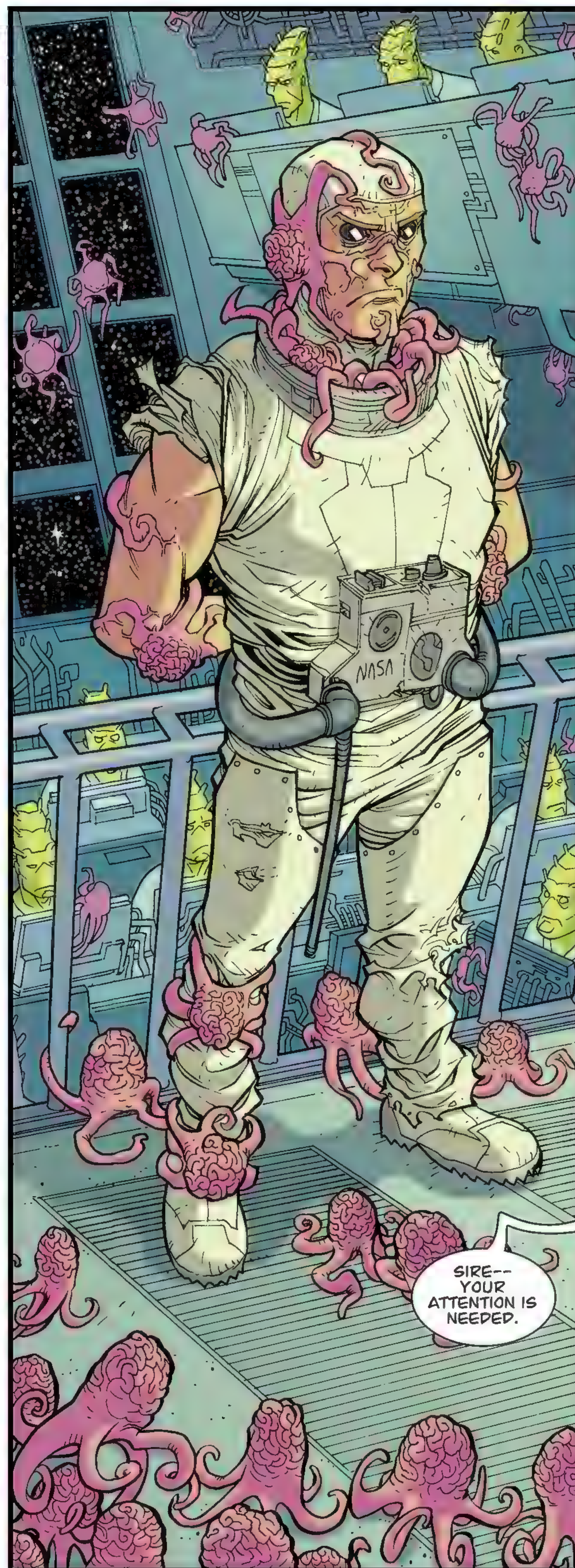
DON'T LET THIS GO TO YOUR HEAD, OLIVER. FINISH UP YOUR MATH AND GET YOUR SHOES ON. MISS APRIL NEEDS TO GET HOME AND WE'RE GOING TO GO TO THE STORE.



OKAY. I LOVE YOU, MOMMY DEBBIE.



AT THAT MOMENT--
DEEP IN SPACE.

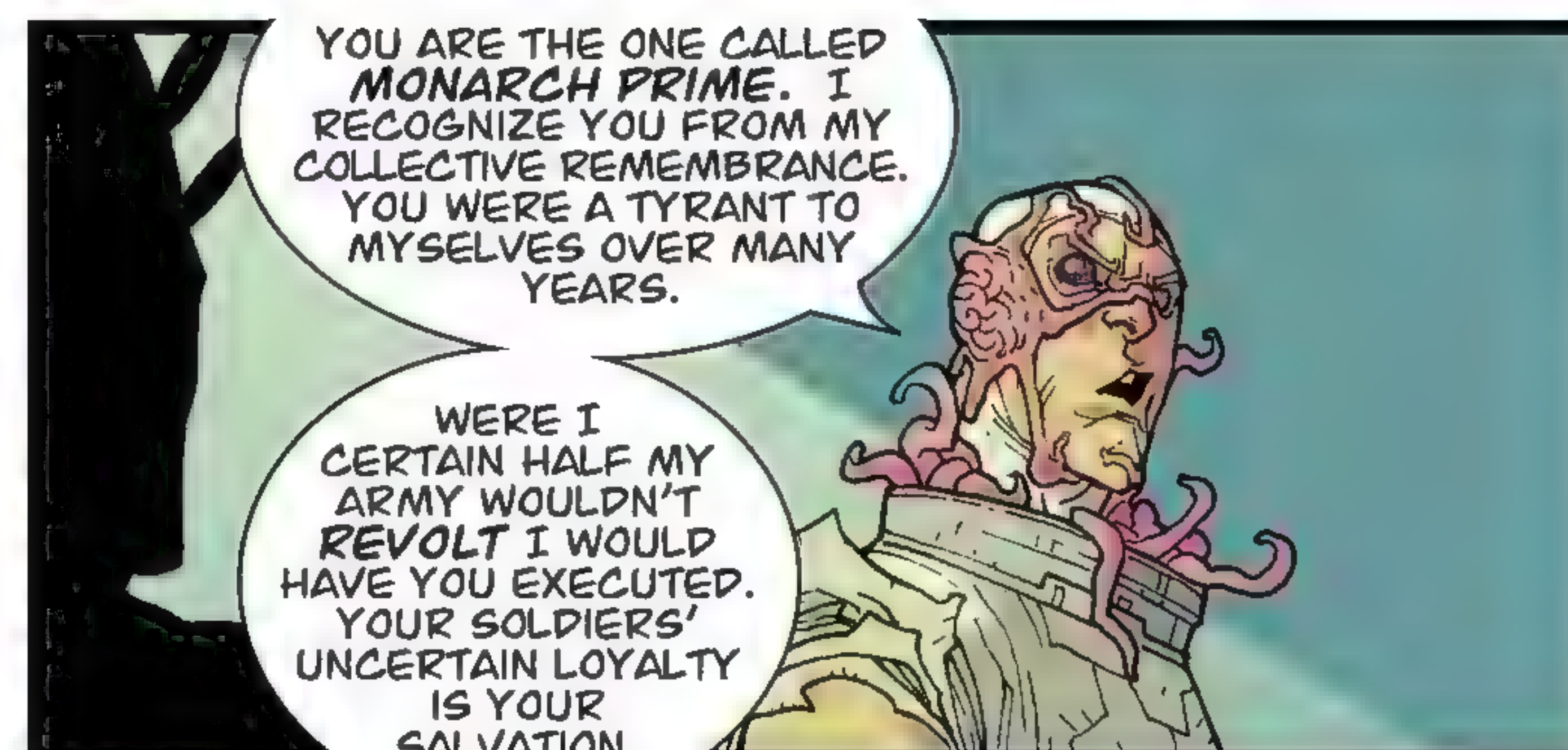


SIRE--
YOUR
ATTENTION IS
NEEDED.



WE CAUGHT HIM TRYING
TO CAUSE A PLASMA LEAK
IN THE ENGINES--THIS
ACTION WOULD HAVE
HALTED OUR TRAVELS
INDEFINITELY.

WHAT
WILL WE BE
REQUIRED
TO DO WITH
HIM?

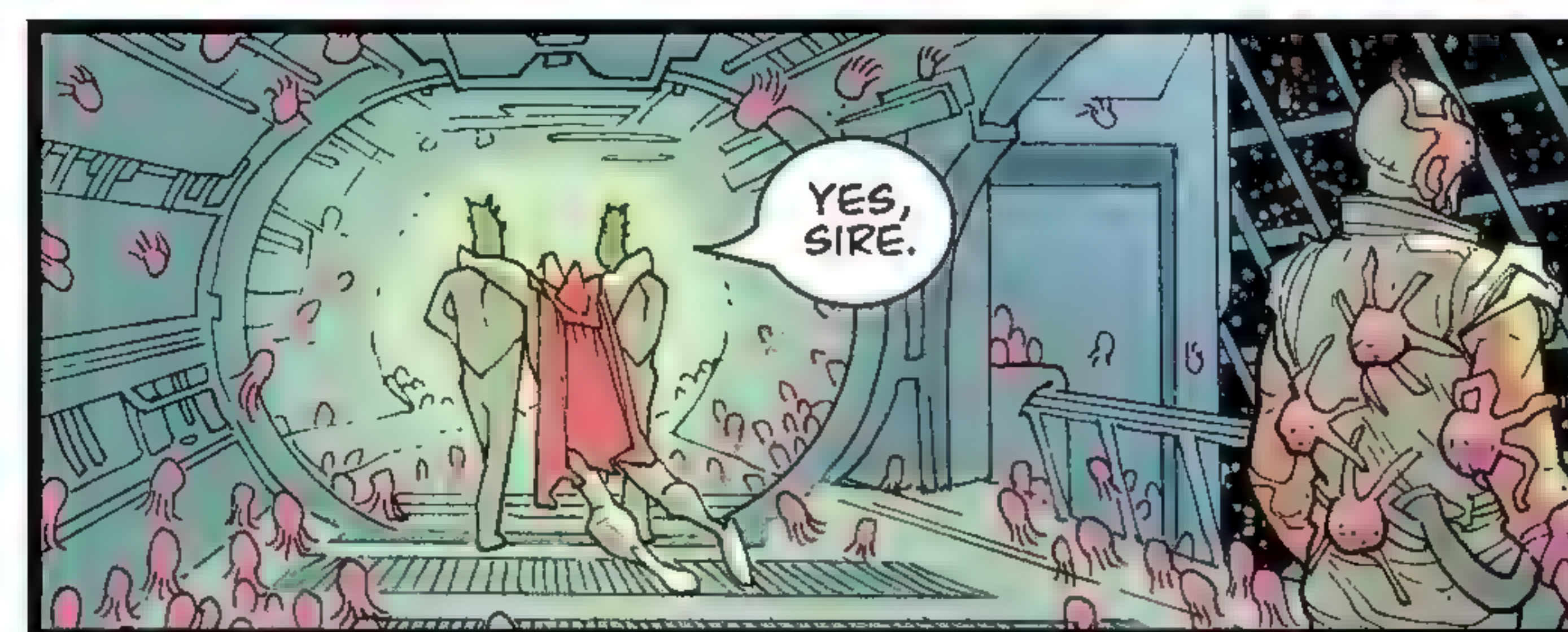


YOU ARE THE ONE CALLED
MONARCH PRIME. I
RECOGNIZE YOU FROM MY
COLLECTIVE REMEMBRANCE.
YOU WERE A TYRANT TO
MYSELVES OVER MANY
YEARS.

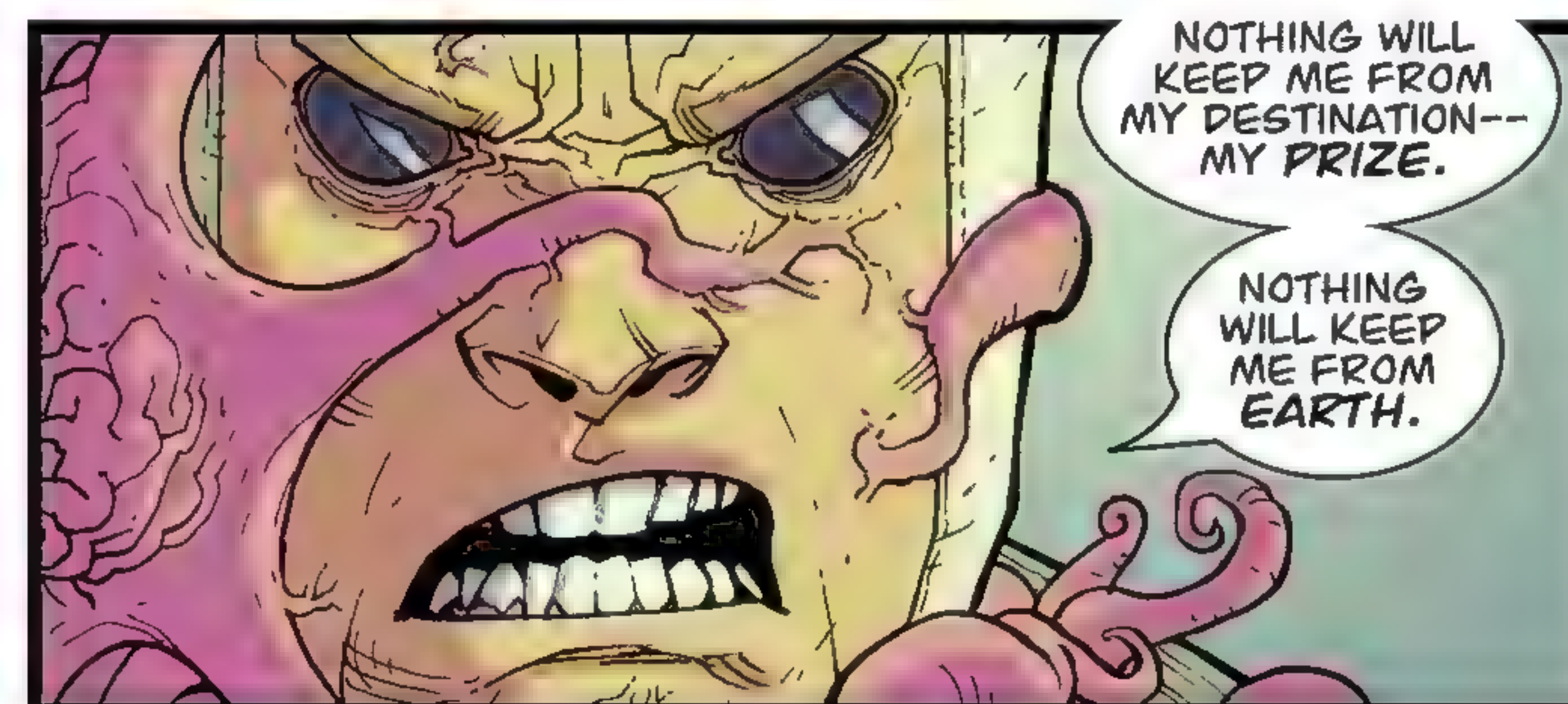
WERE I
CERTAIN HALF MY
ARMY WOULDN'T
REVOLT I WOULD
HAVE YOU EXECUTED.
YOUR SOLDIERS'
UNCERTAIN LOYALTY
IS YOUR
SALVATION.



IF THIS
ONE WILL NOT
REMAIN IN HIS CELL
PLACE HIM IN A STASIS
UNIT. I'LL NOT
SUFFER AN ATTACK
FROM HIM
AGAIN.

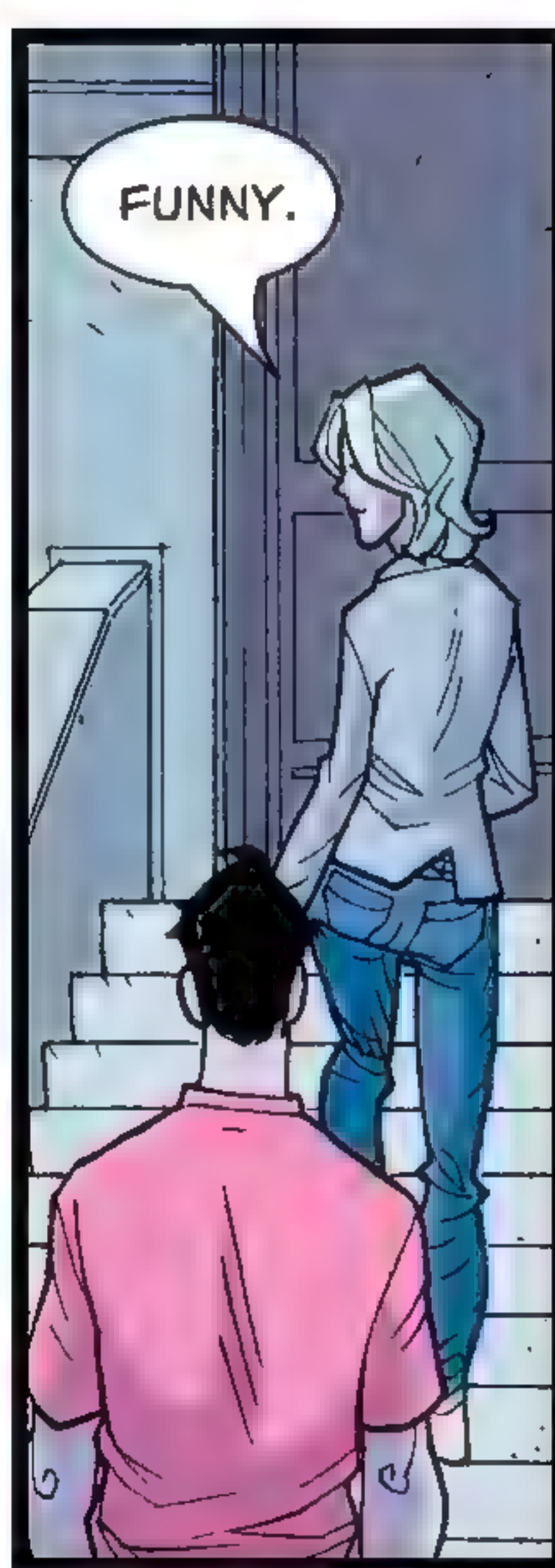
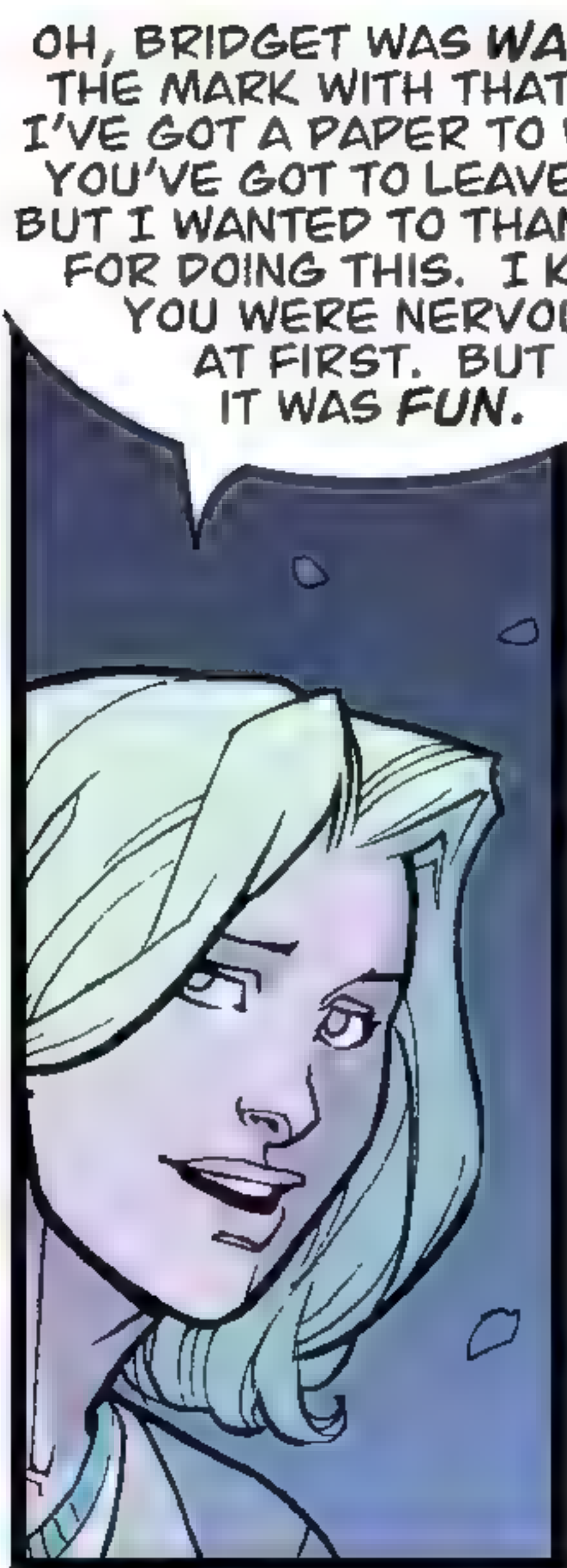


YES,
SIRE.



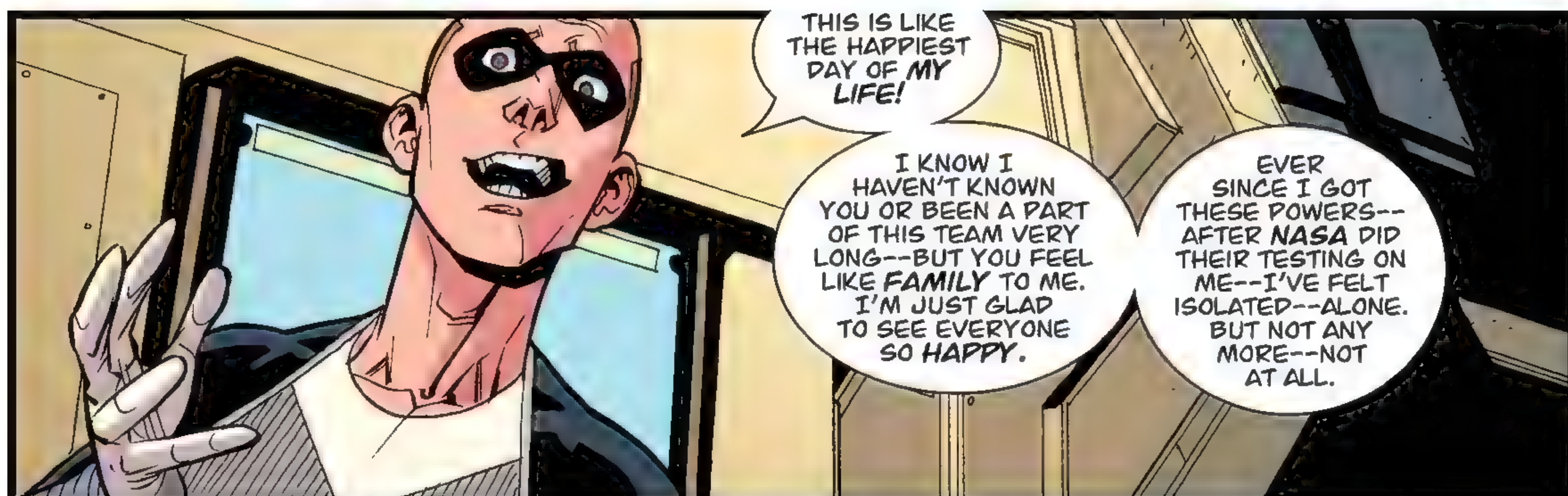
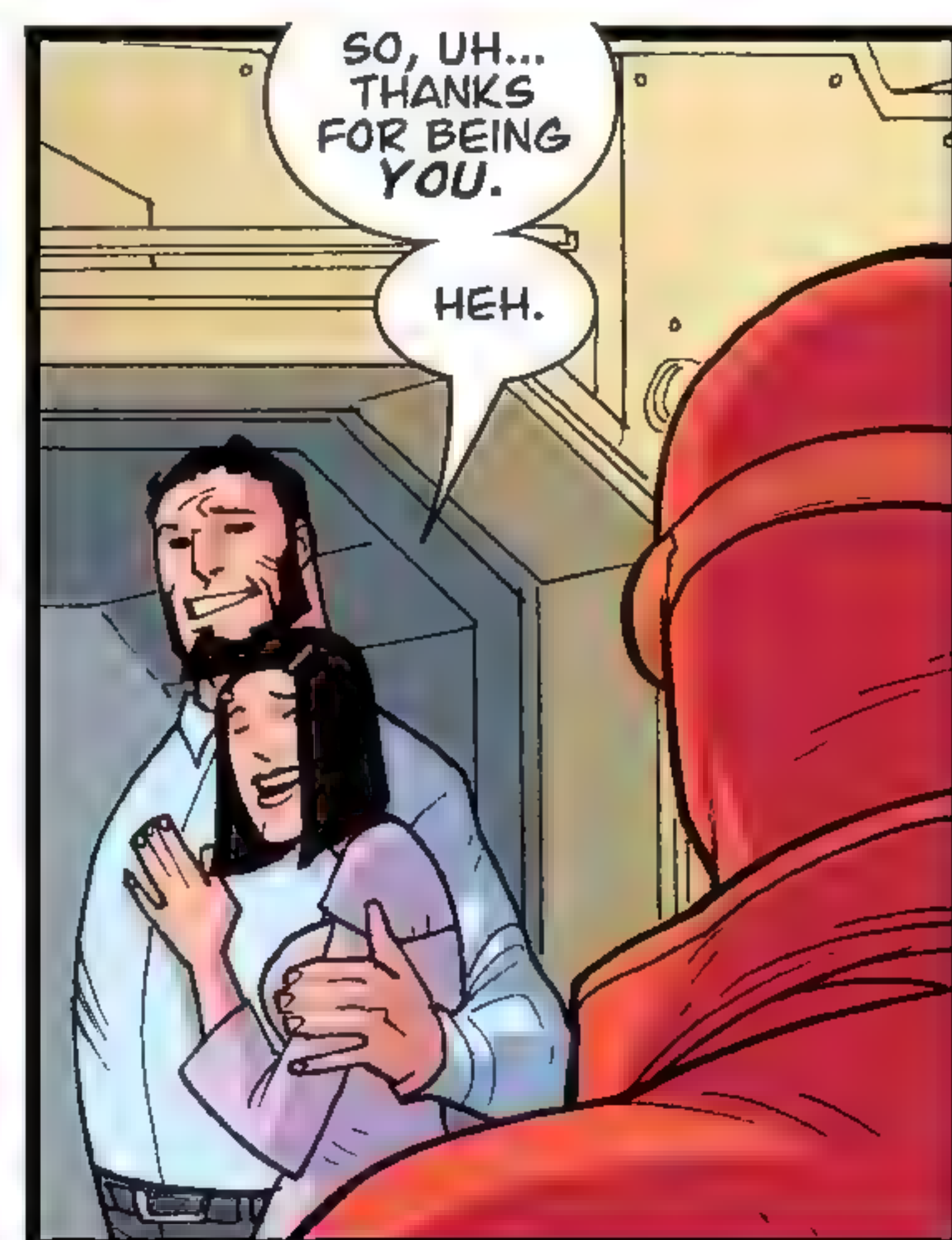
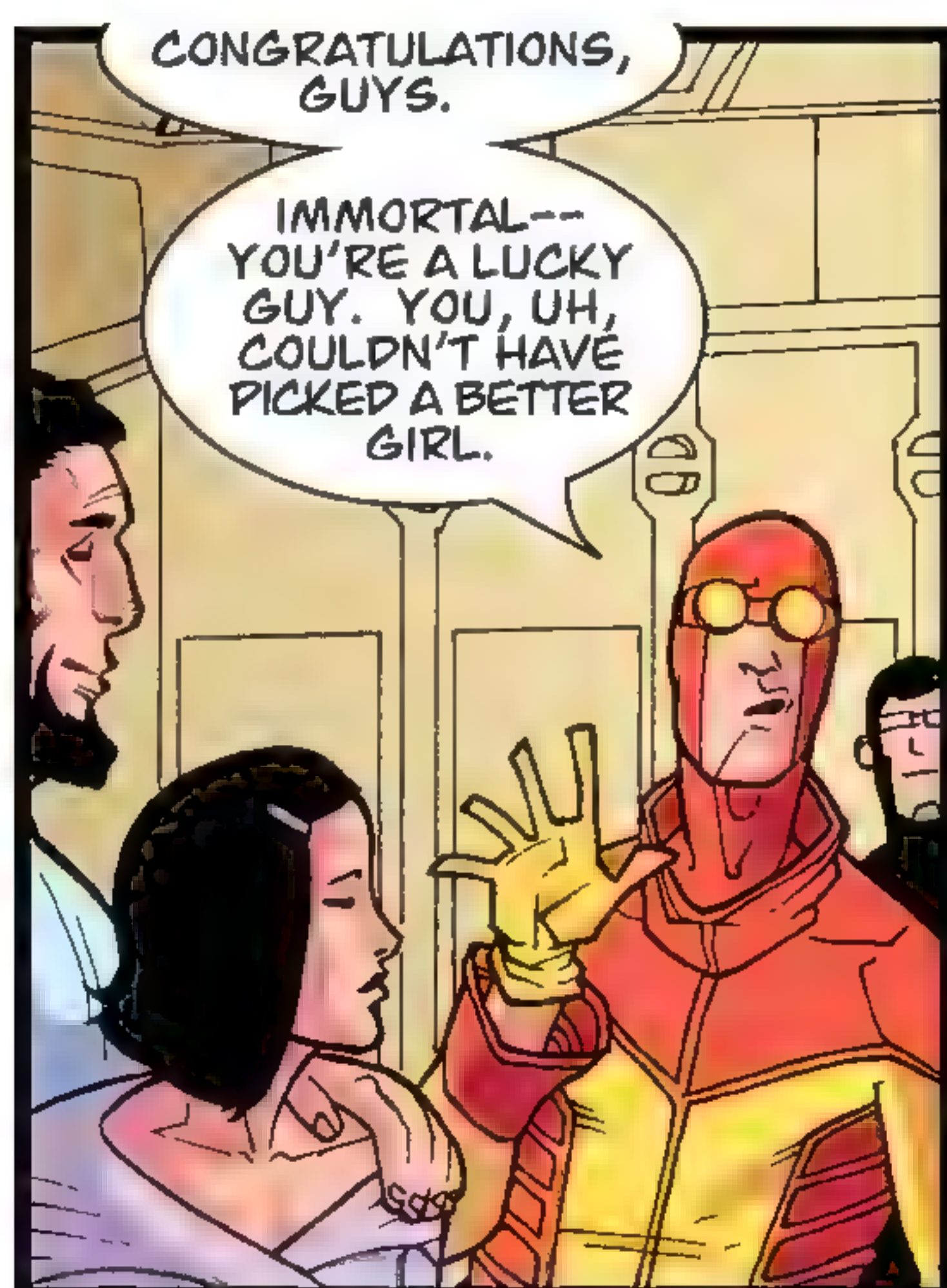
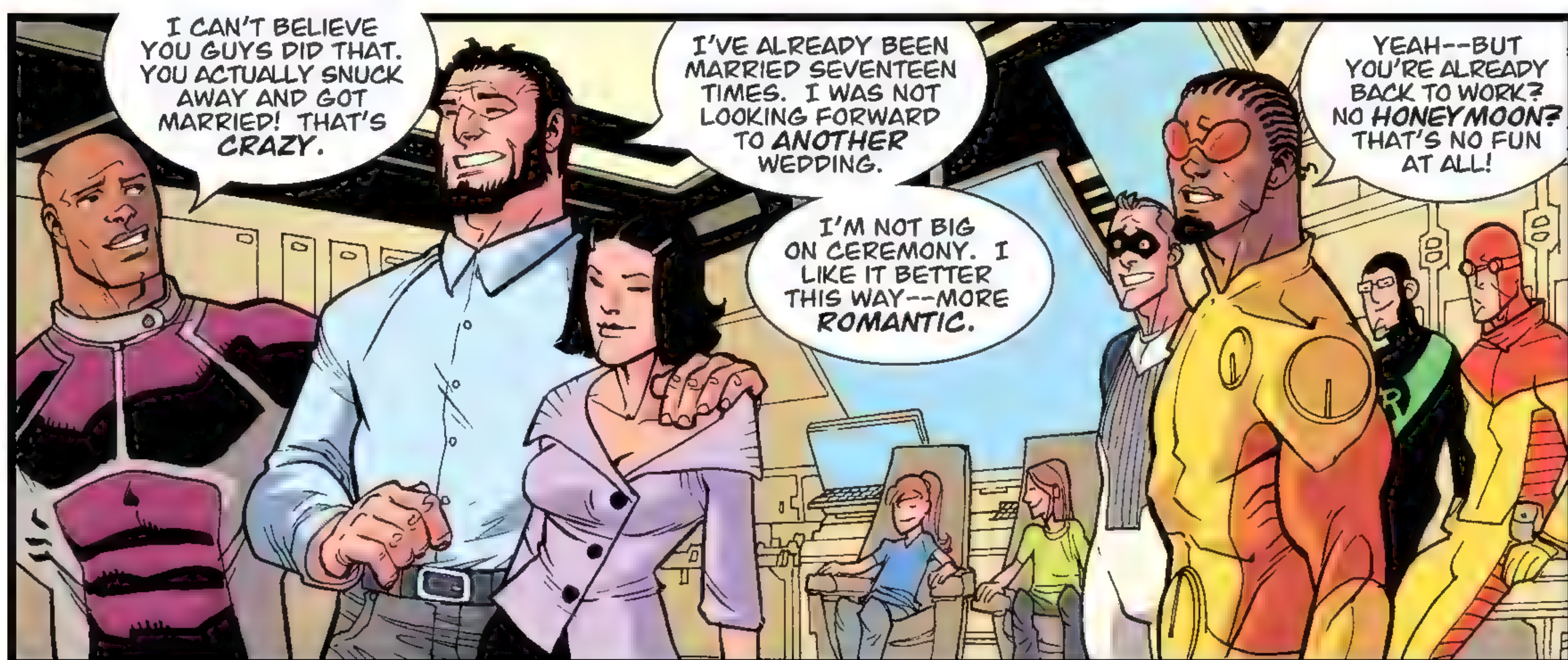
NOTHING WILL
KEEP ME FROM
MY DESTINATION--
MY PRIZE.

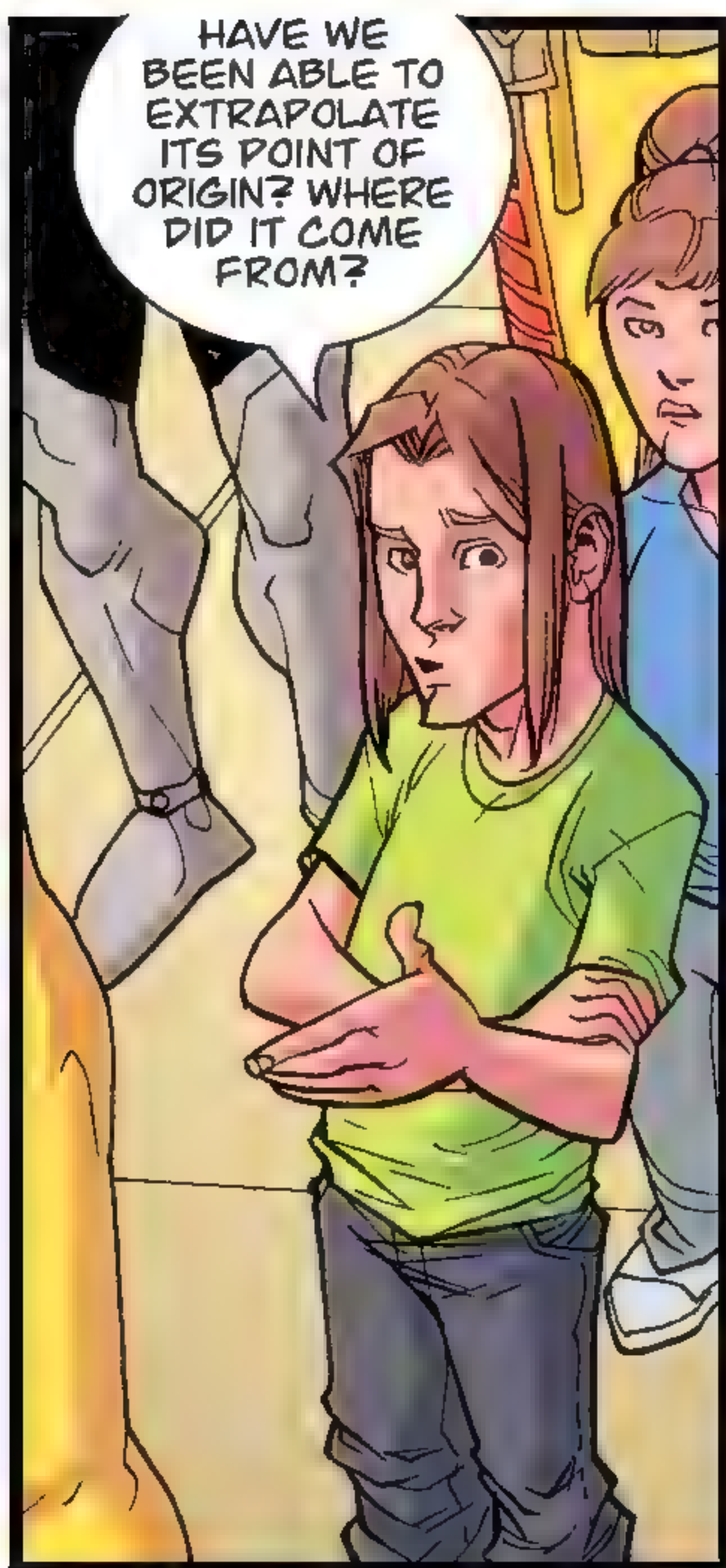
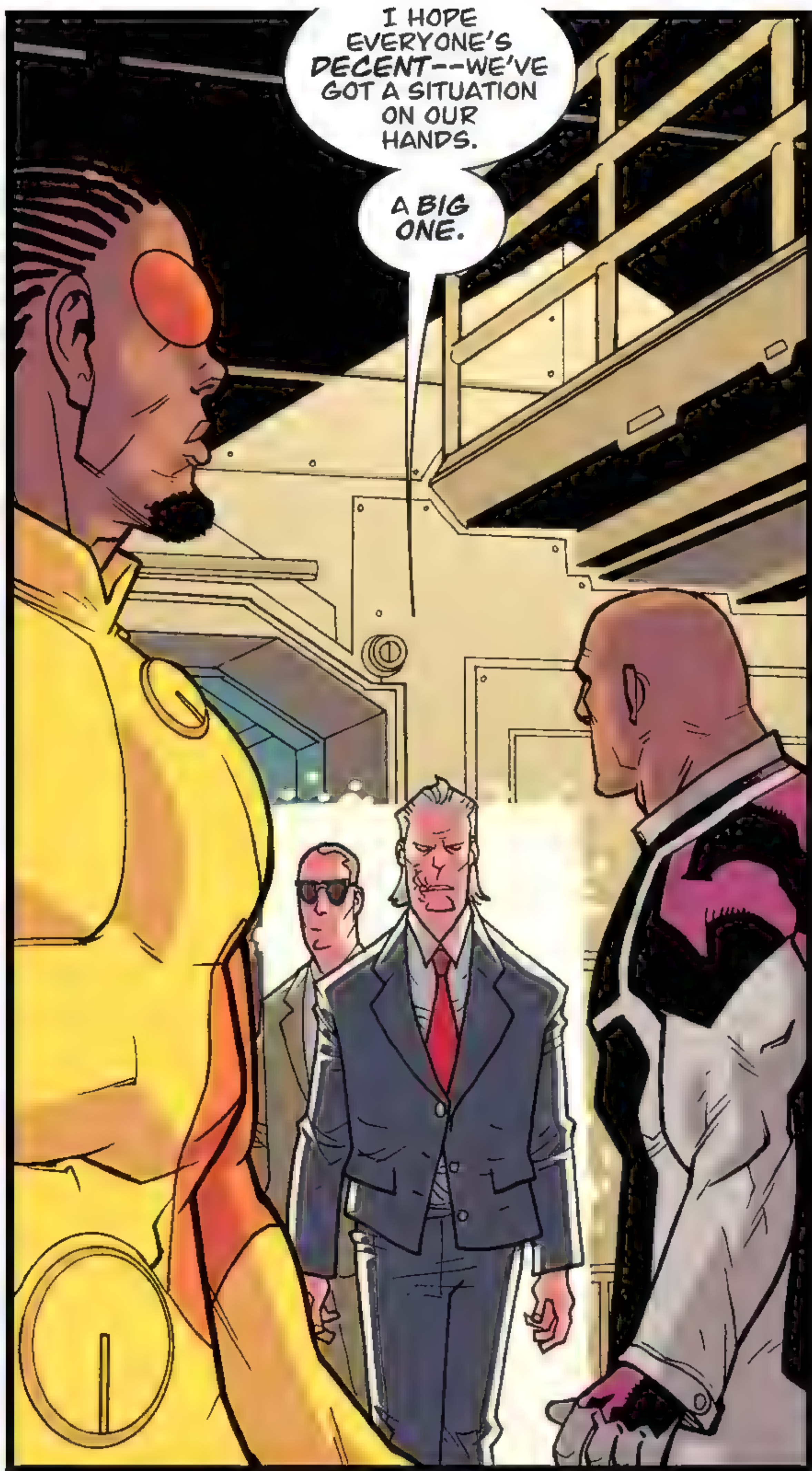
NOTHING
WILL KEEP
ME FROM
EARTH.

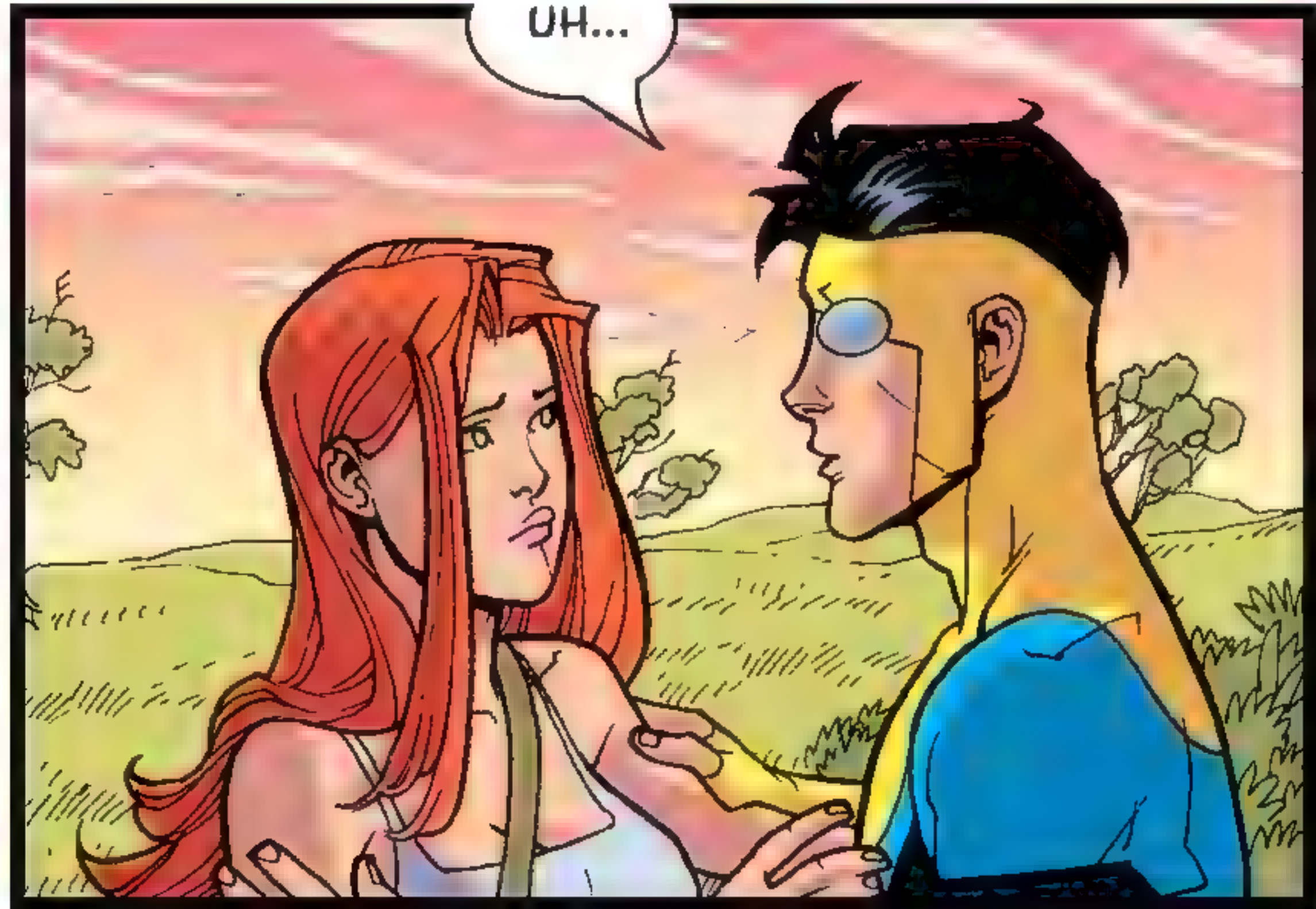
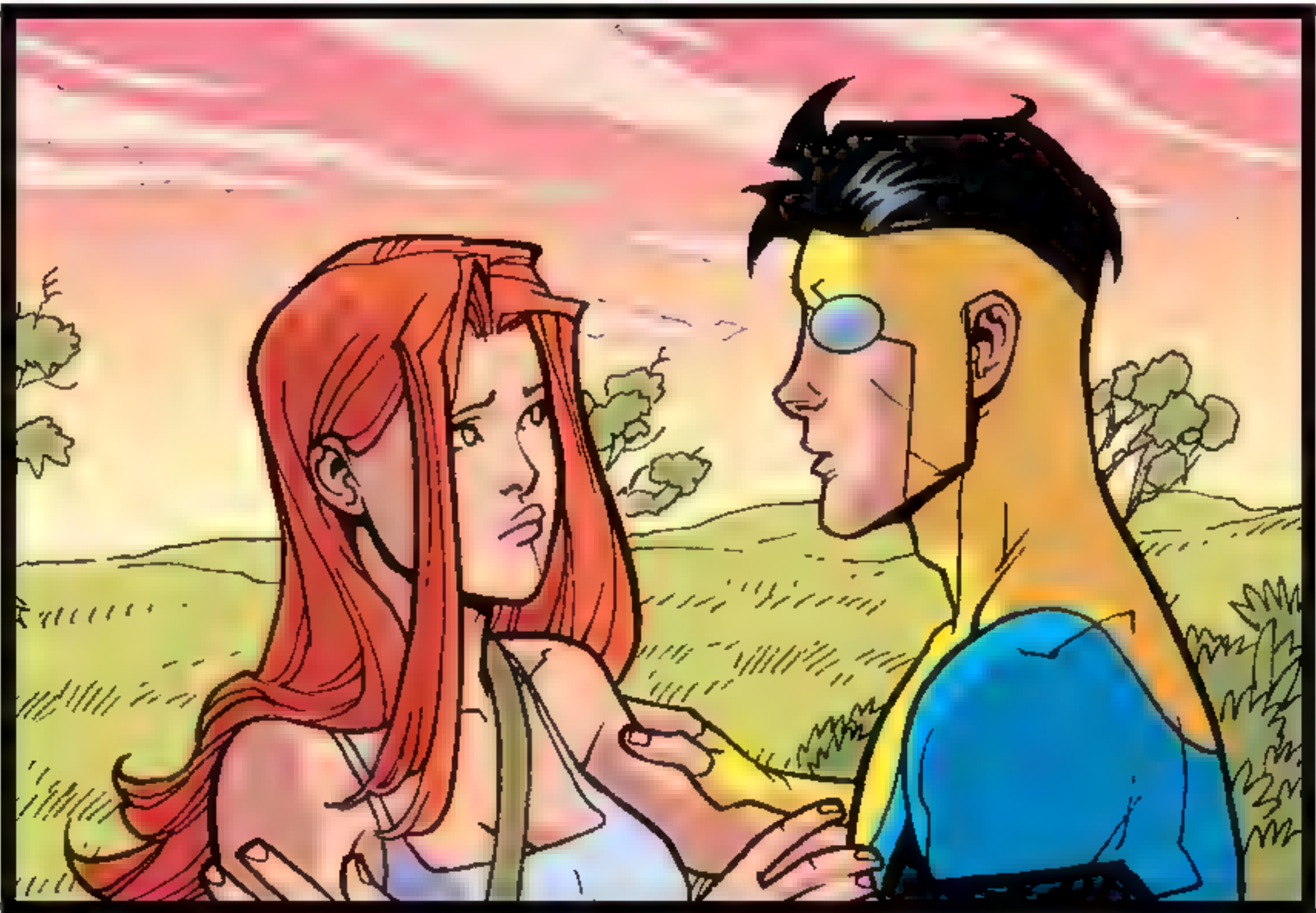
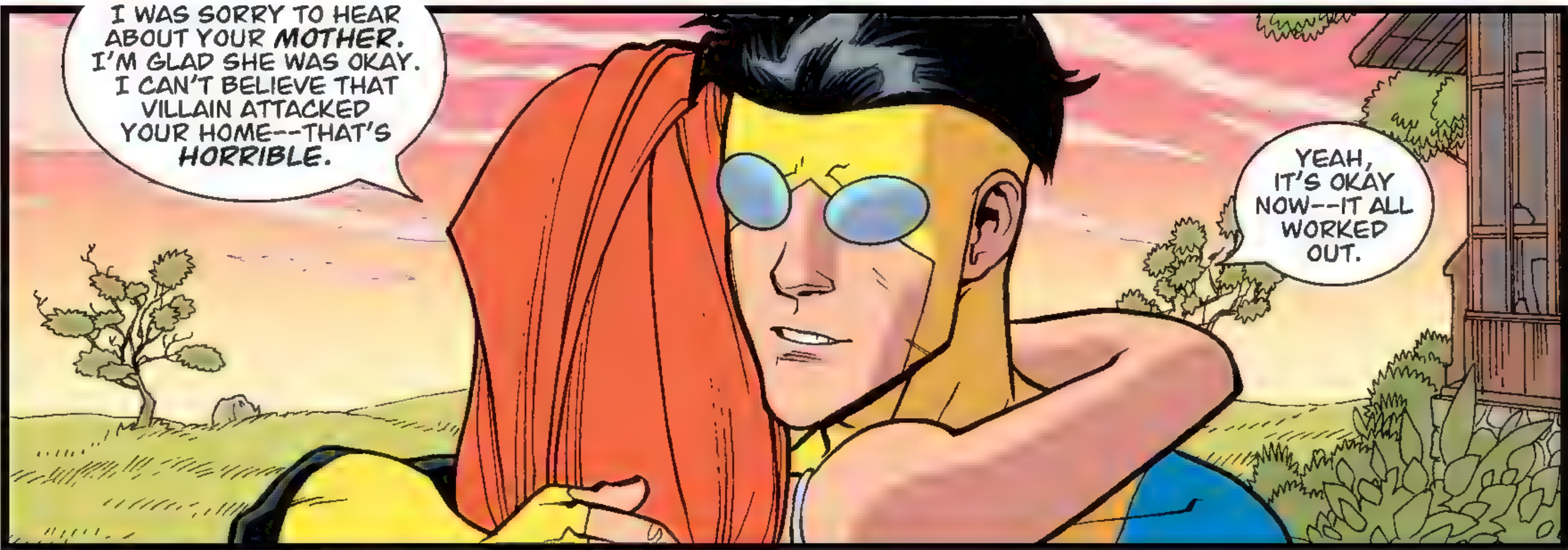
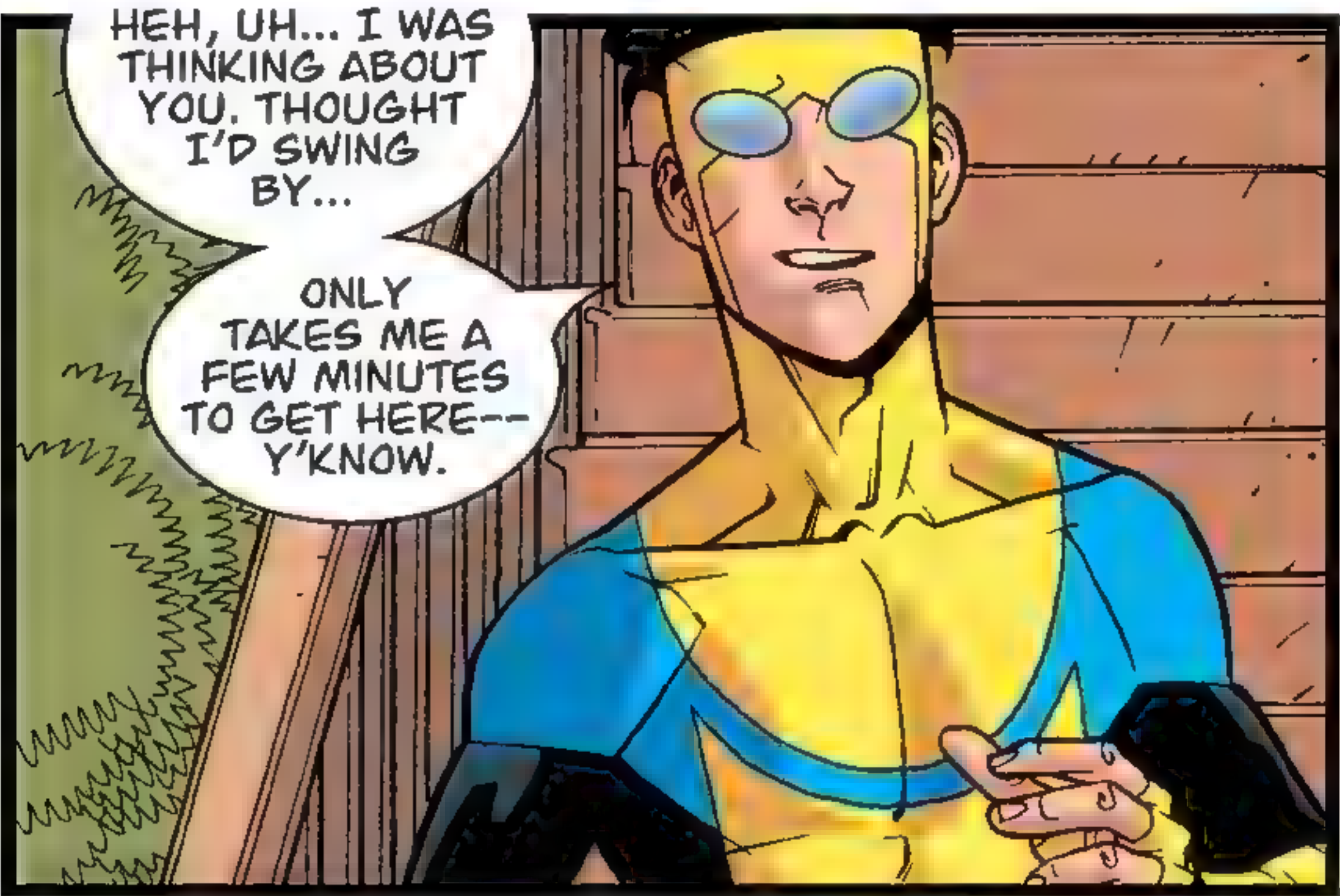
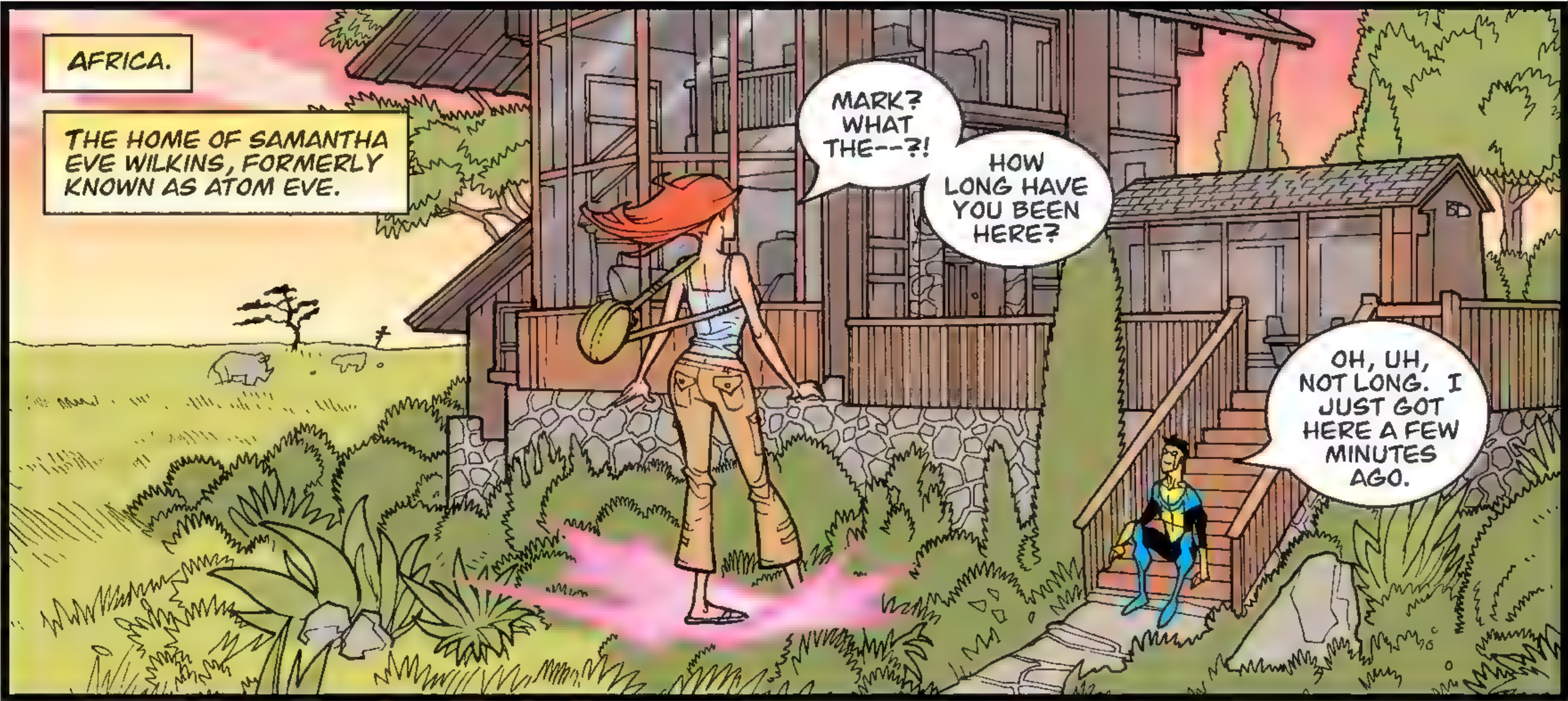


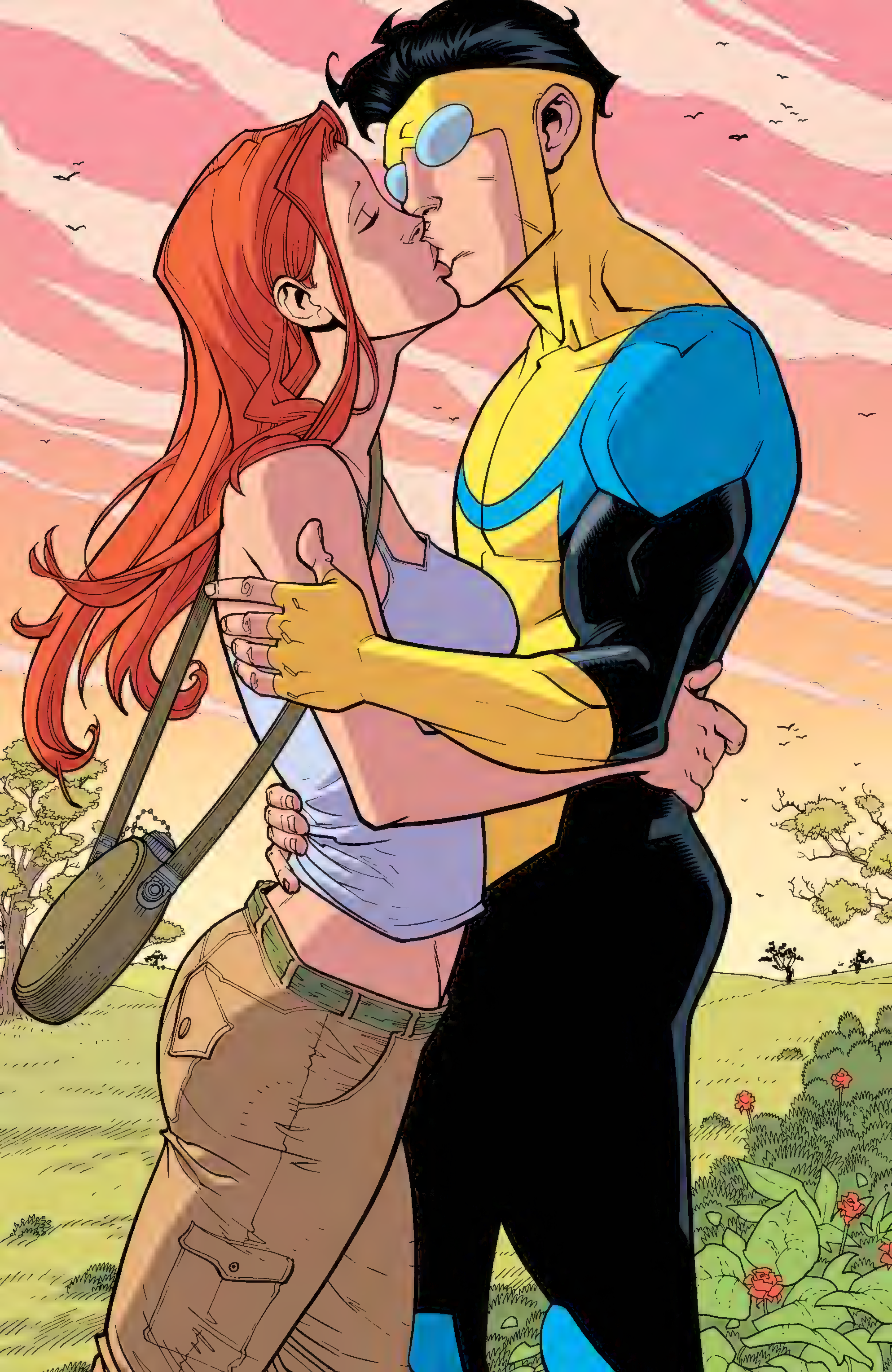
AN UNDISCLOSED
LOCATION IN UTAH.

THE SECRET MOUNTAIN
BASE OF THE GUARDIANS
OF THE GLOBE.



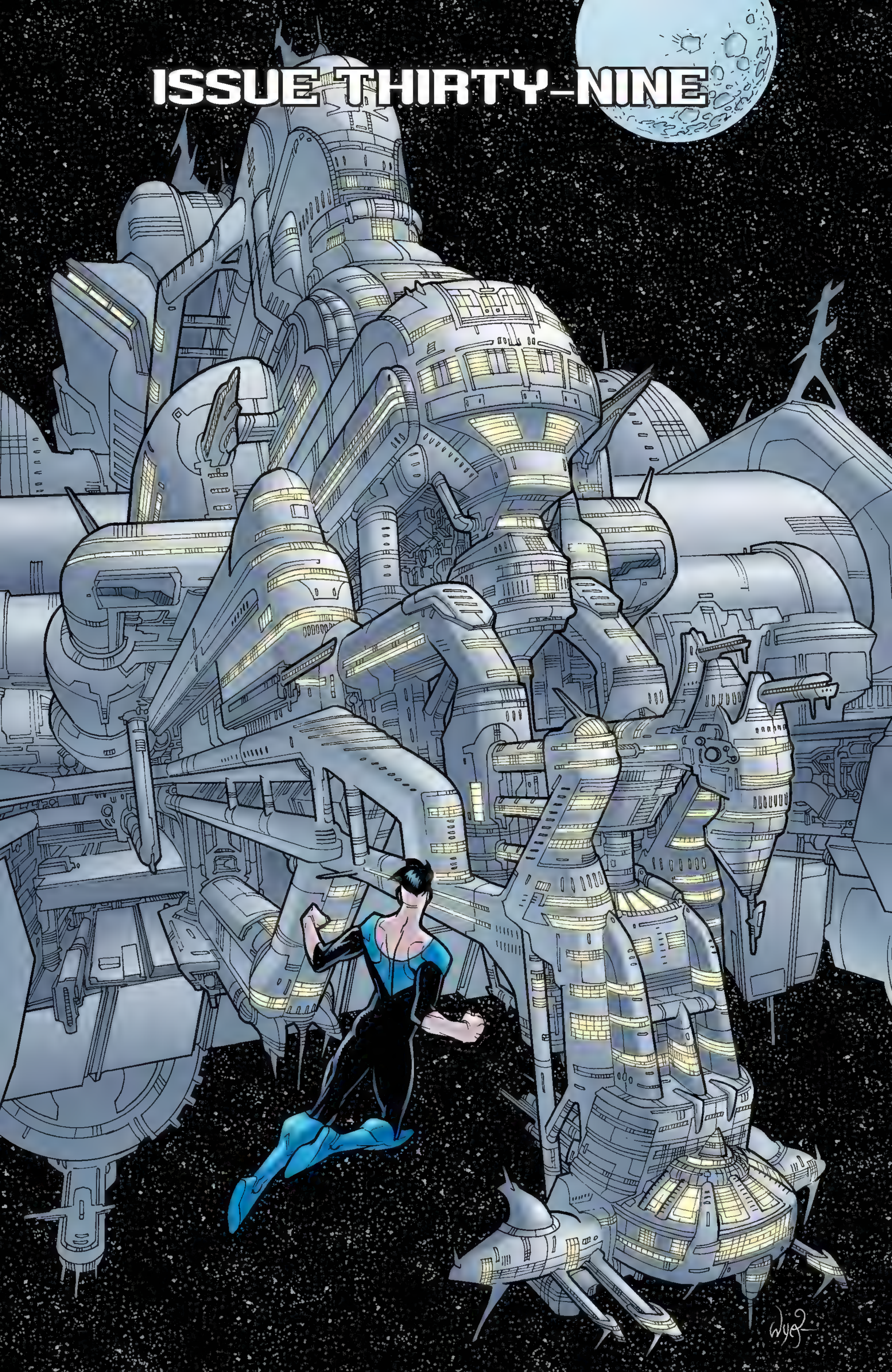








ISSUE THIRTY-NINE



I'M SORRY, GUYS...
I REALLY AM. I
HAVEN'T EXACTLY
BEEN HONEST
WITH YOU.

I DIDN'T GET
THESE POWERS
FROM UNAUTHORIZED
TESTING NASA
SUBJECTED ME TO.
I'VE ALWAYS HAD
THESE POWERS--
BECAUSE EVERYONE
ON MY PLANET
HAS THESE
POWERS.

I'M
FROM
MARS.

WHAT?!

I KNOW, I DID SOMETHING
TERRIBLE BY LYING TO YOU.
IF YOU WANT TO KICK ME
OFF THE TEAM--I'LL
UNDERSTAND.

THAT COMES LATER.
FOR NOW--WHAT DO YOU
KNOW ABOUT THIS SHIP
HEADED FOR EARTH?
ANYTHING?

ACTUALLY,
SIR... I THINK
I KNOW
EVERYTHING.



EVERY BOY ON MARS IS TOLD THIS STORY COUNTLESS TIMES SINCE BIRTH.

THEY WERE CALLED THE SEQUIDS. THEY CAME TO MARS ON A DAMAGED VESSEL WHICH CRASH LANDED ON THE PLANET. THEY WERE HOSTILE.

THEY WAGED WAR WITH THE MARTIANS-- A BATTLE THAT RAGED FOR NEARLY A CENTURY. IT ENDED ONLY WHEN THE SEQUIDS' HOSTS DIED OF OLD AGE.

YOU SEE-- WE DIDN'T KNOW THIS BUT THE WARRIORS WHO FELL TO OUR PLANET WERE THE PARASITIC CREATURES ATTACHED TO THE HUMANOIDS-- NOT THE HUMANOIDS THEMSELVES.

THE SEQUIDS WERE A PARASITIC RACE--DEPENDENT ON A HOST OR HOSTS TO LINK THEIR ONE-MIND. WITHOUT A HOST THEY ARE NEARLY MINDLESS DRONES, ABLE TO PERFORM SIMPLE TASKS, BUT NOT CAPABLE OF INDEPENDENT THOUGHT.

THEY TRIED TO BOND WITH MARTIANS, BUT DUE TO OUR NATURAL SHAPE-SHIFTING CAPABILITIES--BONDING WITH US WAS IMPOSSIBLE.

WITH THEIR HOSTS DEAD--THE SEQUIDS WERE NOW MINDLESS, AND THE MARTIANS UTILIZED THEIR ENEMY--EVENTUALLY ESTABLISHING THEM AS A SLAVE RACE THAT ASSISTED MARTIANS IN DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES.




THAT IS THE STORY
WE WERE TOLD.

NOT ALL OF US BELIEVED
IT. THERE WERE SOME AMONG
US WHO BELIEVED A DIFFERENT
STORY ENTIRELY. THERE WAS
AN UNDERGROUND MOVEMENT
THAT WANTED TO FREE THE
SEQUIDS. I WAS PART OF
THAT MOVEMENT.

OVER THE YEARS THE
SEQUIDS HAD BEEN
BRED TO BE STRONGER,
ABLE TO DO MORE
WORK--AND TO WORK
MORE EFFICIENTLY.

THE SEQUIDS WERE
TESTED--EXPERIMENTED
ON--ALL IN AN EFFORT TO
MAKE BETTER SLAVES.


THE REBEL MOVEMENT
BELIEVED THAT THE STORY
OF OUR TRIUMPH OVER THE
VIOLENT SEQUID RACE WAS
A STORY TOLD TO JUSTIFY
OUR GOVERNMENT'S
HORRIBLE ACTIONS
AGAINST THE SEQUIDS.



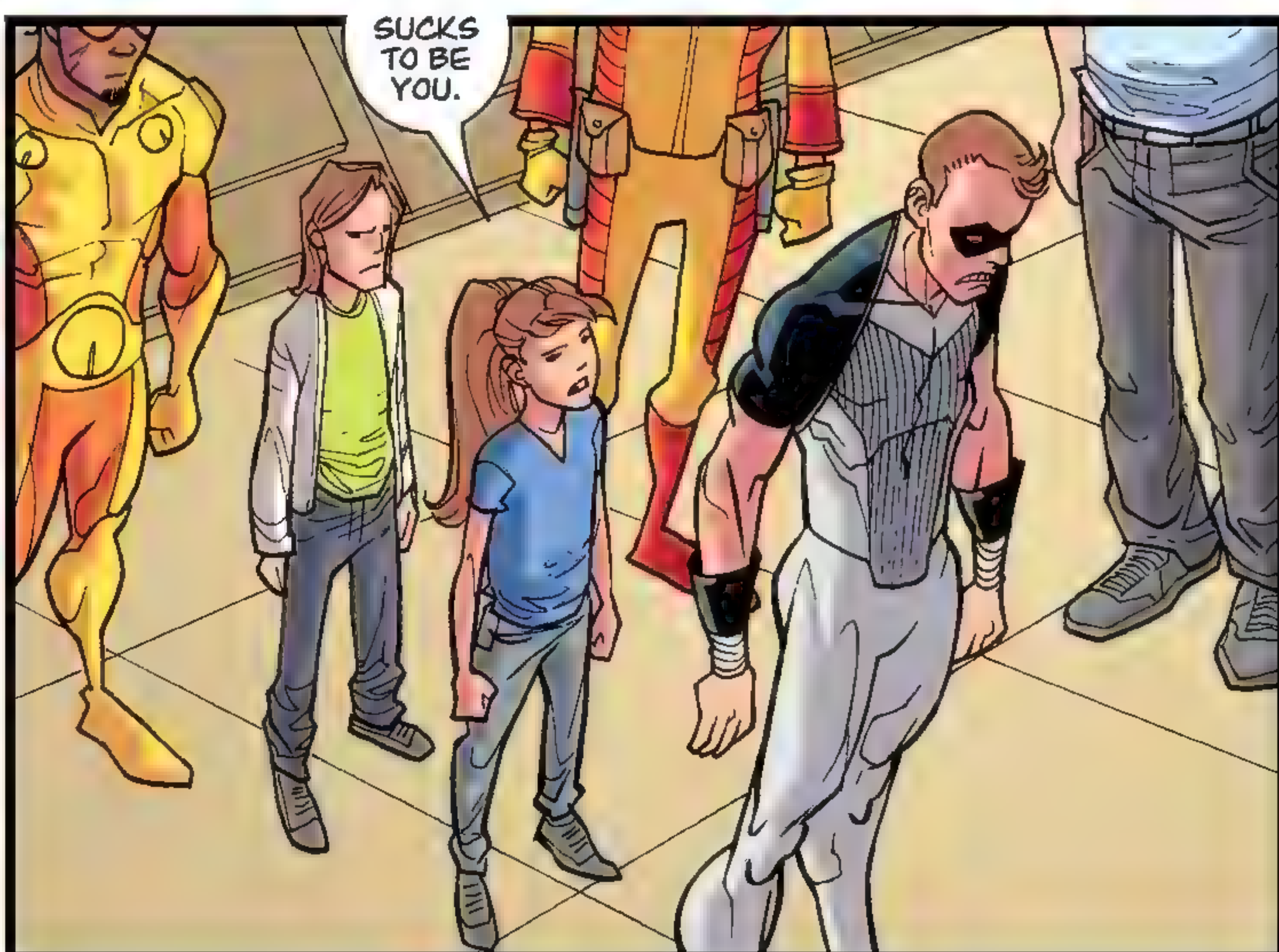
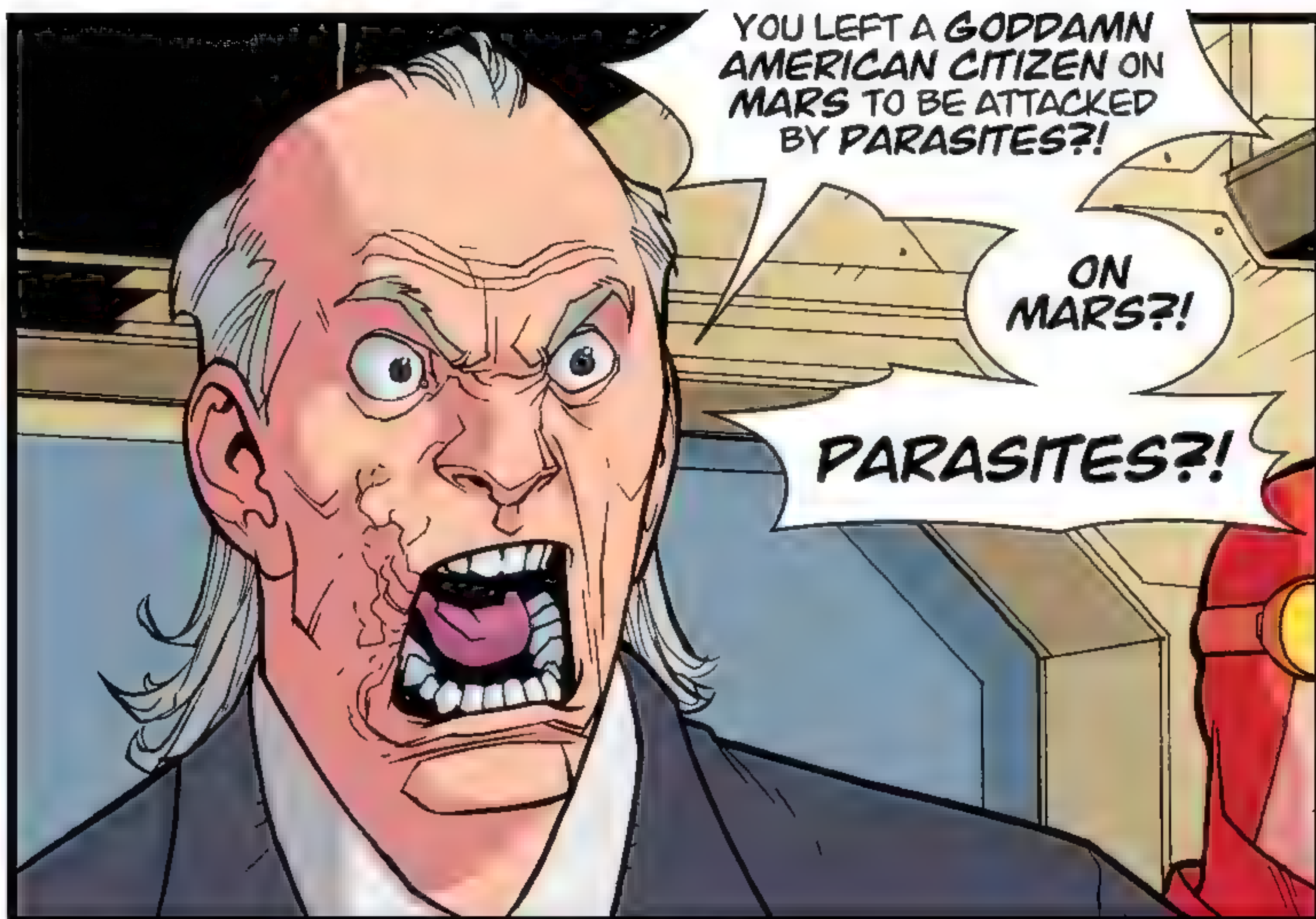
ALL WE NEEDED WAS A SOLID--
ONE ALIEN LIFE FORM A SEQUID
COULD BOND WITH--BUT THEY
WERE OUTLAWED, EXECUTED AS
SOON AS THEY WERE DETECTED
ON THE PLANET.

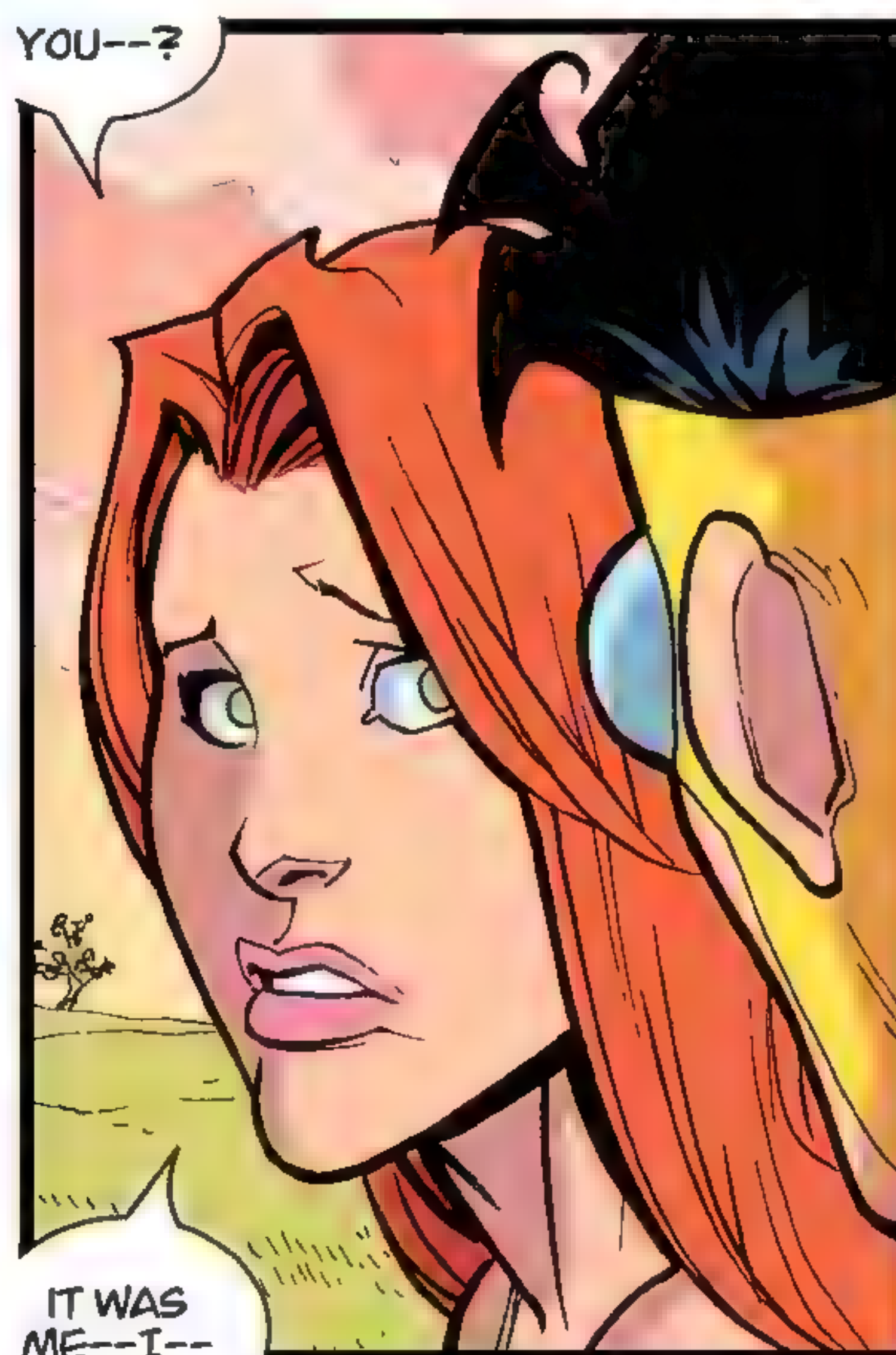
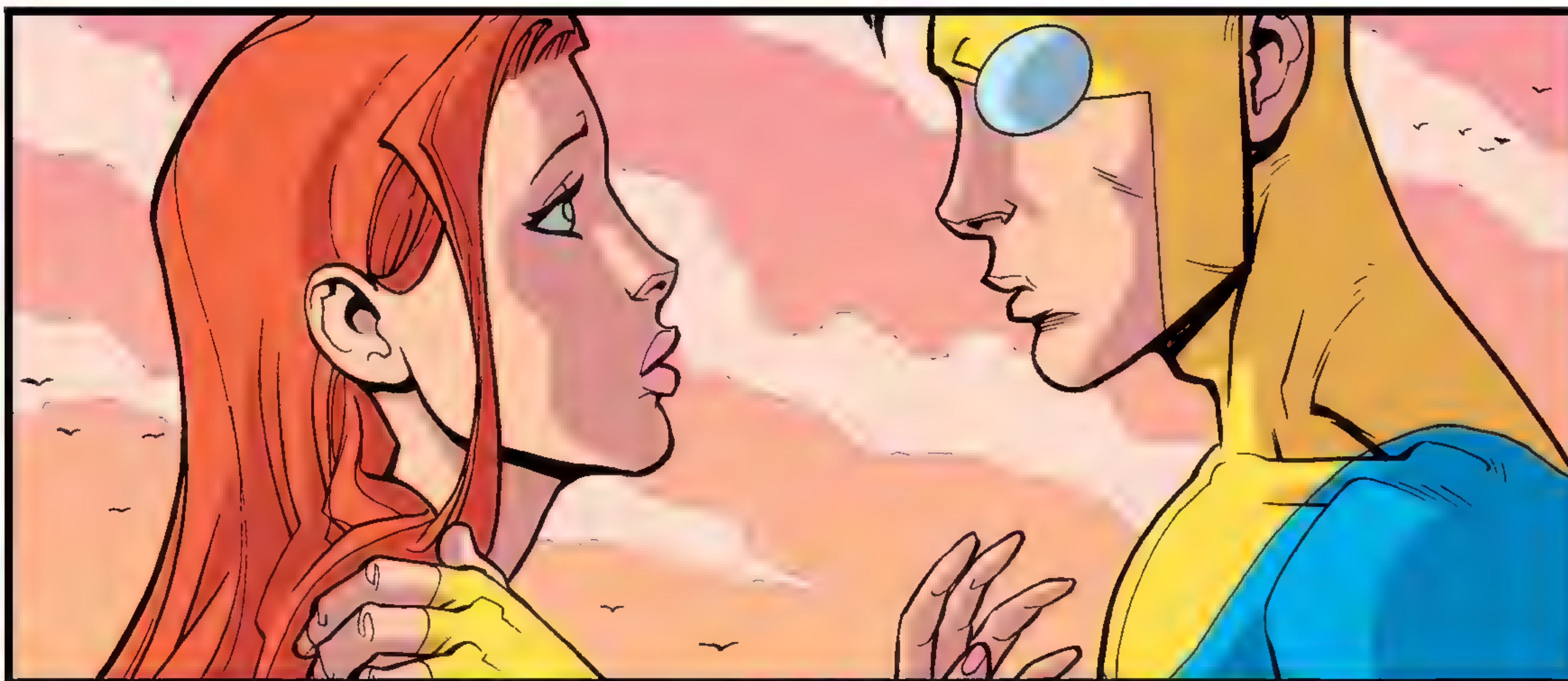
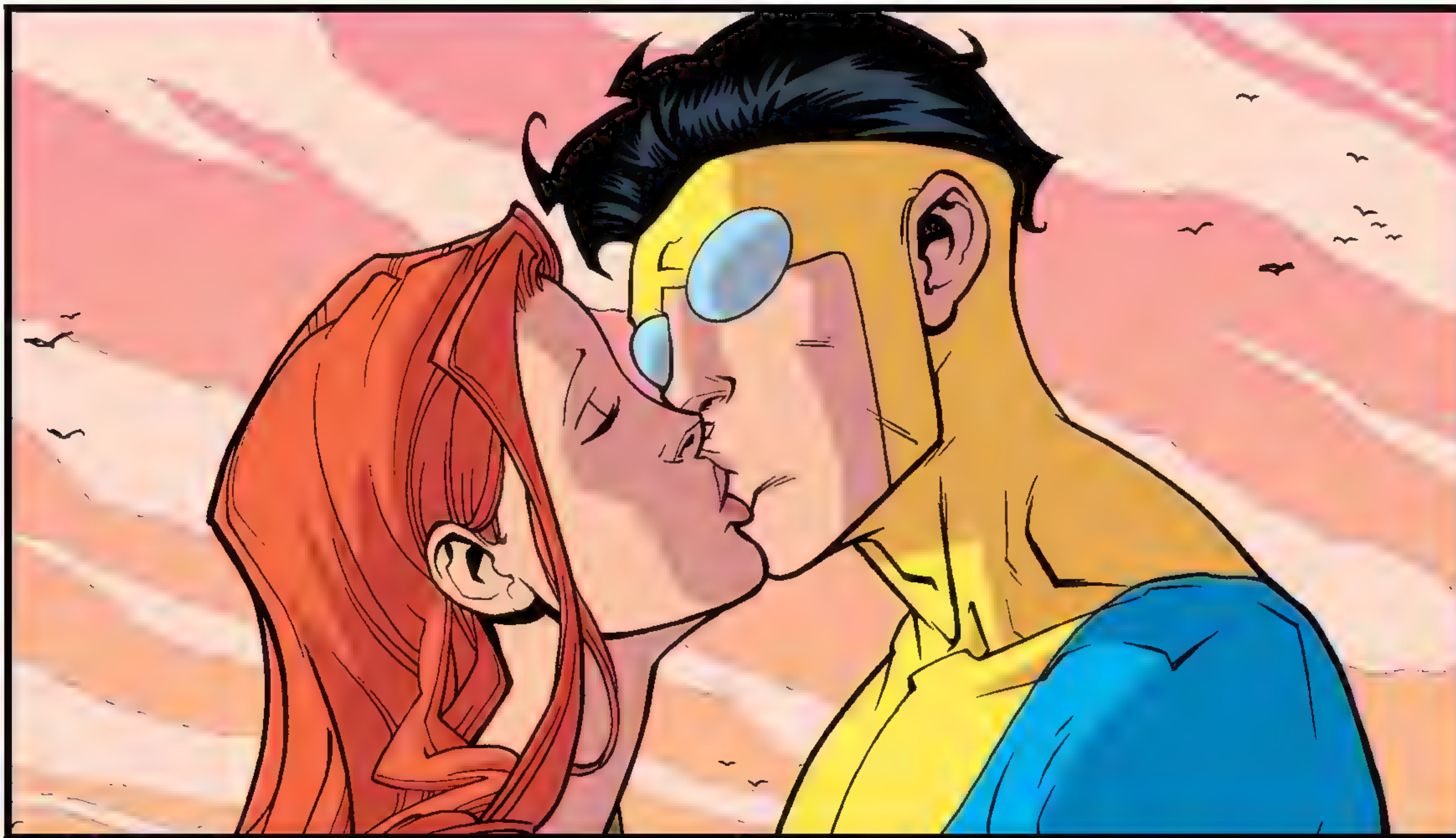
BUT WHEN THE NASA
EXPEDITION FROM EARTH
CAME--WE KNEW WE
HAD OUR CHANCE--AND
WE TOOK IT.

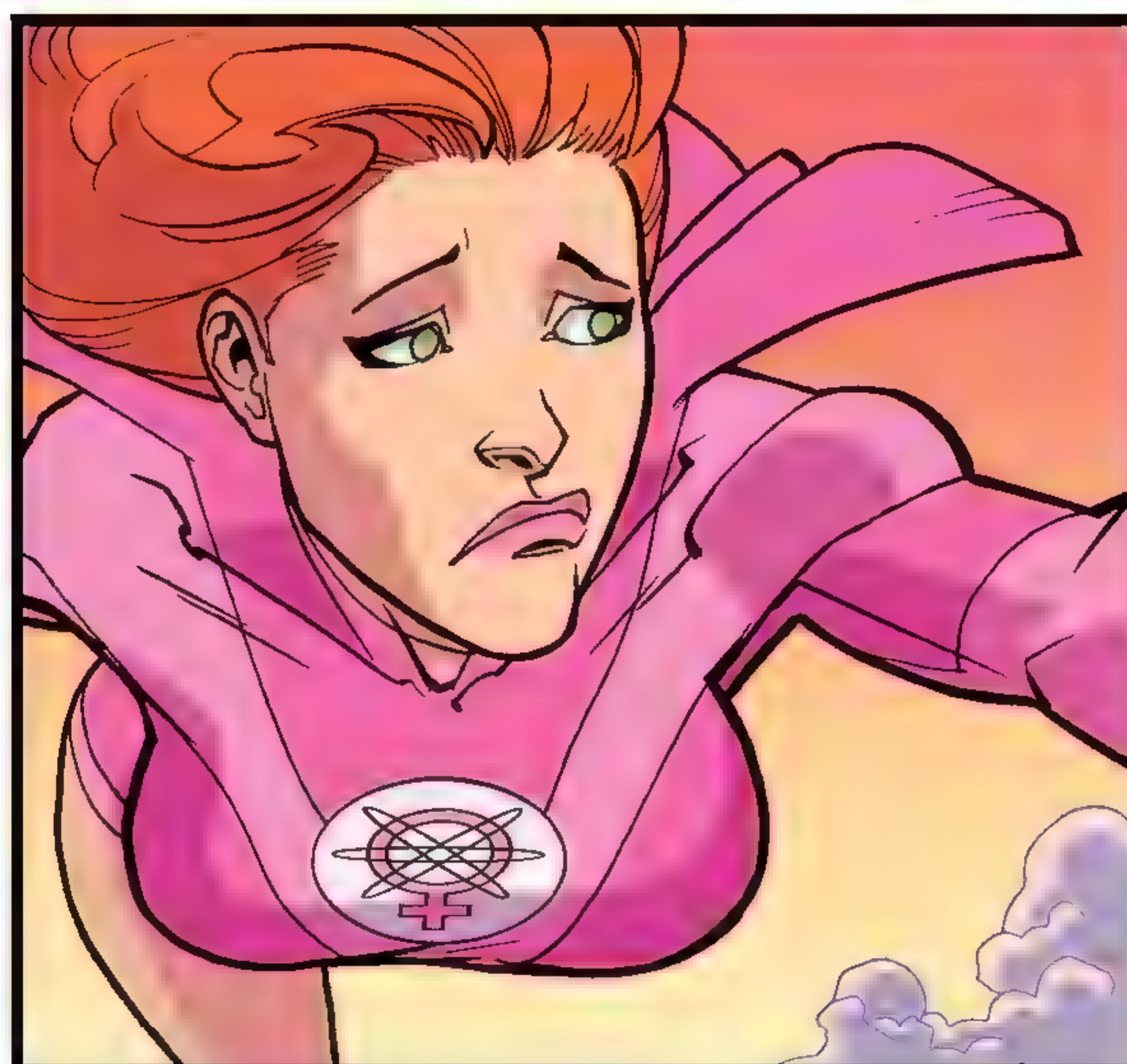
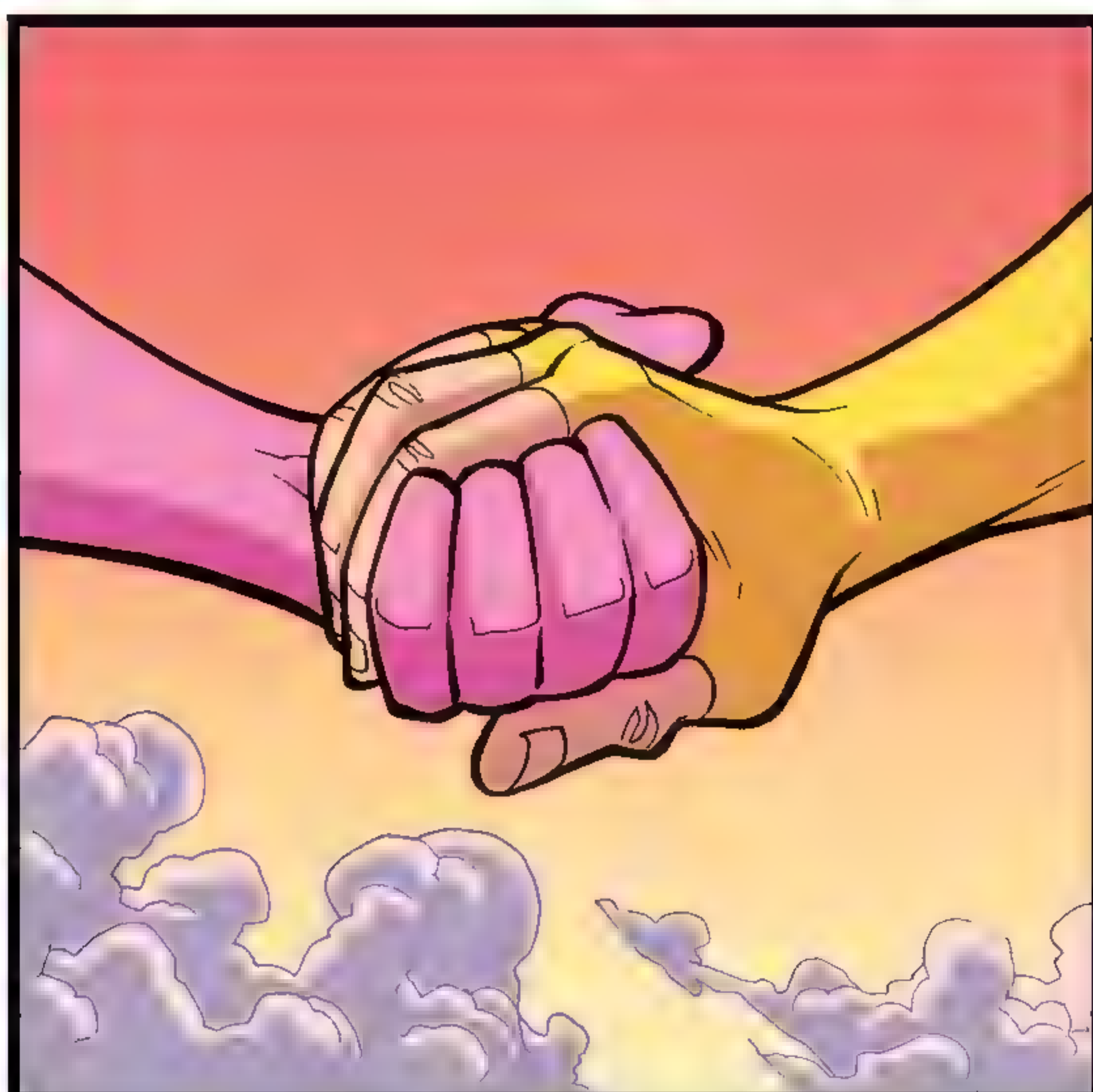
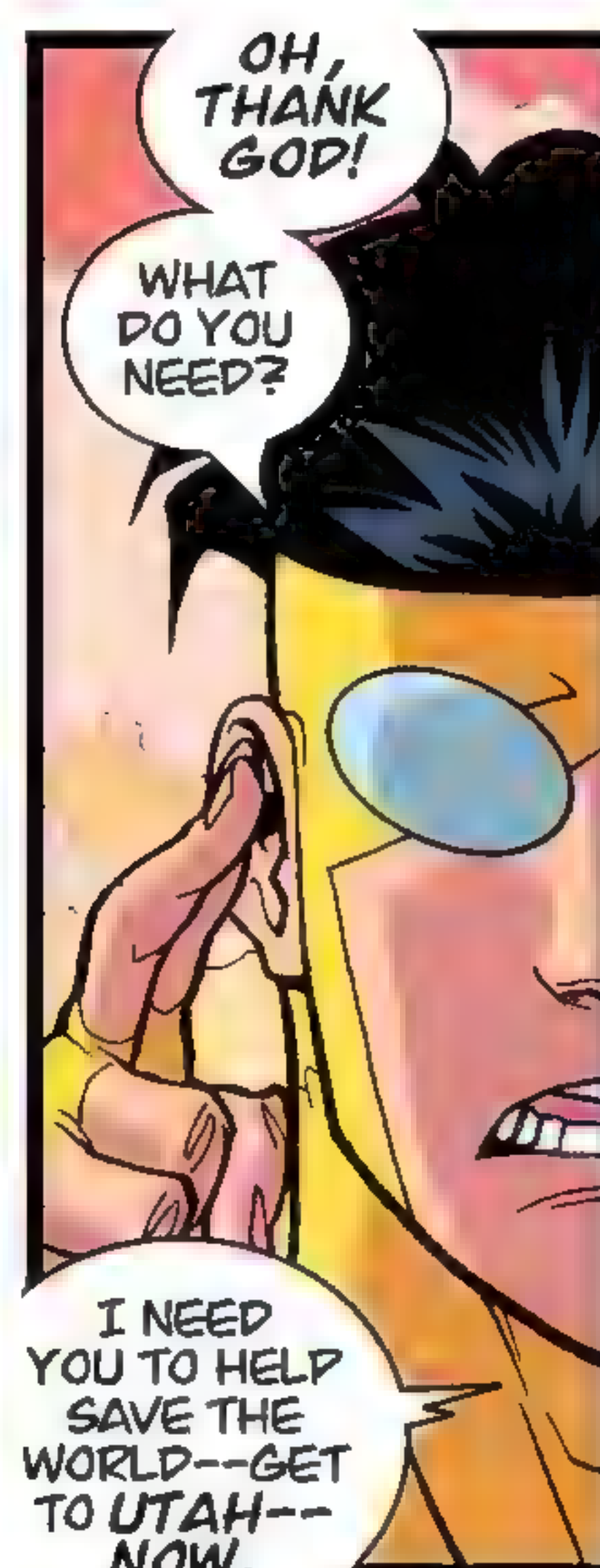
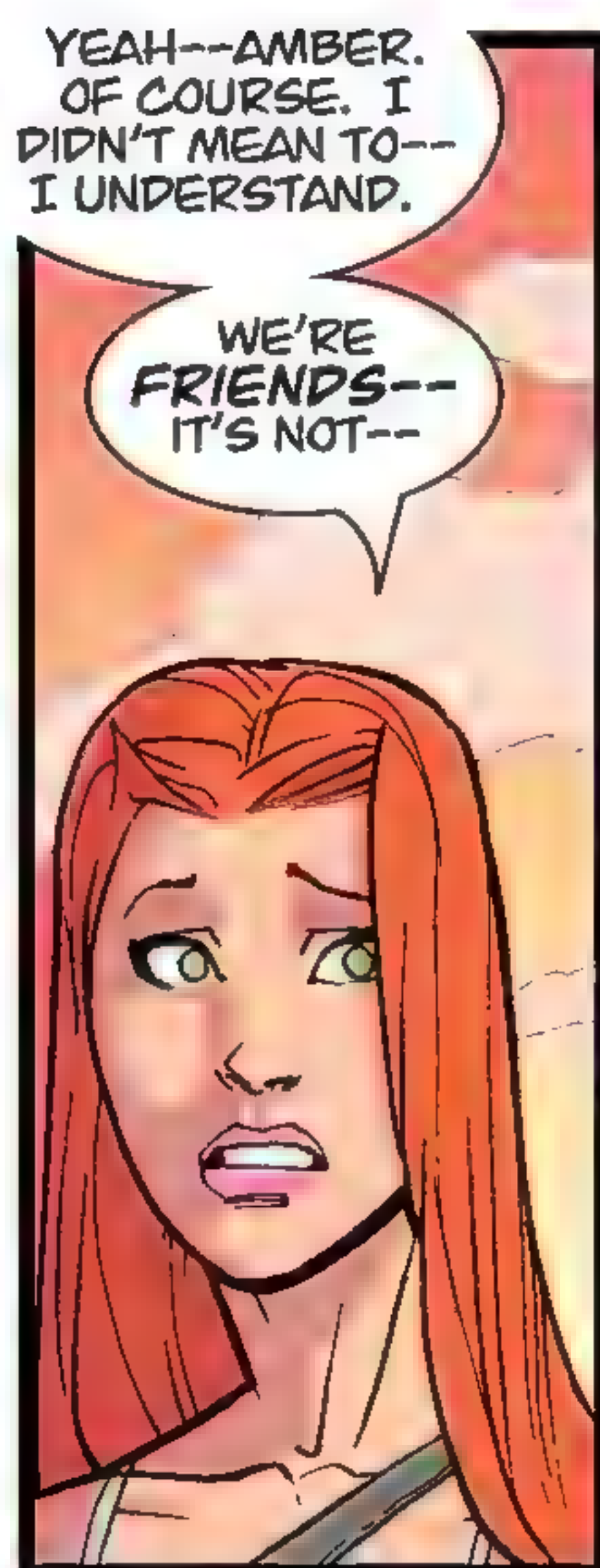
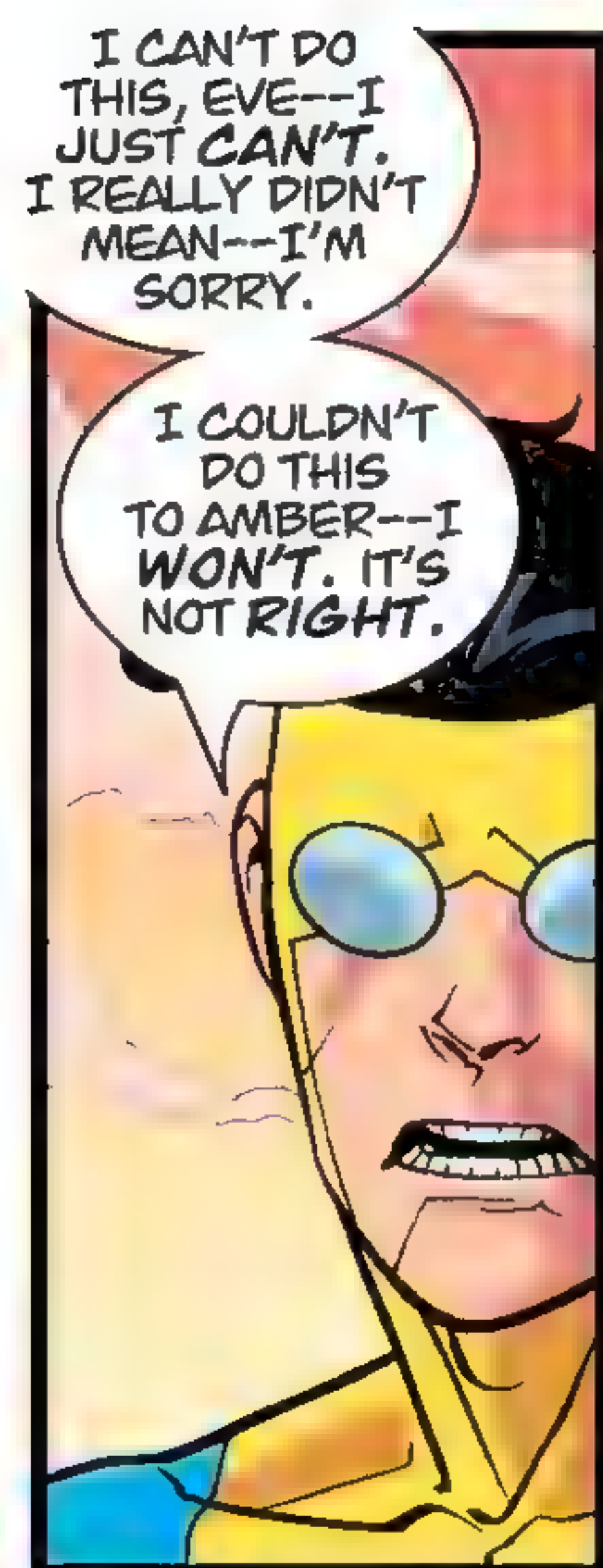
I WAS SENT TO
EARTH IN THE PLACE
OF ASTRONAUT RUS
LIVINGSTON--AND
HE WAS LEFT ON
MARS.



LEFT TO BE
TAKEN OVER BY
THE SEQUIDS.







AN UNDISCLOSED
LOCATION IN UTAH.

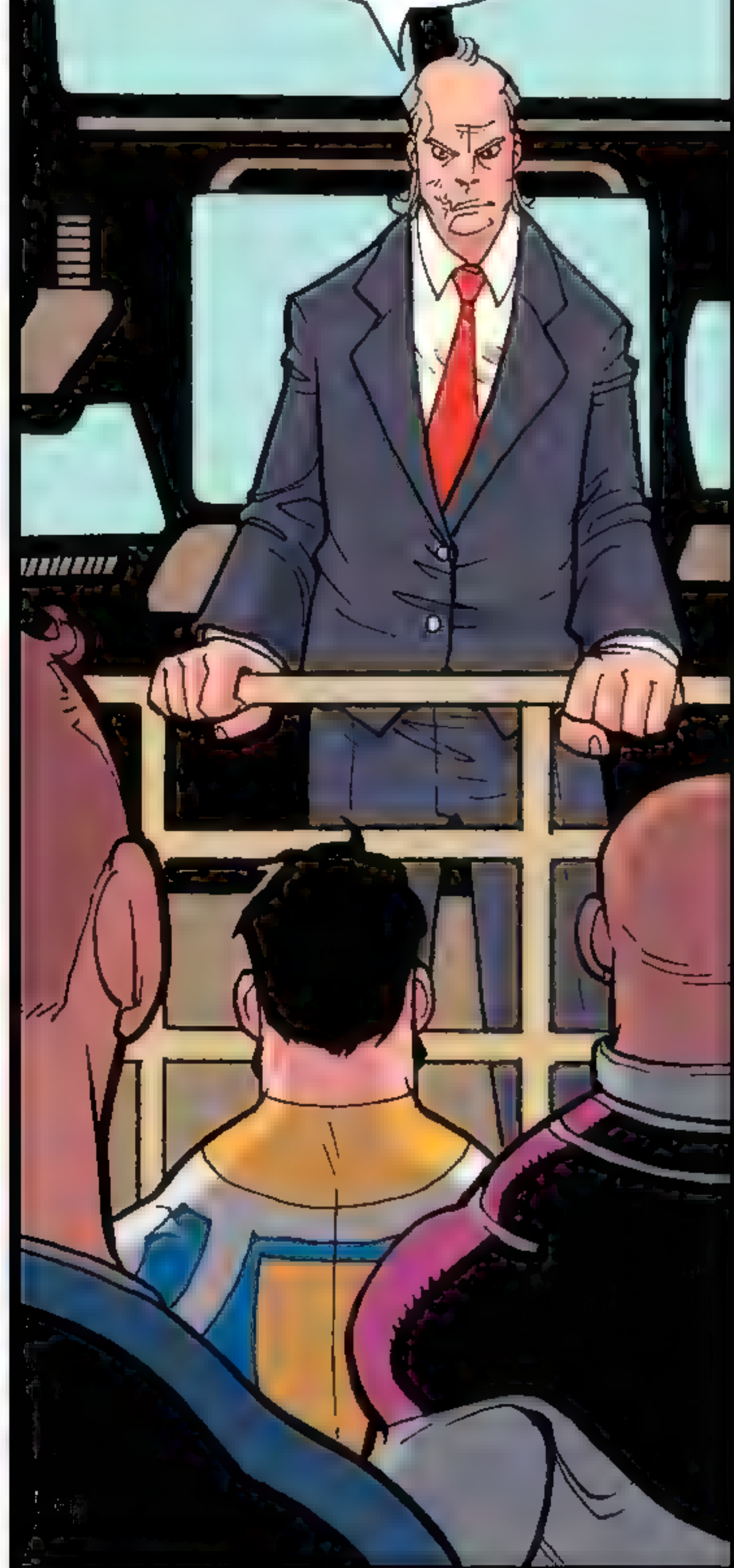
THE SECRET MOUNTAIN
BASE OF THE GUARDIANS
OF THE GLOBE.

OKAY. WE'VE BEEN ABLE
TO LOOK OVER THE INFORMATION
SHAPESMITH HAS GIVEN US
AND REVIEW THE INFORMATION
INVINCIBLE GATHERED DURING
HIS ENCOUNTER WITH THE
MARTIANS AND THE SEQUIDS
A FEW MONTHS
BACK.

WE'VE GOT
A STRIKE TEAM
TO ASSEMBLE, PEOPLE.
WE'RE GOING OUT INTO
SPACE AND WE'RE GOING
TO STOP THIS VESSEL
BEFORE THEY BECOME
A THREAT. BECAUSE
IF THESE CREATURES
REACH EARTH--

--IT'S ALL
OVER.

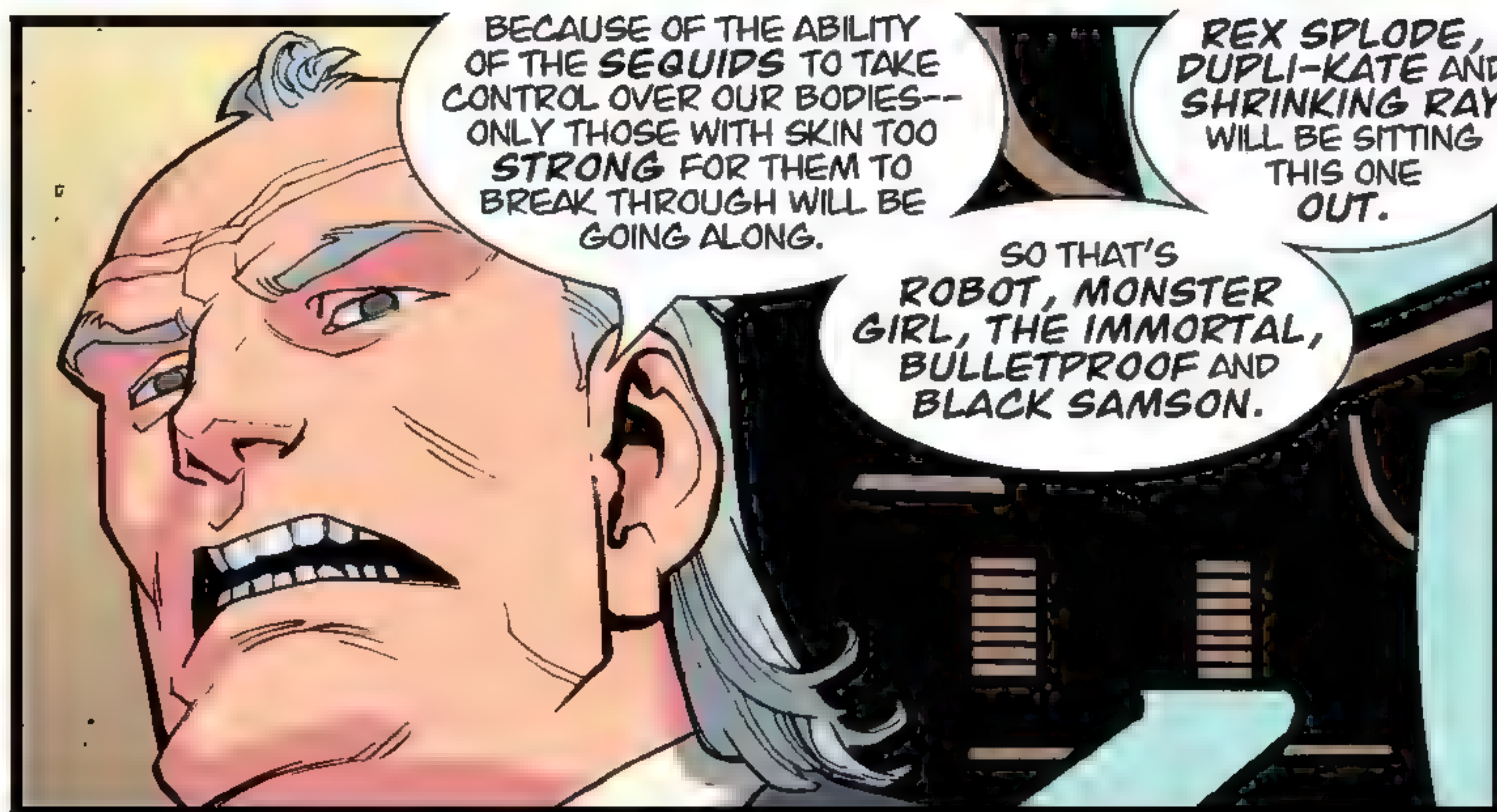
I'VE
ALREADY MADE
MY CHOICES.
THERE WILL BE
NO EXCEPTIONS
MADE--MY
DECISIONS ARE
FINAL.



BECAUSE OF THE ABILITY
OF THE SEQUIDS TO TAKE
CONTROL OVER OUR BODIES--
ONLY THOSE WITH SKIN TOO
STRONG FOR THEM TO
BREAK THROUGH WILL BE
GOING ALONG.

REX SPODE,
DUPLI-KATE AND
SHRINKING RAY
WILL BE SITTING
THIS ONE
OUT.

SO THAT'S
ROBOT, MONSTER
GIRL, THE IMMORTAL,
BULLETPROOF AND
BLACK SAMSON.



I'LL HAVE
TO STAY IN
MONSTER FORM
THE WHOLE TIME,
I SUPPOSE.

OH, THIS
STINKS. I DON'T
WANT TO BE AWAY
FROM MY HUSBAND
SO SOON AFTER
OUR WEDDING.

SO THAT'S
IT THEN--I'M
JUST SIDELINED?
THAT'S
GREAT.

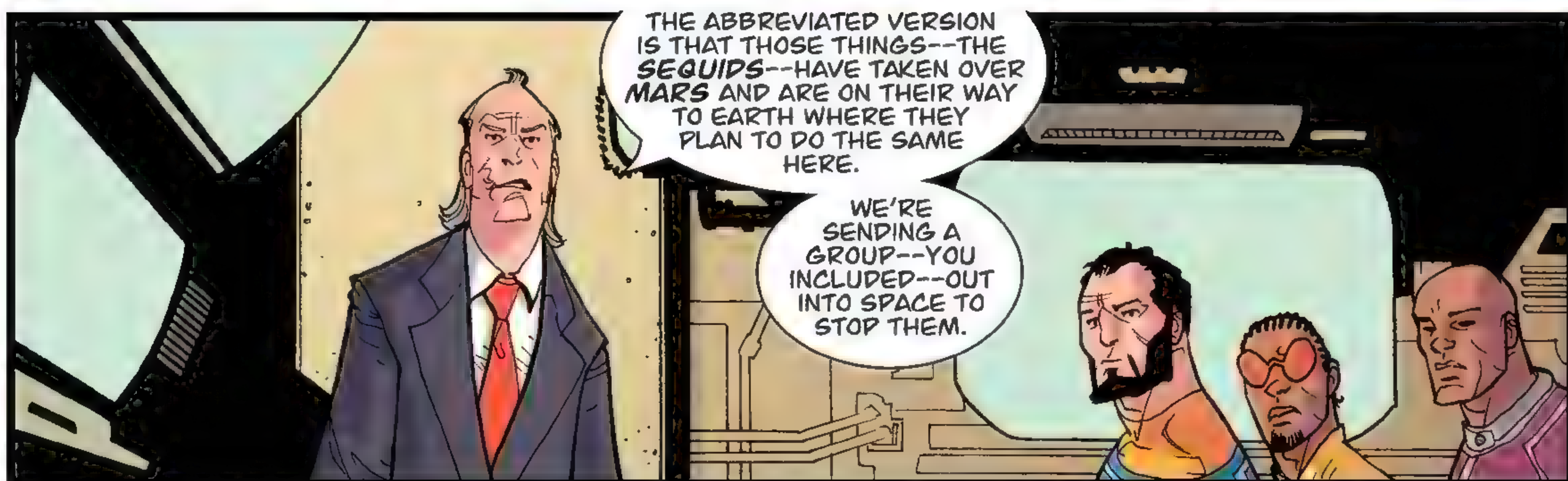




YEAH, ATOM
EVE, RIGHT?
I RECOGNIZE
YOU.

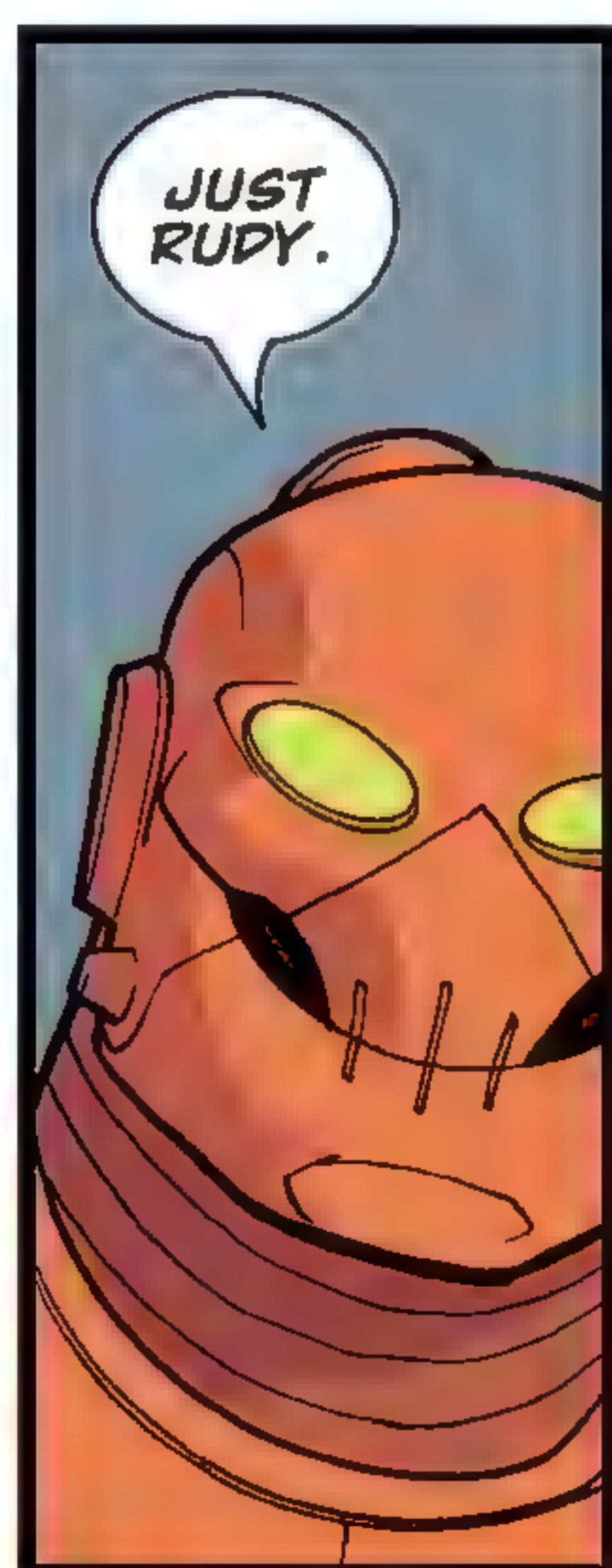
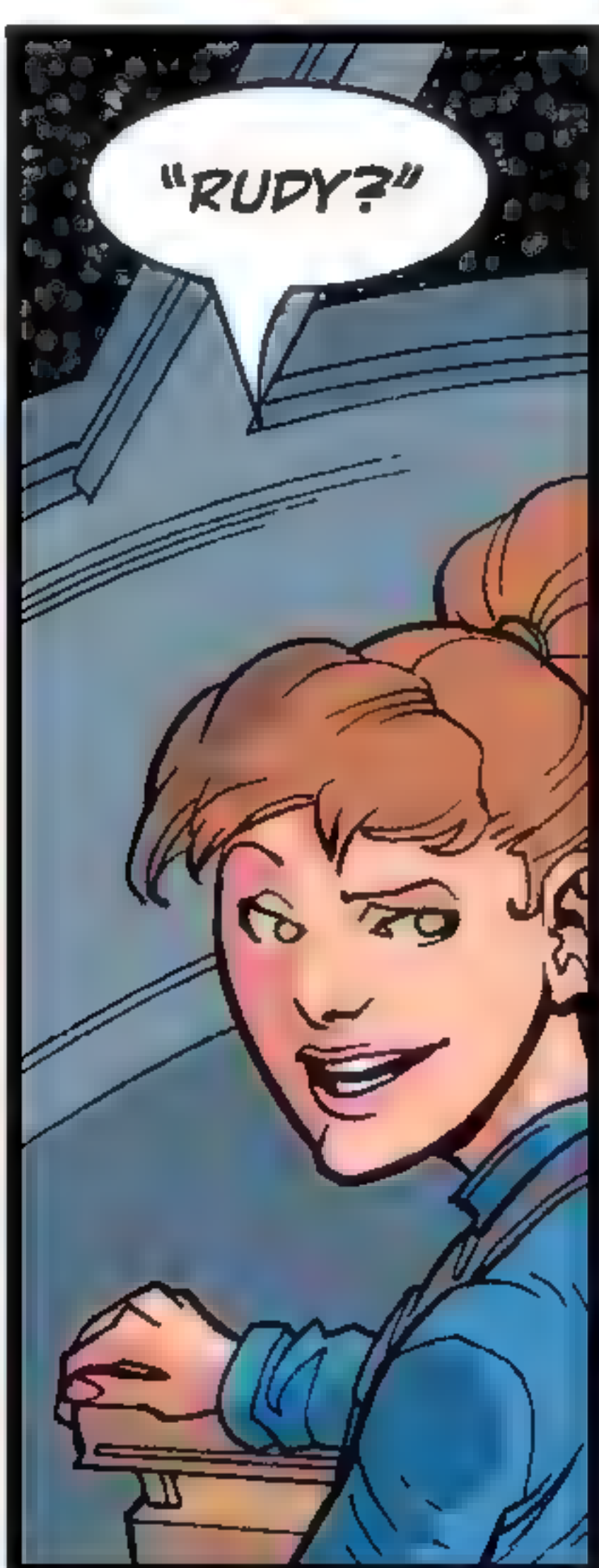
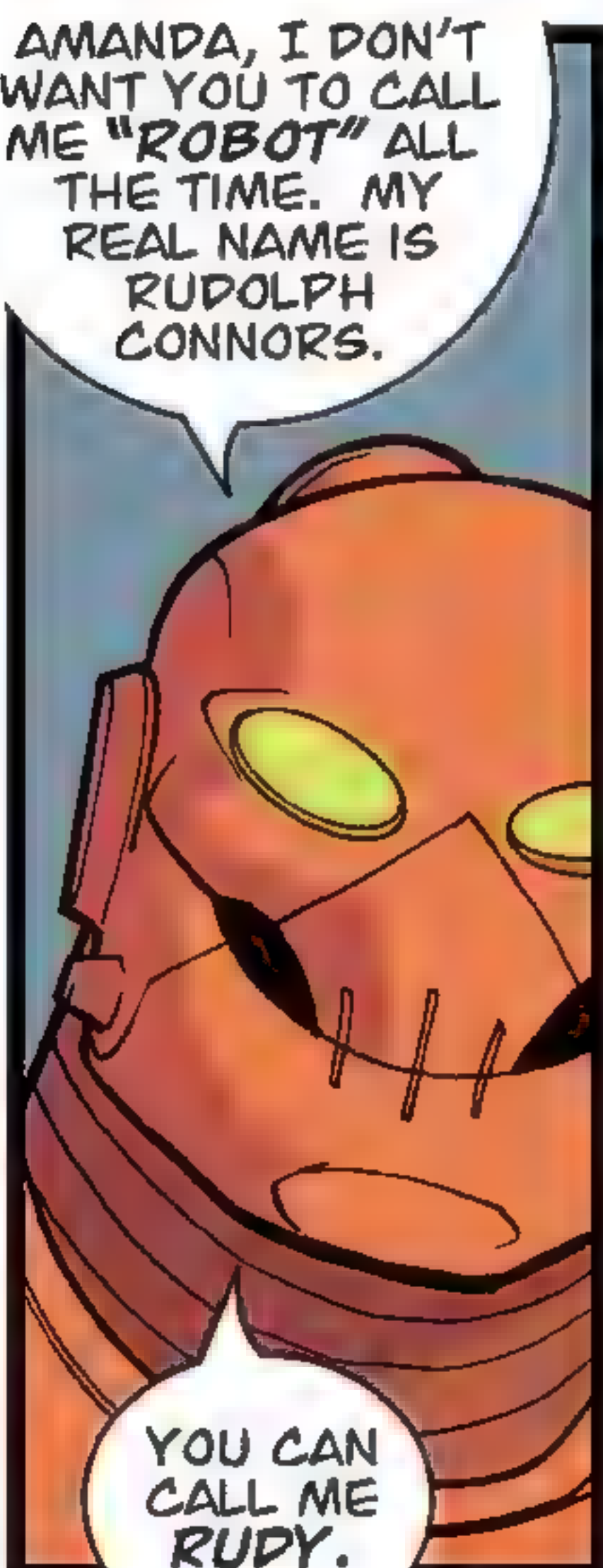
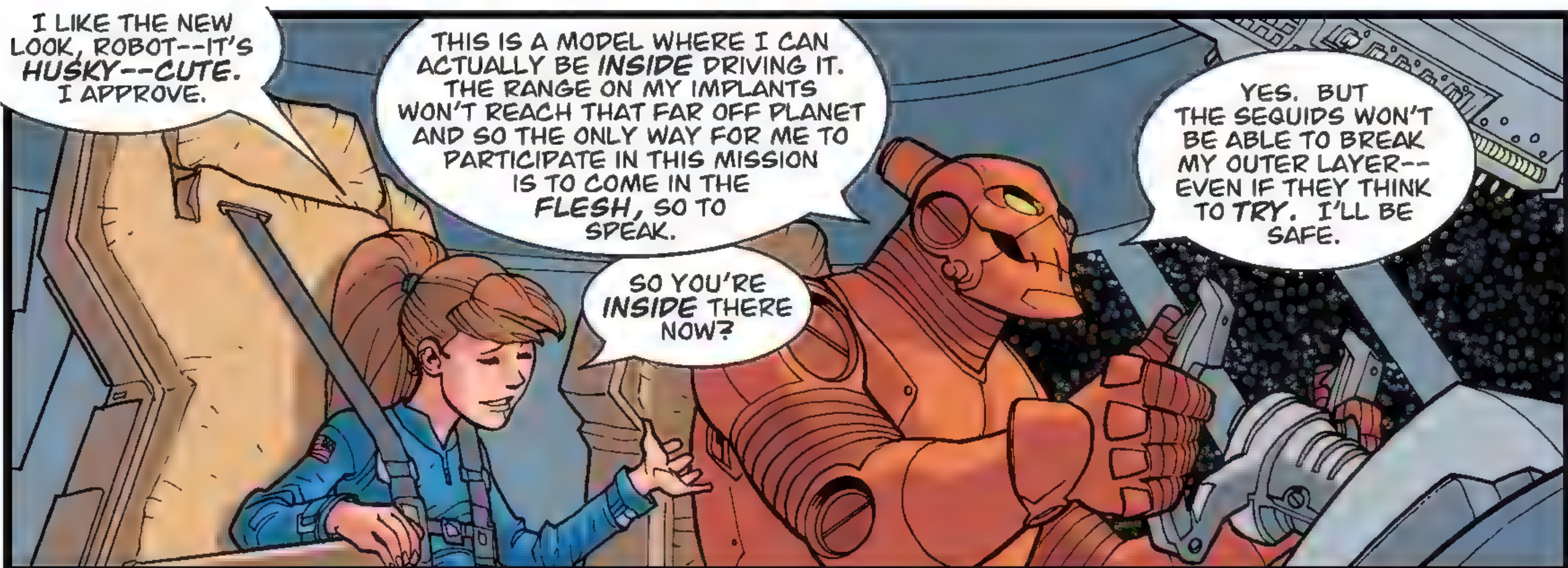
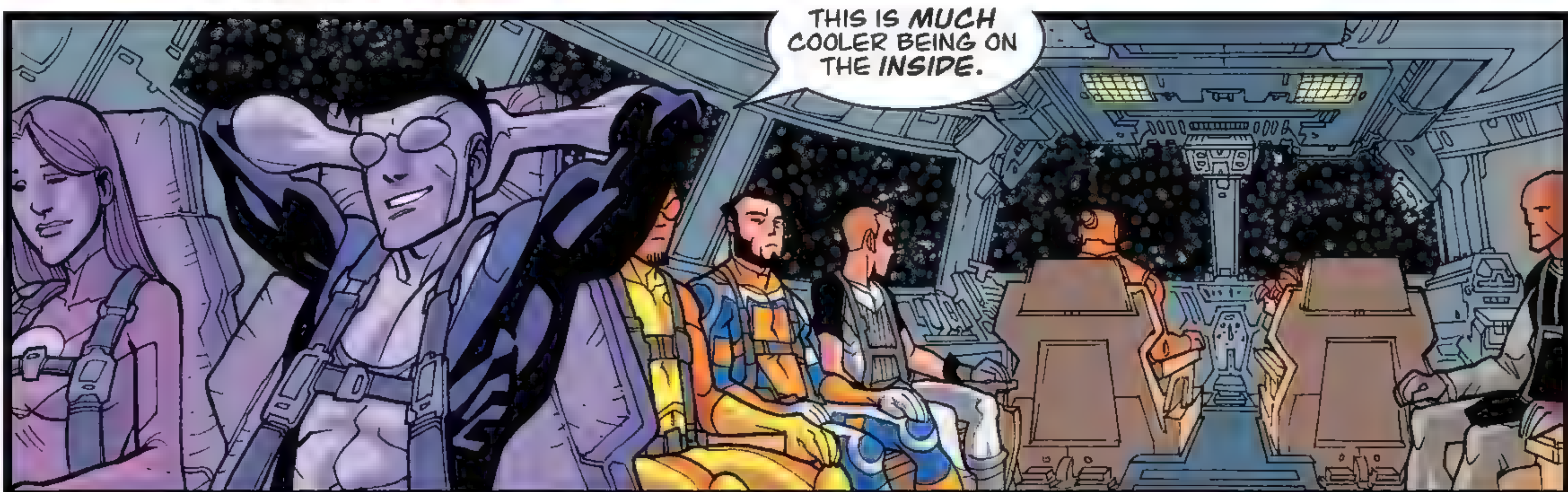
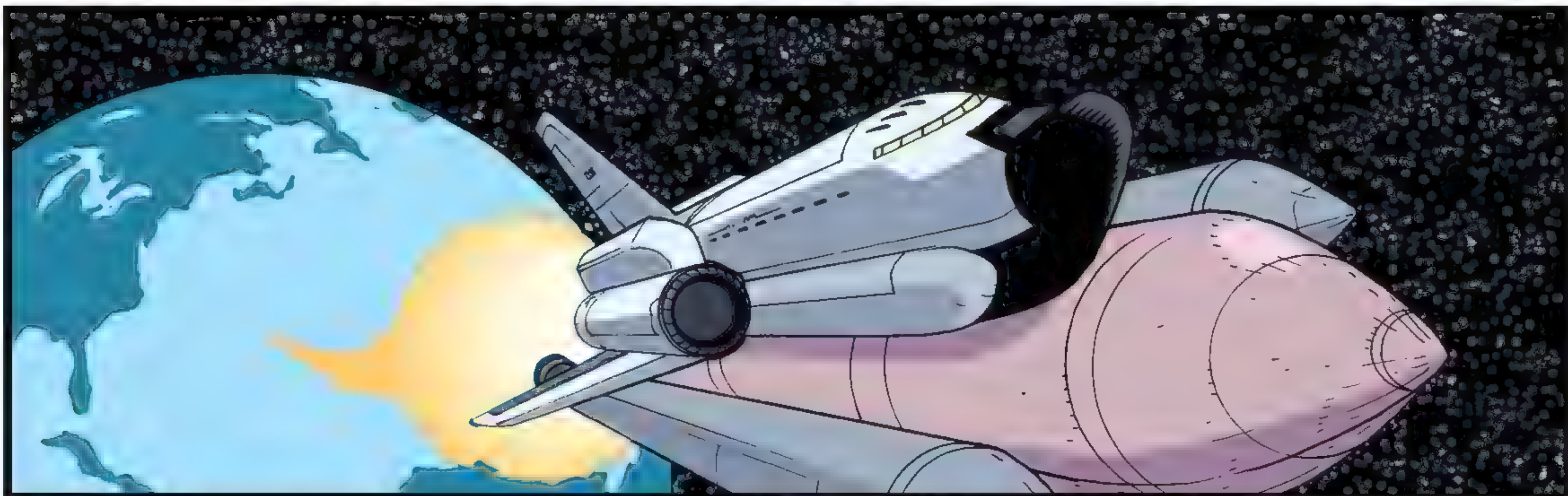


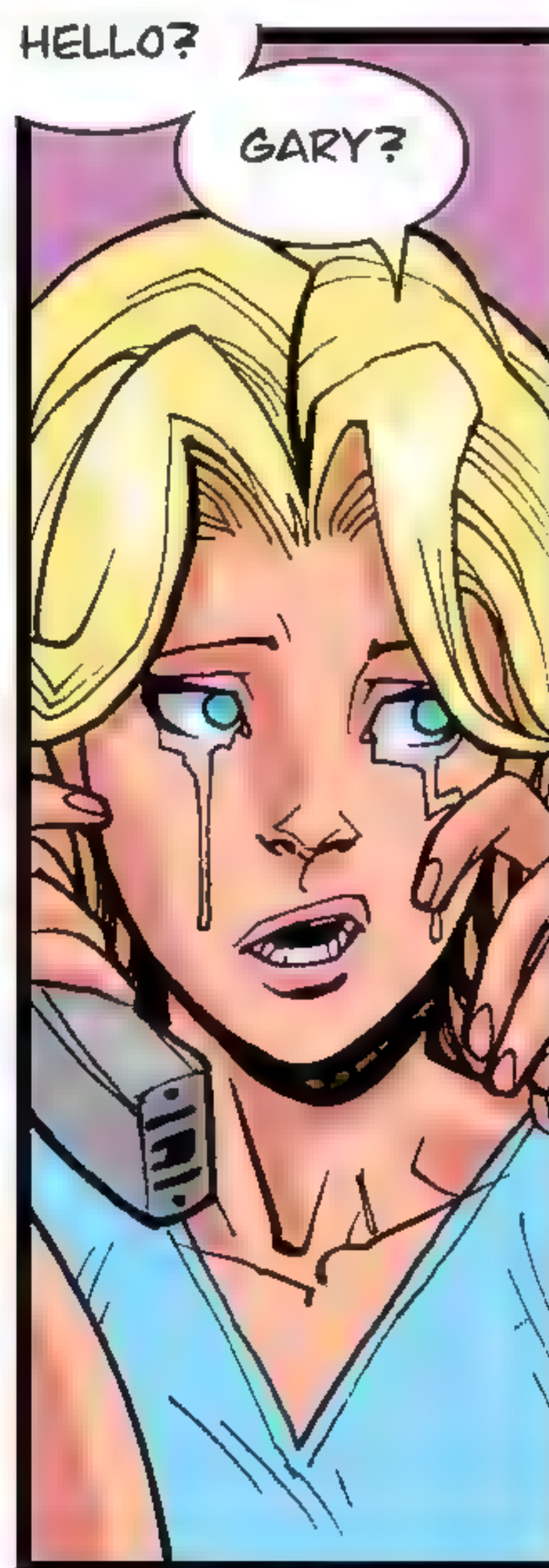
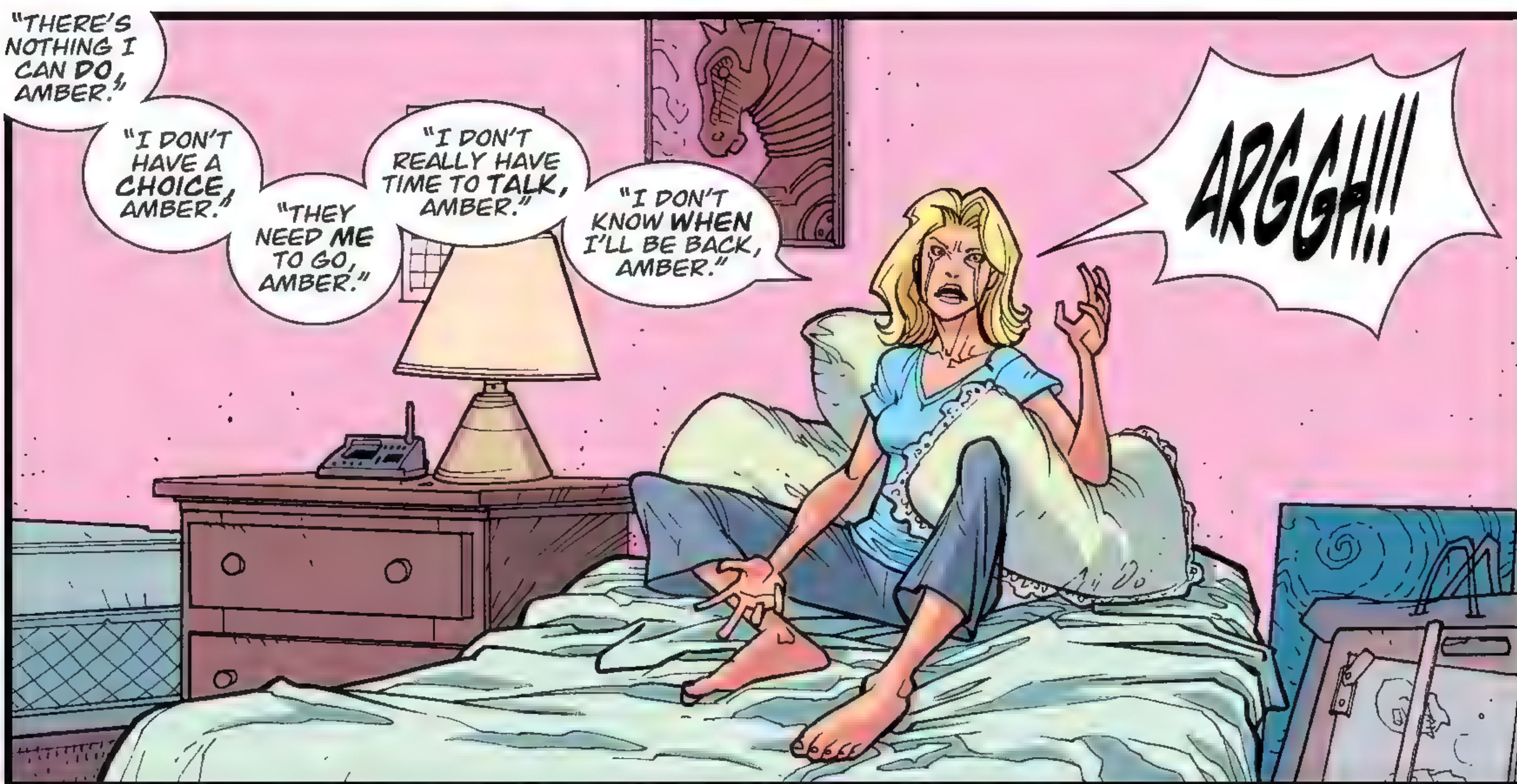
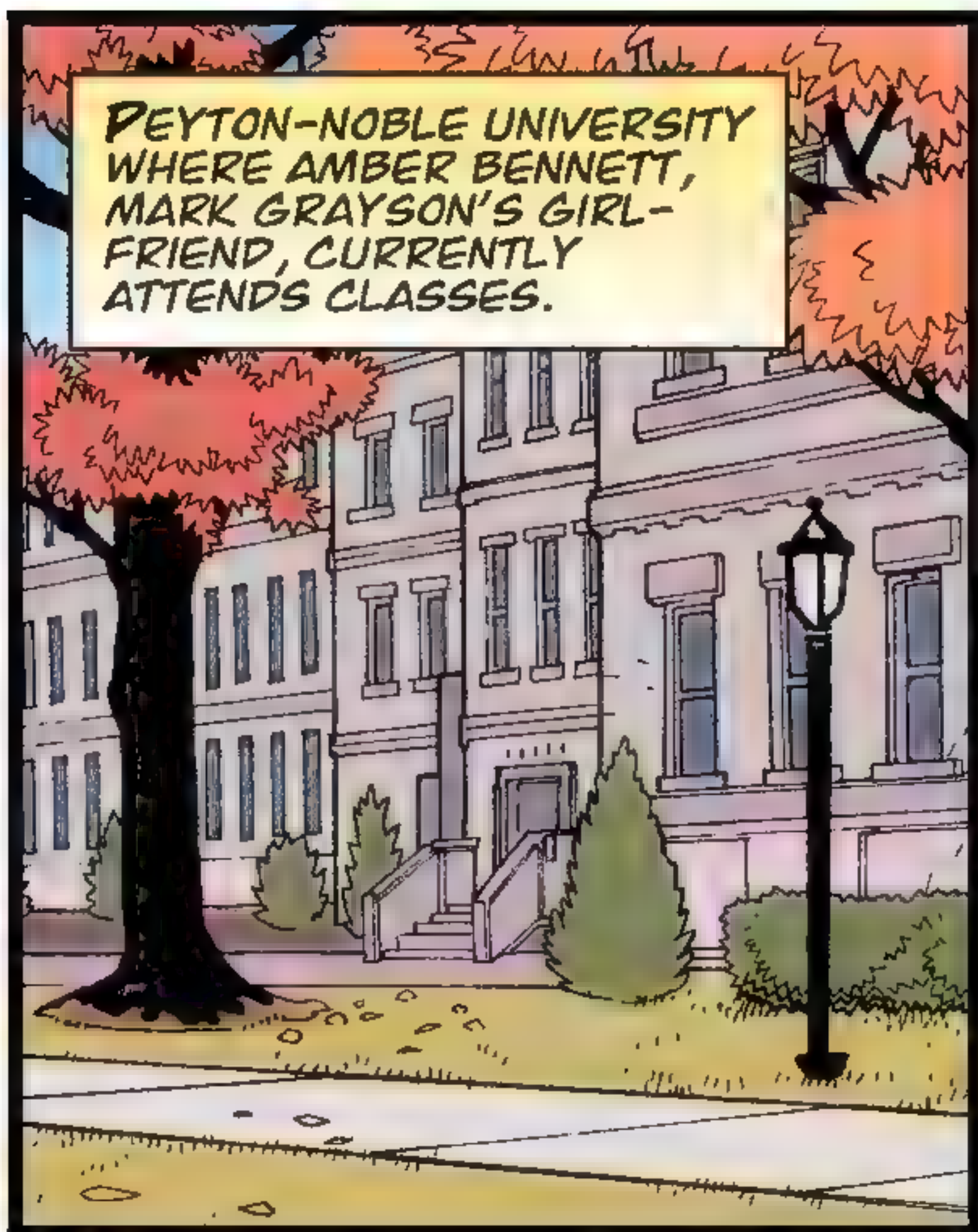
I DON'T
THINK SO,
NO.

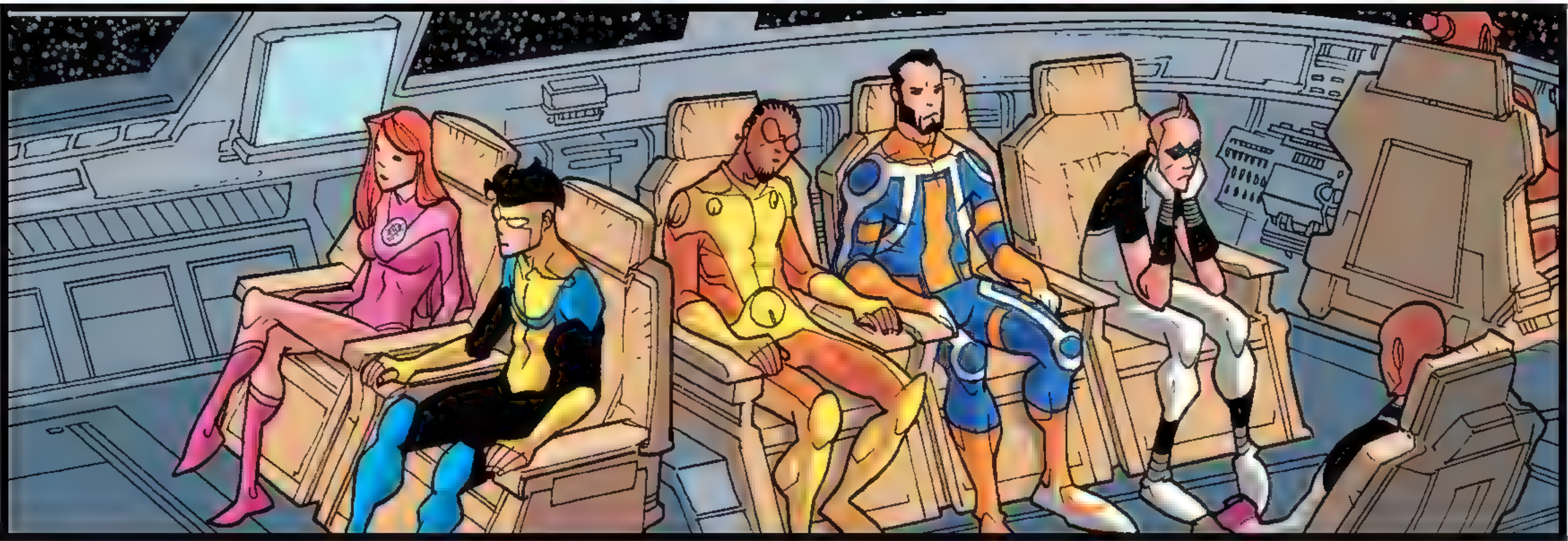
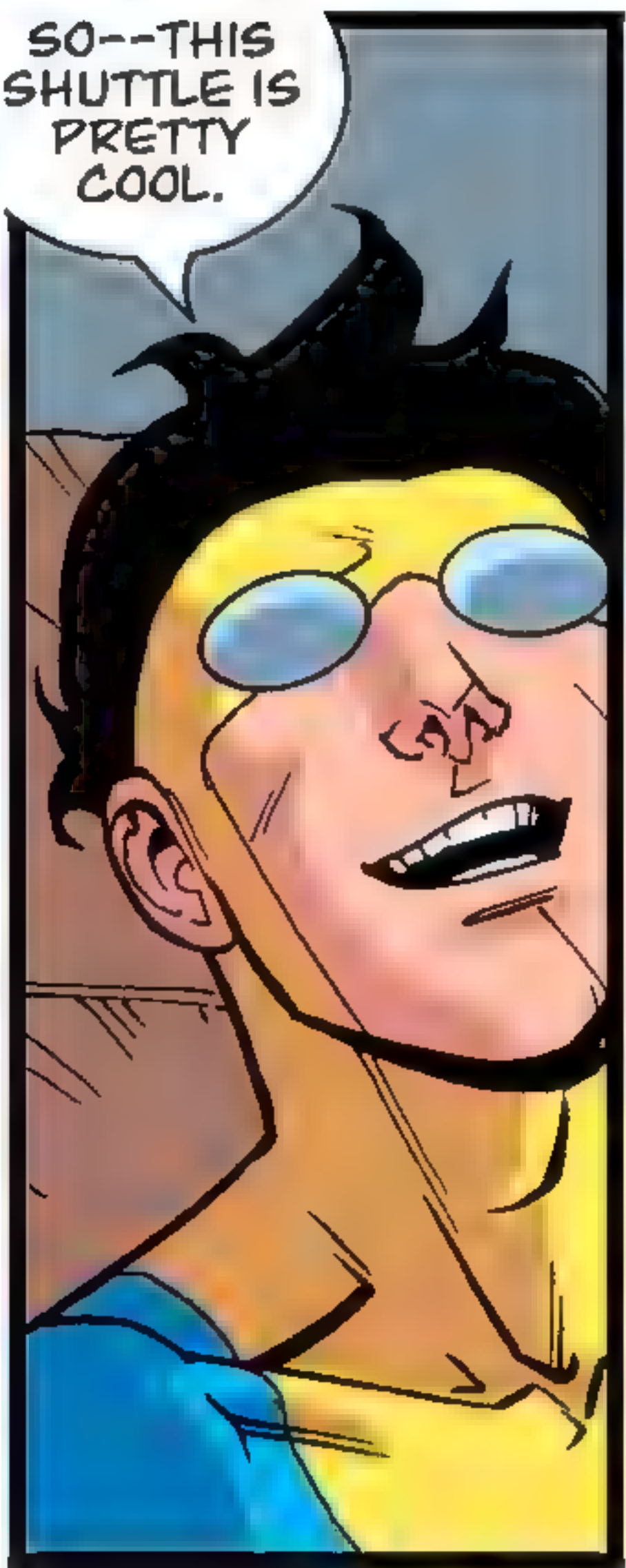
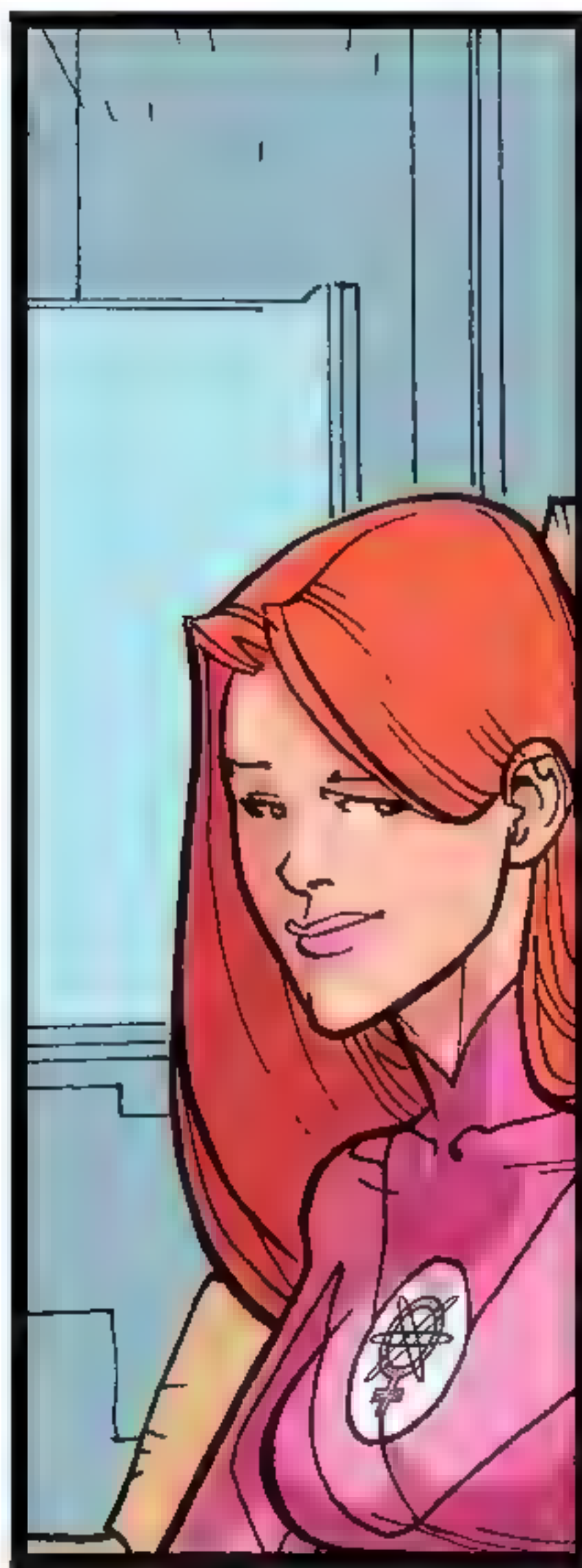
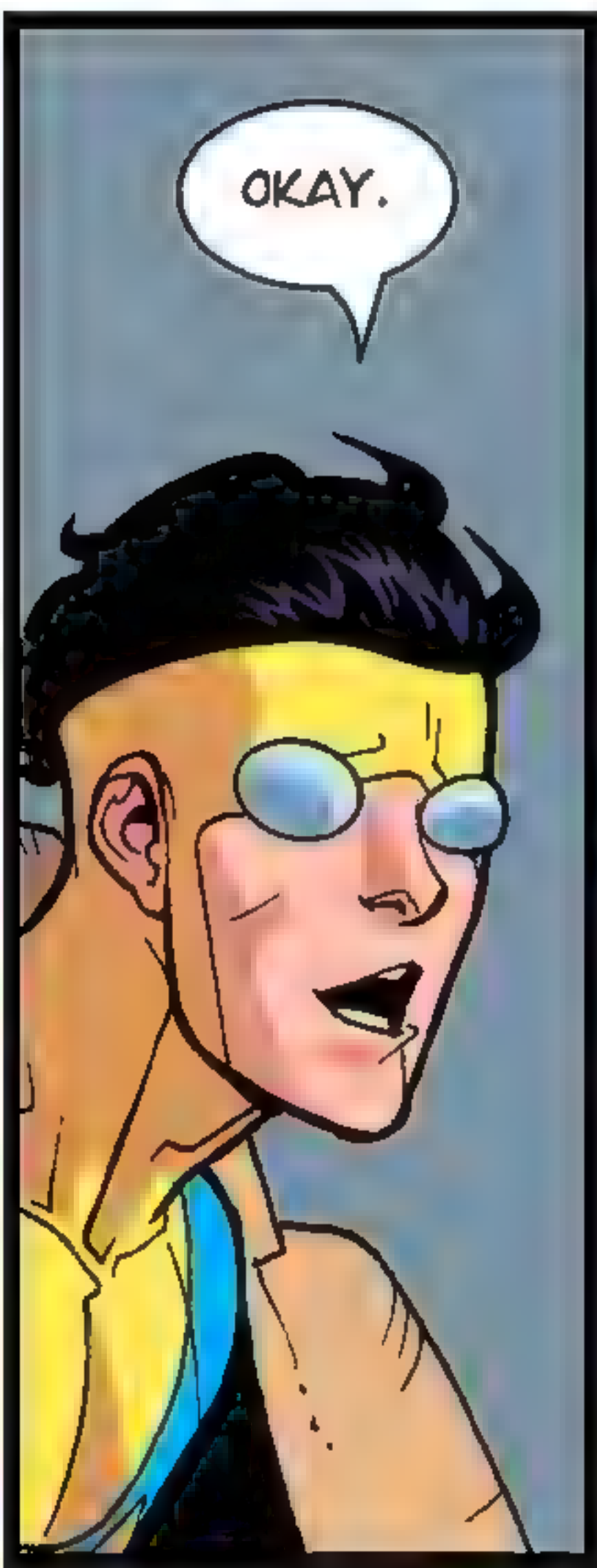
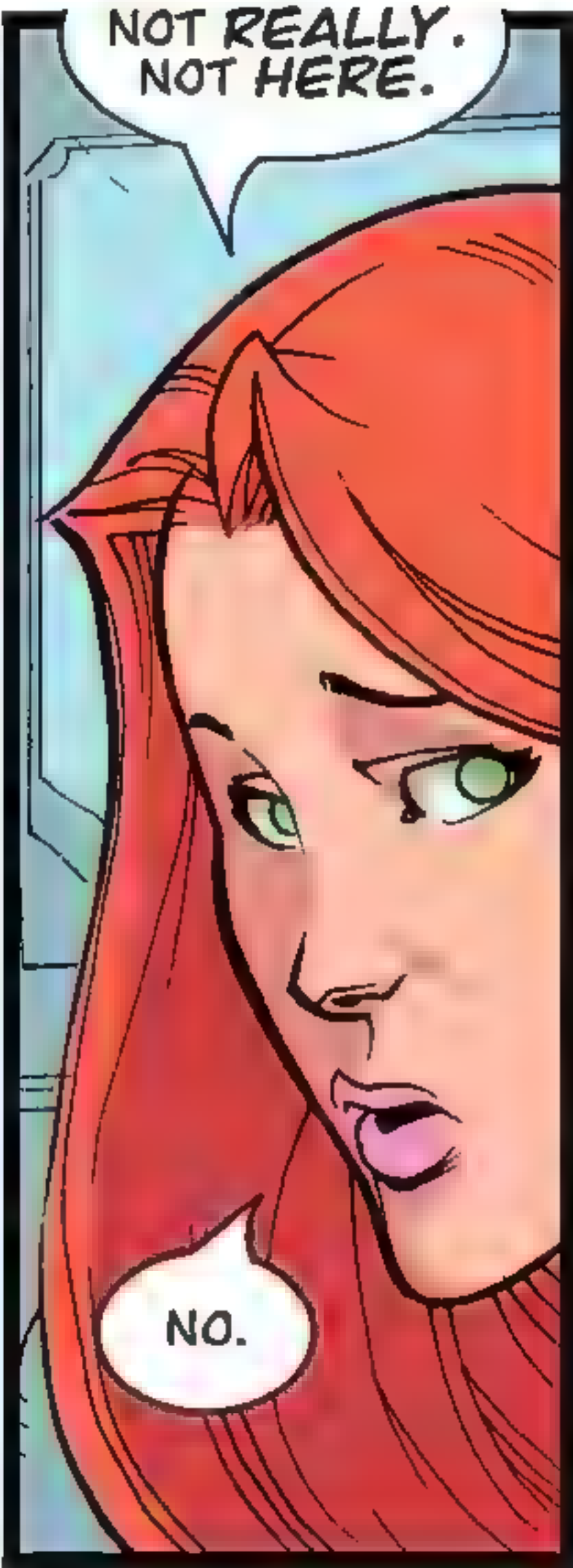
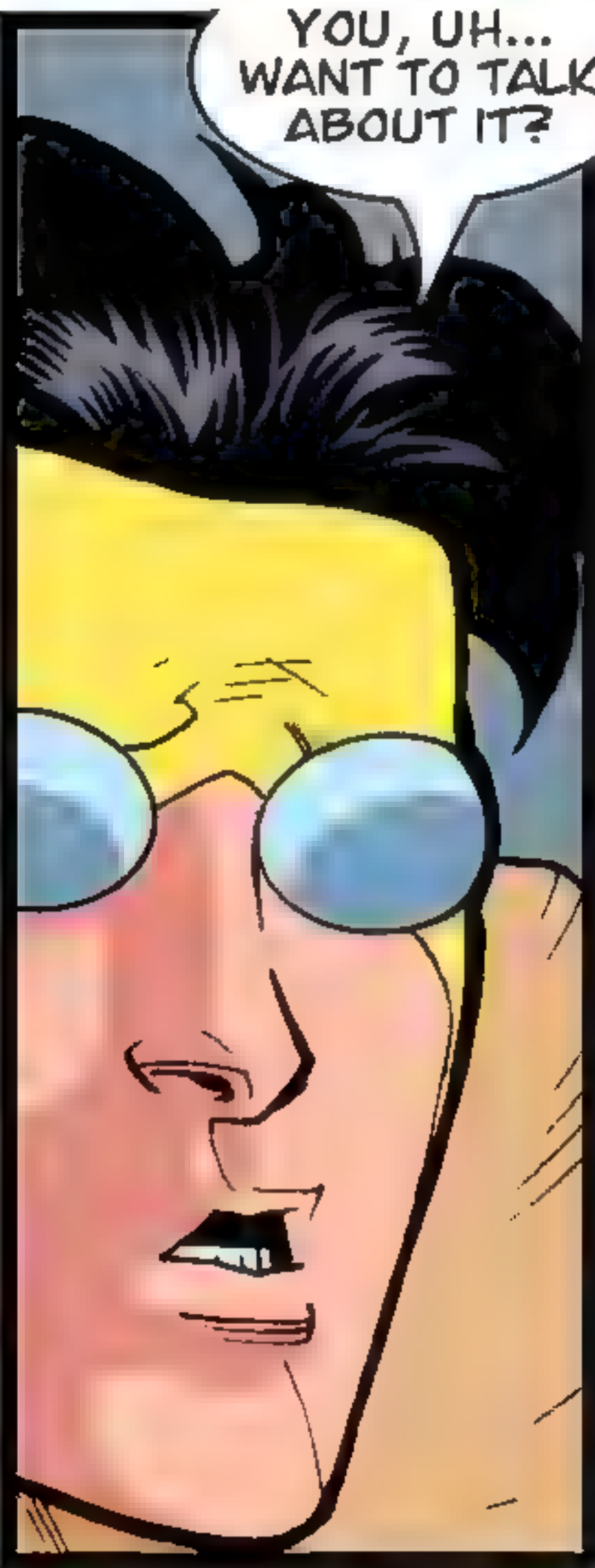
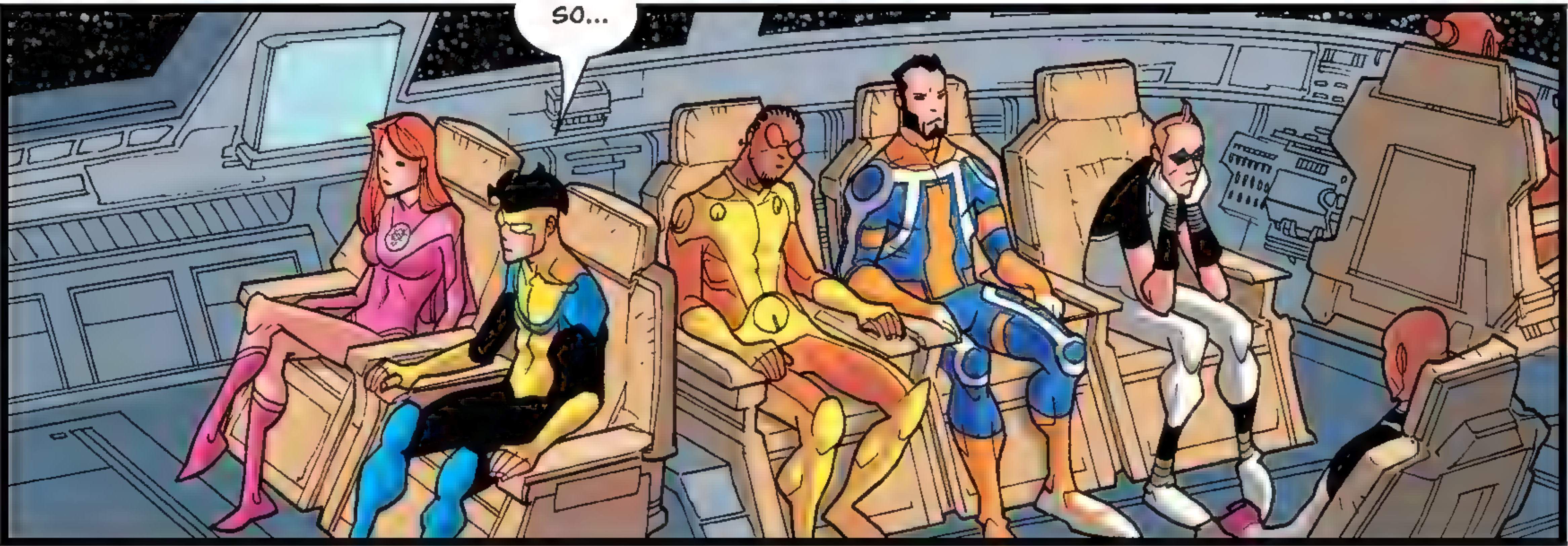
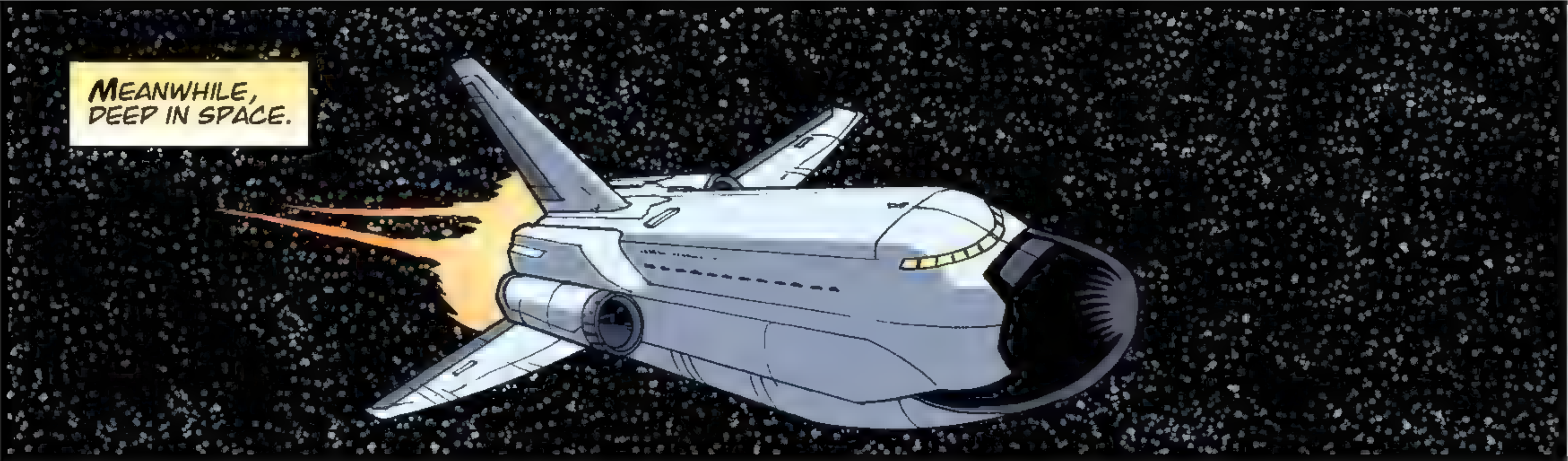


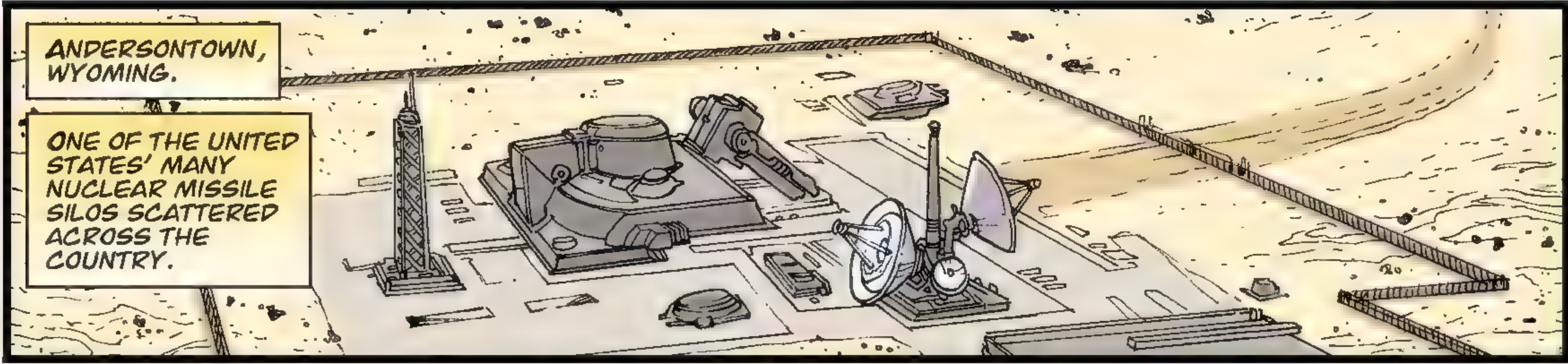
VOOOOSH!!!



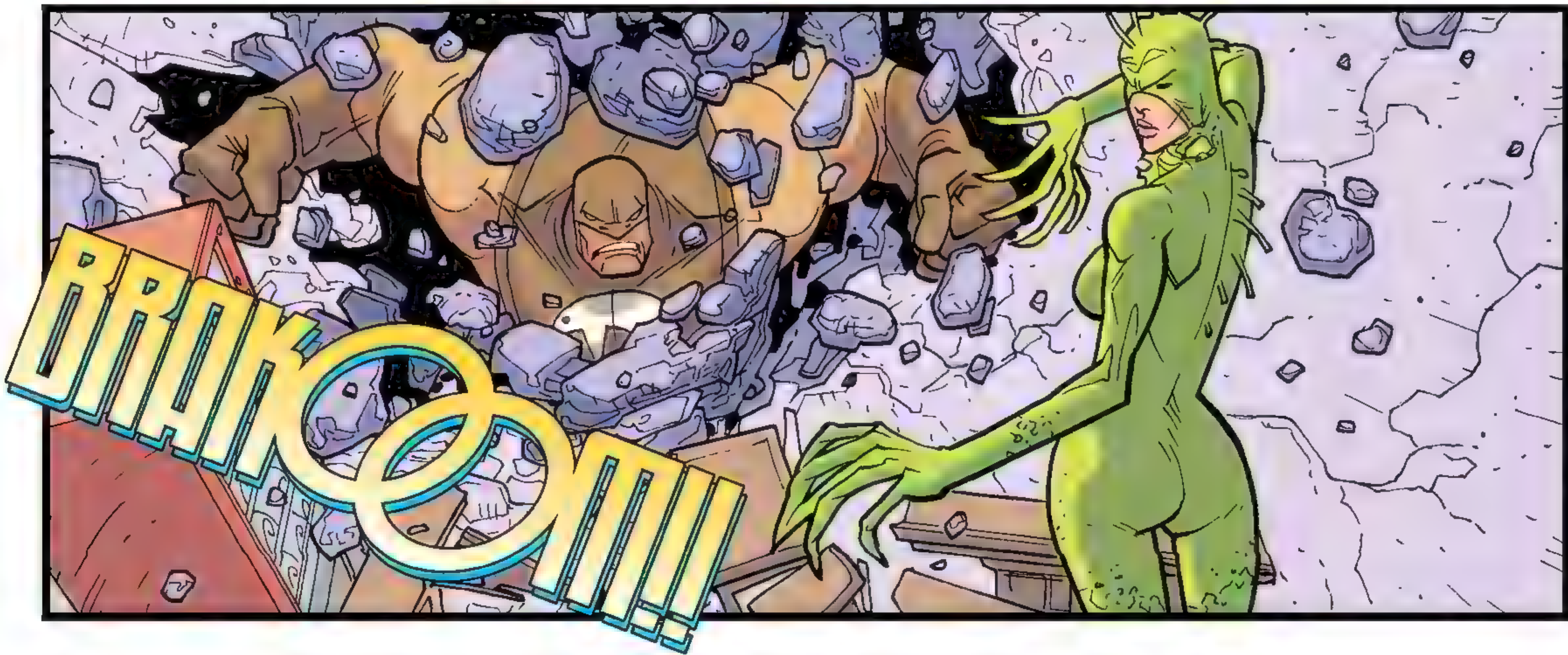
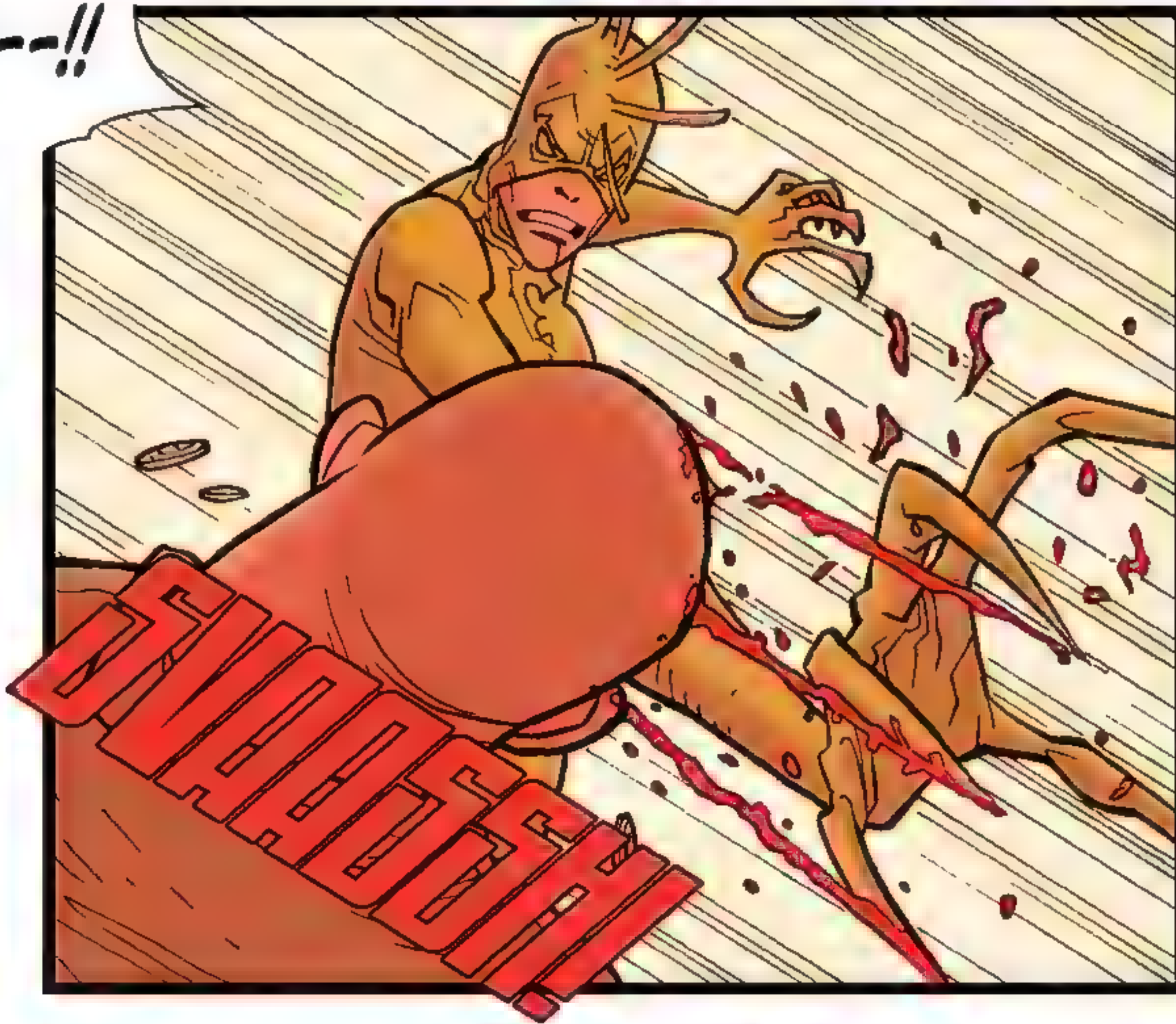


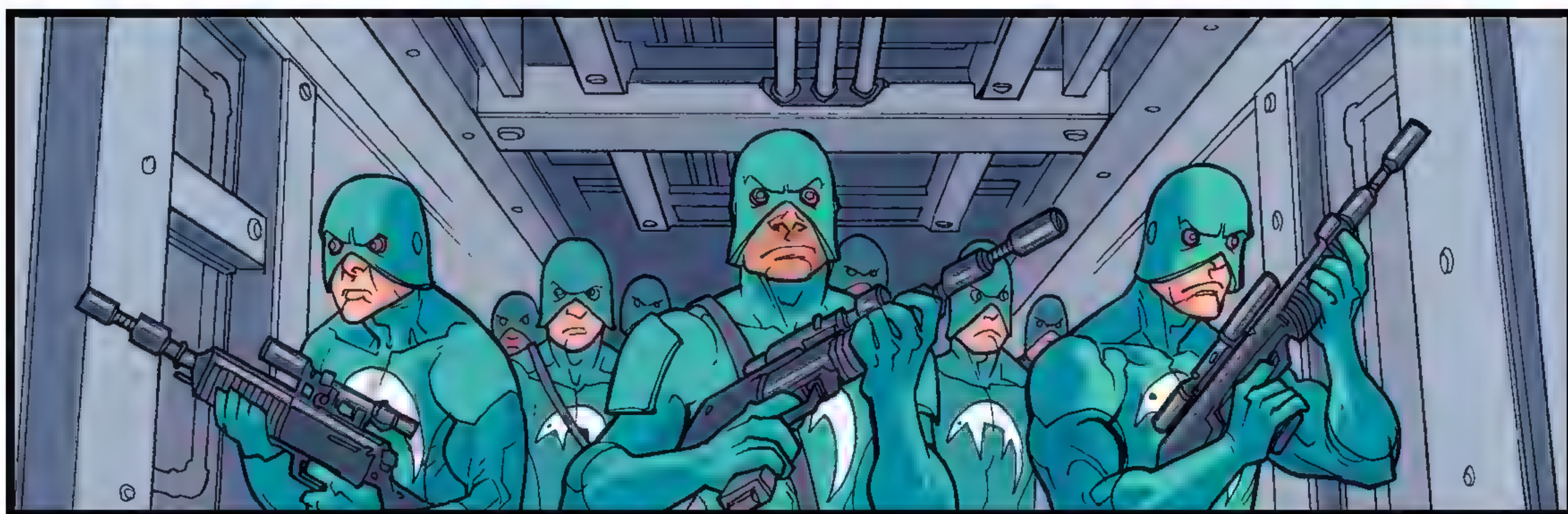


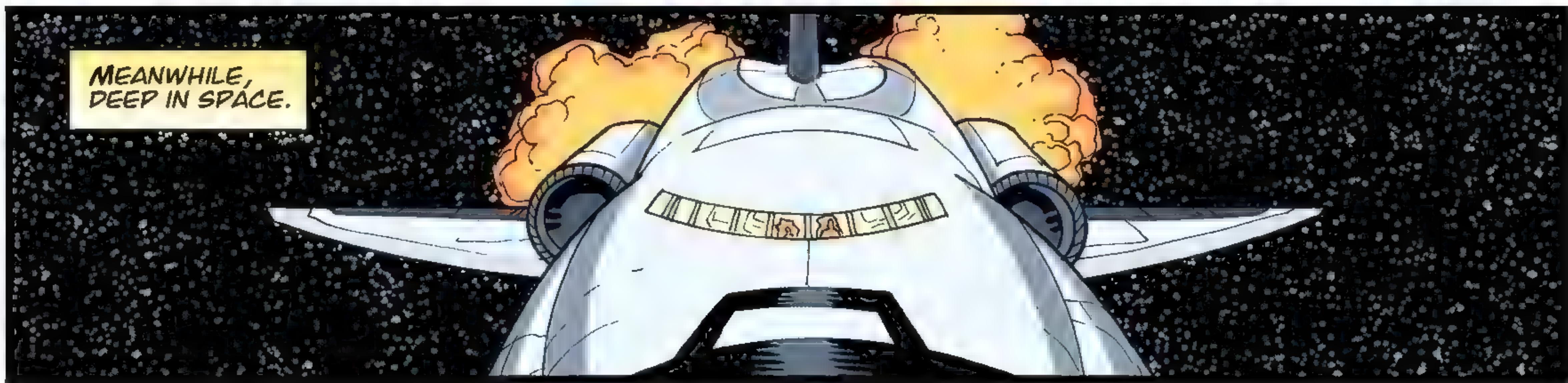




OH, GOD--!!







MEANWHILE,
DEEP IN SPACE.

BASED ON SOME VERY COMPLICATED MATH INVOLVING THEIR LAST KNOWN POSITION AND SPEED ALONG WITH OUR CURRENT POSITION AND SPEED, I ESTIMATE WE'LL REACH THEM WITHIN THE NEXT SIX HOURS.

GIVE
OR TAKE A
MINUTE OR
TWO.

SO
IMPRESSIVE.

I'M
IMPRESSED.
REALLY.

SHAPESMITH--WHAT KIND OF RESISTANCE CAN WE EXPECT? WHAT ARE THE WEAPONS CAPABILITIES OF YOUR PEOPLE? ASSUMING THEY'RE WORKING WITH THE SEQUIDS NOW. AND WHAT ARE THE SEQUIDS' ABILITIES?

I'M NOT REALLY SURE. ASIDE FROM MIND CONTROL AND THEIR PSYCHIC LINK TO EACH OTHER-- I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY CAN DO. THEY'RE STRONG FOR THEIR SIZE--MY PEOPLE HAD THEM DOING ALL KINDS OF HARD LABOR.

IF THEY'RE IN A WARSHIP--WHICH IS THE ONLY THING AS BIG AS THE VESSEL YOU'VE DETECTED IN THE MARTIAN FLEET--AT LEAST SOME MARTIANS HAVE TO BE WORKING WITH THEM. THEY WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO OPERATE IT ON THEIR OWN.

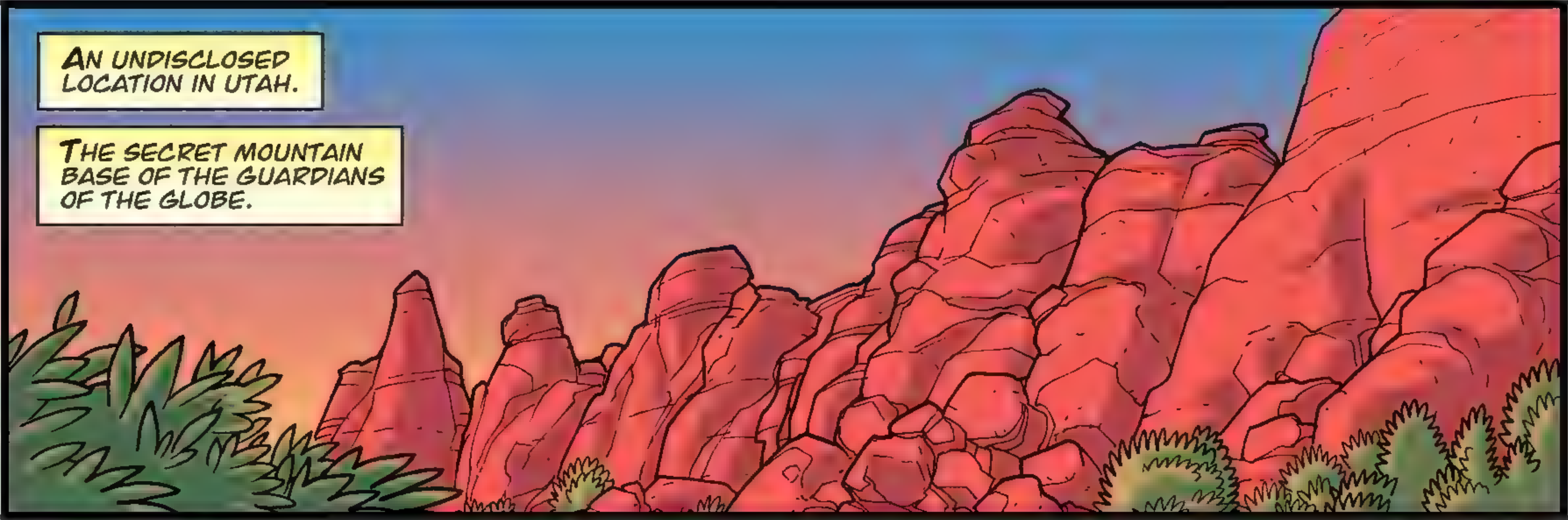


THEY'D HAVE TO HAVE SOME KIND OF PHYSICAL ABILITIES IN ORDER TO FORCE MARTIAN SOLDIERS TO WORK WITH THEM. THEY WOULDN'T JUST SURRENDER TO SEQUID CONTROL.

THOSE WARSHIPS ARE PACKED WITH ALL KINDS OF WEAPONS-- THEY'RE BAD NEWS. ONCE WE'RE IN THEIR SENSOR RANGE THEY'LL KNOW WE'RE COMING.

THIS
ISN'T GOING
TO BE
EASY.





AN UNDISCLOSED LOCATION IN UTAH.

THE SECRET MOUNTAIN BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.



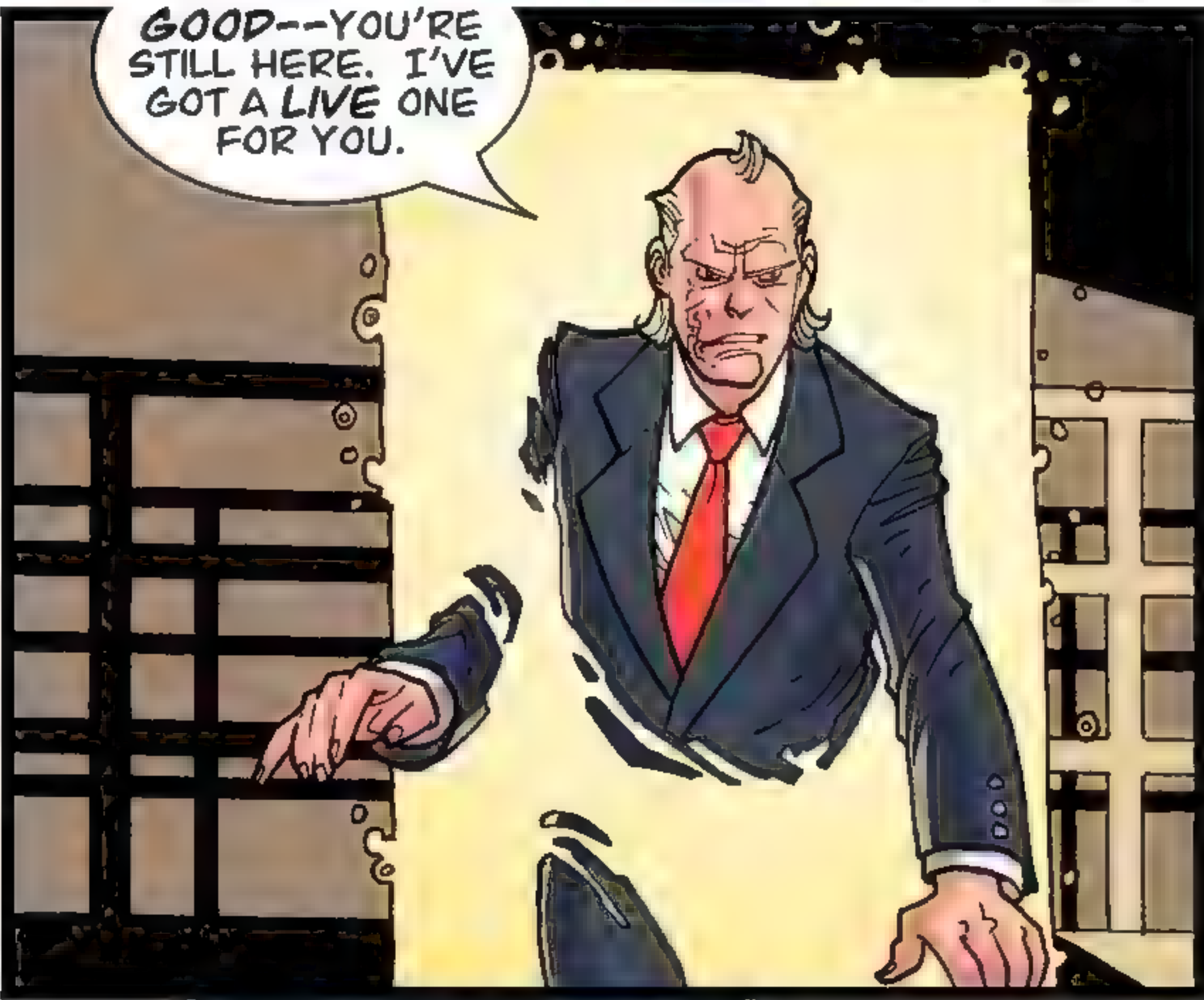
GETTING-- LONELY?

NO-- NOT IN THE LEAST.

WELL, IF IT HAPPENS-- WHEN IT HAPPENS, LET ME KNOW. I CAN MAKE THE LONELINESS GO AWAY.

IT'S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN.

HEH.



GOOD--YOU'RE STILL HERE. I'VE GOT A LIVE ONE FOR YOU.



WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S GOING ON?

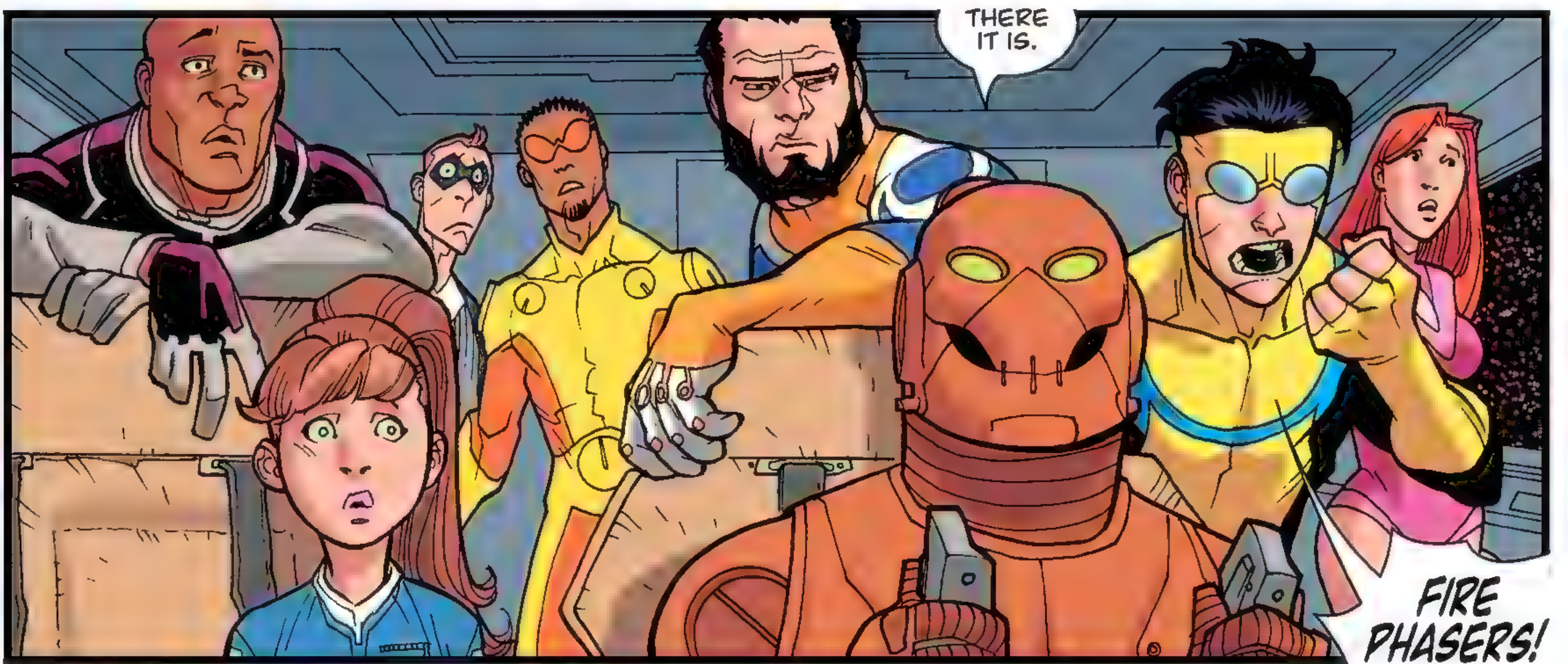
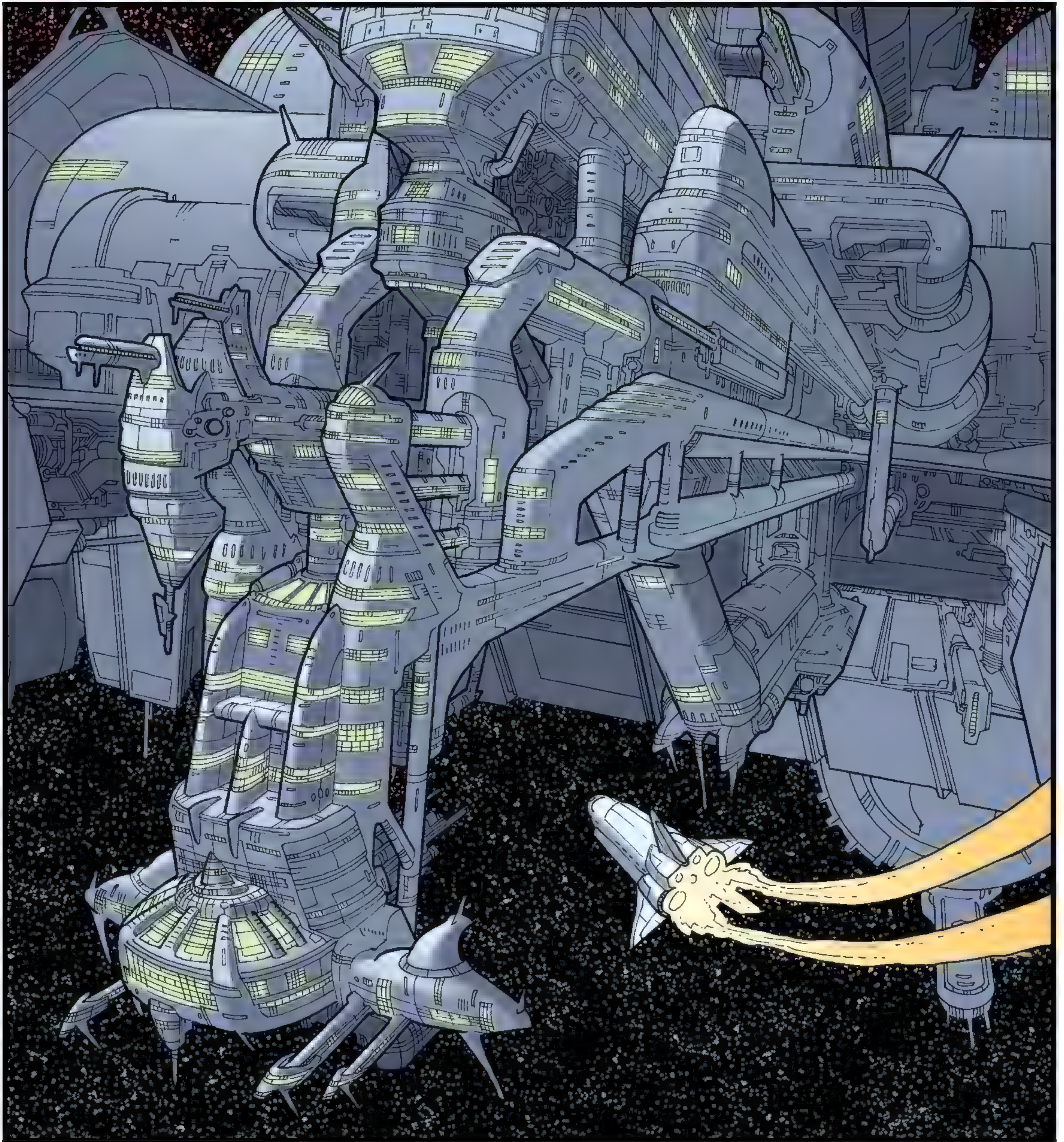
THE LIZARD LEAGUE HAS TAKEN OVER A MISSILE SILO IN WYOMING--THEY'VE GOT THEIR FINGER ON THE BUTTON. WE DON'T YET KNOW WHAT THEIR TARGET IS BUT EVERY MAJOR CITY ON THE PLANET IS AT RISK.

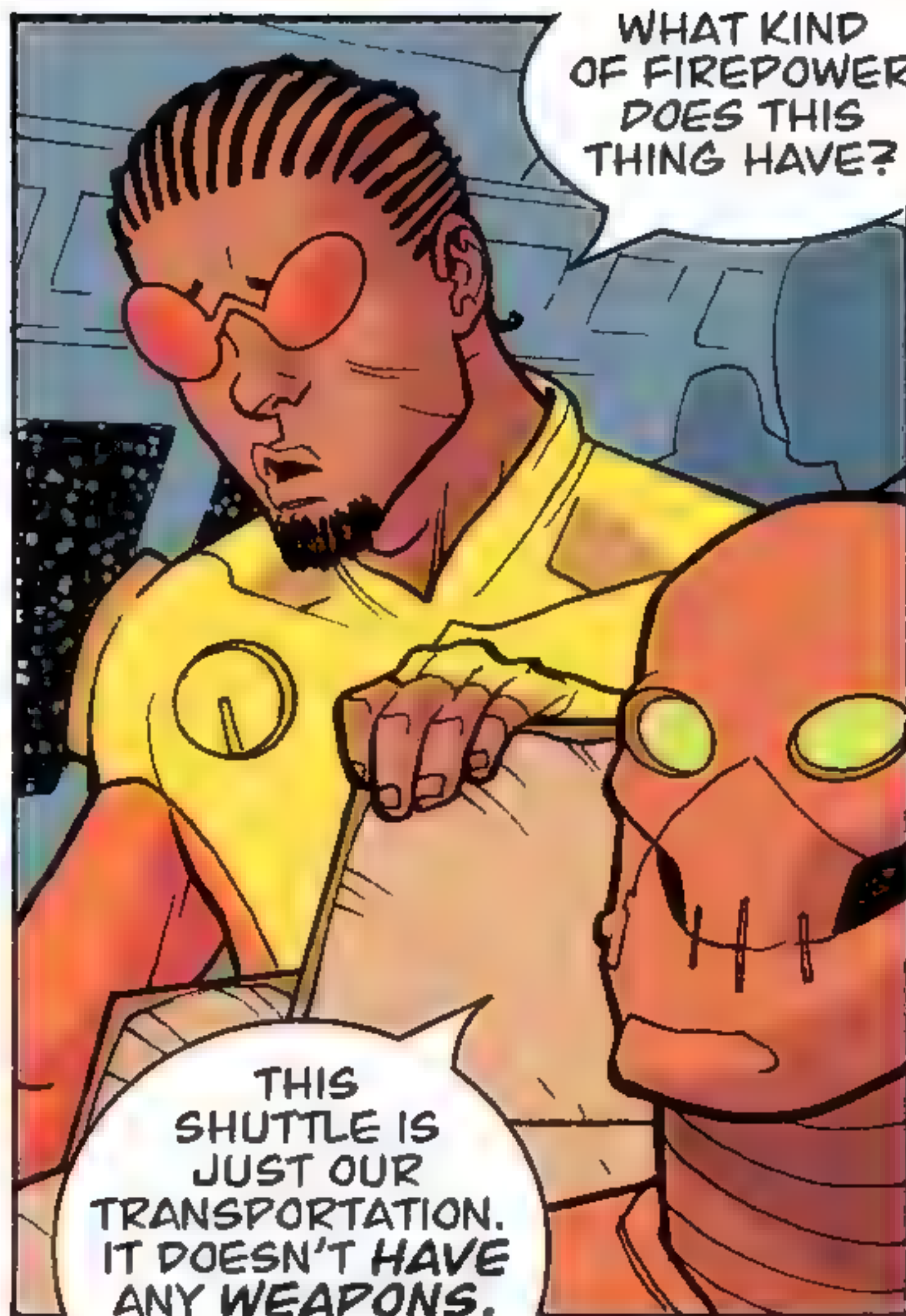
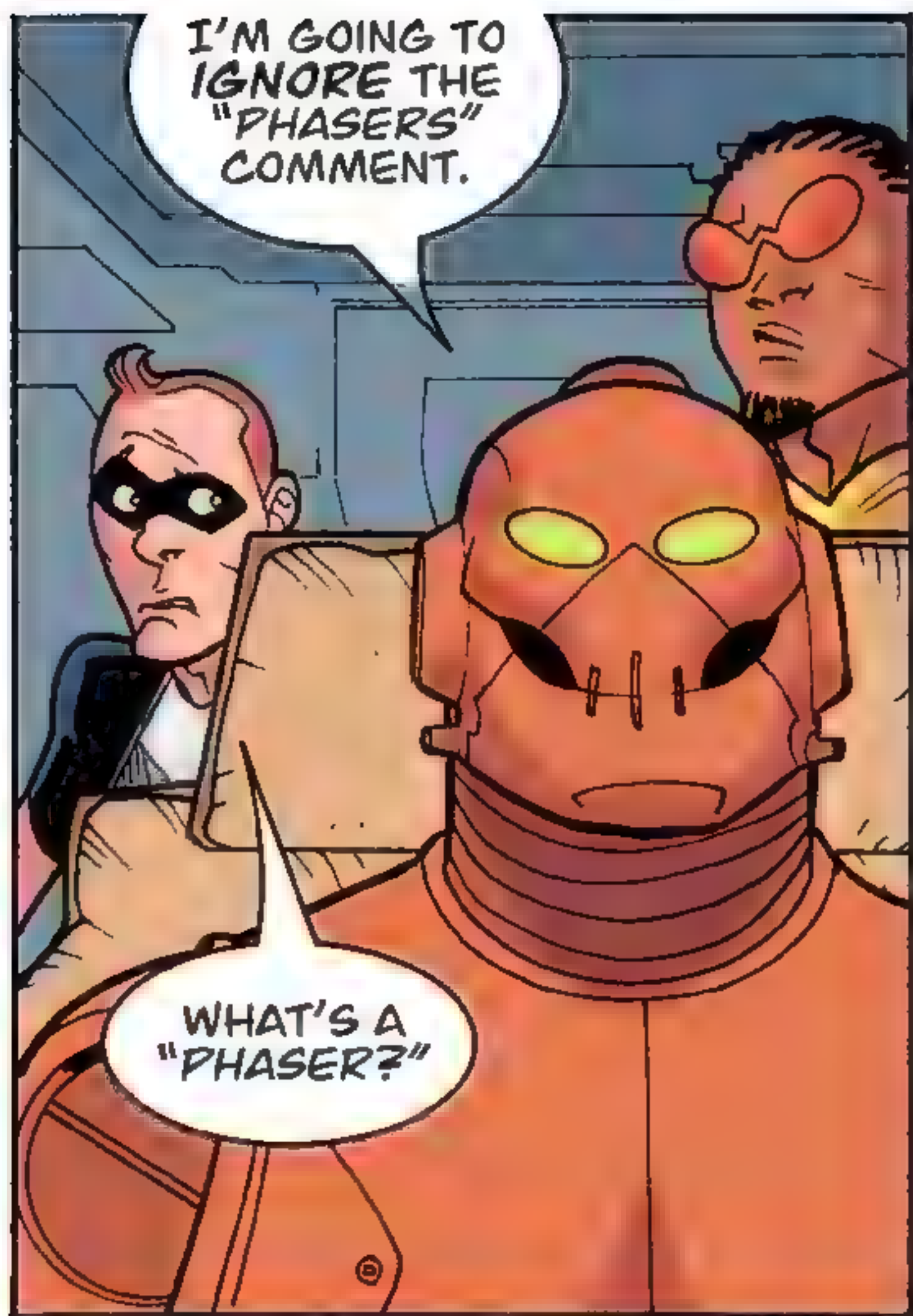
THE BEST PART IS THAT THIS MISSILE WILL HAVE U, S AND A WRITTEN ALL OVER IT. THEY HIT THE RIGHT PLACE AND THEY TRIGGER WORLD WAR THREE.

WHICH MEANS EVEN IF YOUR TEAMMATES SUCCEED IN STOPPING THE SEQUID INVASION, IF THEY ARE ABLE TO STOP THEM--

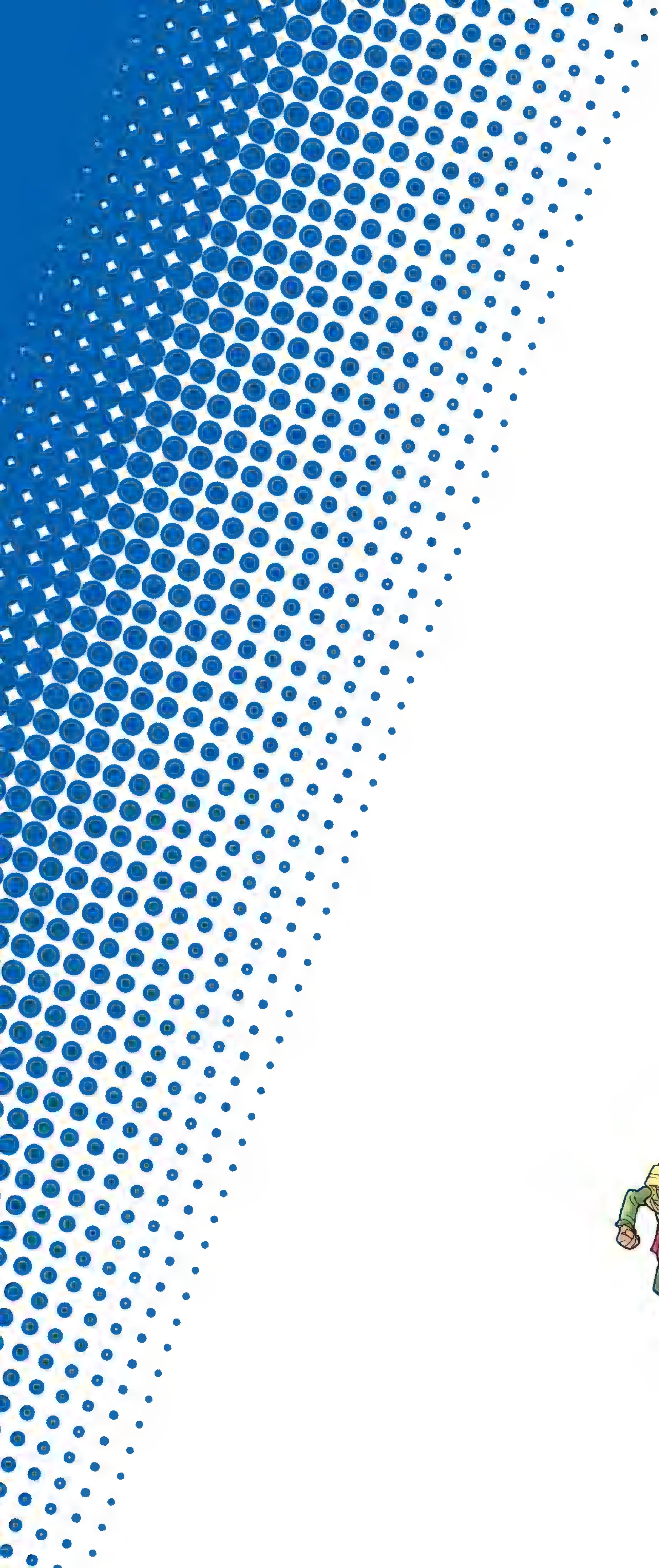
THEY MAY NOT HAVE A PLANET TO RETURN HOME TO.





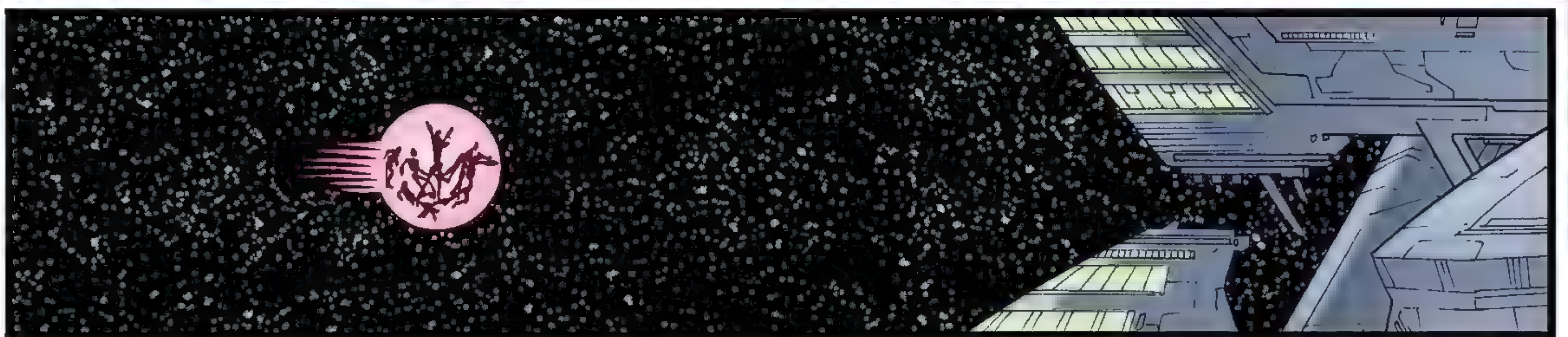






ISSUE FORTY







SILENCE!



WHY DO YOU ATTACK US?! IS IT TRUE THAT YOU HAVE BEEN OVERRUN BY THIS SLAVE RACE--THESE SEQUIDS?

ENSLAVED BY SLAVES, YES-- BECAUSE OF HIM!



AND WE ARE HERE TO STOP THEM-- BECAUSE OF HIM!

WILL YOU HELP US?

TO STOP THE VILE SEQUIDS WE WOULD ALLY WITH TRANSGROTH HIMSELF.



FIGHTING THE LACK OF PRESSURE IN SPACE-- I HAD TO KEEP PULLING ON THE GLOBE TO KEEP IT INTACT SO THE AIR DIDN'T LEAK OUT--AND SEALING UP THAT WALL--

I'VE NEVER USED MY POWERS ON THAT SCALE SO MUCH AT ONE TIME. I JUST--

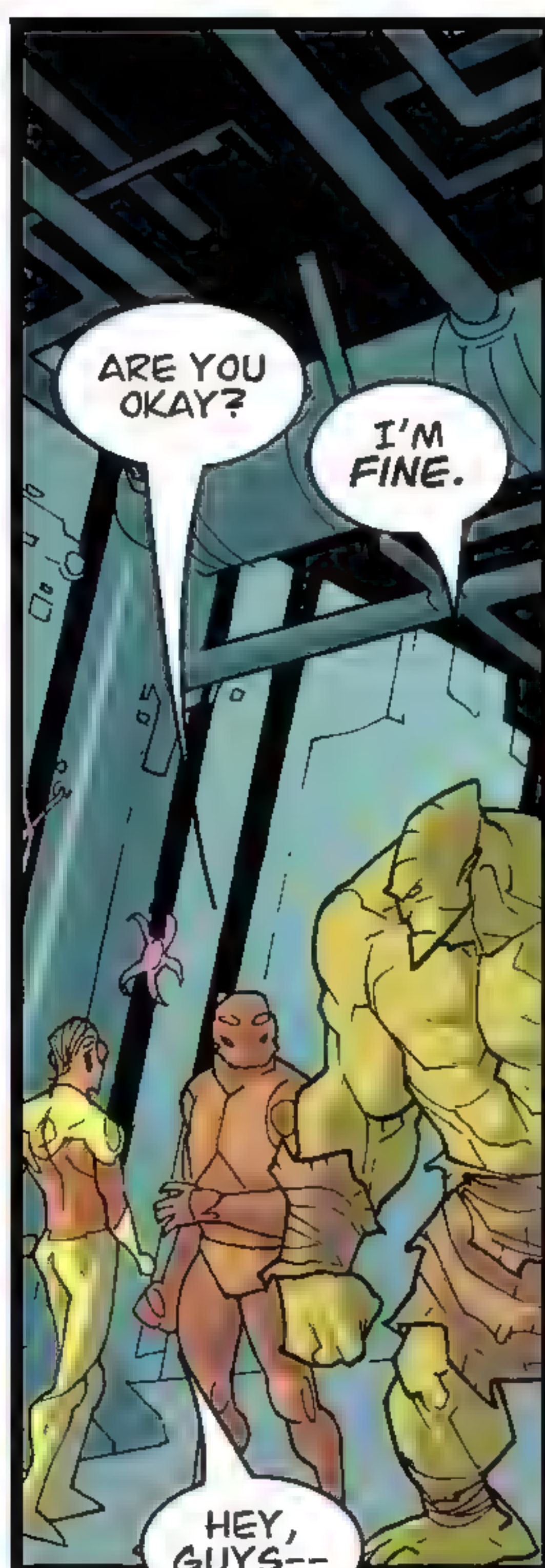
I JUST NEED A MINUTE TO CATCH MY BREATH.

IT'S OKAY-- I GOT YOU.



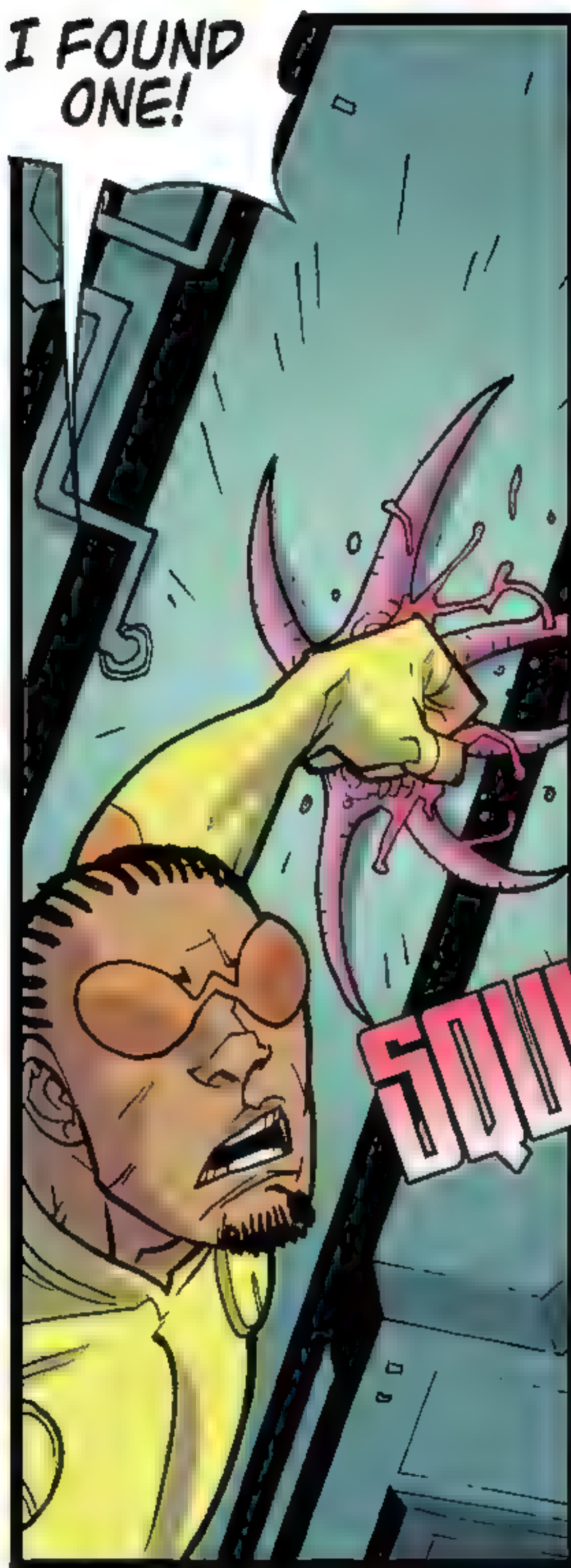
ARE YOU OKAY?

I'M FINE.



HEY, GUYS--

I FOUND ONE!



NO! YOU HAVE ALERTED THEM TO YOUR PRESENCE!

THEY WILL KNOW YOU ARE HERE IMMEDIATELY!





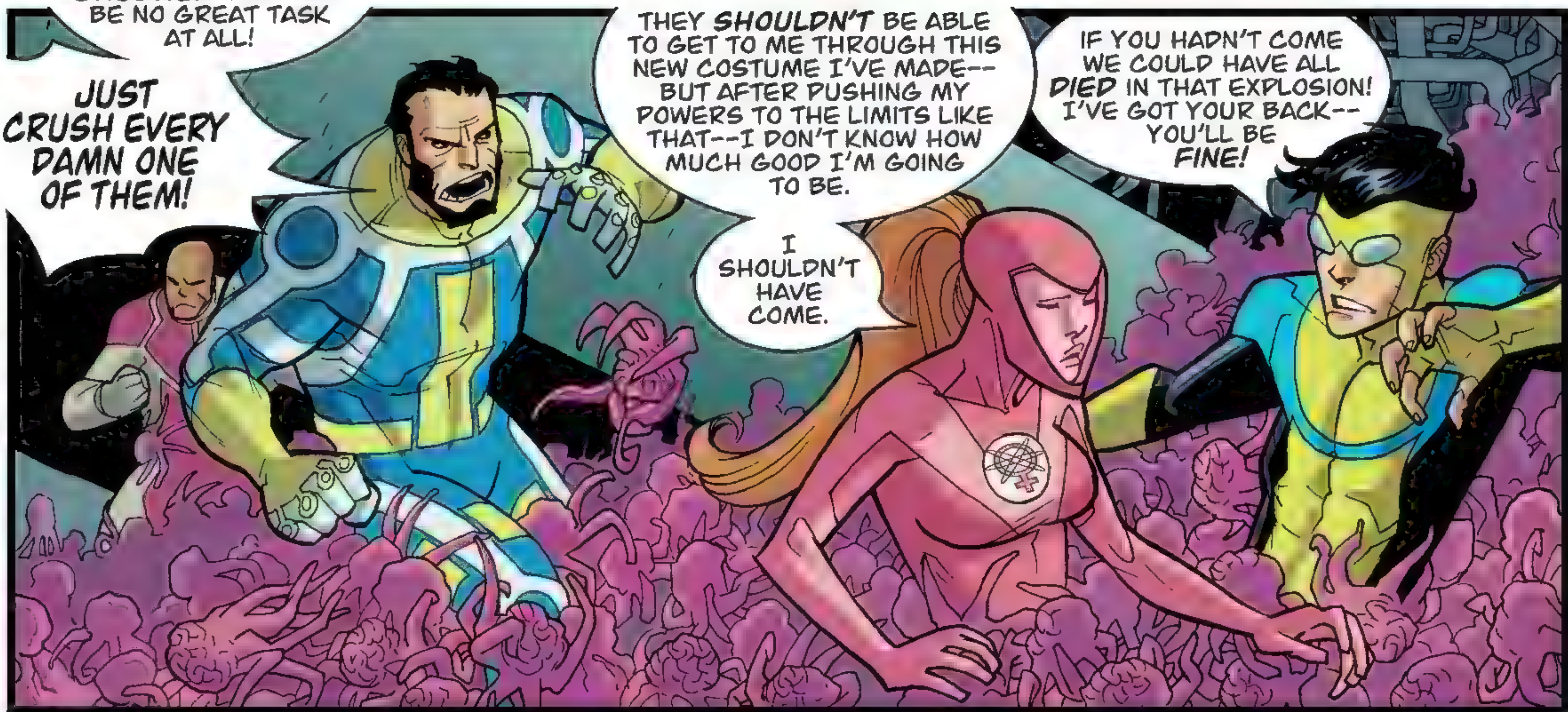
BULLETPROOF
HAS REVEALED
THEIR VULNERABILITY.
IF THESE CREATURES
CAN BE SO EASILY
CRUSHED THIS WILL
BE NO GREAT TASK
AT ALL!

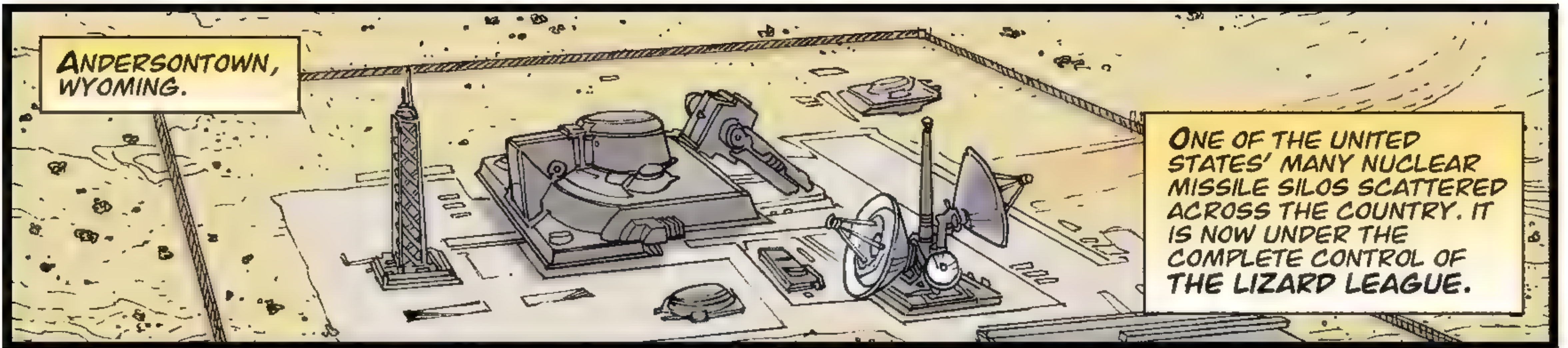
JUST
CRUSH EVERY
DAMN ONE
OF THEM!

THEY SHOULDN'T BE ABLE
TO GET TO ME THROUGH THIS
NEW COSTUME I'VE MADE---
BUT AFTER PUSHING MY
POWERS TO THE LIMITS LIKE
THAT--I DON'T KNOW HOW
MUCH GOOD I'M GOING
TO BE.

I
SHOULDN'T
HAVE
COME.

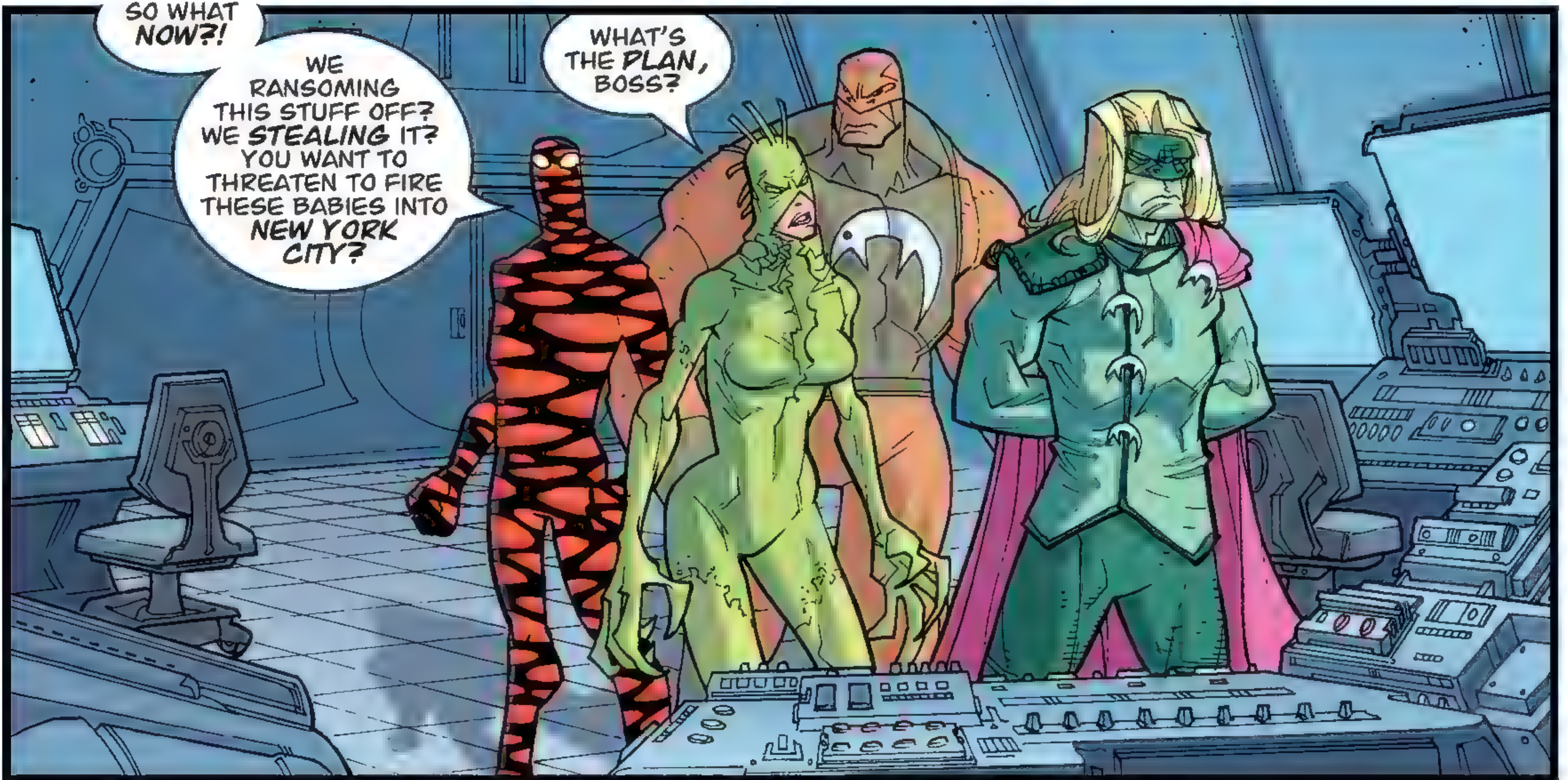
IF YOU HADN'T COME
WE COULD HAVE ALL
DIED IN THAT EXPLOSION!
I'VE GOT YOUR BACK--
YOU'LL BE
FINE!





ANDERSONTOWN,
WYOMING.

ONE OF THE UNITED STATES' MANY NUCLEAR MISSILE SILOS SCATTERED ACROSS THE COUNTRY. IT IS NOW UNDER THE COMPLETE CONTROL OF THE LIZARD LEAGUE.



THE **PLAN**, MY MINIONS, IS TO **SIT TIGHT**. THE GOVERNMENT KNOWS WE'RE **HERE**. THEY **KNOW** WHAT WE NOW HAVE CONTROL OVER--AND THEY'RE GOING TO DO WHATEVER THEY CAN TO GET IT **BACK**.

THEY'RE GOING TO SEND IN THEIR BEST LINE OF **DEFENSE**--WE'LL BE UNDER ATTACK IN AN HOUR OR **LESS**, I'M SURE. ALL WE NEED TO DO IS **HOLD OUR GROUND**.

ONCE THIS ATTACK **FAILS**--ONCE THEY **KNOW** THEY CAN'T **FORCE** US OUT OF HERE OR **STOP** US--

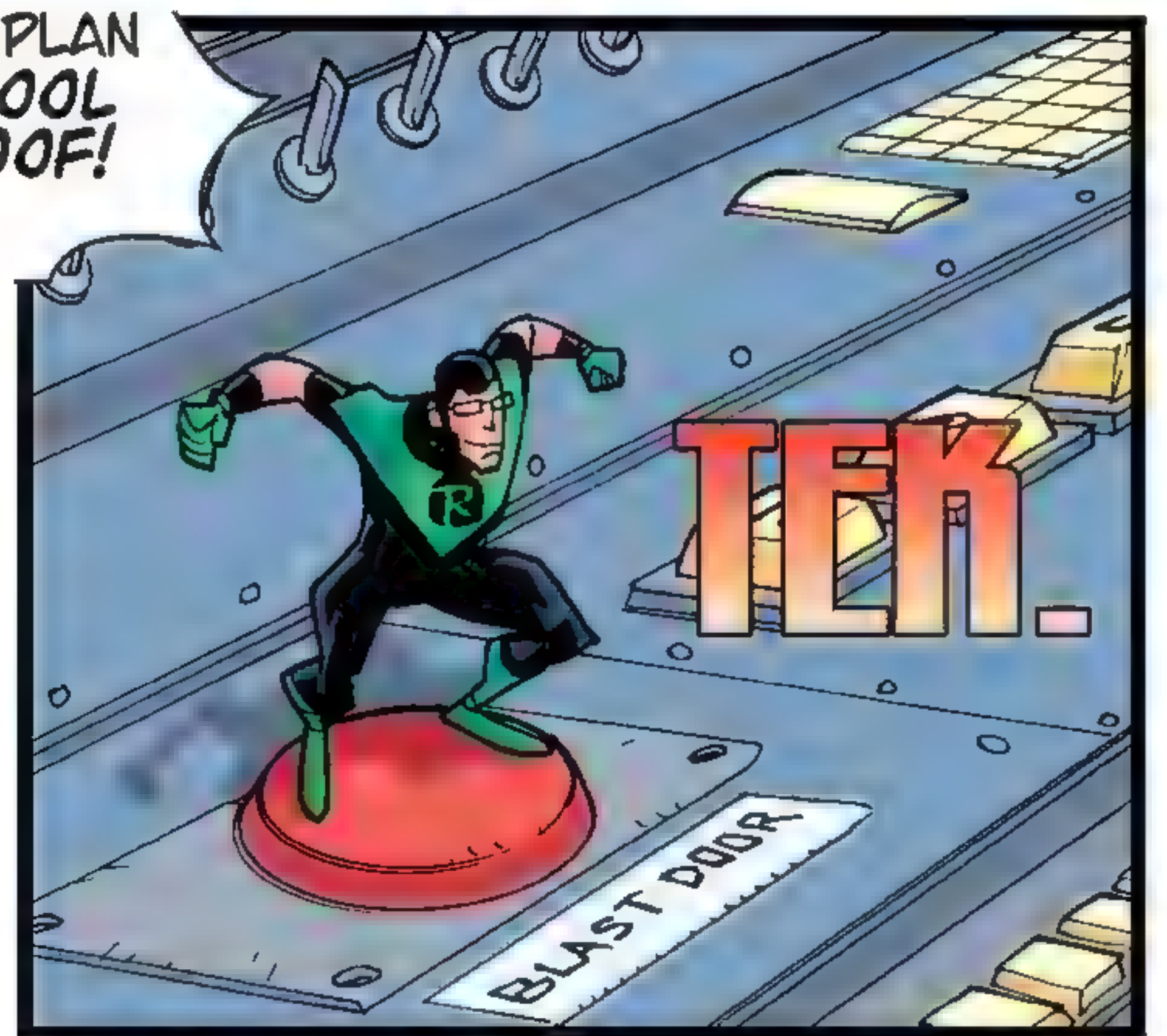
THAT'S WHEN THEY'LL **START** **NEGOTIATING**.



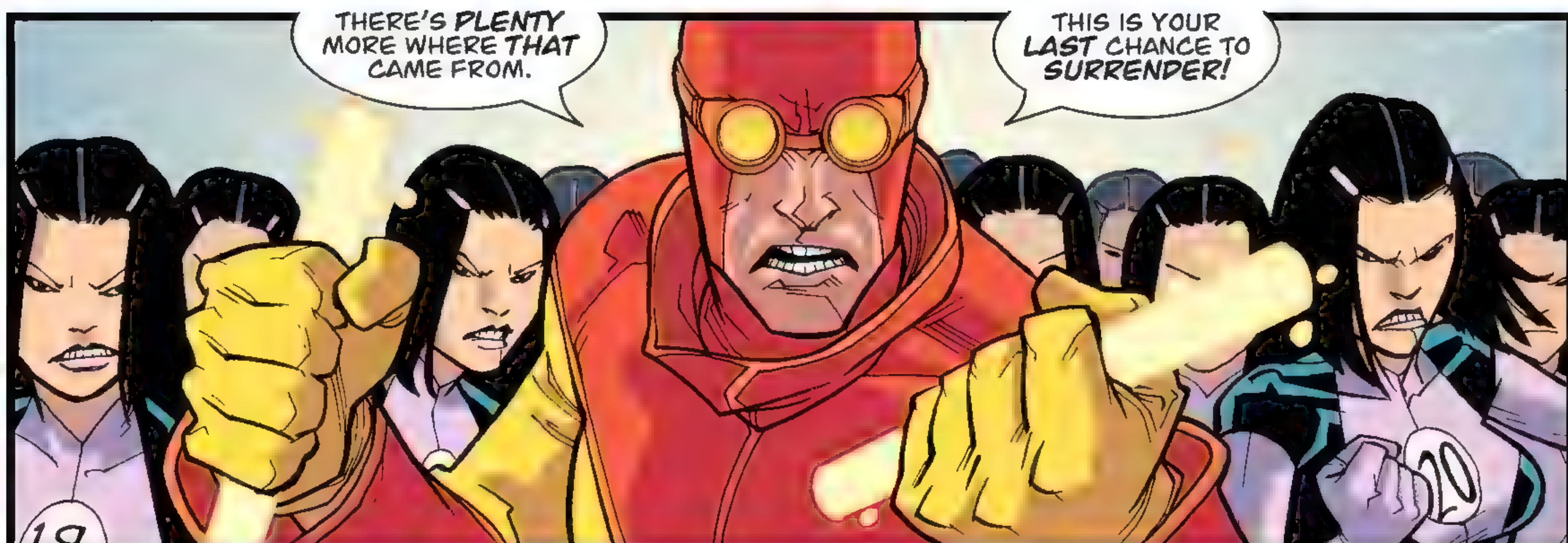
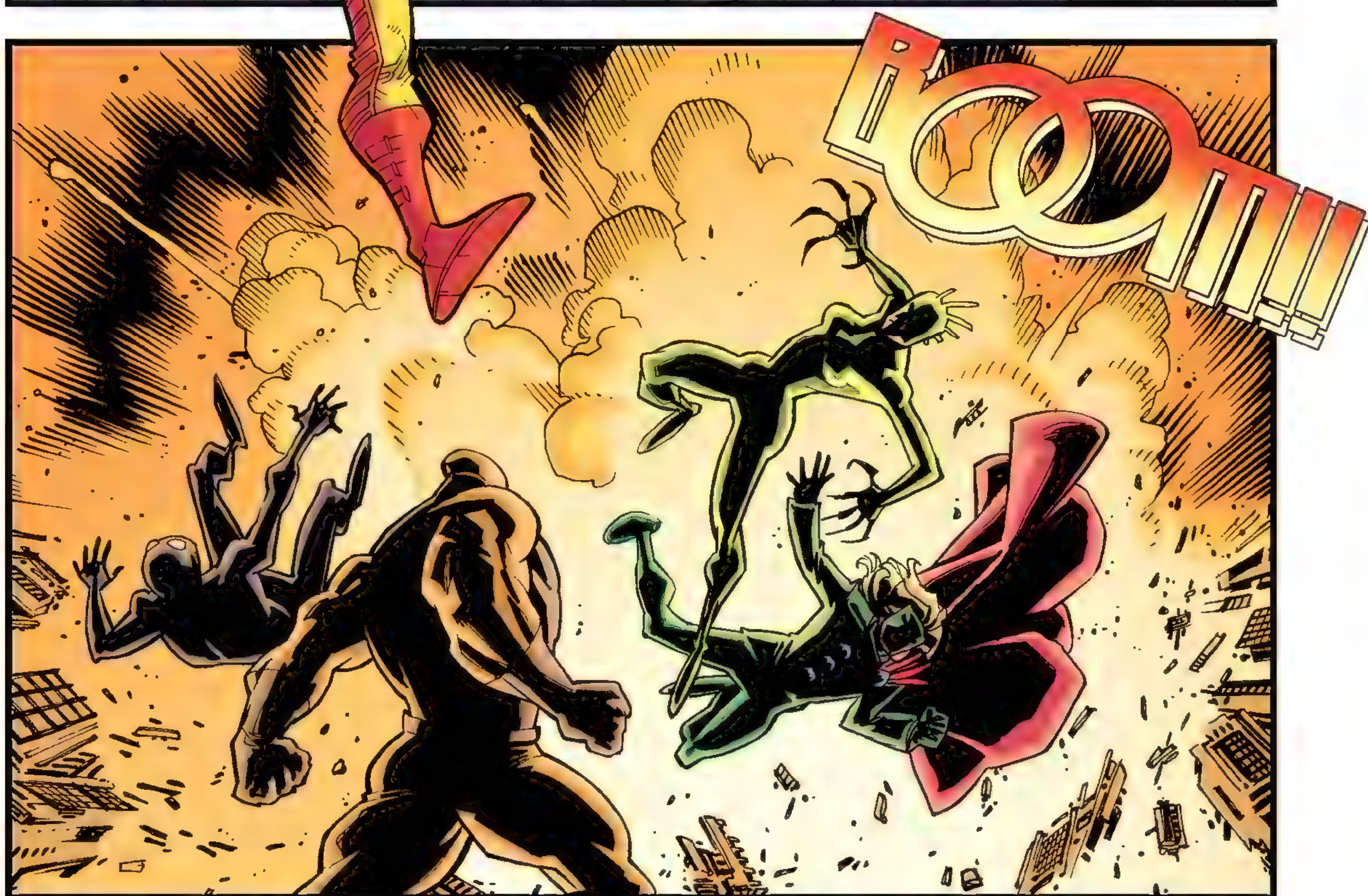
IF WE DO THIS **RIGHT**--WE'LL GET WHATEVER WE **WANT**--WE'LL CONTROL THIS **ENTIRE** COUNTRY AND WE WON'T EVEN HAVE TO FIRE **ONE** MISSILE.

THE BEST PART IS THIS CONTROL ROOM WAS BUILT TO WITHSTAND A **SUPERPOWERED ASSAULT**. OUR SOLDIERS OUTSIDE WILL BE ABLE TO PICK OFF ANYONE WHO'S TRYING TO PRY THE **BLAST DOORS** OPEN.

THIS PLAN IS **FOOL PROOF**!



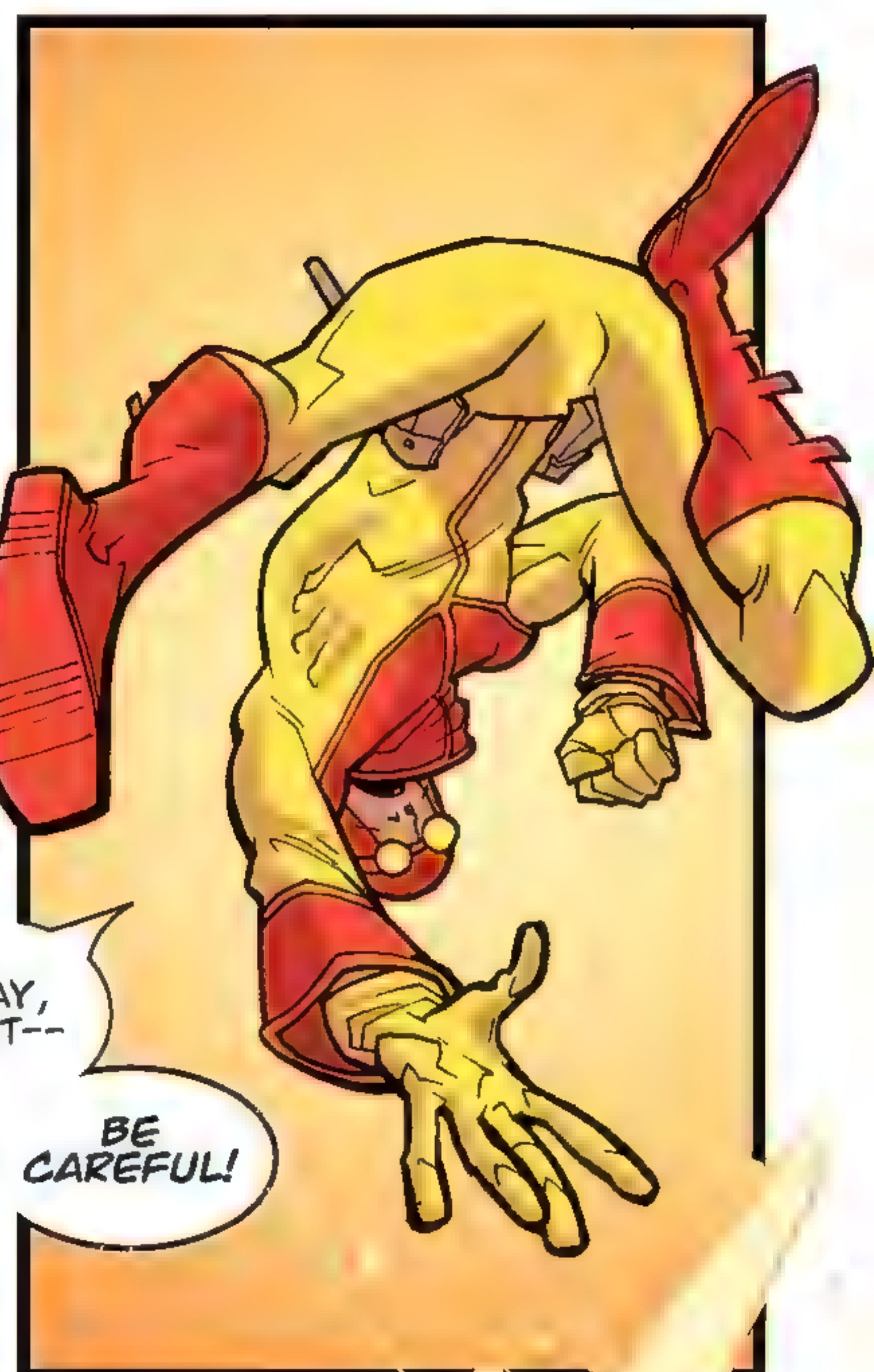
TER.

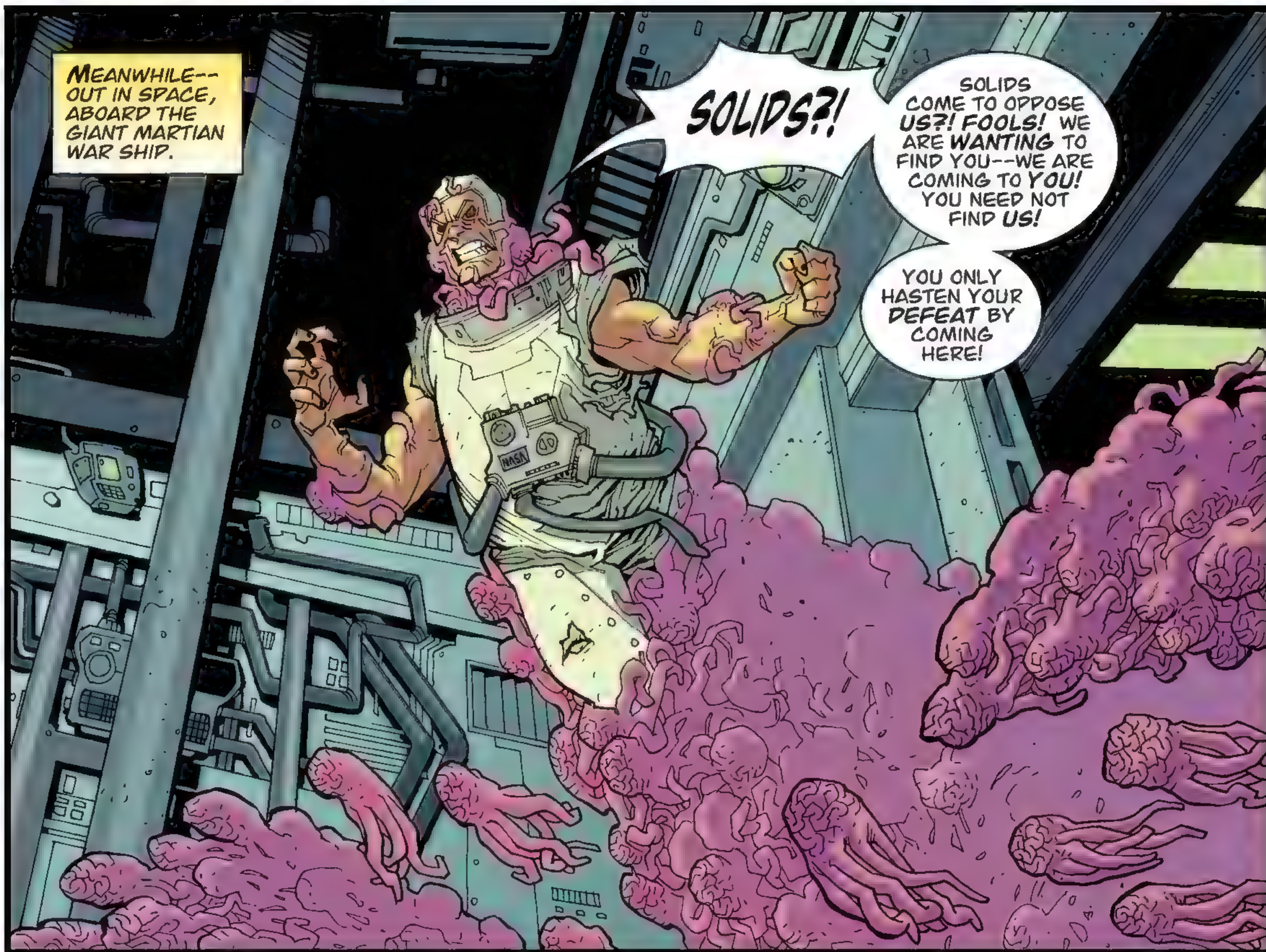


I RESPECTFULLY
DECLINE!



KATE!!



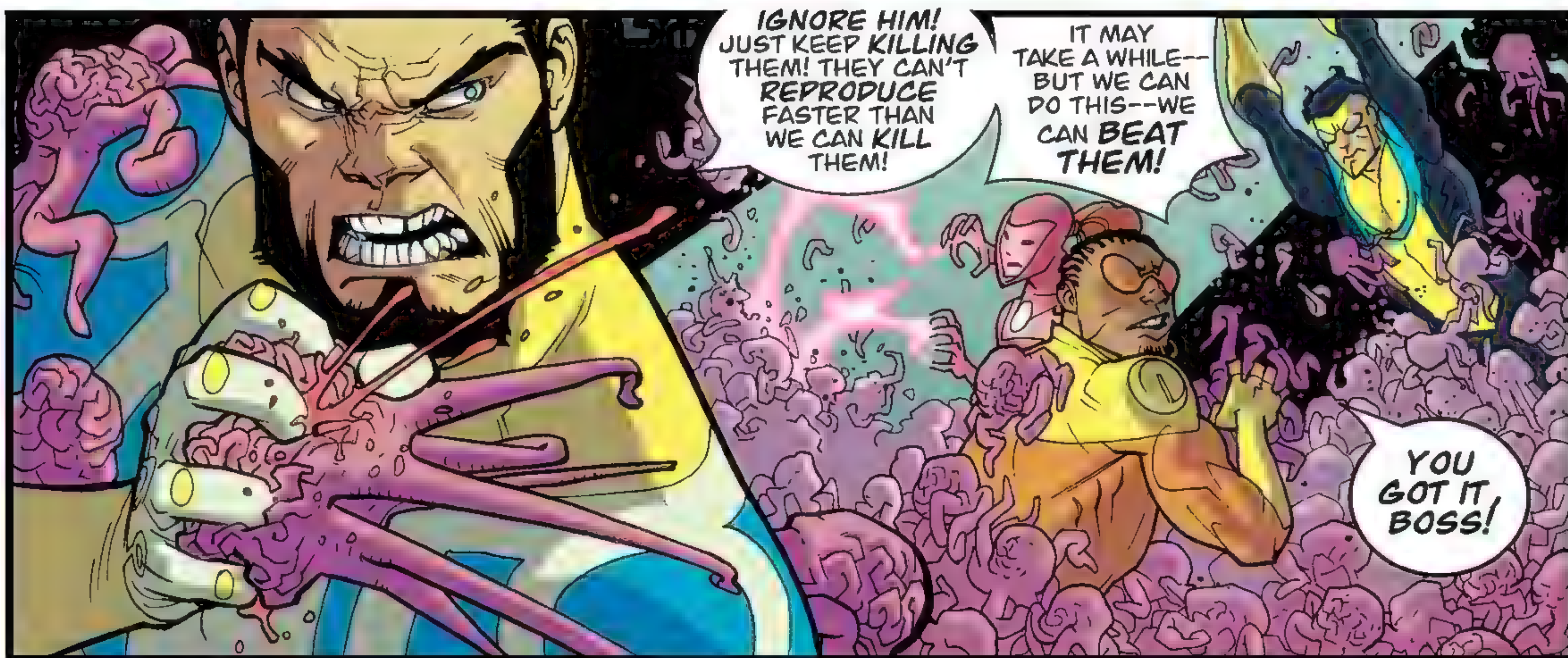


MEANWHILE---
OUT IN SPACE,
ABOARD THE
GIANT MARTIAN
WAR SHIP.

SOLIDS?!

SOLIDS
COME TO OPPOSE
US?! FOOLS! WE
ARE WANTING TO
FIND YOU--WE ARE
COMING TO YOU!
YOU NEED NOT
FIND US!

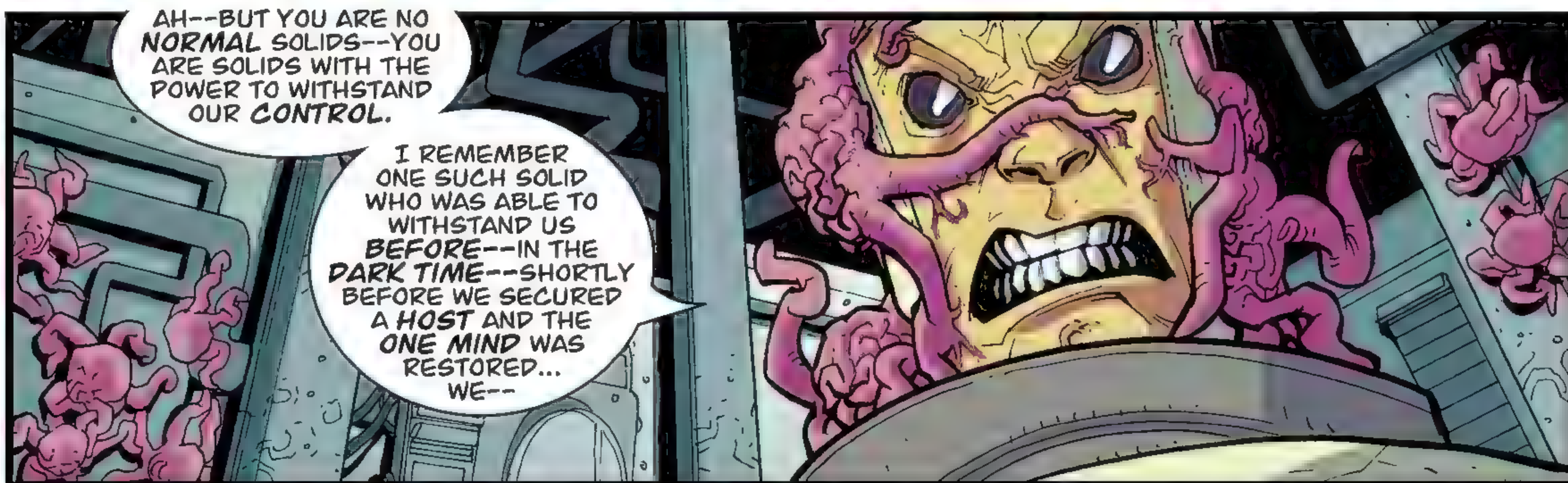
YOU ONLY
HASTEN YOUR
DEFEAT BY
COMING
HERE!



IGNORE HIM!
JUST KEEP KILLING
THEM! THEY CAN'T
REPRODUCE
FASTER THAN
WE CAN KILL
THEM!

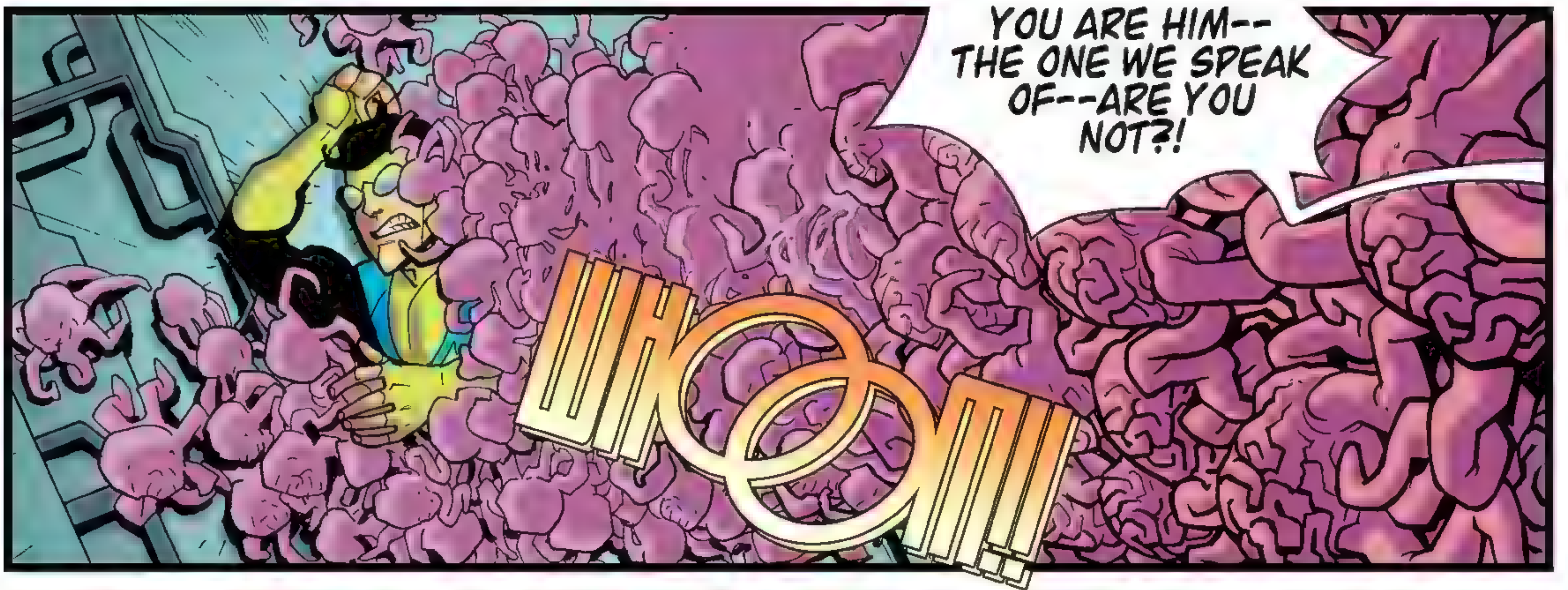
IT MAY
TAKE A WHILE---
BUT WE CAN
DO THIS--WE
CAN BEAT
THEM!

YOU
GOT IT,
BOSS!



AH--BUT YOU ARE NO
NORMAL SOLIDS--YOU
ARE SOLIDS WITH THE
POWER TO WITHSTAND
OUR CONTROL.

I REMEMBER
ONE SUCH SOLID
WHO WAS ABLE TO
WITHSTAND US
BEFORE--IN THE
DARK TIME--SHORTLY
BEFORE WE SECURED
A HOST AND THE
ONE MIND WAS
RESTORED...
WE--



YOU ARE HIM--
THE ONE WE SPEAK
OF--ARE YOU
NOT?!



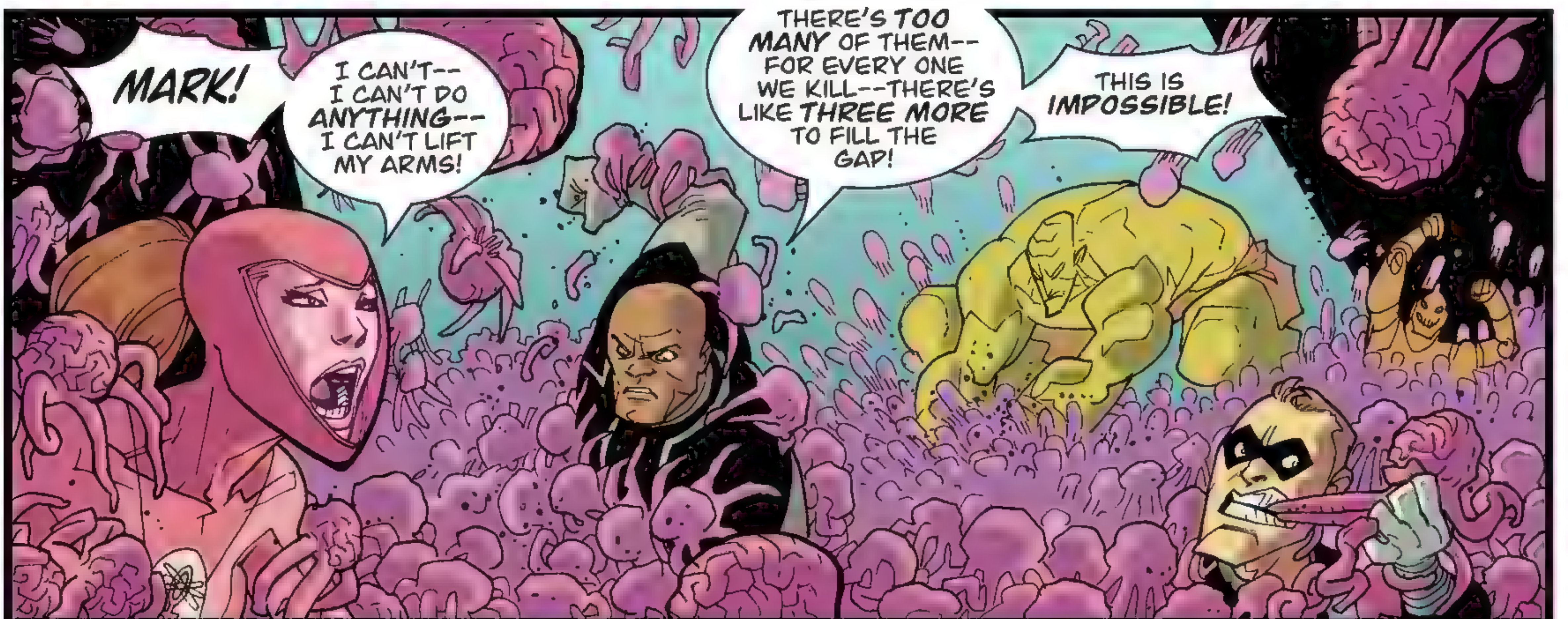
THAT'D BE ME--YEAH.
I'M NOT TOO KEEN ON
HOSTILE TAKEOVERS OF
MY PLANET. IT'S KIND
OF A THING I
HAVE.

IT'S NOTHING
PERSONAL.



STOP--YOU WISH TO
STOP US? I ASSURE
YOU, SOLID--WE CANNOT
BE STOPPED. FOR
CENTURIES WE HAVE
DWELLED AIMLESSLY,
UNWARE OF EVEN OUR
OWN SLAVERY--
CENTURIES WE HAVE
EXISTED IN A HAZE--
MINDLESS.

WE WILL
NEVER
SUFFER
THAT FATE
AGAIN!



MARK!

I CAN'T--
I CAN'T DO
ANYTHING--
I CAN'T LIFT
MY ARMS!

THERE'S TOO
MANY OF THEM--
FOR EVERY ONE
WE KILL--THERE'S
LIKE THREE MORE
TO FILL THE
GAP!

THIS IS
IMPOSSIBLE!



I WILL REACH YOUR
PLANET--THE SOLID
PLANET--FORETOLD IN
THE DEPTHS OF THE
HOST'S MEMORY. WE
WILL SPREAD OUT
AMONG THIS WORLD
AS A GREAT
PLAGUE!

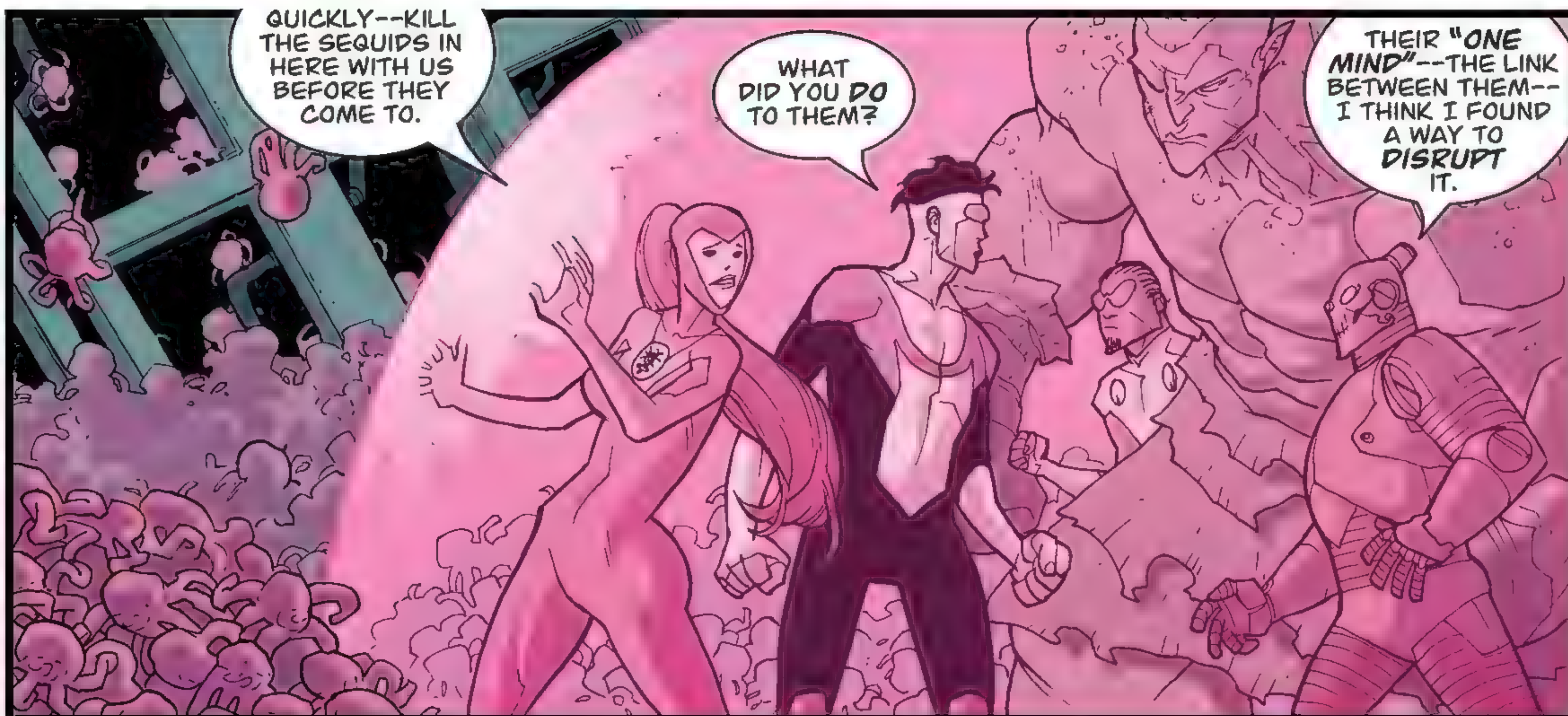
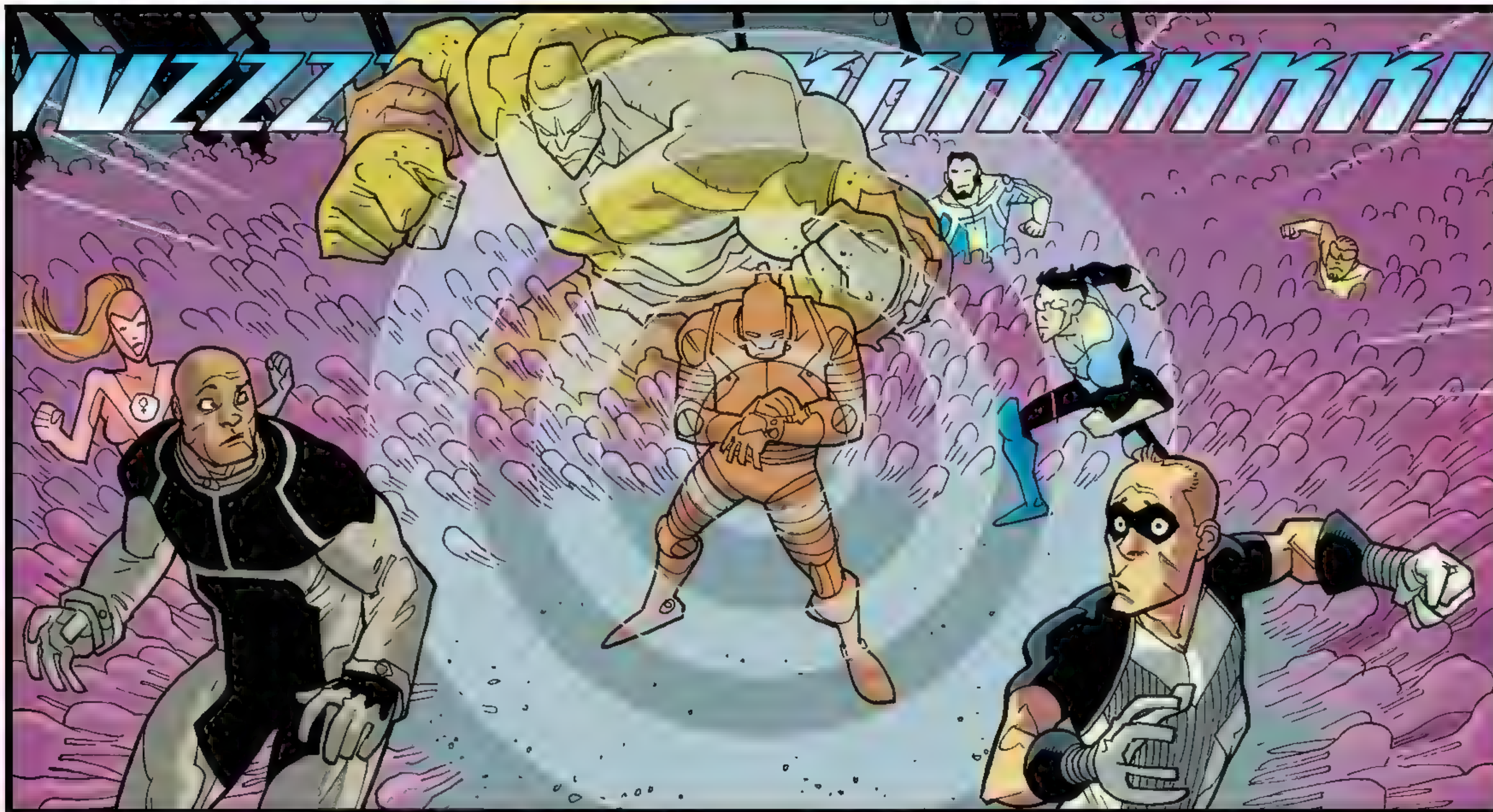
NOTHING
YOU CAN DO
WILL STOP
US!



IRK!!

WHAT
ARE YOU
DOING?!

TRYING TO
SEE IF THERE'S
SOMETHING
HE HASN'T
THOUGHT OF.



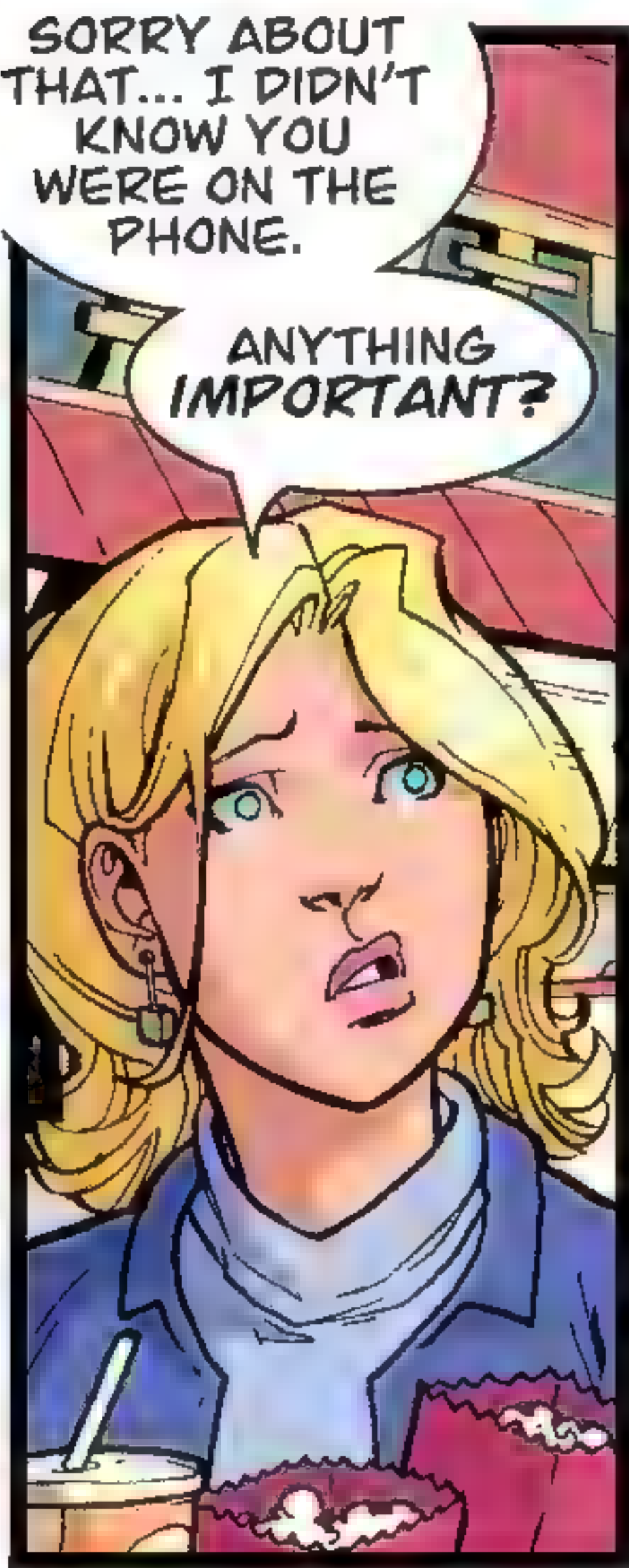


MEANWHILE, ON EARTH. AMBER BENNETT IS OUT SEEING A MOVIE WITH GARY--HER "FRIEND" FROM COLLEGE.

I GOT THE POPCORN AND THE DRINKS--LET'S GET IN THERE BEFORE ALL THE GOOD SEATS ARE TAKEN.

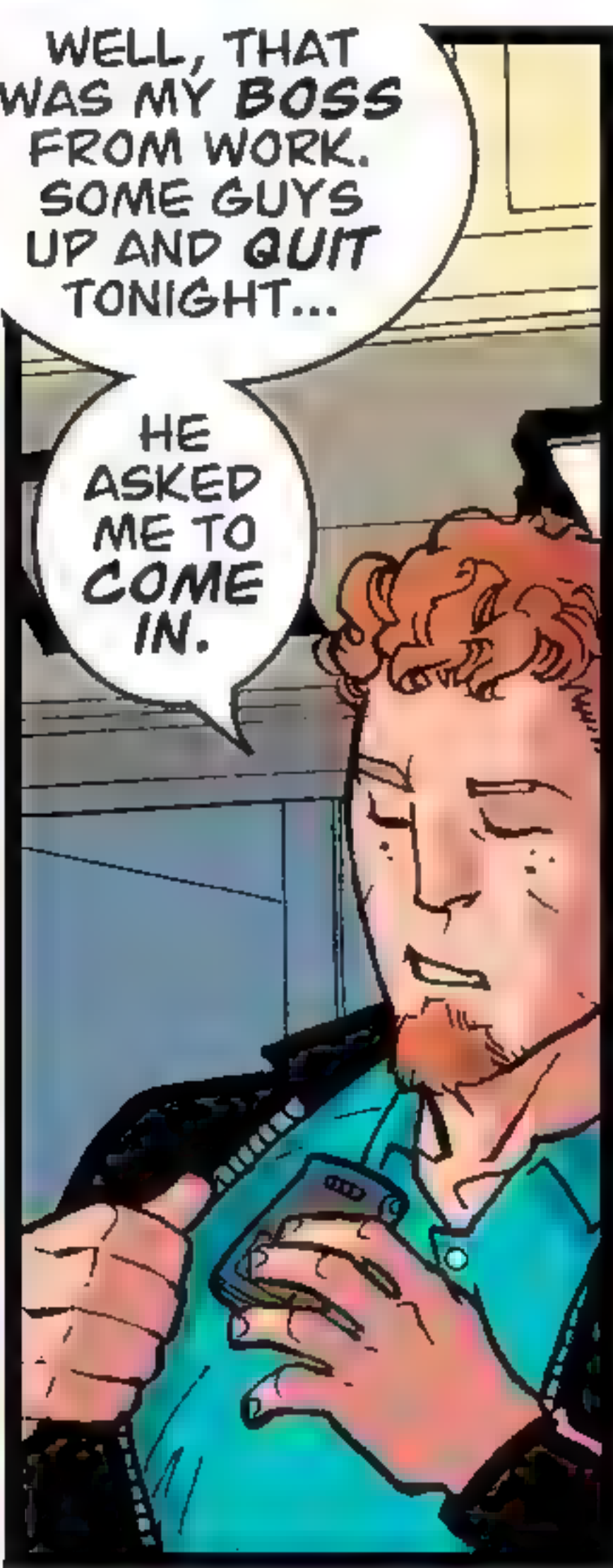
YEAH, NO, NO-- I UNDERSTAND. I COMPLETELY UNDERSTAND.

OKAY-- BYE.



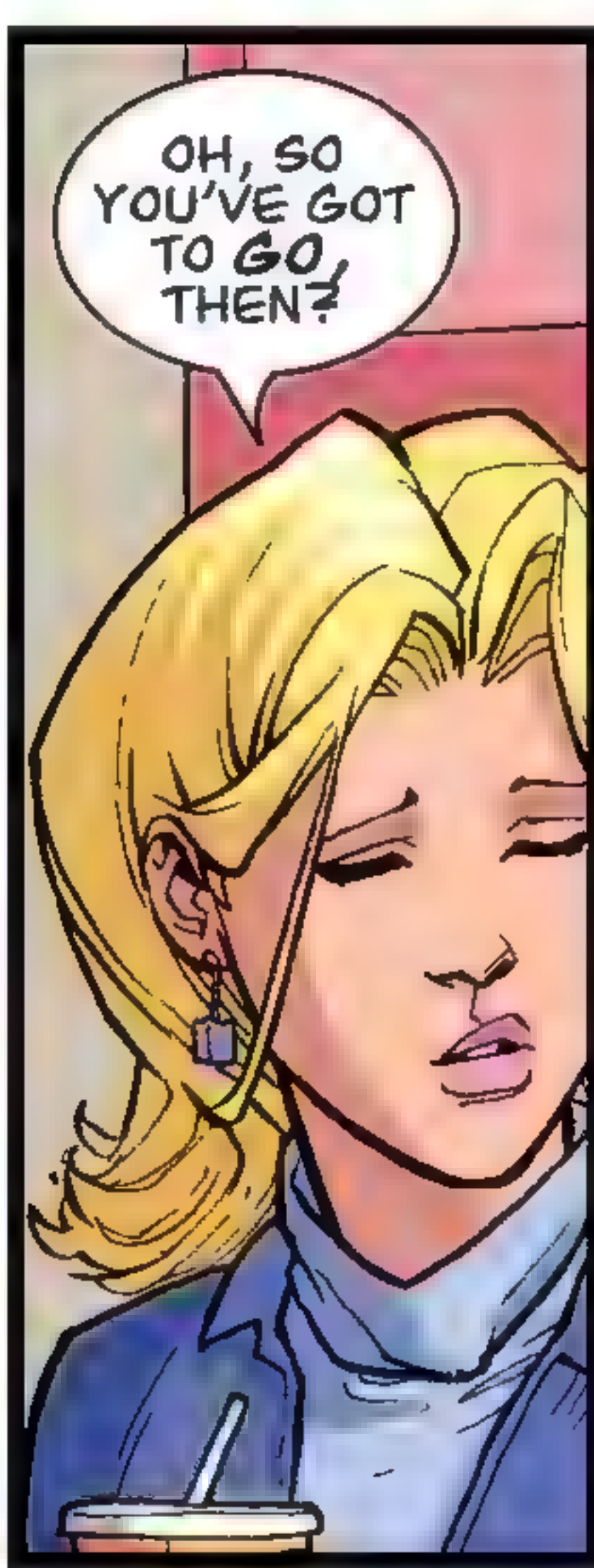
SORRY ABOUT THAT... I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE ON THE PHONE.

ANYTHING IMPORTANT?



WELL, THAT WAS MY BOSS FROM WORK. SOME GUYS UP AND QUIT TONIGHT...

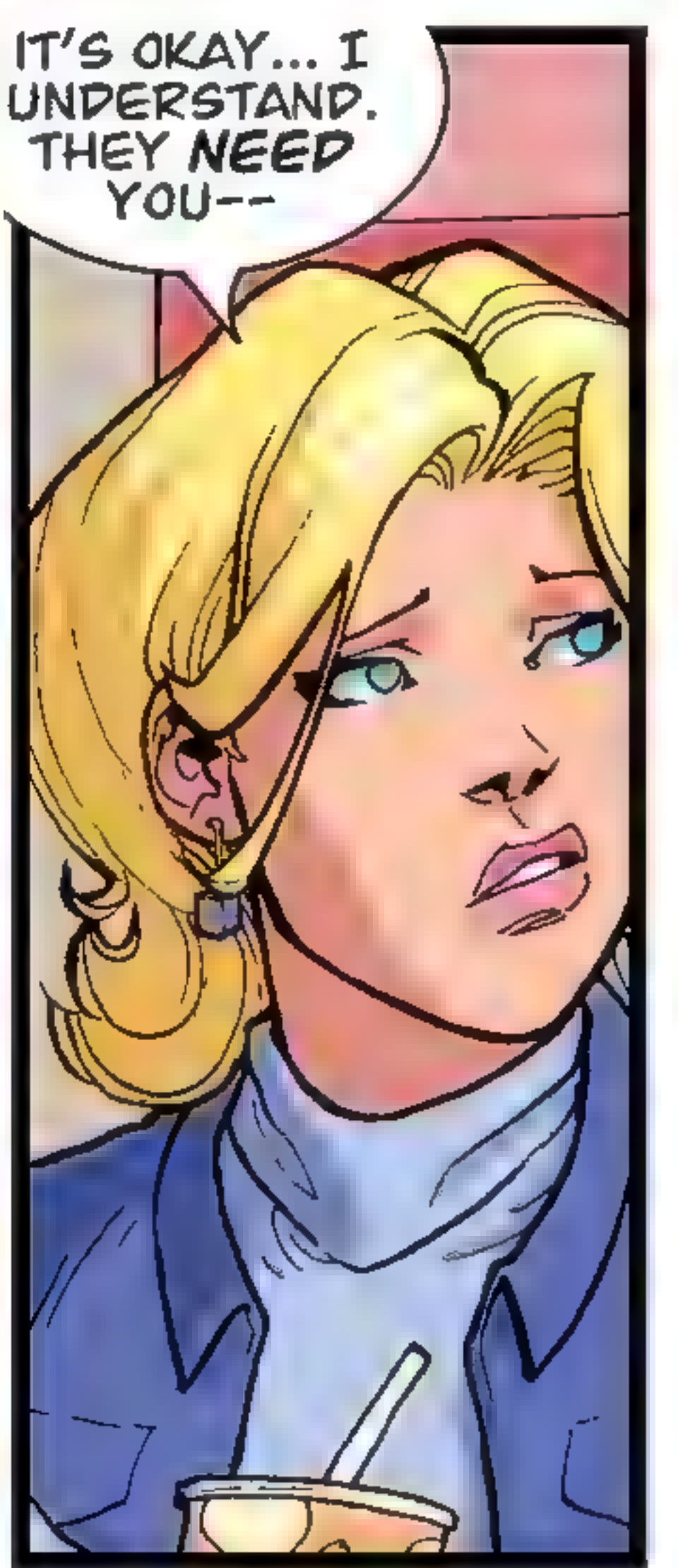
HE ASKED ME TO COME IN.



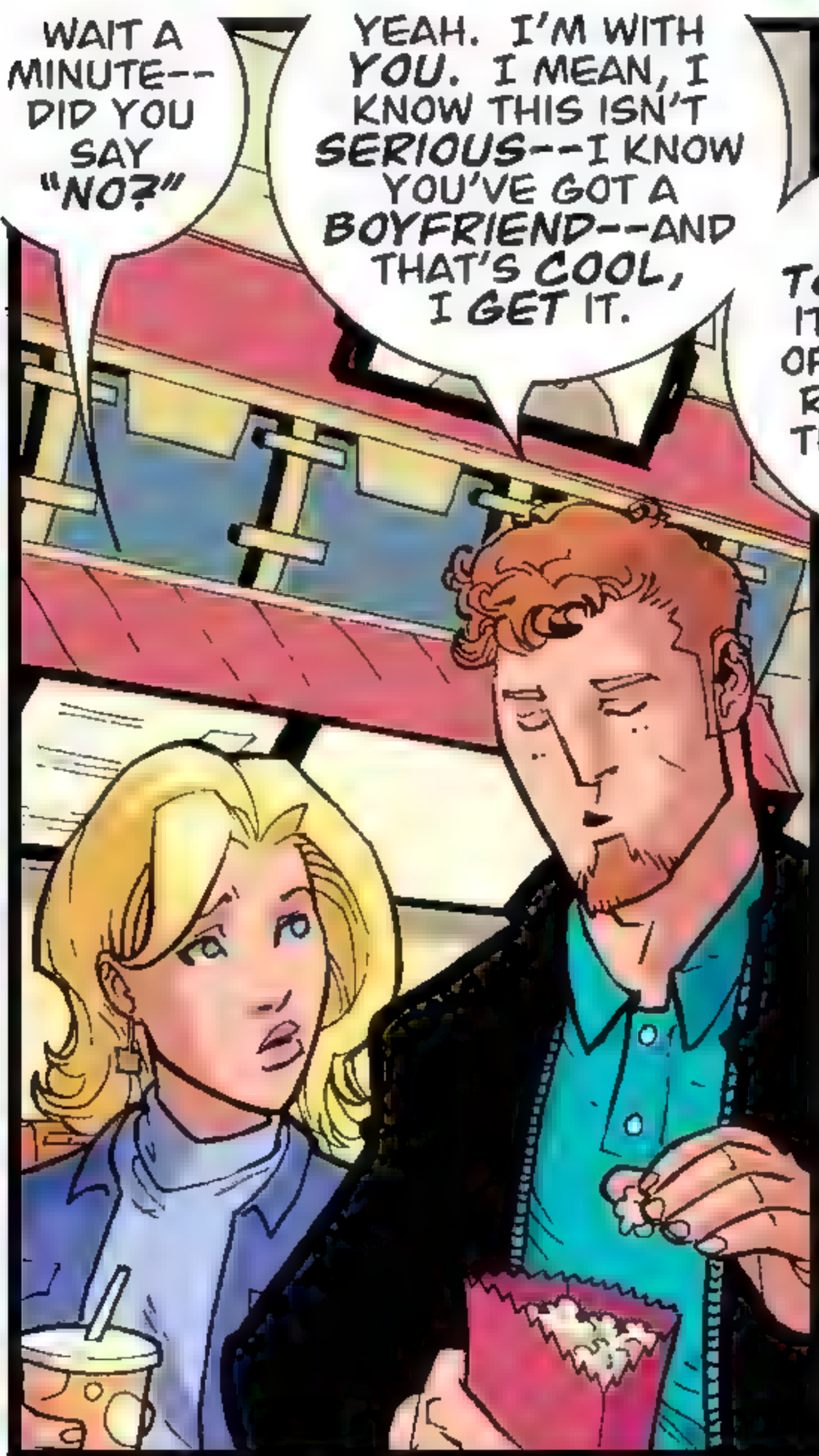
OH, SO YOU'VE GOT TO GO, THEN?



NO.

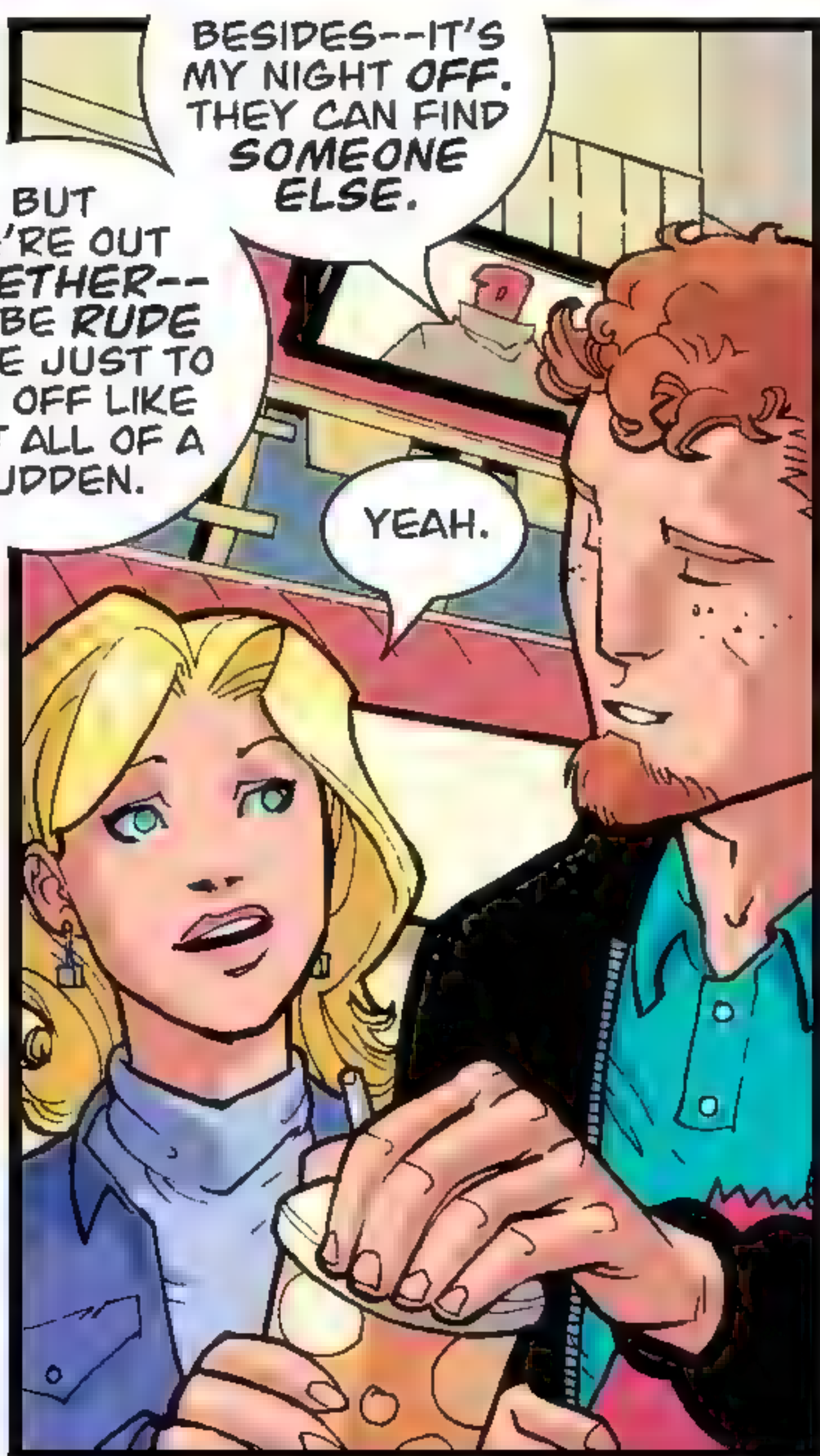


IT'S OKAY... I UNDERSTAND. THEY NEED YOU--



WAIT A MINUTE-- DID YOU SAY "NO?"

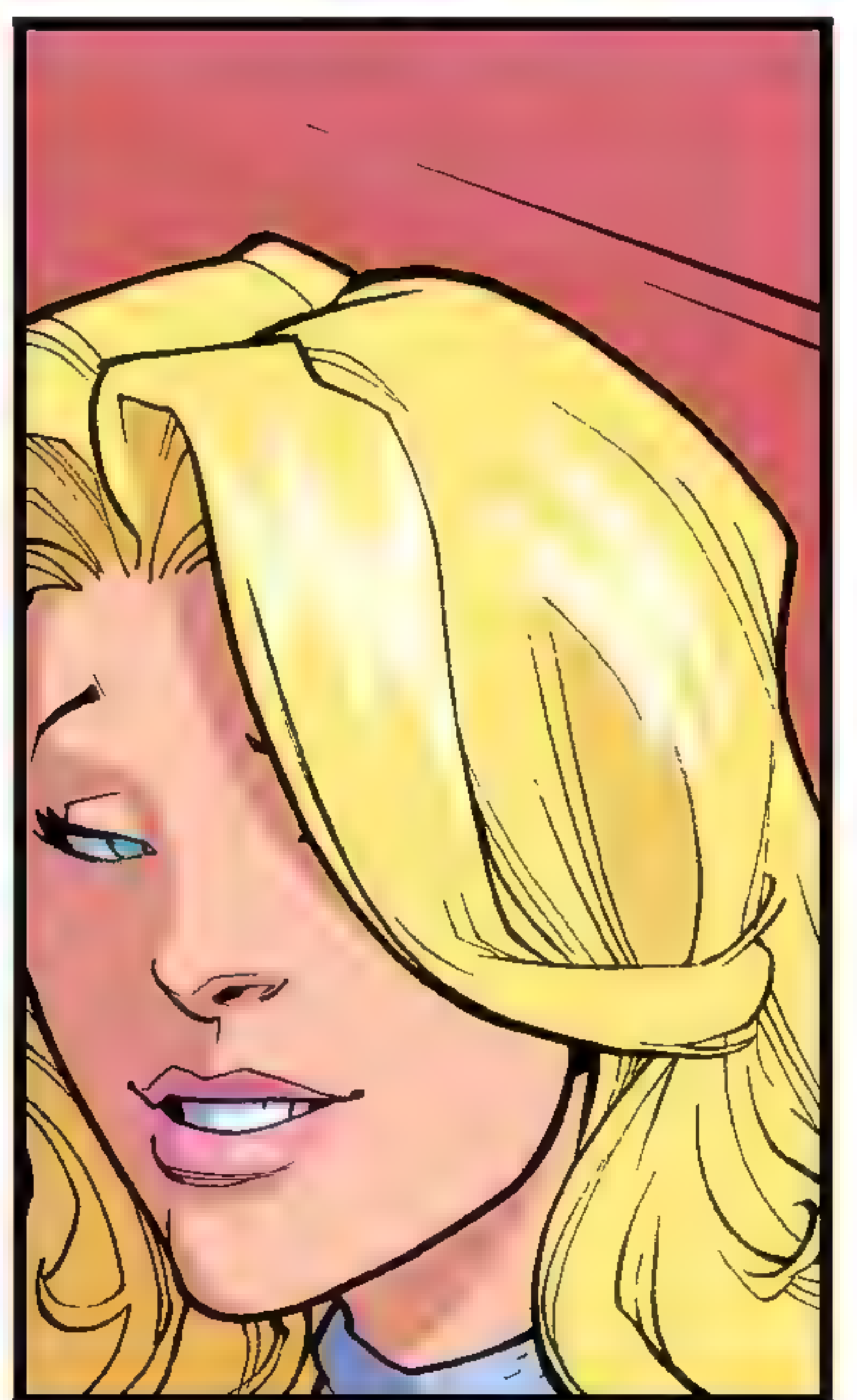
YEAH. I'M WITH YOU. I MEAN, I KNOW THIS ISN'T SERIOUS--I KNOW YOU'VE GOT A BOYFRIEND--AND THAT'S COOL, I GET IT.

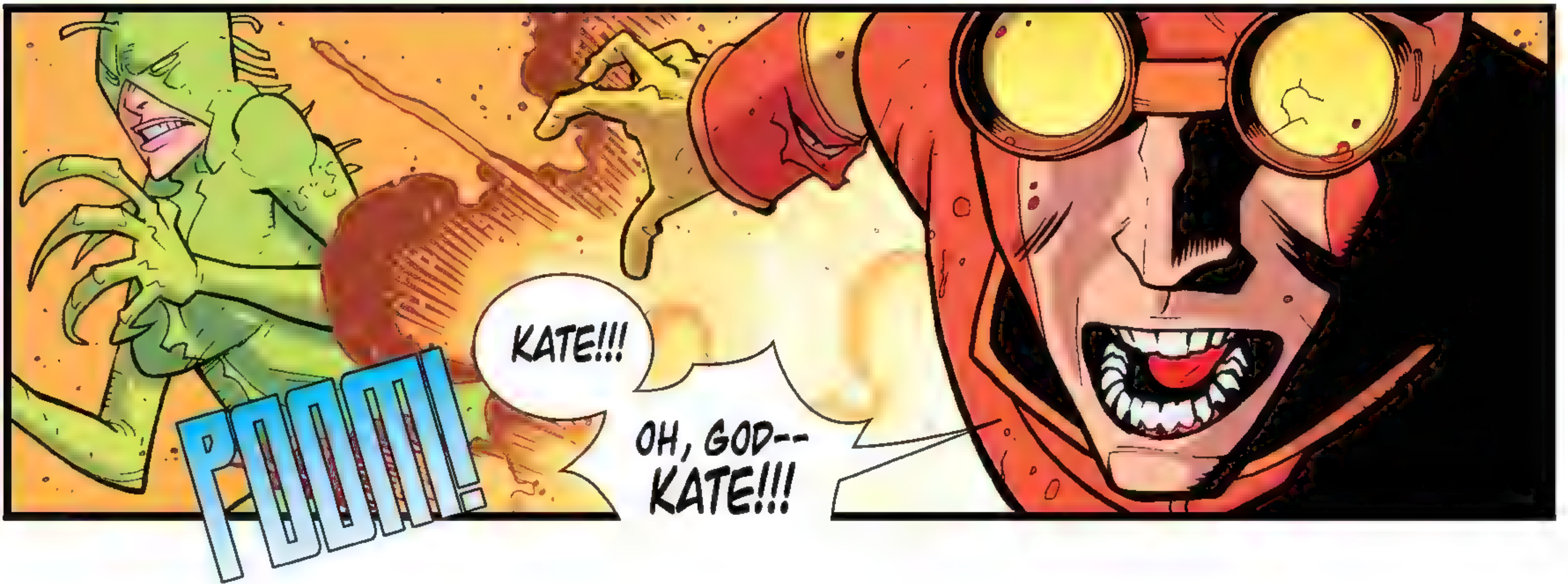
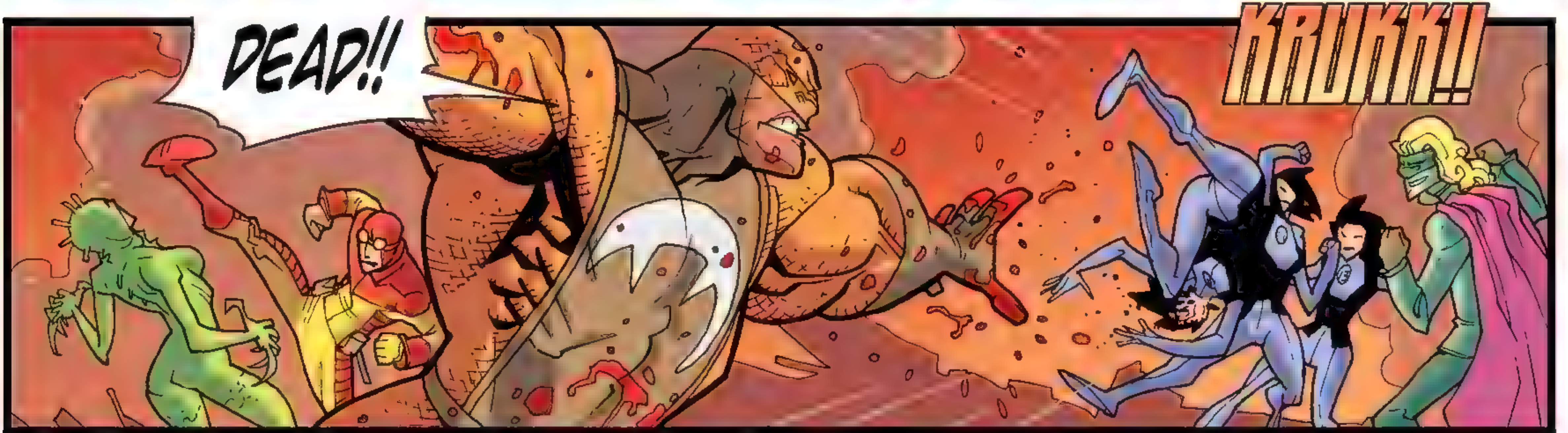
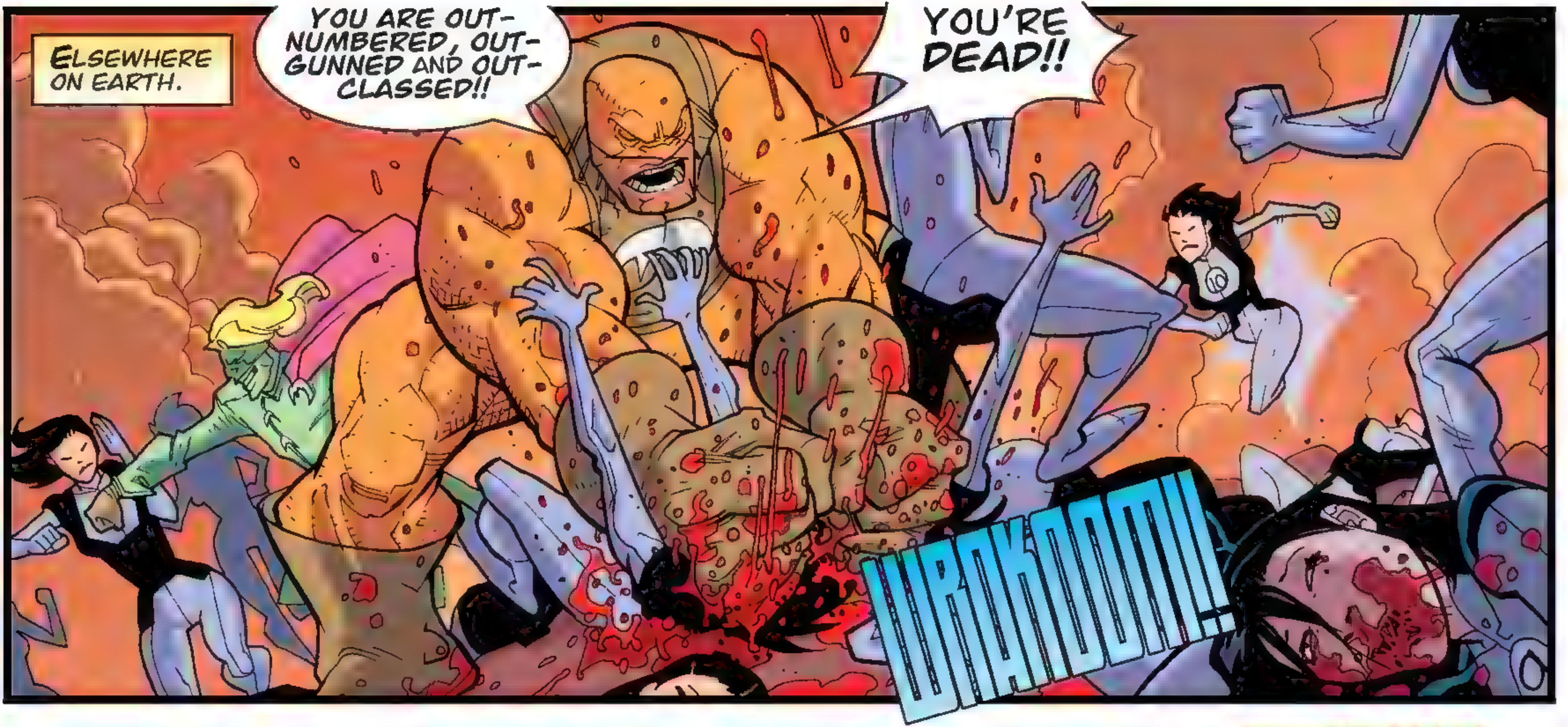


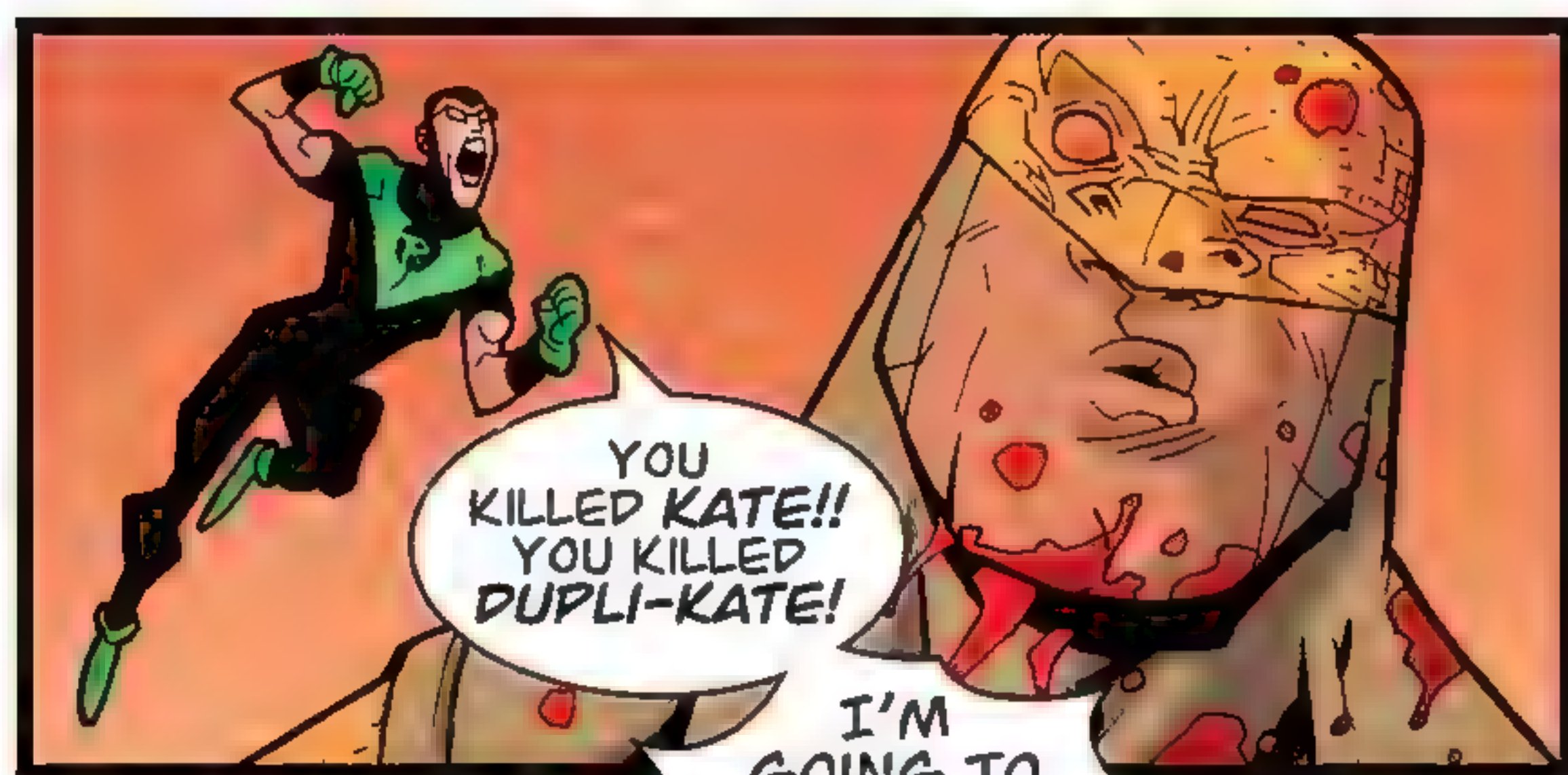
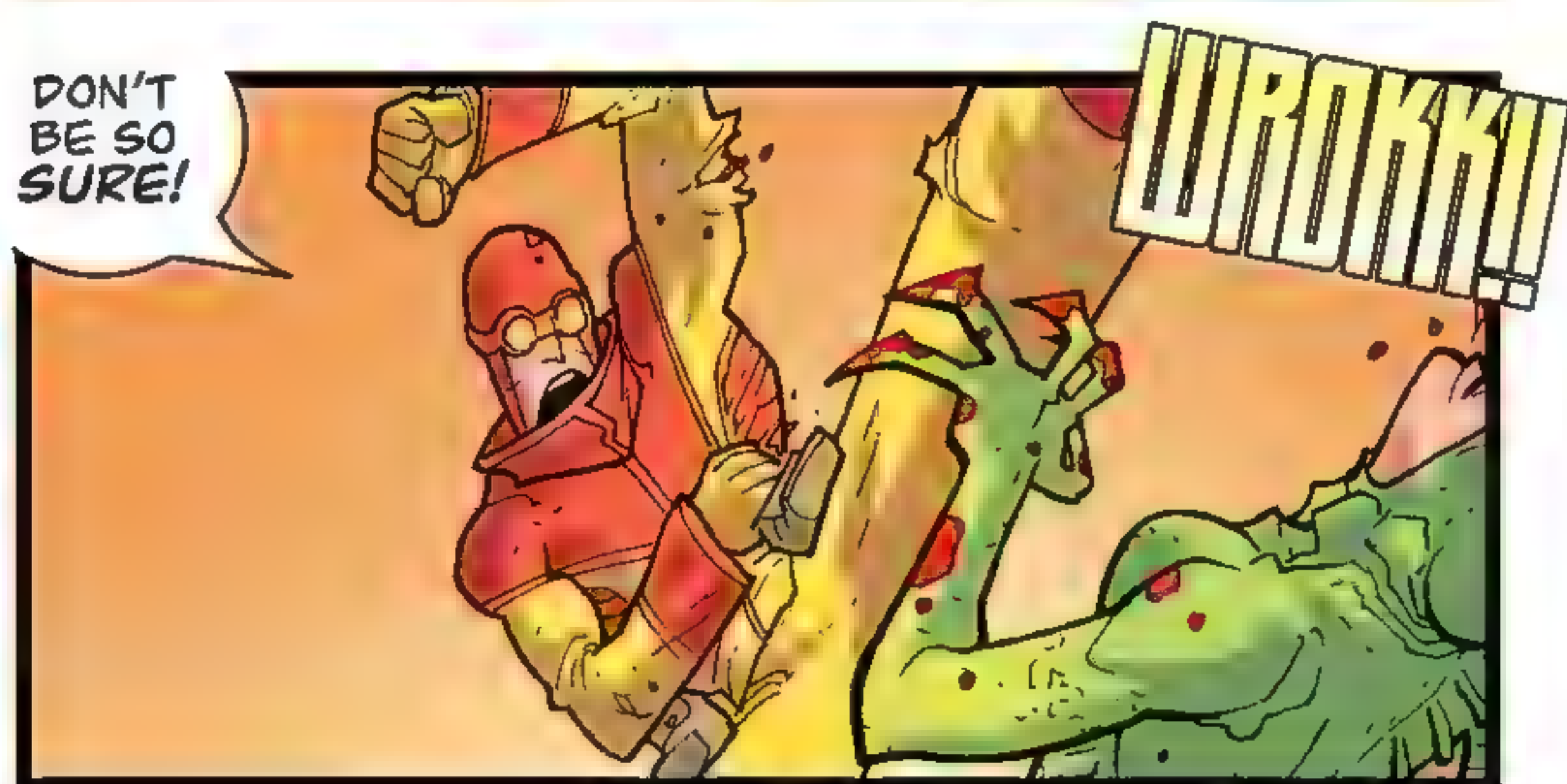
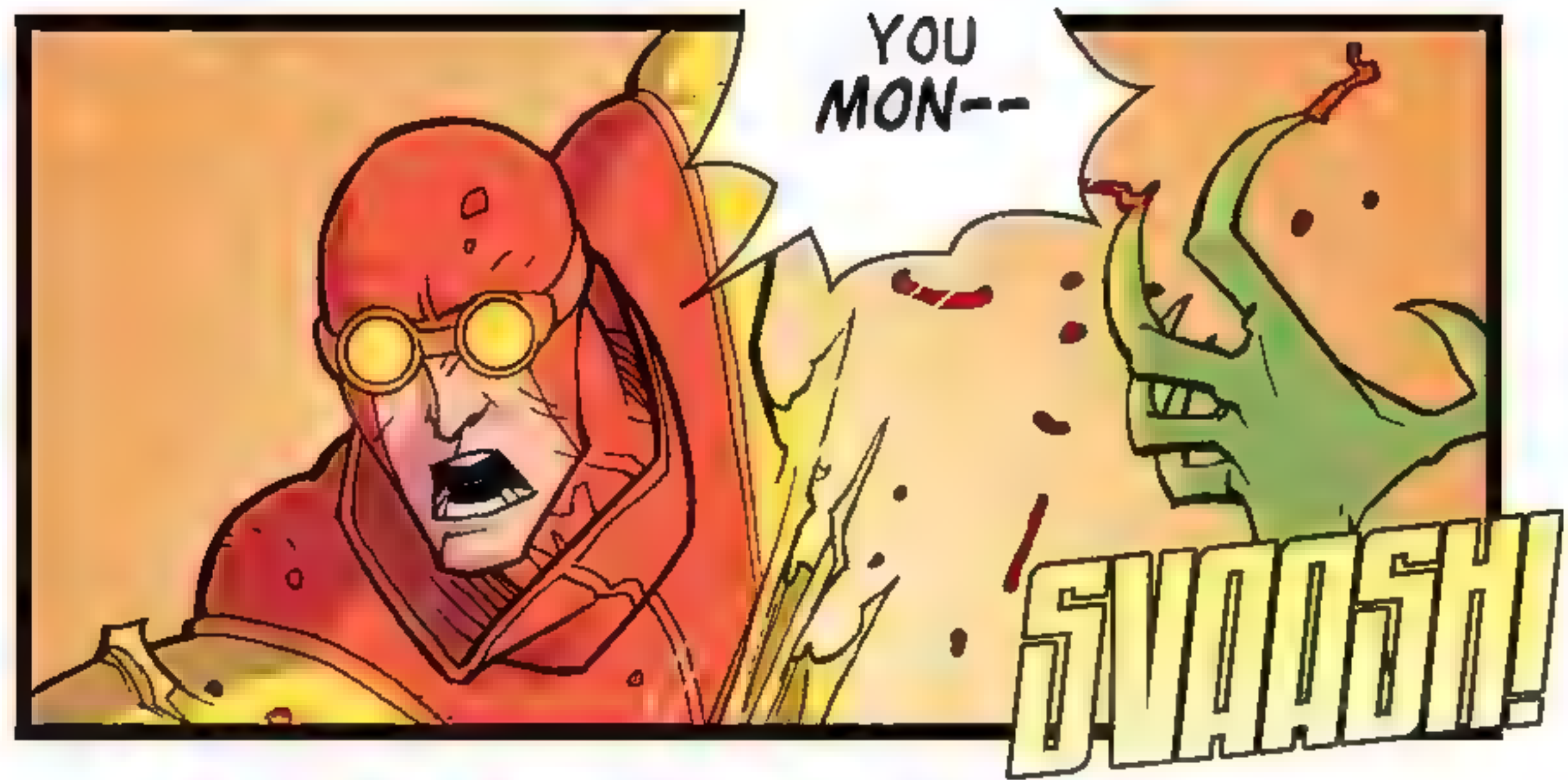
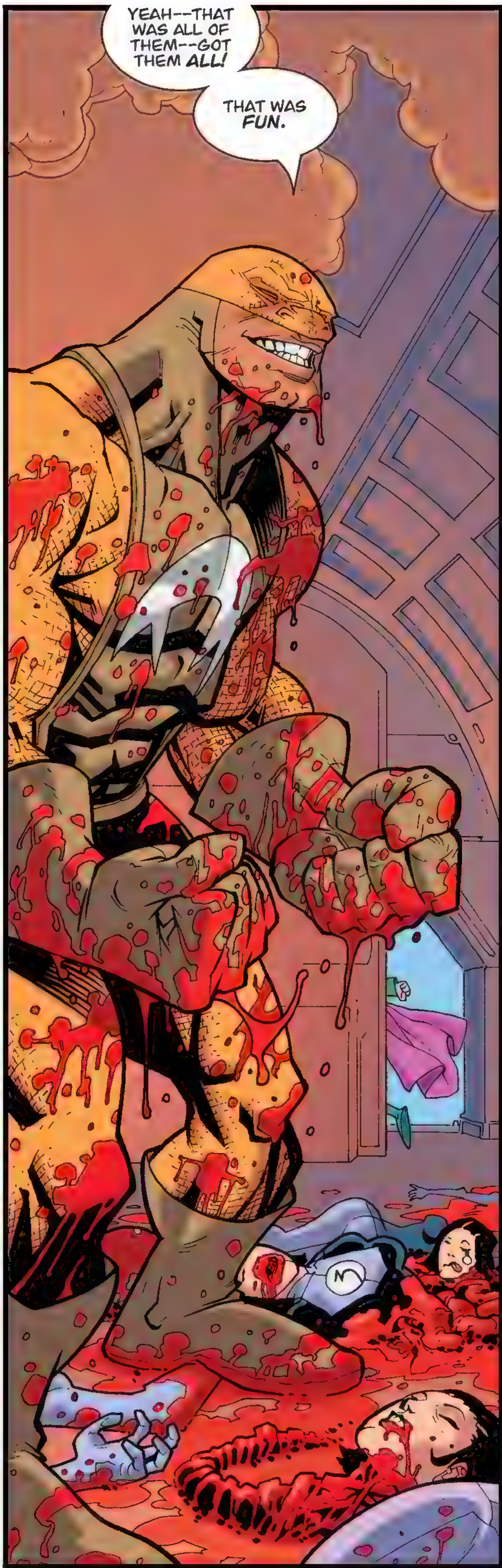
BESIDES--IT'S MY NIGHT OFF. THEY CAN FIND SOMEONE ELSE.

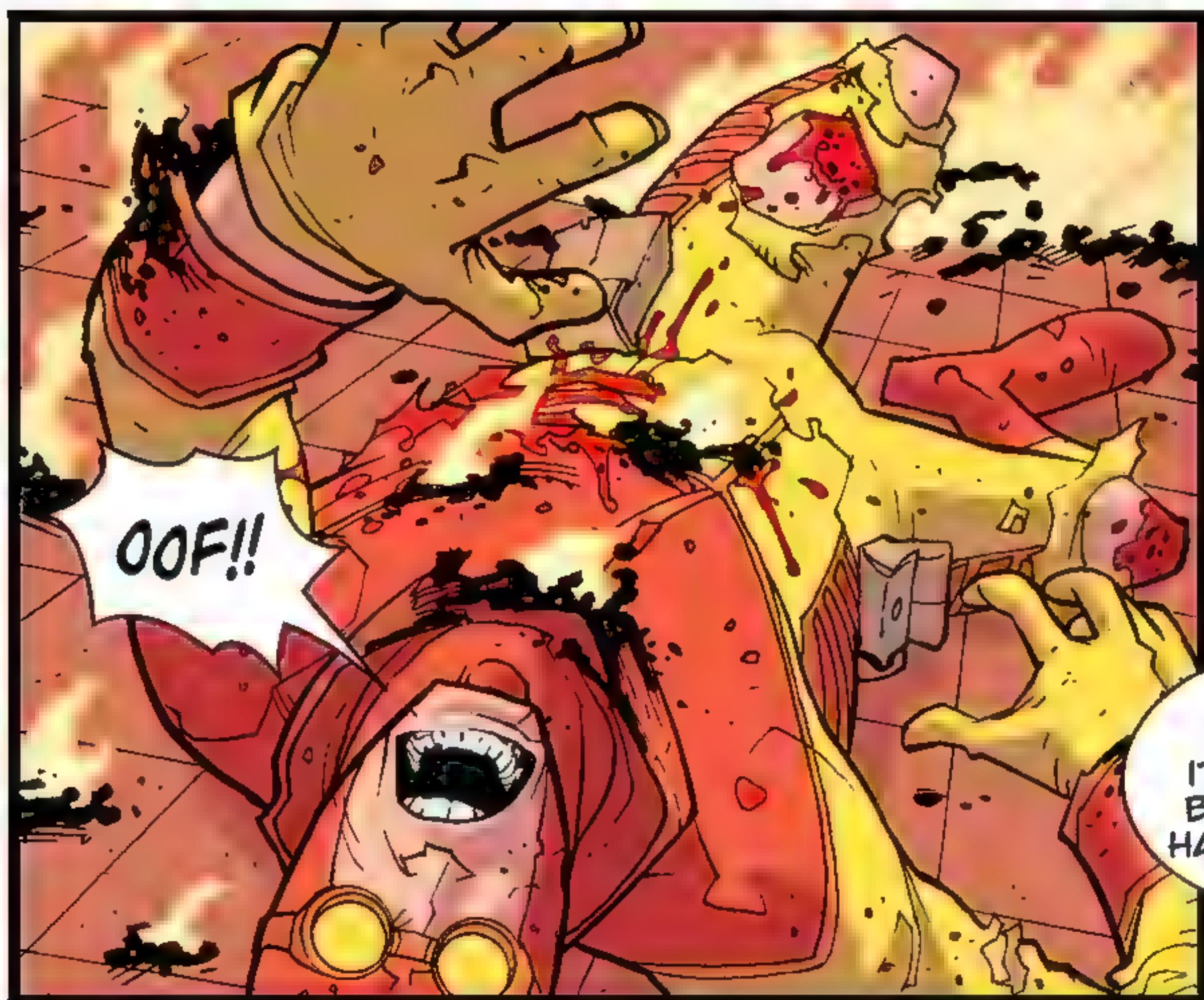
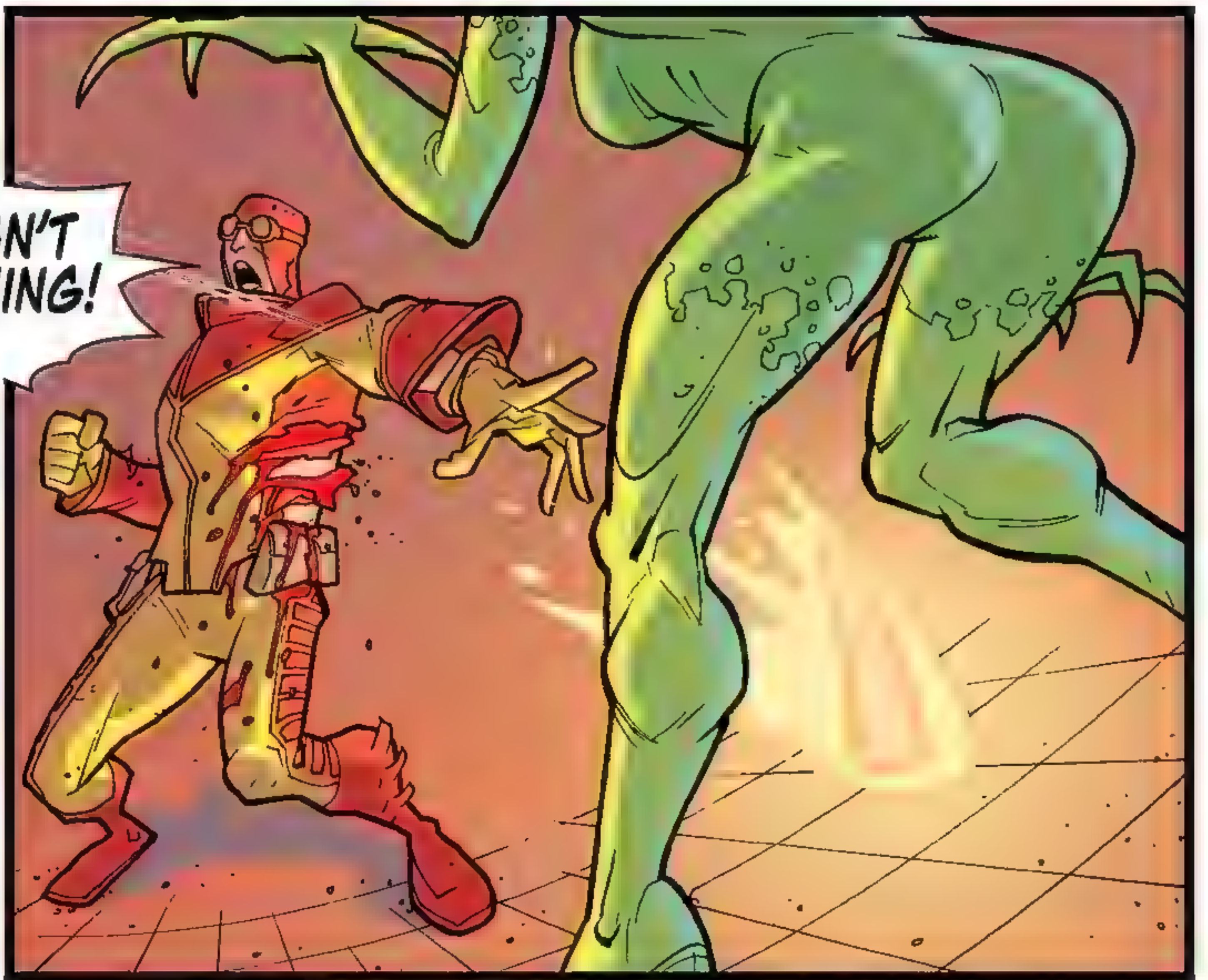
BUT WE'RE OUT TOGETHER-- IT'D BE RUDE OF ME JUST TO RUN OFF LIKE THAT ALL OF A SUDDEN.

YEAH.









BACK IN DEEP SPACE.

UNGH.

ARE YOU
OKAY?

NO--THEY'RE
PUSHING AGAINST
THE **BARRIER**--
THROWING ALL THEIR
WEIGHT AGAINST IT--
I DON'T KNOW HOW
MUCH **LONGER**
I CAN KEEP
IT UP.

THIS ISN'T
WORKING--
I'VE JUST PUT
US IN A **WORSE**
SITUATION.

NO.

ALL I
NEED IS
TIME.

THAT PULSE
DISRUPTED THEIR
PSYCHIC LINK--
EVEN RENDERED
THE **SEQUIDS**
UNCONSCIOUS
FOR A FEW MINUTES--
IF I DISMANTLE MY
ARMOR I CAN USE
THE COMPONENTS
TO **AMPLIFY** ITS
EFFECT.

IF I COULD
GET CLOSE ENOUGH
TO THE **HOST**--THE
ASTRONAUT, I COULD
SEPARATE THE **SEQUIDS**
FROM HIM LONG
ENOUGH FOR US TO
GET HIM OUT
OF HERE.

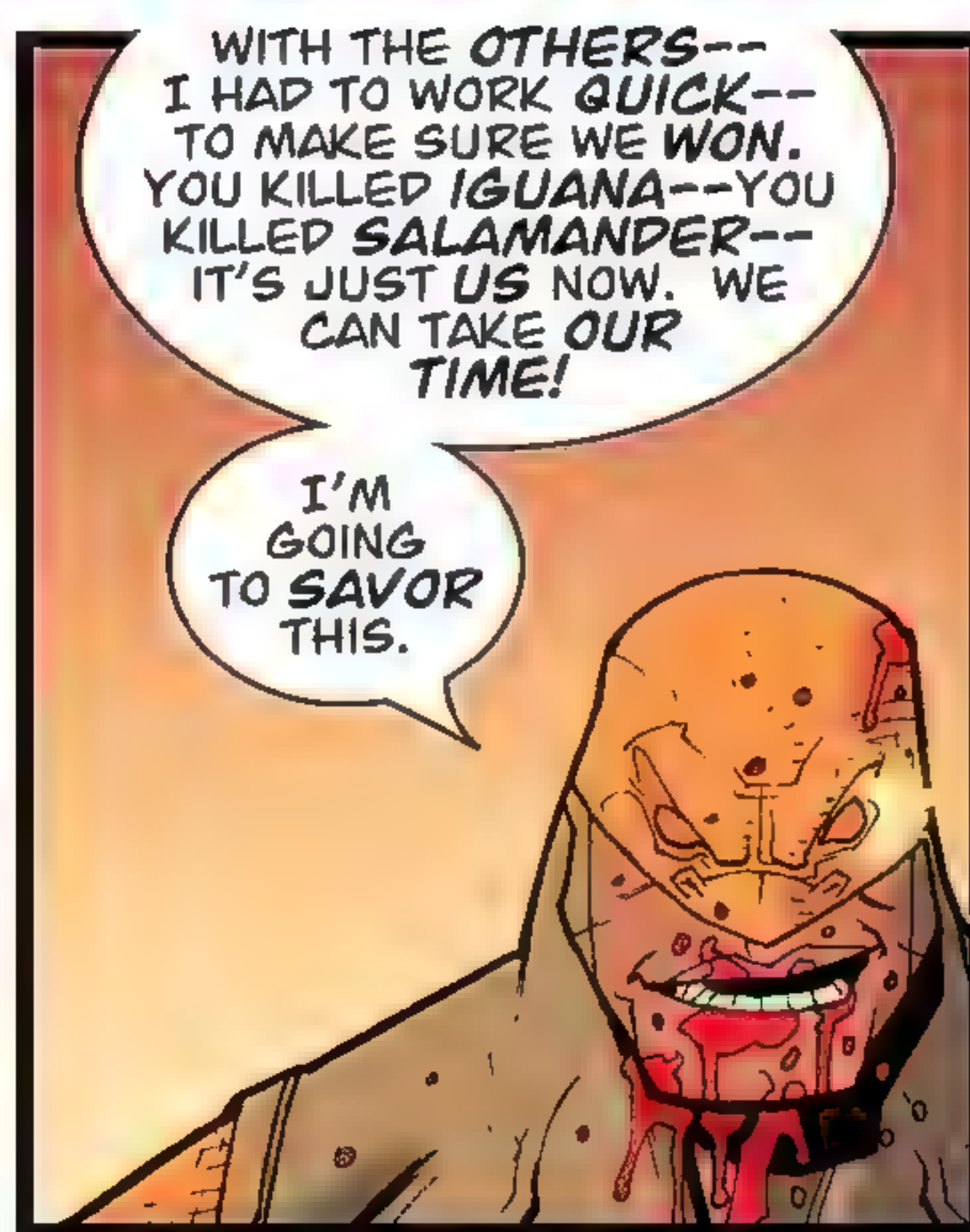
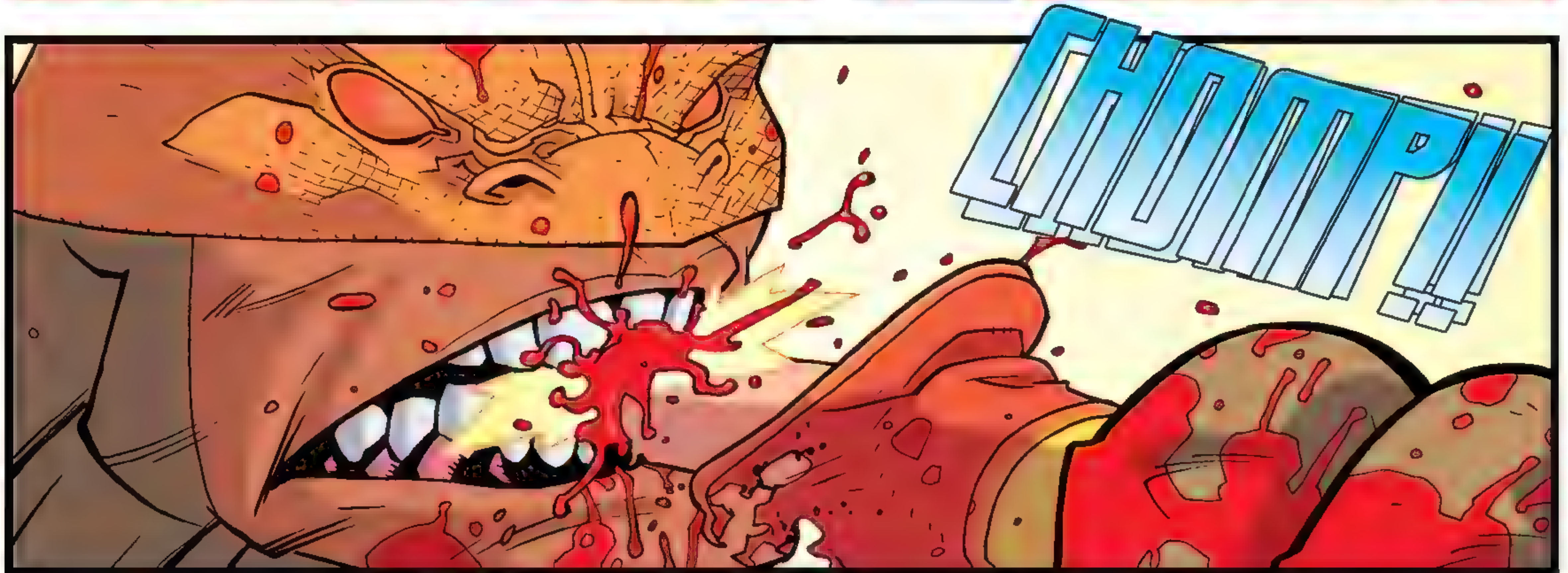
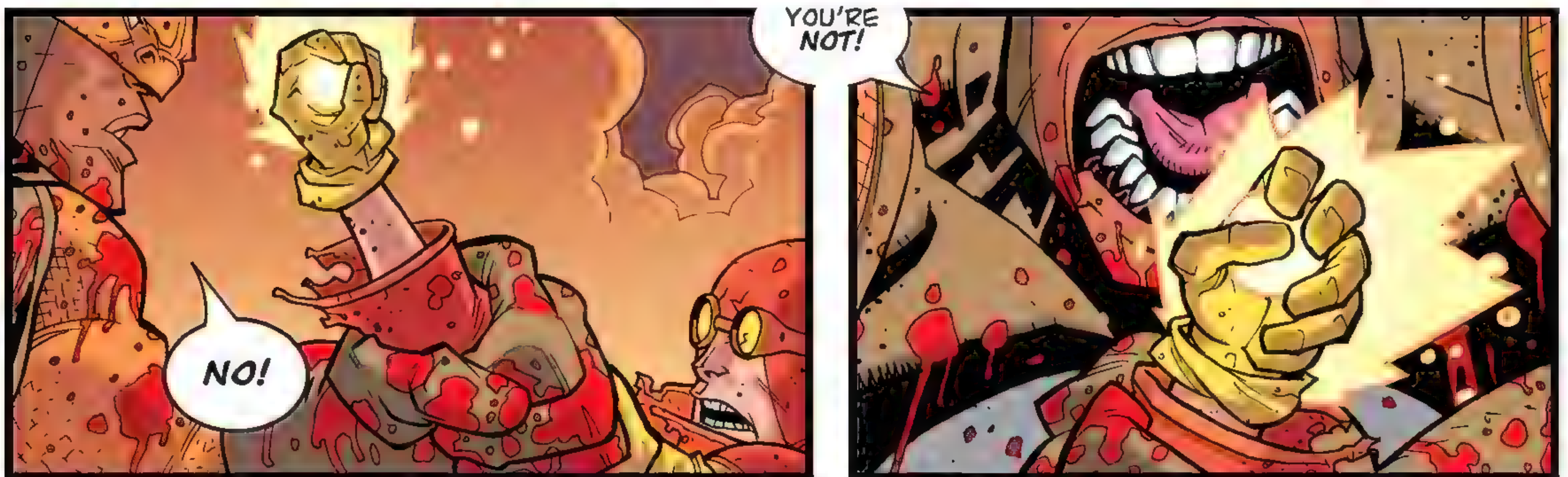
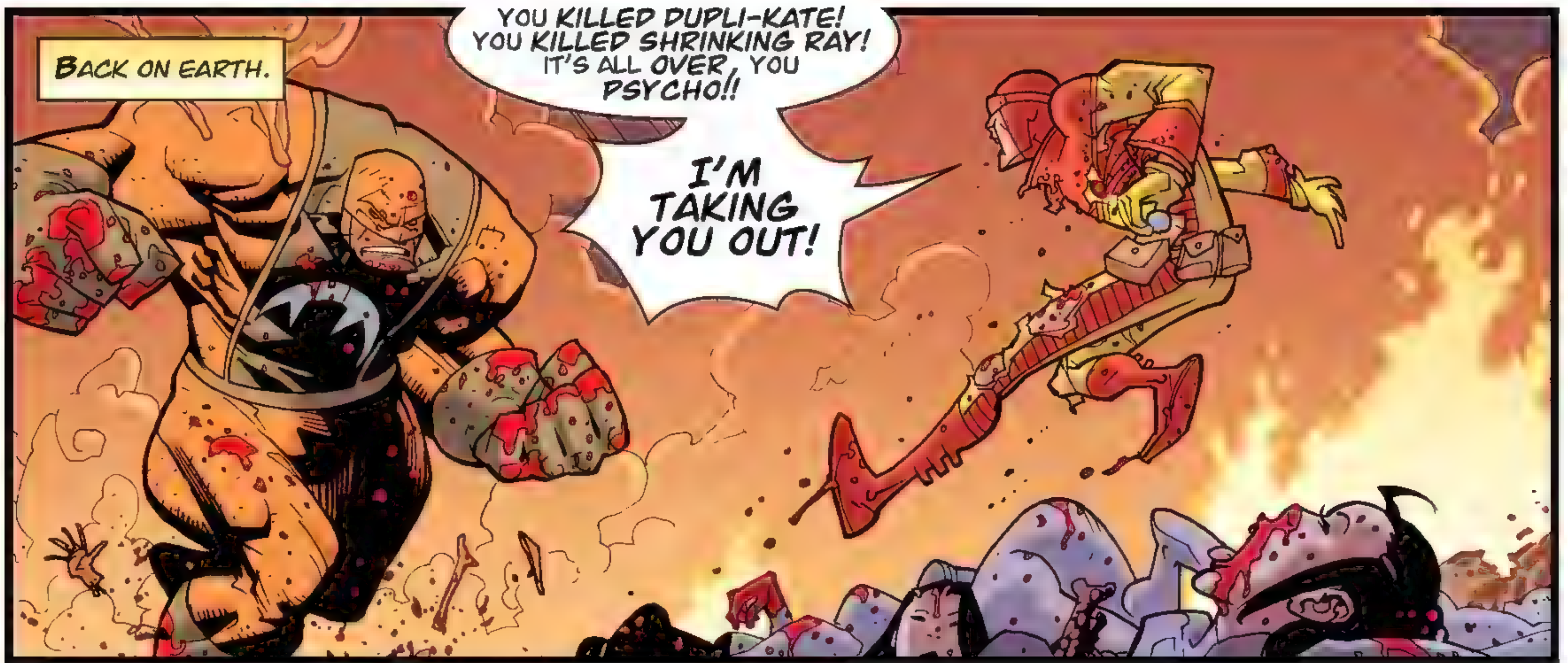
PROVIDED THE
MARTIANS HAVE
ANOTHER **SHIP**
WE COULD USE TO
GET HOME...

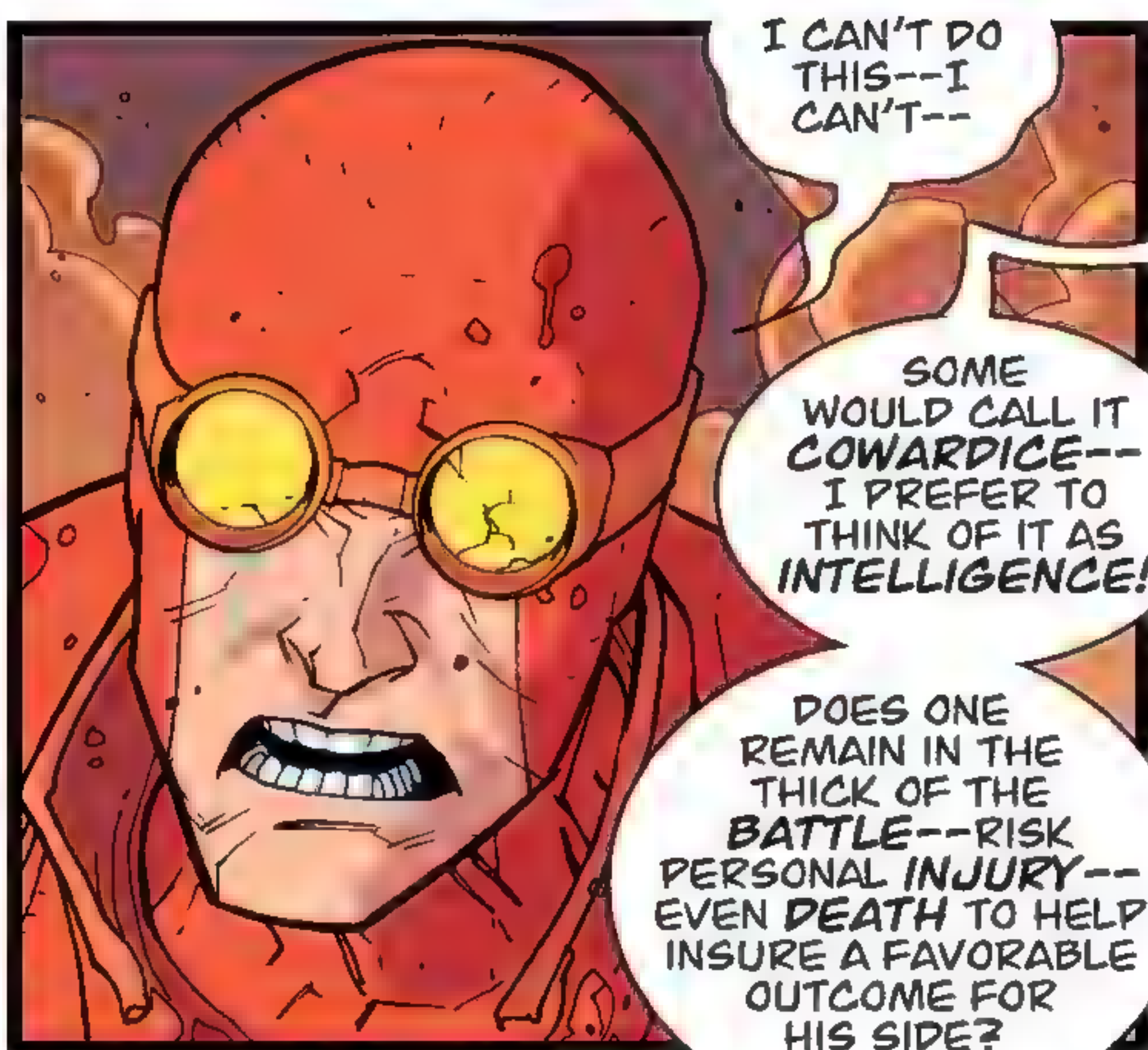
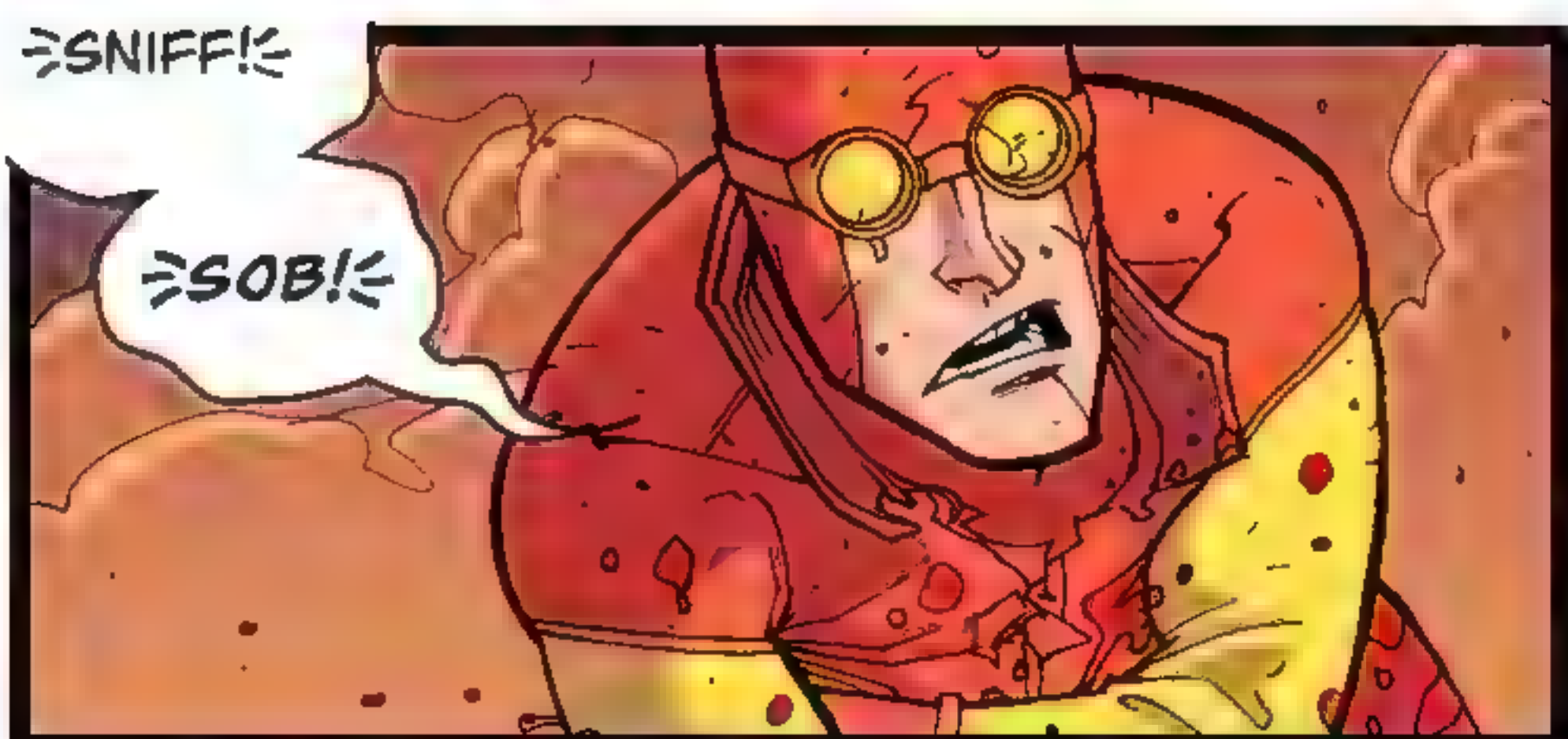
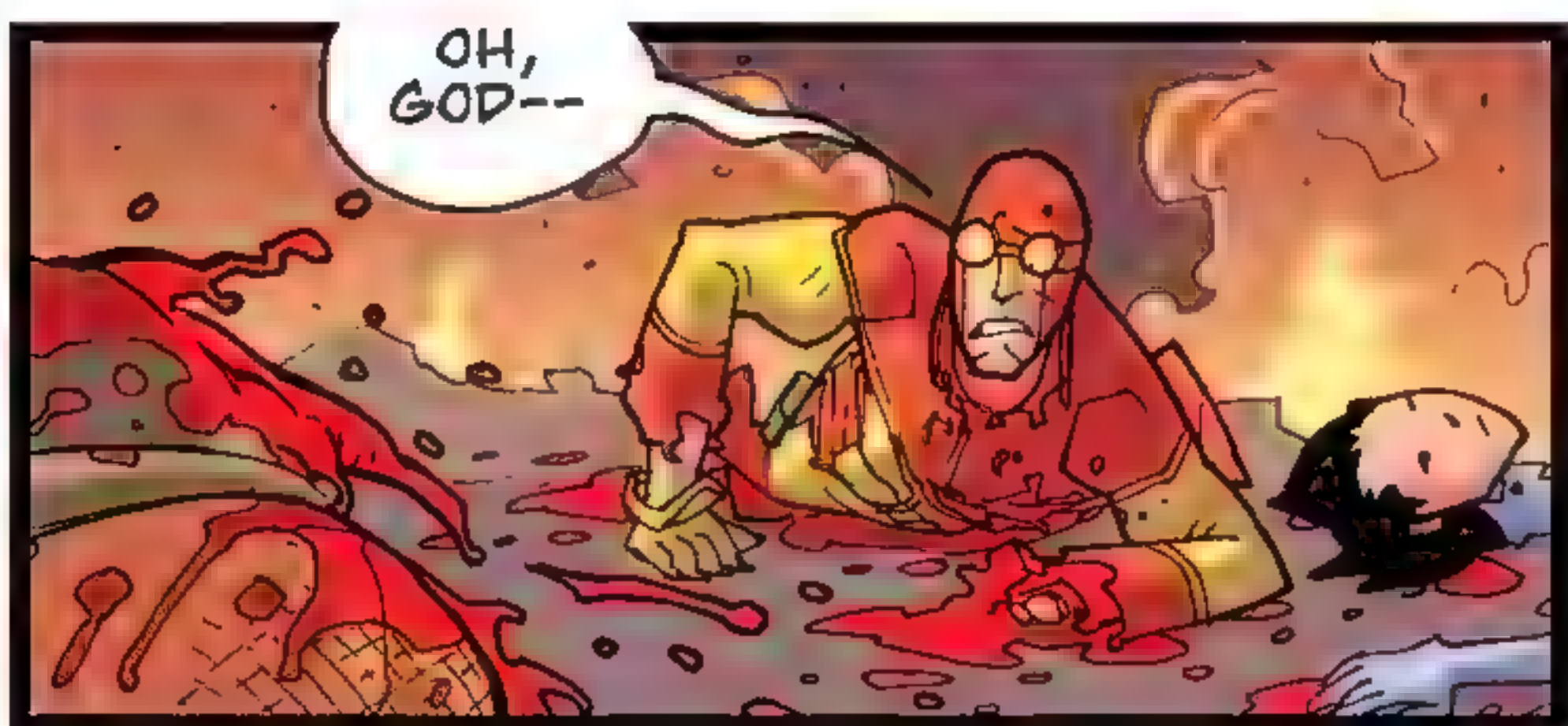
OH--THEY DO--
THEY'VE GOT
HUNDREDS OF
SMALLER SHIPS
IN THIS THING.
THEY'RE IN THE
HANGAR BAY--
LEVEL 84.

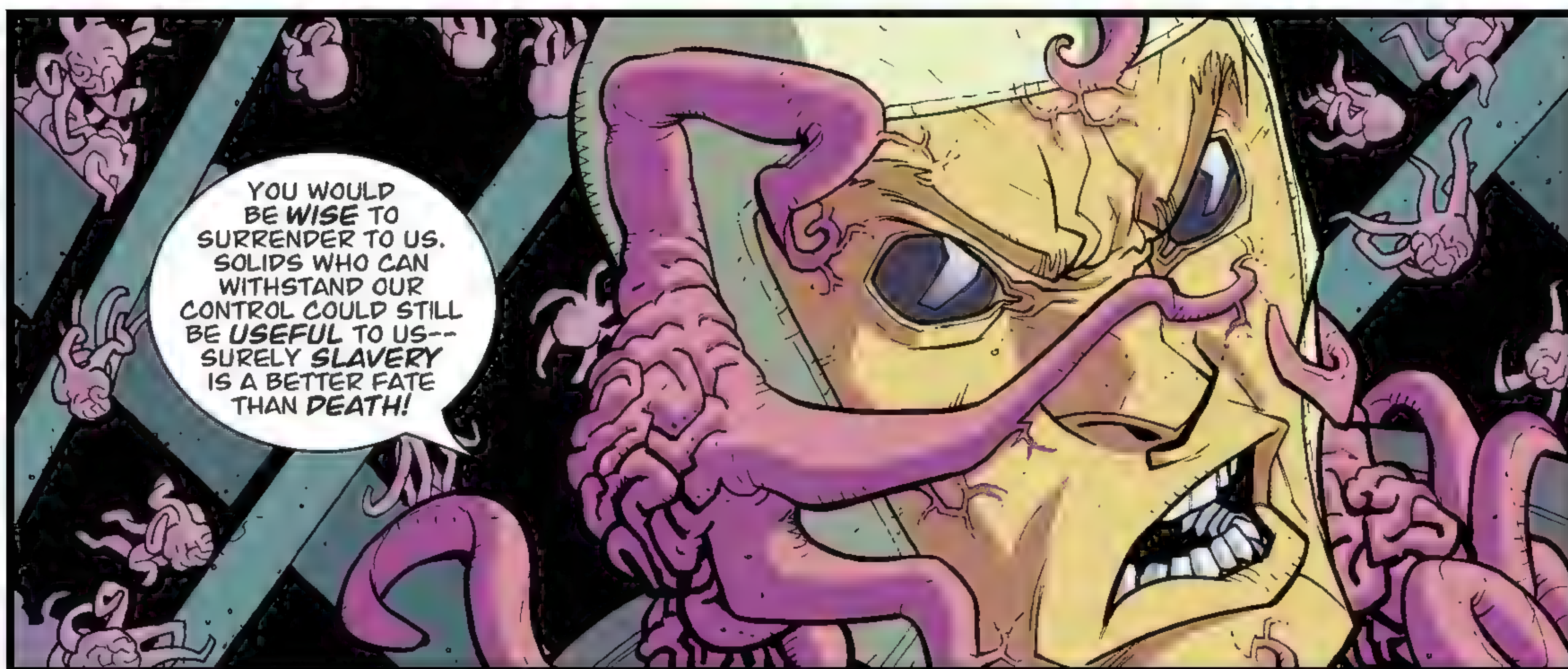
THEY USED
TO TAKE MY
SCHOOL ON
TOURS
THROUGH THIS
SHIP--I'VE
MEMORIZED
ALMOST THE
ENTIRE
LAYOUT.

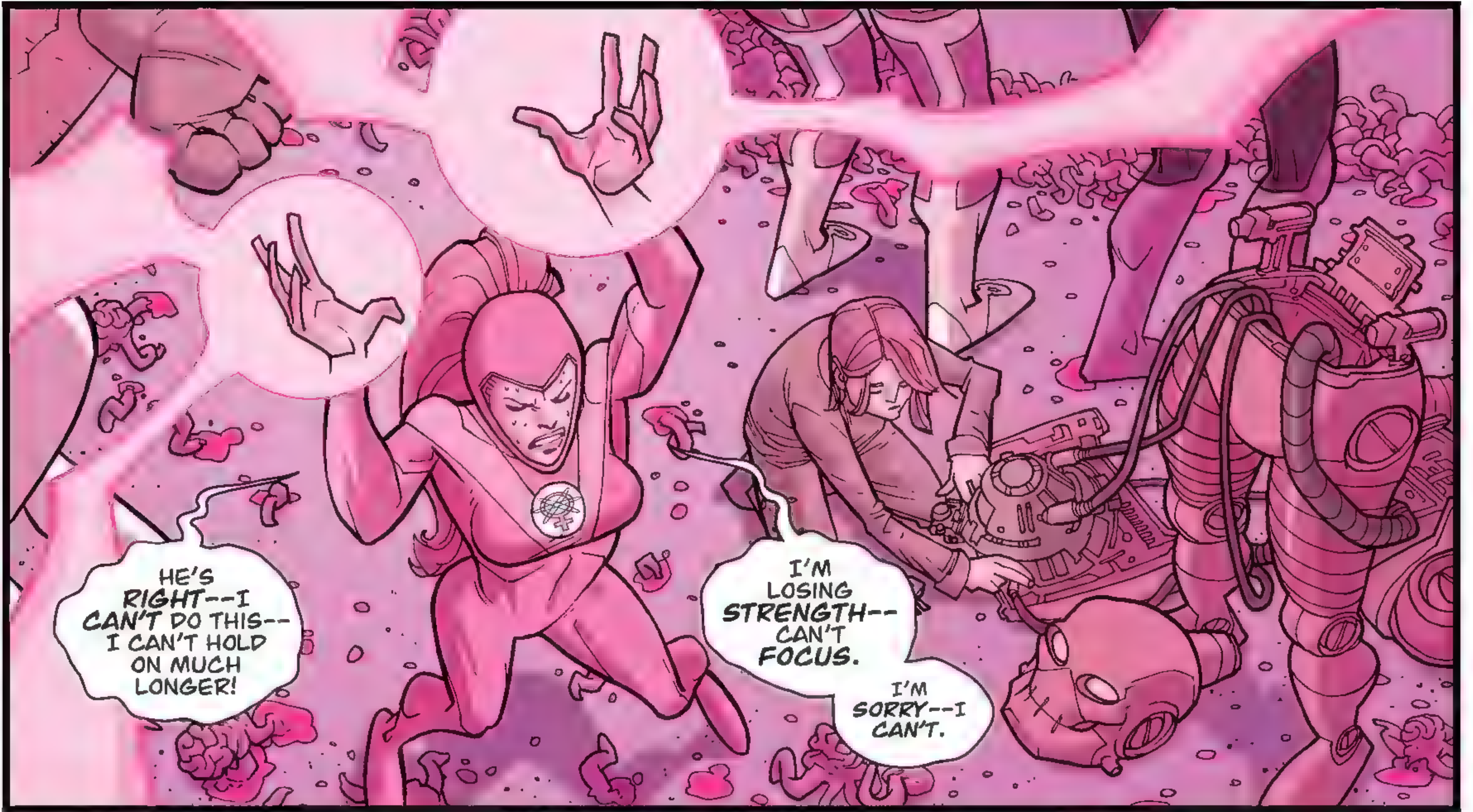
IT WOULD
TAKE US A WHILE
TO GET THERE
FROM **HERE**--
BUT I KNOW
THE WAY.

I
THINK.







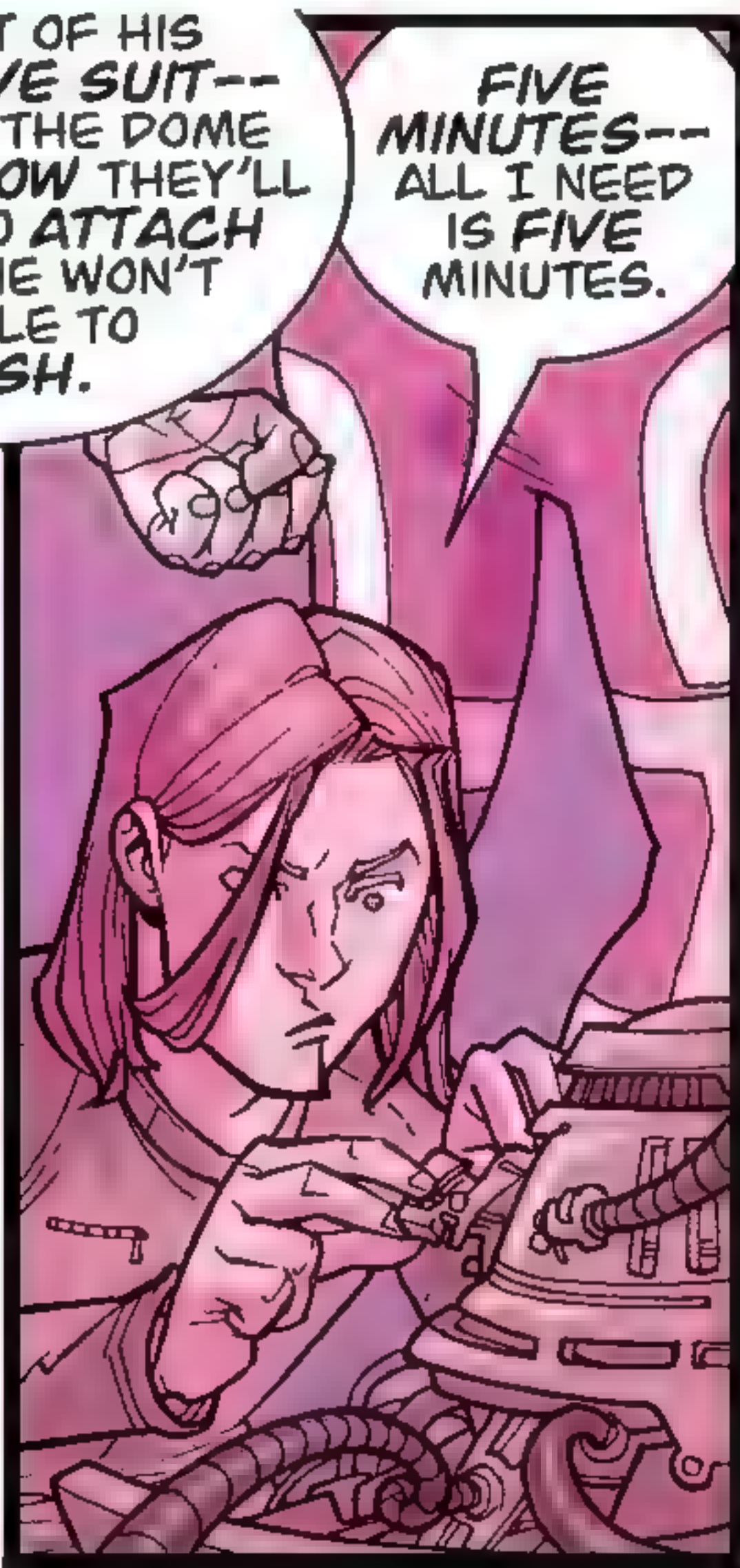


HE'S RIGHT--I CAN'T DO THIS--I CAN'T HOLD ON MUCH LONGER!

I'M LOSING STRENGTH--CAN'T FOCUS.
I'M SORRY--I CAN'T.



JUST HOLD IT TOGETHER LONG ENOUGH FOR ROBOT TO FINISH HIS DEVICE--HE'LL BE DONE SOON.



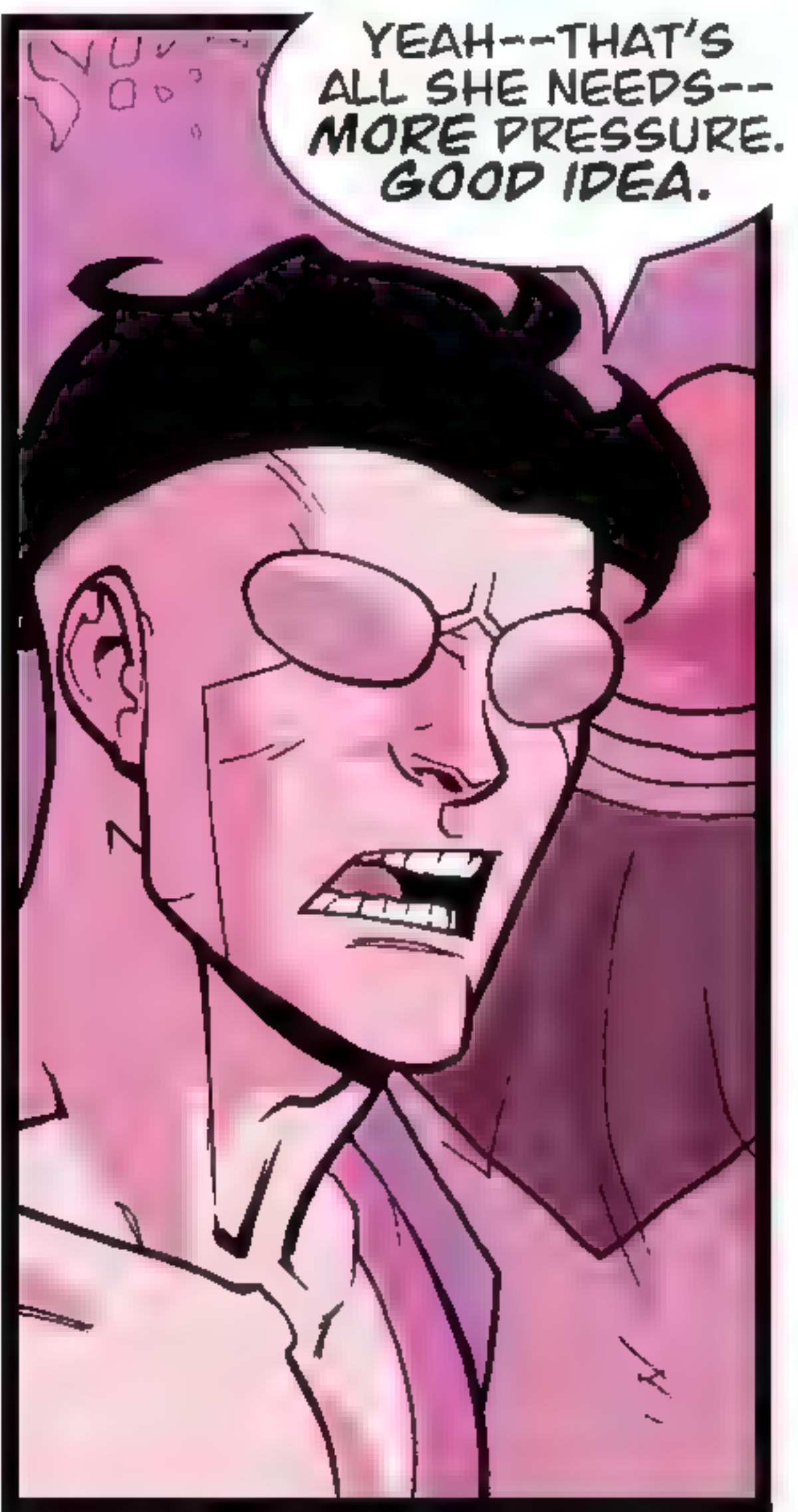
HE'S OUT OF HIS PROTECTIVE SUIT--IF YOU LET THE DOME COLLAPSE NOW THEY'LL BE ABLE TO ATTACH TO HIM. HE WON'T BE ABLE TO FINISH.

FIVE MINUTES--ALL I NEED IS FIVE MINUTES.



I COMMAND YOU TO MAINTAIN THIS BARRIER!

THE FATE OF THE ENTIRE HUMAN RACE RESTS ON YOUR SHOULDERS!



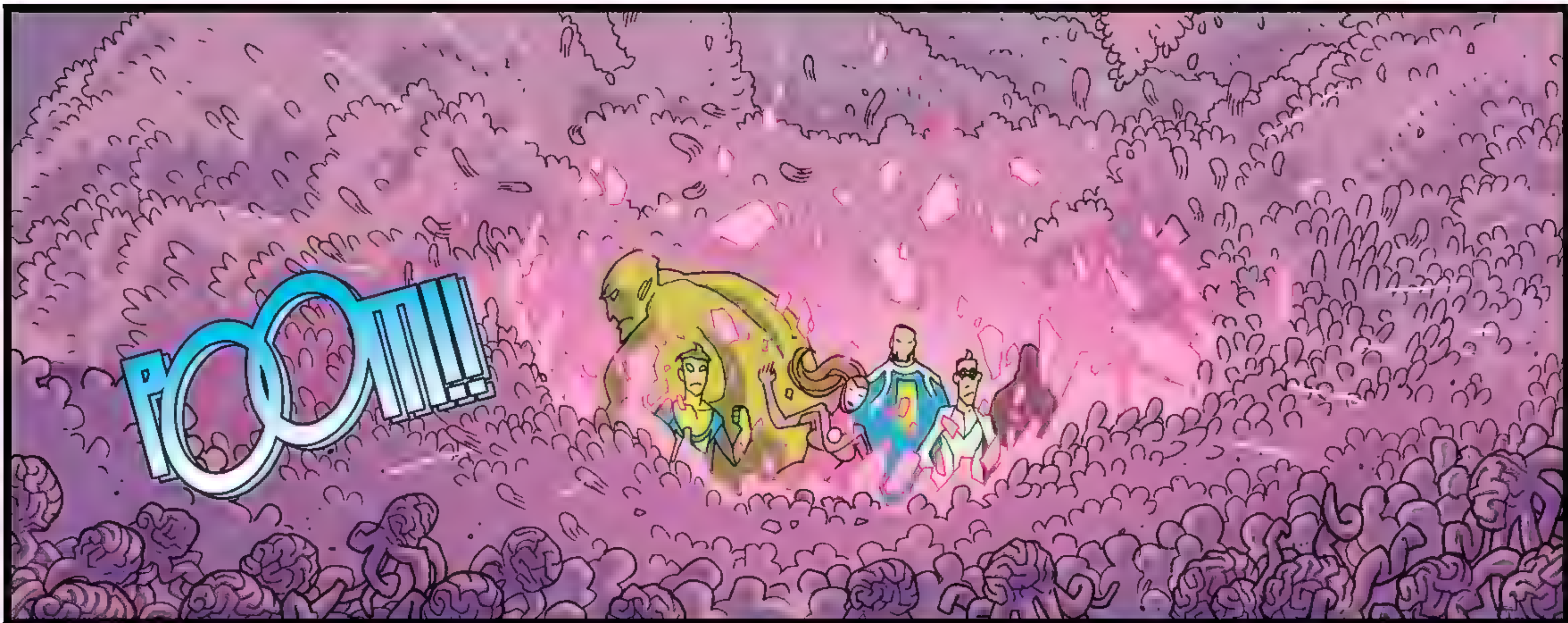
YEAH--THAT'S ALL SHE NEEDS--MORE PRESSURE. GOOD IDEA.

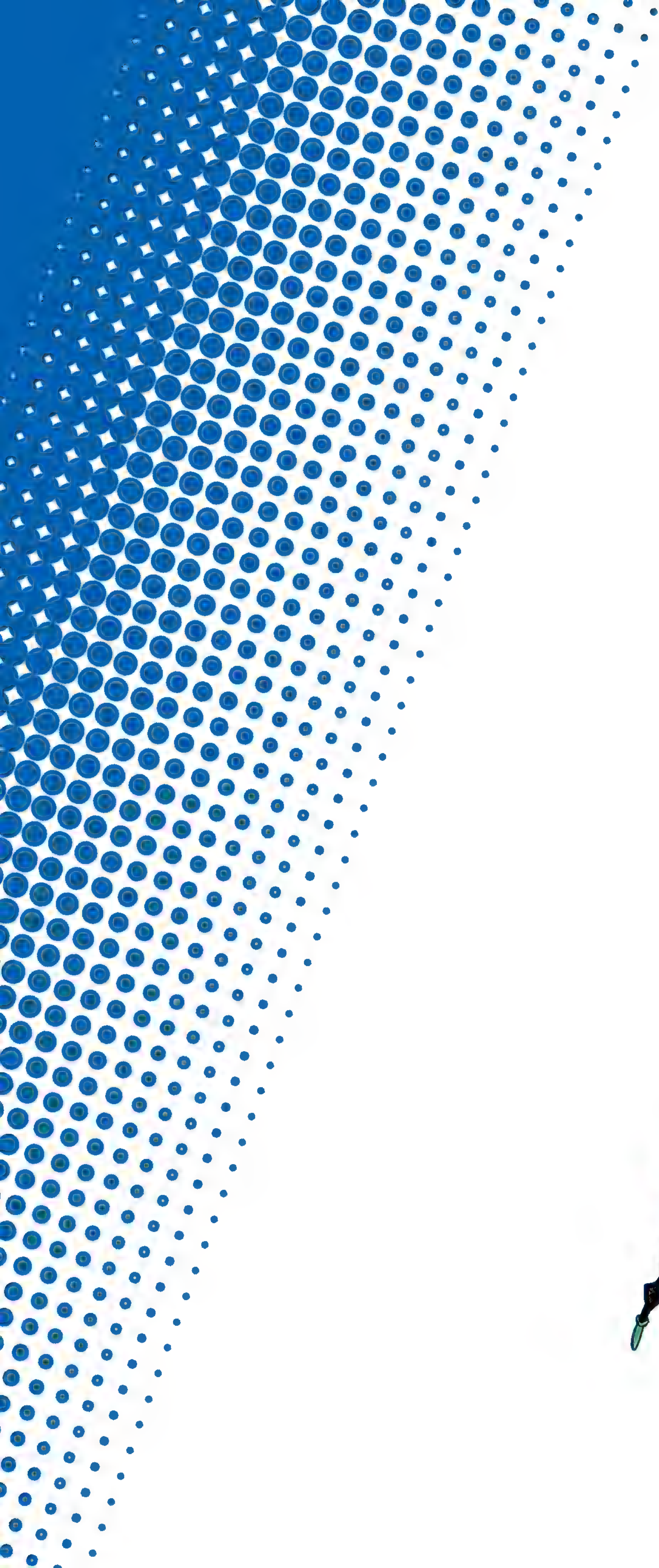


JUST TRY YOUR BEST--IF YOU CAN'T--WE'LL FIGURE SOMETHING OUT. I PROMISE--BUT PLEASE, KEEP IT UP AS LONG AS YOU CAN.

I CAN--I WILL--

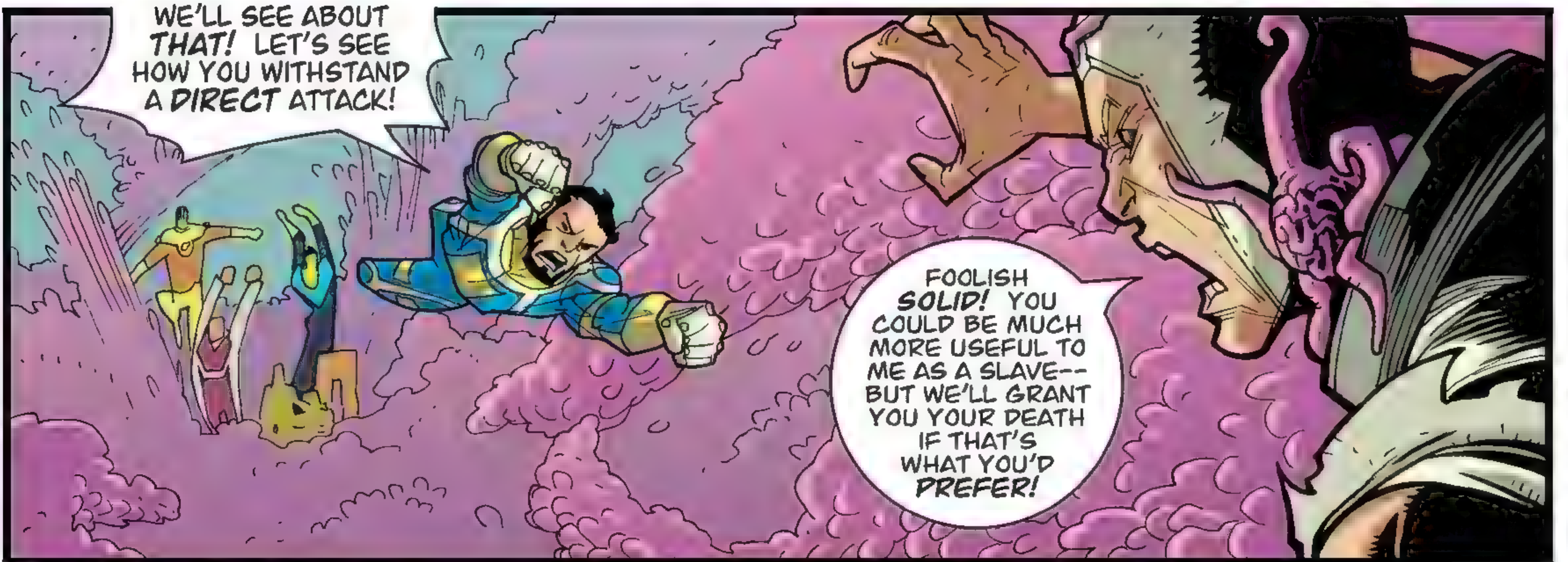
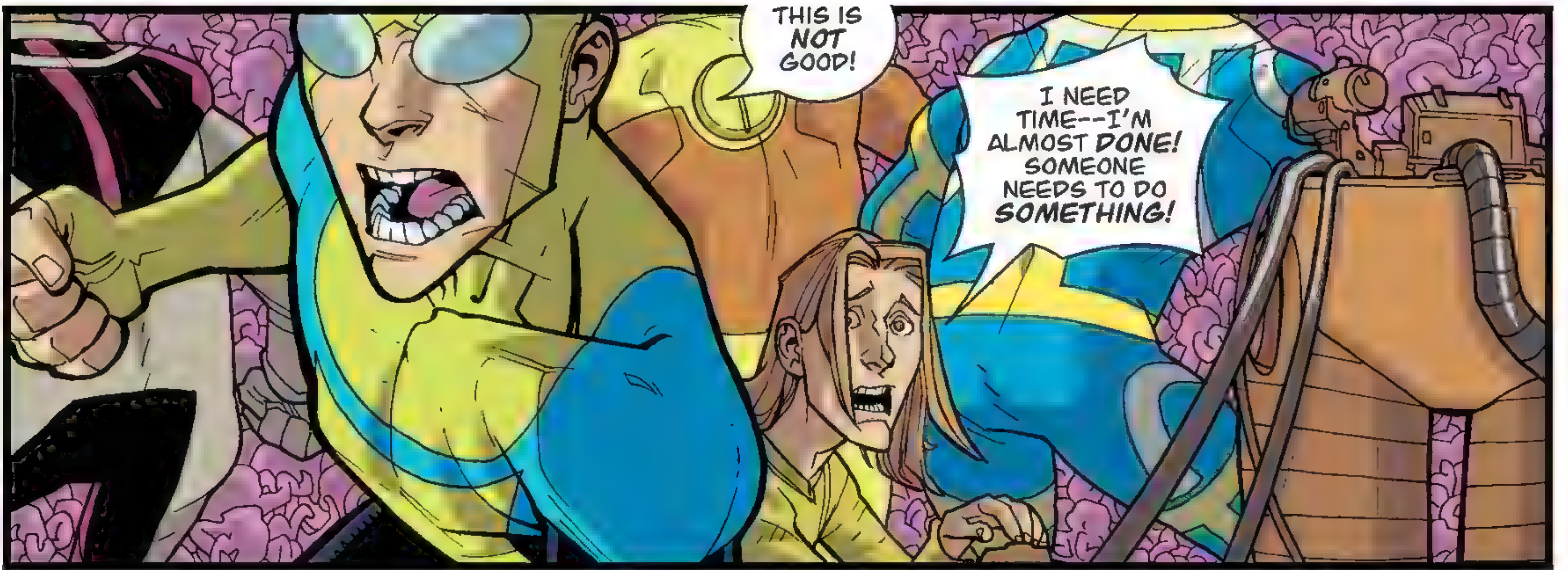
I JUST--

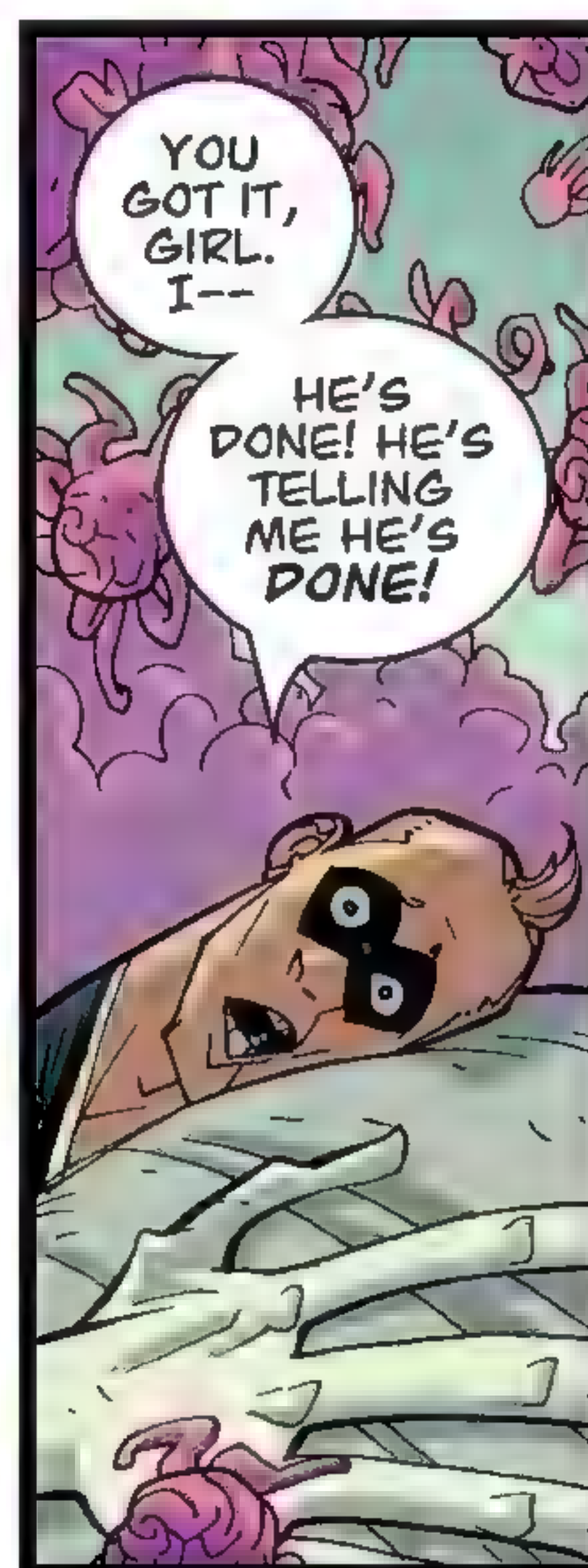
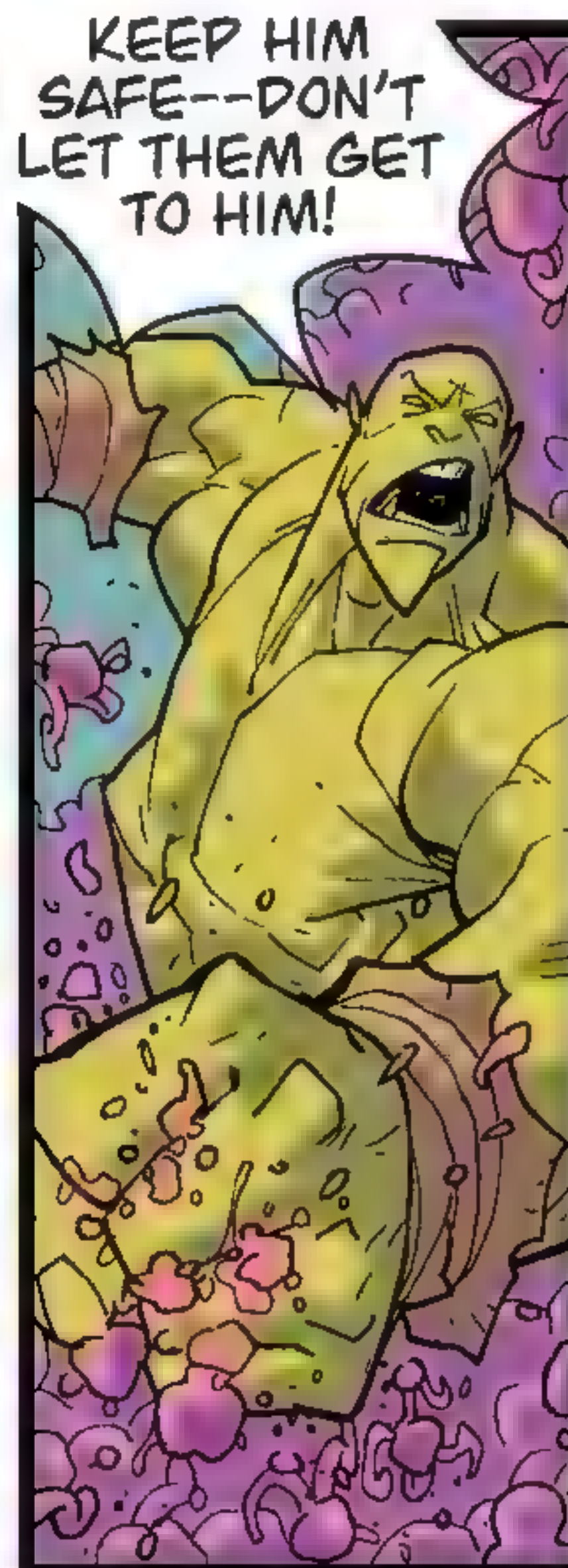
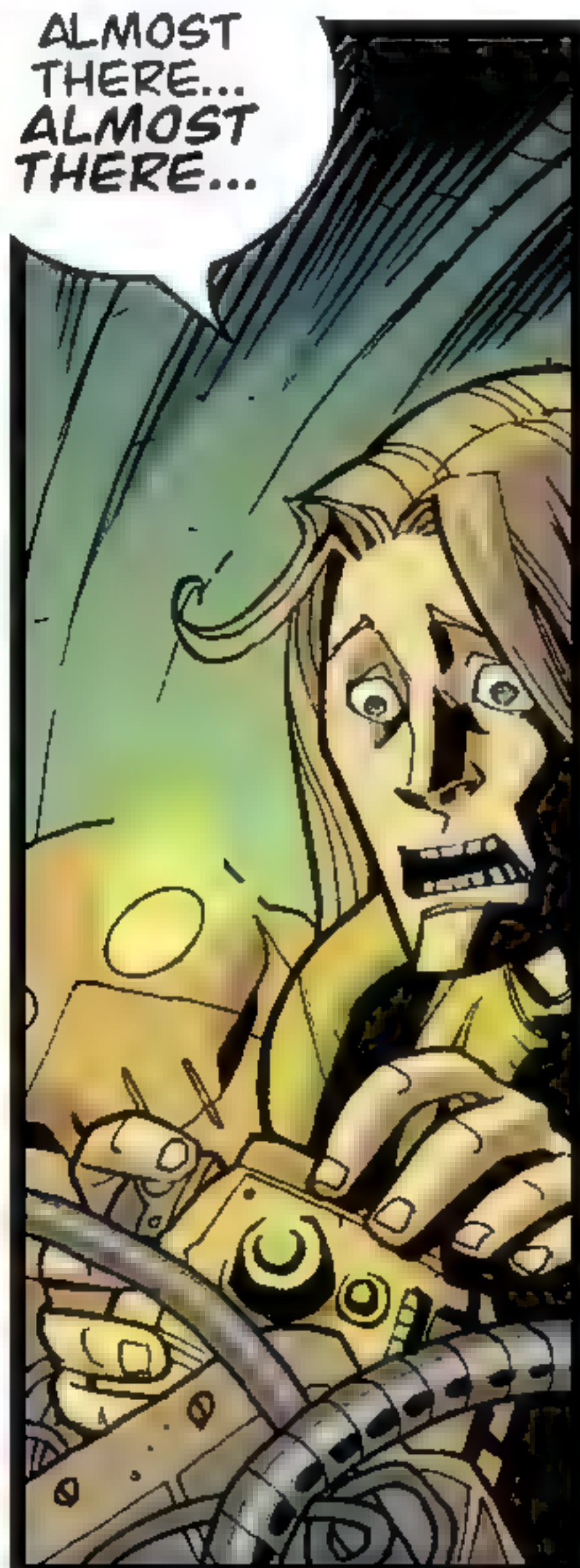
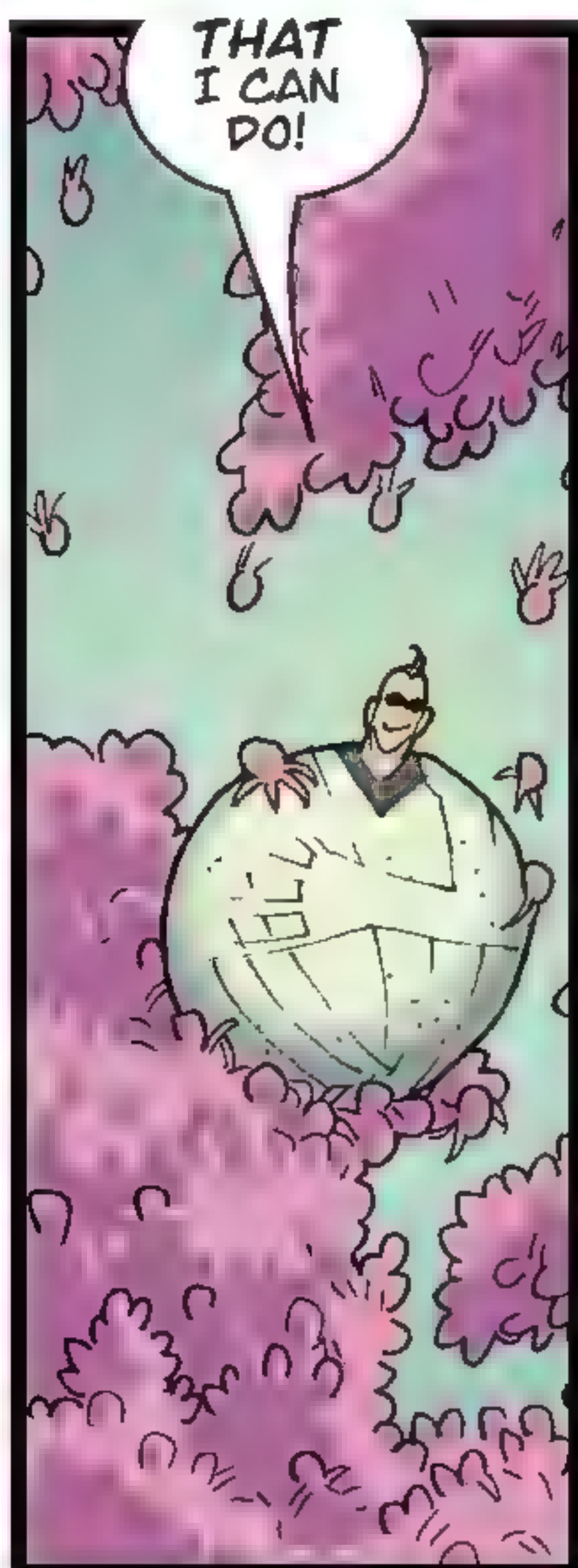
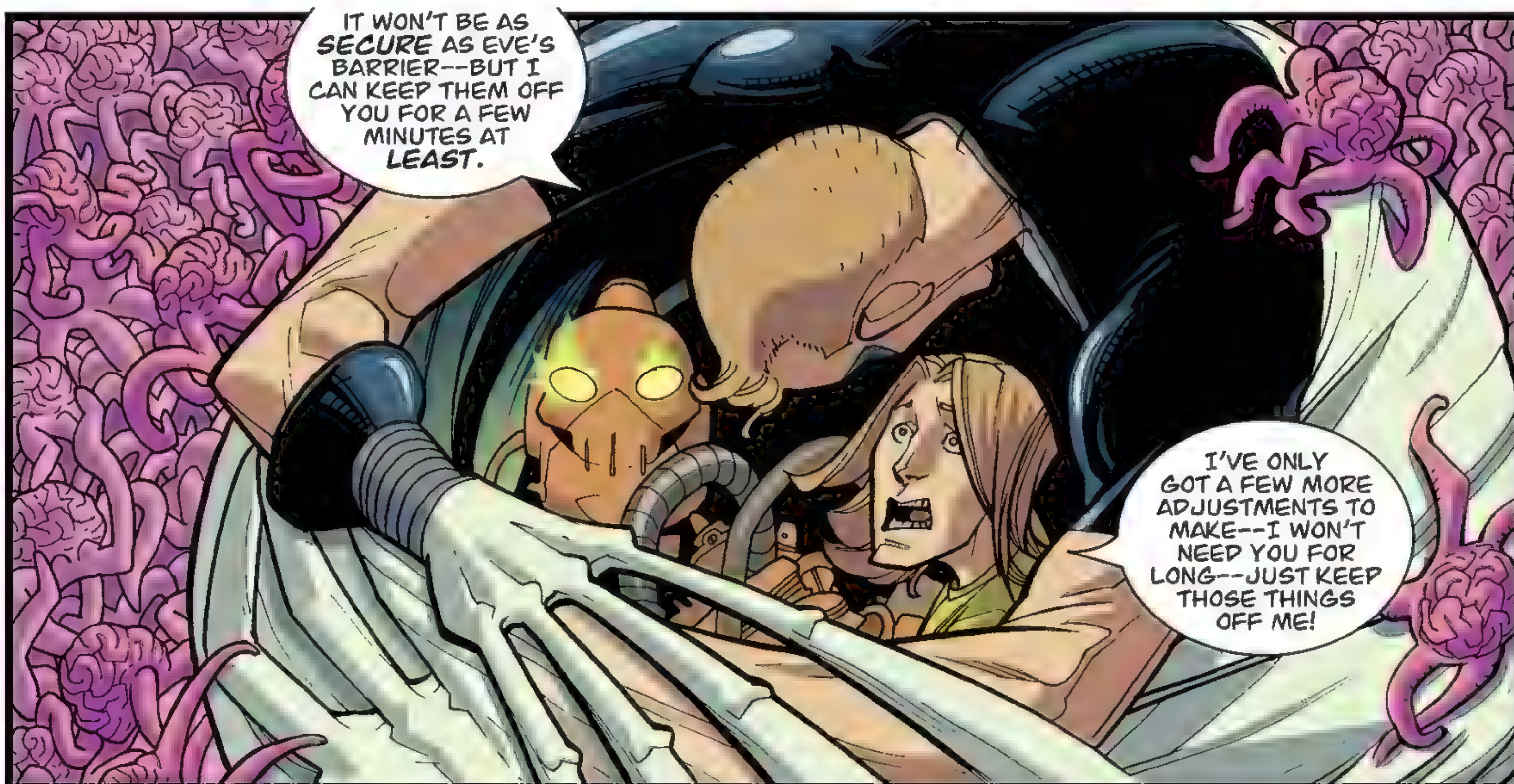
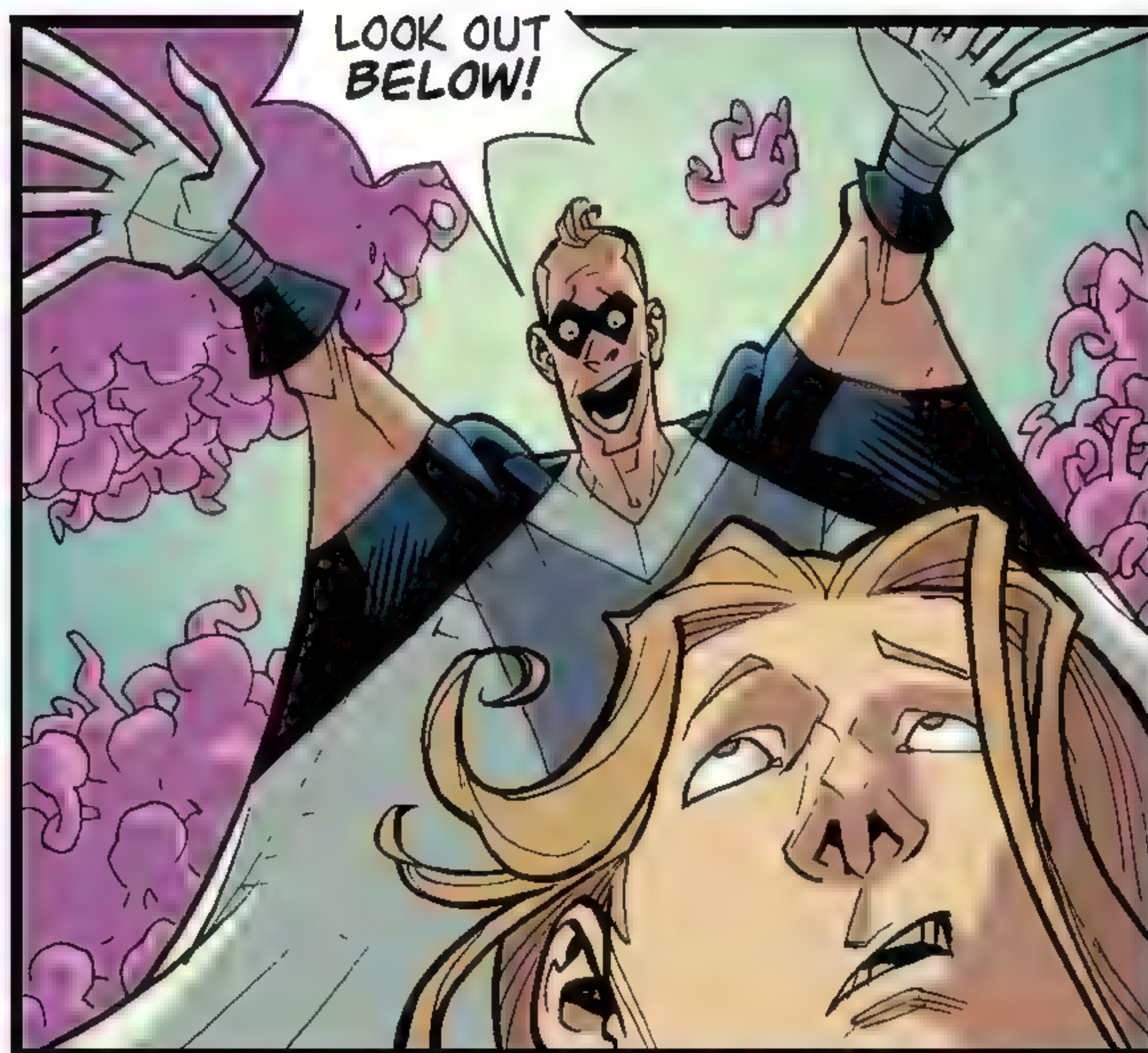




ISSUE FORTY-ONE







SOMEONE WANT TO
TAKE THIS THING?!
HE SAYS YOU JUST
NEED TO GET CLOSE
TO HIM AND PRESS
THE BUTTON.

ANYONE?

ME!

GIVE
IT TO
ME!



HOW
DARE
Y--

STOP! I'M
DOING THIS! I'M
STRONGER THAN
YOU! I'M FASTER
THAN YOU!

THIS
IS TOO
IMPORTANT
TO LET YOUR
EGO GET IN
THE WAY!

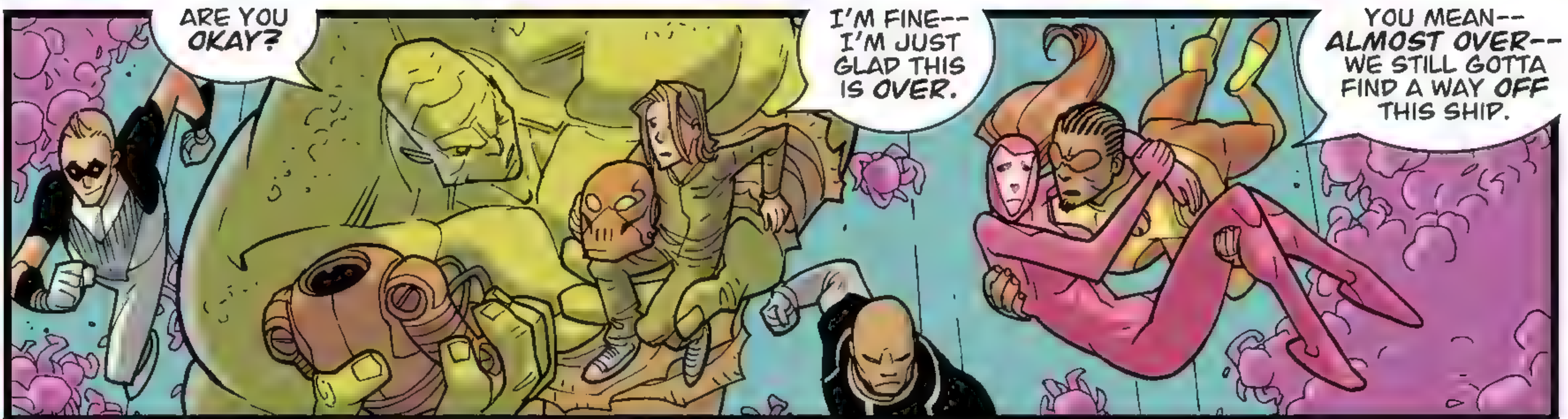


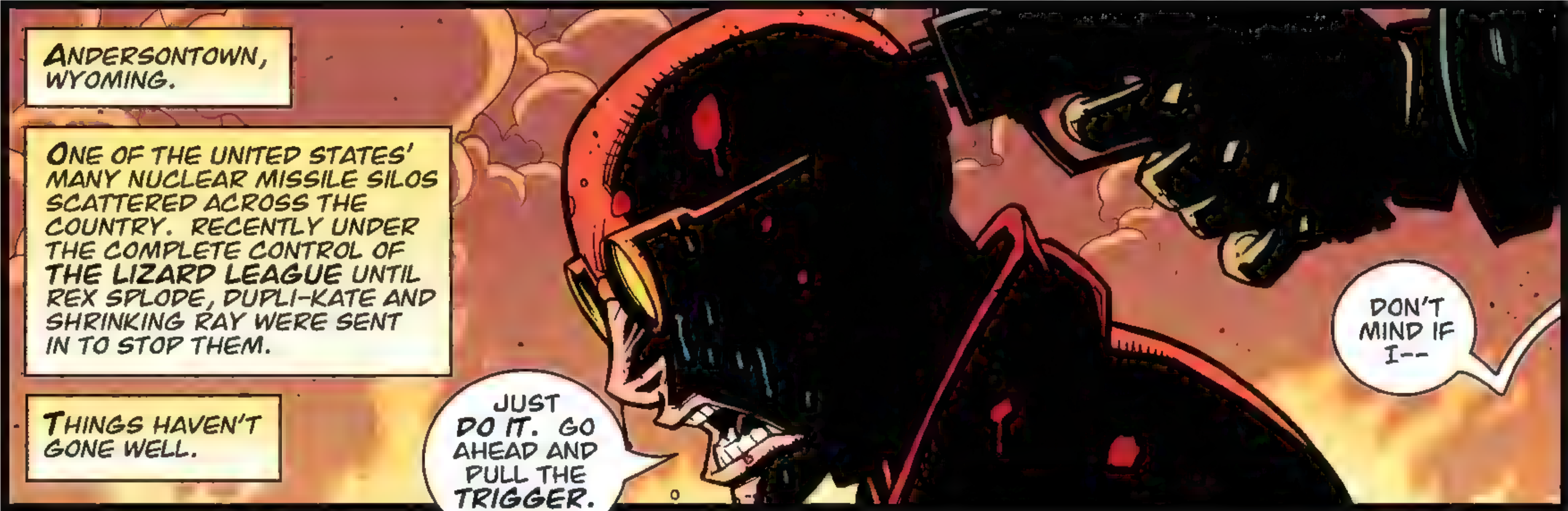
WHAT IS
THIS?

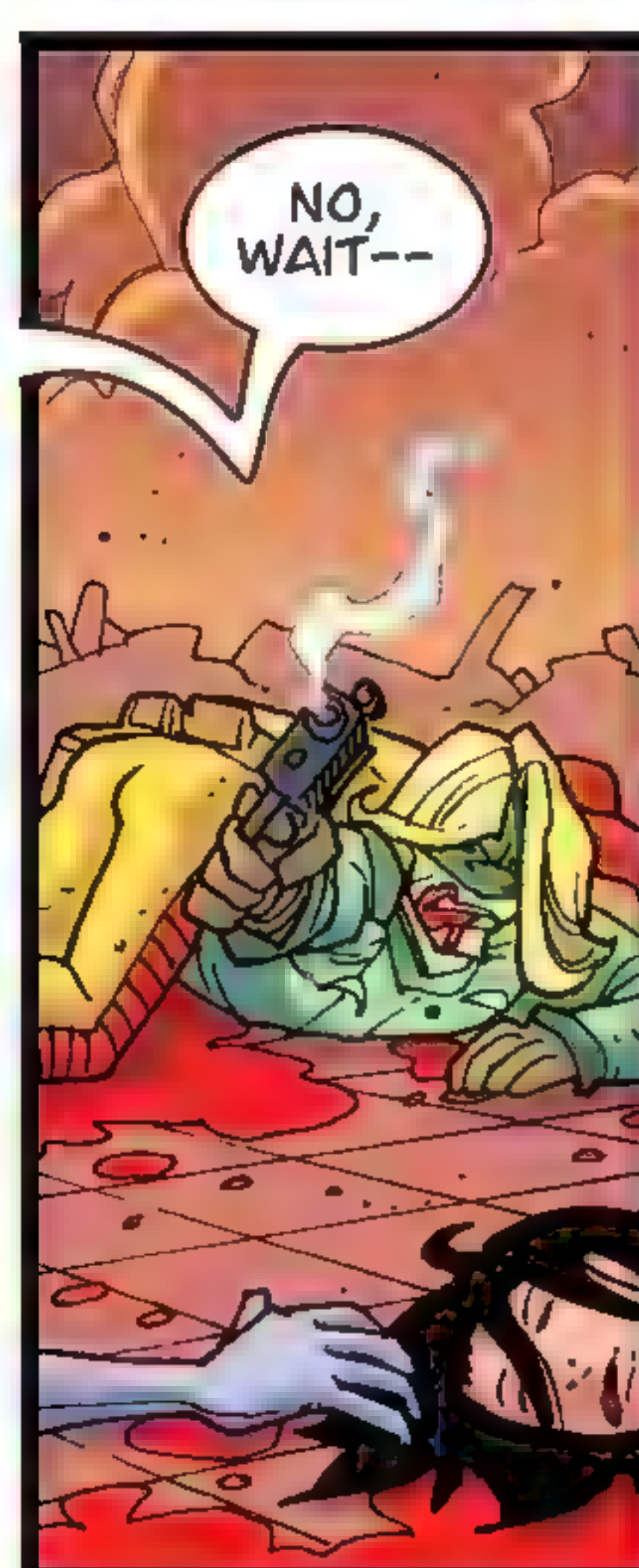
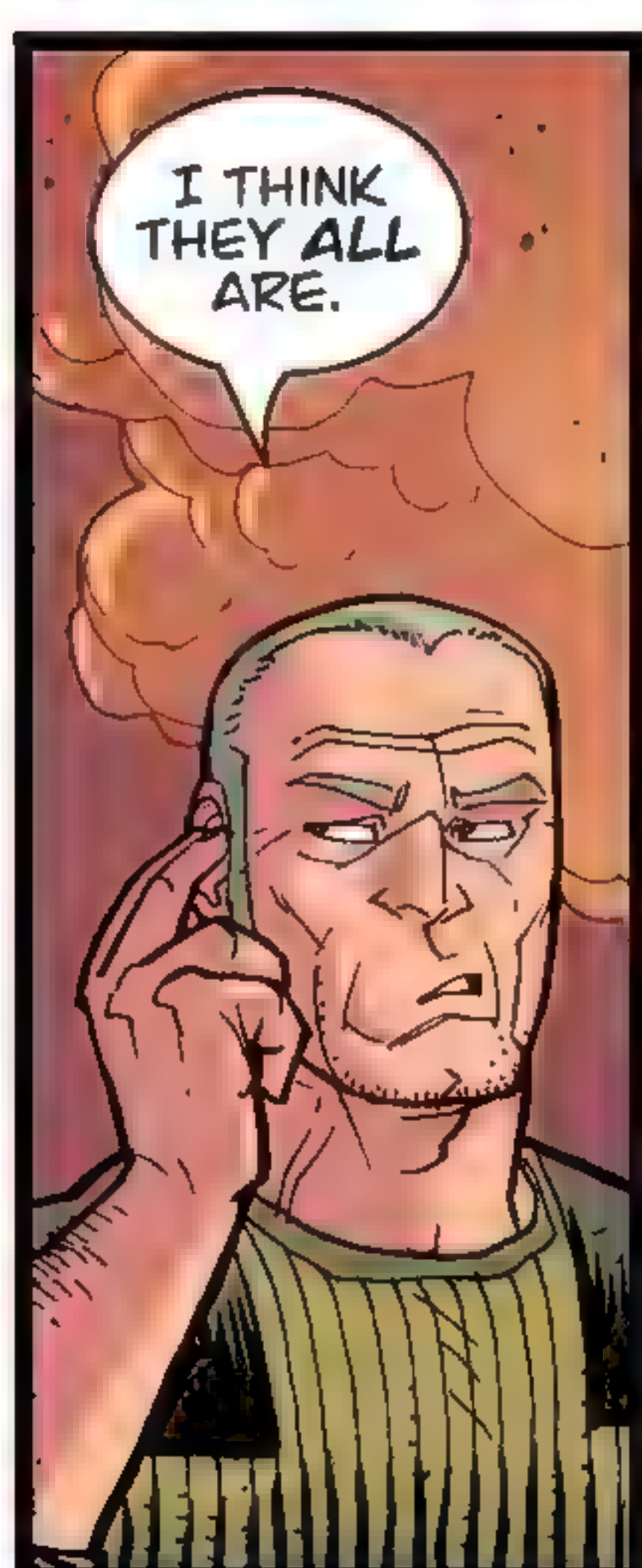
ANOTHER
FOOL READY
TO DIE?



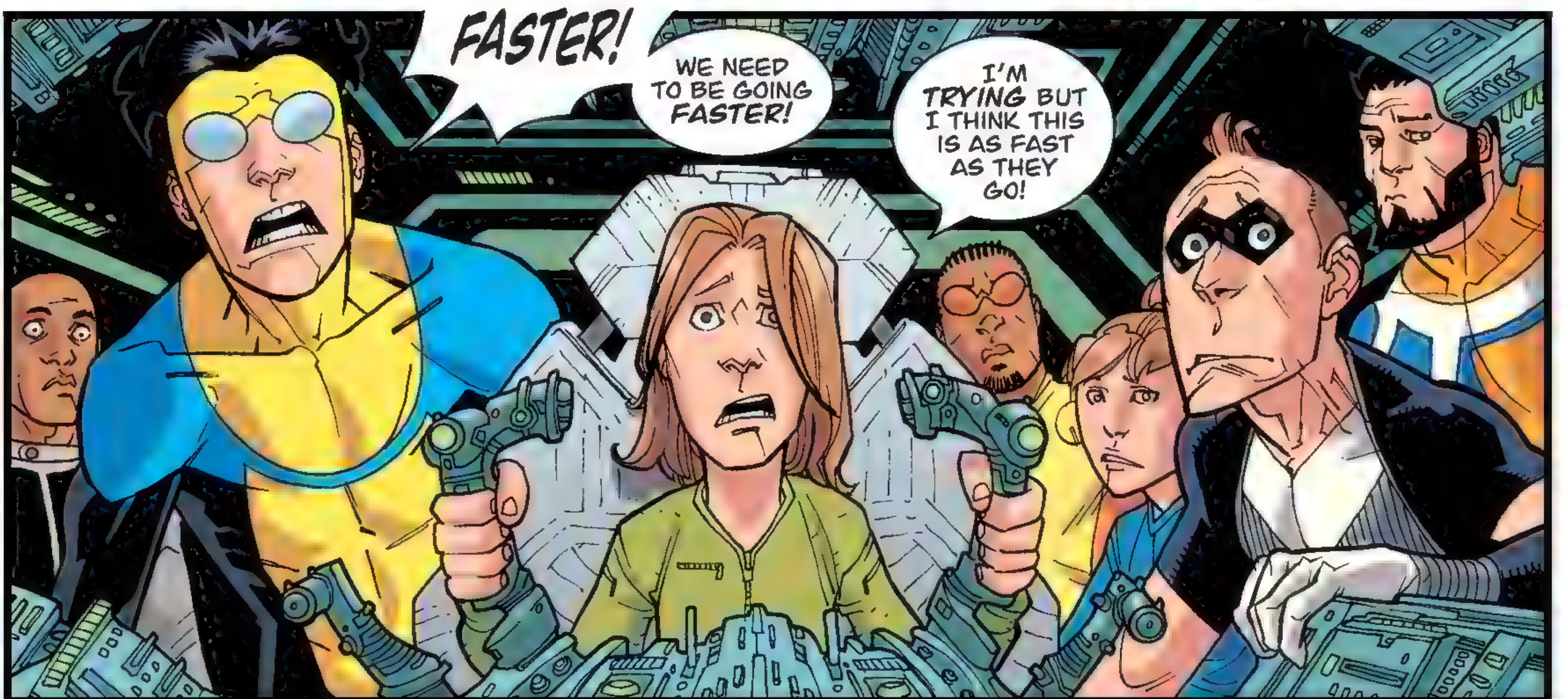
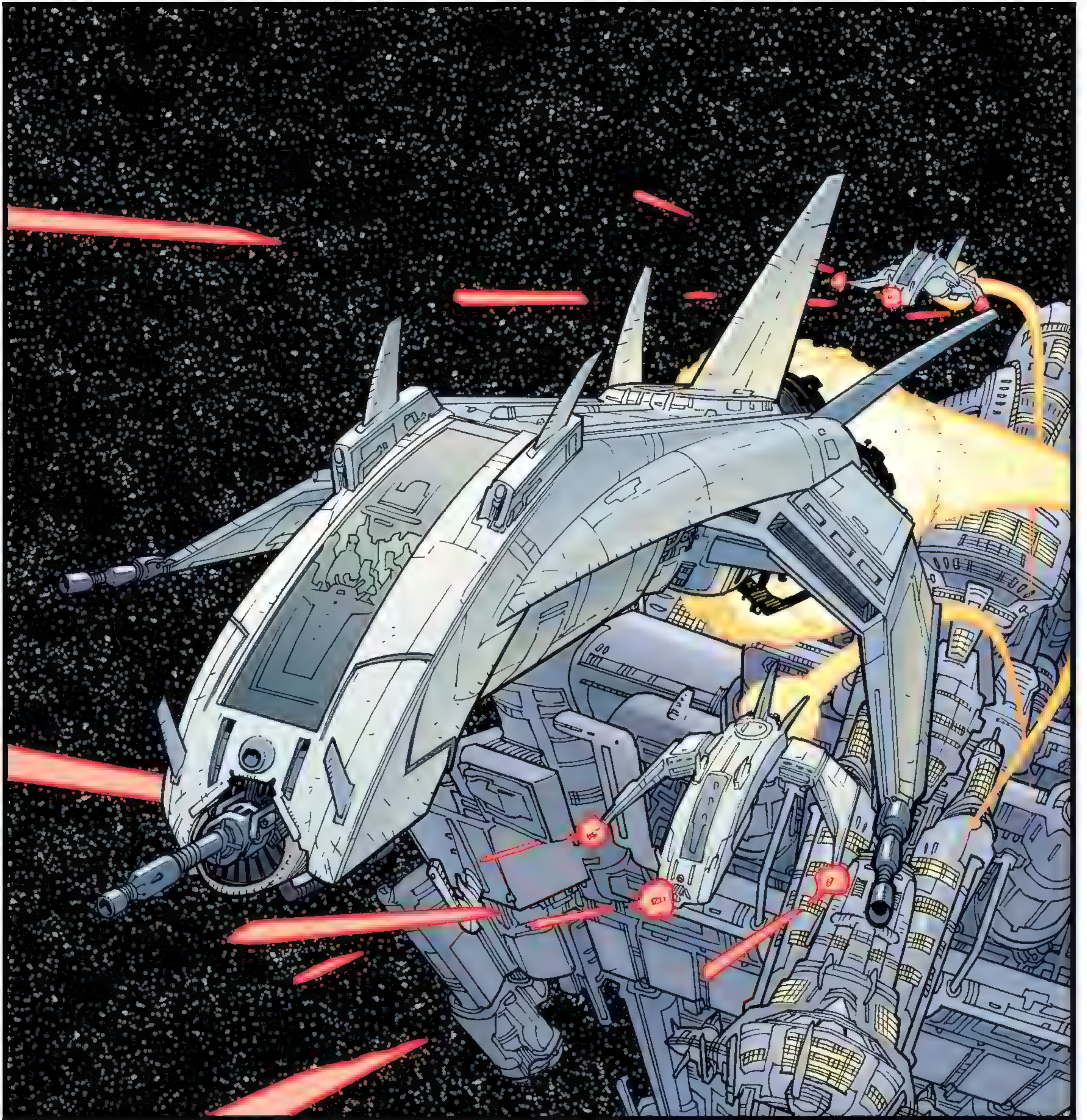








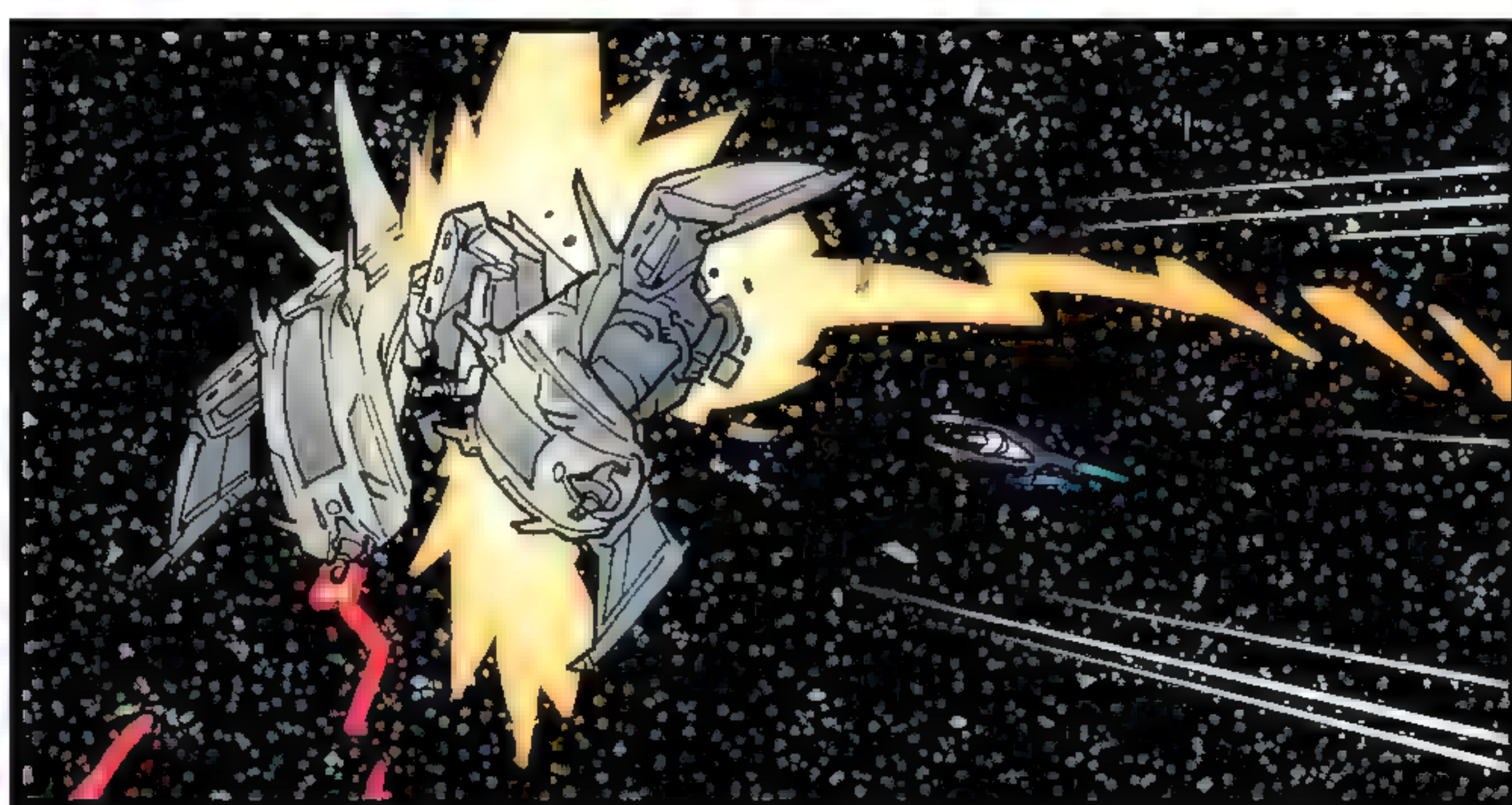
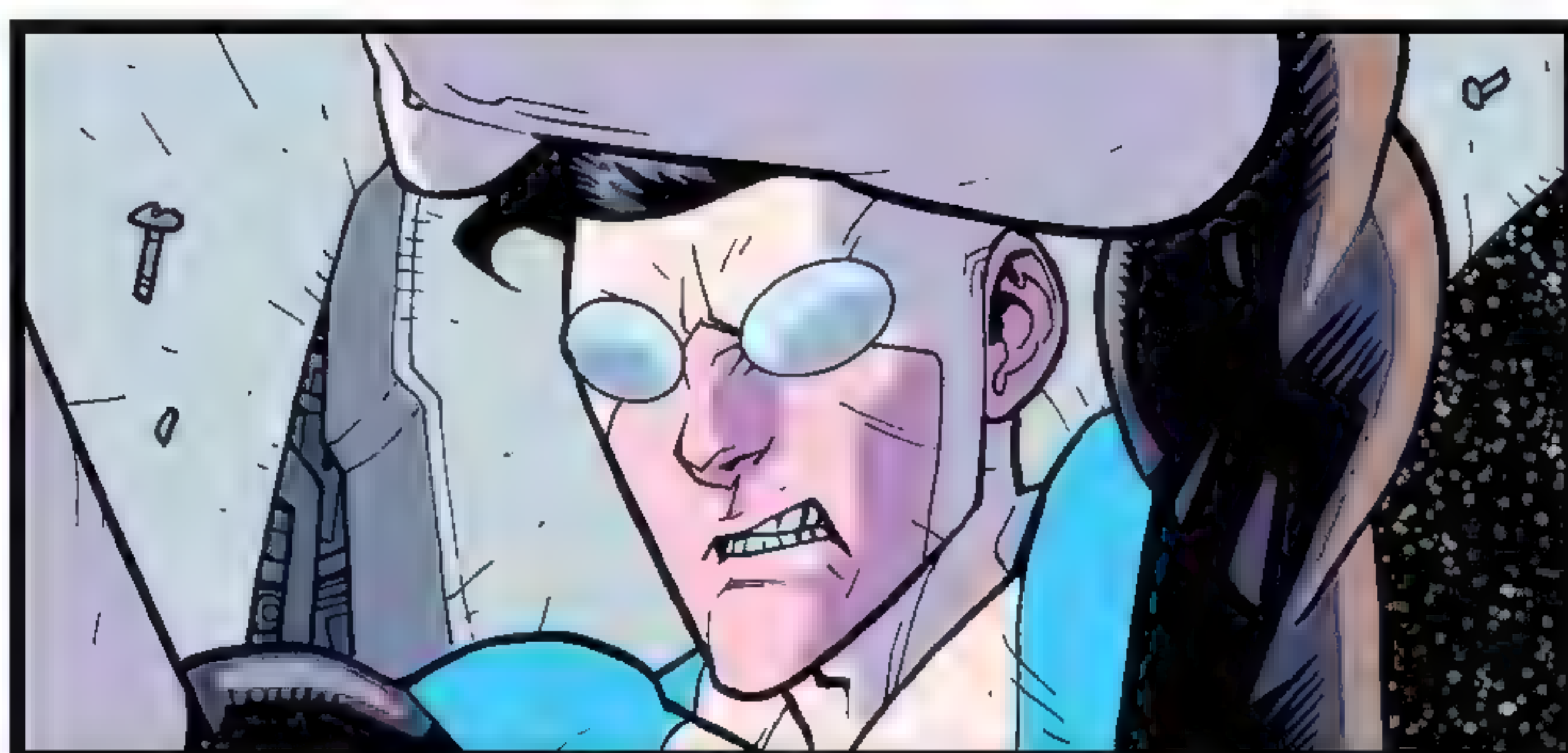
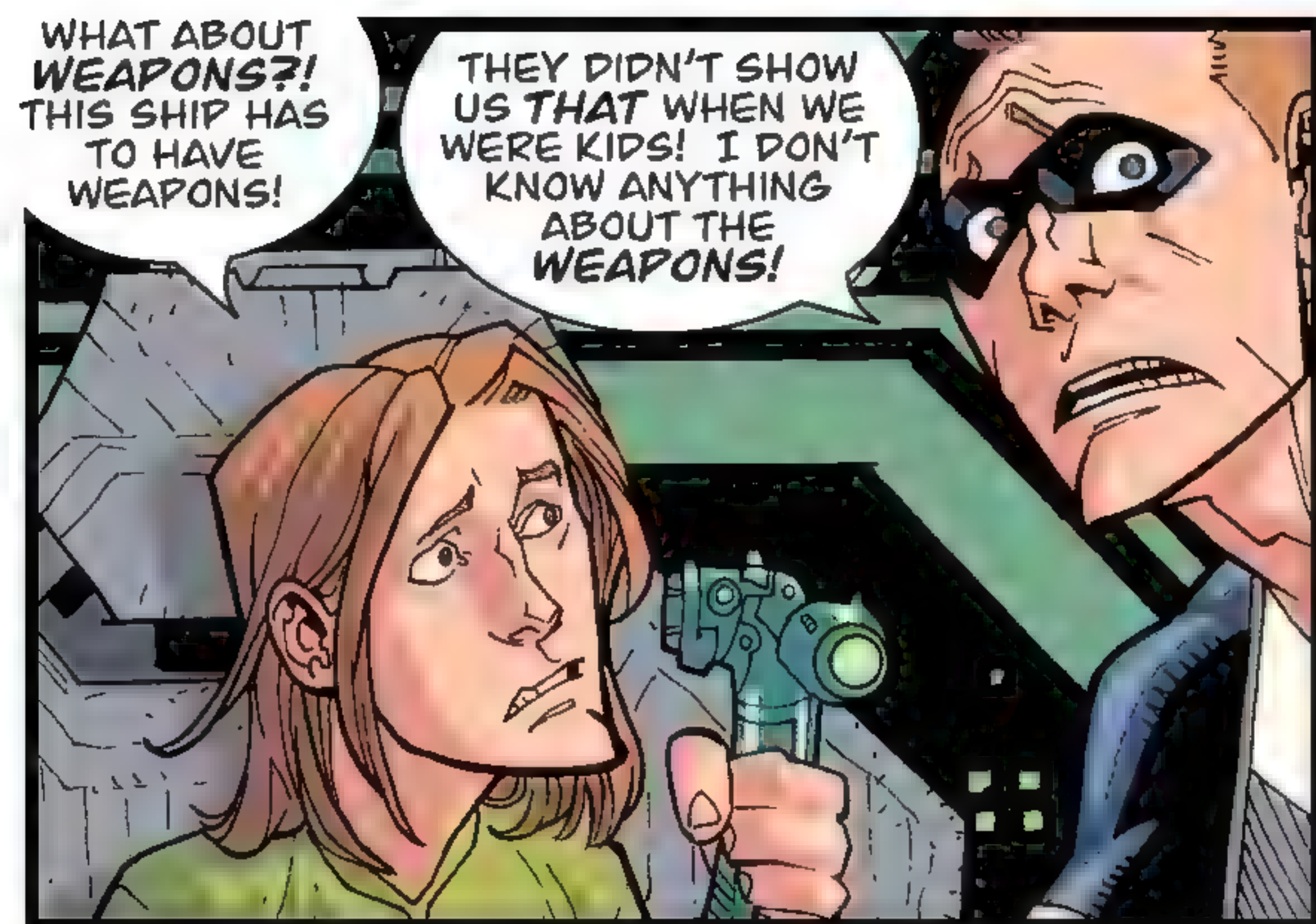




FASTER!

WE NEED
TO BE GOING
FASTER!

I'M
TRYING BUT
I THINK THIS
IS AS FAST
AS THEY
GO!







YOU DID IT!
THAT WAS--- THAT WAS--- WOW.



THANKS, I---HEY.

I REMEMBER WHEN WE MET-- WHEN YOU WERE FIRST STARTING OUT. YOU WERE SO UNSURE OF YOURSELF THEN.



YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY.

THAT WAS SOME IMPRESSIVE WORK BACK THERE, KID. NOT JUST WITH THE MARTIAN SHIPS, EITHER.

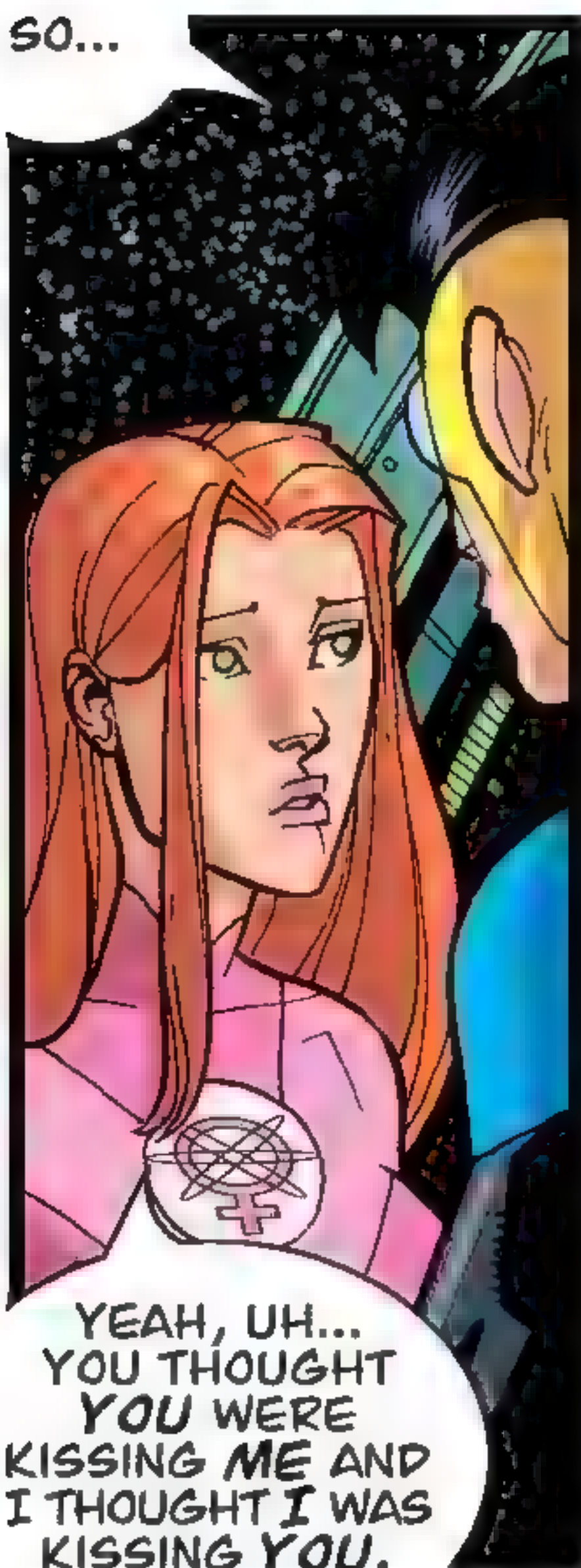
I DON'T KNOW IF WE COULD HAVE DONE ANY OF THIS WITHOUT YOU.



YOU--YOU DID A REMARKABLE JOB OUT HERE, SON.

YOU'VE REALLY PROVEN YOURSELF.

THANKS.

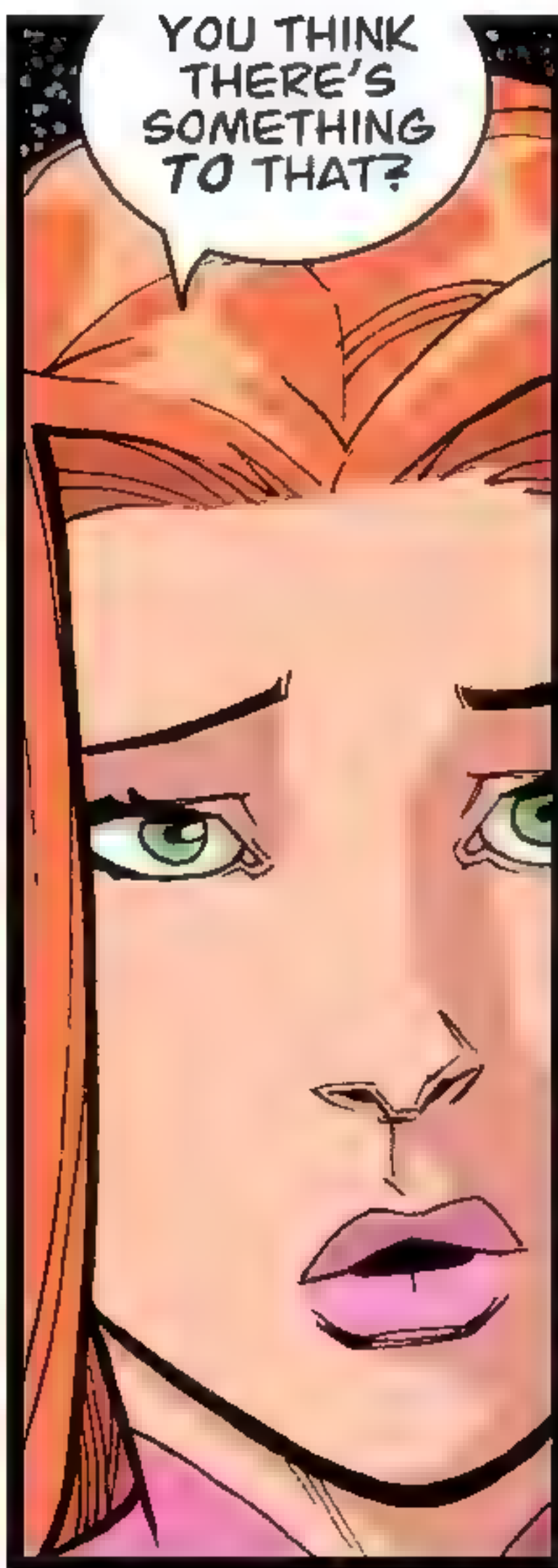


SO...

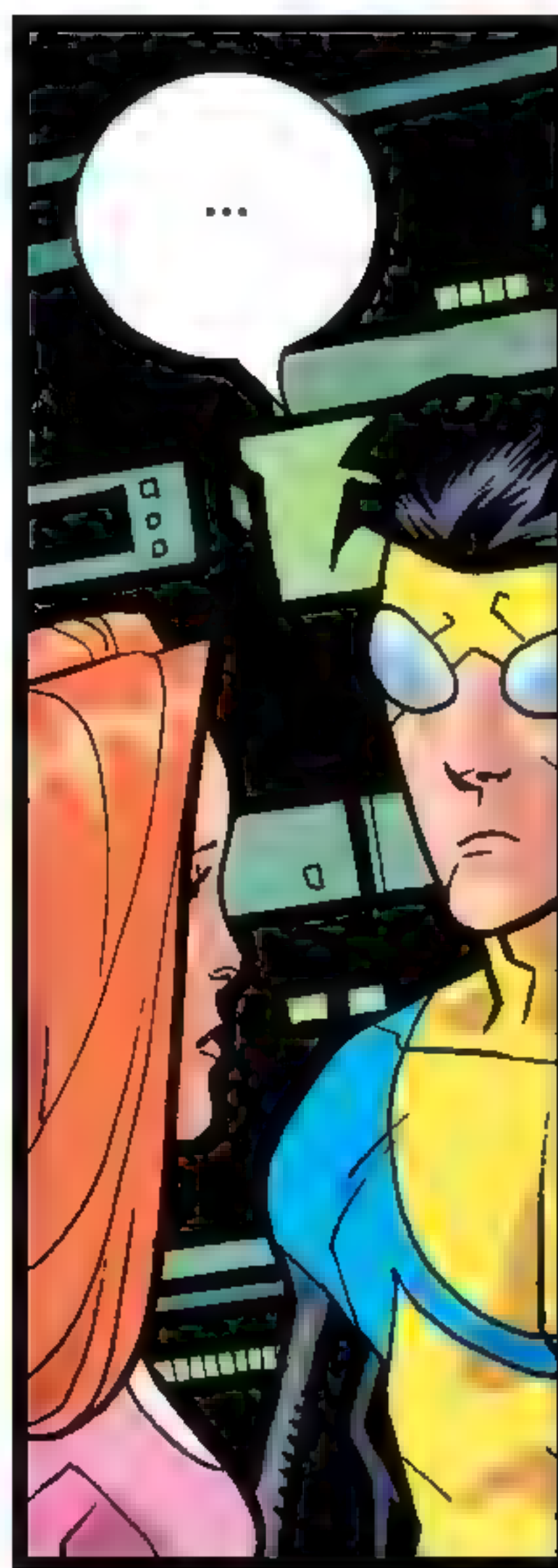
YEAH, UH... YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE KISSING ME AND I THOUGHT I WAS KISSING YOU.



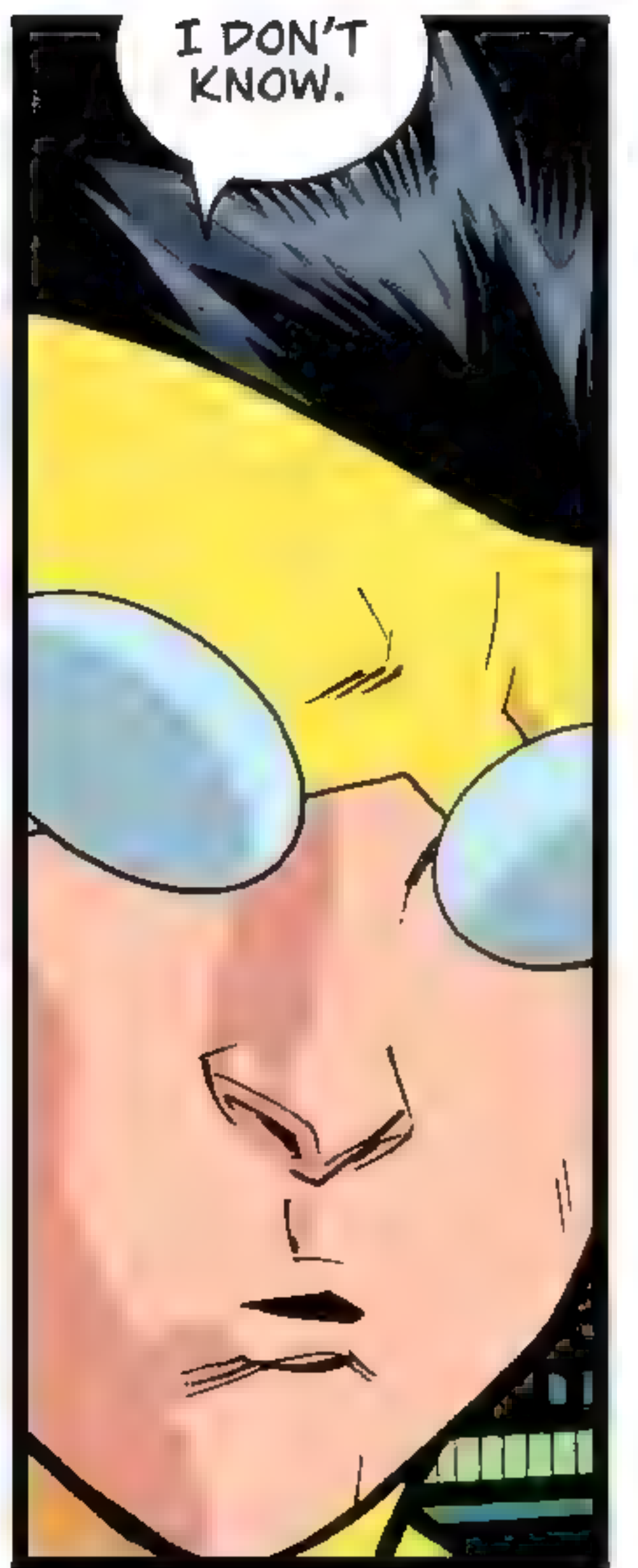
YEAH?



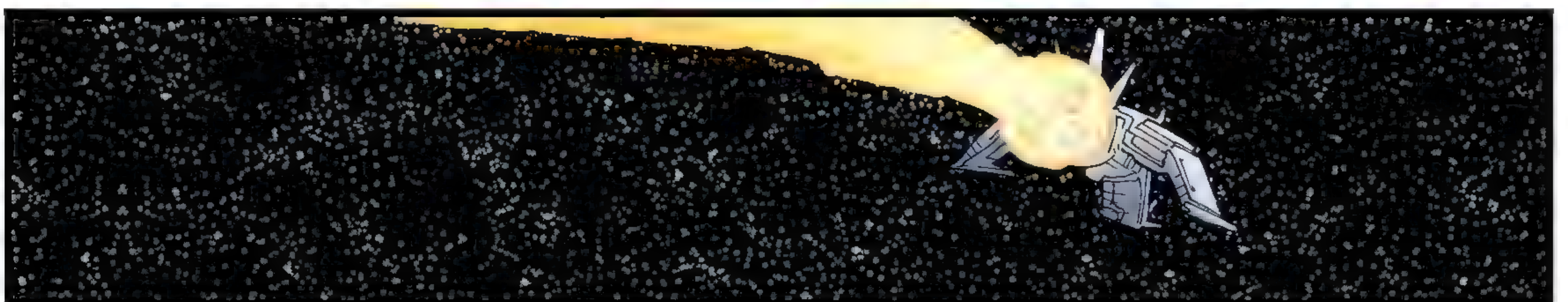
YOU THINK THERE'S SOMETHING TO THAT?

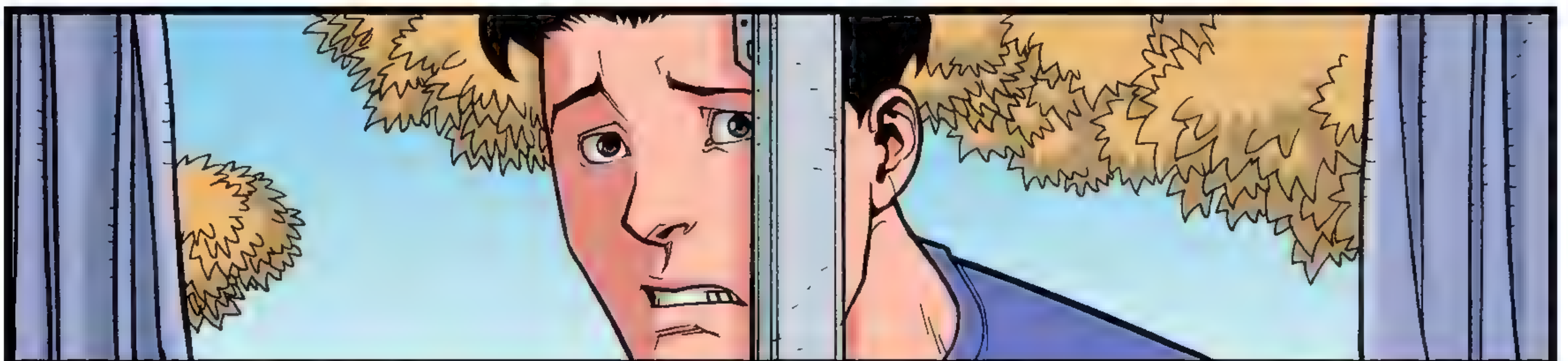
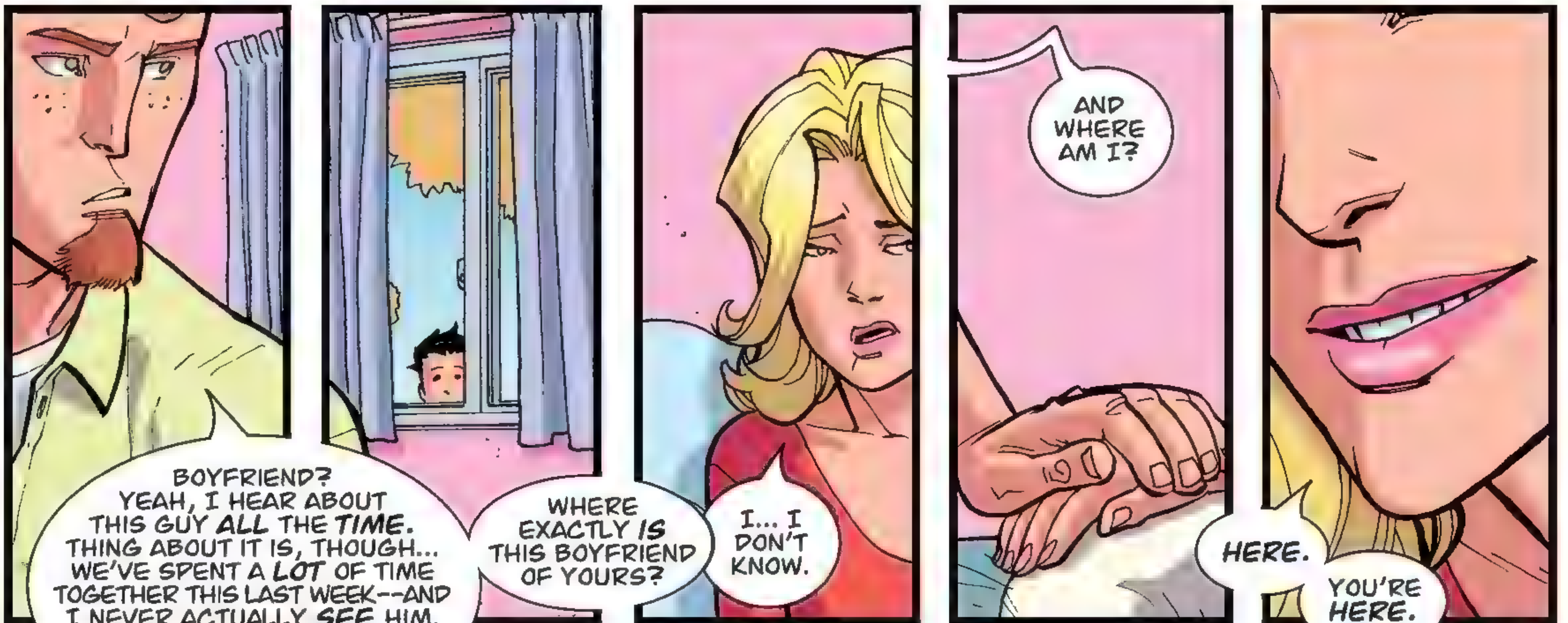
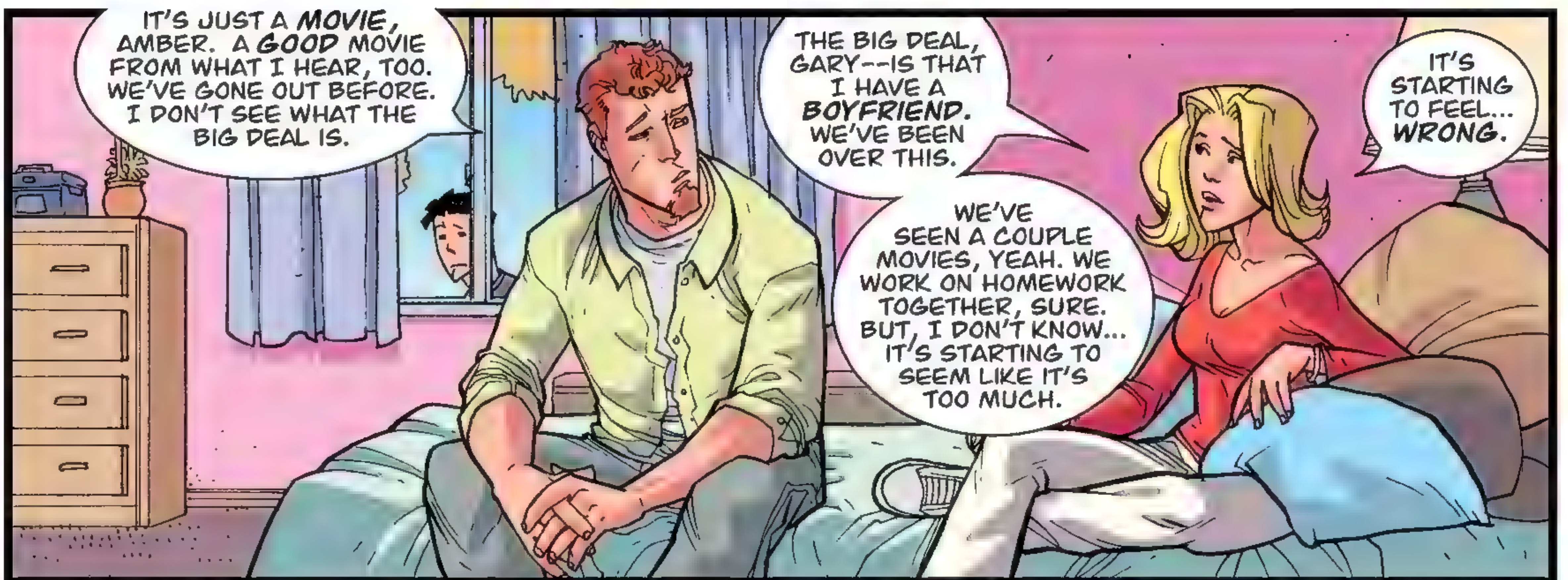
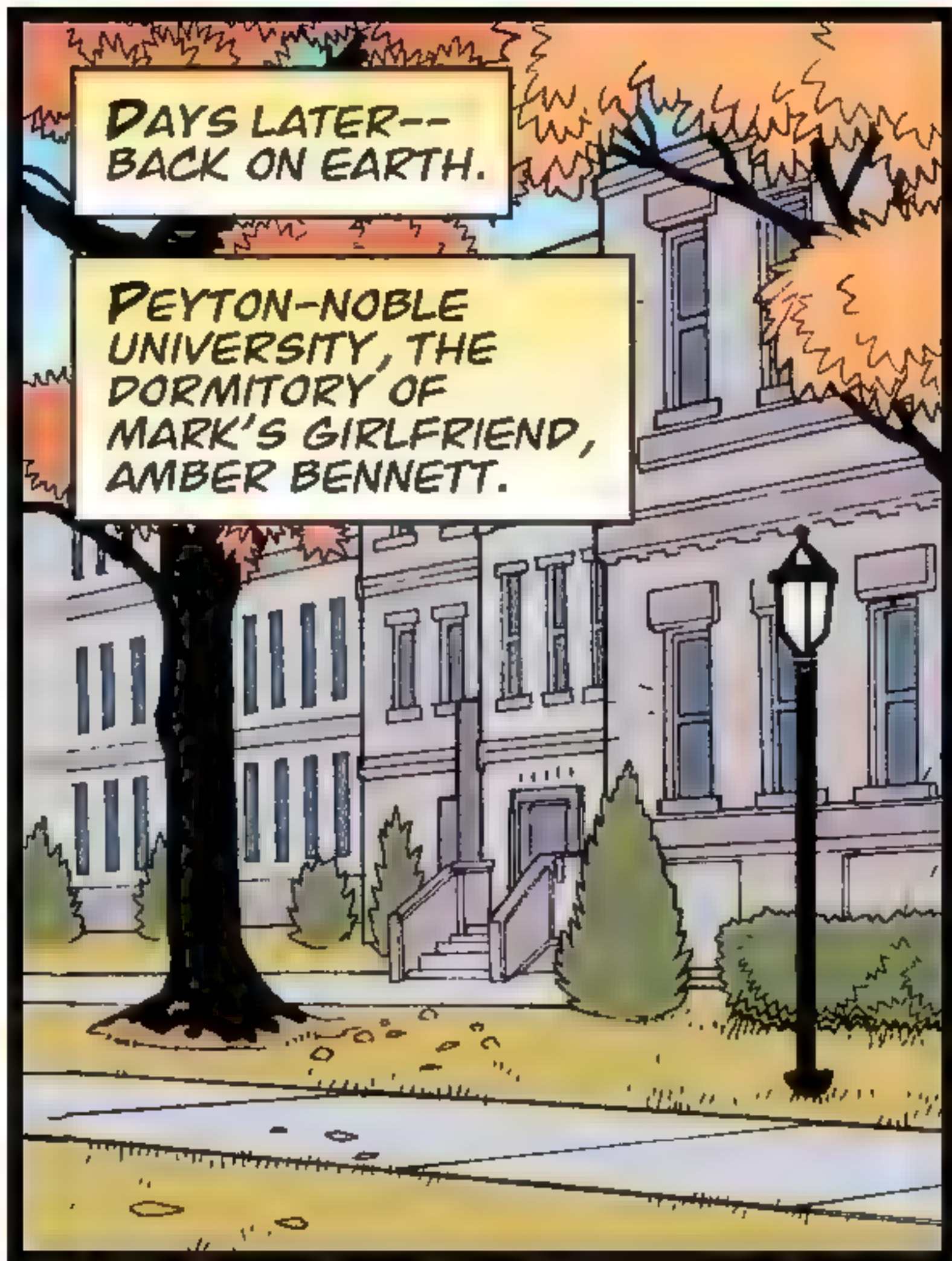


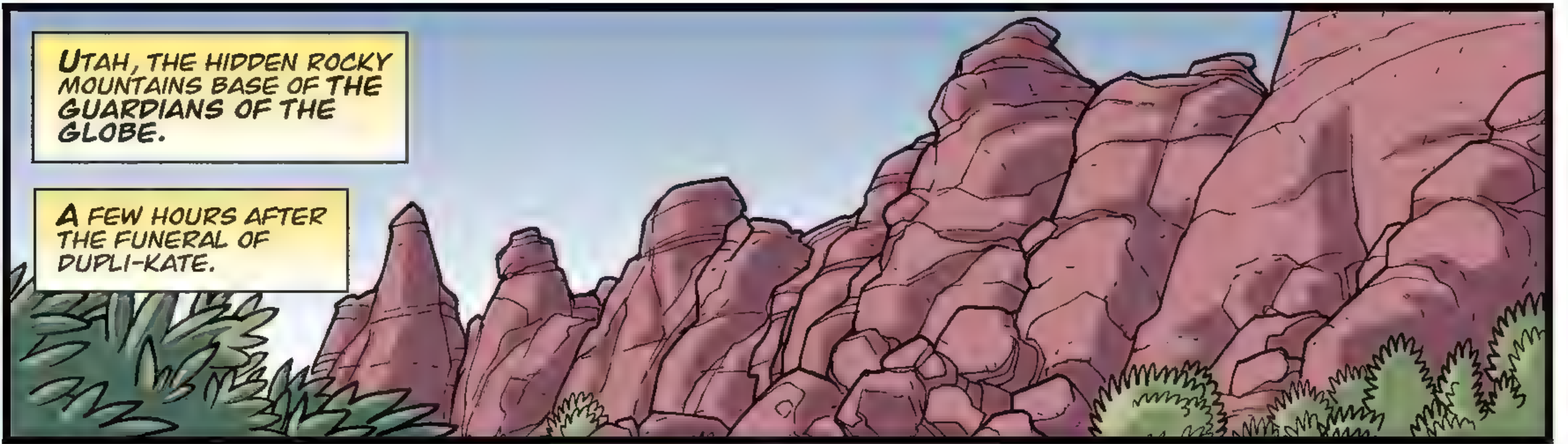
...



I DON'T KNOW.







UTAH, THE HIDDEN ROCKY MOUNTAINS BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.

A FEW HOURS AFTER THE FUNERAL OF DUPLI-KATE.



IT WAS--IT WAS A LOVELY SERVICE. I CAN'T BELIEVE WE ALMOST MISSED IT. IT'S--A HORRIBLE THING TO COME BACK TO, MAN-- I'M--I'M SO SORRY.

THANK YOU. IT WAS A NICE SERVICE. I WISH SHE HAD SOME FAMILY.

I WISH WE COULD HAVE FOUND HER BROTHER.



YOU WERE SO HAPPY, MAN--I JUST-- I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY, IMMORTAL.

I'M SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS.



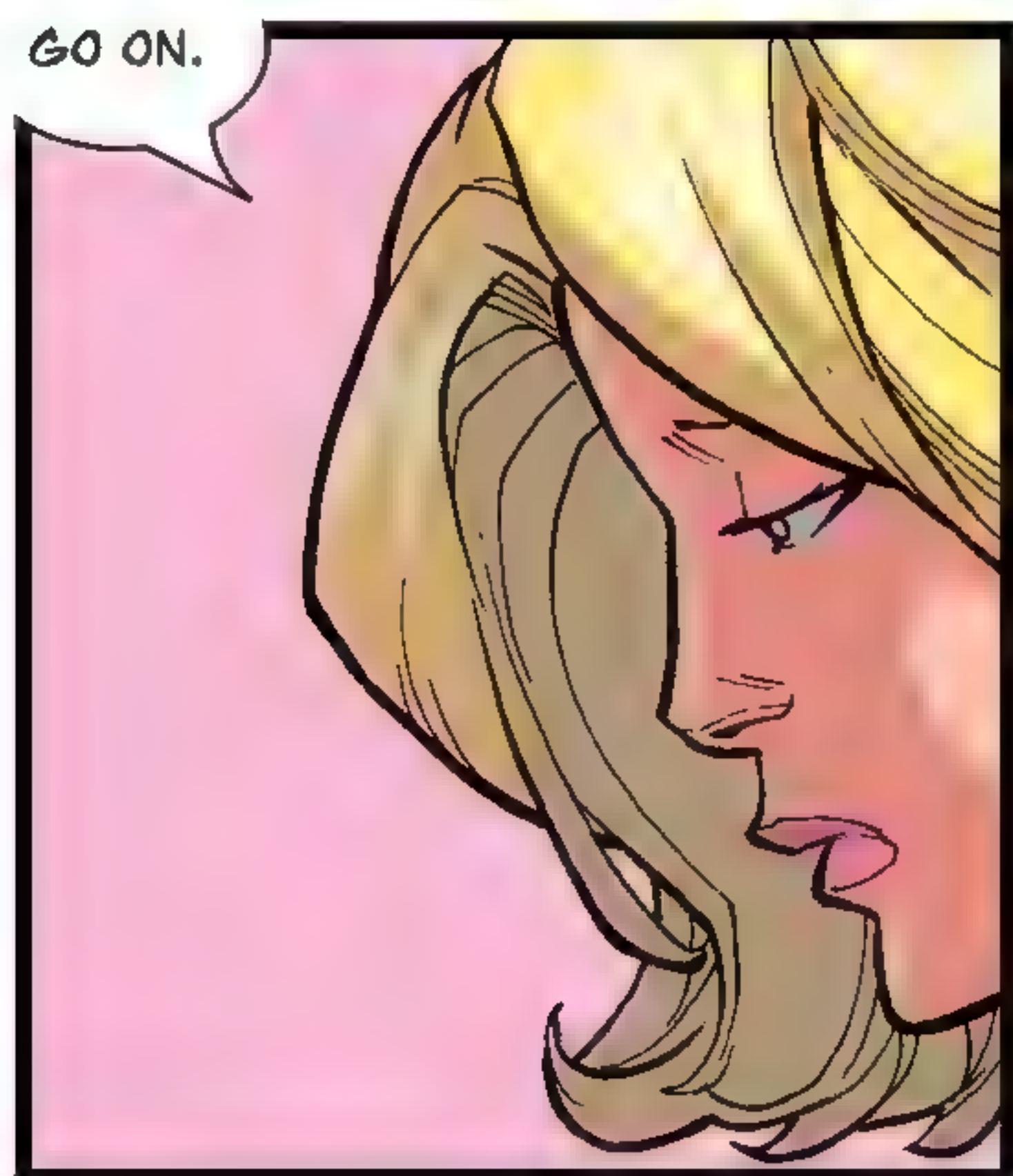
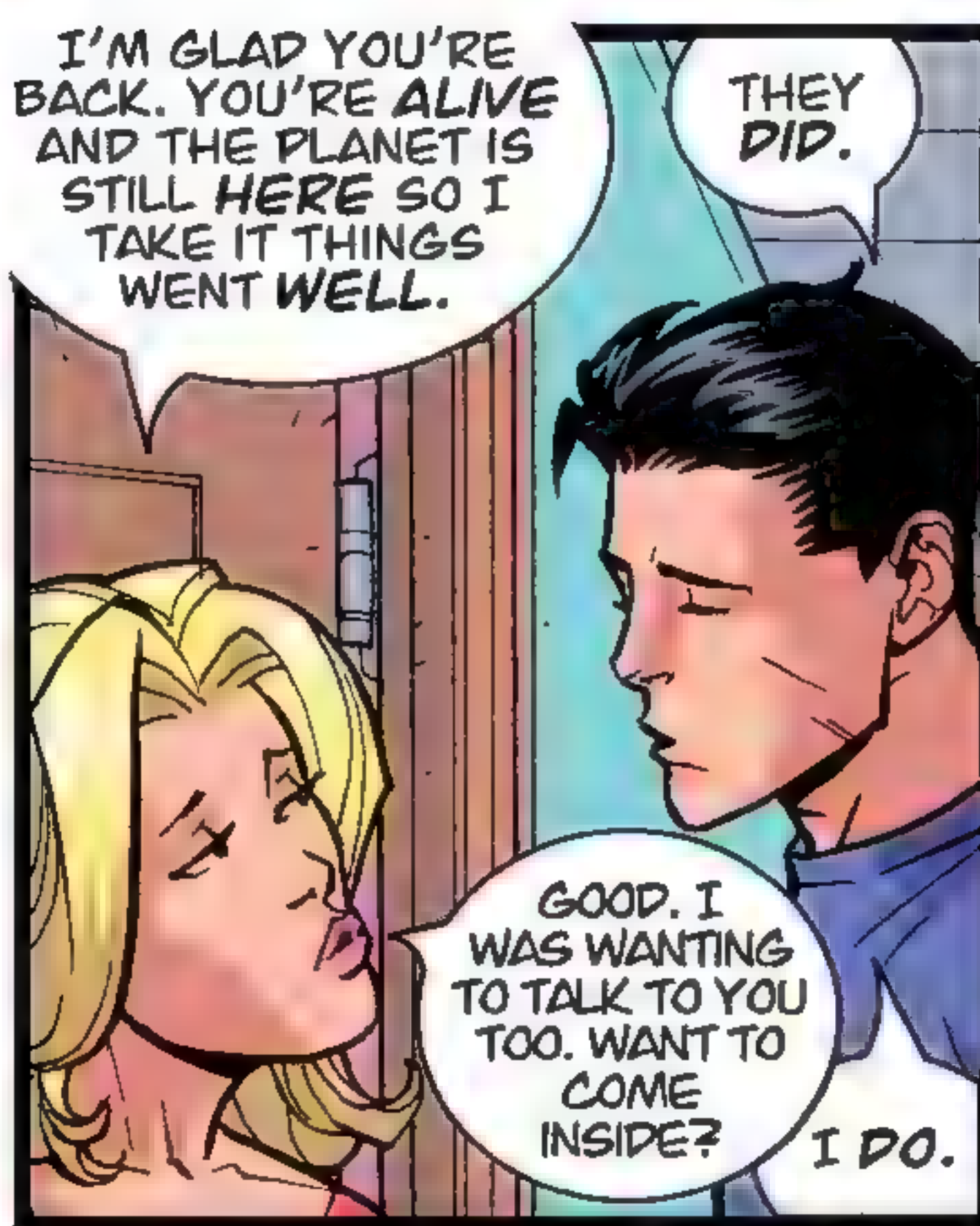
IT'S NOTHING I HAVEN'T EXPERIENCED BEFORE. NOTHING I'M NOT USED TO.

IT'S JUST-- THE THING THAT BOTHERS ME THE MOST--HER AGE--SHE WAS SO YOUNG--

I DIDN'T KNOW I'D LOSE HER SO SOON.



I THOUGHT WE WOULD HAVE MORE TIME TOGETHER.



I'M ALWAYS ZIPPING OFF SOMEWHERE TO DO SOMETHING IMPORTANT. HECK--I'VE EVEN BEEN LEAVING THE PLANET A BUNCH LATELY. AND I'VE REALIZED I JUST EXPECT YOU TO ACCEPT THAT. I'M SAVING THE WORLD--I'M DOING ALL THIS GREAT STUFF--YOU SHOULD BE HAPPY TO SIT AROUND WAITING FOR ME.

YOU CAN'T BE MAD AT ME FOR DOING THIS STUFF BECAUSE THAT WOULD MAKE YOU A SELFISH PERSON.

BUT THAT'S NOT FAIR TO YOU. YOU'RE A PERSON--YOU'VE GOT FEELINGS. IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT I'M THIS SUPERHERO--AND YOU DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THAT GOING IN.

YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE TO JUST ACCEPT THAT I'M NOT GOING TO BE HERE MOST OF THE TIME. WHY SHOULD YOU?

I JUST-- I THINK YOU WOULD BE HAPPIER WITHOUT ME-- WITH SOMEONE ELSE.

I CAME TO THE WINDOW EARLIER--I SAW YOU IN HERE WITH GARY. I KNOW YOU DIDN'T CHEAT ON ME OR ANYTHING--AND THAT'S COOL--BUT IT'S CLEAR TO ME THAT YOU'D BE HAPPIER WITH HIM. AND THAT'S TOTALLY COOL, TOO.

I'VE ACTUALLY-- I THINK YOU WERE RIGHT ABOUT EVE. SHE DOES LIKE ME--AND I DON'T KNOW--I MIGHT, Y'KNOW, PURSUE THAT.

OKAY.

OKAY? THAT'S IT?

WHAT DID YOU WANT TO SAY TO ME?

EVERY SINGLE THING YOU JUST SAID TO ME... SERIOUSLY--ALL OF IT. I PROMISE.

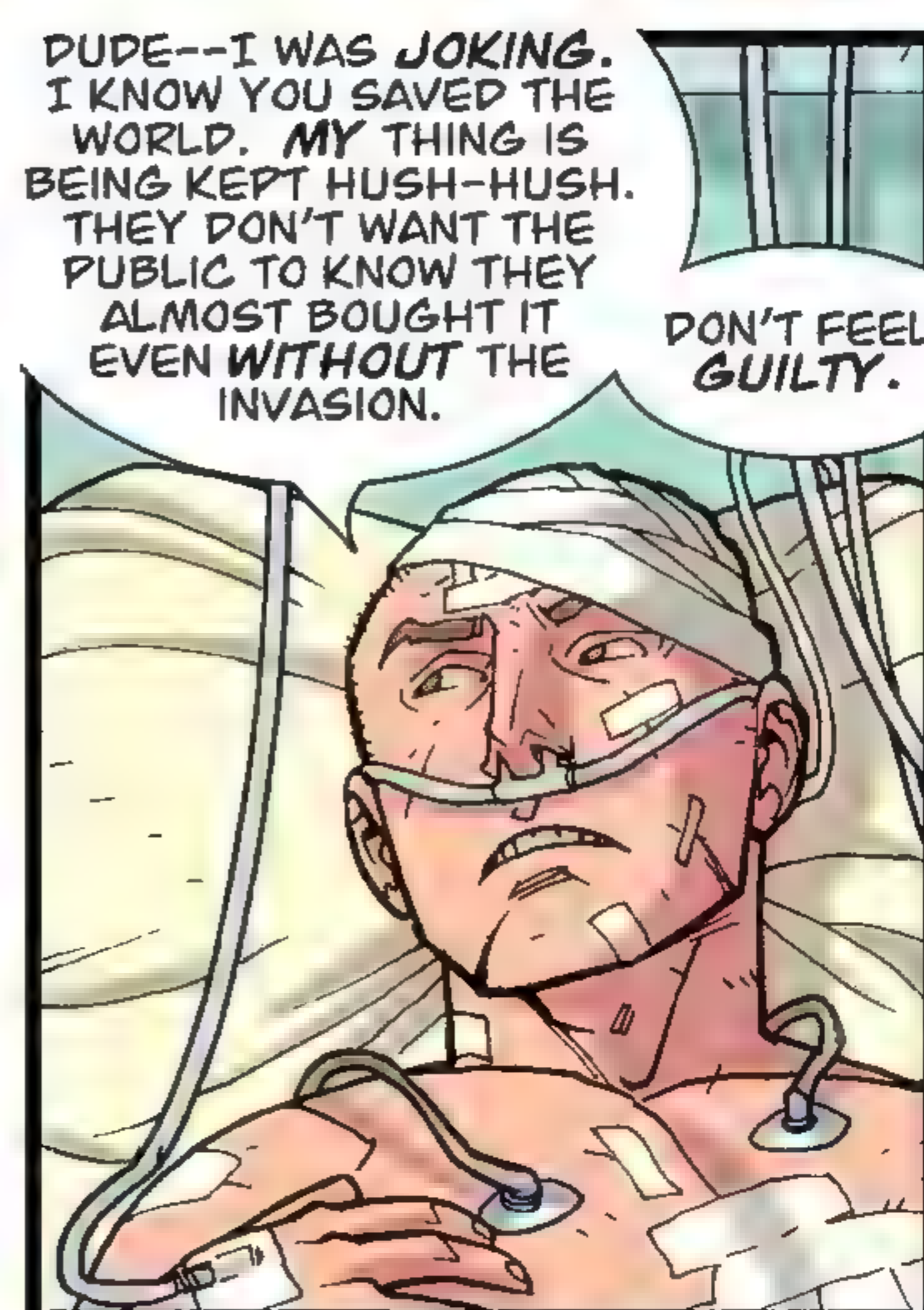
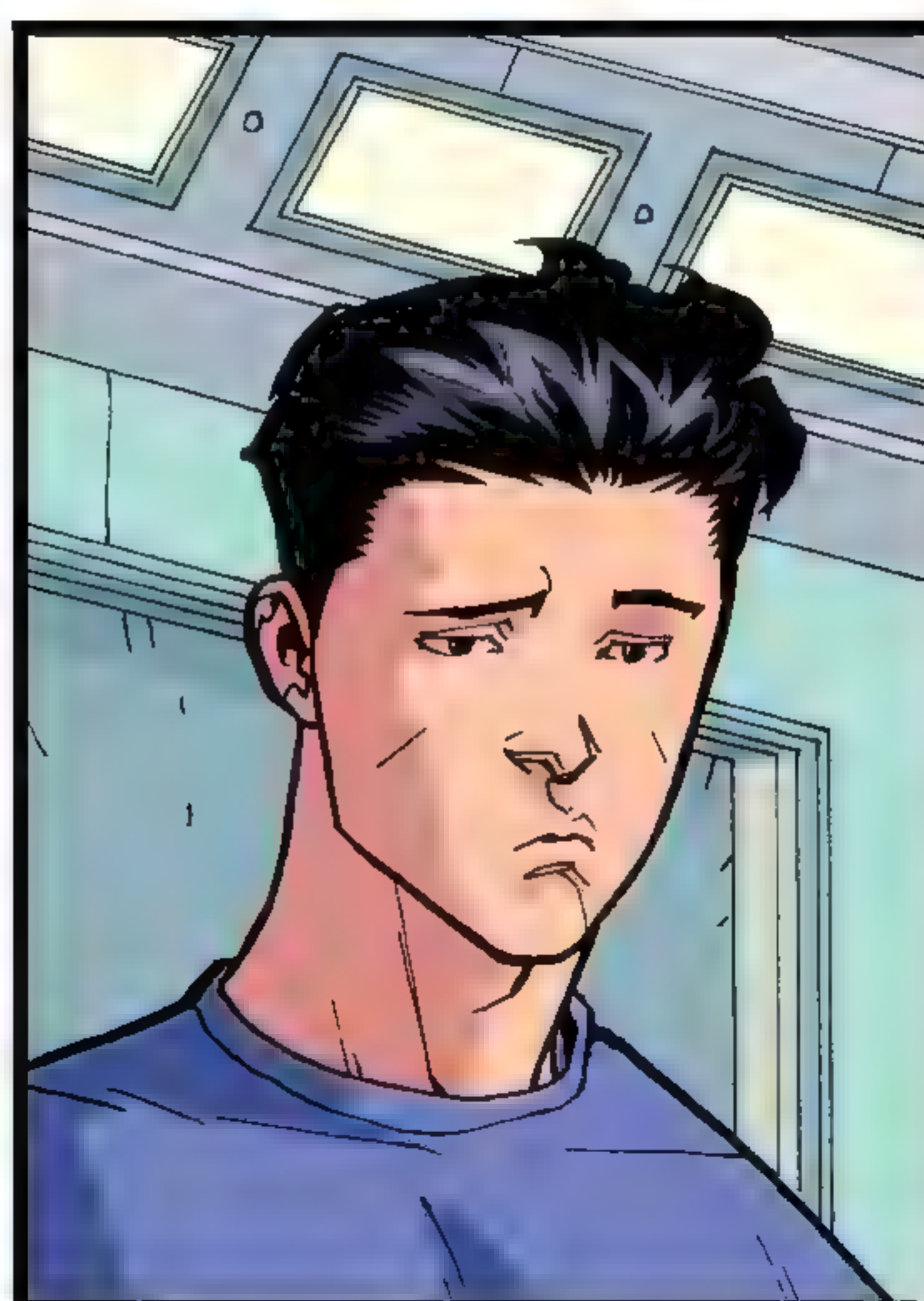
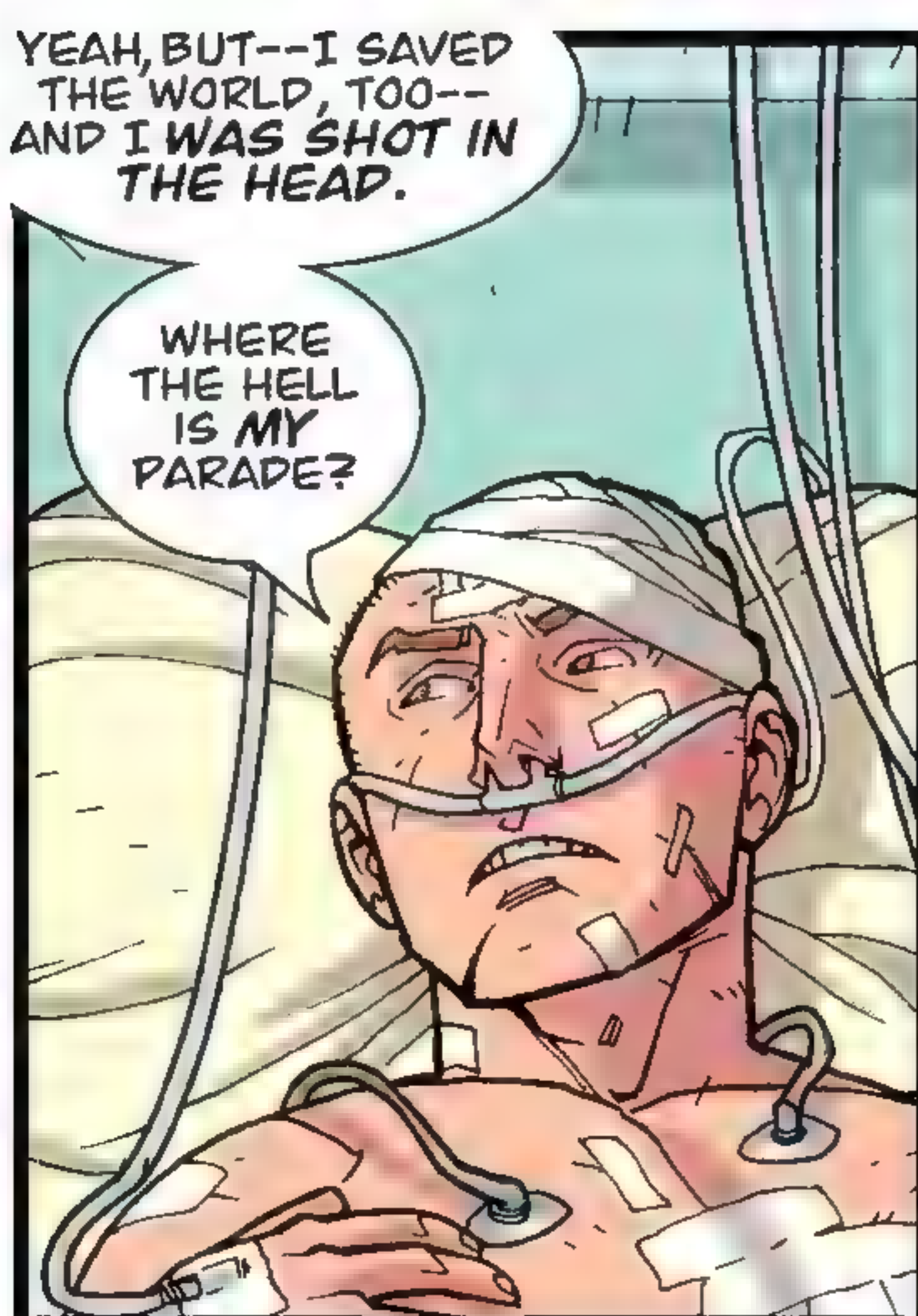
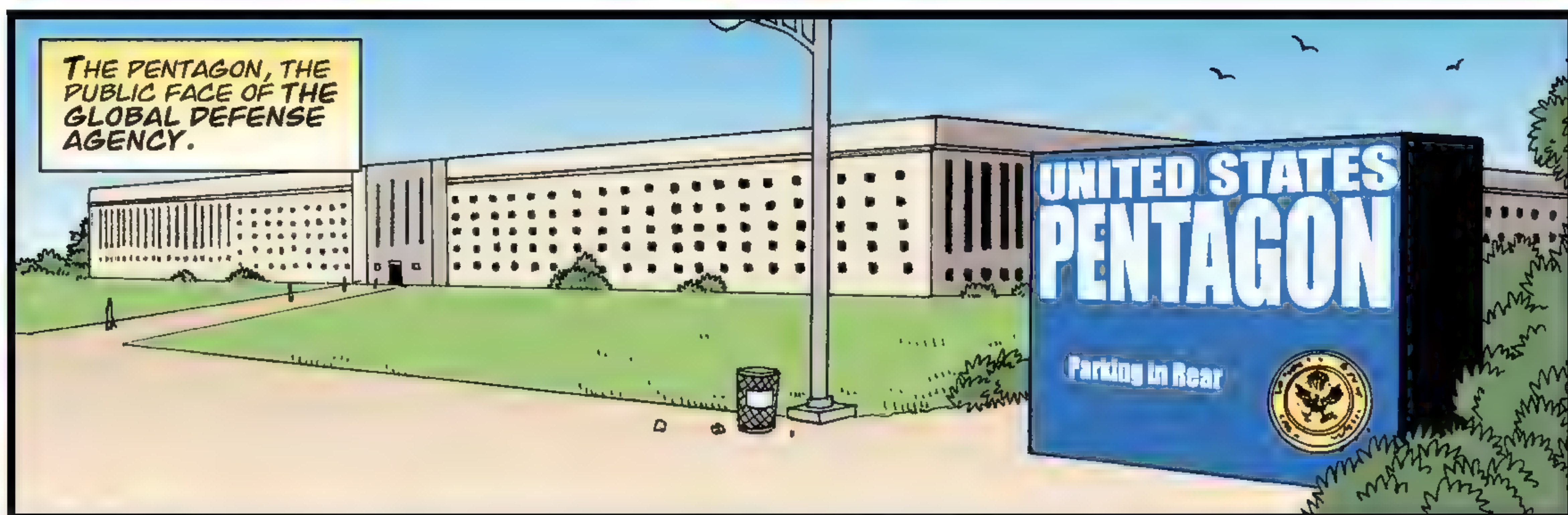
EXCEPT FOR THAT PART ABOUT EVE AT THE END.

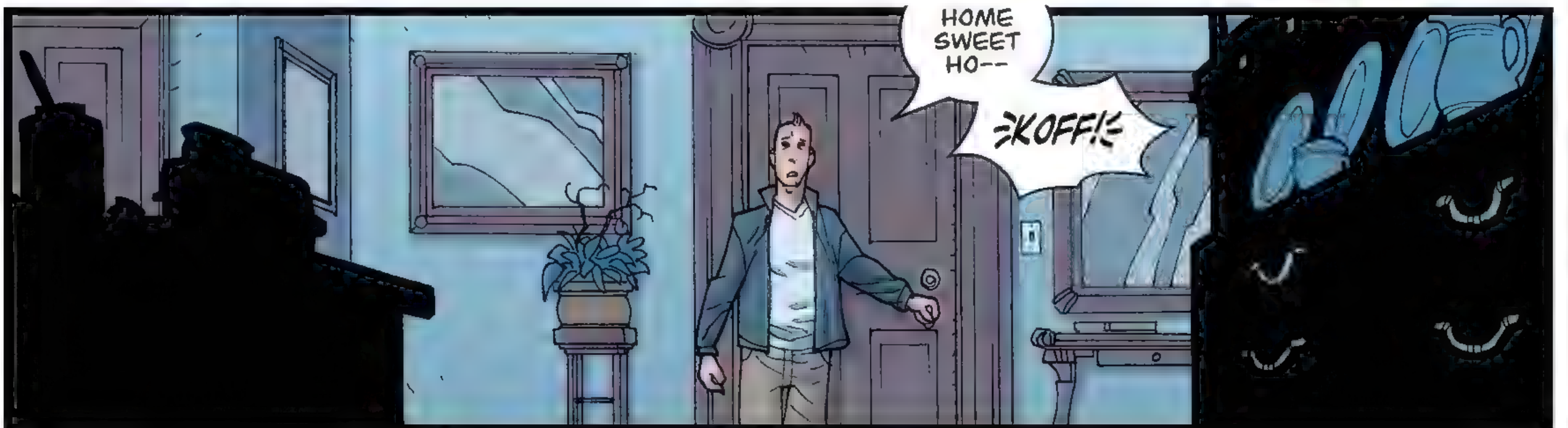
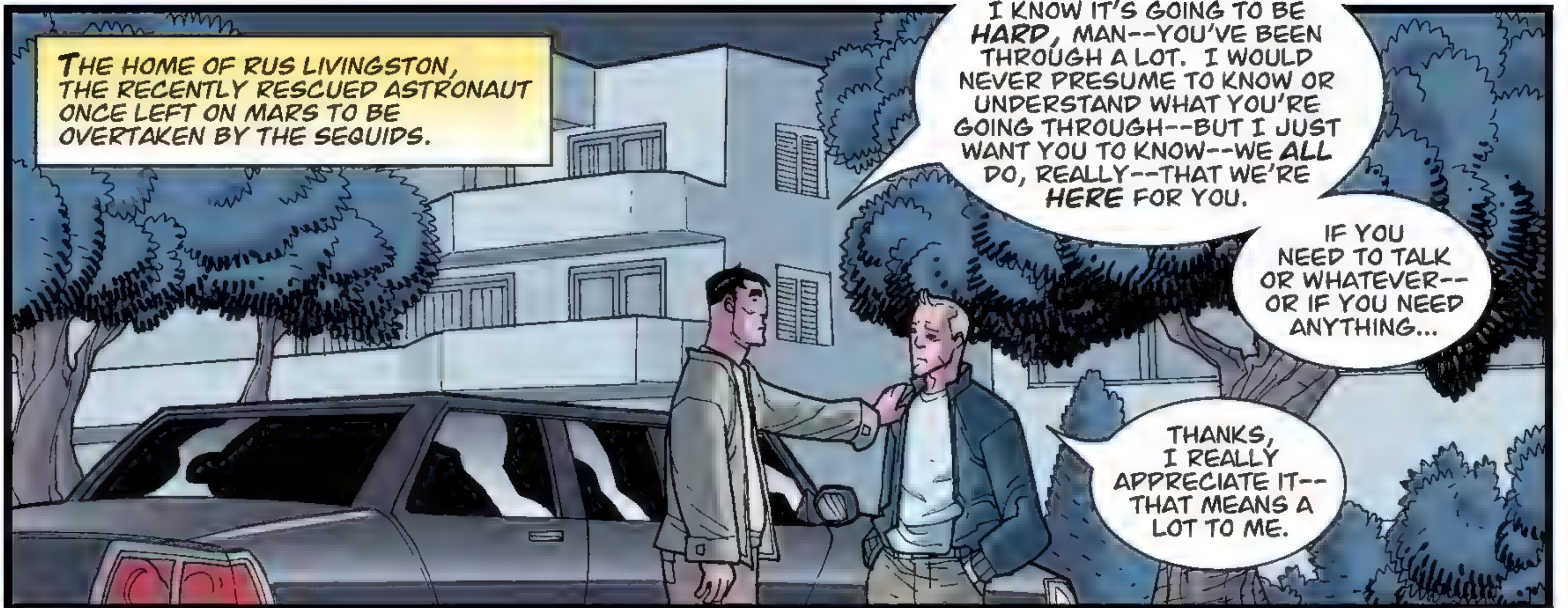
WELL-- THAT'S A RELIEF.

I DID MISS YOU A BUNCH, THOUGH.

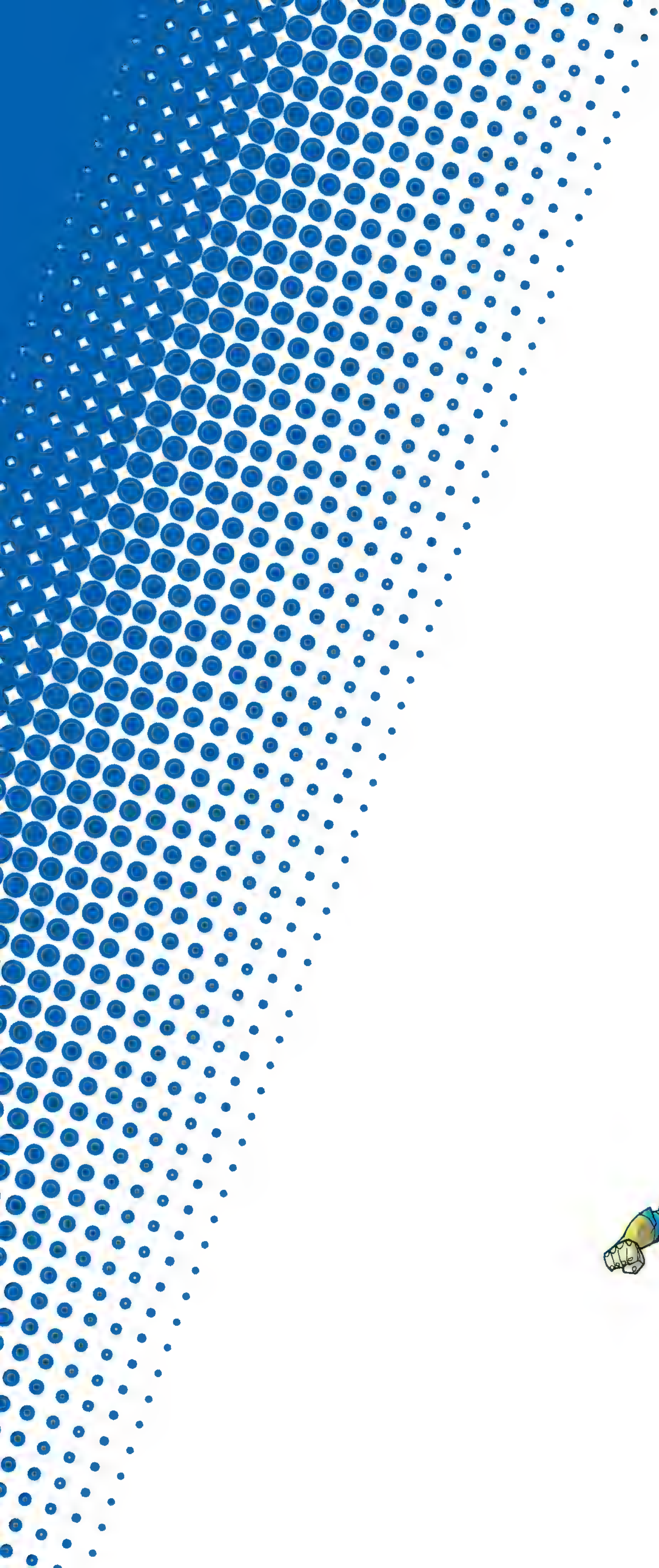
ONE LAST CUDDLE?

SURE.









ISSUE FORTY-TWO



NO, SO FAR
EVERYTHING IS
GOING WELL.
NOTHING'S HAPPENED--
NOT EVEN A MINOR SET
BACK. LAST TIME I
TALKED TO THE ASTRONAUTS,
AT LEAST--THINGS WERE
RUNNING SMOOTHLY
AND RIGHT ON
SCHEDULE.

WELL, JUST
KEEP AN EYE ON
THEM. THIS IS
A DANGEROUS
MISSION--THAT'S
WHY YOU'RE
THERE.

I KNOW
WHY I'M HERE.
IF THEY LOSE
CONTAINMENT--I
HELP THE ASTRONAUTS
INTO THE ESCAPE POD
AND ZIP THEM BACK TO
EARTH BEFORE THEY
RUN OUT OF AIR. IT'S
SIMPLE, CECIL--
THIS IS EASY.

I AM
STANDING.

FINE,
FINE,
FINE.

I CAN
SEE YOU,
MARK. I'M
LOOKING
RIGHT AT
YOU.

EASY--
RIGHT. JUST
KEEP YOUR EYES
OPEN, WHO KNOWS
WHAT'S OUT THERE--
AND FOR GOD'S SAKE--
AT LEAST STAND UP
AND ACT LIKE YOU'RE
READY TO SAVE THEM
IF SOMETHING
DOES GO
WRONG.



WHAT IS IT?
WHY ARE YOU
CONSTANTLY
STARING
AT HIM?

DO YOU
TRUST HIM? I
MEAN--REALLY
TRUST HIM? HE'S
ONLY HALF HUMAN--
AND HIS ALIEN FATHER
TRIED TO TAKE OVER THE
WORLD FOR HIS PEOPLE--
THE VILTRUMITES
OR WHATEVER THEY'RE
CALLED. DON'T
YOU REMEMBER
THE--

I REMEMBER
THE TRAGIC EVENTS
OF **MARCH SIXTEEN**.
HIS FIGHT WITH OMNI-
MAN WAS ALL OVER THE
NEWS FOR MONTHS.
ALL THOSE PEOPLE
DIED--IT WAS
TRAGIC, YEAH.

I'VE
BEEN TO THE
MONUMENT.

YEAH--HIS FATHER,
WHO WAS ONE OF OUR
MOST BELOVED HEROES,
OMNI-MAN, TRIED TO
TAKE OVER THE WORLD.
HIS FATHER KILLED
THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE
THAT DAY.

IF THAT'S
TRUE--INVINCIBLE
HERE WOULD HAVE
HAD SOMETHING TO DO
WITH IT. REGARDLESS--
THIS KID'S FATHER
WAS AN EVIL--
EVIL MAN.

THEN HIS
FATHER JUST
LEFT THE PLANET--
DISAPPEARED. OR
SO WE'VE BEEN LED TO
BELIEVE. YOU'VE HEARD
THE THEORIES--THAT
THE GOVERNMENT
STRUCK A DEAL WITH
OMNI-MAN--THAT
HE NEVER
LEFT.

BUT I'M
SUPPOSED TO
IGNORE THAT
AND TRUST THAT
THIS GUY IS GOING
TO **SAVE** ME IF
SOMETHING GOES
WRONG. I DON'T
TRUST THIS
KID--I JUST
DON'T.

YES--OMNI-MAN
TRIED TO TAKE OVER
THE WORLD--BUT
DON'T FORGET,
INVINCIBLE **STOPPED**
HIM. HE **SAVED**
US ALL THAT
DAY.

HE
TURNED
AGAINST HIS
FATHER--AND
PROTECTED US.
YOU HEARD THE
RECORDING OF
THEM TALKING
DURING THE FIGHT.
INVINCIBLE
DIDN'T BACK
DOWN.

THE
KID'S
GOT MY
TRUST.

AND DIDN'T YOU SEE
THE **PARADE**? HE
JUST STOPPED SOME
BIG ALIEN MENACE
FROM REACHING
EARTH AND **TAKING**
OVER.

NOW HE'S
HELPING US
PUT AN OUTPOST
ON THE MOON SO
WE CAN MONITOR
FOR MORE SPACE
BORNE THREATS
BEFORE THEY
REACH US.

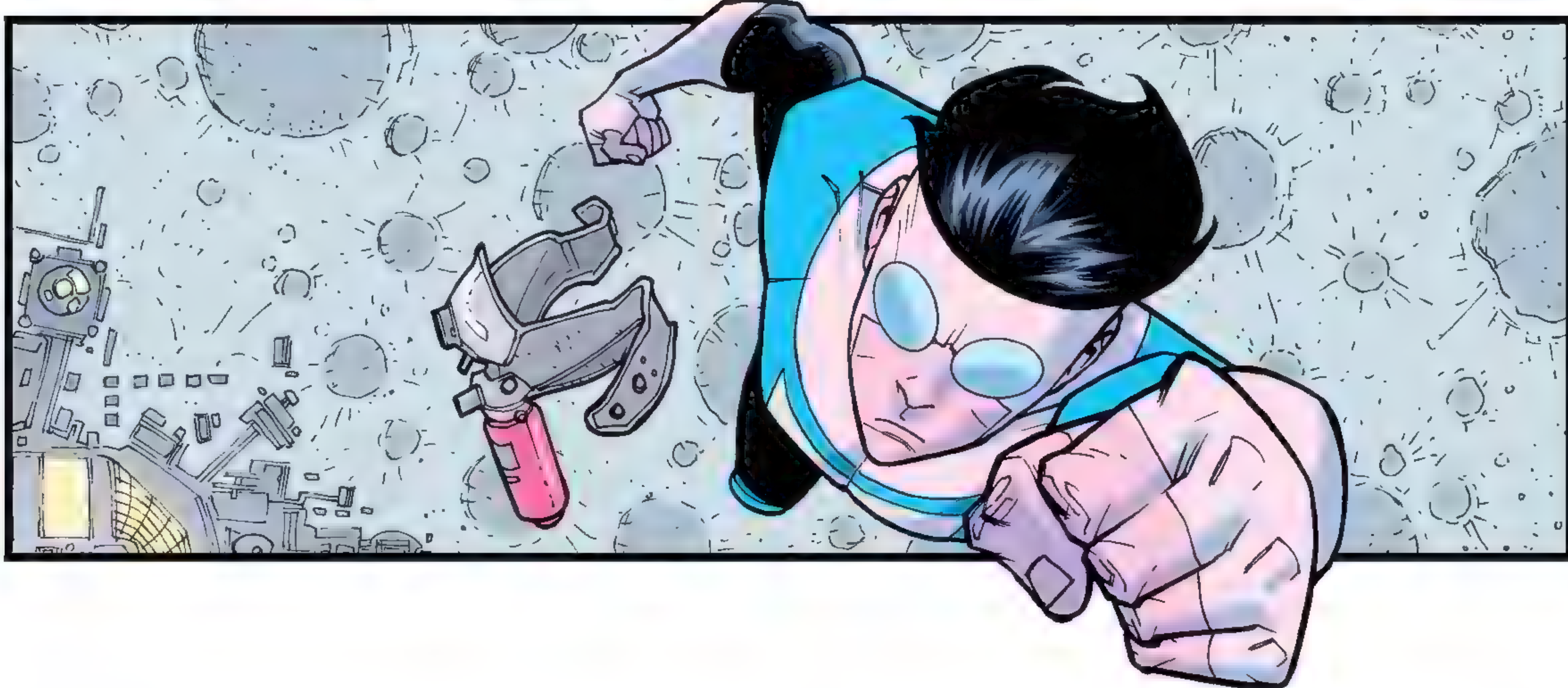
SEEMS
TO ME
LIKE HE'S
EARNED
THAT
TRUST.

WHATEVER.

THE GUY
JUST SEEMS
KIND OF
SHADY TO
ME.

FIRST OFF--WE'VE GOT
A LOT OF WORK TO DO AND
NOT A LOT OF TIME. BETA
TEAM IS COMING IN HERE IN
SIXTEEN HOURS TO WORK
ON THE INNER STRUCTURES.
WE HAVE TO HAVE THIS
DOME SECURE, COMPLETE
AND FUNCTIONING
BEFORE THEN.

SECOND--I
WAS ON THE **MARS**
MISSION WHEN WE WERE
TAKEN CAPTIVE. INVINCIBLE
SAVED US. IF IT WASN'T
FOR HIM WE WOULD HAVE
BEEN **EXECUTED**.





...AND IF YOU JUST STAY ON COURSE HE SHOULD BE RIGHT IN FRONT OF--

I SEE HIM--

--WOW.

YEAH-- I'VE GOT THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE ON THE WAY. I CALLED THEM IN, TOO-- FIGURED THIS IS A BIG ENOUGH JOB FOR ALL OF YOU.



YOU FIGURED RIGHT.

ARE YOU GOING TO BE ABLE TO HOLD YOUR OWN UNTIL THEY ARRIVE?

OH, YEAH-- I THINK-- I'VE BEEN PRACTICING. I SHOULD BE OKAY.

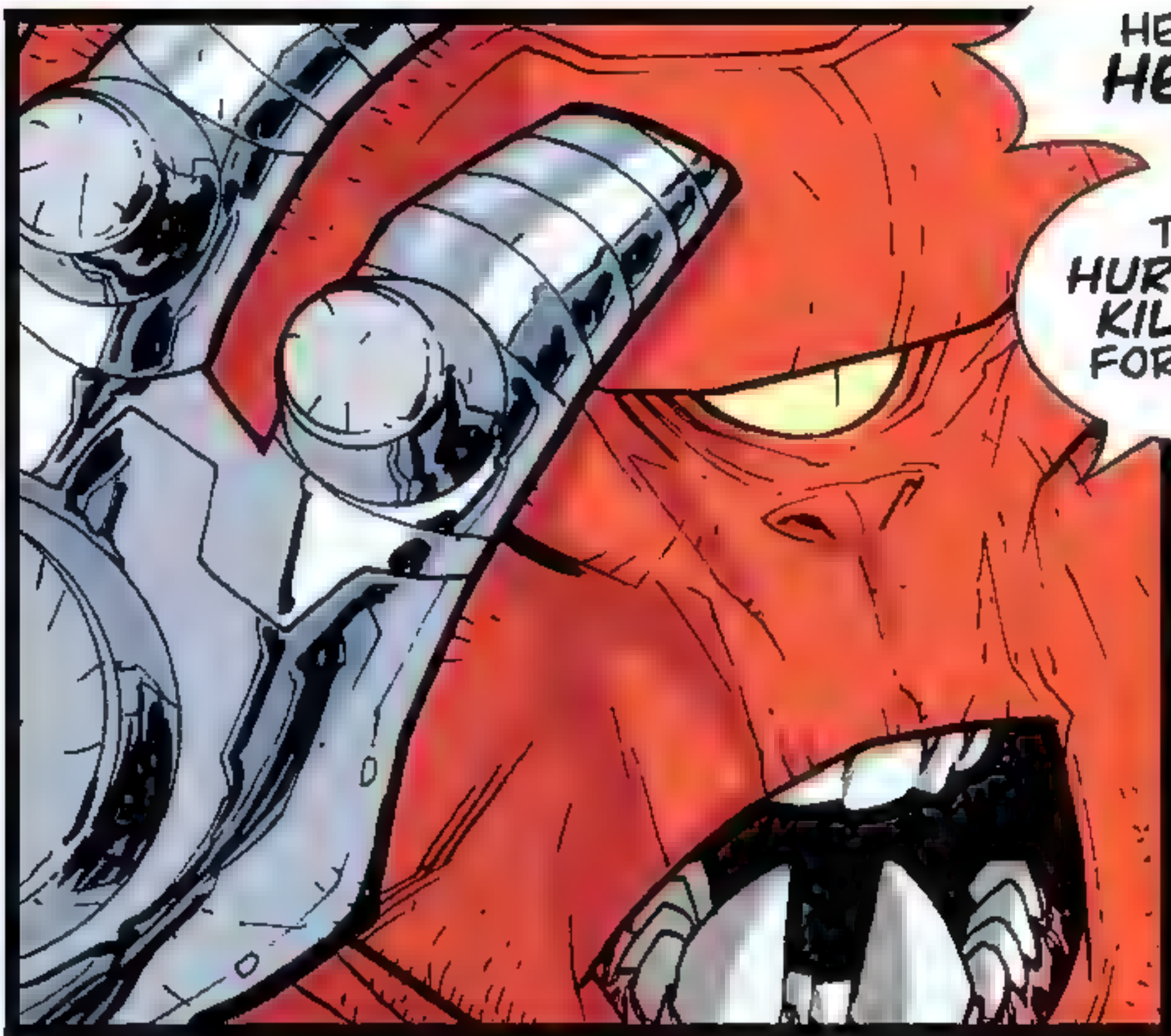
TANKS?! SOLDIERS?! YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TIME!! I'M TOO STRONG! I CAN'T BE STOPPED!

POOM!



KROOOM!!

I THINK I CAN DO THIS.



HEY--
HEY!!

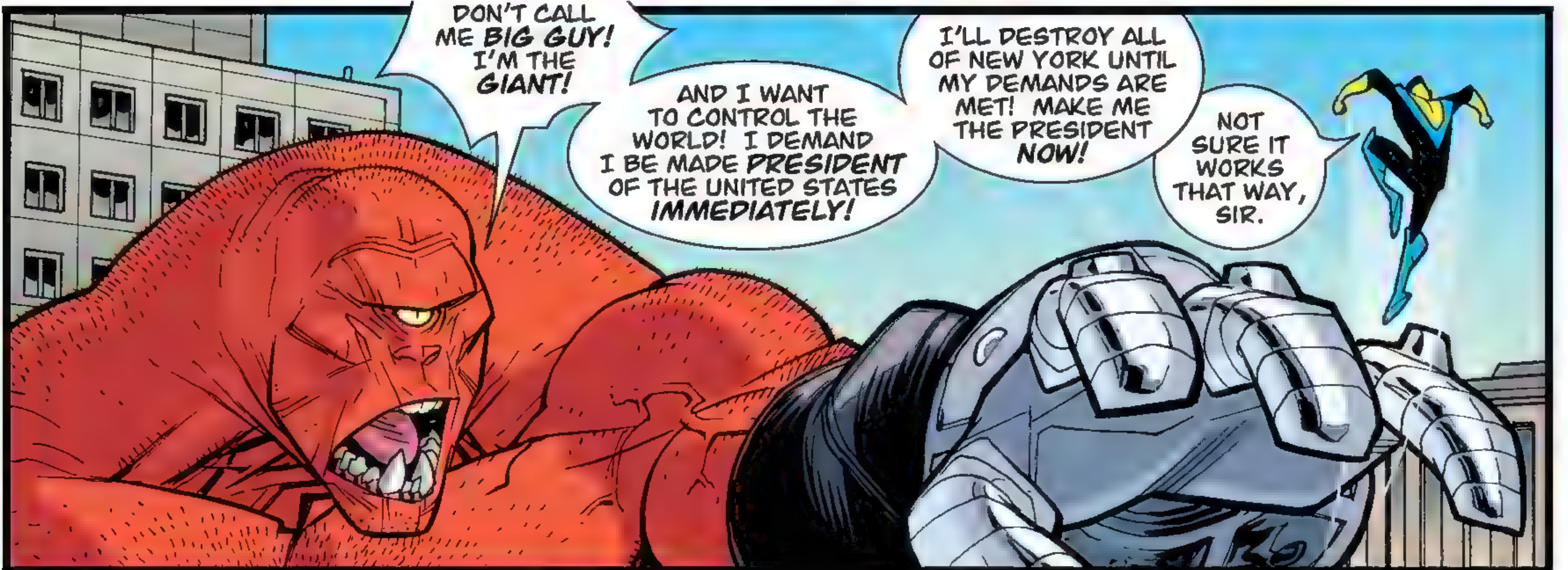
THAT
HURT! I'LL
KILL YOU
FOR THAT!



FORGIVE ME IF
I DON'T STAND
STILL TO PROVIDE
YOU THE
OPPORTUNITY.

ANYWAY--
WHAT GIVES,
BIG GUY?!
WHERE'VE YOU
BEEN HIDING
AND WHAT IS
IT YOU'RE
AFTER?!

YOU'RE
CAUSING ALL
KINDS OF
TROUBLE!



DON'T CALL
ME **BIG GUY!**
I'M THE
GIANT!

AND I WANT
TO CONTROL THE
WORLD! I DEMAND
I BE MADE **PRESIDENT**
OF THE UNITED STATES
IMMEDIATELY!

I'LL DESTROY ALL
OF NEW YORK UNTIL
MY DEMANDS ARE
MET! MAKE ME
THE **PRESIDENT**
NOW!

NOT
SURE IT
WORKS
THAT WAY,
SIR.



I PROMISE THAT
IF YOU DESTROY ALL
OF NEW YORK THE
ONLY THING WE'LL
BE MAKING YOU
IS **DEAD!**

HE'S
NOT KIDDING--
I SUGGEST
A **HASTY**
SURRENDER.



THIS GUY'S
OBVIOUSLY NOT
ALL HERE, FOLKS--
I DON'T THINK
KILLING HIM
IS--

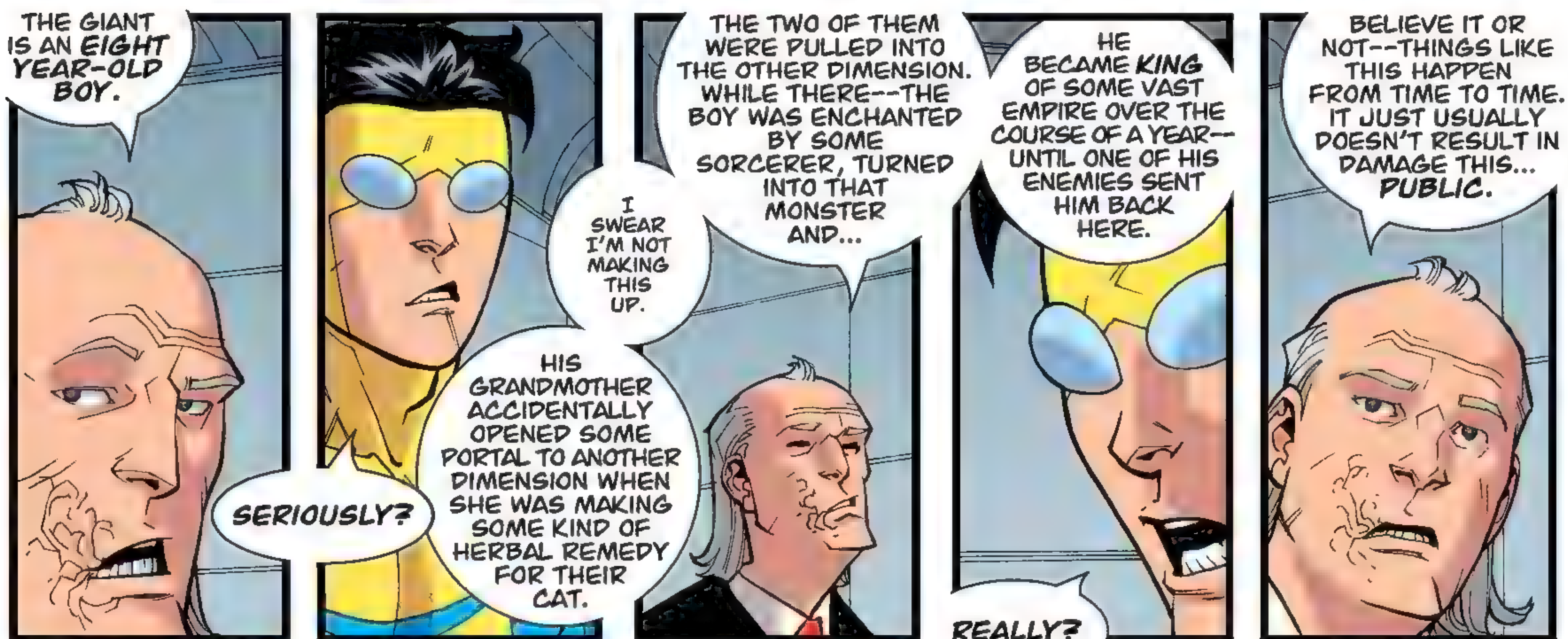
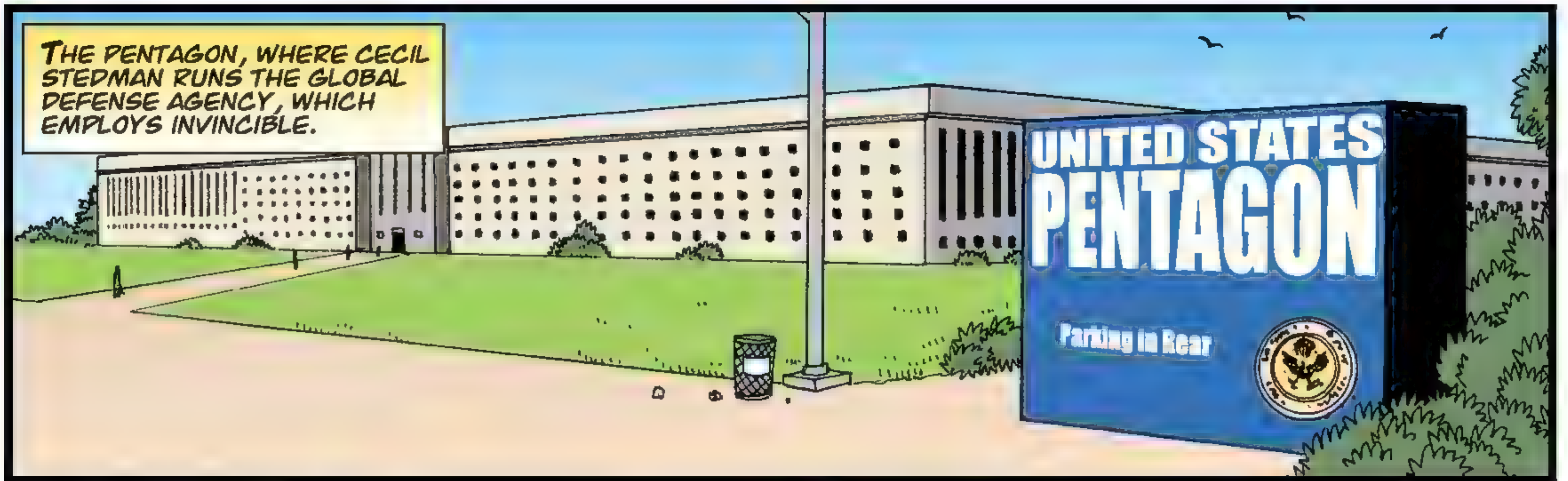
LET THE
GUARDIANS
WRAP THIS
ONE UP, MARK--
I NEED YOU
IN **SPACE--**
QUICK!



SPACE?
WHAT
FOR?

OH--OH,
YEAH!







GATHERED MEMBERS OF THE PRESS, I APPRECIATE YOUR PATIENCE. I NOW TURN THE FLOOR OVER TO THE MAN OF THE HOUR HIMSELF-- INVINCIBLE.



YOU'VE BEEN VERY DILIGENT IN YOUR WORK OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS, THE INVASION FROM MARS, SAVING THESE ASTRONAUTS TODAY...

IS THERE ANY REASON FOR YOUR INCREASED PUBLIC PROFILE?



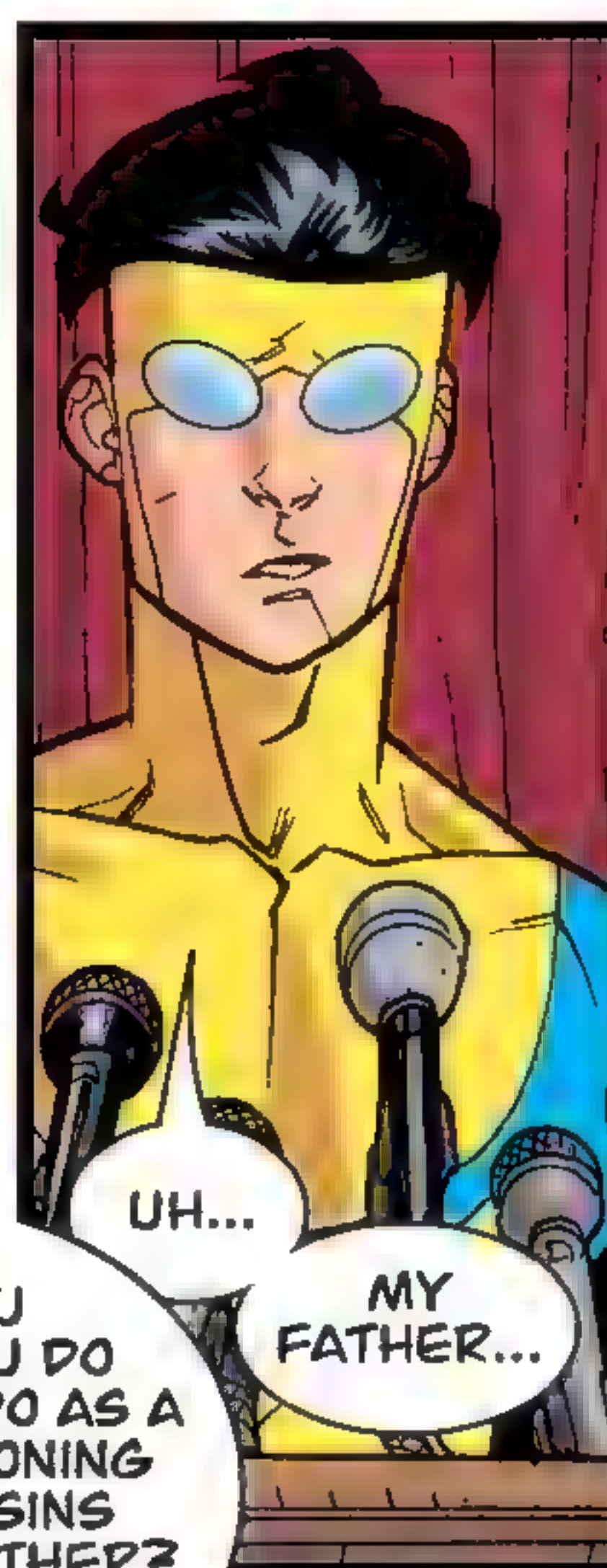
NOT REALLY, NO. I'VE ALWAYS BEEN HELPING OUT--DOING MY PART. I GUESS WHAT I'VE BEEN DOING LATELY IS A BIT MORE NEWS-WORTHY?

I DON'T REALLY KNOW.



YOUR FATHER, OMNI-MAN, TRIED TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD AND ENSLAVE US ALL-- YOU OPPOSED HIM.

DO YOU THINK YOU DO WHAT YOU DO AS A WAY OF ATONING FOR THE SINS OF YOUR FATHER?



UH...

MY FATHER...

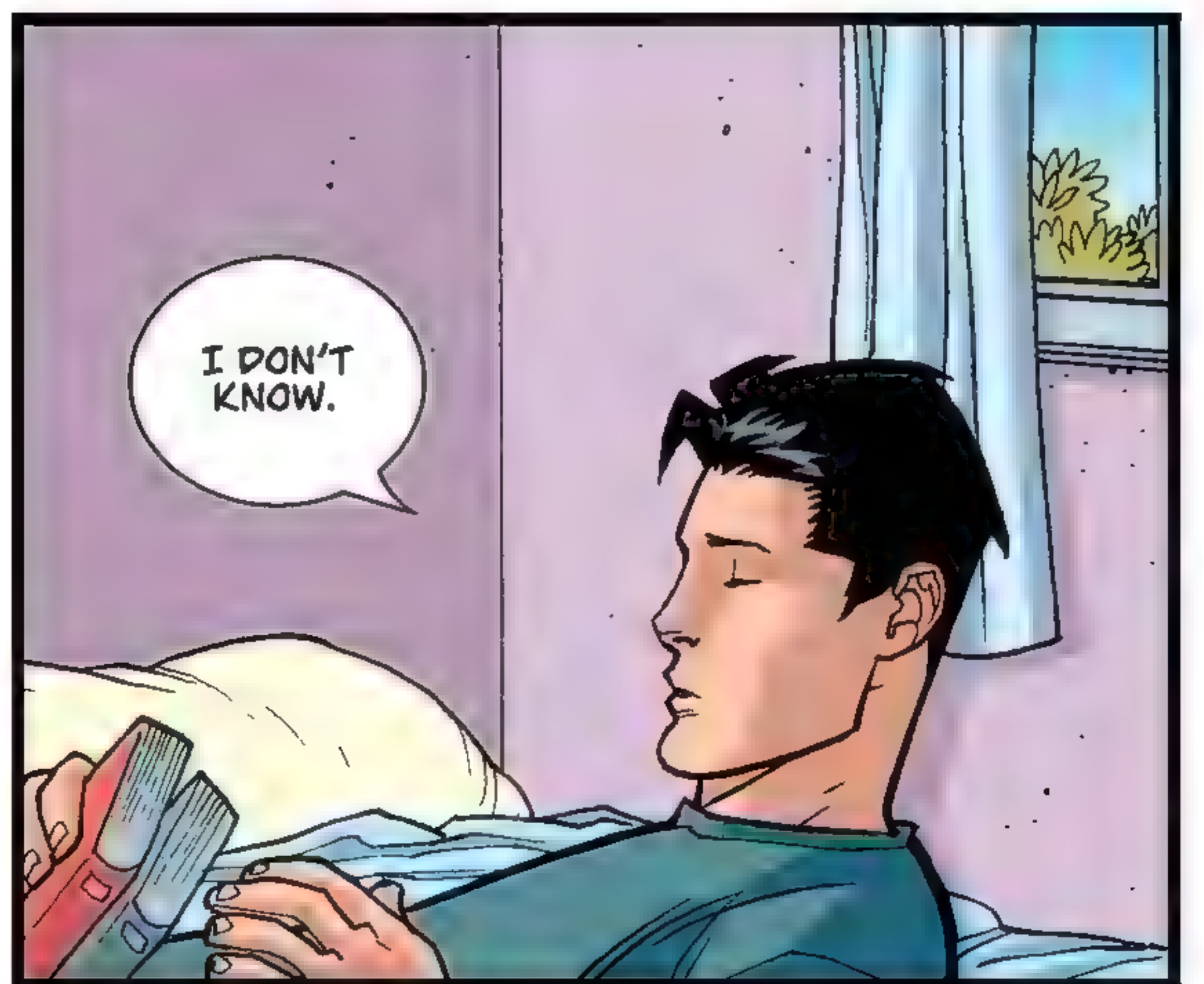


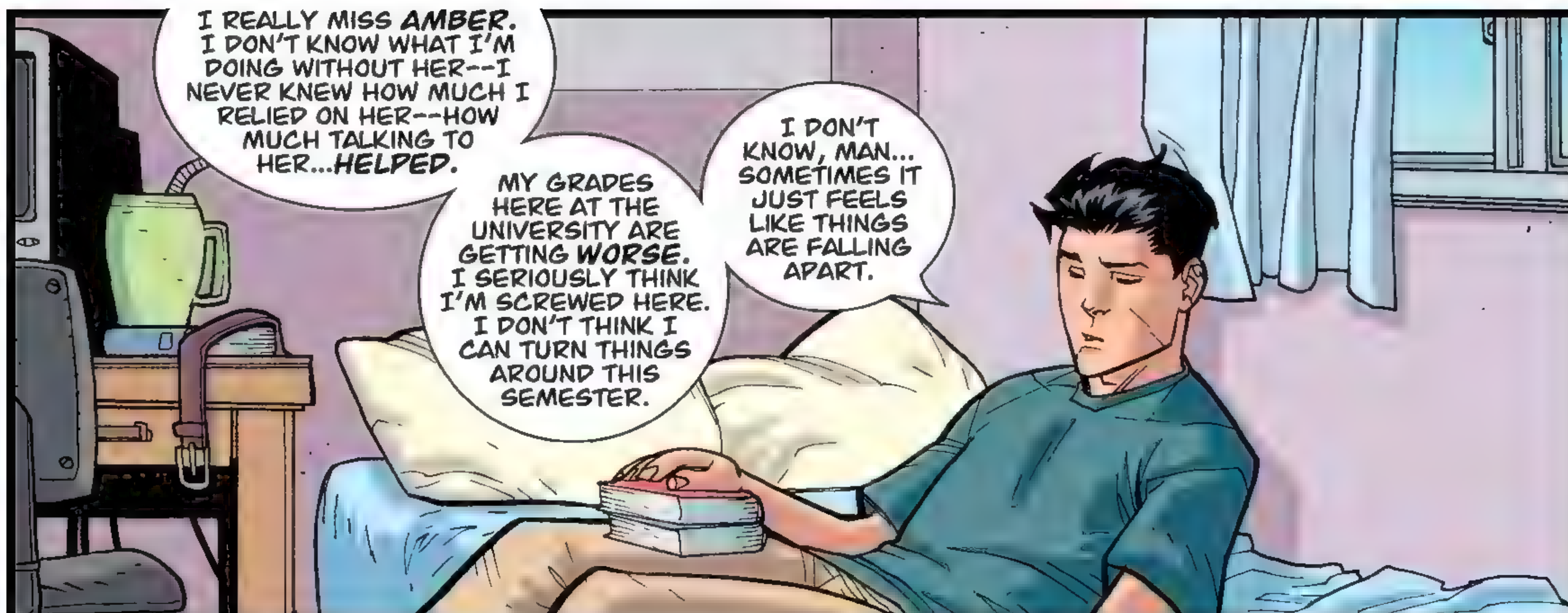
I'M WELL AWARE OF THE HORRIFIC ACTIONS OF MY FATHER. I KNOW WHAT HIS PLANS FOR THIS PLANET WERE-- AND I STOPPED HIM FROM CARRYING THEM OUT.

THE EVENTS OF THAT DAY ARE SOMETHING THAT ARE ALWAYS ON MY MIND. IT'S NOT SOMETHING I'LL EVER FORGET AND IT DOES GUIDE MY ACTIONS TO A CERTAIN EXTENT.

BUT I DO WHAT I DO--NOT AS AN APOLOGY TO THE HUMAN RACE-- OR TO TRY AND ERASE THE ACTIONS OF MY FATHER. I HELP PEOPLE BECAUSE I WANT TO-- BECAUSE I BELIEVE THAT IT IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO.

I'M ONLY TRYING TO DO WHAT'S RIGHT.





I REALLY MISS AMBER. I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M DOING WITHOUT HER--I NEVER KNEW HOW MUCH I RELIED ON HER--HOW MUCH TALKING TO HER...HELPED.

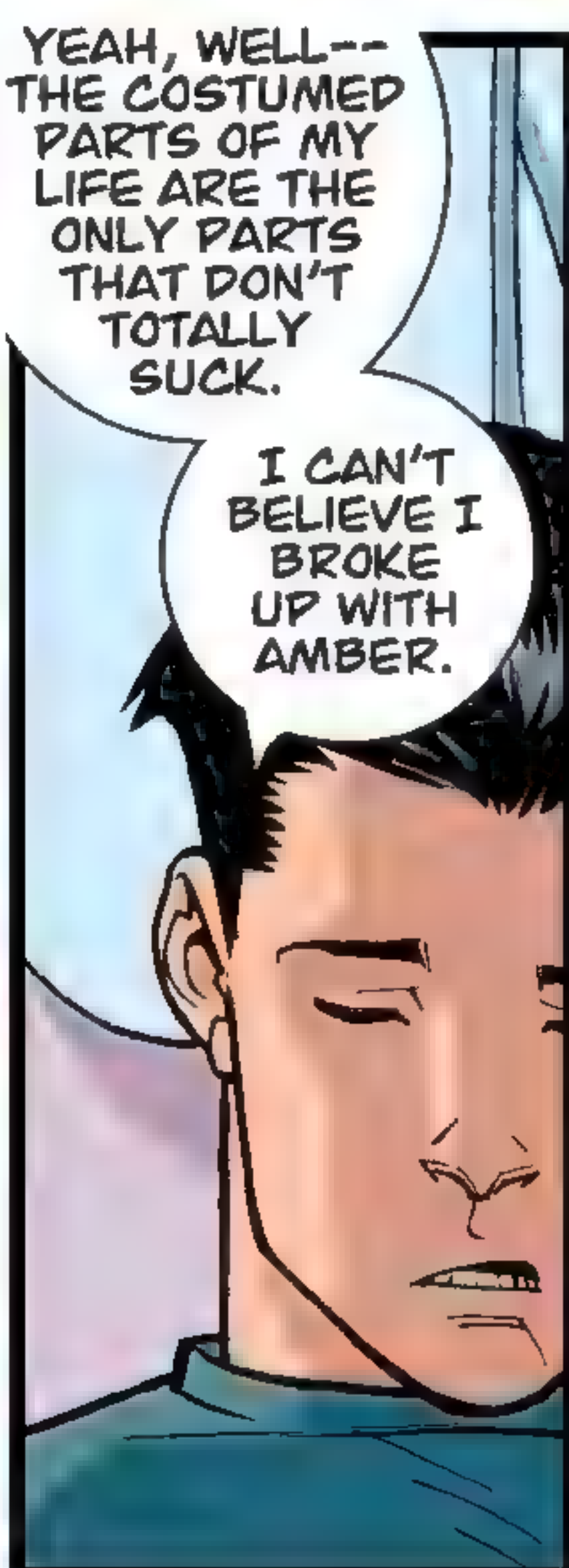
MY GRADES HERE AT THE UNIVERSITY ARE GETTING WORSE. I SERIOUSLY THINK I'M SCREWED HERE. I DON'T THINK I CAN TURN THINGS AROUND THIS SEMESTER.

I DON'T KNOW, MAN... SOMETIMES IT JUST FEELS LIKE THINGS ARE FALLING APART.



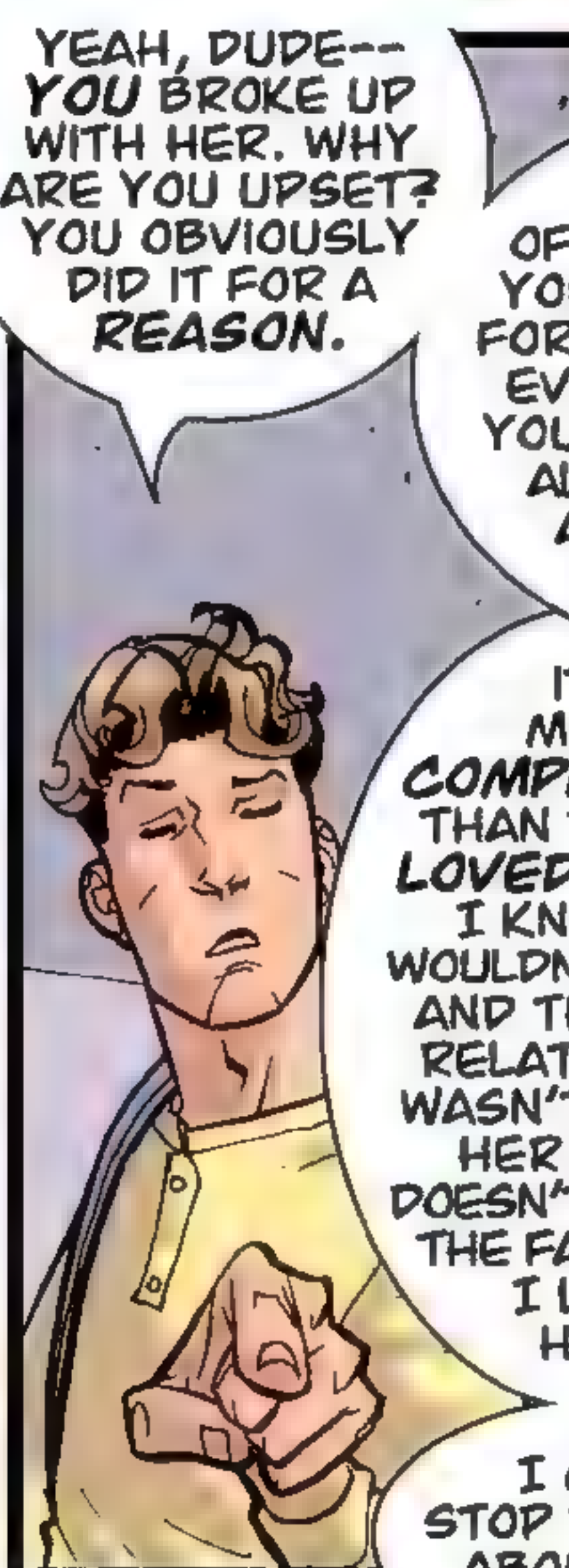
FALLING APART?

YEAH. I SAW YOU ALL OVER THE NEWS TODAY--THAT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE "FALLING APART" TO ME.



YEAH, WELL--THE COSTUMED PARTS OF MY LIFE ARE THE ONLY PARTS THAT DON'T TOTALLY SUCK.

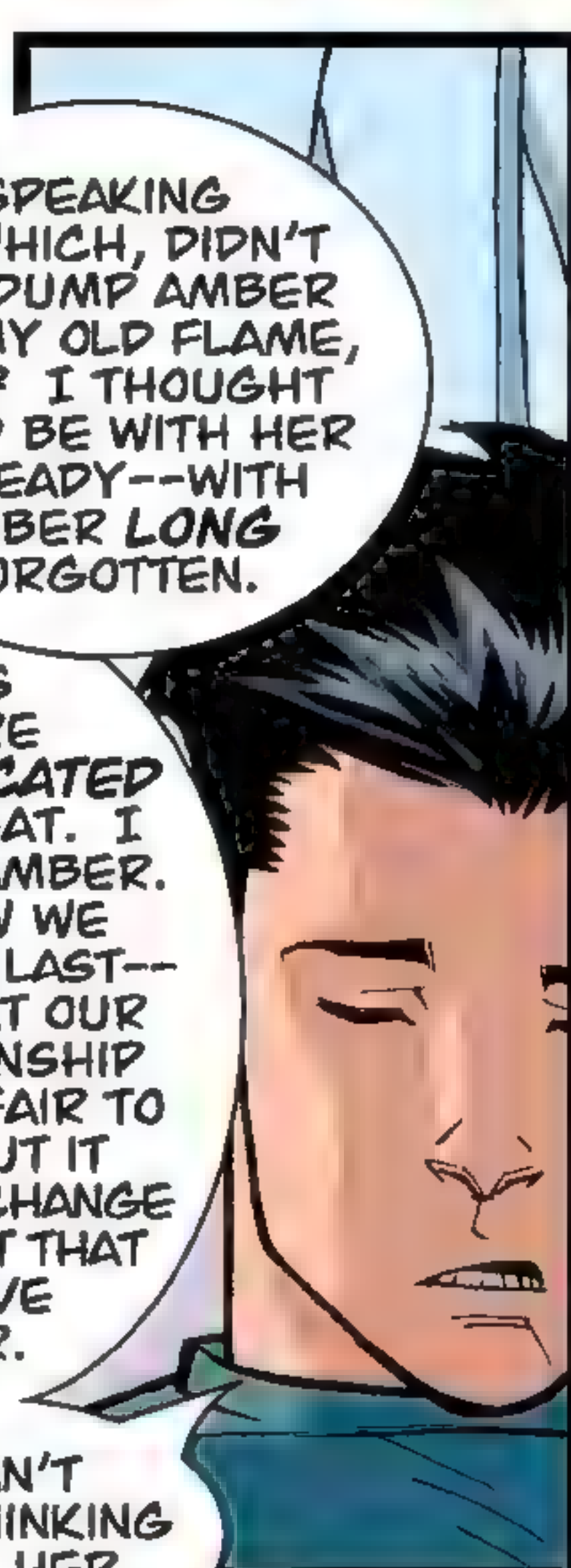
I CAN'T BELIEVE I BROKE UP WITH AMBER.



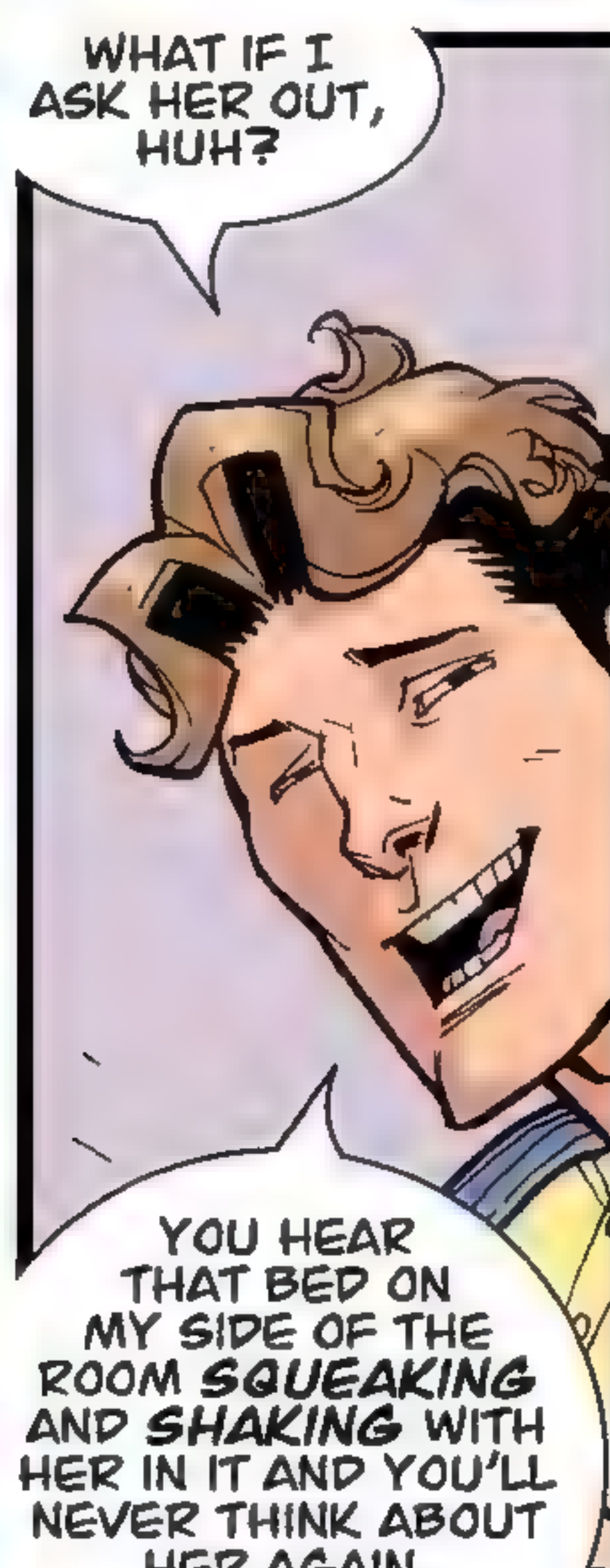
YEAH, DUDE--YOU BROKE UP WITH HER. WHY ARE YOU UPSET? YOU OBVIOUSLY DID IT FOR A REASON.

IT'S MORE COMPLICATED THAN THAT. I LOVED AMBER. I KNOW WE WOULDN'T LAST--AND THAT OUR RELATIONSHIP WASN'T FAIR TO HER BUT IT DOESN'T CHANGE THE FACT THAT I LOVE HER.

I CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT HER.



SPEAKING OF WHICH, DIDN'T YOU DUMP AMBER FOR MY OLD FLAME, EVE? I THOUGHT YOU'D BE WITH HER ALREADY--WITH AMBER LONG FORGOTTEN.



WHAT IF I ASK HER OUT, HUH?

YOU HEAR THAT BED ON MY SIDE OF THE ROOM SQUEAKING AND SHAKING WITH HER IN IT AND YOU'LL NEVER THINK ABOUT HER AGAIN.



YEAH--THAT'S ABOUT THAT ABSOLUTE LAST THING I NEED TO HEAR.

IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE LIKE THAT I'M OUT OF HERE. I'VE GOT PLENTY OF BETTER THINGS I COULD BE DOING WITH MY TIME.

OH, COME ON, MAN--I WAS JUST TRYING TO HELP.

MARK, HEY--

MARK? WHERE ARE YOU GOING--WHAT'S BETTER THAN HANGING OUT WITH ME?

LATER.

YOU AM
BIG HERO.
OCTOBOSS SEE
YOU IN TELEVISION.
ME AM NOT CARE
HOW LARGE HERO
BE. YOU IS FOOL
AM FACE
OCTOBOSS.

ME DID
NOT INSTIGATE
FIGHT. I MINDING
AM OWN BUSINESS--
KILLING MANY
ENEMIES. NOT YOU--
YOU HAVE NO
REASON AT
ATTACK.

YOU
SOUND
TOTALLY
RETARDED.

ME COME HERE FROM
OTHER WORLD! BEGINNING
AM MISUNDERSTOOD--
SHOUT BUT NOT HEARD. ME
TAKE TIME OFF TO LEARN
LANGUAGE OF ENEMY.
ME PLACE EFFORT
AM TASK.

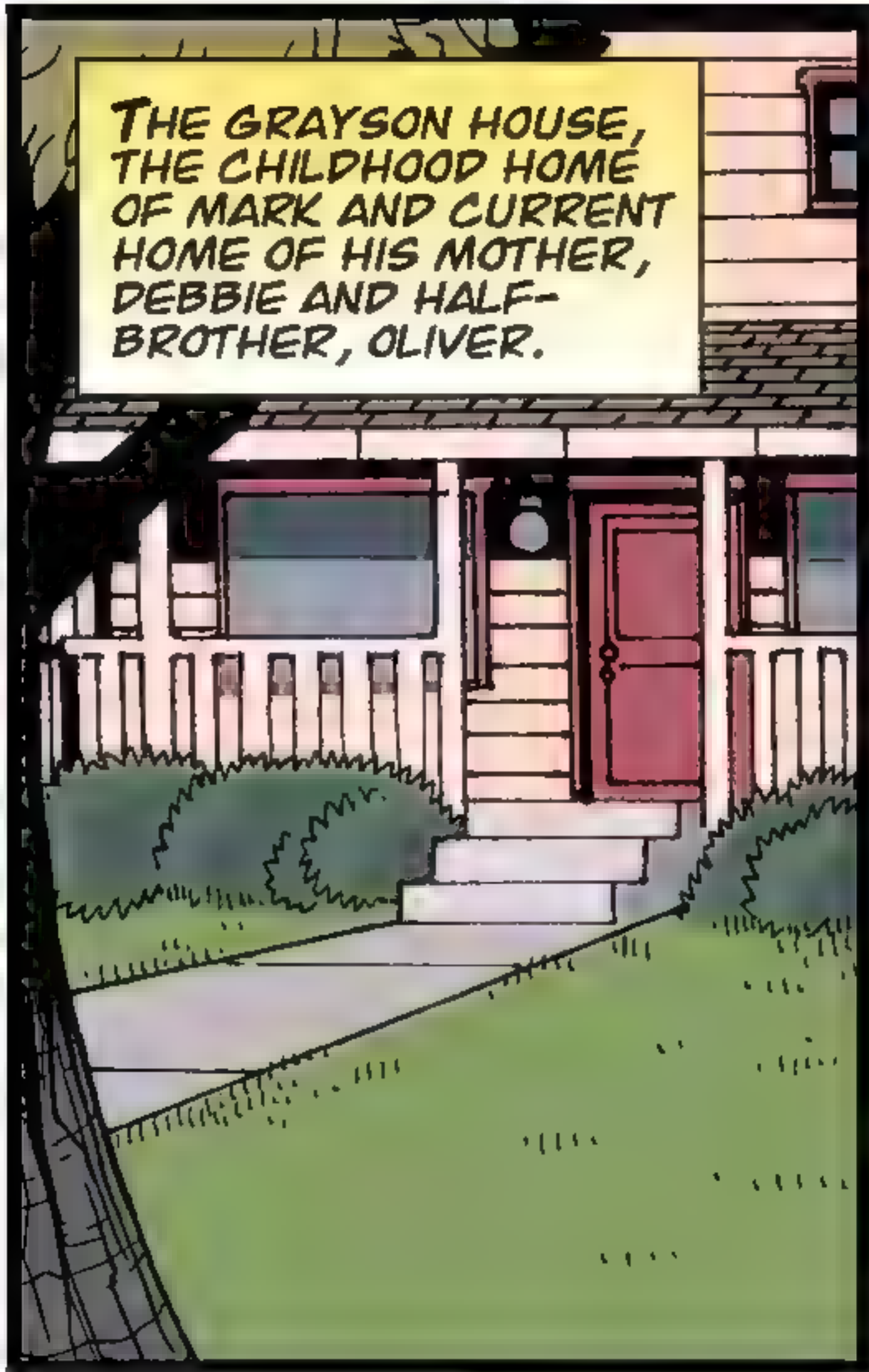
ALL
GET I BE
RIDICULE?!

OCTOBOSS
AM KILLING
YOU FOR
INSULT!

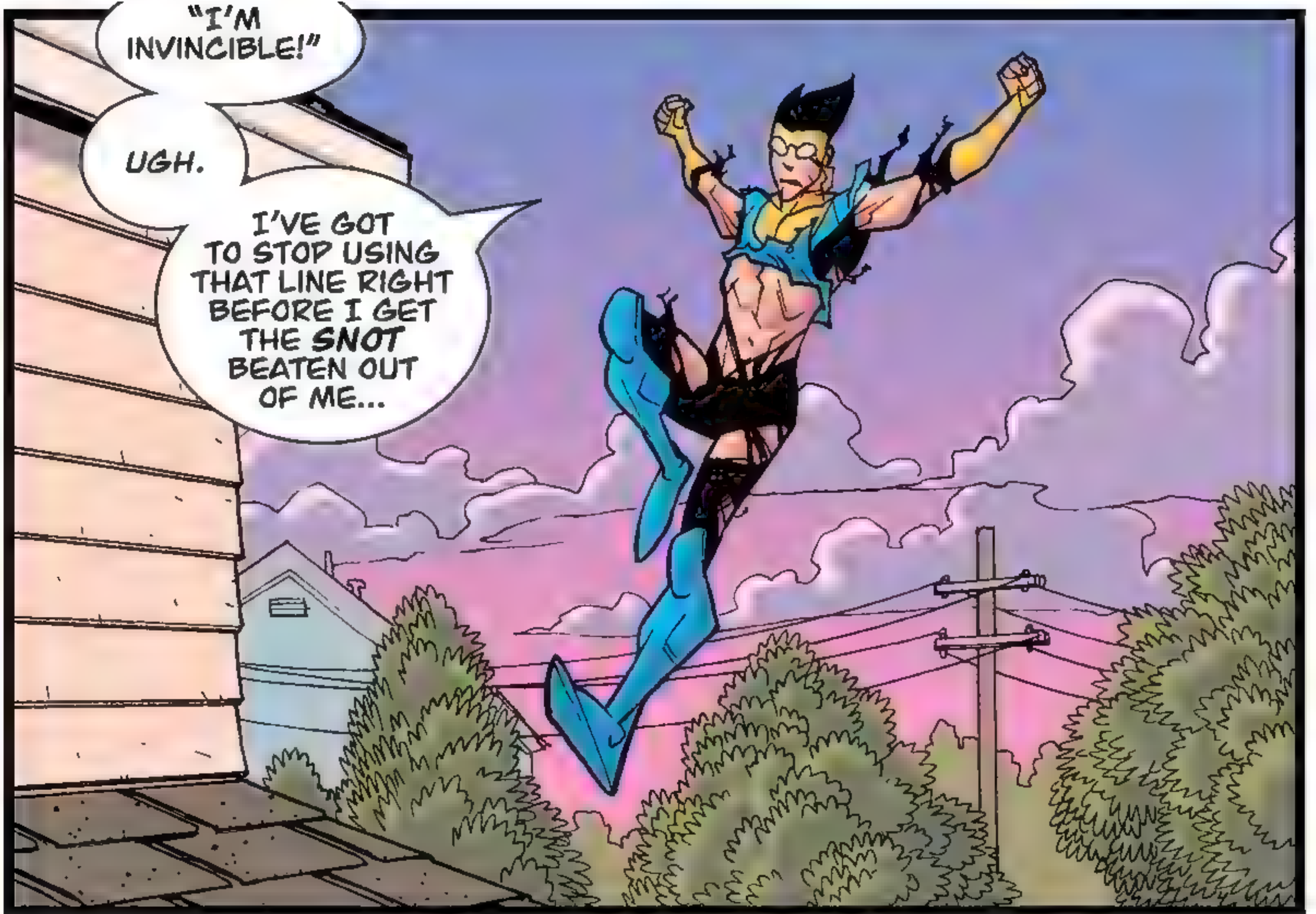
YOU'RE
KIDDING,
RIGHT?

DIDN'T
YOU SAY
YOU'VE BEEN
WATCHING
THE NEWS?

I'M
INVINCIBLE!



THE GRAYSON HOUSE, THE CHILDHOOD HOME OF MARK AND CURRENT HOME OF HIS MOTHER, DEBBIE AND HALF-BROTHER, OLIVER.



"I'M INVINCIBLE!"

UGH.

I'VE GOT TO STOP USING THAT LINE RIGHT BEFORE I GET THE **SNOT** BEATEN OUT OF ME...



OH, LOOK WHO'S HERE.

YEAH, I CAME BY TO GET SOME CLOTHES BEFORE I HEAD BACK TO SCHOOL. I JUST RUINED **ANOTHER** COSTUME. IF I FLEW BACK IN THAT ONE I'D ARRIVE NAKED.

HOW'S THE LITTLE GUY?



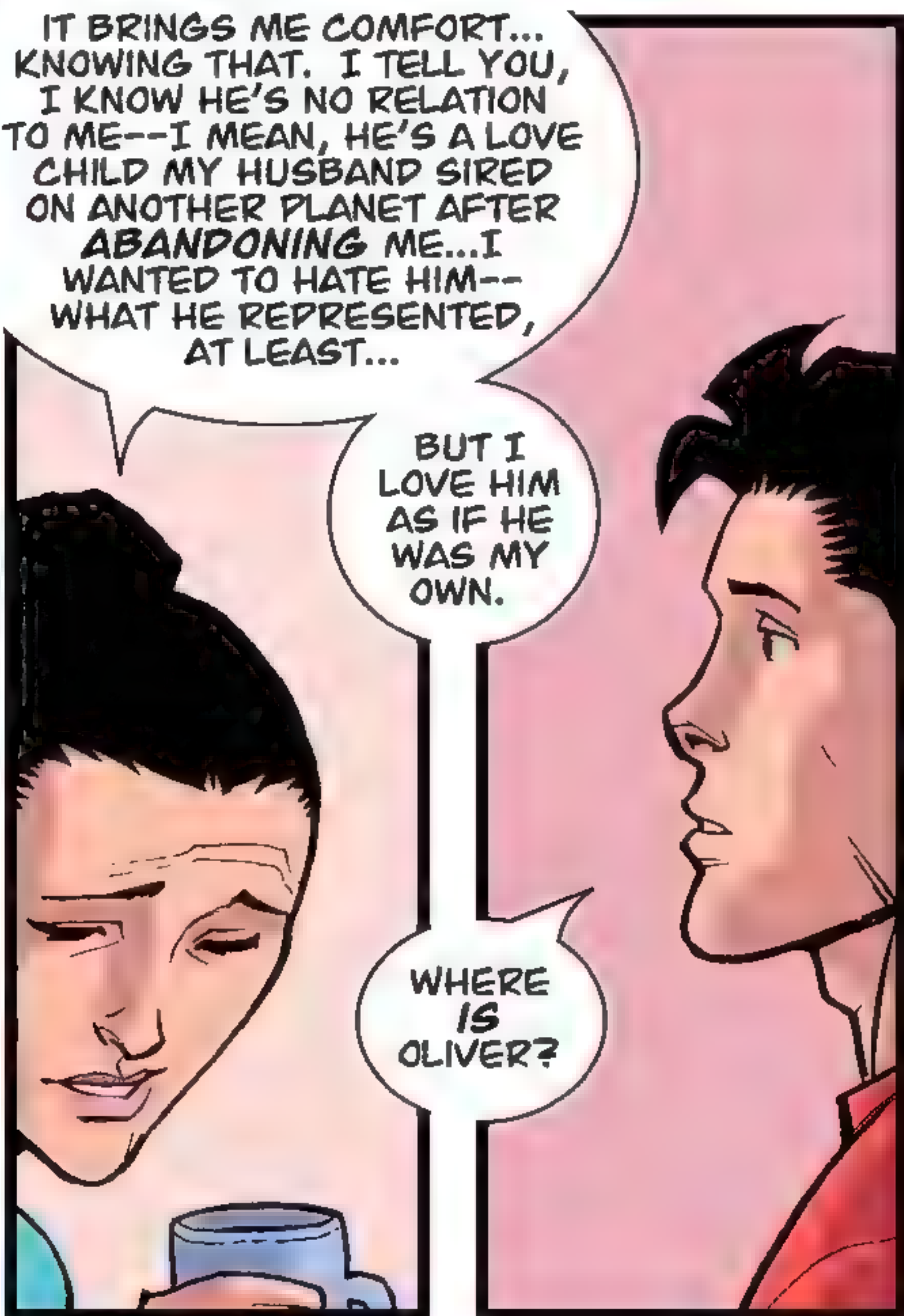
NOT AS LITTLE AS HE WAS LAST TIME YOU SAW HIM BUT THAT'S ALWAYS THE CASE.

I SWEAR-- YOU GREW UP WAY TOO FAST, BUT **THIS** ONE...



WELL, HIS MOTHER'S ALIEN RACE ONLY LIVED FOR A MATTER OF MONTHS.

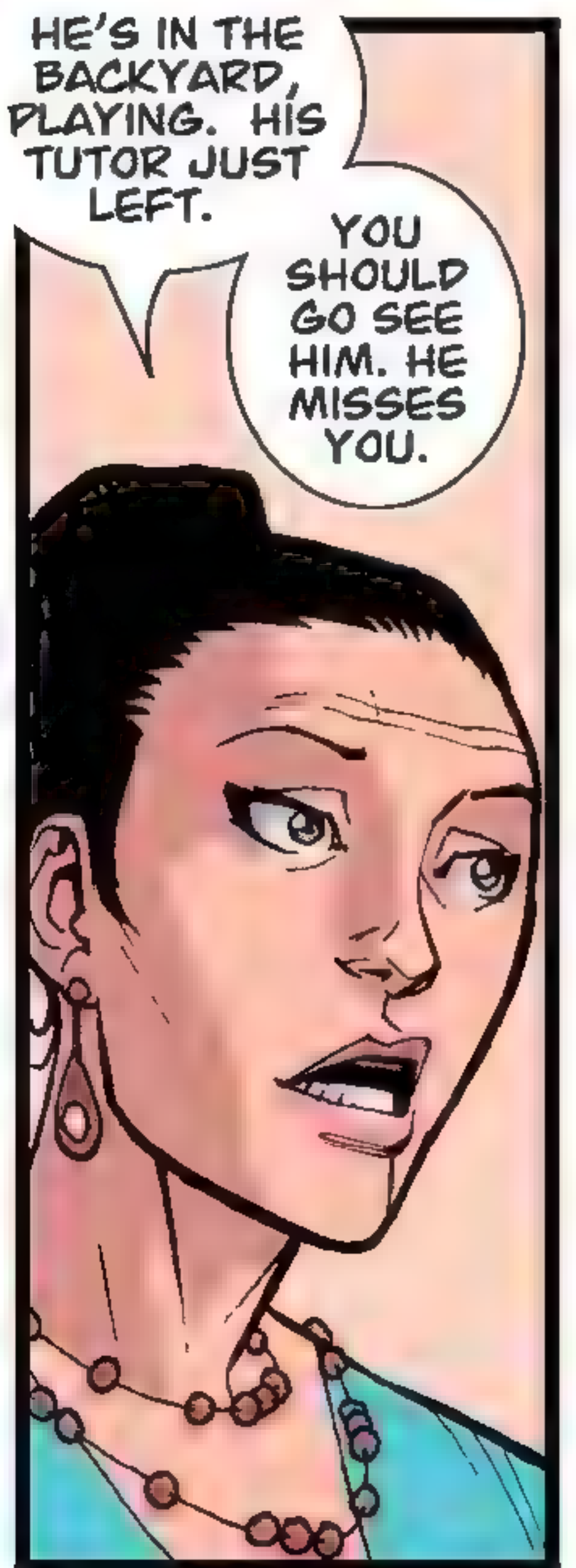
BE THANKFUL THAT DAD'S VILTRUMITE DNA WILL SLOW THAT DOWN AS HE GETS OLDER.



IT BRINGS ME COMFORT... KNOWING THAT. I TELL YOU, I KNOW HE'S NO RELATION TO ME--I MEAN, HE'S A LOVE CHILD MY HUSBAND SIRED ON ANOTHER PLANET AFTER **ABANDONING** ME...I WANTED TO HATE HIM--WHAT HE REPRESENTED, AT LEAST...

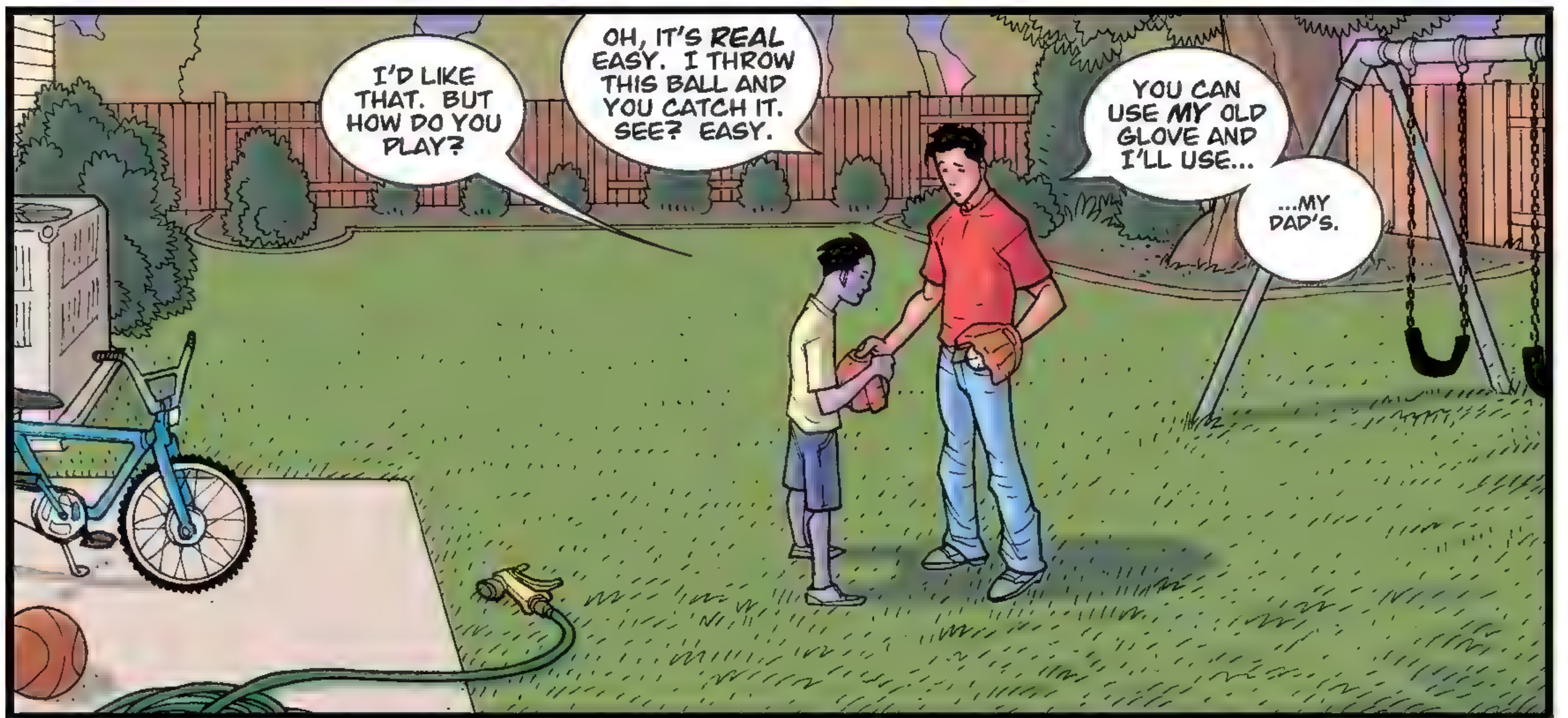
BUT I LOVE HIM AS IF HE WAS MY OWN.

WHERE IS OLIVER?



HE'S IN THE BACKYARD, PLAYING. HIS TUTOR JUST LEFT.

YOU SHOULD GO SEE HIM. HE MISSES YOU.





UM...

I HAVEN'T
TOLD MOM YET.
I WANTED TO
SURPRISE
YOU.

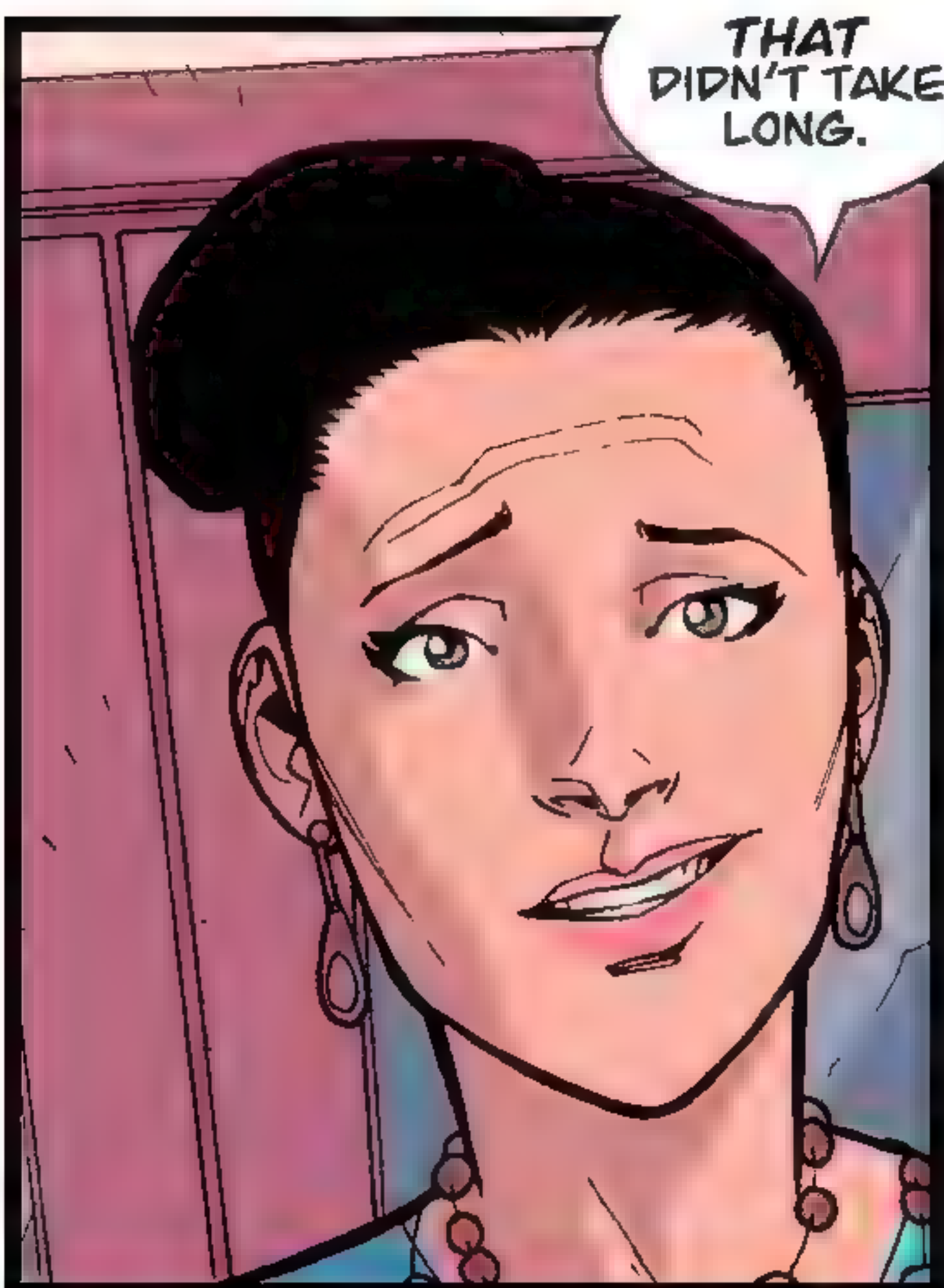
MISSION
ACCOMPLISHED.

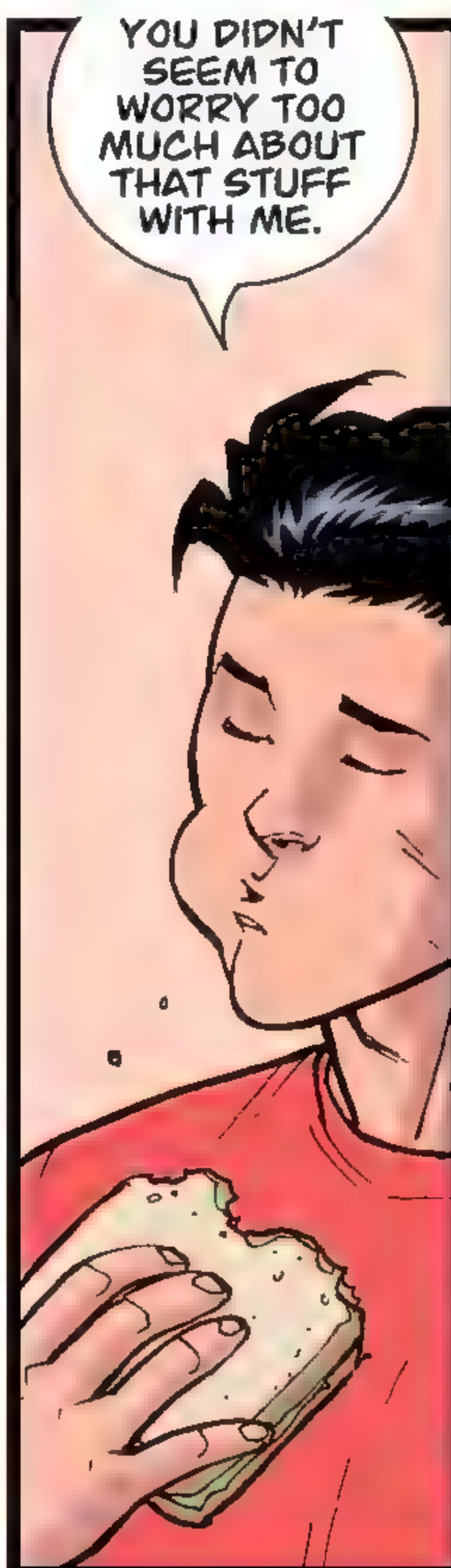
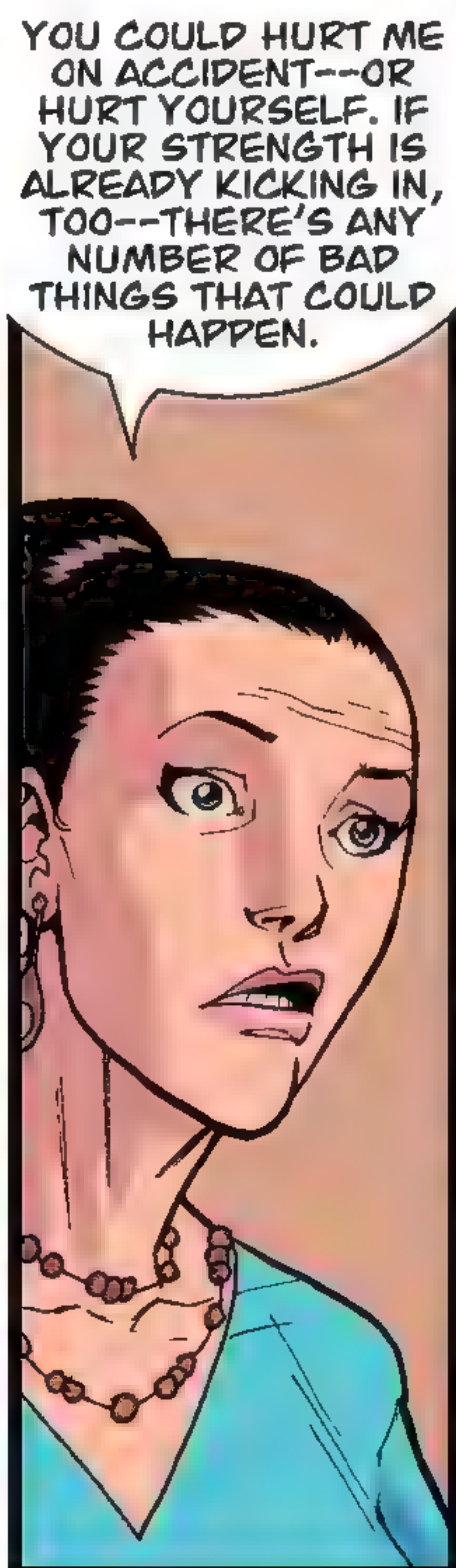
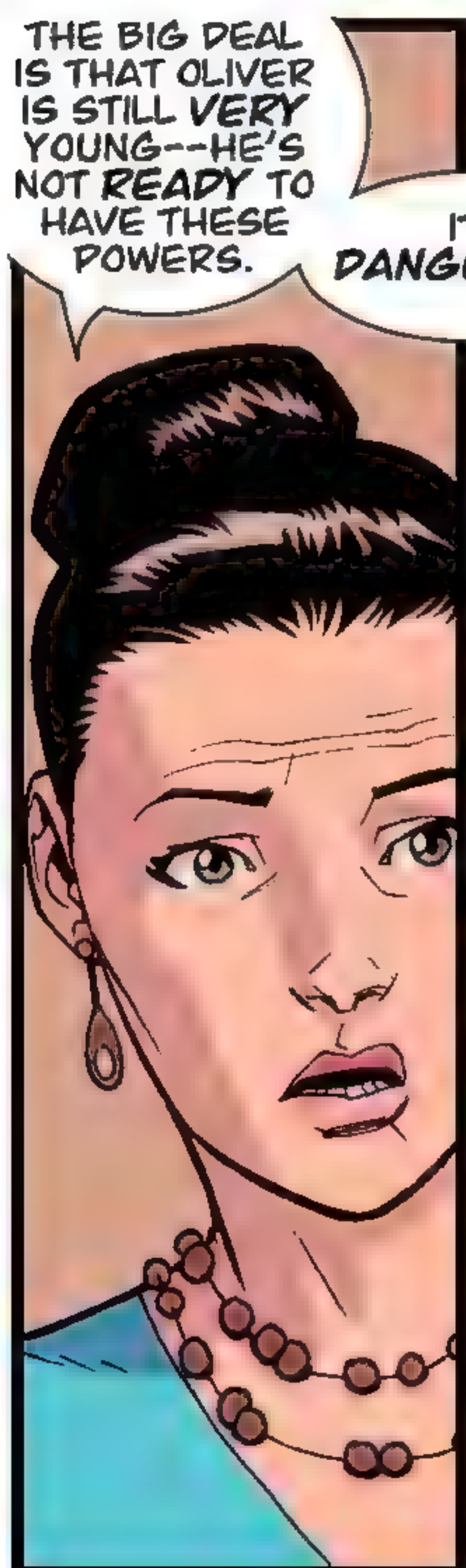
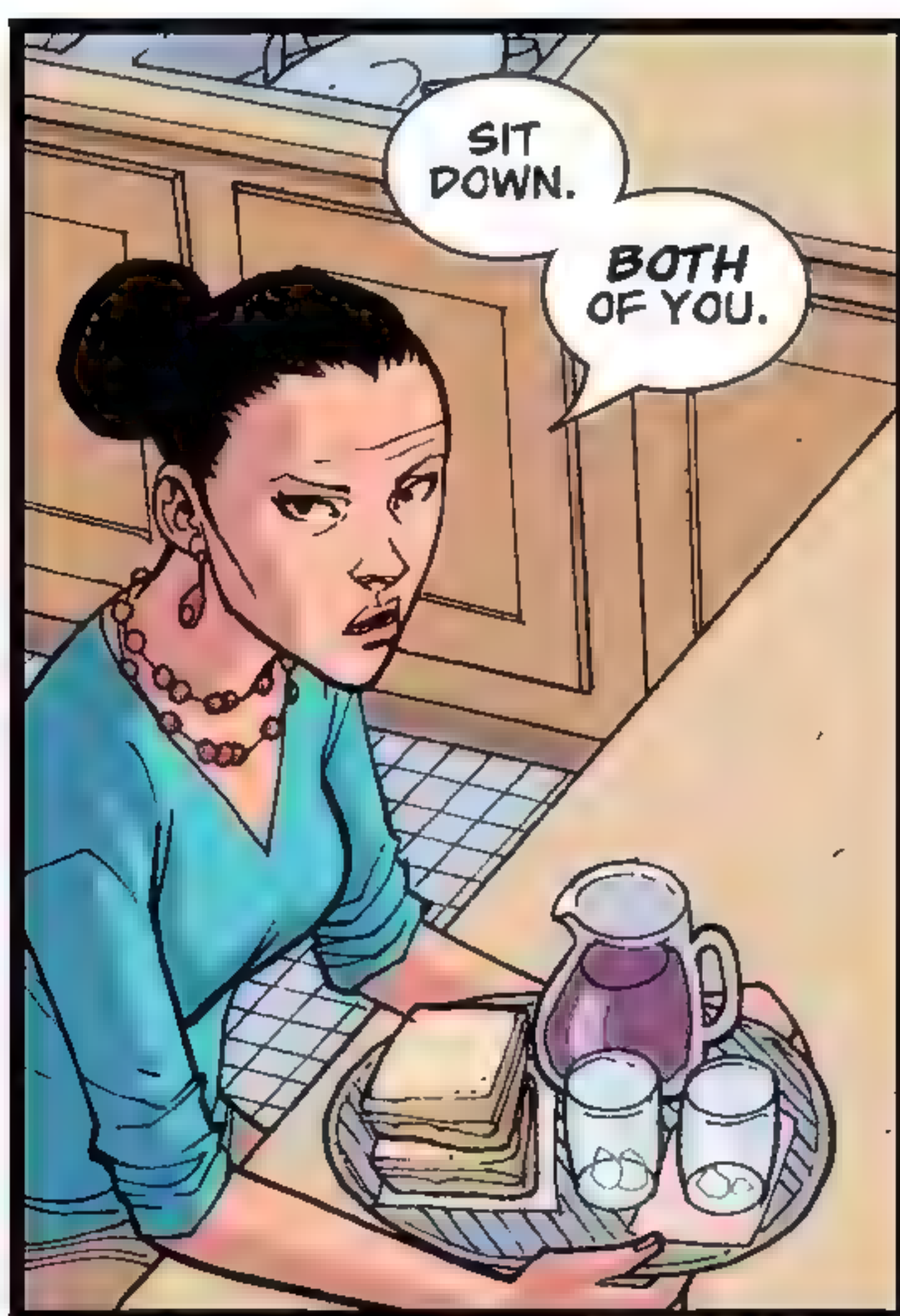
WOW.



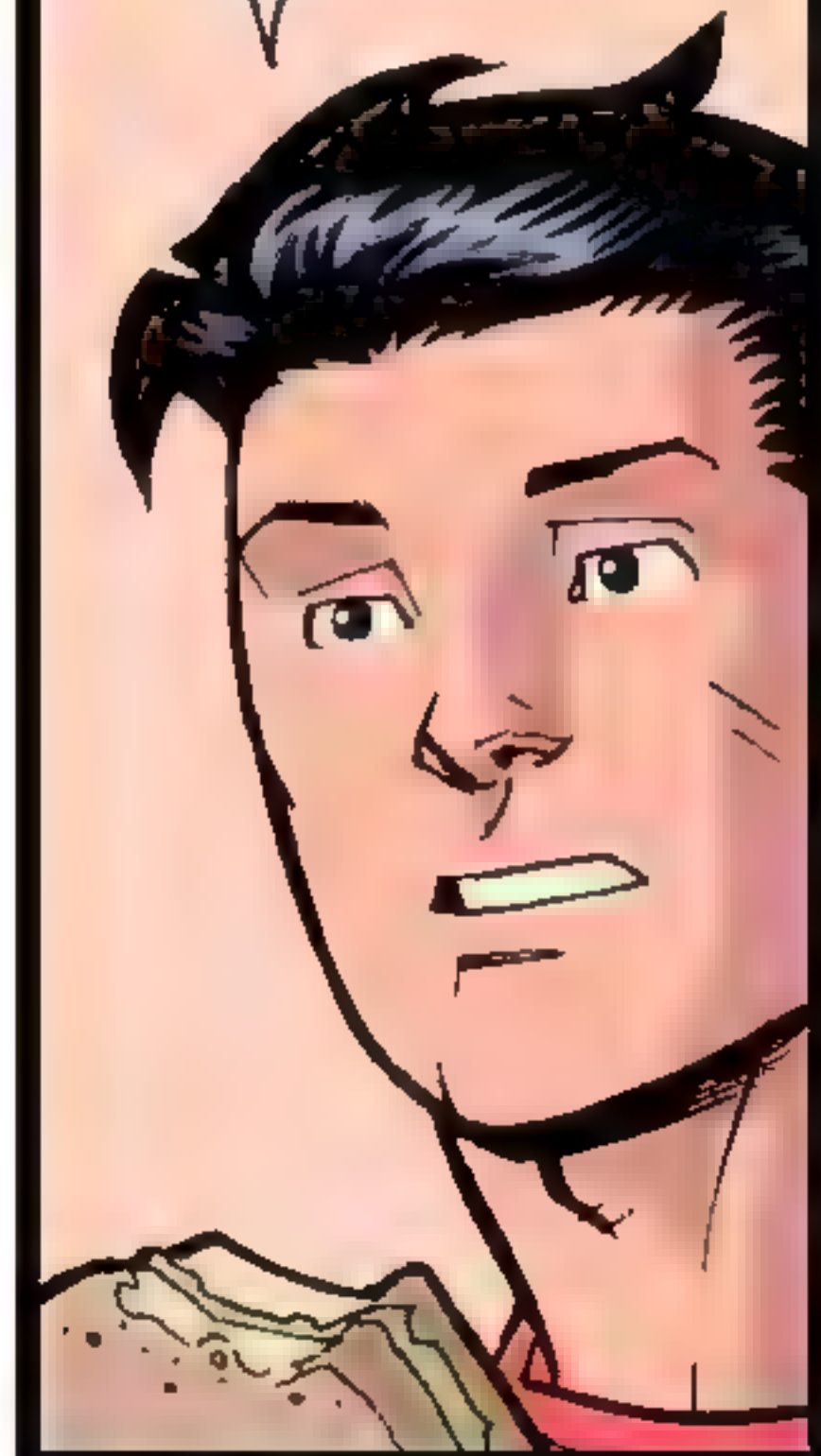
ISSUE FORTY-THREE



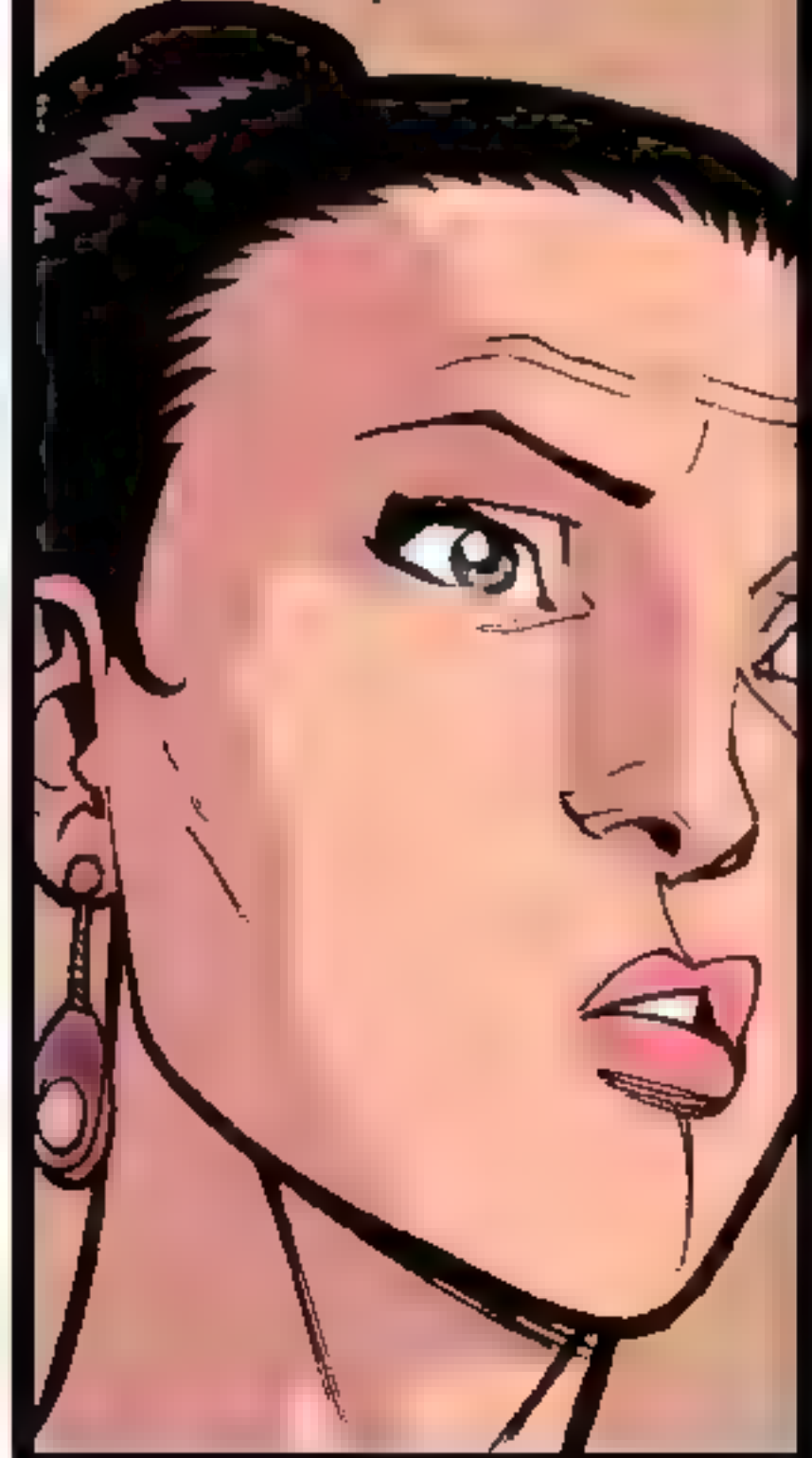




WELL, IF THAT'S ALL IT IS--IF HE JUST NEEDS SOMEONE TO GUIDE HIM AND HELP HIM FIGURE STUFF OUT--I COULD DO THAT.



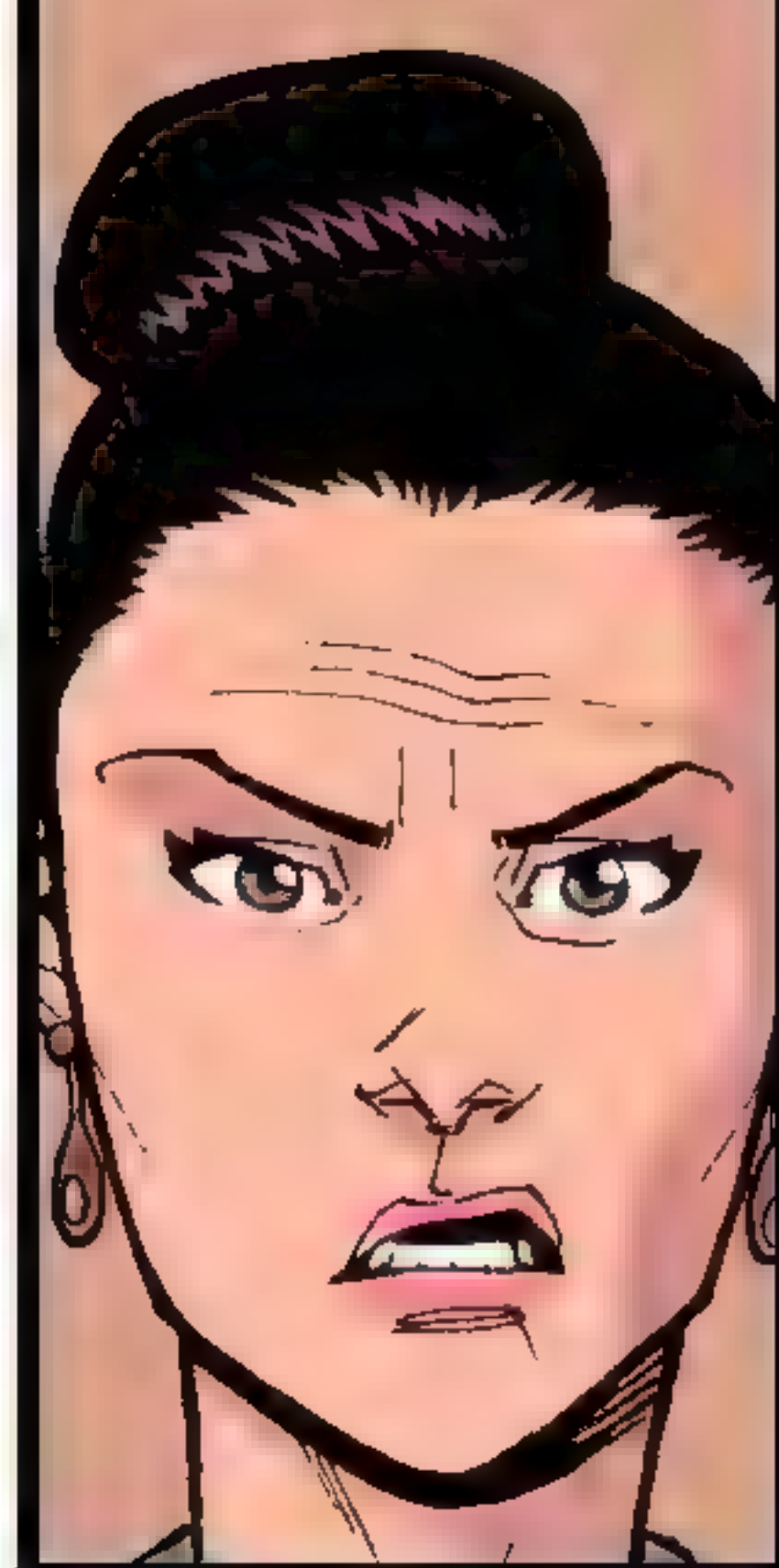
YOU'VE GOT SCHOOL.



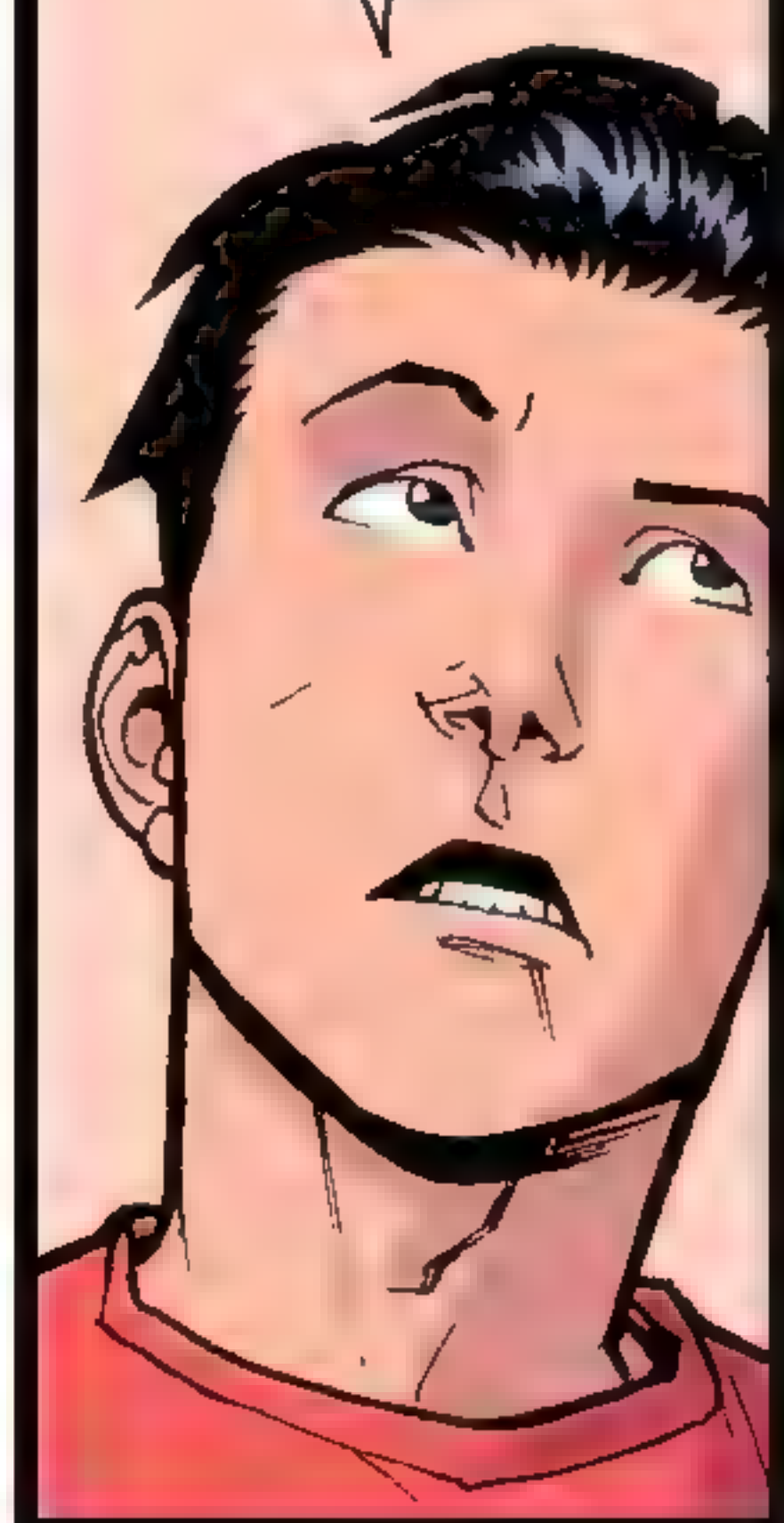
I COULD QUIT SCHOOL.



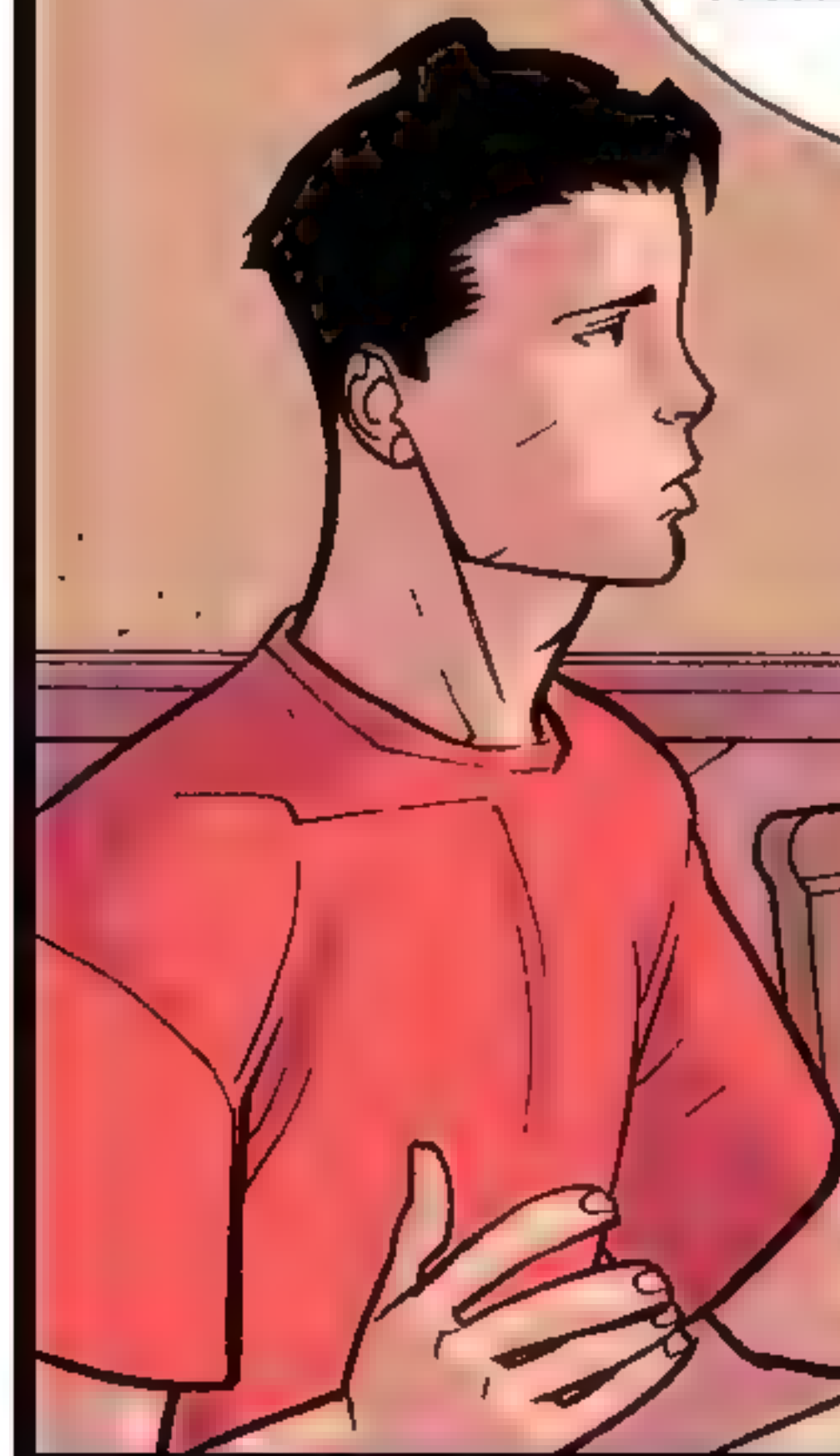
MARK.



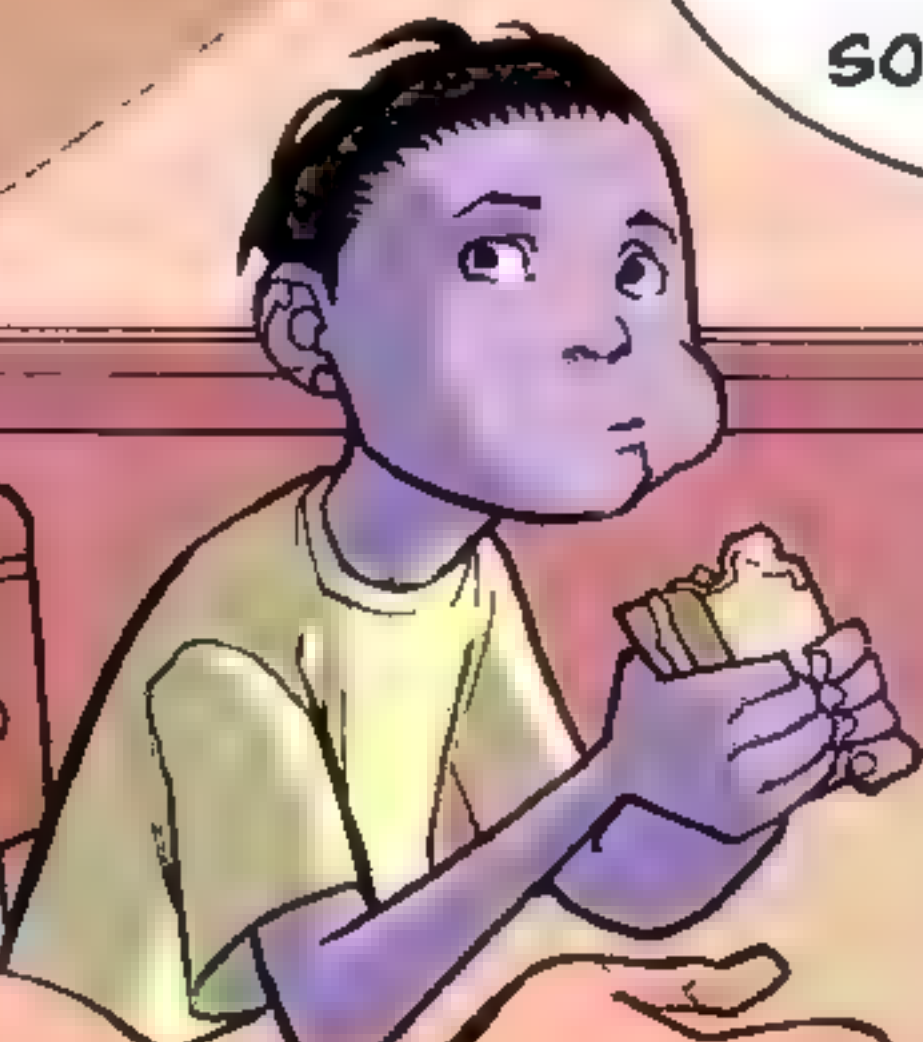
WHAT? WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?



I'M FAILING MOST OF MY CLASSES--I'M JUST NOT DOING WELL AT ALL. I'VE GOT TOO MANY DISTRACTIONS. I NEVER HAVE TIME TO DO MY HOMEWORK. I MISS MORE CLASSES THAN I ATTEND.



AND LET'S FACE IT... I'M TOTALLY WASTING MY TIME THERE. I'M GOING TO COLLEGE TO BUY TIME--NOT TO LEARN SOMETHING.

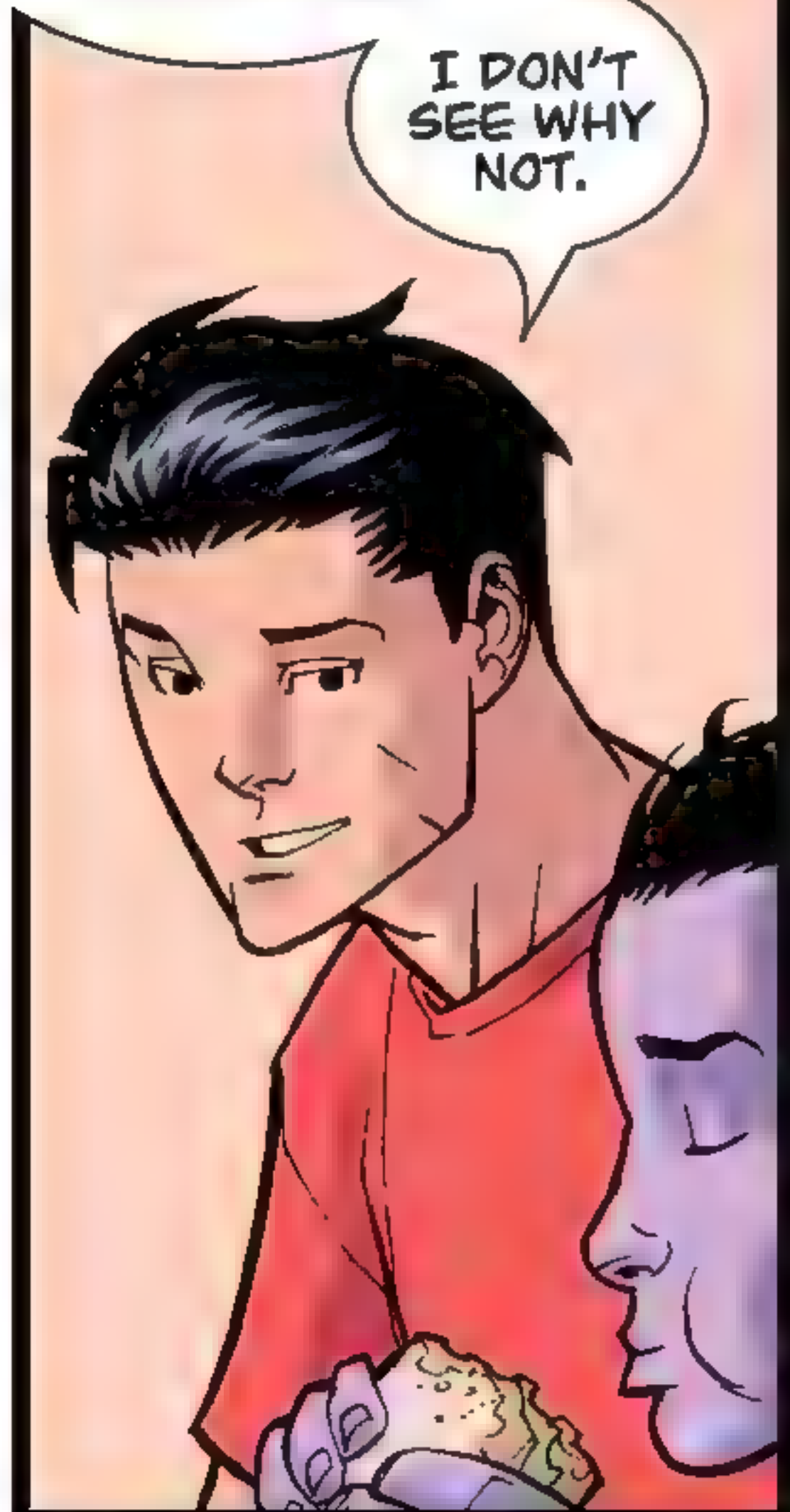


WITH MY POWERS I COULD DO ANYTHING AND MAKE A LIVING. WORLD'S FASTEST PIZZA DELIVERY BOY--ANYTHING. CECIL IS ALREADY PAYING ME MORE THAN I COULD EVER MAKE WITH A "REAL" JOB.

YOU KNOW I DON'T REALLY NEED SCHOOL. WHAT--AM I GOING TO BE A DENTIST? WHY WOULD I DO THAT?

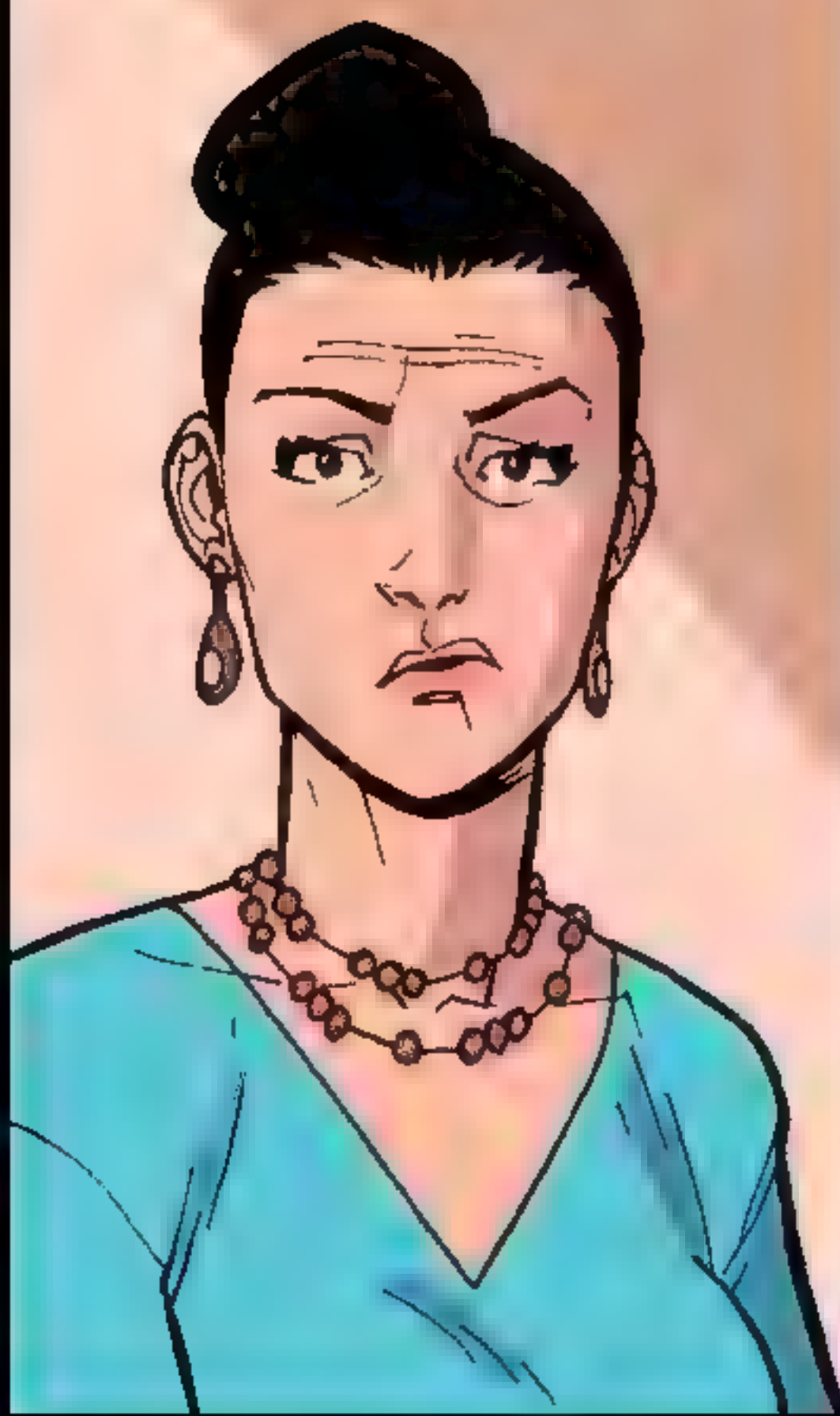


I'D BE BETTER OFF HERE--TRAINING OLIVER. I COULD MOVE BACK HOME AND EVERYTHING.

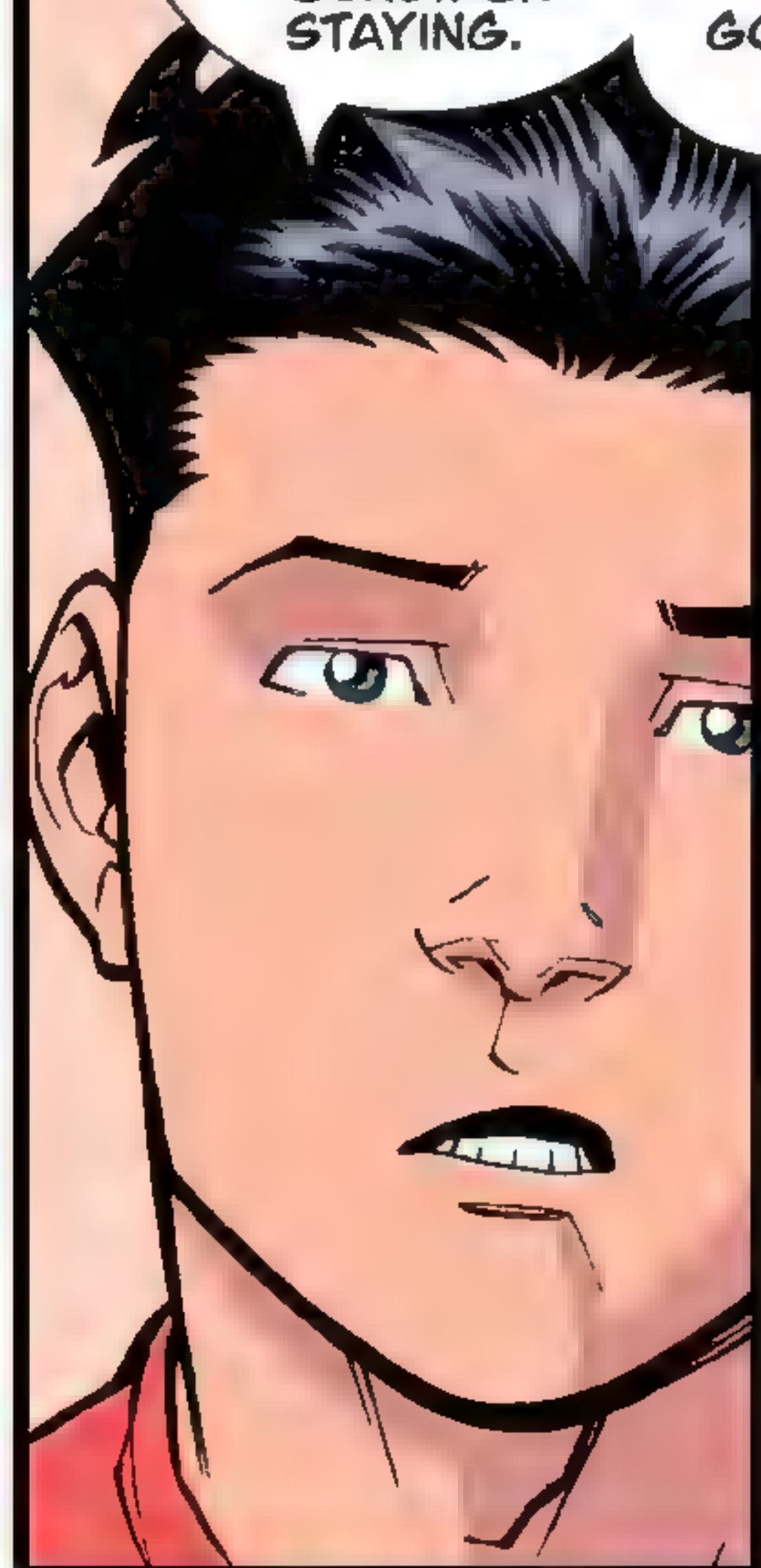


I DON'T SEE WHY NOT.

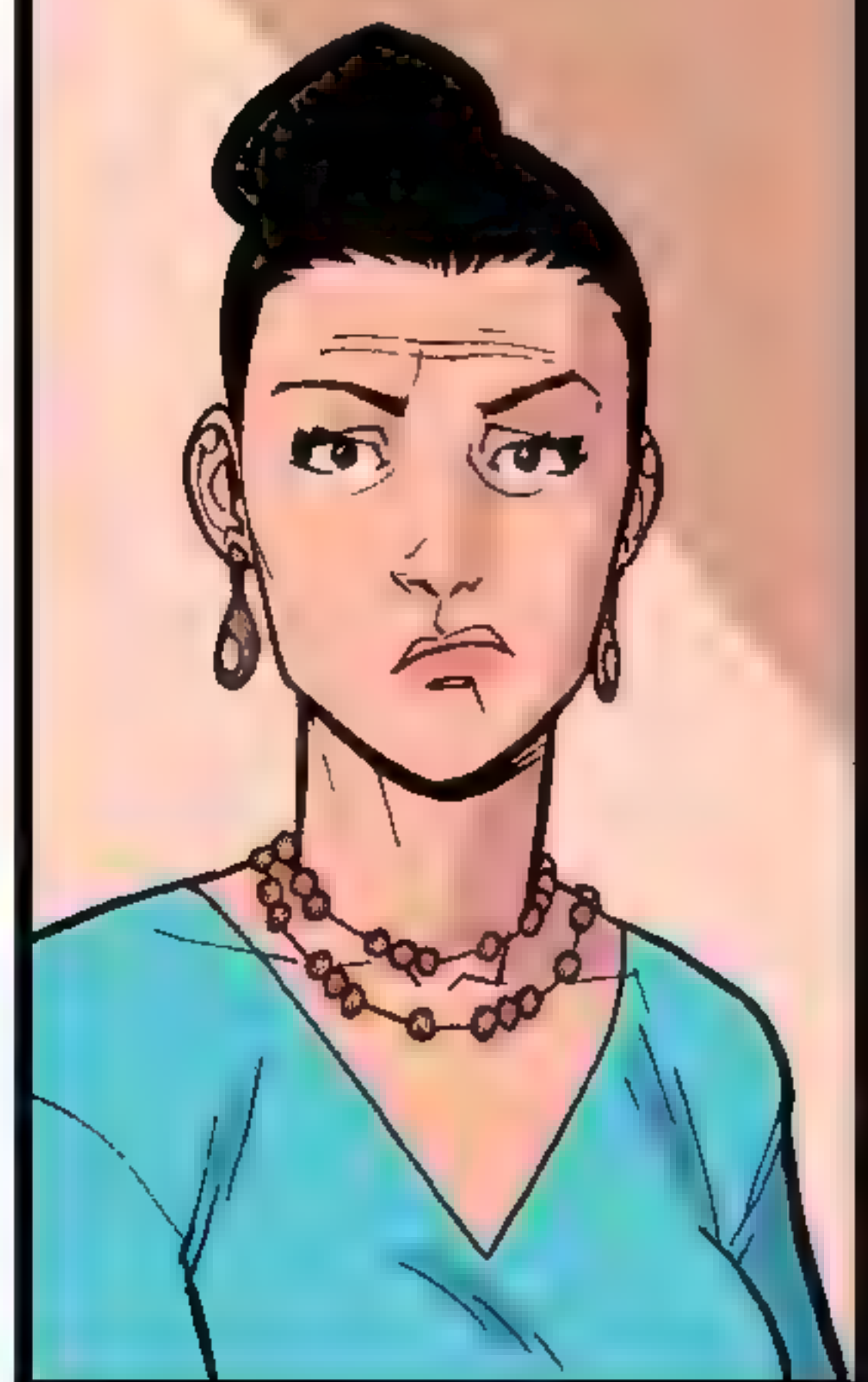
YOU'RE NOT QUITTING SCHOOL.



TELL ME WHY I NEED SCHOOL AND I'LL CONSIDER STAYING.

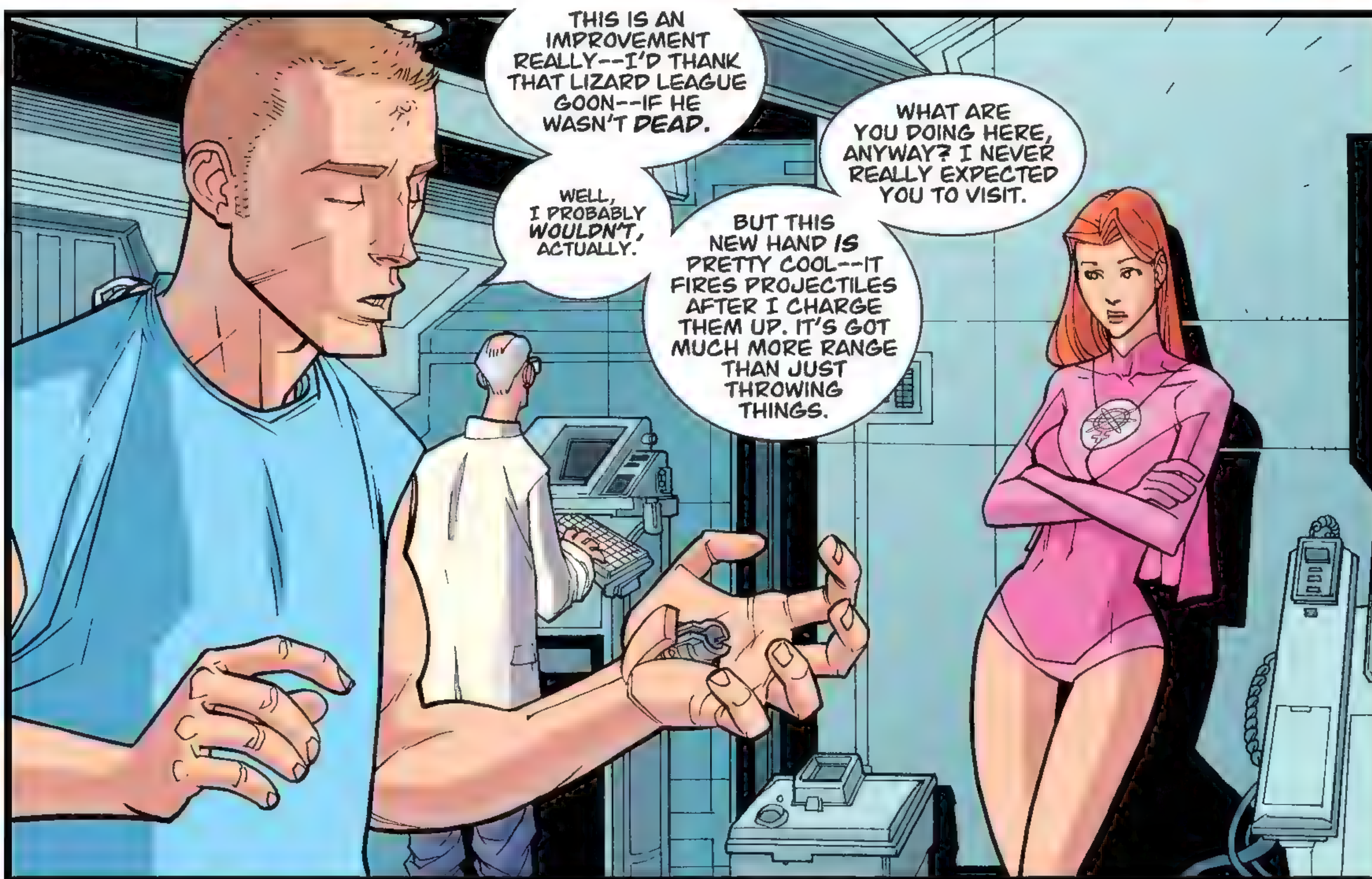
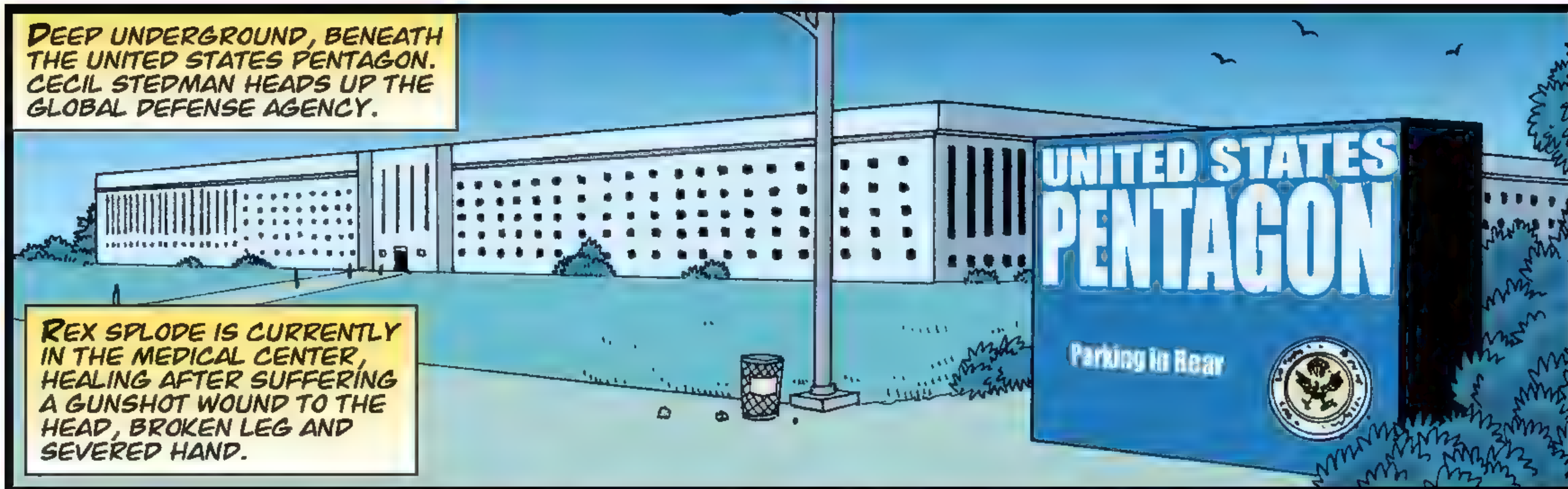


GO ON.



DEEP UNDERGROUND, BENEATH THE UNITED STATES PENTAGON. CECIL STEPMAN HEADS UP THE GLOBAL DEFENSE AGENCY.

REX SPODE IS CURRENTLY IN THE MEDICAL CENTER, HEALING AFTER SUFFERING A GUNSHOT WOUND TO THE HEAD, BROKEN LEG AND SEVERED HAND.



THIS IS AN IMPROVEMENT REALLY--I'D THANK THAT LIZARD LEAGUE GOON--IF HE WASN'T DEAD.

WELL, I PROBABLY WOULDN'T, ACTUALLY.

BUT THIS NEW HAND IS PRETTY COOL--IT FIRES PROJECTILES AFTER I CHARGE THEM UP. IT'S GOT MUCH MORE RANGE THAN JUST THROWING THINGS.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, ANYWAY? I NEVER REALLY EXPECTED YOU TO VISIT.

LOOK, YOU'RE A SCUMBAG, OF THE HIGHEST ORDER--

THANKS.

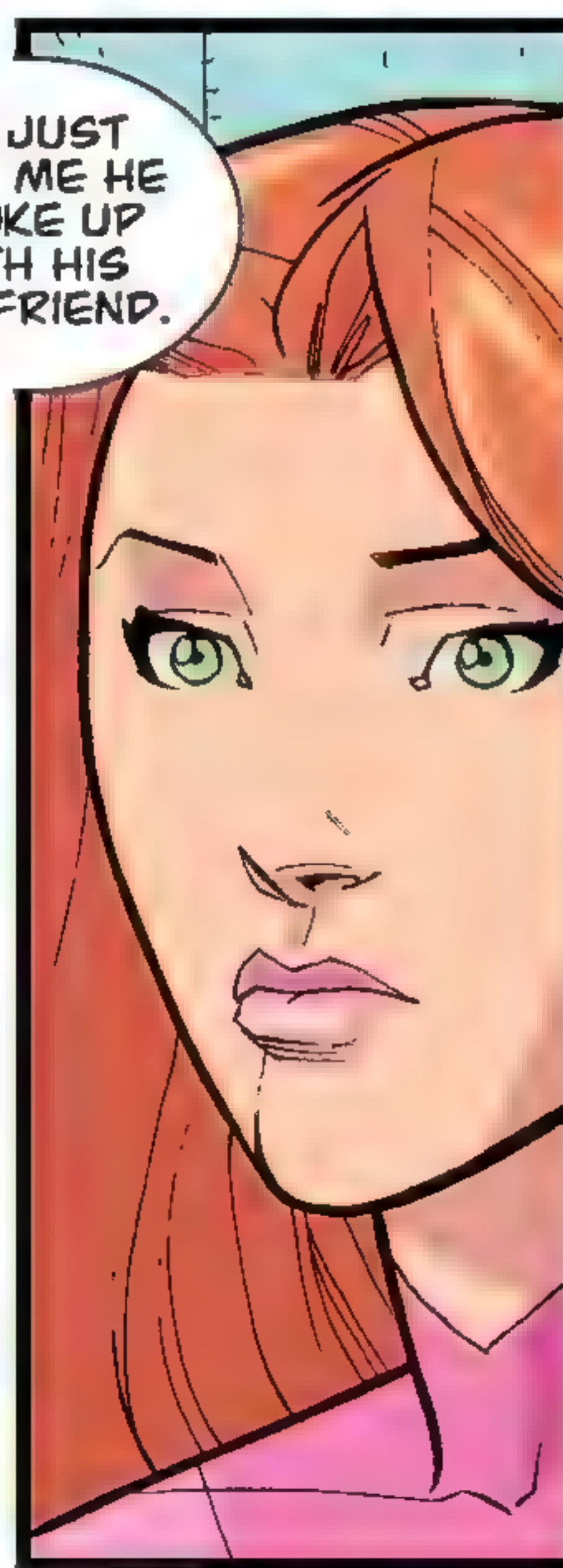
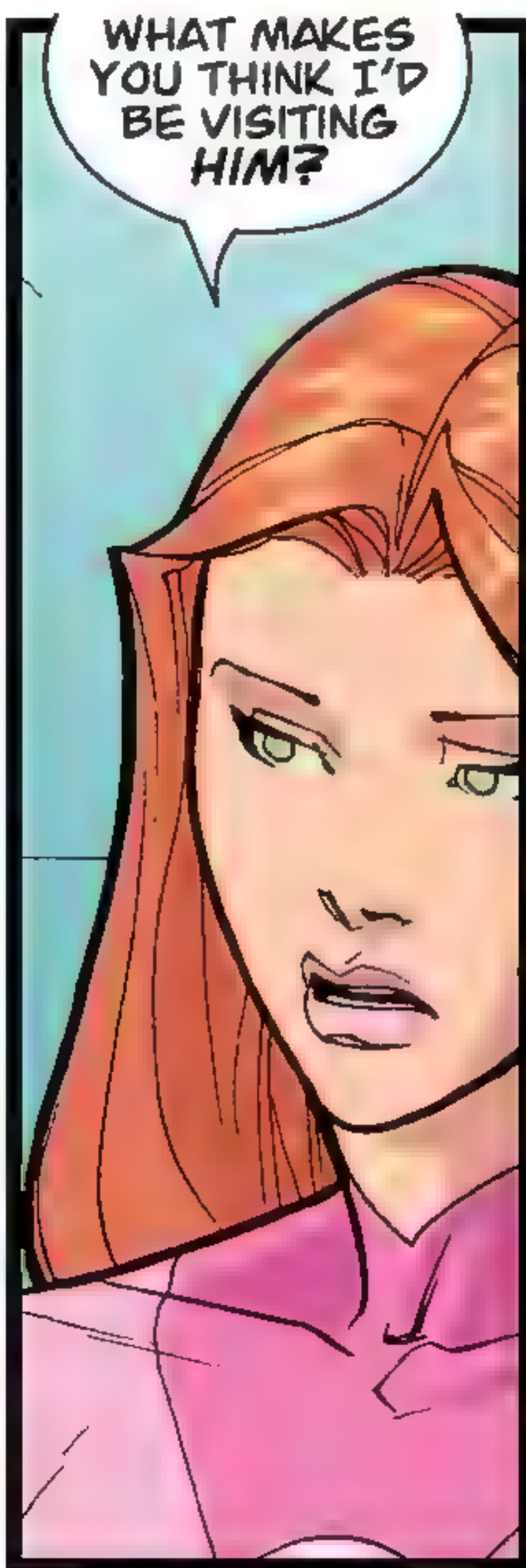
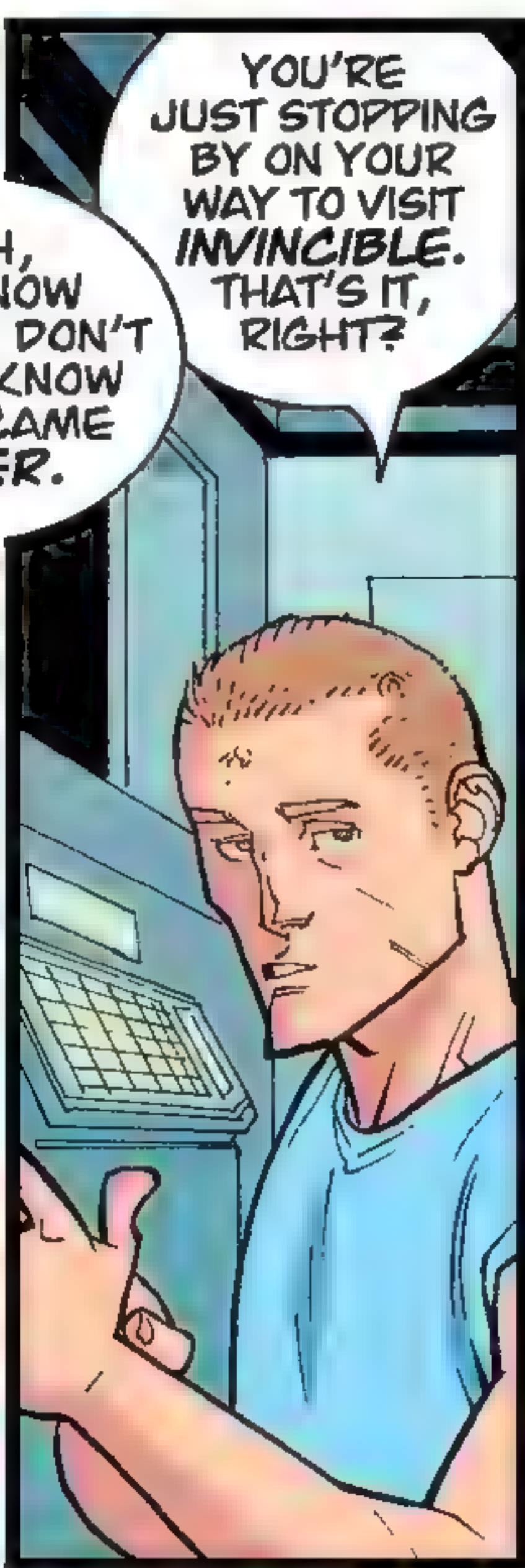
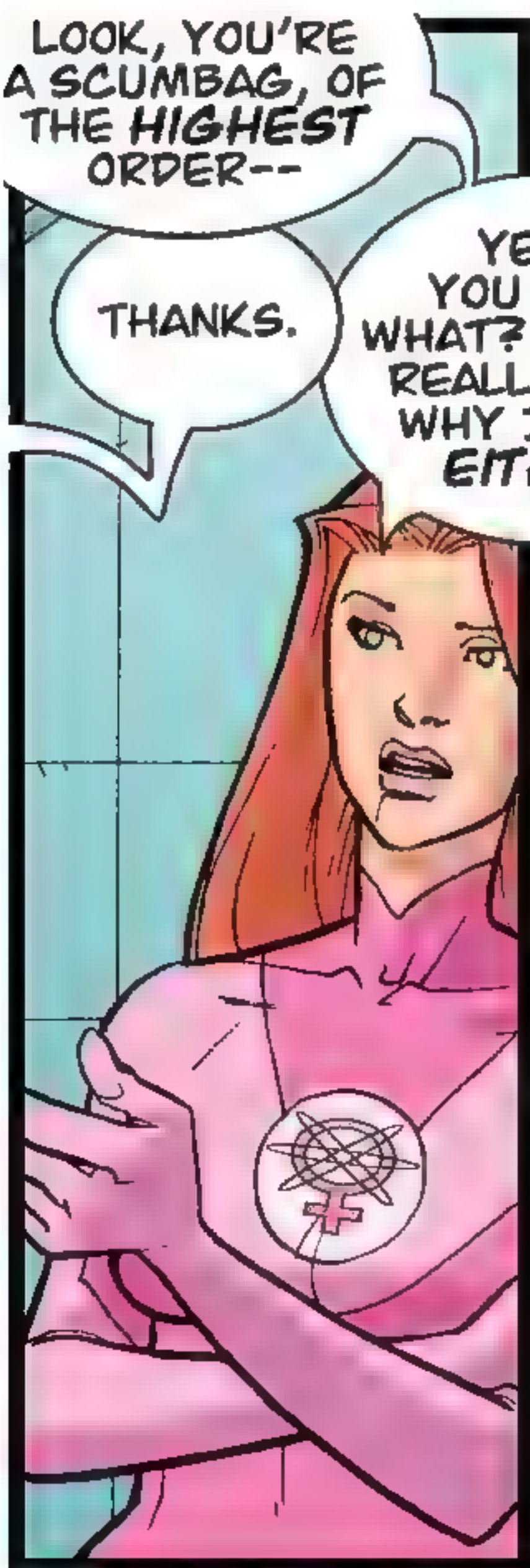
YEAH, YOU KNOW WHAT? I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHY I CAME EITHER.

YOU'RE JUST STOPPING BY ON YOUR WAY TO VISIT INVINCIBLE. THAT'S IT, RIGHT?

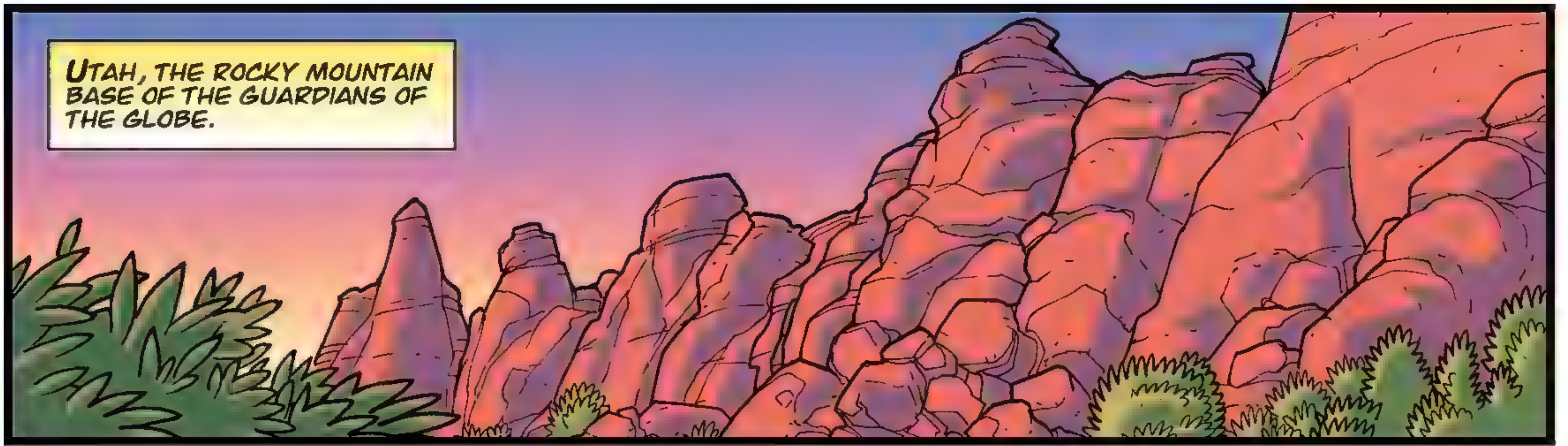
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I'D BE VISITING HIM?

I KNOW YOU ALWAYS KINDA HAD A THING FOR HIM. HE'S A GOOD GUY-- YOU SHOULD GO FOR IT.

HE JUST TOLD ME HE BROKE UP WITH HIS GIRLFRIEND.



UTAH, THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN
BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF
THE GLOBE.



I KNOW YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT IN YOUR TIME--MORE THAN ANYONE COULD BEAR, BUT YOU **DON'T** HAVE TO DO THIS. YOU DON'T HAVE TO ACT LIKE THIS **ISN'T** AFFECTING YOU. YOU CAN TAKE TIME OFF.

MAYBE YOU **SHOULD** TAKE SOME TIME OFF.

I AM FINE. I HAVE DEALT WITH DEATH ALL MY LIFE. I AM SADDENED BY DUPLI-KATE'S PASSING BUT SHE IS NOT THE FIRST WIFE I HAVE LOST.

I WILL DEAL WITH THIS IN MY OWN WAY--IT WILL NOT EFFECT MY ABILITY TO LEAD THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE. TO BE HONEST, I NEED THE DISTRACTION.

THAT'S UNDERSTANDABLE. IF YOU'RE SURE--

HOLD ON--

SO WE'VE GOT A PROJECTILE FROM DEEP SPACE HEADED STRAIGHT FOR EARTH?

HOW LARGE?

AT THAT SIZE--WITH A TRAJECTORY THAT DELIBERATE IT MUST BE AN ATTACK. IT--

ATTACK? I'LL HANDLE THIS.

I'LL MEET THE OBJECT IN SPACE--IT WON'T REACH EARTH--YOU CAN COUNT ON THAT.

IMMORTAL-- WAIT--

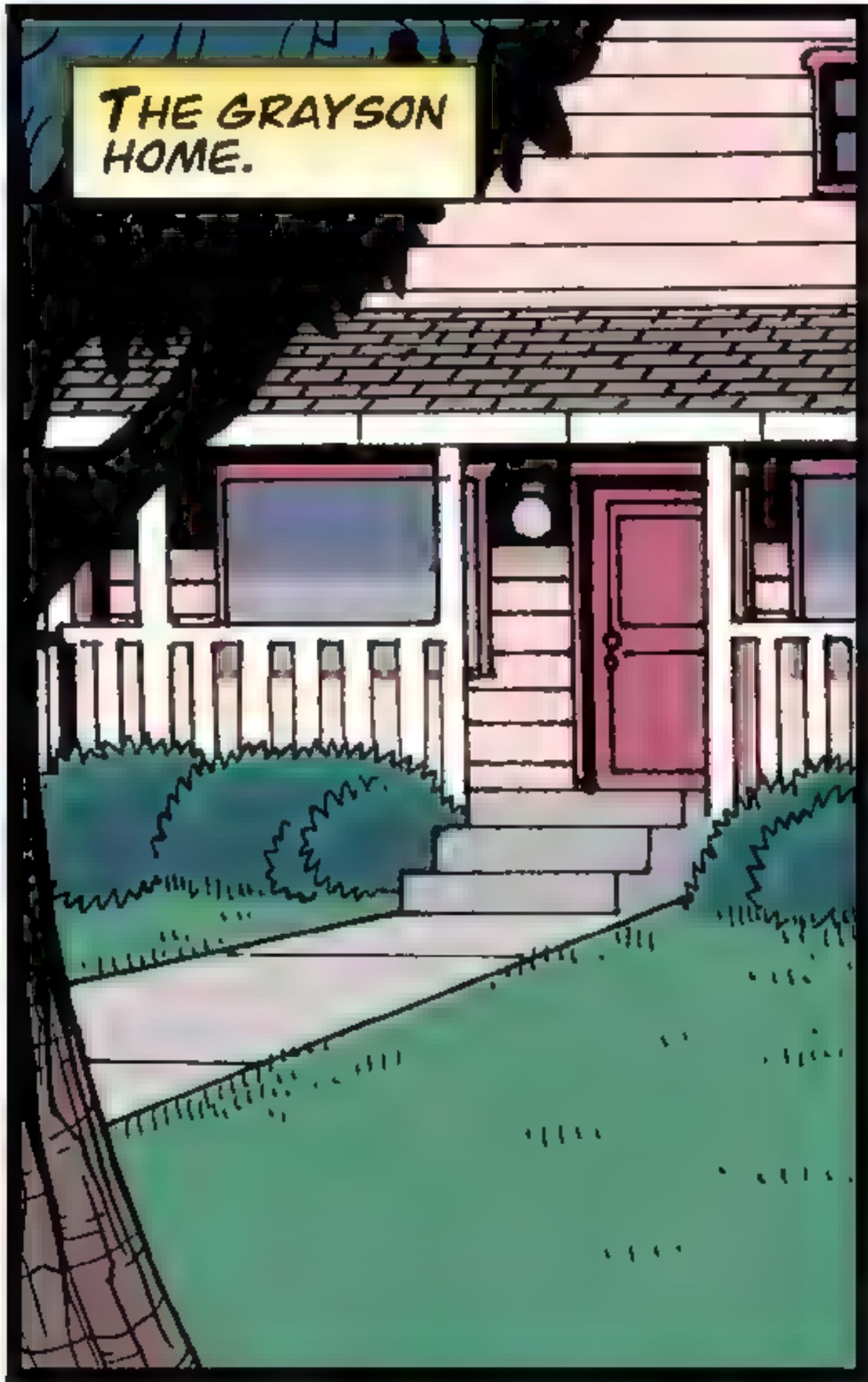
DID YOU SAY IT'S ORGANIC? APPEARS TO BE LIVING?

SIGH

HM.

I THINK I KNOW WHAT WE'RE DEALING WITH.





THE GRAYSON HOME.

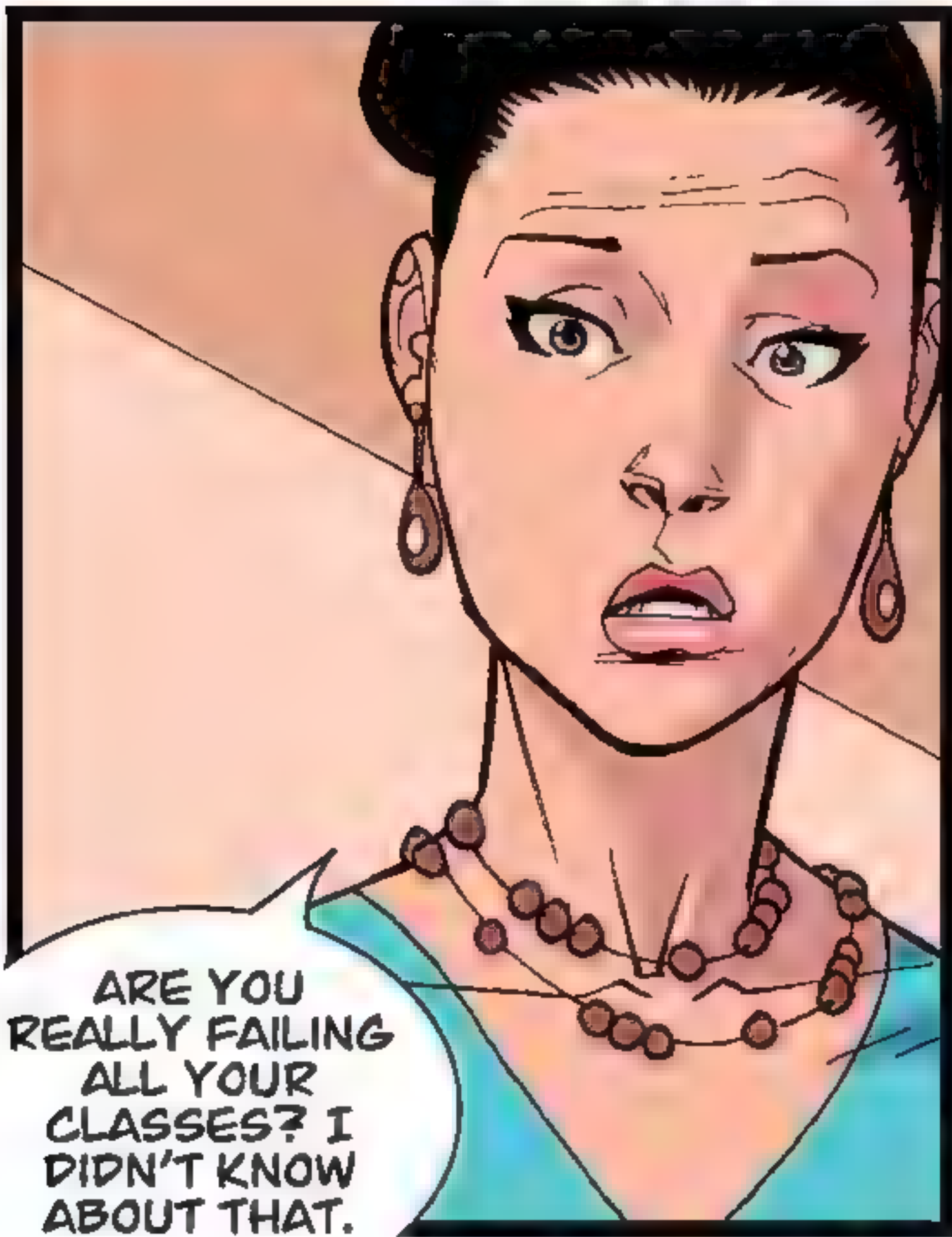


HE'S OUT. HE DOESN'T USUALLY GO DOWN FOR A NAP THIS EASY. I GUESS FLYING MAKES HIM TIRED.

DOES FLYING MAKE YOU TIRED?

AT FIRST MORE THAN NOW. I HAVE TO REALLY PUSH IT WITH MY SPEED TO BREAK A SWEAT FLYING. IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN IF YOU CAN'T DO IT.

SO... WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO WITH THE LITTLE GUY?

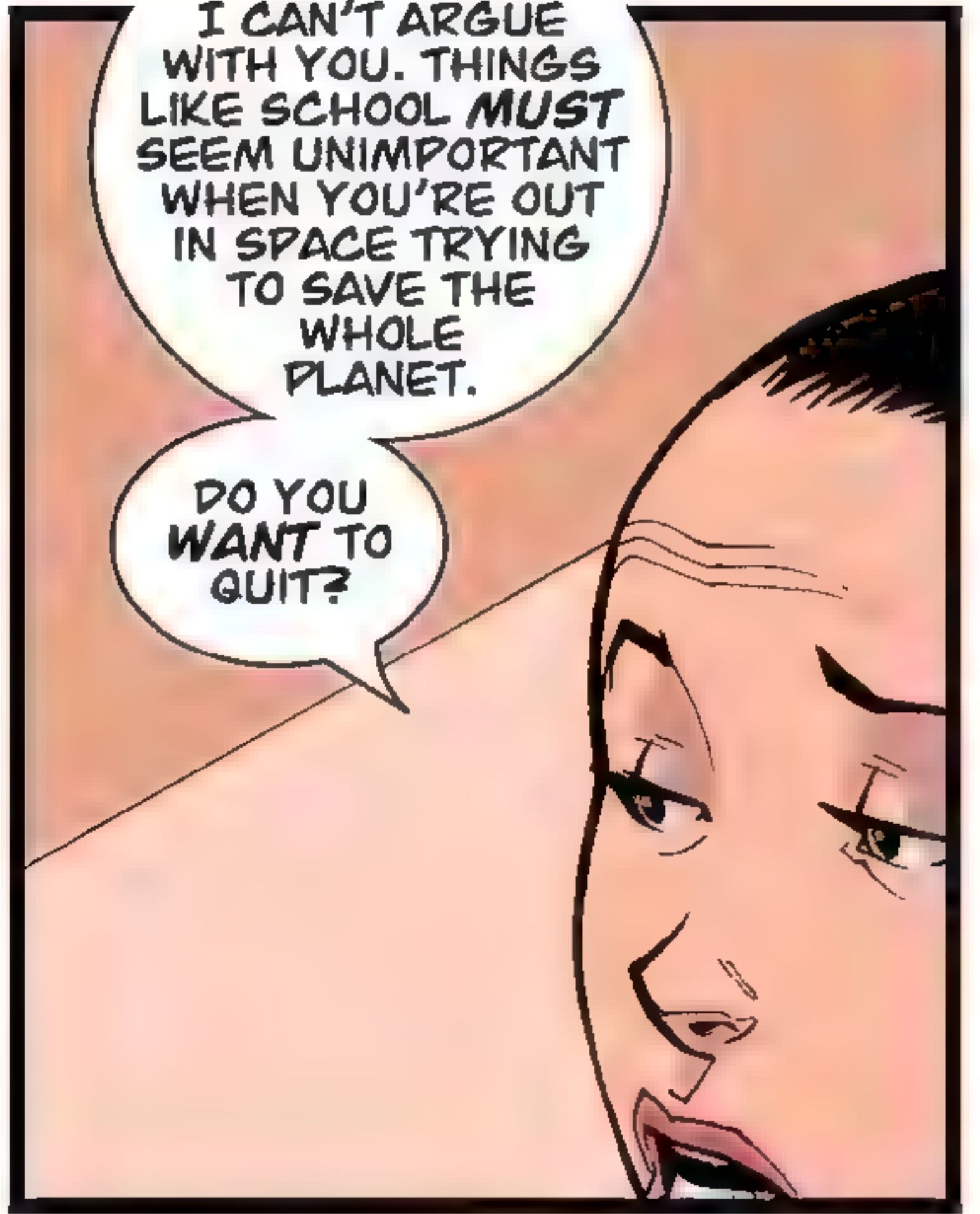


ARE YOU REALLY FAILING ALL YOUR CLASSES? I DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THAT.



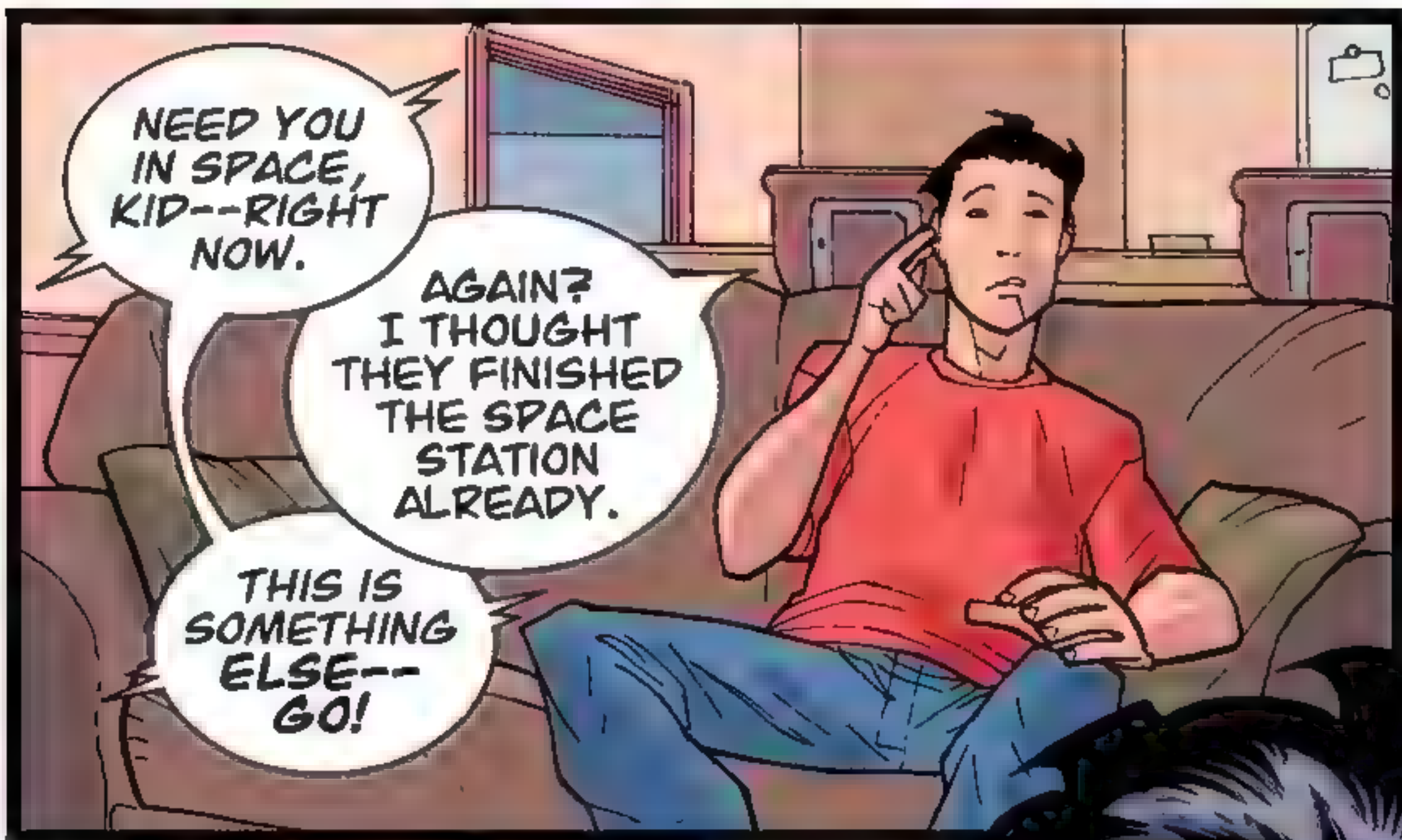
YEAH. IT'S JUST HARD TO FIND THE TIME.

HONESTLY, I JUST DO NOT TAKE IT SERIOUSLY. I DON'T CARE ABOUT IT. IT'S NOT IMPORTANT TO ME.



I CAN'T ARGUE WITH YOU. THINGS LIKE SCHOOL **MUST** SEEM UNIMPORTANT WHEN YOU'RE OUT IN SPACE TRYING TO SAVE THE WHOLE PLANET.

DO YOU WANT TO QUIT?



NEED YOU IN SPACE, KID--RIGHT NOW.

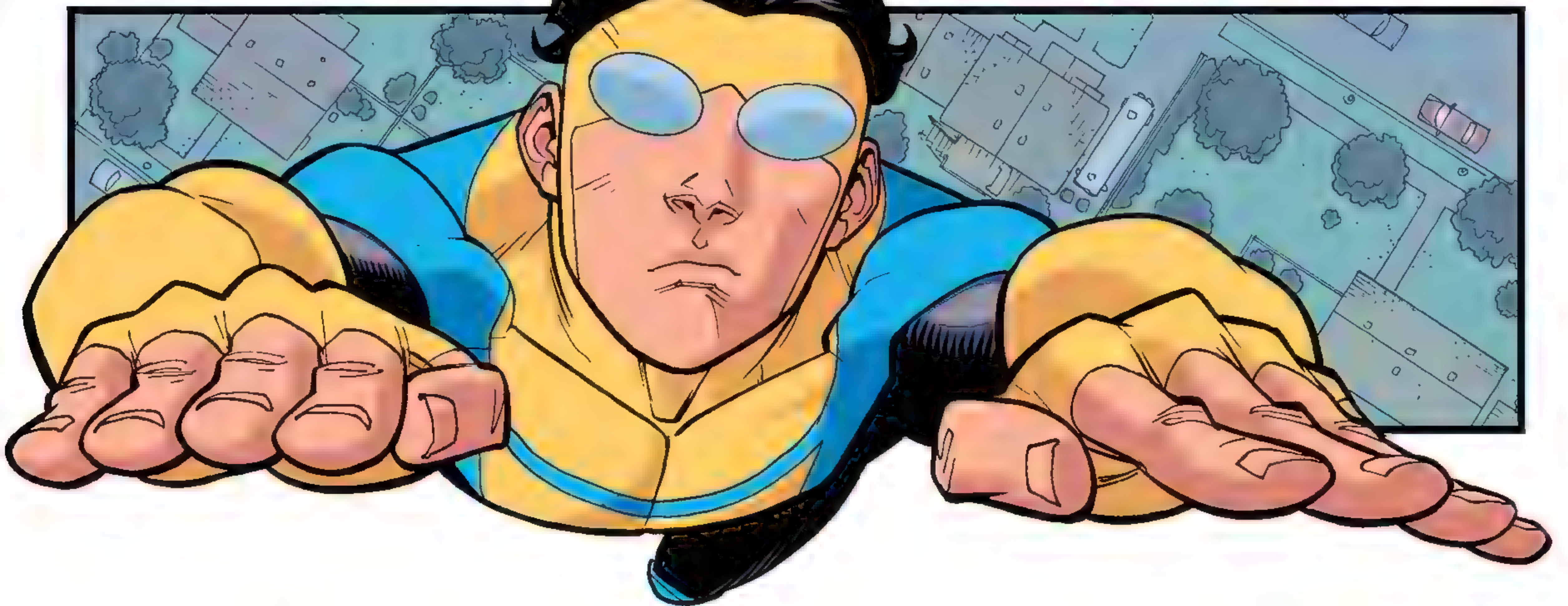
AGAIN? I THOUGHT THEY FINISHED THE SPACE STATION ALREADY.

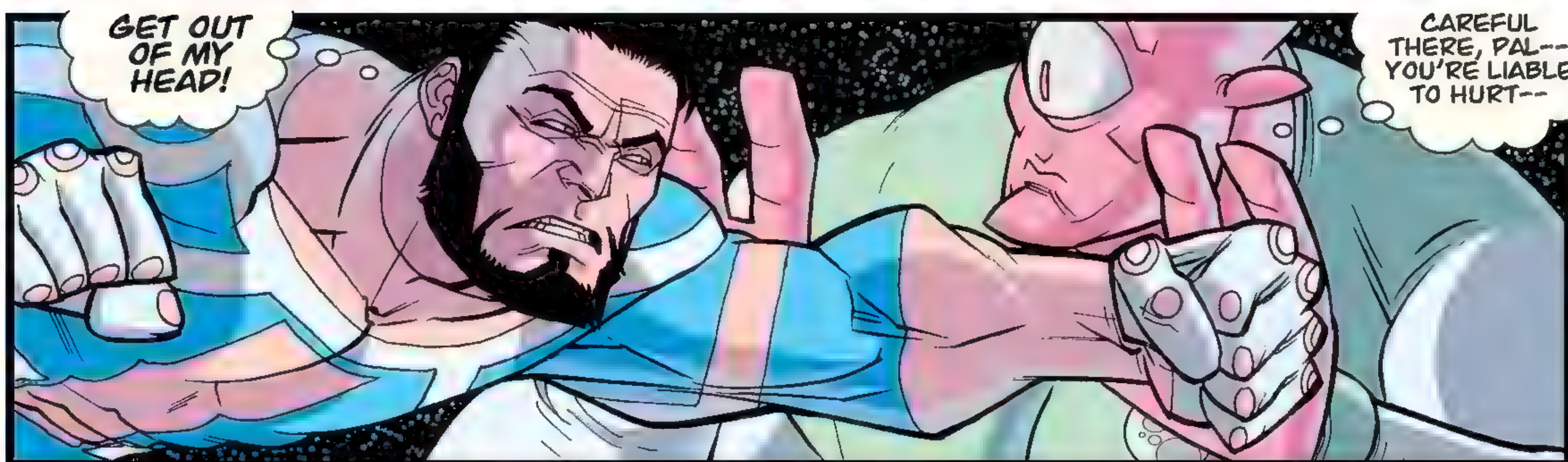
THIS IS SOMETHING ELSE--GO!



WE CAN FINISH THIS LATER. GO ON--BE A HERO... MAKE ME PROUD.

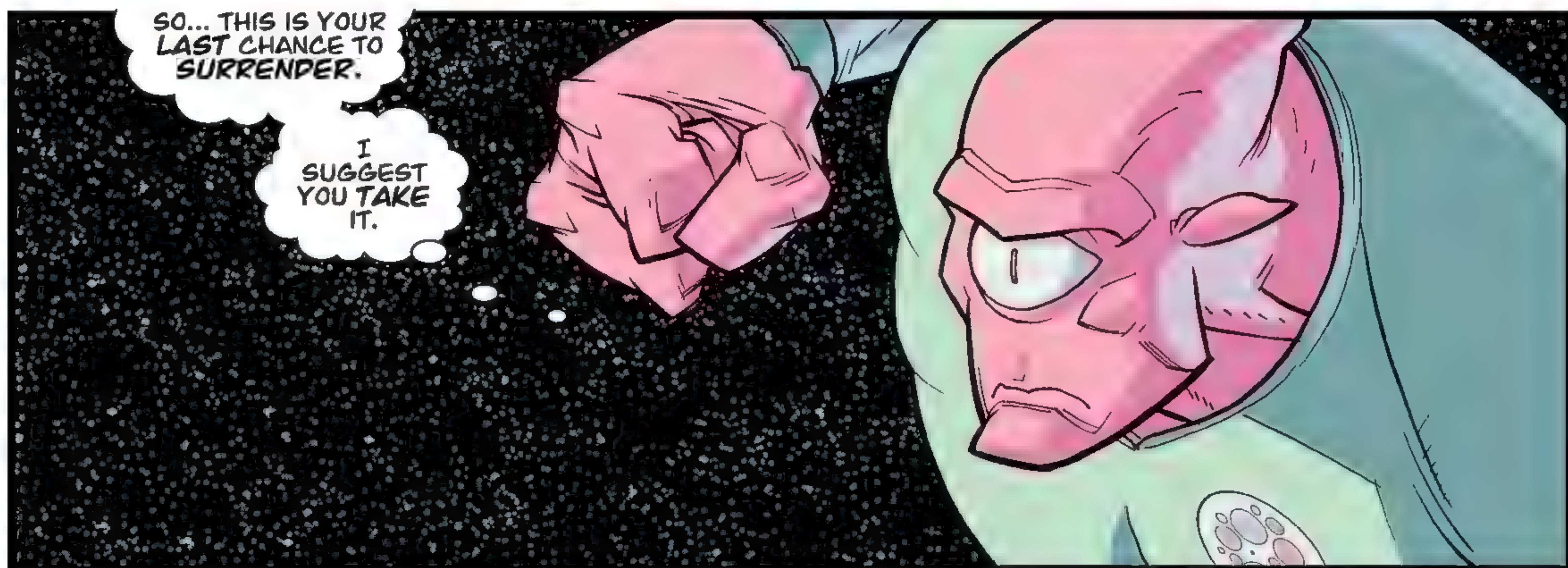
I'LL SEE YOU SOON.

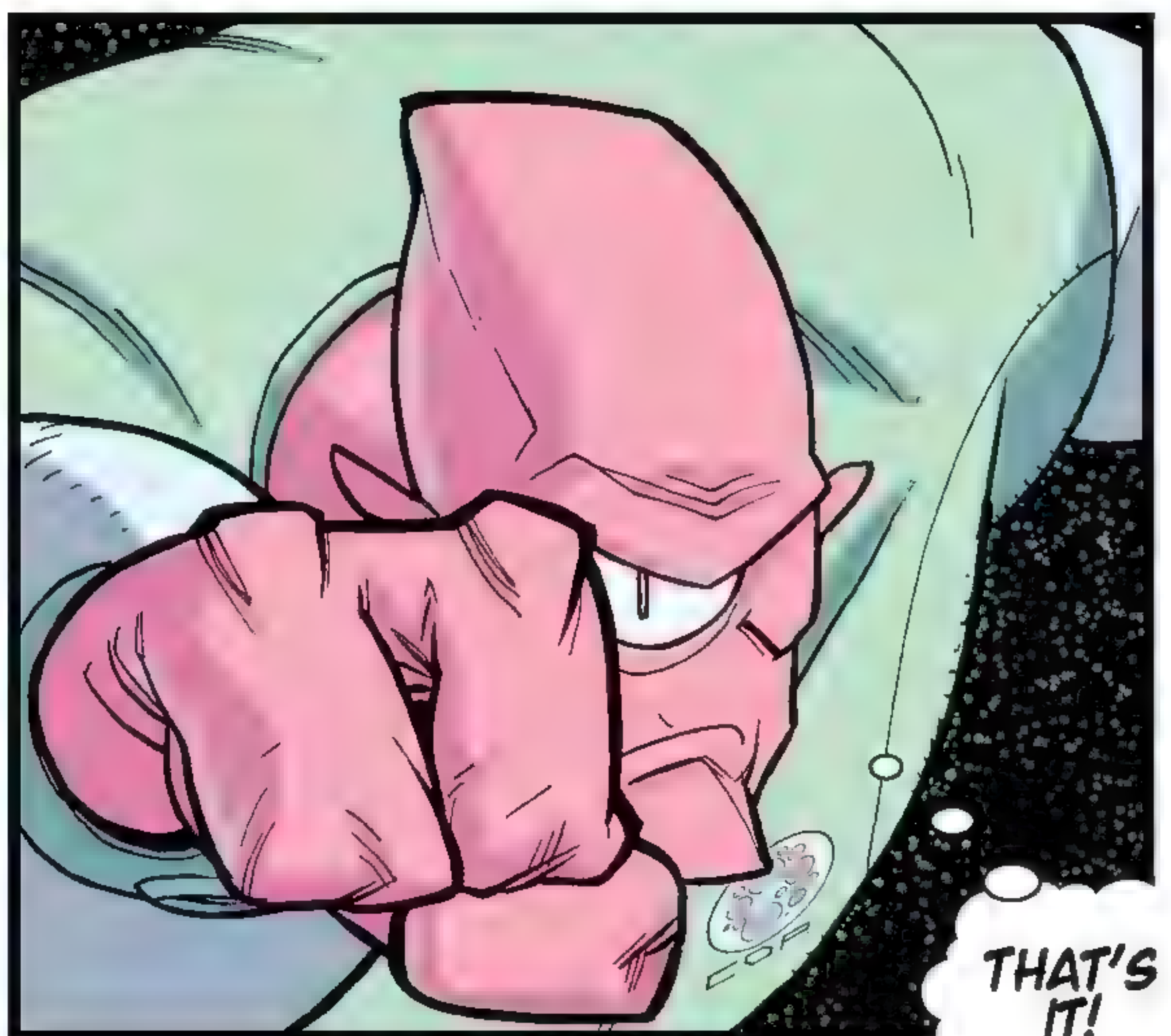


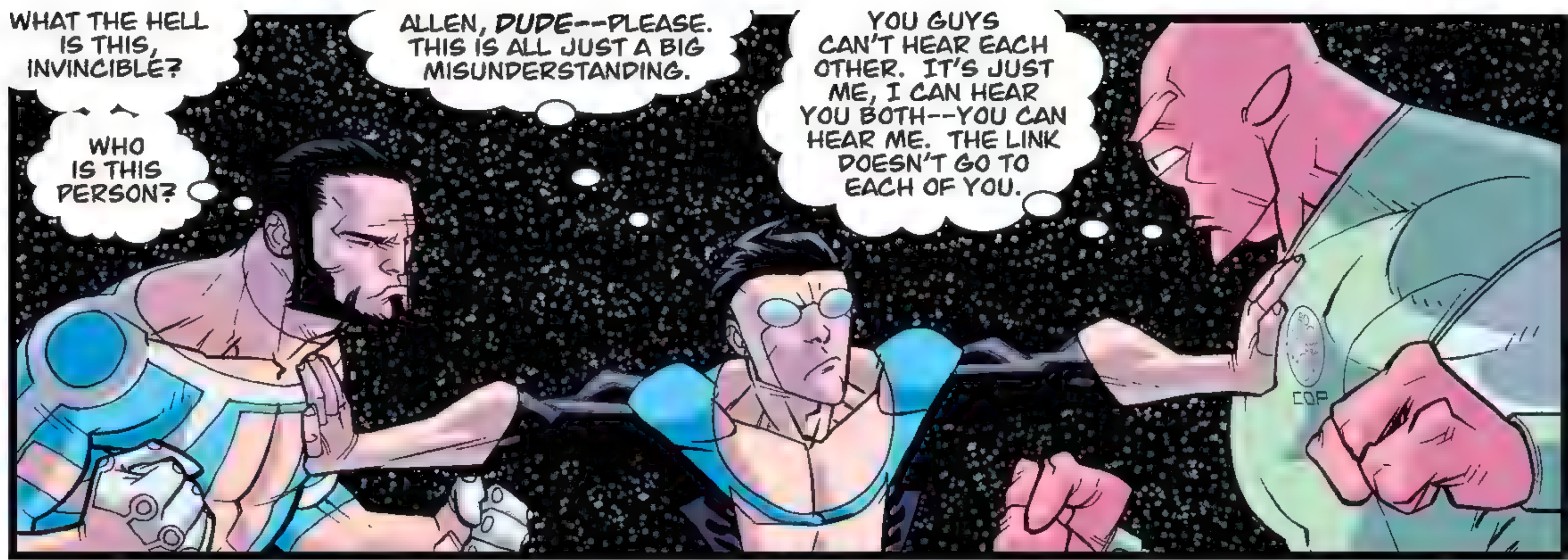




--SOMEONE.





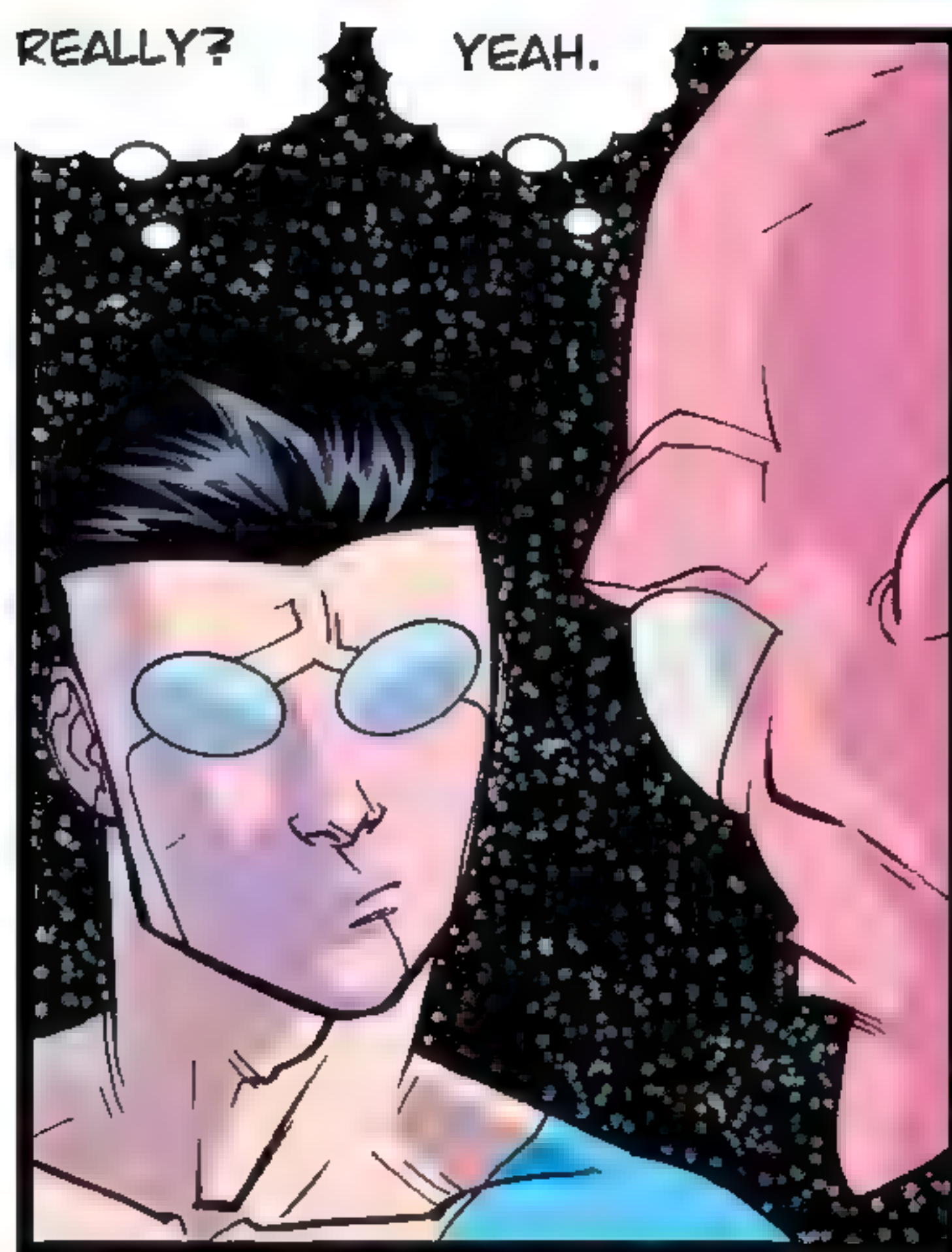


WHAT THE HELL IS THIS, INVINCIBLE?

WHO IS THIS PERSON?

ALLEN, DUPE--PLEASE. THIS IS ALL JUST A BIG MISUNDERSTANDING.

YOU GUYS CAN'T HEAR EACH OTHER. IT'S JUST ME, I CAN HEAR YOU BOTH--YOU CAN HEAR ME. THE LINK DOESN'T GO TO EACH OF YOU.



REALLY?

YEAH.



OKAY--THIS GUY IS NOT THAT STRONG AT ALL. YOU'D KILL HIM--YOU'D JUST RIP HIM APART.

HE'S ALSO A TOTAL JERK. BUT HE'S BEEN THROUGH A LOT RECENTLY--SO CUT HIM SOME SLACK.



OH, COOL. SEEMS OUR MUTUAL FRIEND HAS SORTED EVERYTHING OUT HERE. I'M NOT ATTACKING OR ANYTHING. I REALLY JUST CAME TO SEE HIM.

MY NAME'S ALLEN. IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU.



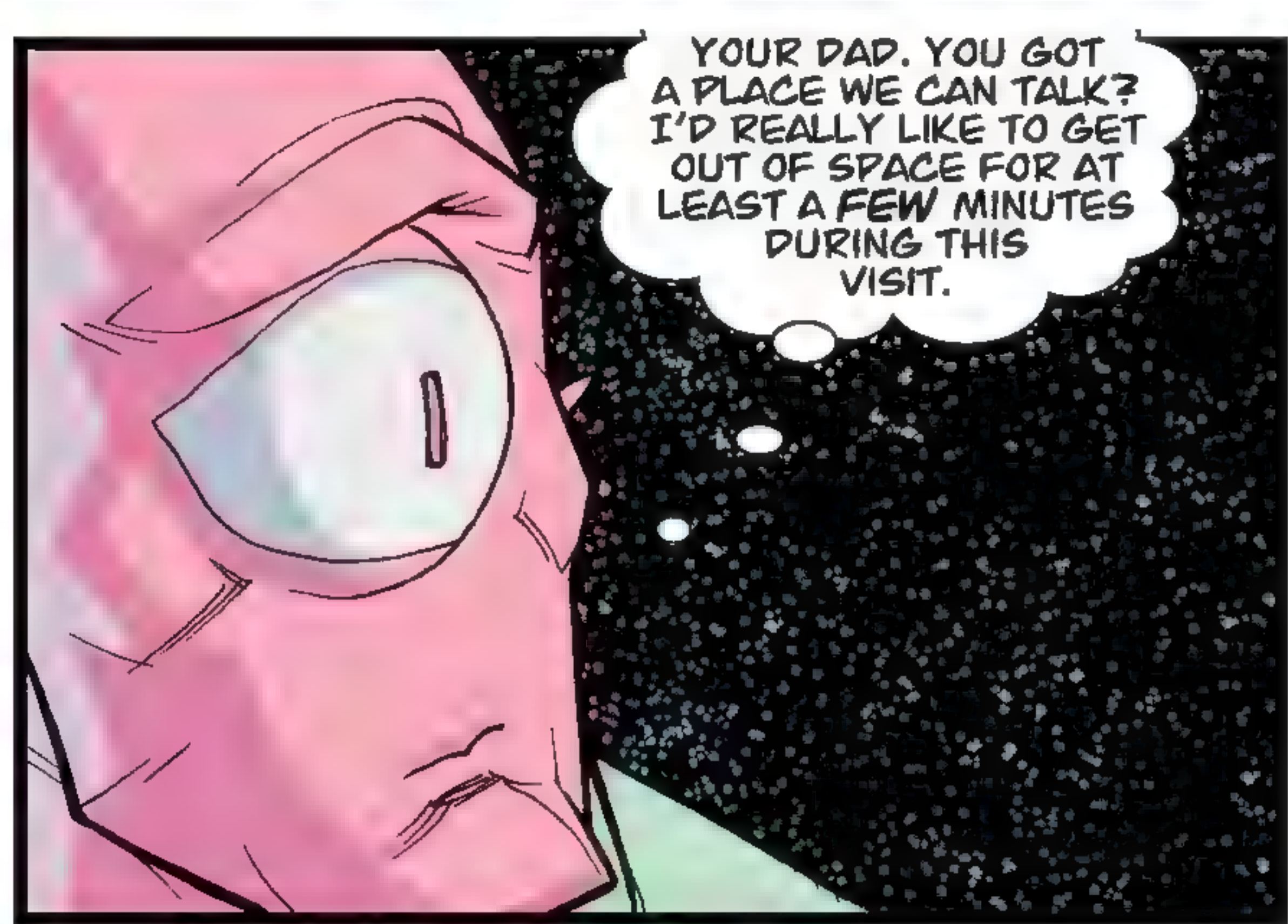
I'M THE IMMORTAL. I... APOLOGIZE FOR THE MISUNDERSTANDING. I DIDN'T HURT YOU DID I?

NOT EVEN A LITTLE BIT. IMMORTAL, HUH? I JUST FOUND OUT RECENTLY I MAY BE IMMORTAL--UNABLE TO BE KILLED AT LEAST. DON'T KNOW IF I'M SAFE FROM OLD-AGE.

ARE YOU? I WOULD ASSUME SO BECAUSE OF THE NAME, BUT REALLY--ASSUMING GOT US TO WHERE WE WERE A FEW MINUTES AGO, SO--

YOU CAME TO SEE ME? REALLY?

WHAT ABOUT?



YOUR DAD. YOU GOT A PLACE WE CAN TALK? I'D REALLY LIKE TO GET OUT OF SPACE FOR AT LEAST A FEW MINUTES DURING THIS VISIT.



SURE, FOLLOW ME.

NICE MEETING YOU, MISTER IMMORTAL.



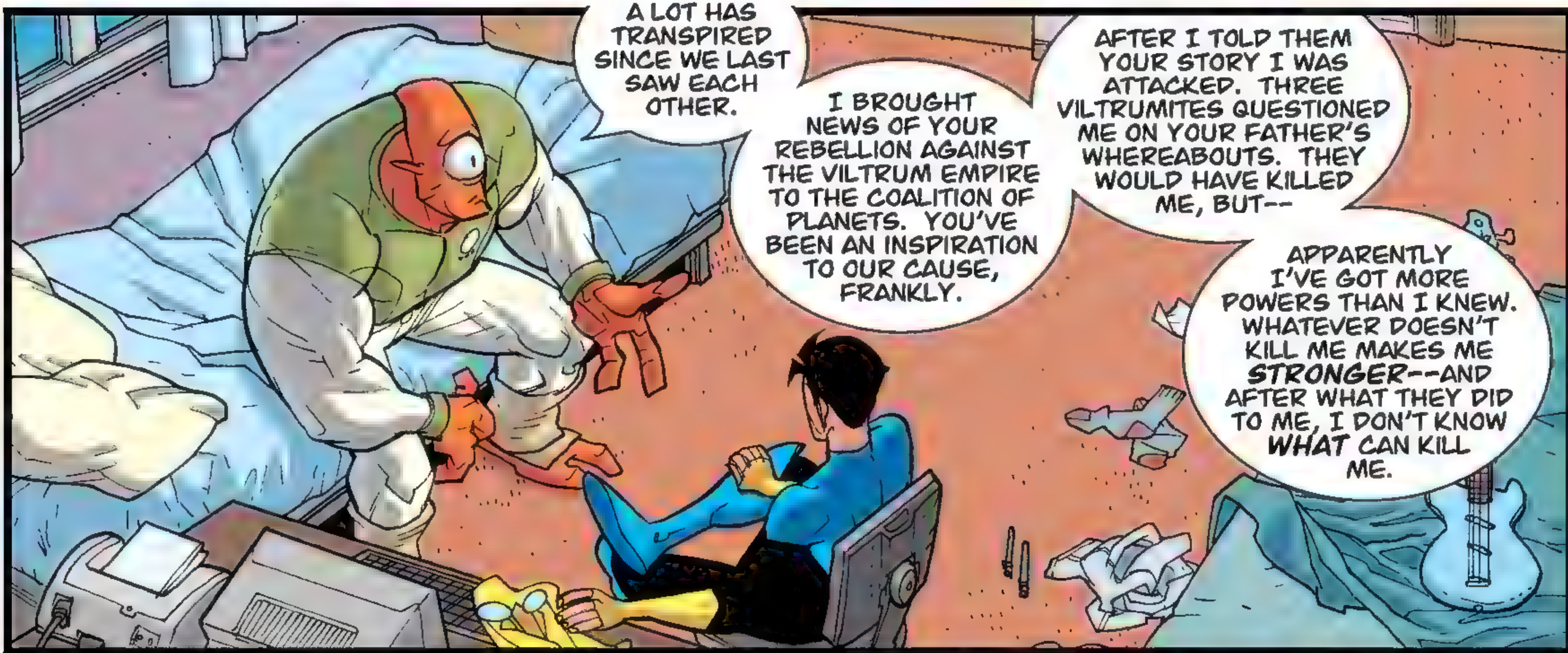
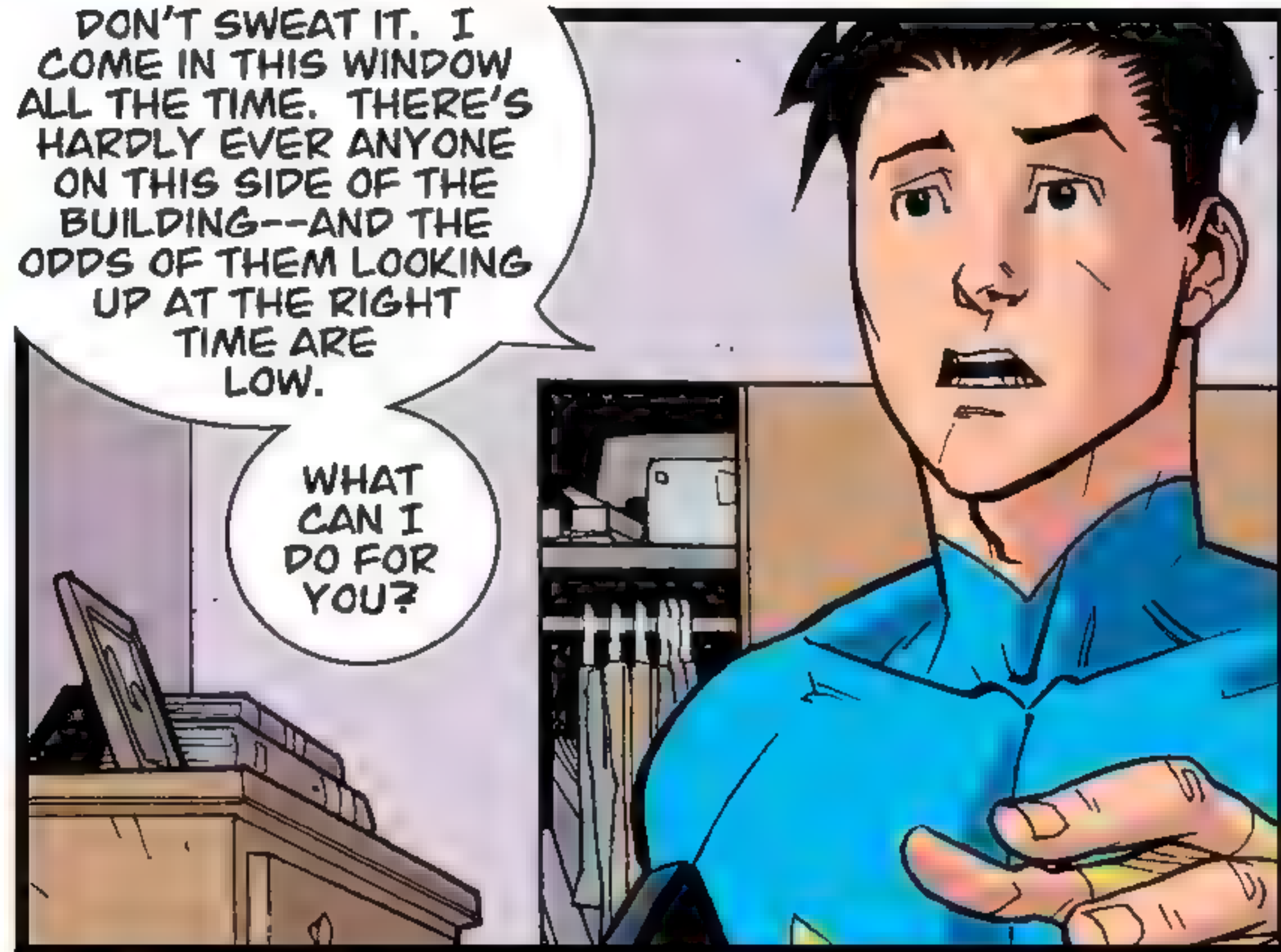
UPSTATE UNIVERSITY.
THE DORM ROOM OF MARK
GRAYSON AND WILLIAM
CLOCKWELL.



IS IT OKAY IF
SOMEONE SEES
ME HERE? I
THOUGHT YOU KEPT
YOUR ABILITIES A
SECRET FROM MOST
OF YOUR KIND.

DON'T SWEAT IT. I
COME IN THIS WINDOW
ALL THE TIME. THERE'S
HARDLY EVER ANYONE
ON THIS SIDE OF THE
BUILDING--AND THE
ODDS OF THEM LOOKING
UP AT THE RIGHT
TIME ARE
LOW.

WHAT
CAN I
DO FOR
YOU?



A LOT HAS
TRANSPIRED
SINCE WE LAST
SAW EACH
OTHER.

I BROUGHT
NEWS OF YOUR
REBELLION AGAINST
THE VILTRUM EMPIRE
TO THE COALITION OF
PLANETS. YOU'VE
BEEN AN INSPIRATION
TO OUR CAUSE,
FRANKLY.

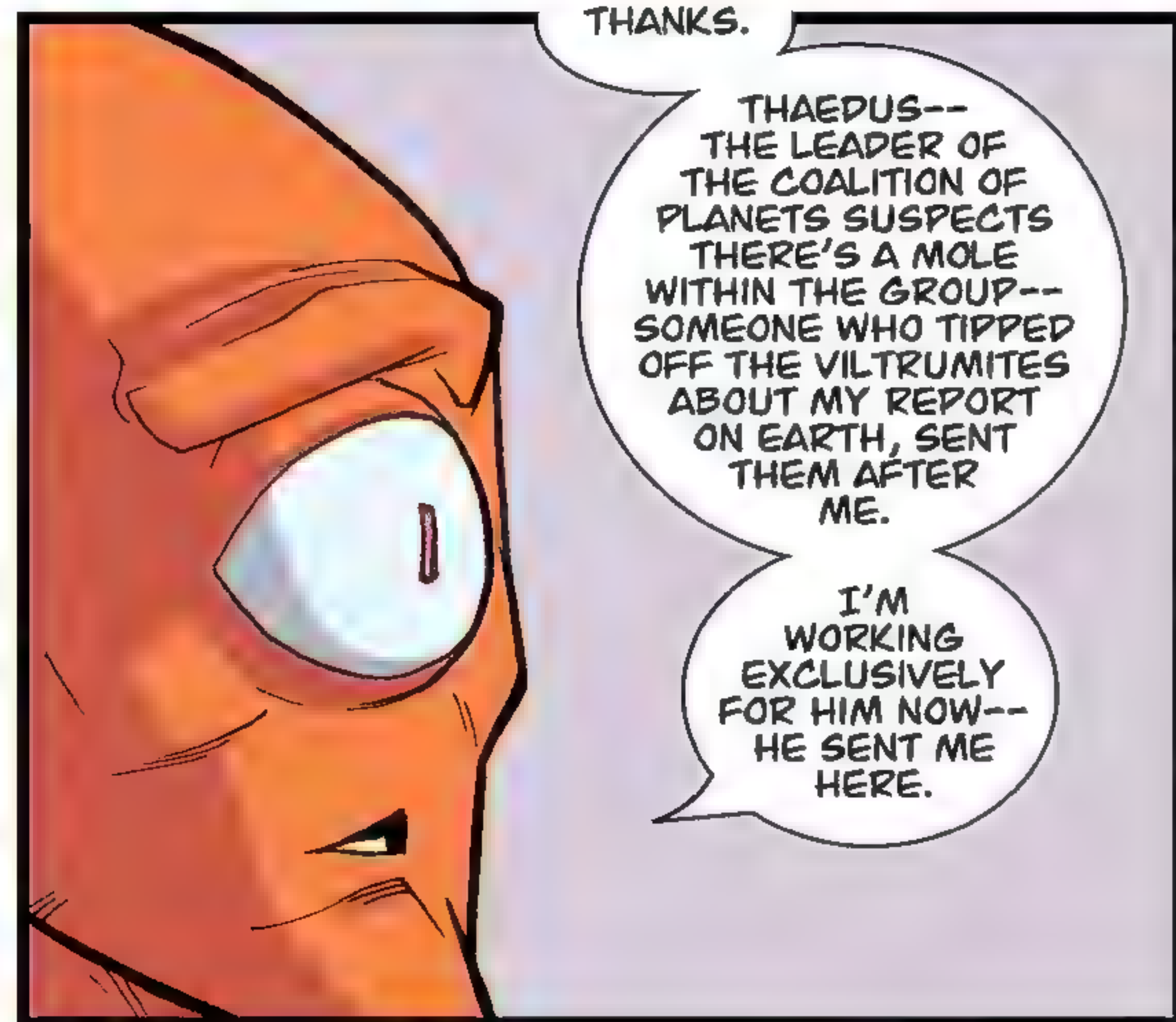
AFTER I TOLD THEM
YOUR STORY I WAS
ATTACKED. THREE
VILTRUMITES QUESTIONED
ME ON YOUR FATHER'S
WHEREABOUTS. THEY
WOULD HAVE KILLED
ME, BUT--

APPARENTLY
I'VE GOT MORE
POWERS THAN I KNEW.
WHATEVER DOESN'T
KILL ME MAKES ME
STRONGER--AND
AFTER WHAT THEY DID
TO ME, I DON'T KNOW
WHAT CAN KILL
ME.



YEAH--
I NOTICED
YOU PUT A
LOT OF
WEIGHT
ON.

YOU'RE
BEEFIER.



THANKS.

THAEDUS--
THE LEADER OF
THE COALITION OF
PLANETS SUSPECTS
THERE'S A MOLE
WITHIN THE GROUP--
SOMEONE WHO TIPPED
OFF THE VILTRUMITES
ABOUT MY REPORT
ON EARTH, SENT
THEM AFTER
ME.

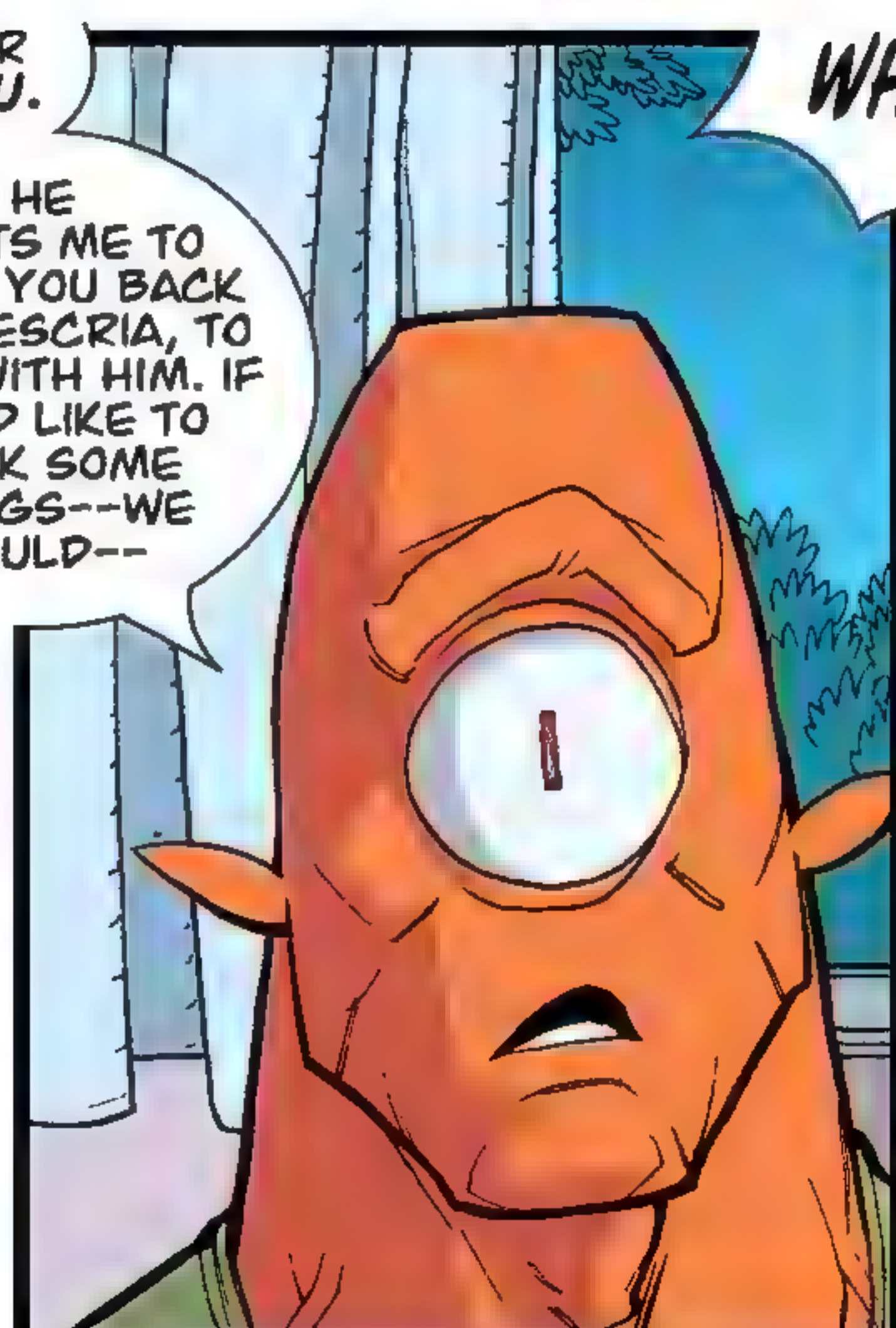
I'M
WORKING
EXCLUSIVELY
FOR HIM NOW--
HE SENT ME
HERE.

SO, THAEDUS IS THE GUY IN CHARGE THERE? HE RUNS THE COALITION OF PLANETS. WHY DID HE SEND YOU HERE?



FOR YOU.

HE WANTS ME TO BRING YOU BACK TO TALESRIA, TO MEET WITH HIM. IF YOU'D LIKE TO PACK SOME THINGS--WE COULD--



WHAT?!

NO! NO WAY-- I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE.

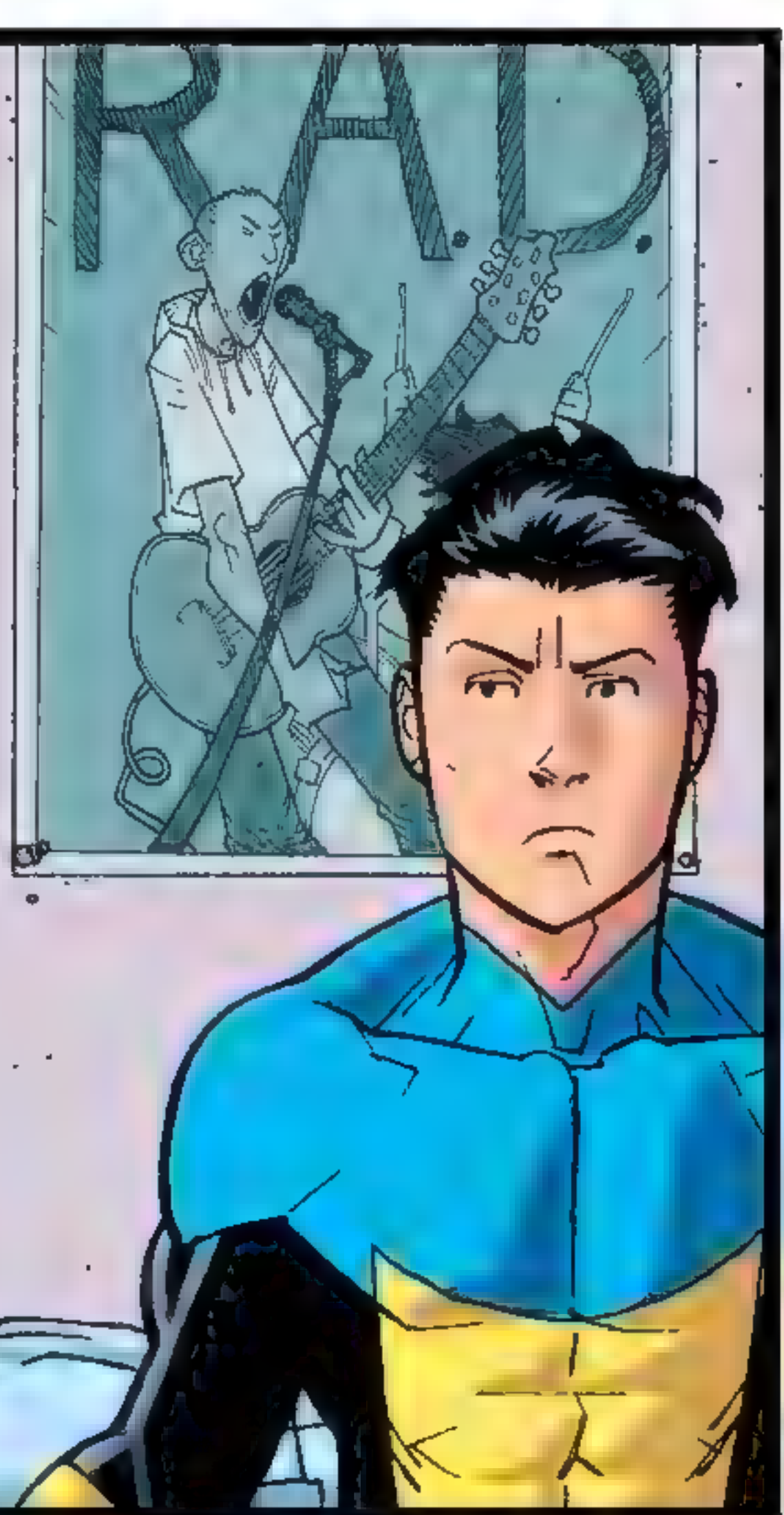


YOU'VE GOT NO IDEA WHAT I'VE BEEN THROUGH RECENTLY. I'M NOT GOING OUT INTO SPACE AGAIN-- NO WAY. I--SPACE SUCKS.

I'VE BEEN OUT IN SPACE MORE THAN I'VE BEEN ON THIS PLANET IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS. I JUST BROKE UP WITH MY GIRLFRIEND--WHO I REALLY DID LIKE-- BECAUSE I'M GONE SO MUCH. I NEVER GET TO SEE MY MOM.

MY LITTLE BROTHER JUST GOT POWERS AND I--

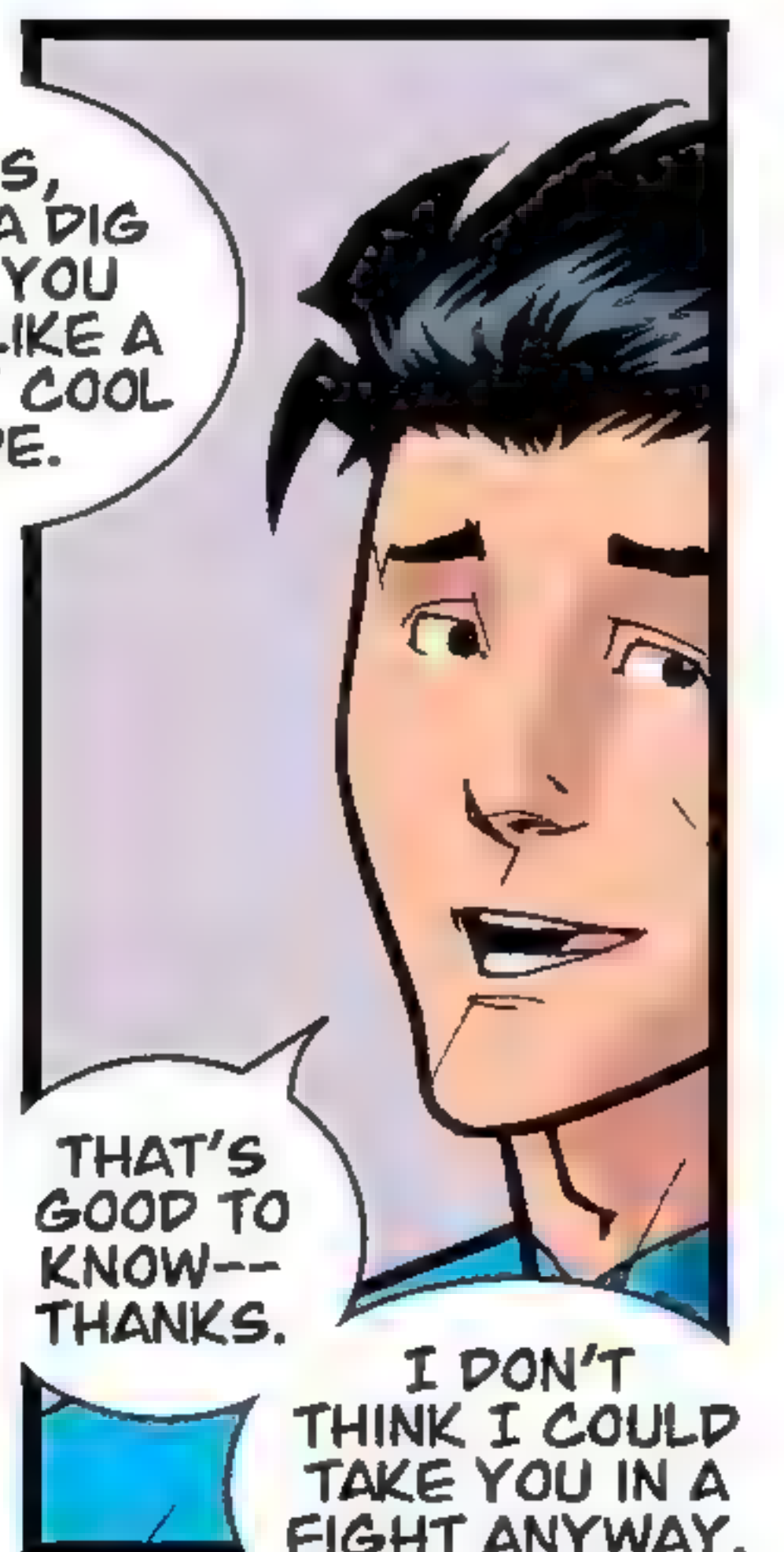
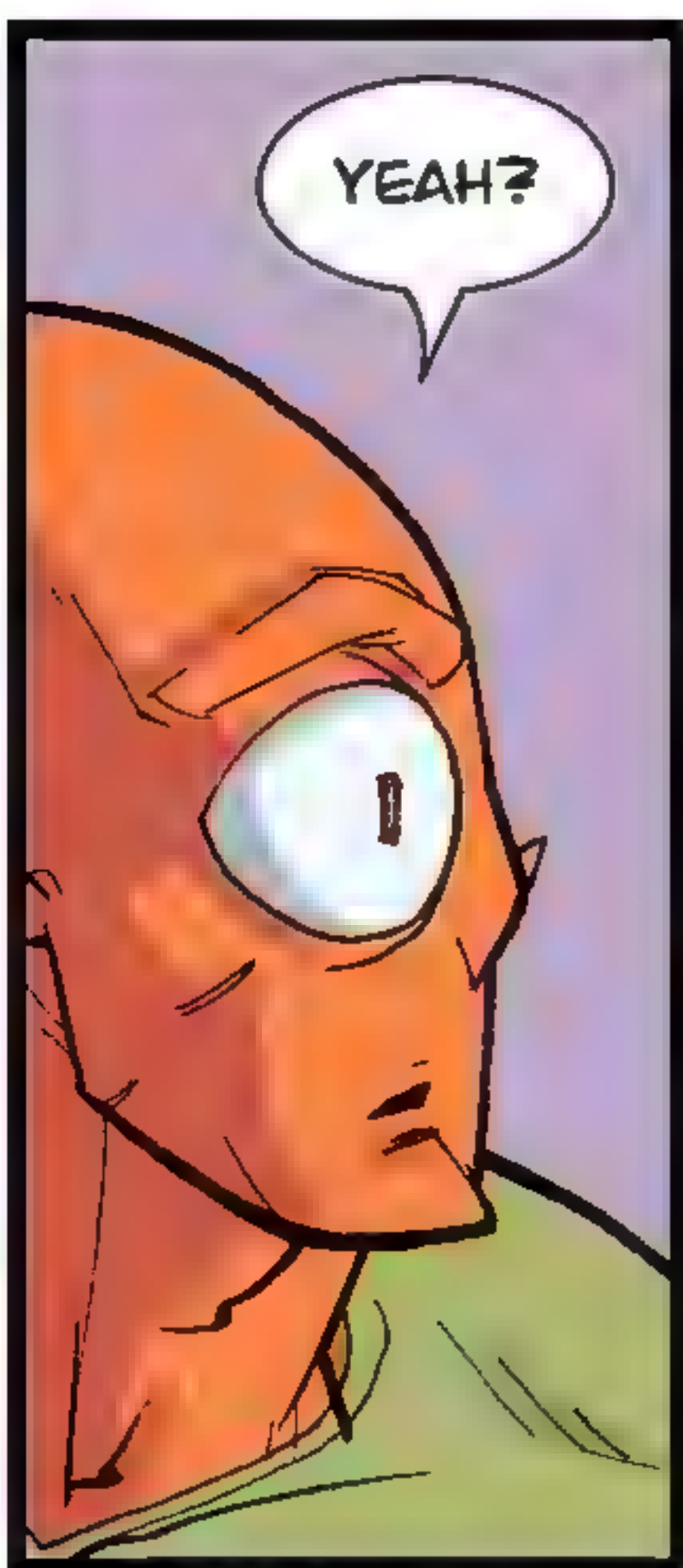
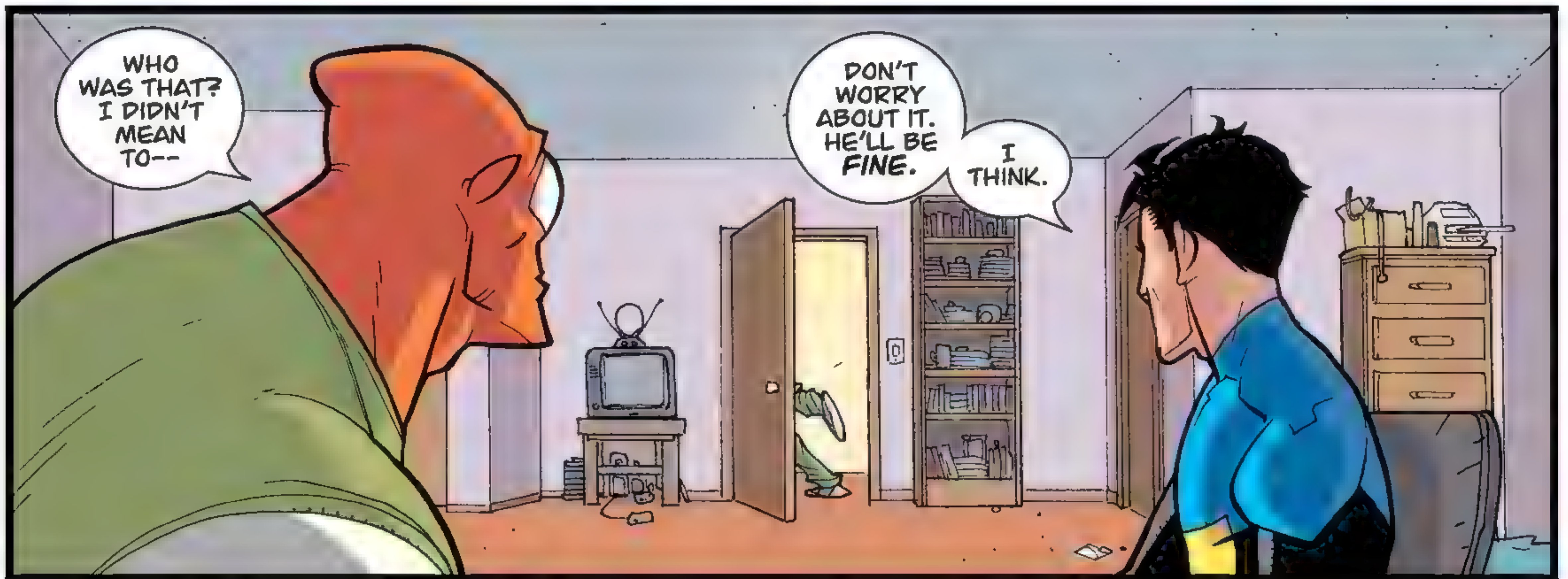
NO. THERE'S NO WAY I'M GOING. I'M SORRY ALLEN, BUT I'D FIGHT YOU BEFORE I LET YOU TAKE ME.

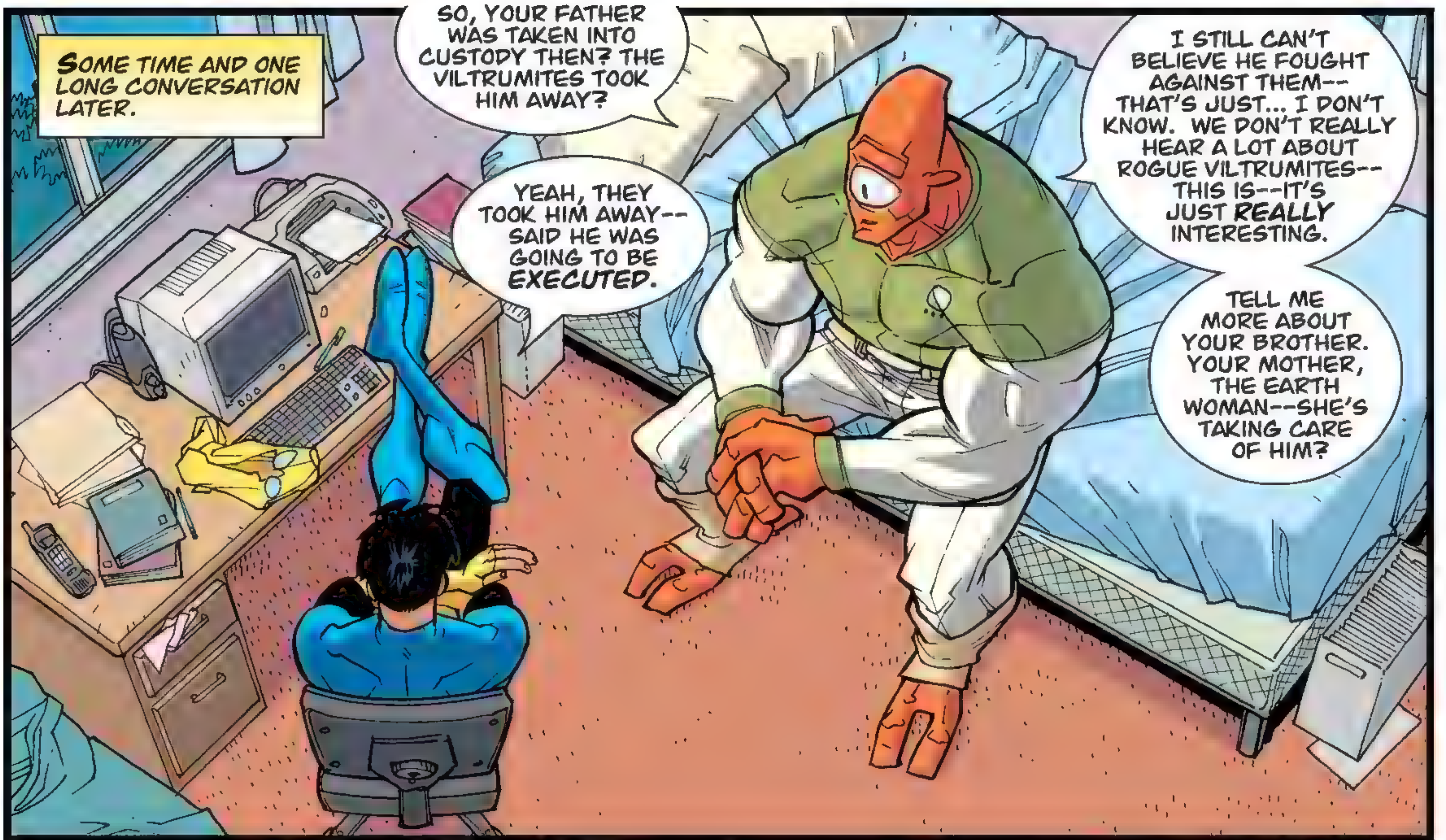


YOU'RE NOT GOING TO MAKE ME FIGHT YOU...

...ARE YOU?







SOME TIME AND ONE LONG CONVERSATION LATER.

SO, YOUR FATHER WAS TAKEN INTO CUSTODY THEN? THE VILTRUMITES TOOK HIM AWAY?

YEAH, THEY TOOK HIM AWAY-- SAID HE WAS GOING TO BE EXECUTED.

I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE HE FOUGHT AGAINST THEM-- THAT'S JUST... I DON'T KNOW. WE DON'T REALLY HEAR A LOT ABOUT ROGUE VILTRUMITES-- THIS IS--IT'S JUST REALLY INTERESTING.

TELL ME MORE ABOUT YOUR BROTHER, YOUR MOTHER, THE EARTH WOMAN--SHE'S TAKING CARE OF HIM?



OLIVER--YEAH. MY MOM'S TAKING CARE OF HIM. HE, UH... WELL. I JUST FOUND OUT TODAY THAT HE'S ALREADY GETTING HIS POWERS.



HE ALREADY HAS POWERS LIKE YOU?



WELL, HE DOESN'T REALLY KNOW HOW TO USE THEM YET AND HE'S REALLY YOUNG SO HE'S PROBABLY NOT VERY POWERFUL.



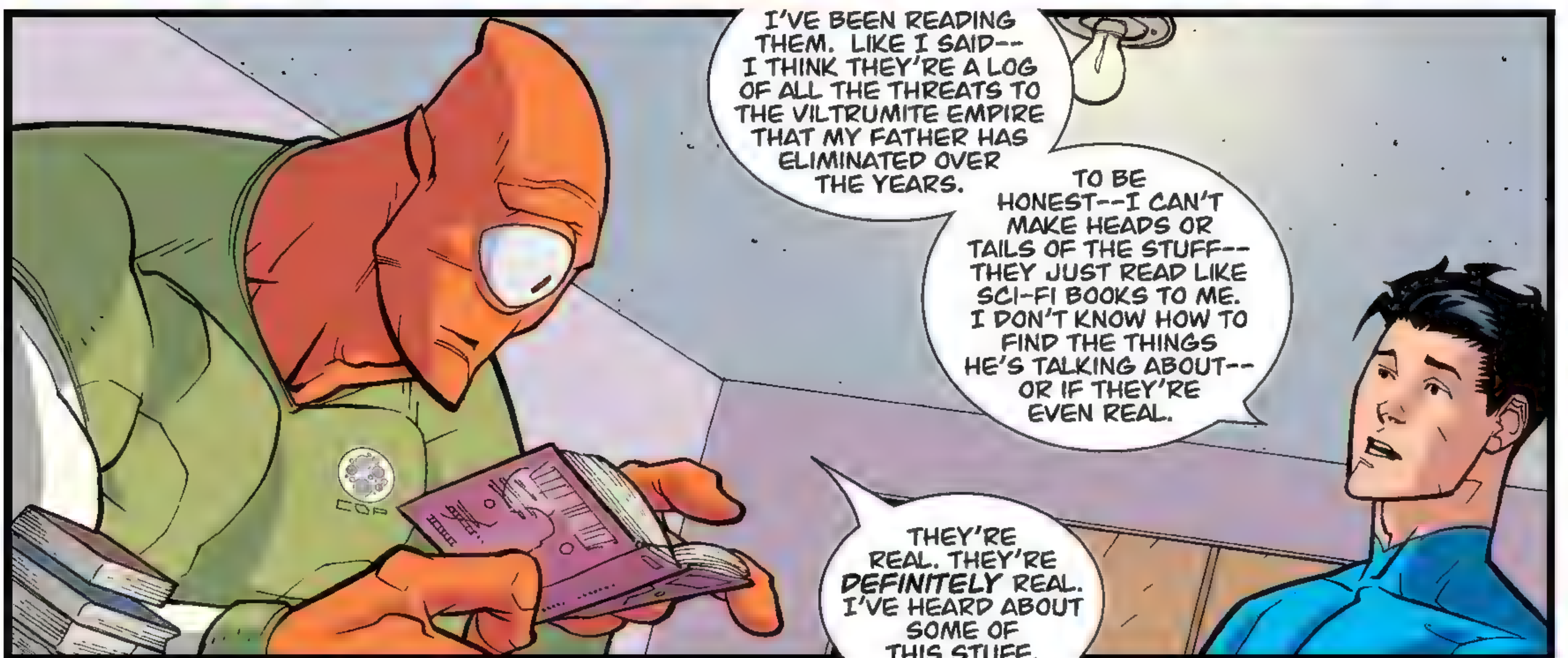
I DON'T KNOW IF PURE-BLOOD VILTRUMITES ARE BORN WITH THEIR POWERS-- BUT MINE DIDN'T COME UNTIL I WAS WELL INTO PUBERTY.

INTERESTING.



GOT THEM RIGHT HERE.

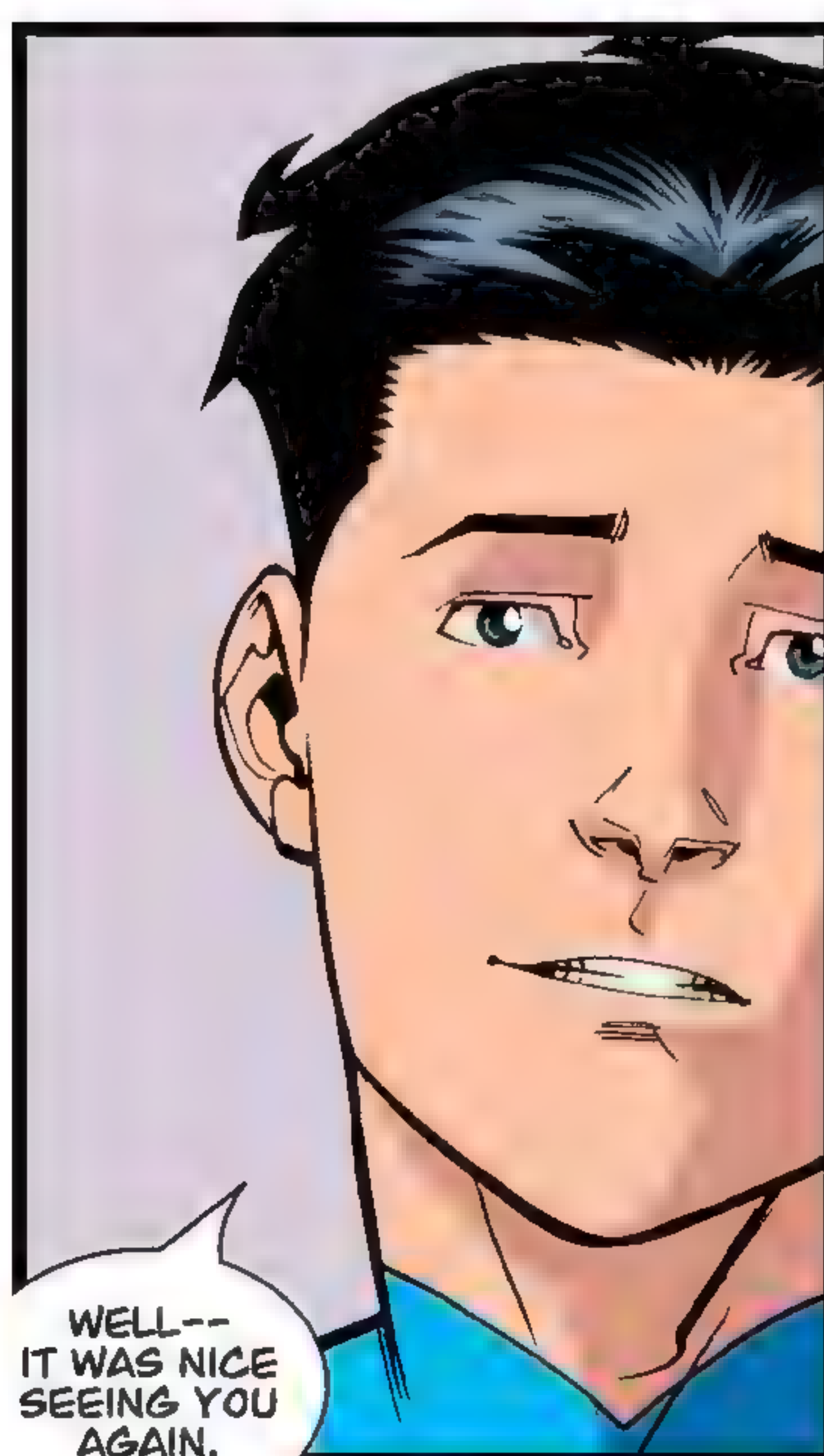
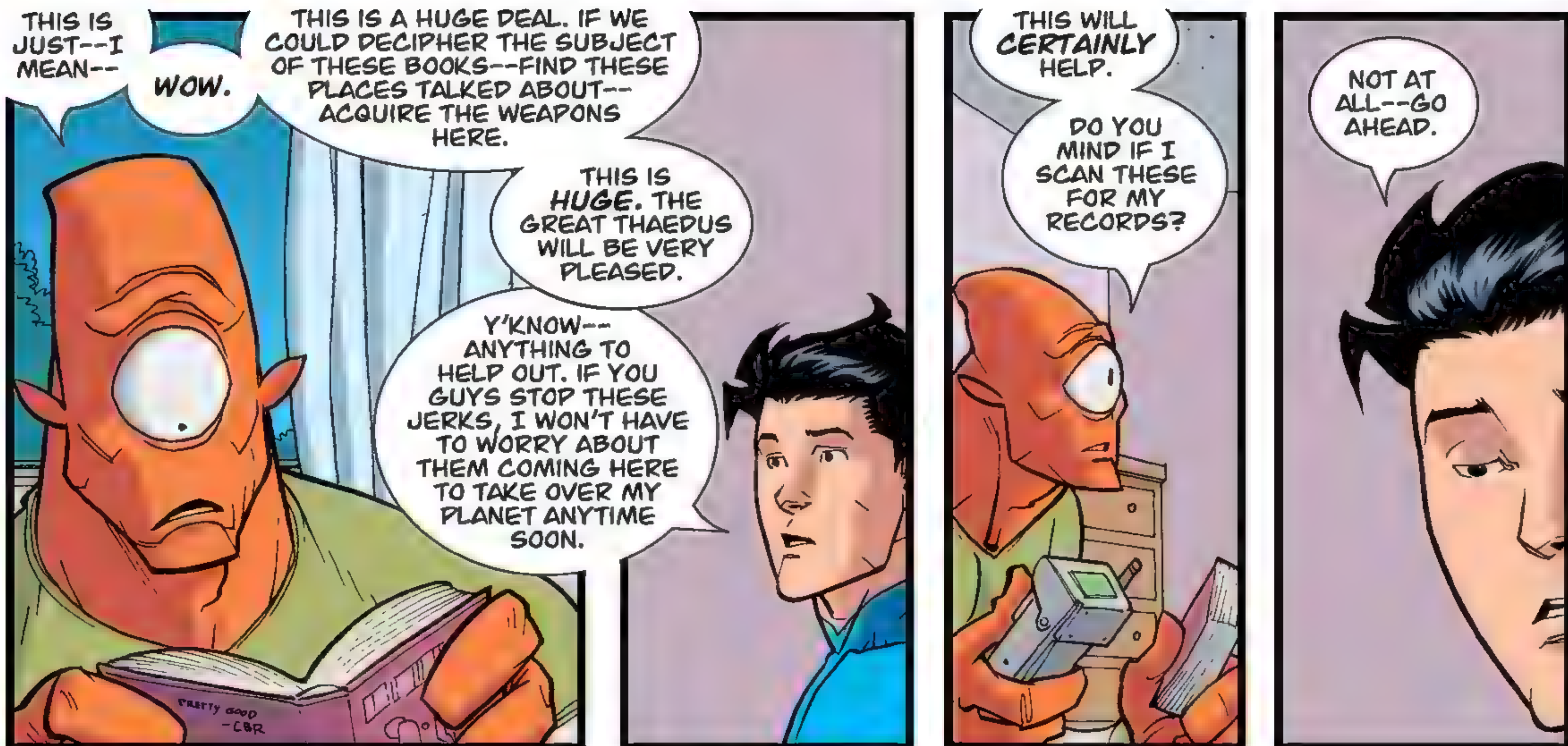
SHOW ME THESE BOOKS YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT.

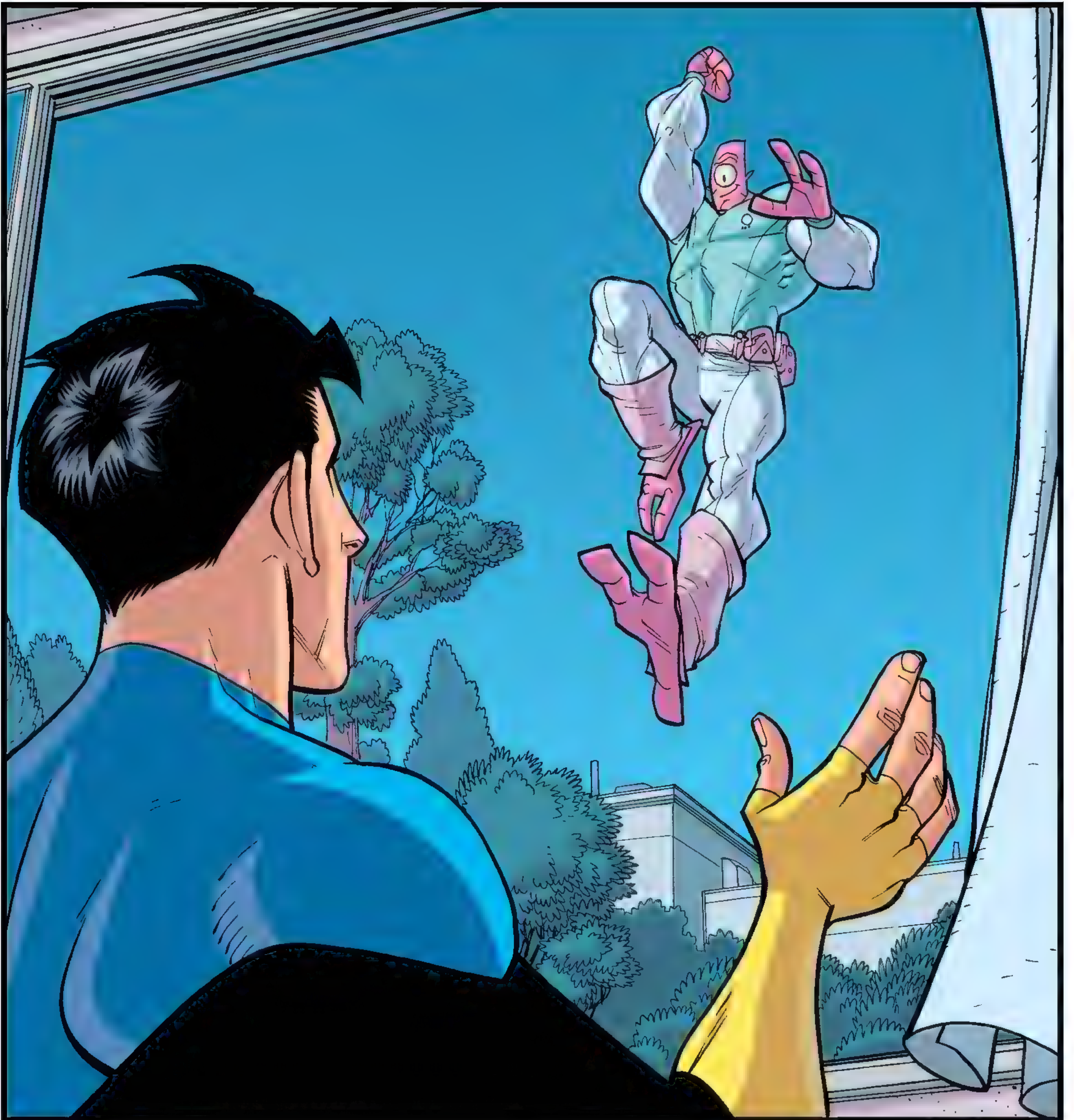


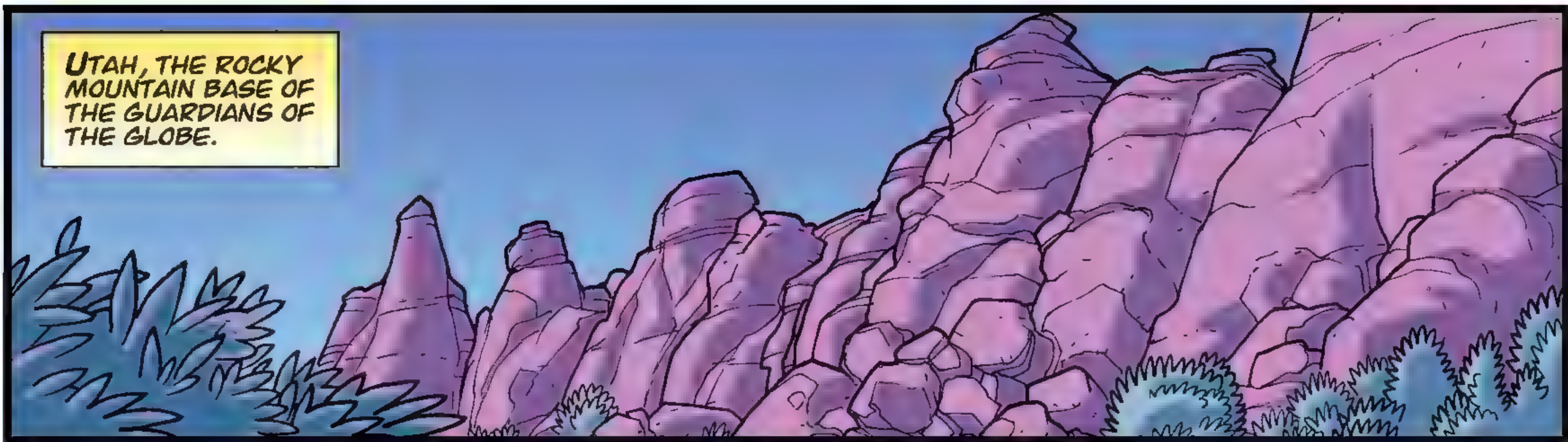
I'VE BEEN READING THEM. LIKE I SAID-- I THINK THEY'RE A LOG OF ALL THE THREATS TO THE VILTRUMITE EMPIRE THAT MY FATHER HAS ELIMINATED OVER THE YEARS.

TO BE HONEST--I CAN'T MAKE HEADS OR TAILS OF THE STUFF-- THEY JUST READ LIKE SCI-FI BOOKS TO ME. I DON'T KNOW HOW TO FIND THE THINGS HE'S TALKING ABOUT-- OR IF THEY'RE EVEN REAL.

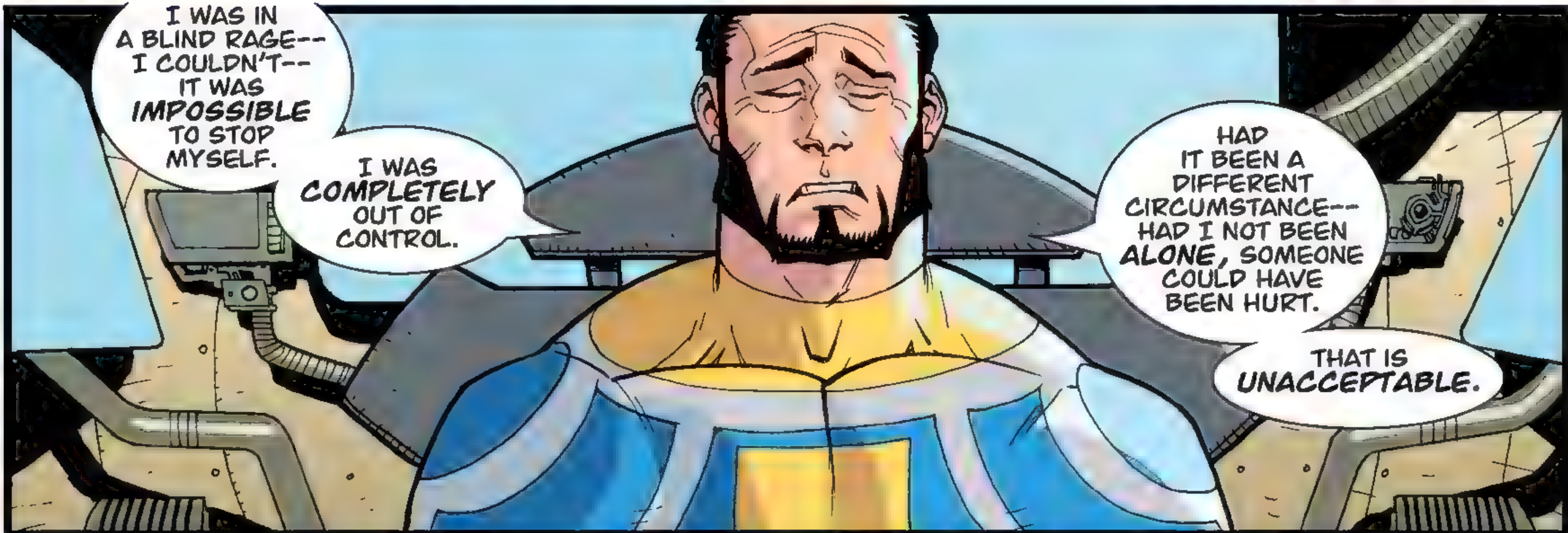
THEY'RE REAL. THEY'RE DEFINITELY REAL. I'VE HEARD ABOUT SOME OF THIS STUFF.







UTAH, THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN BASE OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.



I WAS IN A BLIND RAGE-- I COULDN'T-- IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO STOP MYSELF.

I WAS COMPLETELY OUT OF CONTROL.

HAD IT BEEN A DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCE-- HAD I NOT BEEN ALONE, SOMEONE COULD HAVE BEEN HURT.

THAT IS UNACCEPTABLE.



I UNDERSTAND. LOOK, WE'VE BEEN FRIENDS FOR YEARS. I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU LIKE THIS.

IF YOU NEED SOME TIME-- TAKE SOME TIME.

NO--YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. I'VE NEVER FELT LIKE THIS ABOUT SOMEONE BEFORE. I DON'T THINK I AM EVER GOING TO GET OVER THIS. IT'S TIME--IT'S MY TIME TO END THIS.

I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER LEAD THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE AGAIN.

CALL IT A TEMPORARY LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM THE TEAM IF YOU WISH--BUT I DON'T THINK I'M COMING BACK.



I'M DONE.



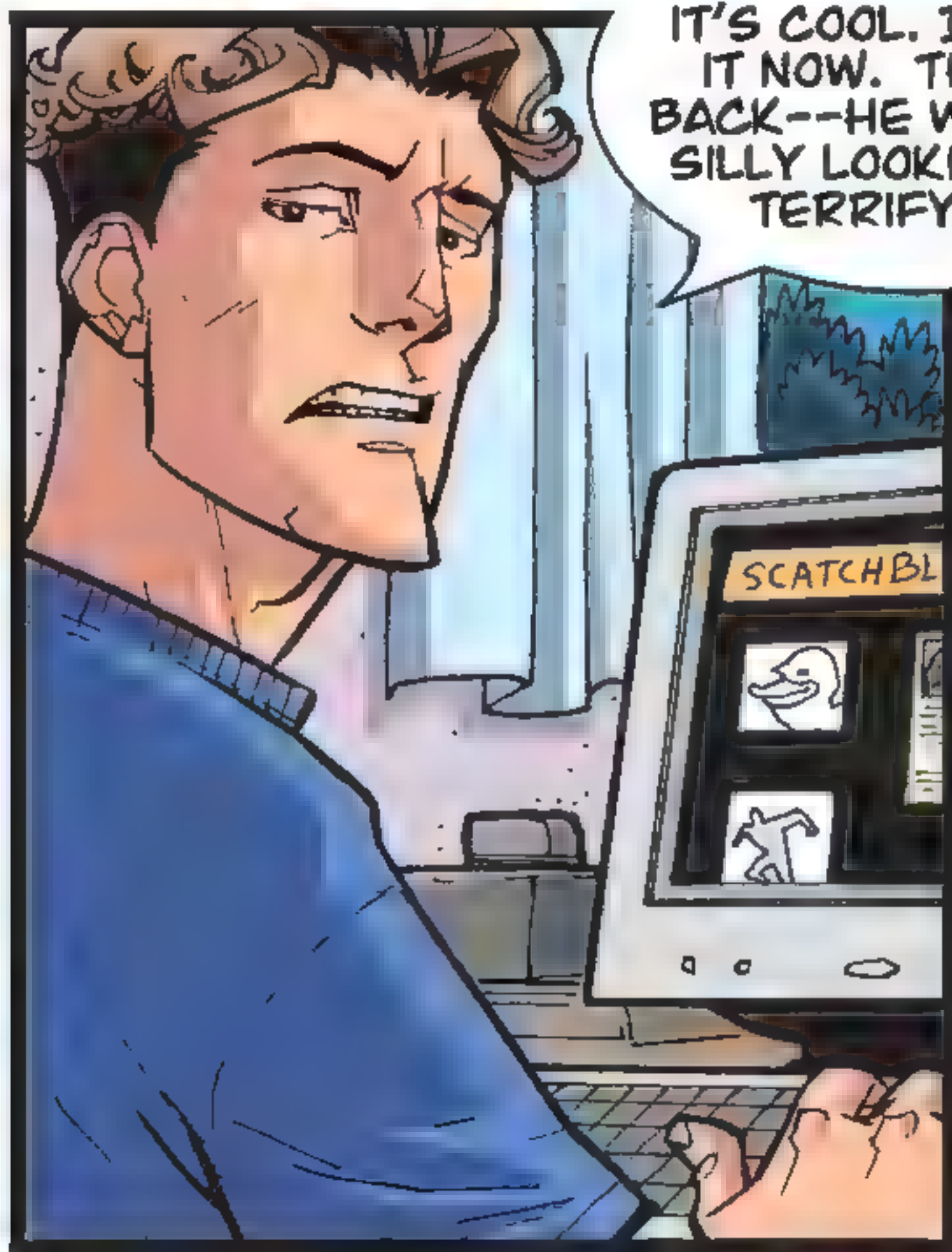
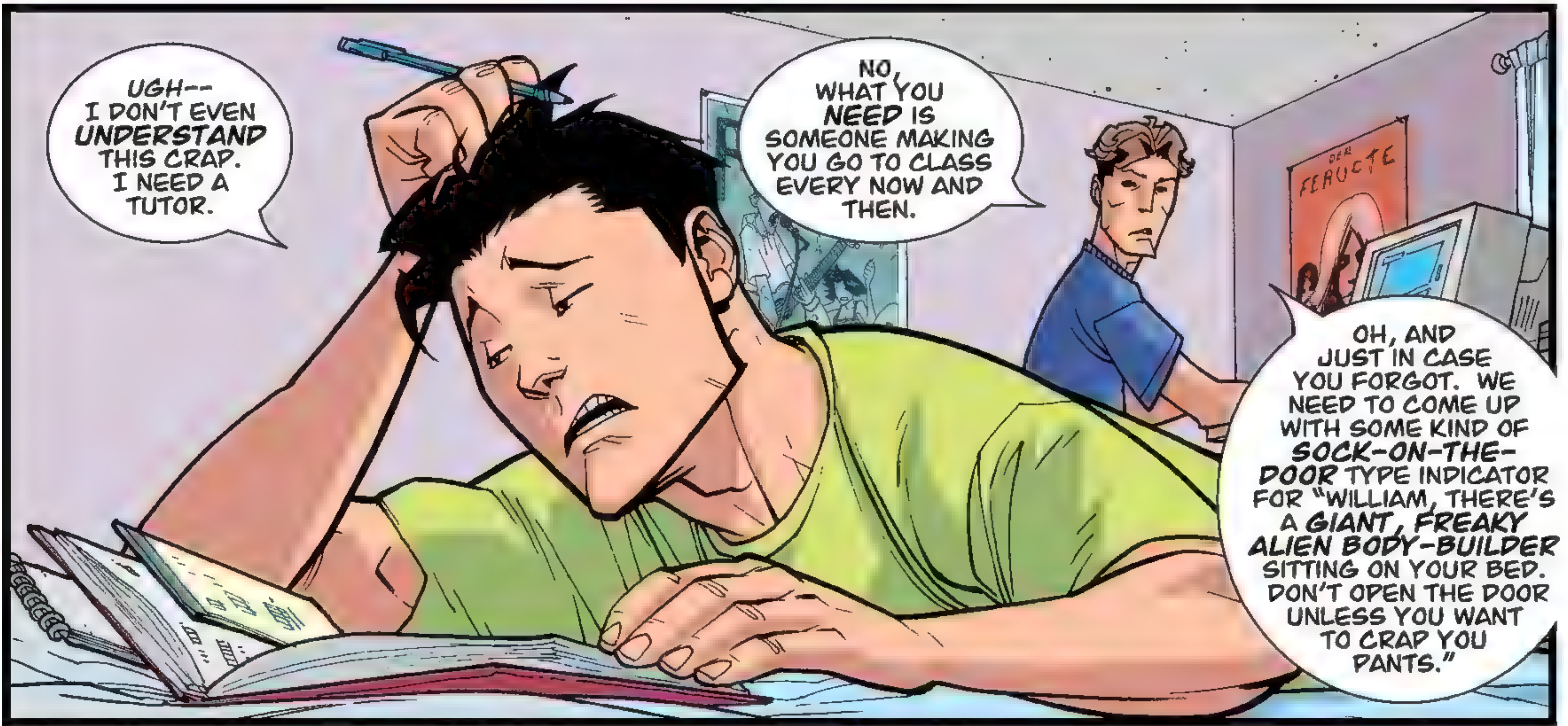
THERESA, PLEASE SCHEDULE A MEETING WITH ROBOT FOR MY EARLIEST POSSIBLE SLOT.

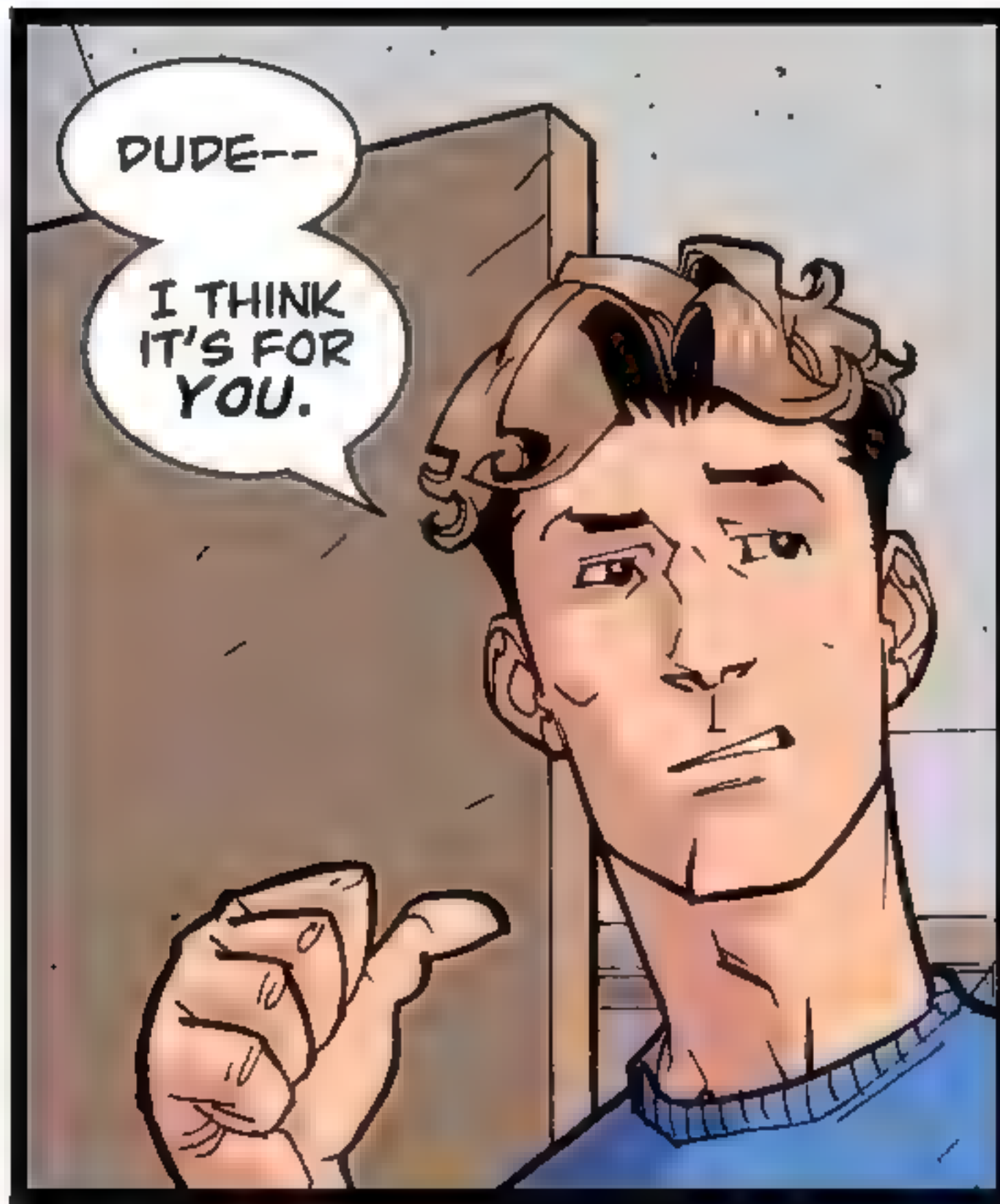
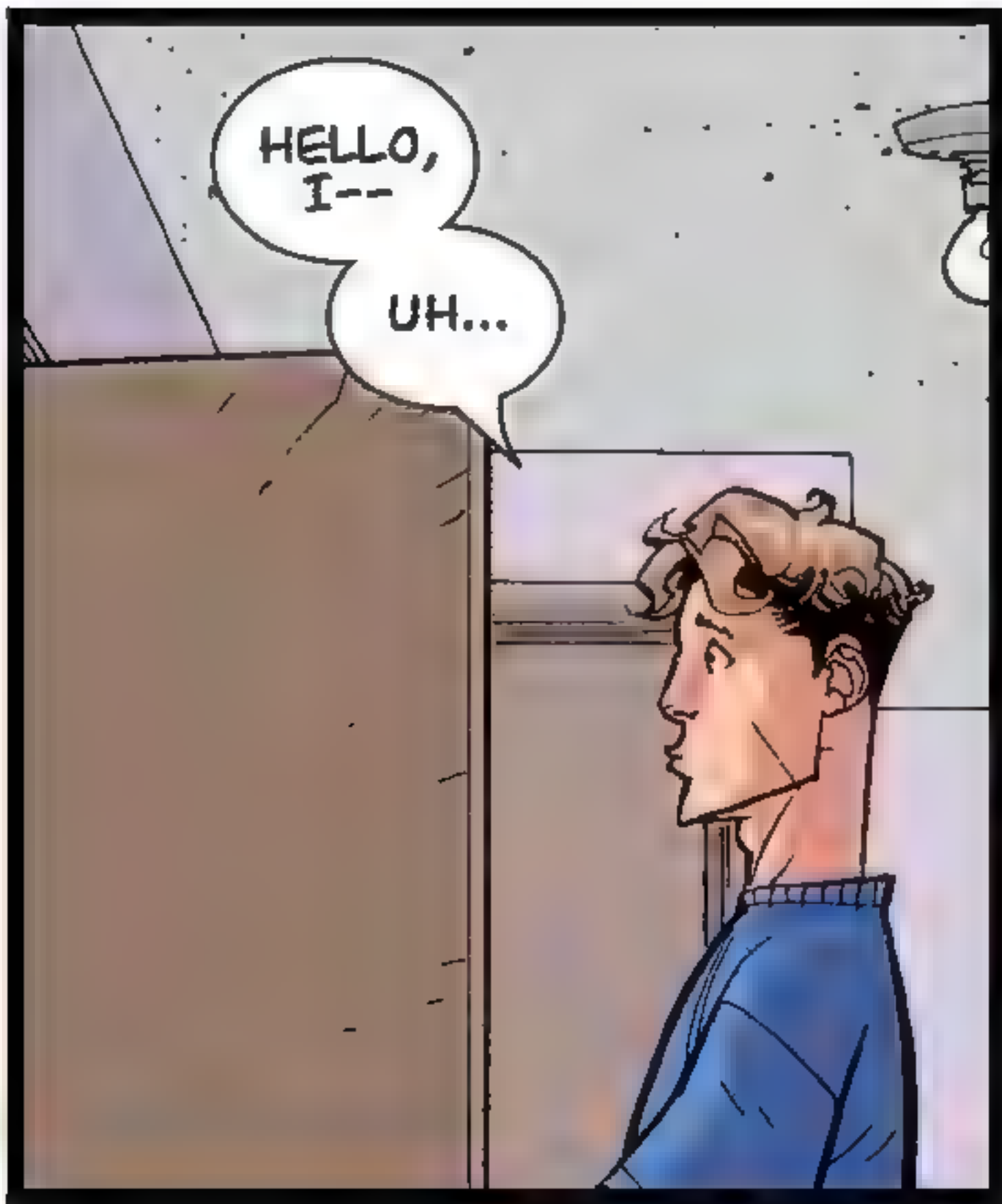
THANK YOU.

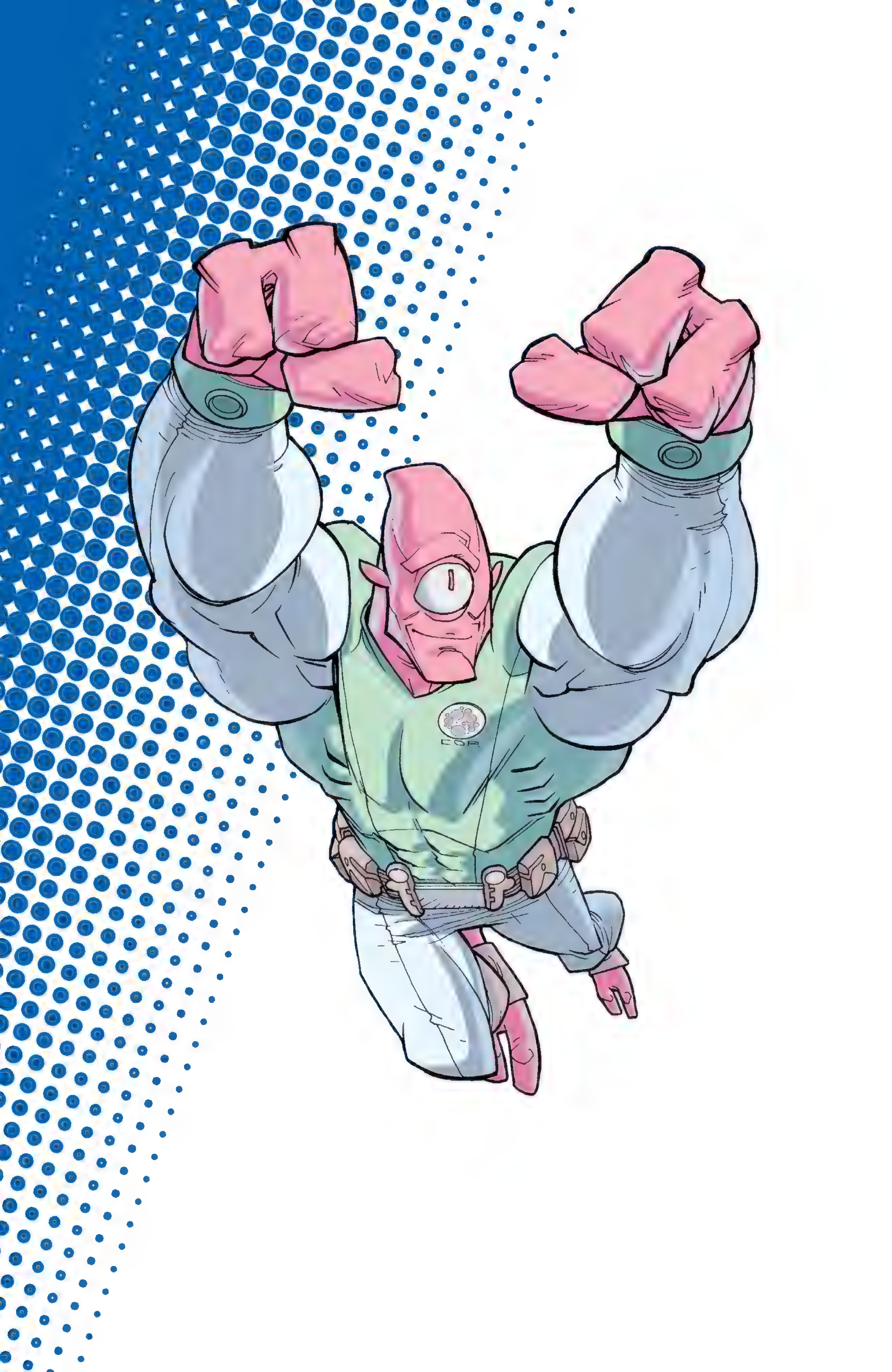


TELL HIM HIS OLD POSITION JUST OPENED UP.

I WANT TO GIVE HIM ANOTHER CHANCE.



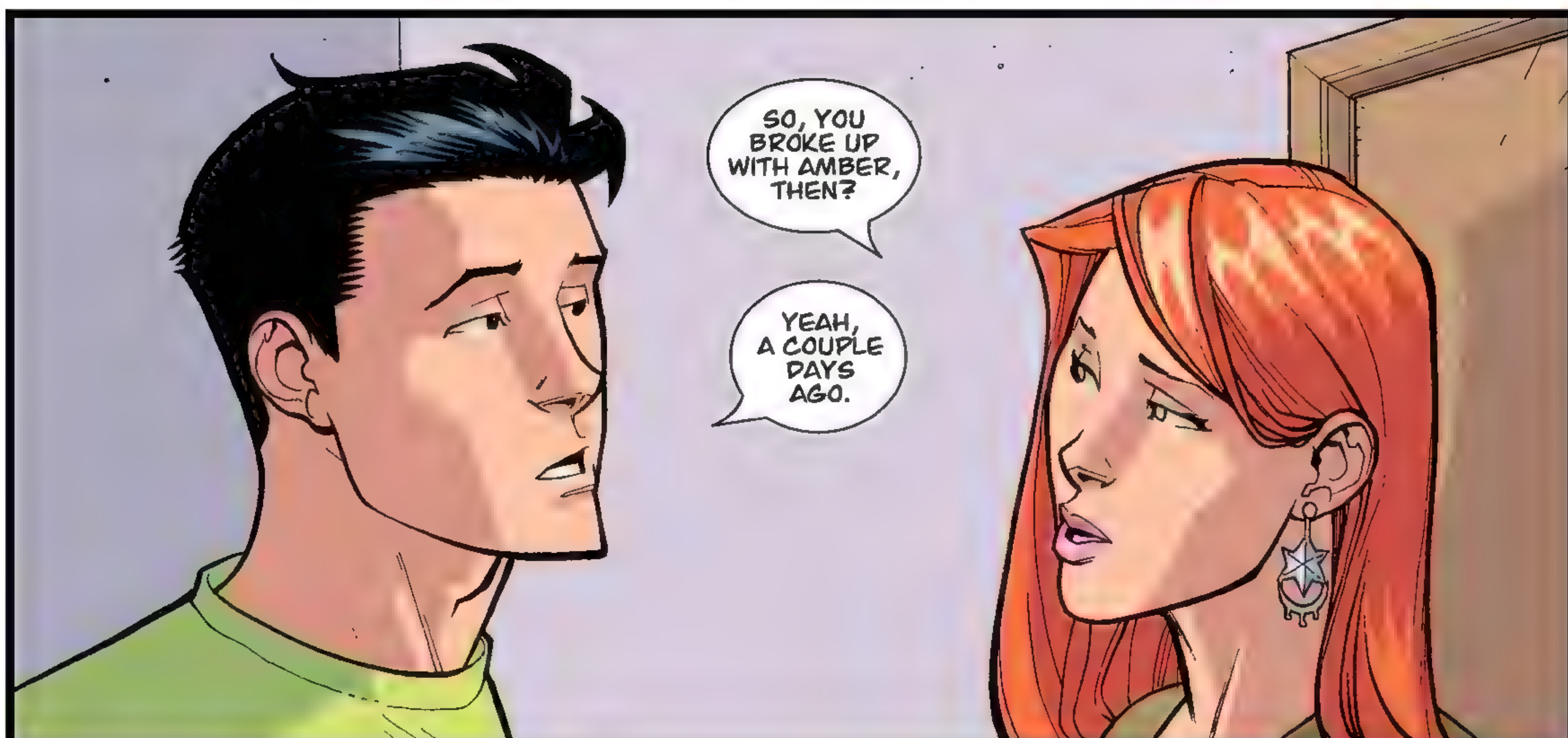
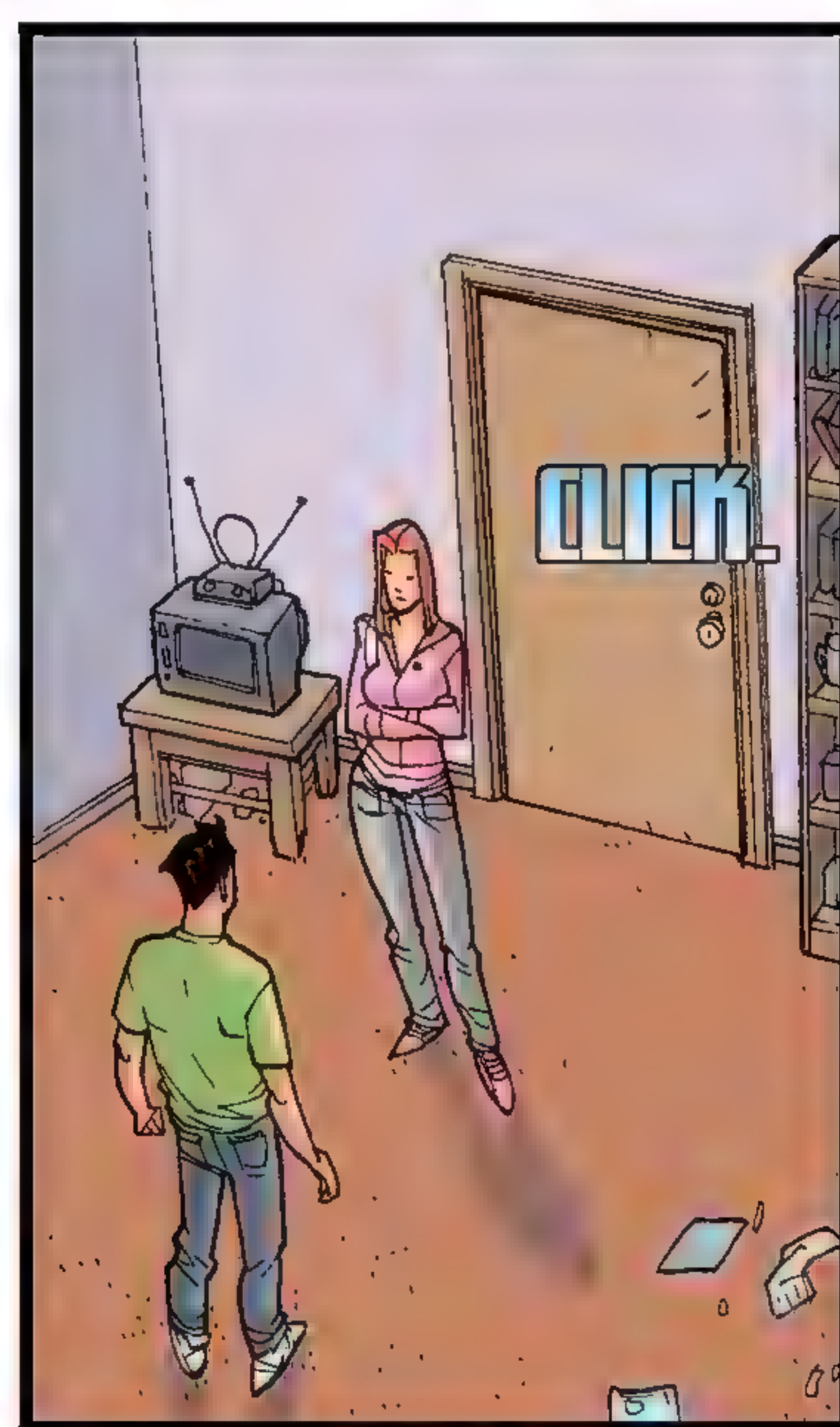
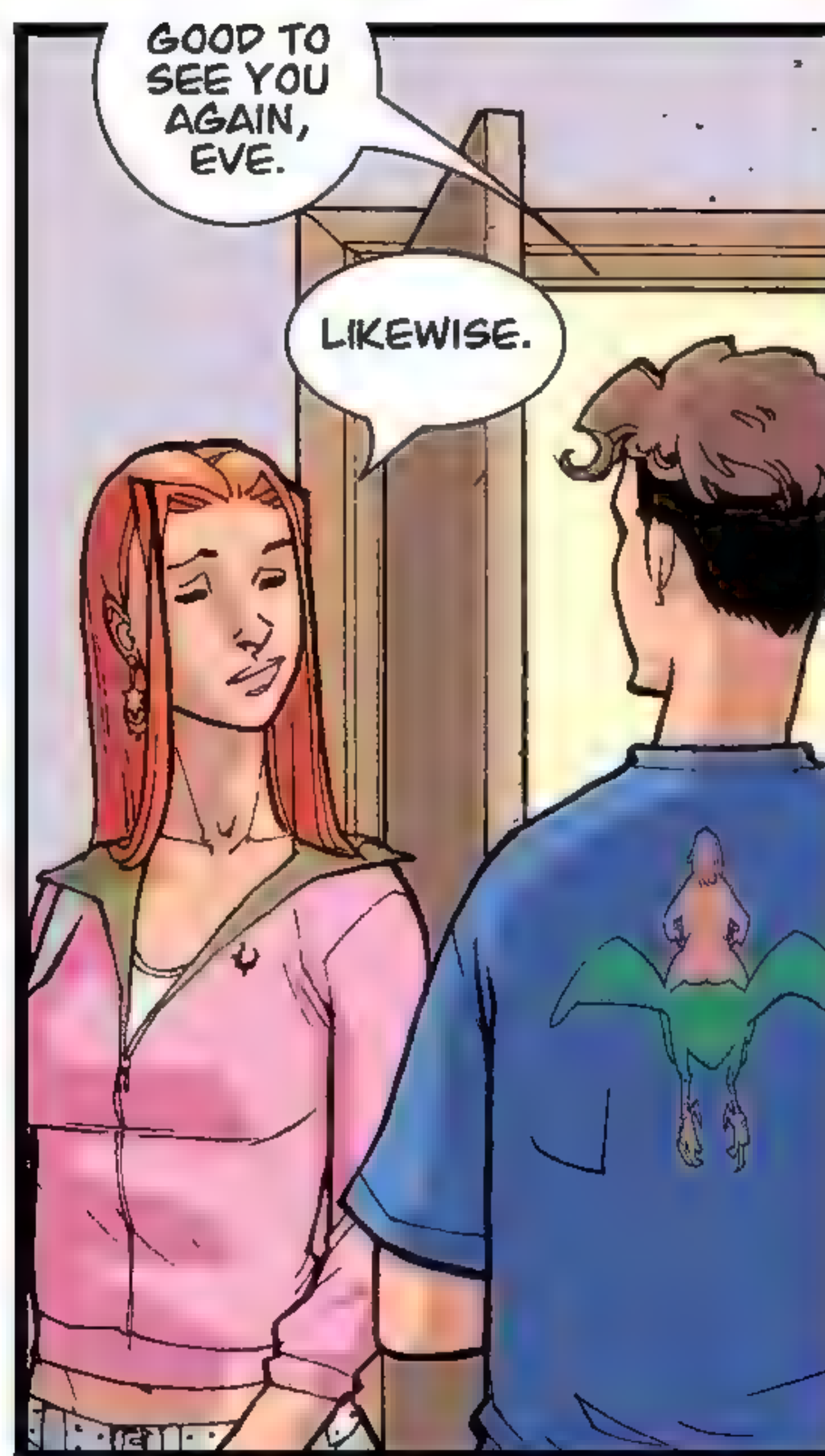


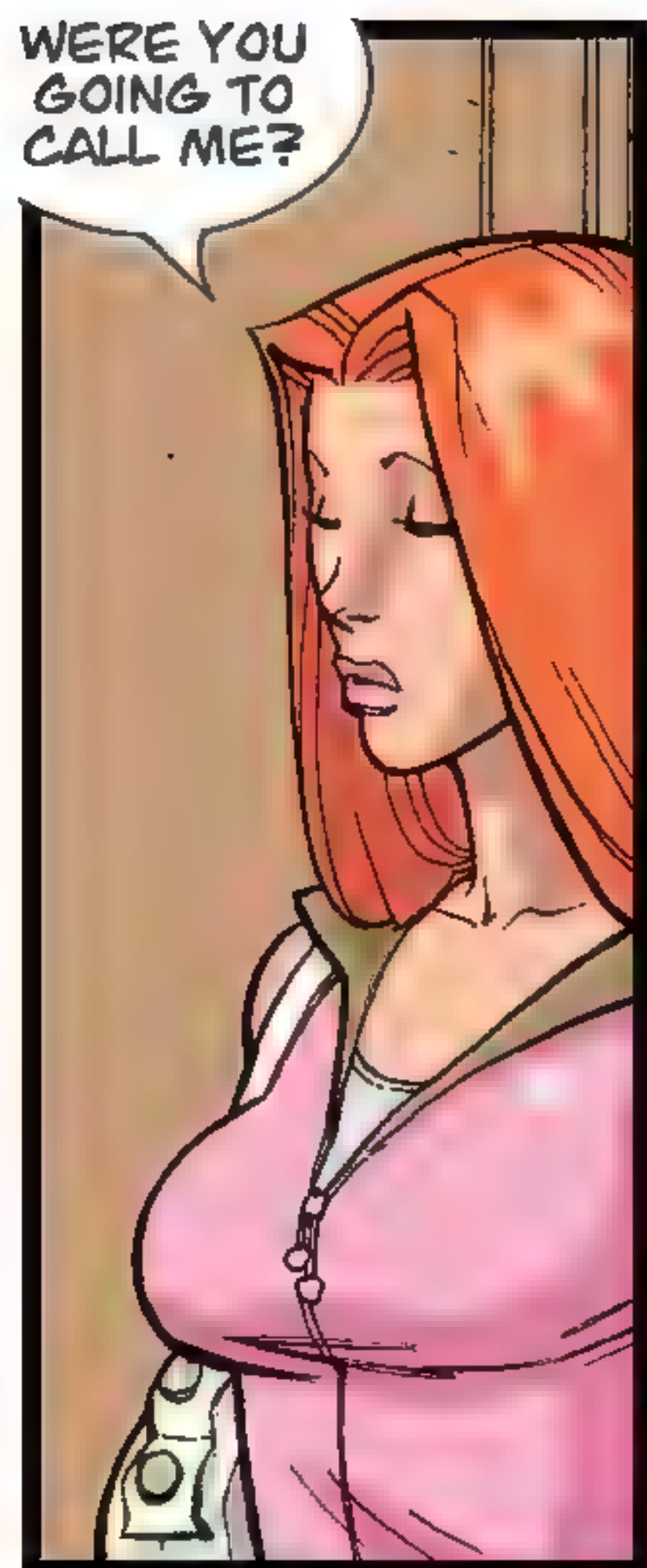




ISSUE FORTY-FOUR

Ryan





WERE YOU GOING TO CALL ME?



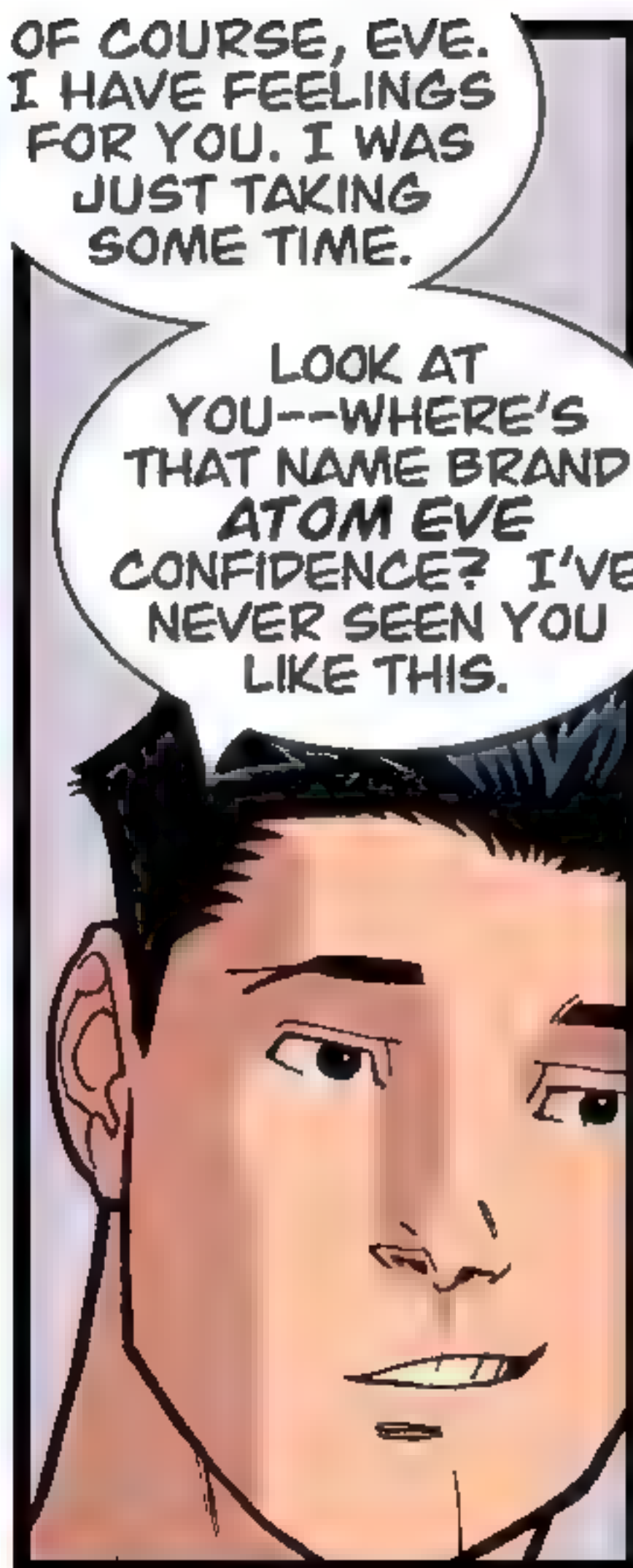
OF COURSE. I JUST... I **JUST** BROKE UP WITH HER. I STILL HAD SOME THINGS TO WORK OUT, Y'KNOW?

I WAS GOING TO CALL YOU. OR JUST VISIT.



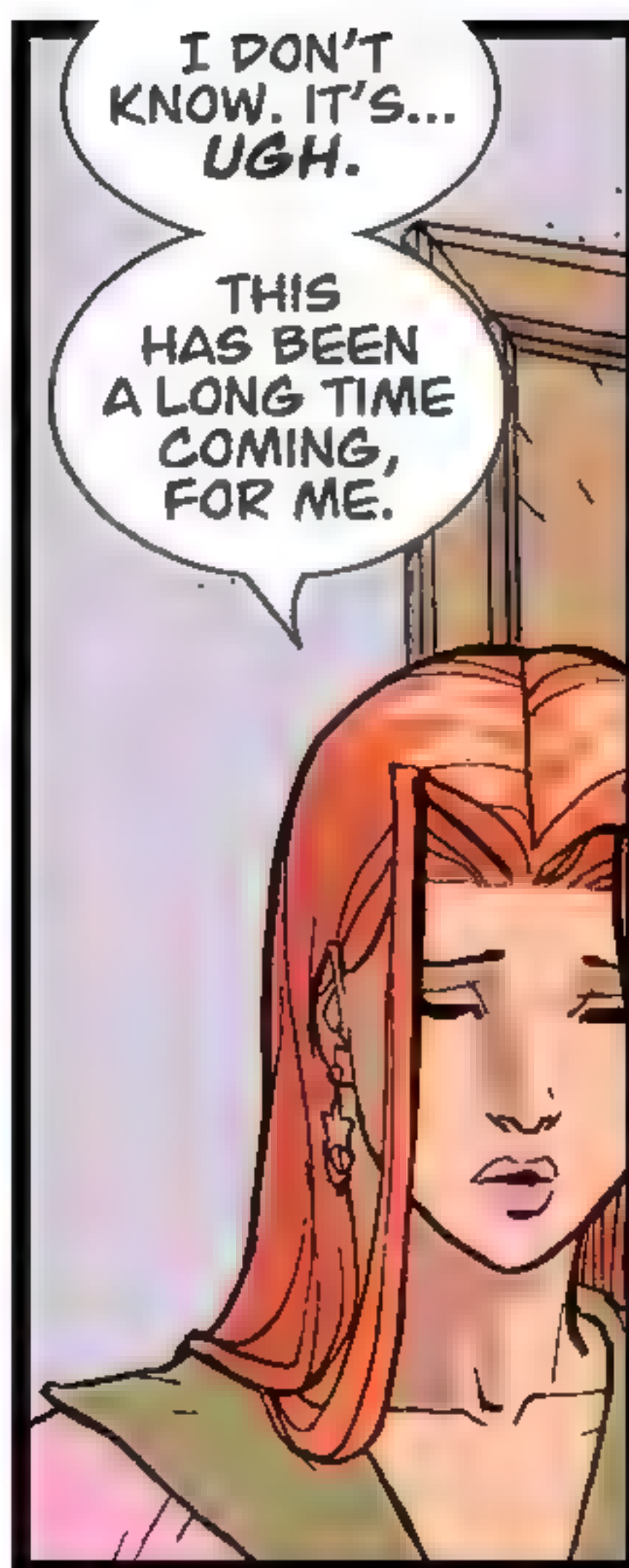
SO--YOU THINK THIS IS GOING TO WORK OUT?

US, I MEAN?



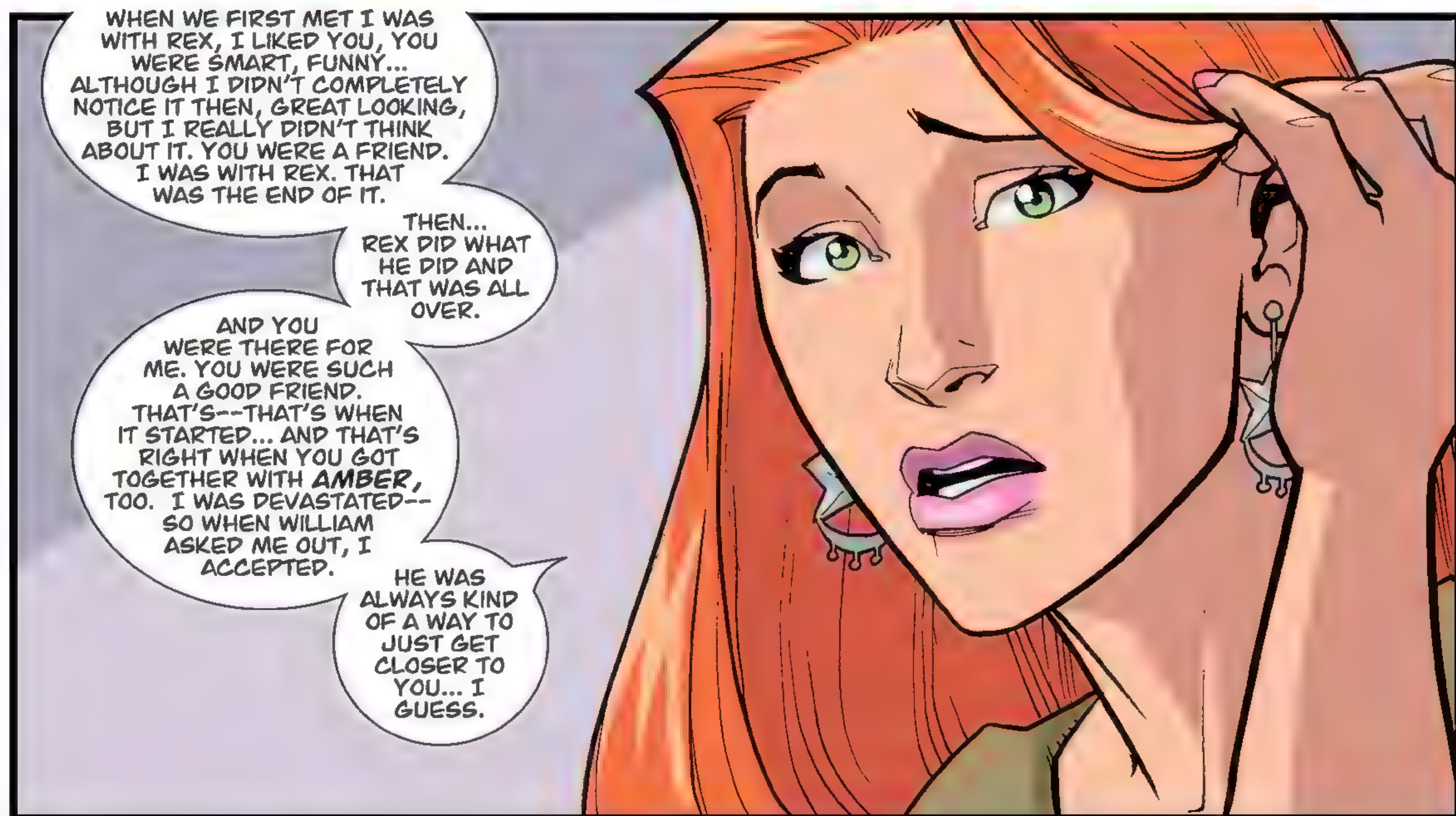
OF COURSE, EVE. I HAVE FEELINGS FOR YOU. I WAS JUST TAKING SOME TIME.

LOOK AT YOU--WHERE'S THAT NAME BRAND **ATOM EVE** CONFIDENCE? I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU LIKE THIS.



I DON'T KNOW. IT'S... **UGH.**

THIS HAS BEEN A LONG TIME COMING, FOR ME.

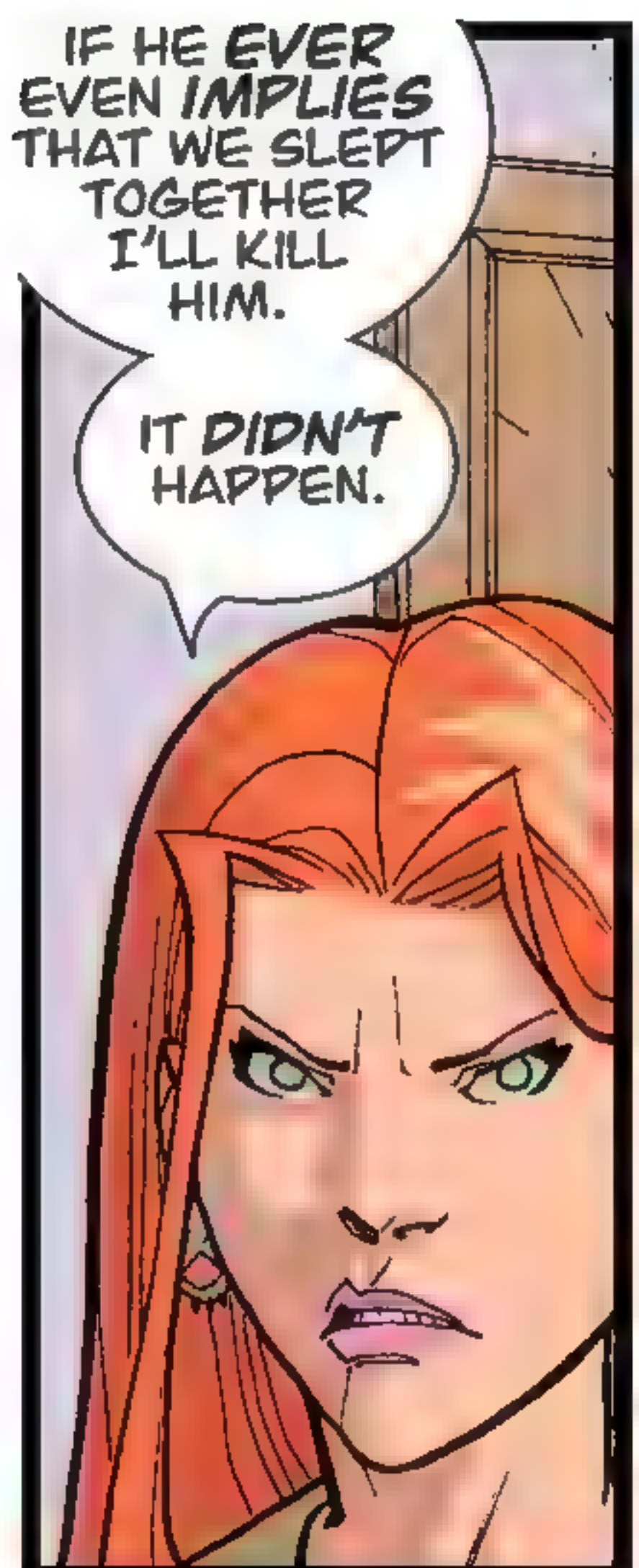


WHEN WE FIRST MET I WAS WITH REX, I LIKED YOU, YOU WERE SMART, FUNNY... ALTHOUGH I DIDN'T COMPLETELY NOTICE IT THEN, GREAT LOOKING, BUT I REALLY DIDN'T THINK ABOUT IT. YOU WERE A FRIEND. I WAS WITH REX. THAT WAS THE END OF IT.

THEN... REX DID WHAT HE DID AND THAT WAS ALL OVER.

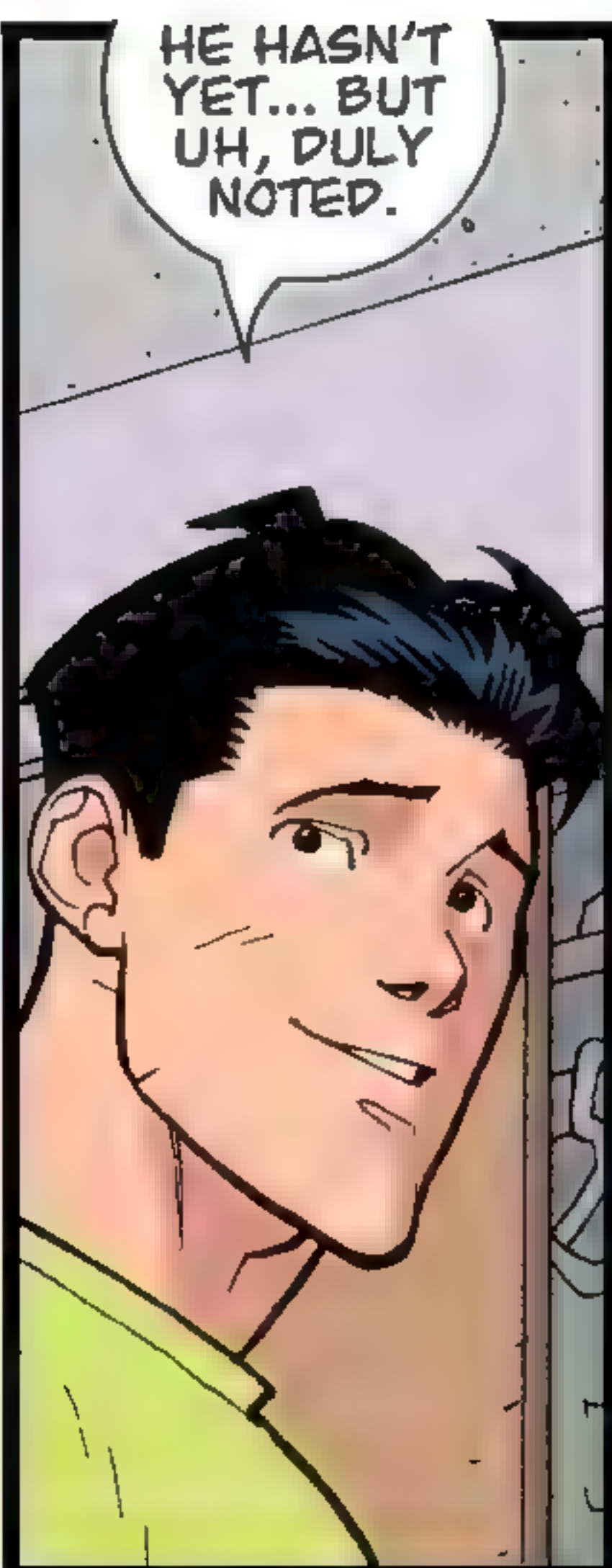
AND YOU WERE THERE FOR ME. YOU WERE SUCH A GOOD FRIEND. THAT'S--THAT'S WHEN IT STARTED... AND THAT'S RIGHT WHEN YOU GOT TOGETHER WITH **AMBER**, TOO. I WAS DEVASTATED--SO WHEN WILLIAM ASKED ME OUT, I ACCEPTED.

HE WAS ALWAYS KIND OF A WAY TO JUST GET CLOSER TO YOU... I GUESS.



IF HE EVER EVEN **IMPLIES** THAT WE SLEPT TOGETHER I'LL KILL HIM.

IT DIDN'T HAPPEN.

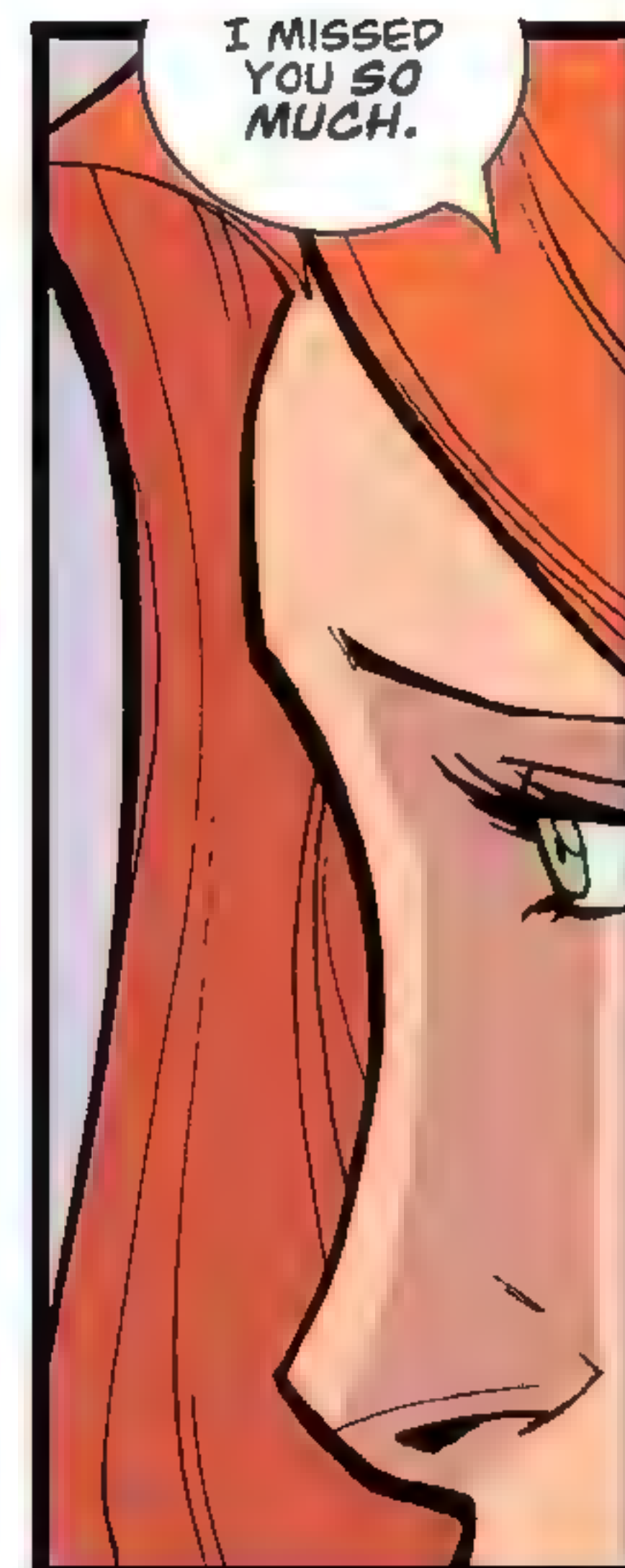


HE HASN'T YET... BUT UH, DULY NOTED.

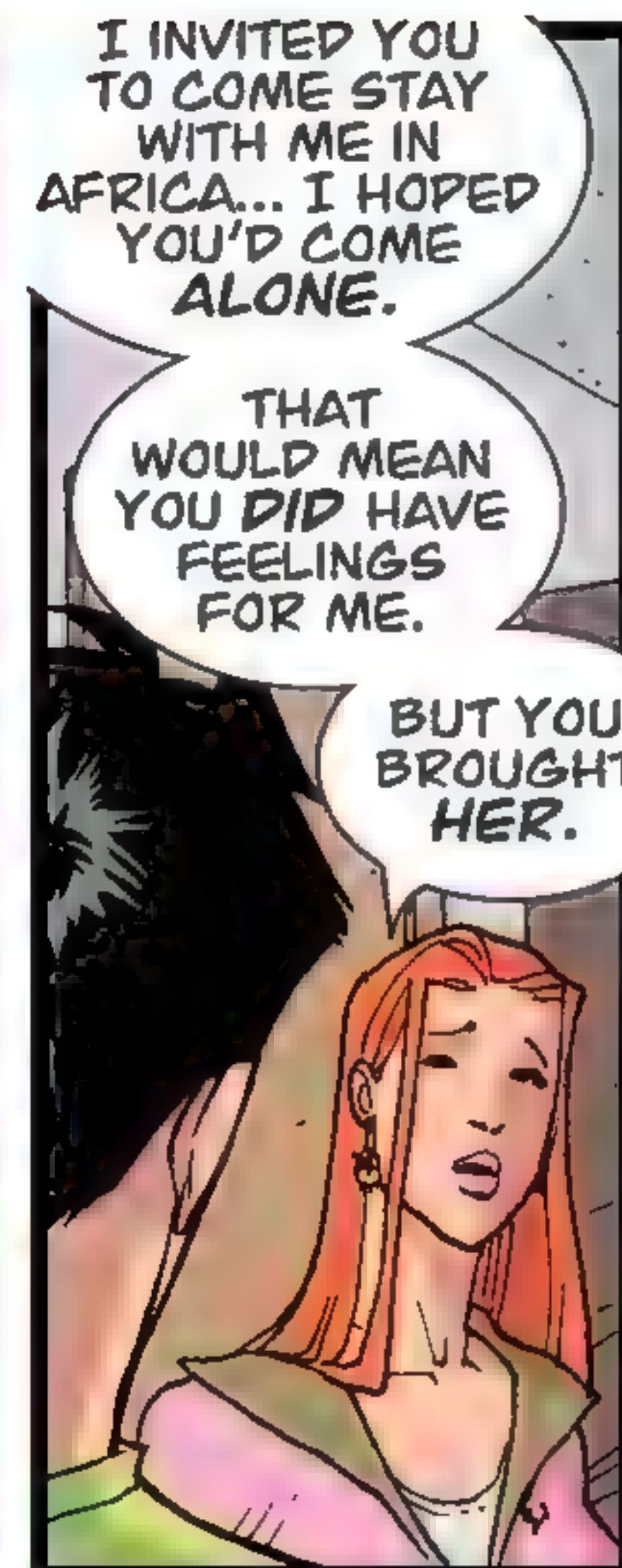


AFTER I BROKE UP WITH WILLIAM, I JUST-- IT WAS PAINFUL TO BE AROUND YOU. YOU AND **AMBER** WERE SO HAPPY IT... I **DID** GO TO AFRICA TO HELP PEOPLE, TO DO GOOD...

BUT BEING AWAY FROM YOU WAS A BIG PART OF IT.



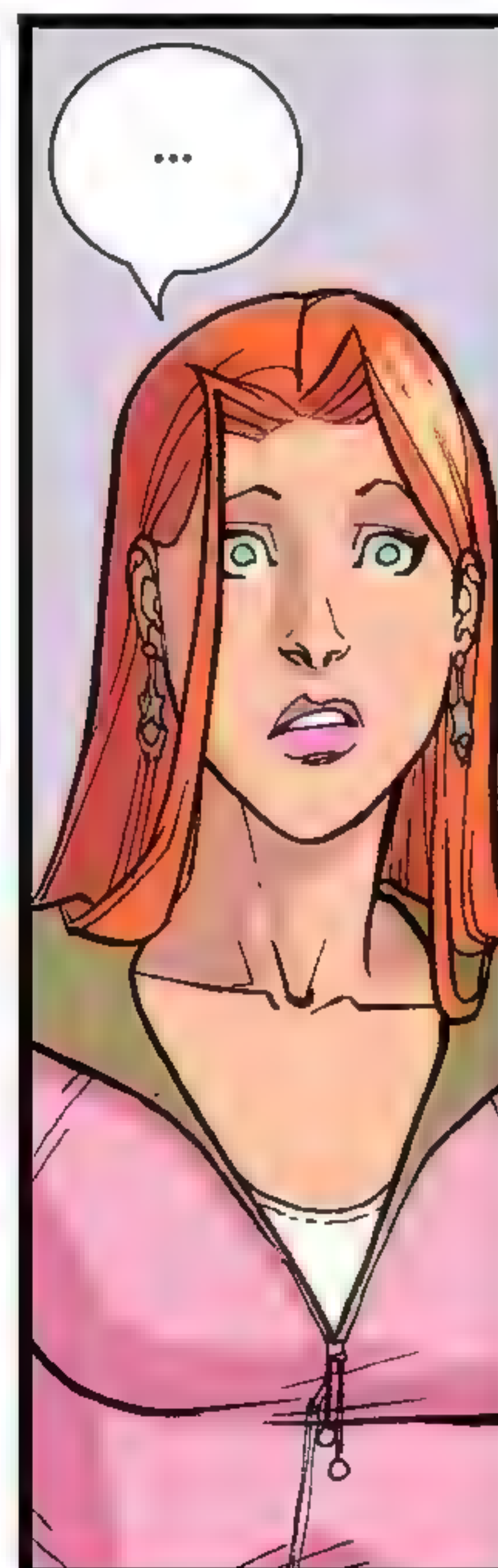
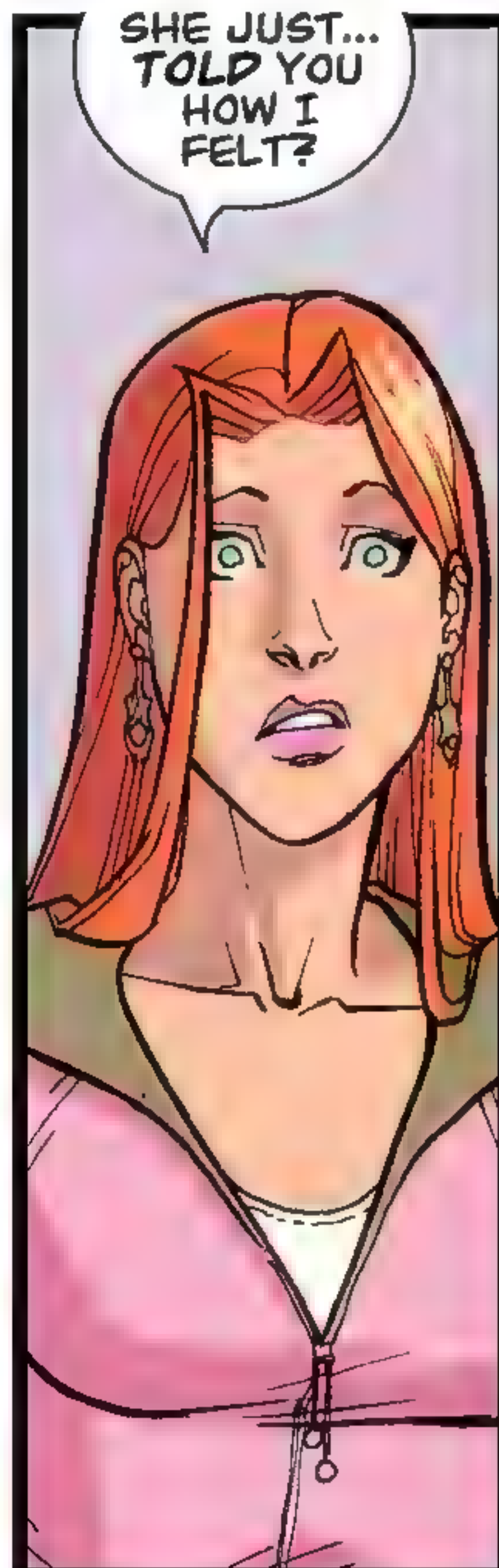
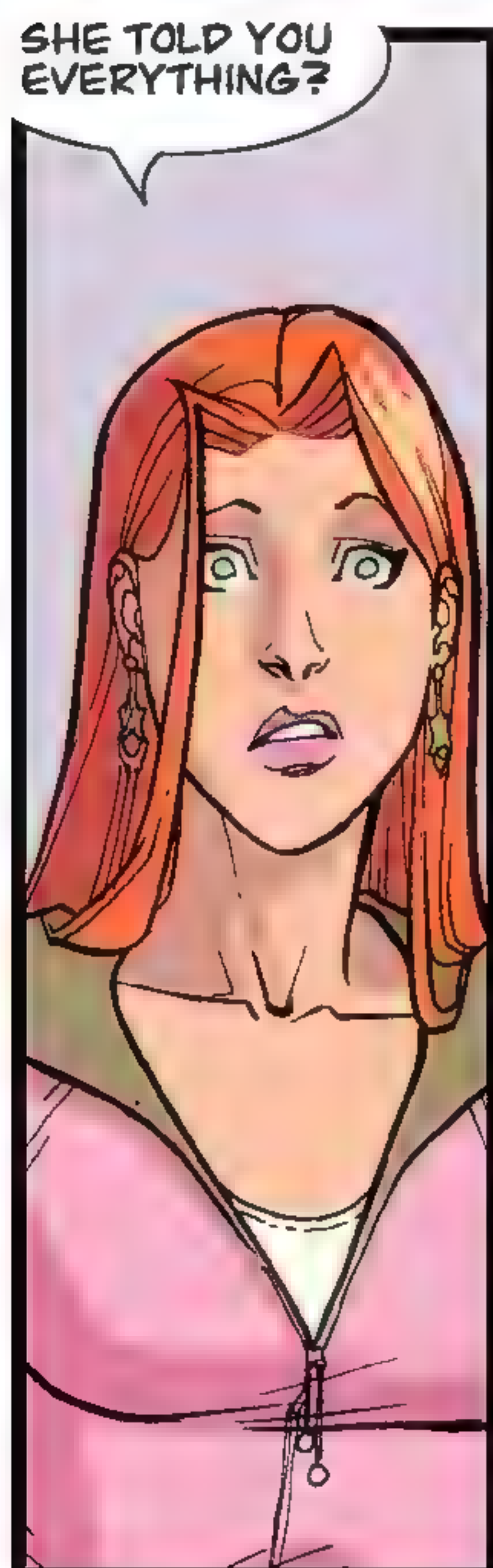
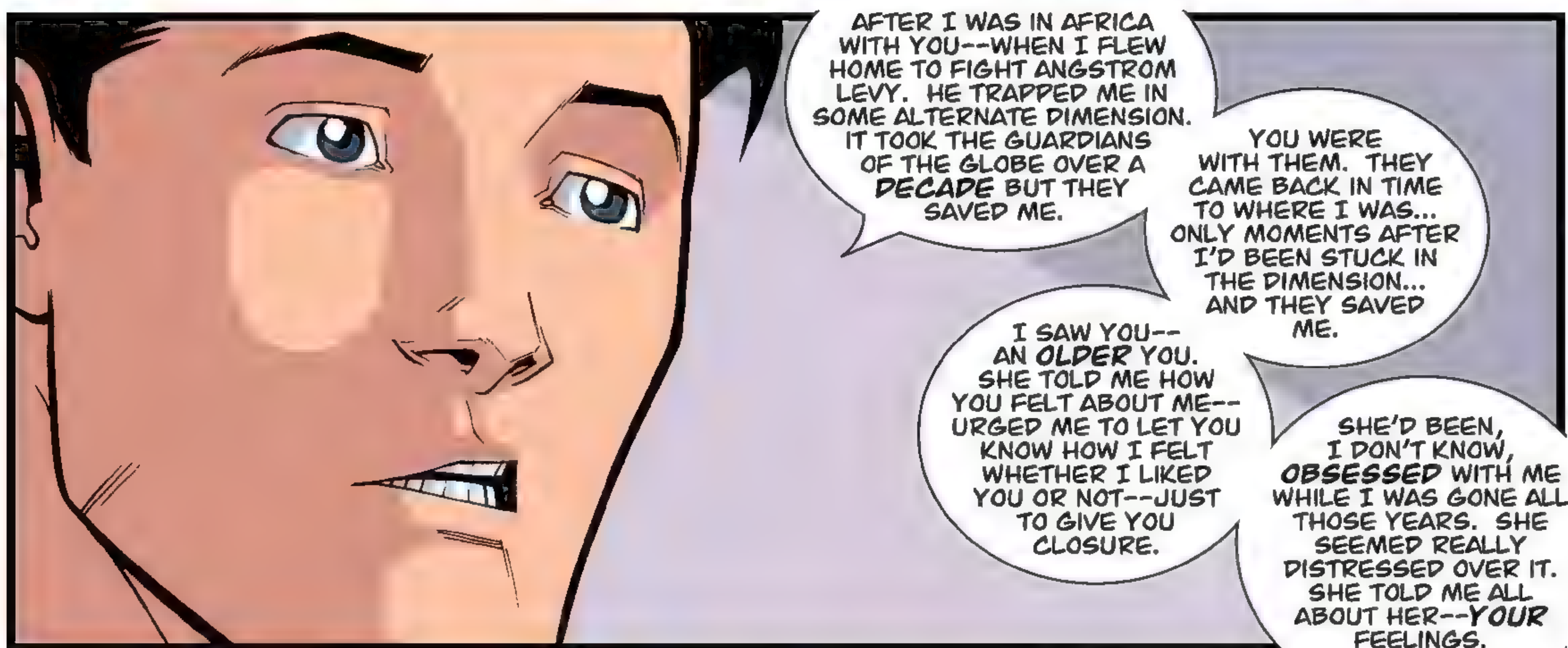
I MISSED YOU SO MUCH.

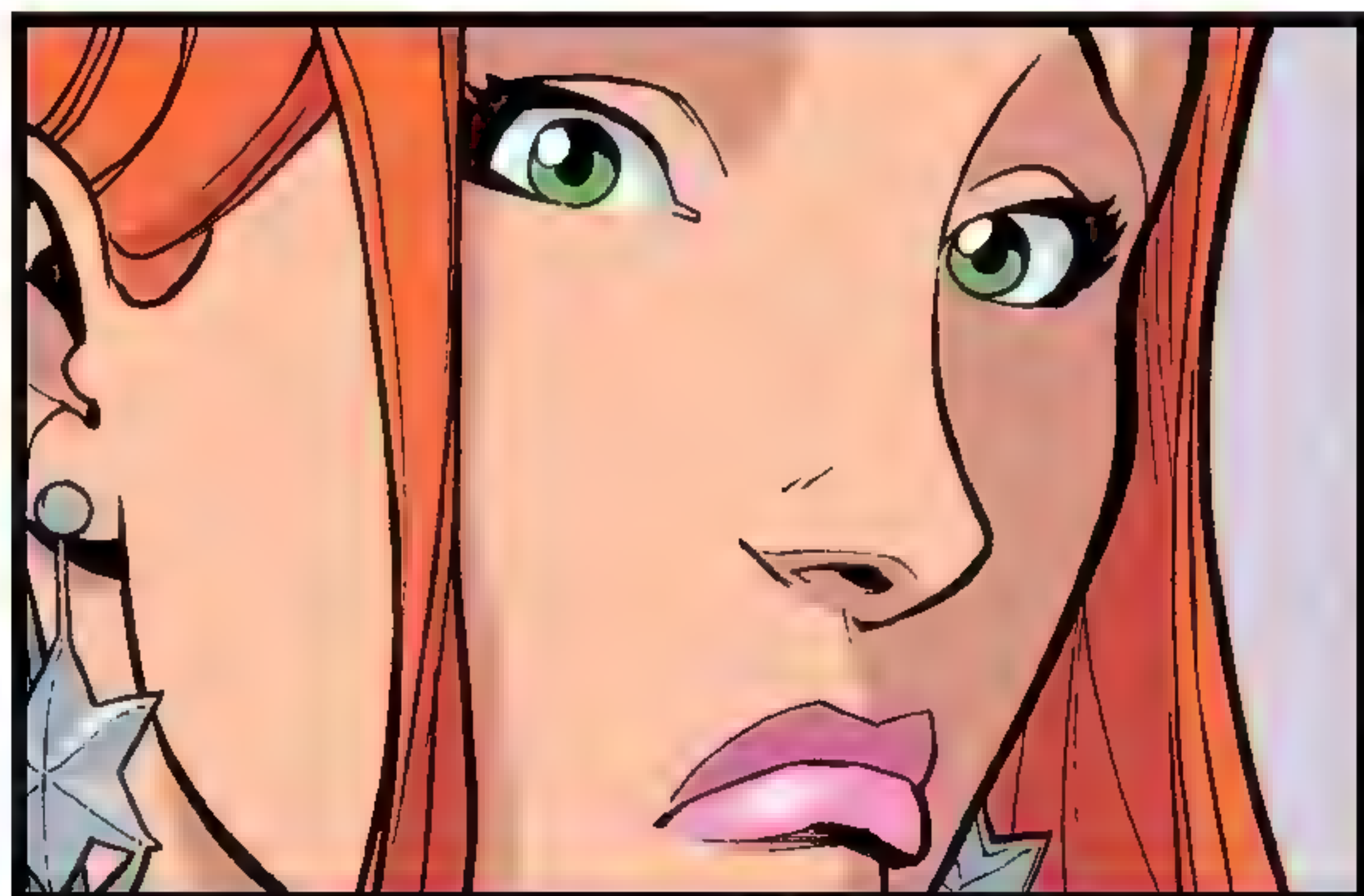
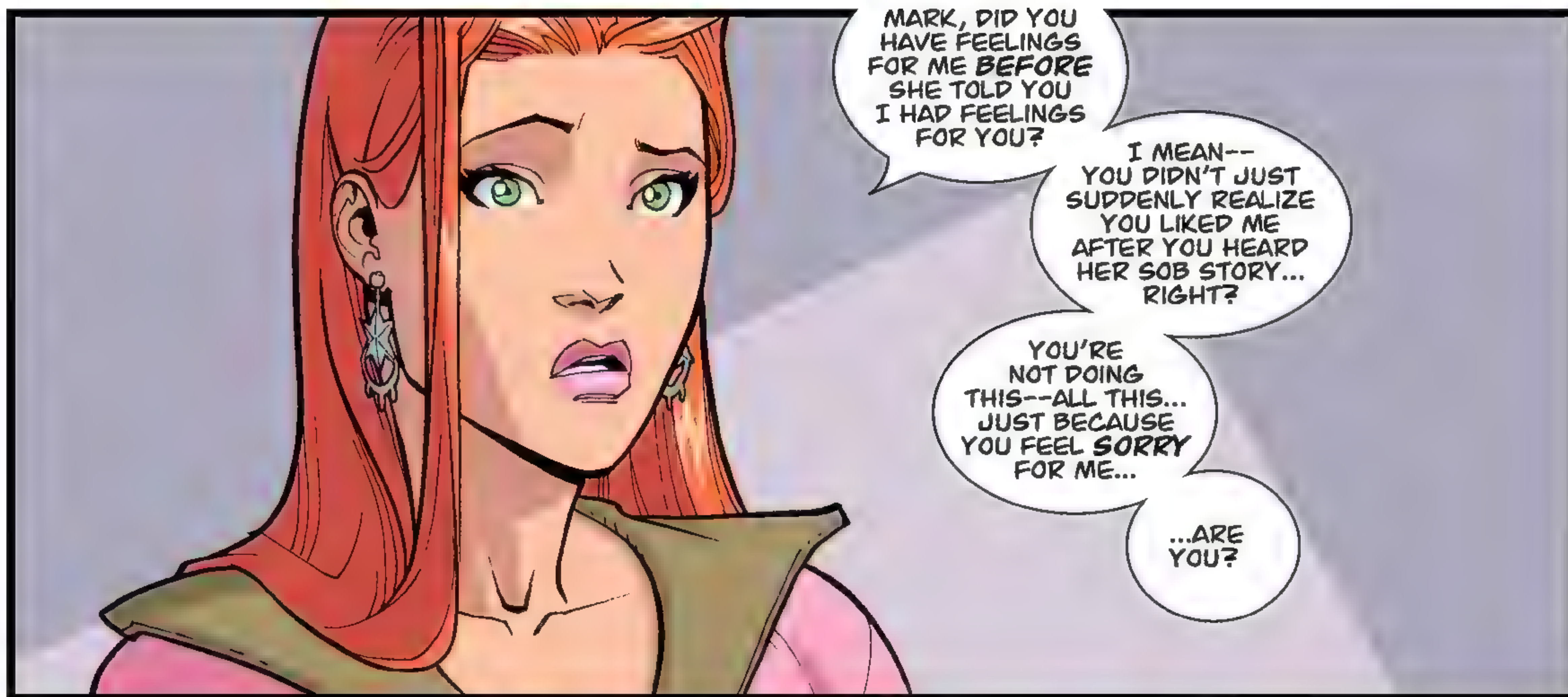


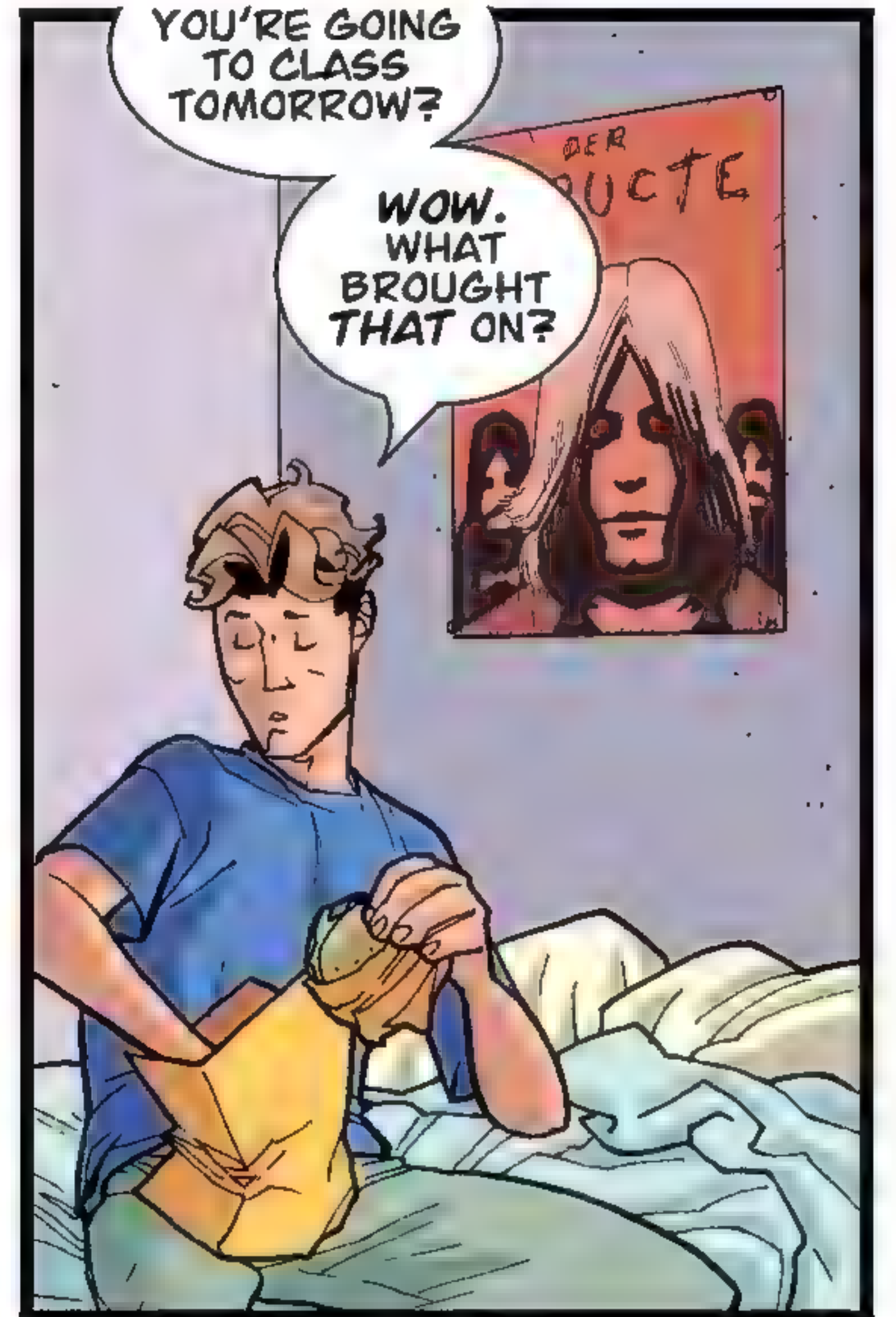
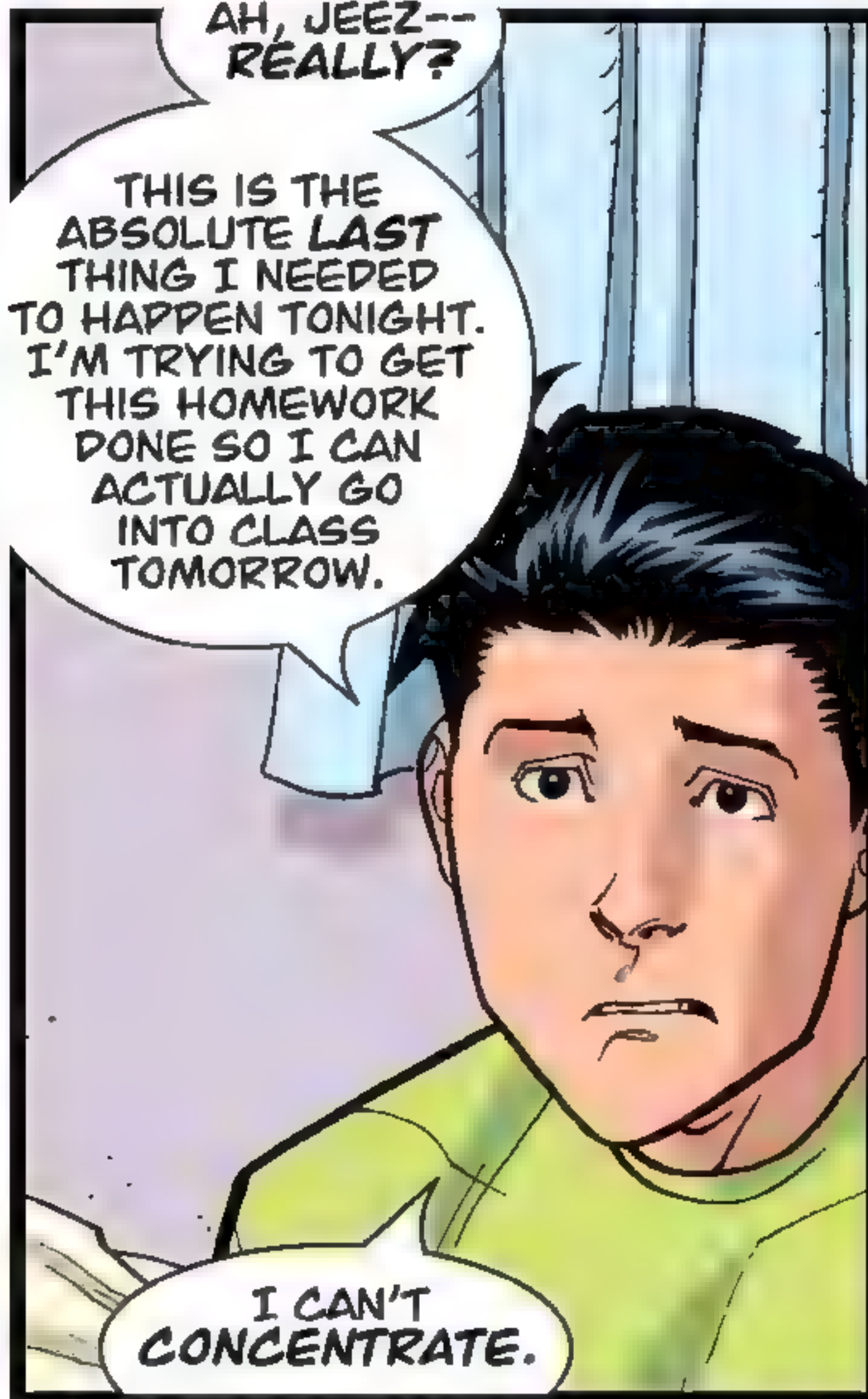
I INVITED YOU TO COME STAY WITH ME IN AFRICA... I HOPED YOU'D COME ALONE.

THAT WOULD MEAN YOU **DID** HAVE FEELINGS FOR ME.

BUT YOU BROUGHT HER.

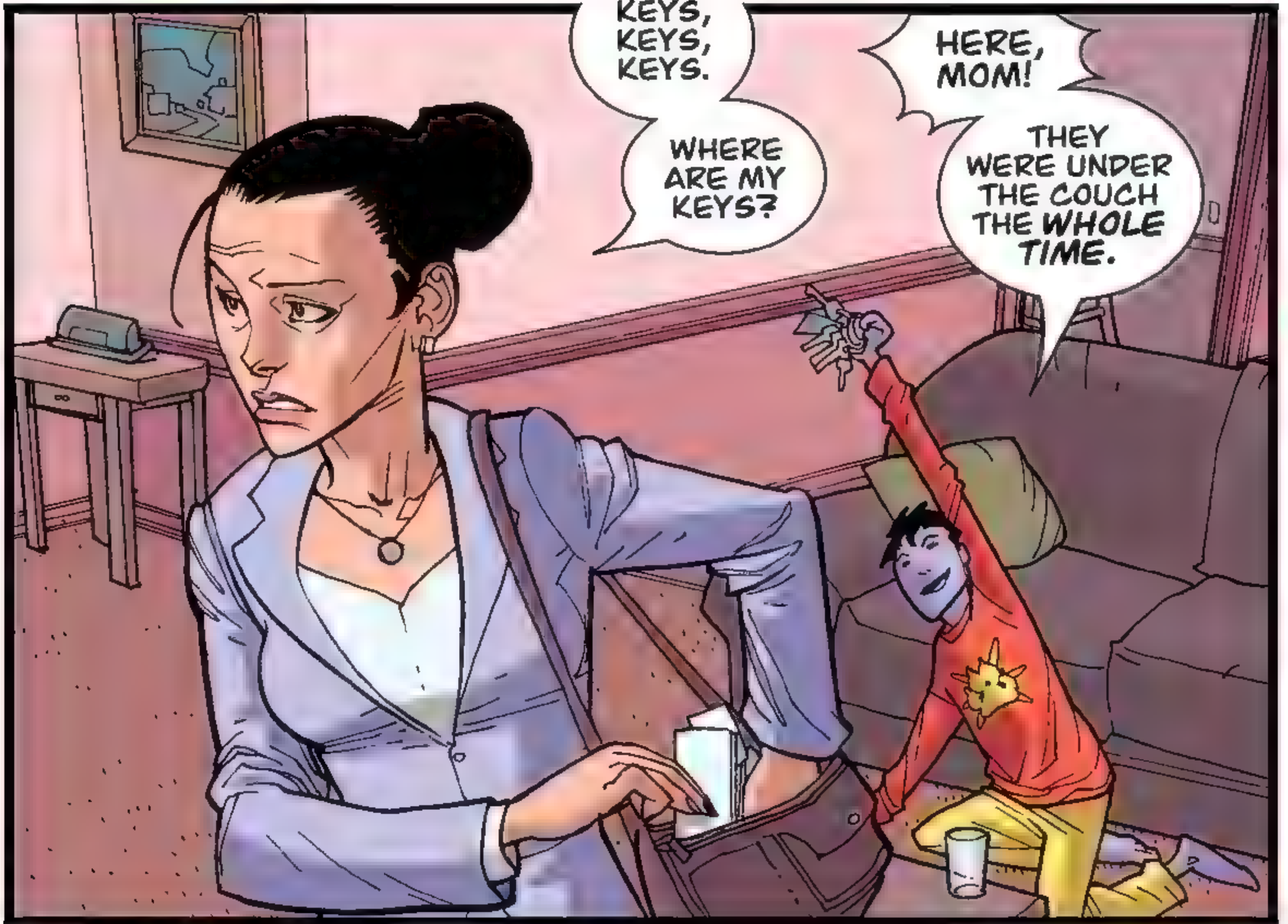








THE GRAYSON HOUSE.
HOME OF MARK'S MOTHER,
DEBBIE GRAYSON AND
MARK'S HALF-BROTHER
OLIVER GRAYSON.



KEYS,
KEYS,
KEYS.

WHERE
ARE MY
KEYS?

HERE,
MOM!

THEY
WERE UNDER
THE COUCH
THE WHOLE
TIME.



OH, THANK
YOU,
OLIVER.

APRIL,
ARE YOU SURE
YOU'RE COOL
WITH THIS?
YOUR JOB TITLE
DOESN'T INCLUDE
BABYSITTER.



TRUST ME, THIS
IS FINE. I DON'T
MIND WATCHING
OLIVER EVERY NOW
AND THEN SO YOU CAN
GO OUT OR WHATEVER.
SOME JOBS IN THE
PAST THE KIDS HAVE
PRACTICALLY
CALLED ME
"MOM."

YOU'RE
NOT ASKING TOO
MUCH. HE'LL BE
FINE. I'LL TAKE
CARE OF THE
LITTLE GUY.

I'M NOT
LITTLE!



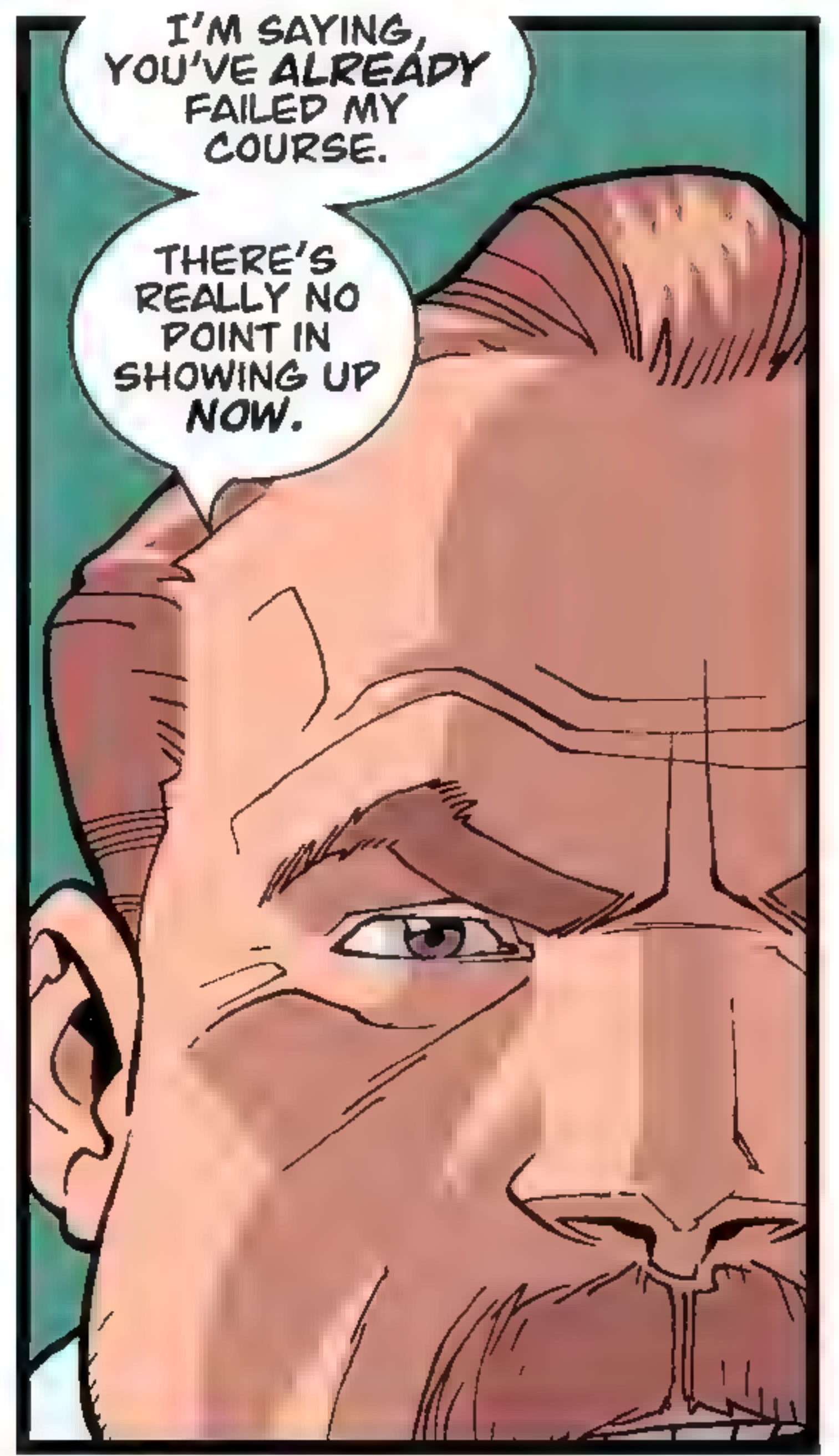
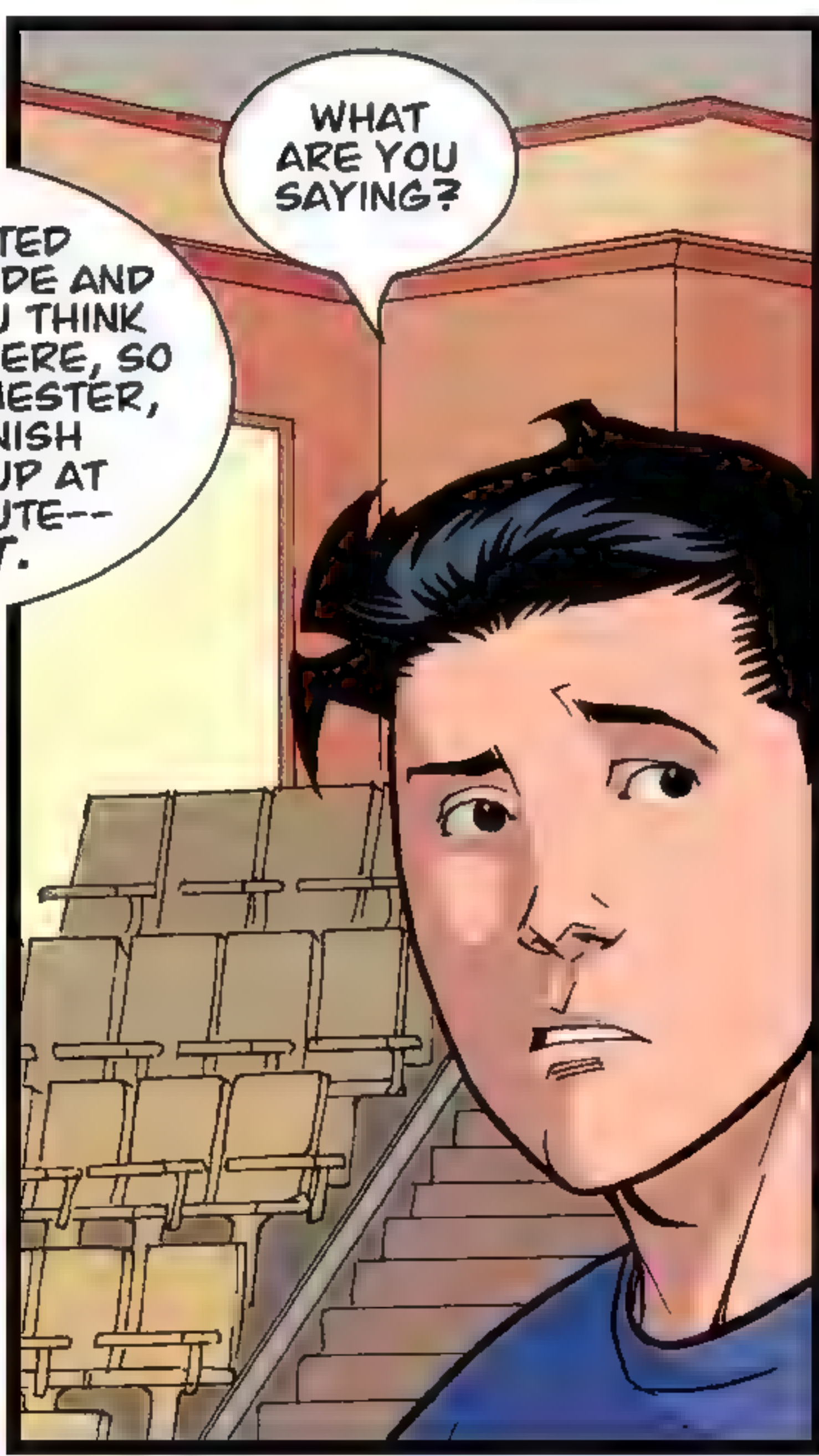
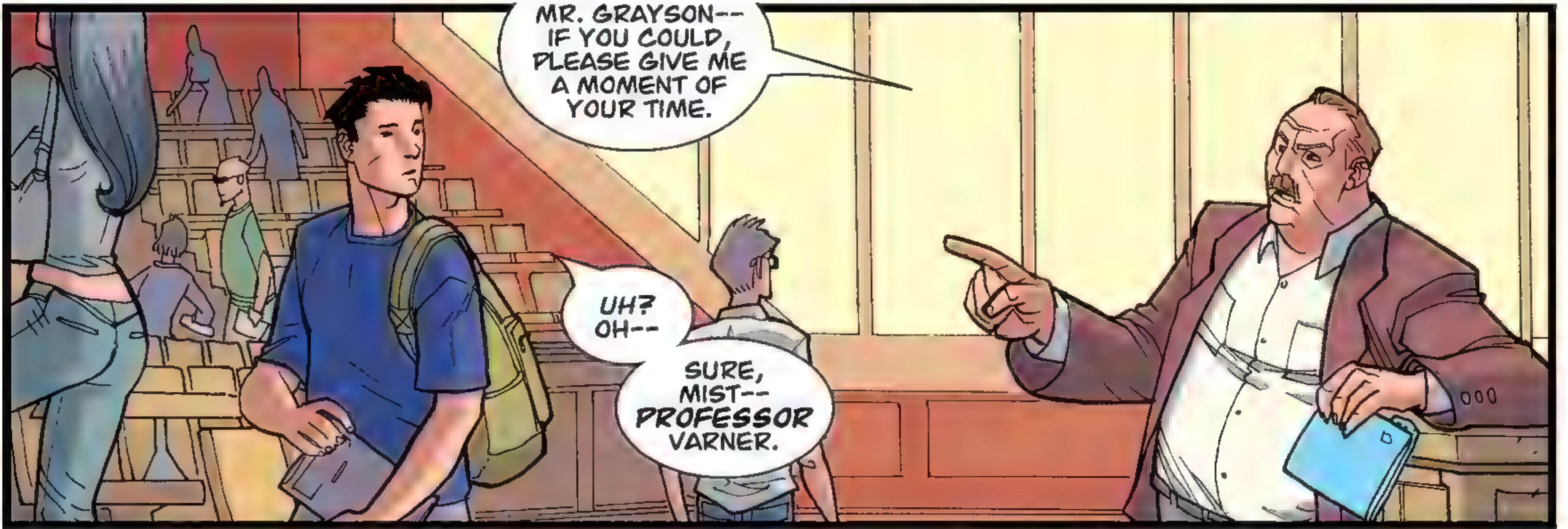
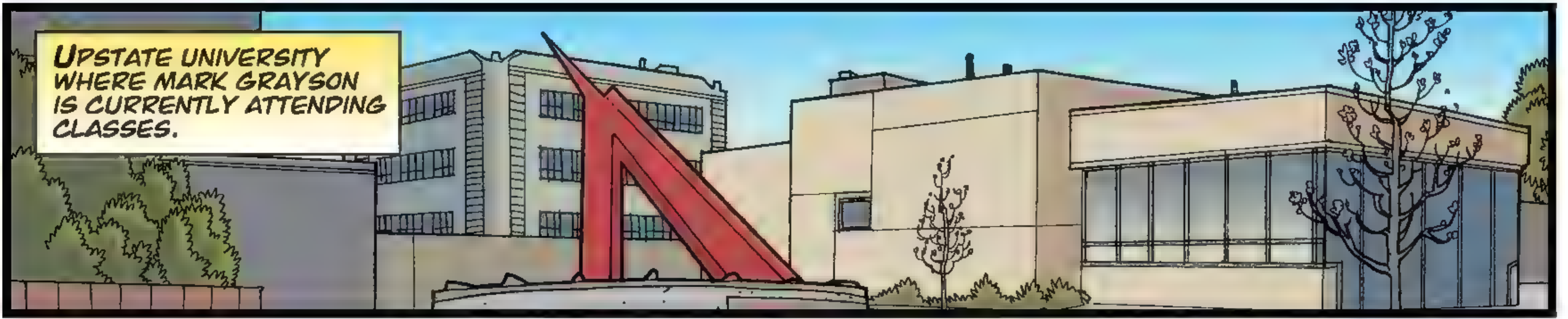
OLIVER, YOU
BETTER BEHAVE
YOURSELF.

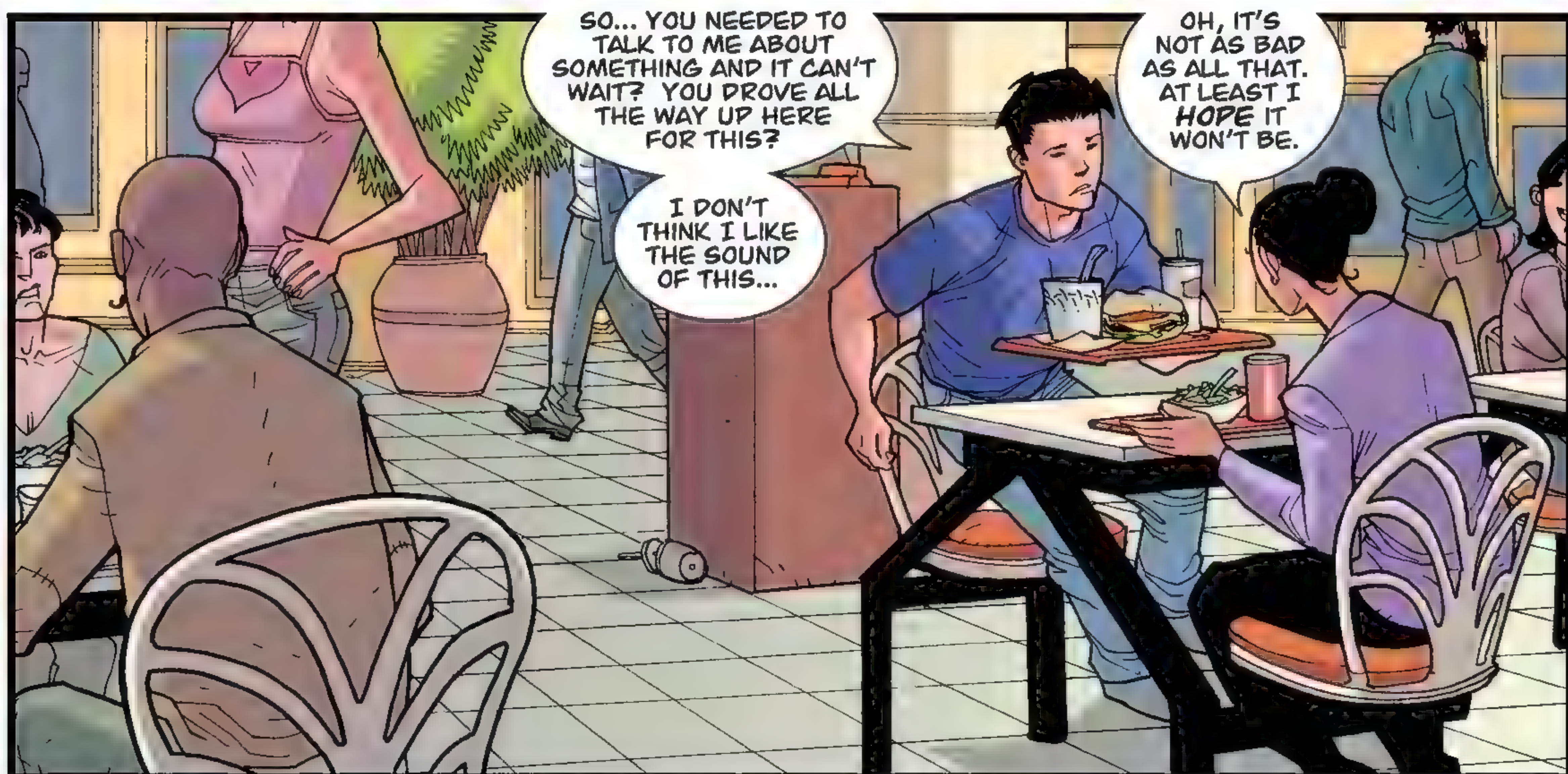
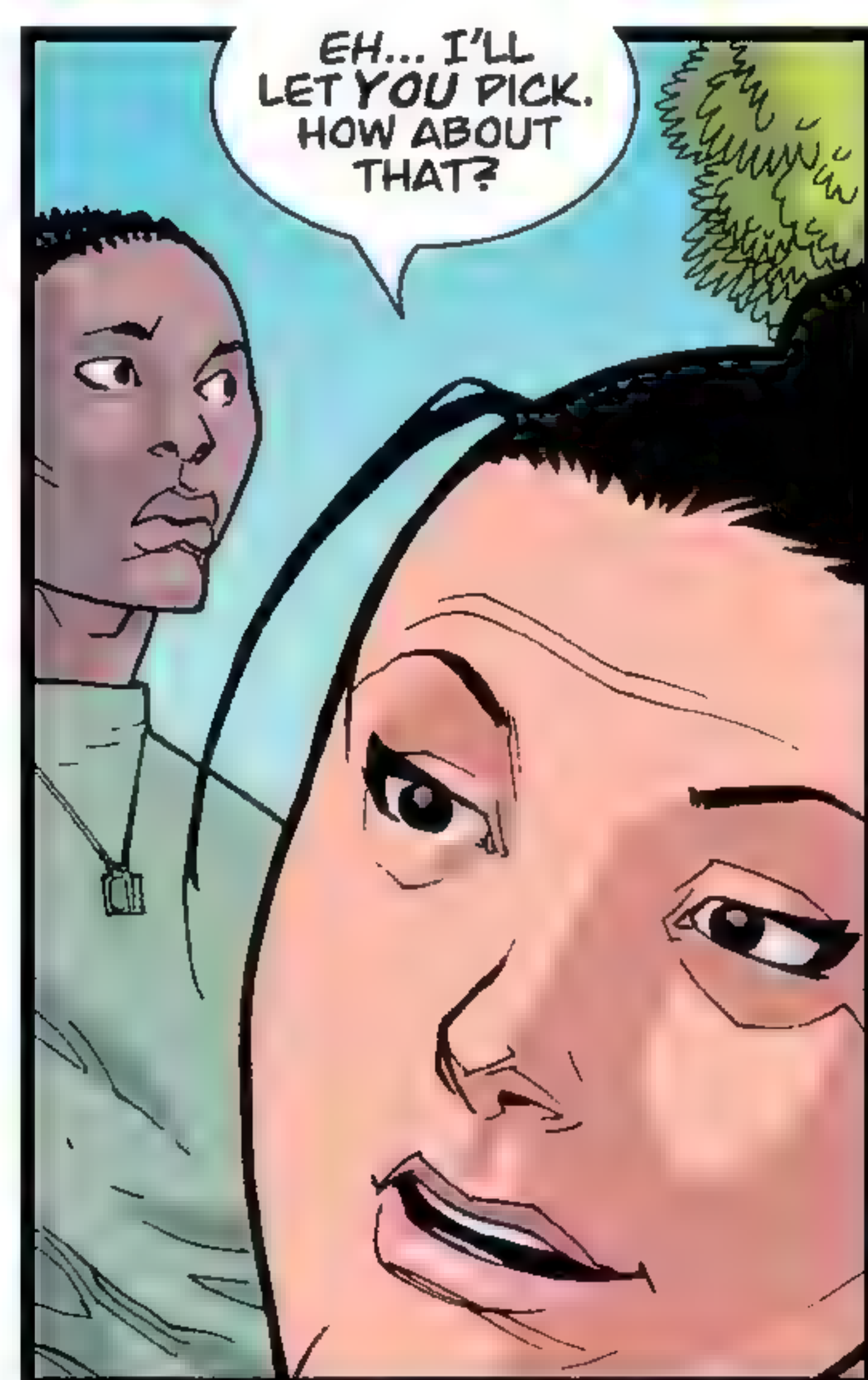
I WILL.
BYE,
MOM.

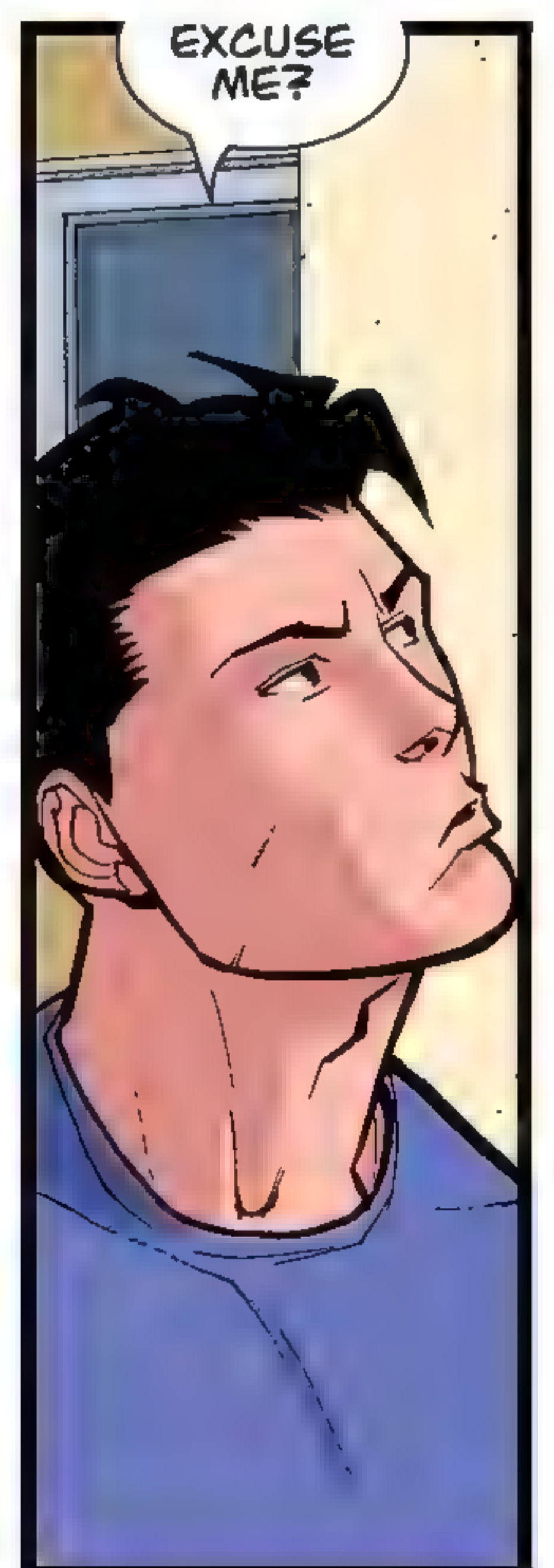
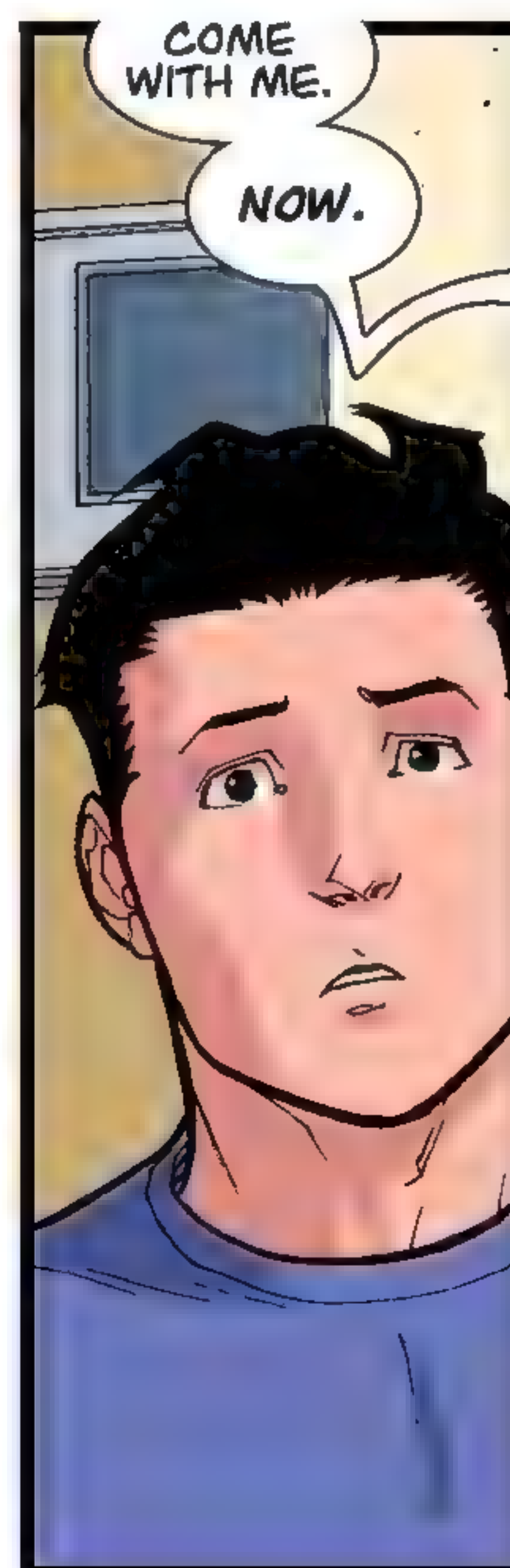
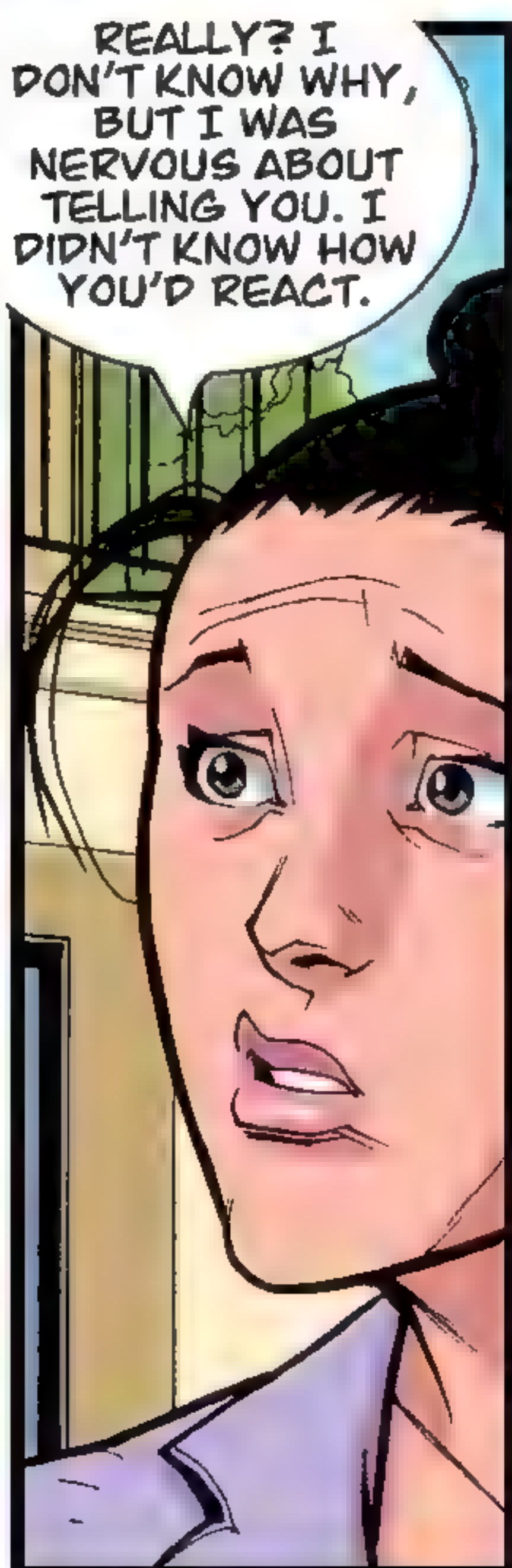
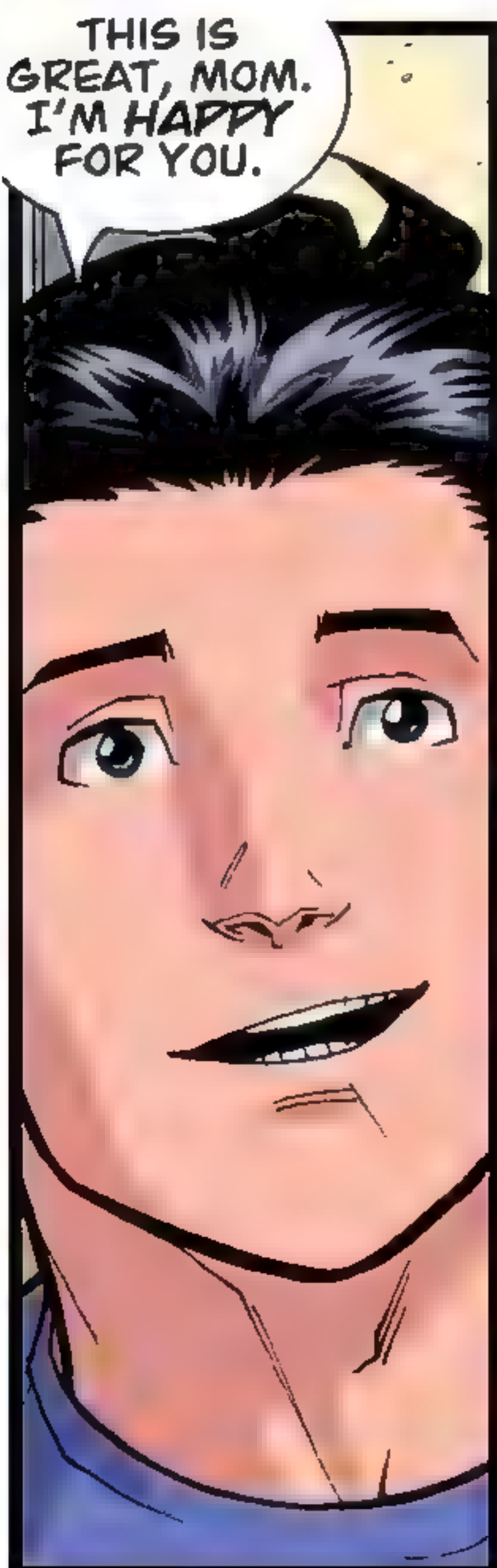
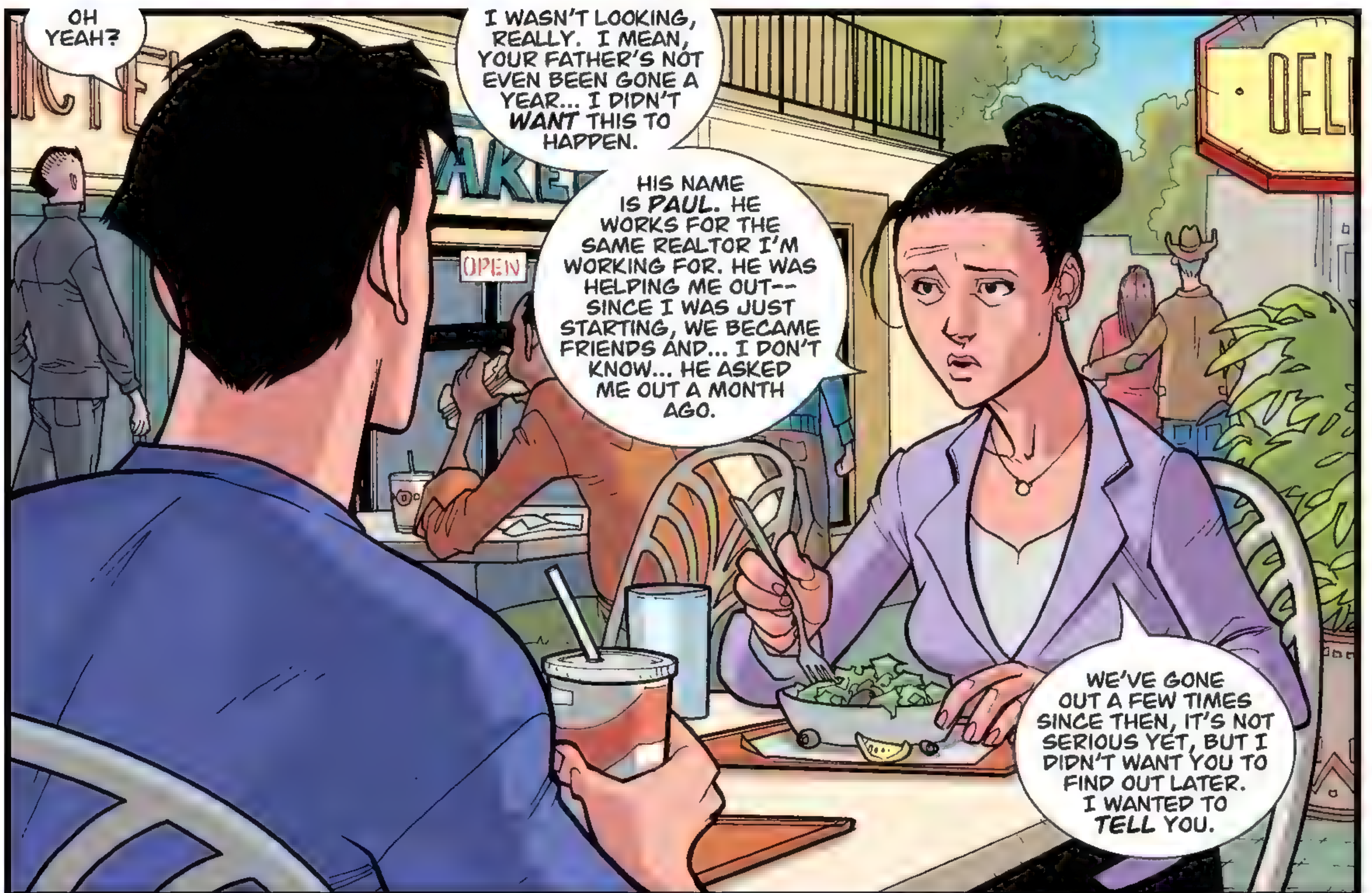
EVERYTHING
WILL BE FINE--
JUST GO.

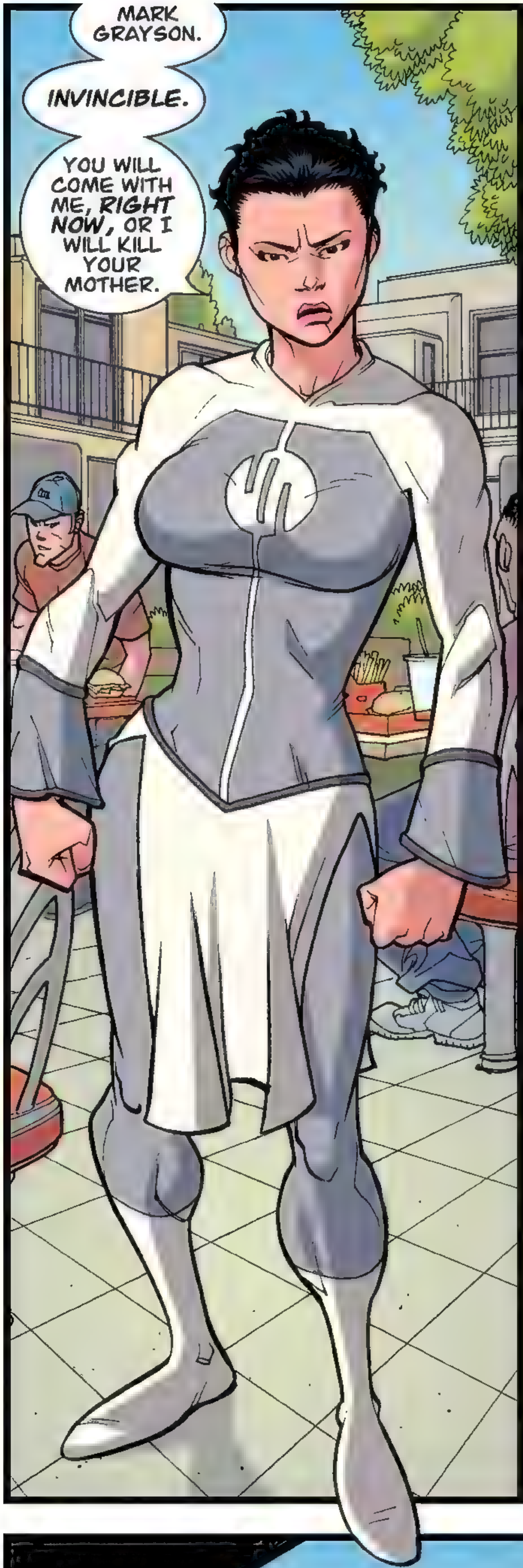
HAVE
FUN..

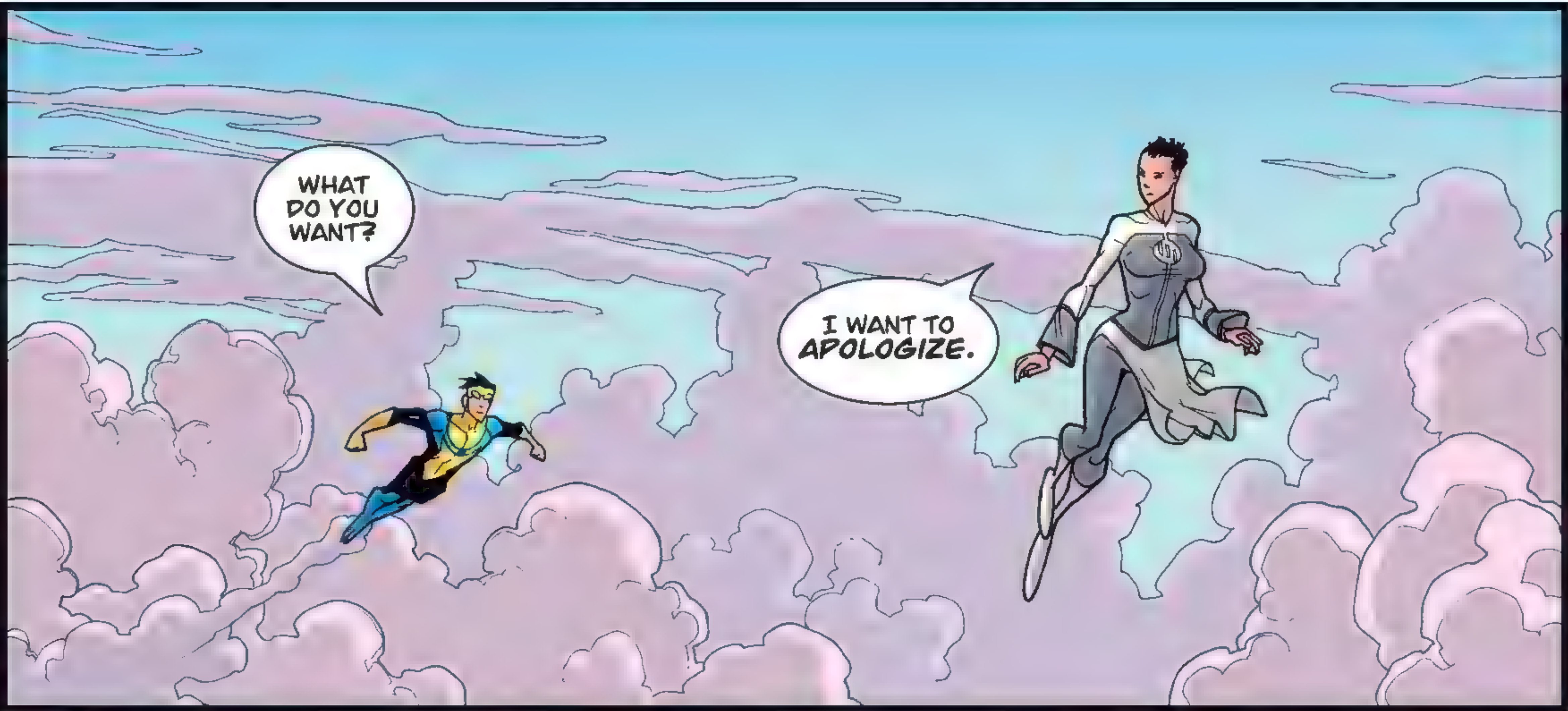
I'M NOT
ANTICIPATING
THIS BEING
"FUN." WISH
ME LUCK.





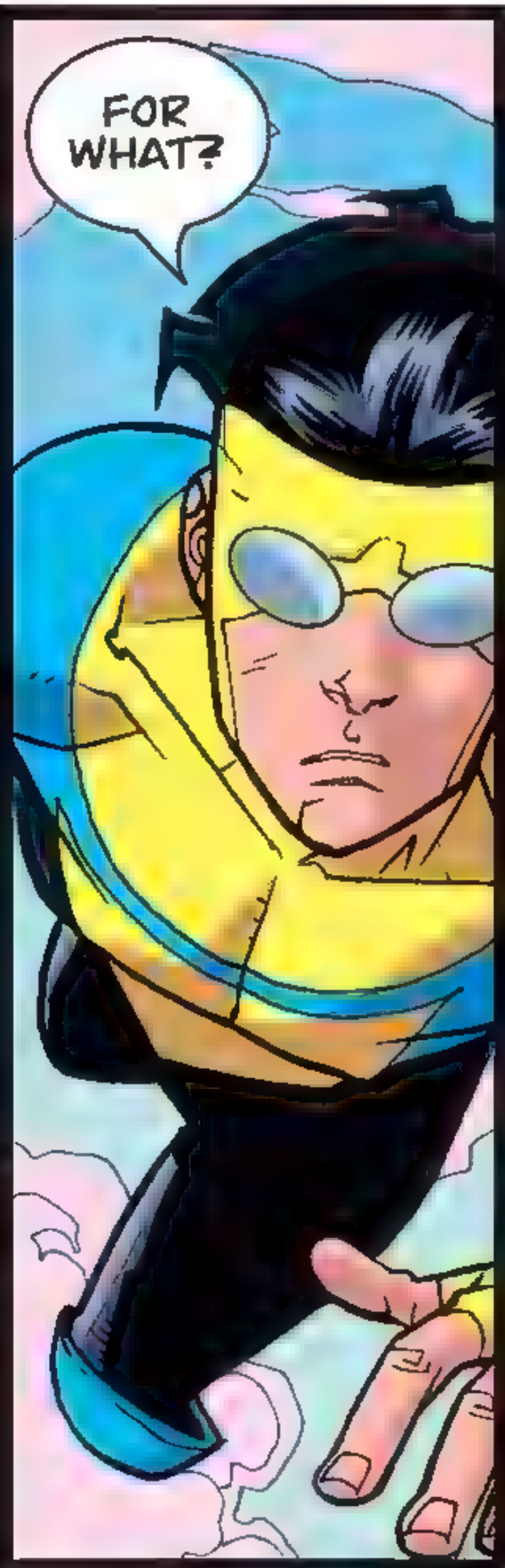






WHAT DO YOU WANT?

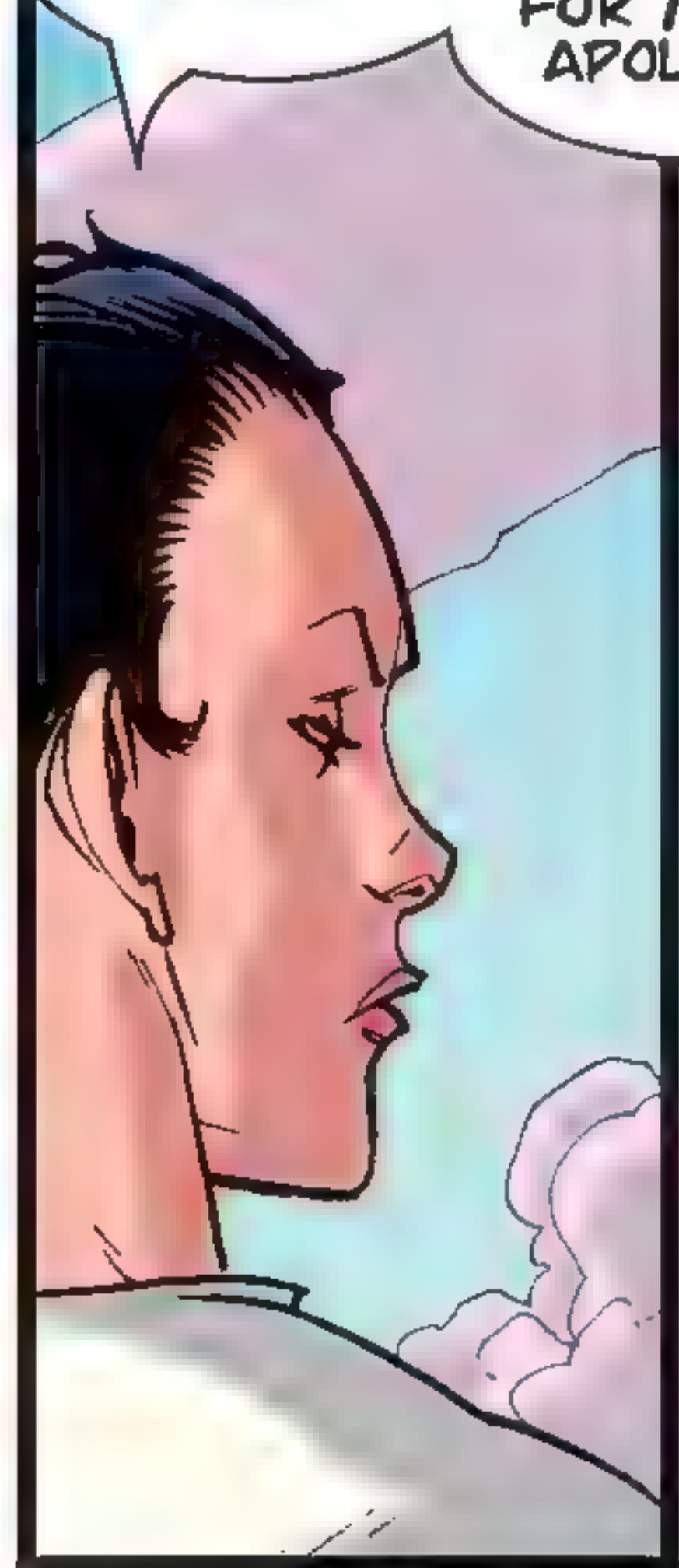
I WANT TO APOLOGIZE.



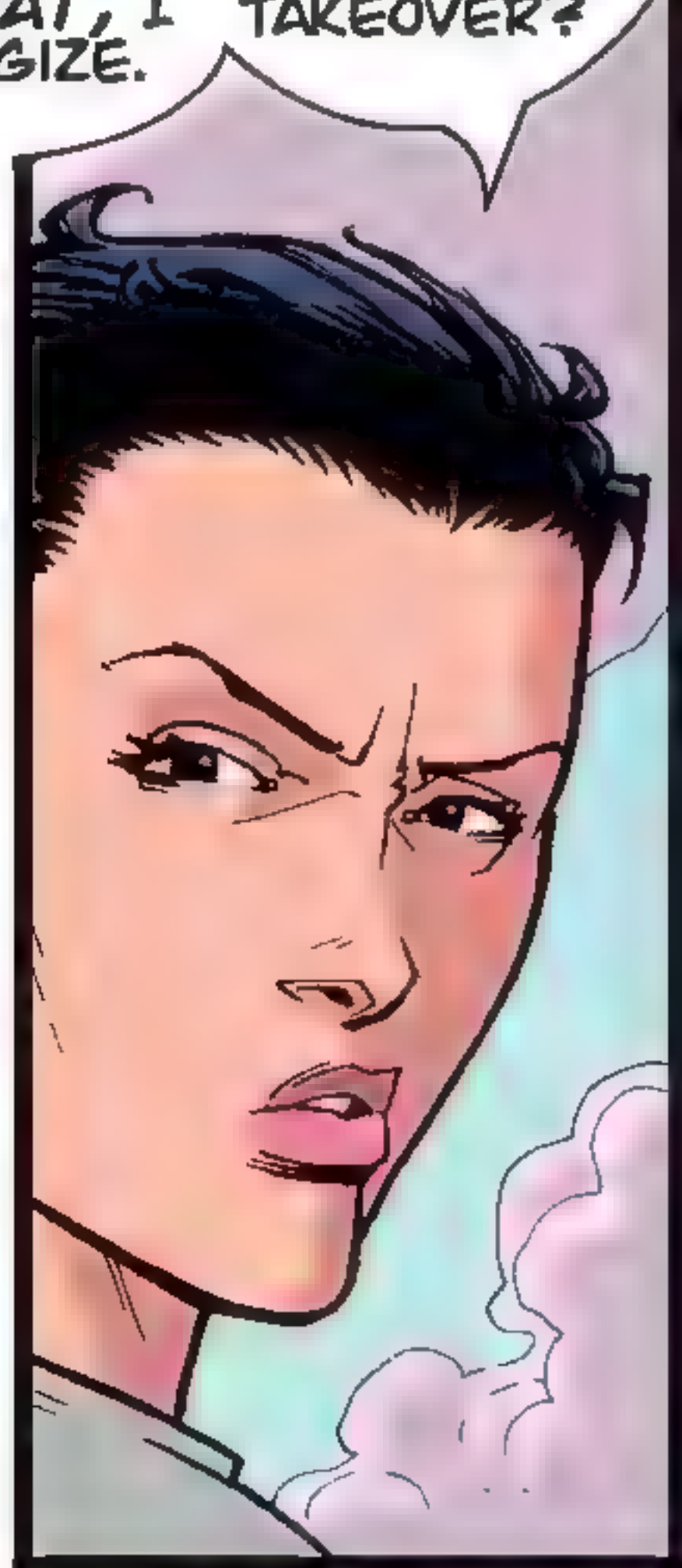
FOR WHAT?

FOR THREATENING YOUR MOTHER. THAT'S NOT HOW I WANTED THIS TO START. IT WAS THE ONLY WAY I THOUGHT I COULD GET YOU ALONE QUICKLY.

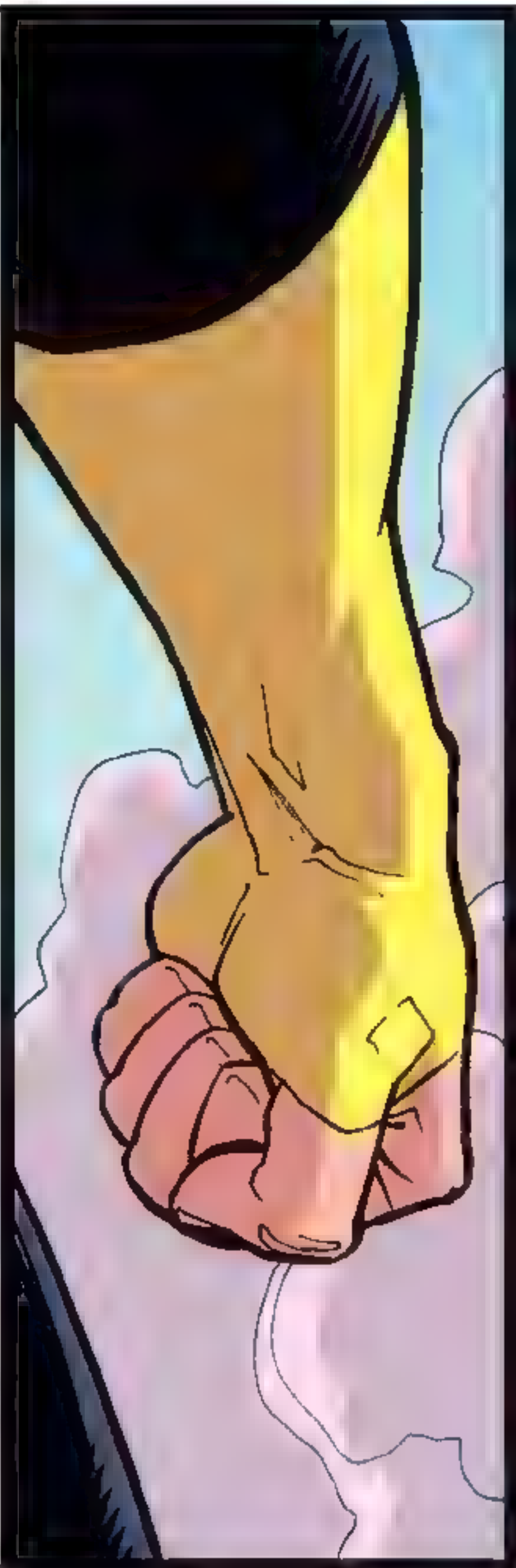
YOU HAVE BEEN DESIGNATED THE VILTRUMITE AGENT OF THIS PLANET. WHAT STEPS HAVE YOU TAKEN TO PREPARE THIS PLANET FOR EVENTUAL TAKEOVER?



FOR THAT, I APOLOGIZE.



NONE.



I'M NOT HERE TO FIGHT YOU, MARK.

TRUST ME. IF I WERE HERE TO HURT YOU--YOU'D ALREADY BE DEAD.

THEN WHY ARE YOU HERE?



TO CLARIFY THINGS. I BELIEVE YOU ARE UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT VILTRUMITES ARE WARMONGERS, A RACE TO BE FEARED, OPPOSED, EVEN DESTROYED.

I'M HERE TO TELL YOU THAT YOU'RE MISTAKEN.



AND YOU STARTED BY THREATENING TO KILL MY MOTHER?



I WON'T DENY THERE ARE FUNDAMENTAL CULTURAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN VILTRUMITES AND THE PEOPLE YOU WERE RAISED AMONGST.



"FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES?"

YOU THINK?!



OUR PEOPLE ARE QUICK TO TURN VIOLENT. IT IS SOMETHING WE ALL STRUGGLE WITH. HAVE YOU NOT EXPERIENCED THIS YOURSELF?



DESPITE WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT US AND OUR NATURE. YOU ARE MISUNDERSTANDING THE INTENT OF OUR DRIVE TO CONQUER OTHER WORLDS.

WE TAKE OVER, YES, AND WE DO TAKE OUR SHARE OF A PLANET'S NATURAL RESOURCES BUT WE BRING SO MUCH TO THE PLANET IN RETURN.

WE REALLY HAVE A LOT TO OFFER.

LIKE WHAT?!



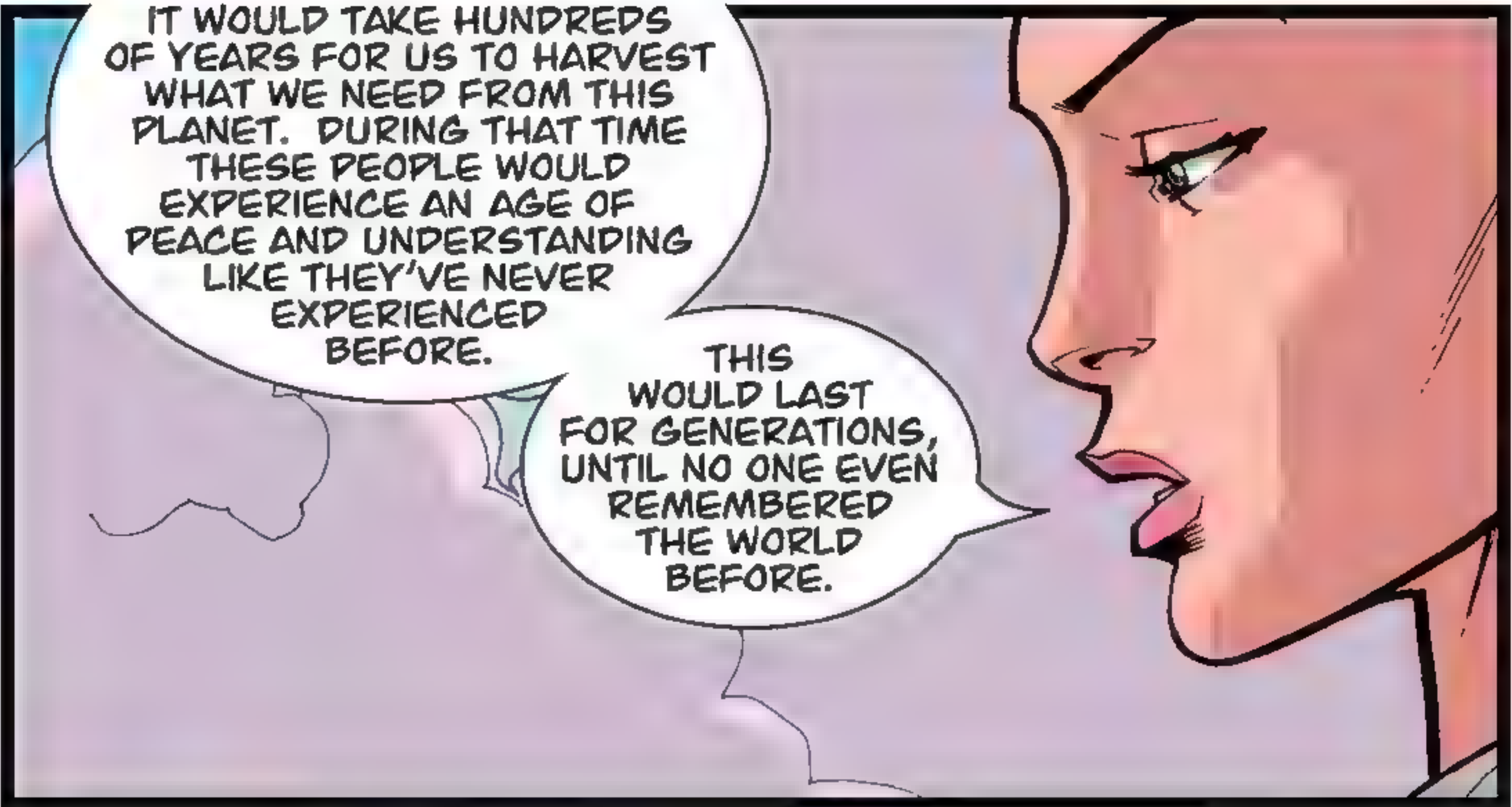
IS THIS PLANET NOT RIDDLED WITH DEATH AND DISEASE? ARE THESE PEOPLE NOT PLAGUED BY VIOLENCE AND WAR?

A VILTRUMITE OCCUPATION WOULD RID THEM OF ALL THAT. WE WOULD SHARE OUR TECHNOLOGY, CURE THEIR DISEASES. NO UNSANCTIONED VIOLENCE WOULD OCCUR UNDER OUR RULE.

WE COULD TRANSFORM THIS WORLD INTO A UTOPIA.

YOU MEAN THE SLAVES WOULD BE COMPLACENT?

THEY'D BE FED AND HAPPY WHILE YOU SUCKED THIS PLANET DRY-- RUINING IT.



IT WOULD TAKE HUNDREDS OF YEARS FOR US TO HARVEST WHAT WE NEED FROM THIS PLANET. DURING THAT TIME THESE PEOPLE WOULD EXPERIENCE AN AGE OF PEACE AND UNDERSTANDING LIKE THEY'VE NEVER EXPERIENCED BEFORE.

THIS WOULD LAST FOR GENERATIONS, UNTIL NO ONE EVEN REMEMBERED THE WORLD BEFORE.



...AND WHEN YOU'RE DONE?



WHEN WE'RE DONE WE WILL HAVE **DESTROYED** THIS PLANET--THE SAME AS THESE BEINGS YOU WISH TO PROTECT ARE ALREADY **DOING**.

NOTHING WOULD BE LOST.

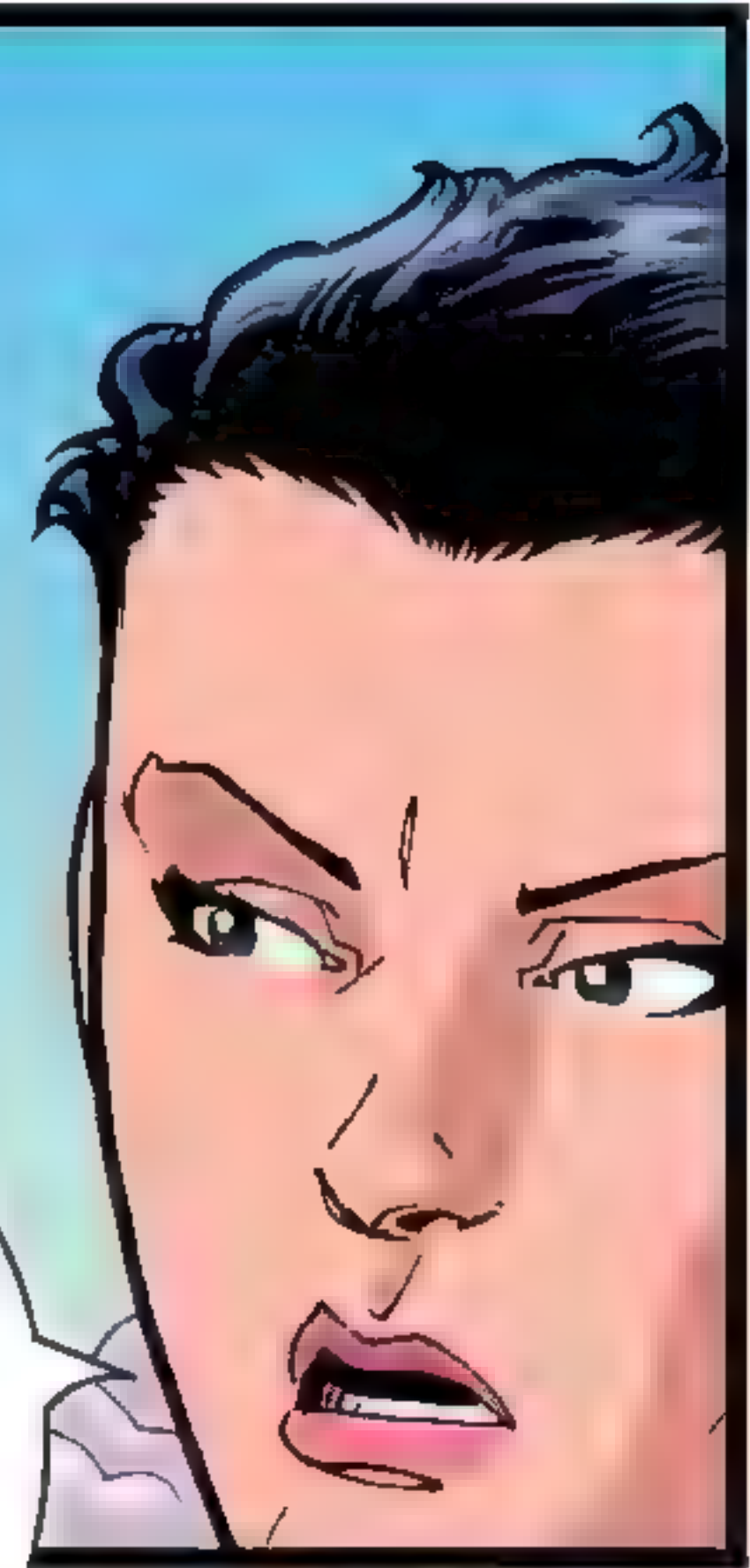


I HATE TO INTERRUPT THIS THRILLING CONVERSATION--WHICH WE'RE RECORDING-- BUT I'VE GOT A BIG JOB FOR YOU.

SEE IF SHE'LL LET YOU BREAK AWAY. SEE HOW **FRIENDLY** SHE REALLY WANTS TO APPEAR.

EXCUSE ME, THIS IS VERY INTERESTING BUT I'VE GOT A THING I'VE GOT TO DO **RIGHT NOW**. PEOPLE ARE **DYING**.

I AM AWARE THAT YOU PROTECT THESE PEOPLE. IF IT WILL CONVINCE YOU THAT I AM COMPASSIONATE TOWARD THESE PEOPLE I WILL HELP.



FINE.

WHATEVER.

JUST REMEMBER-- WE'RE SAVING PEOPLE--NOT HURTING THEM.

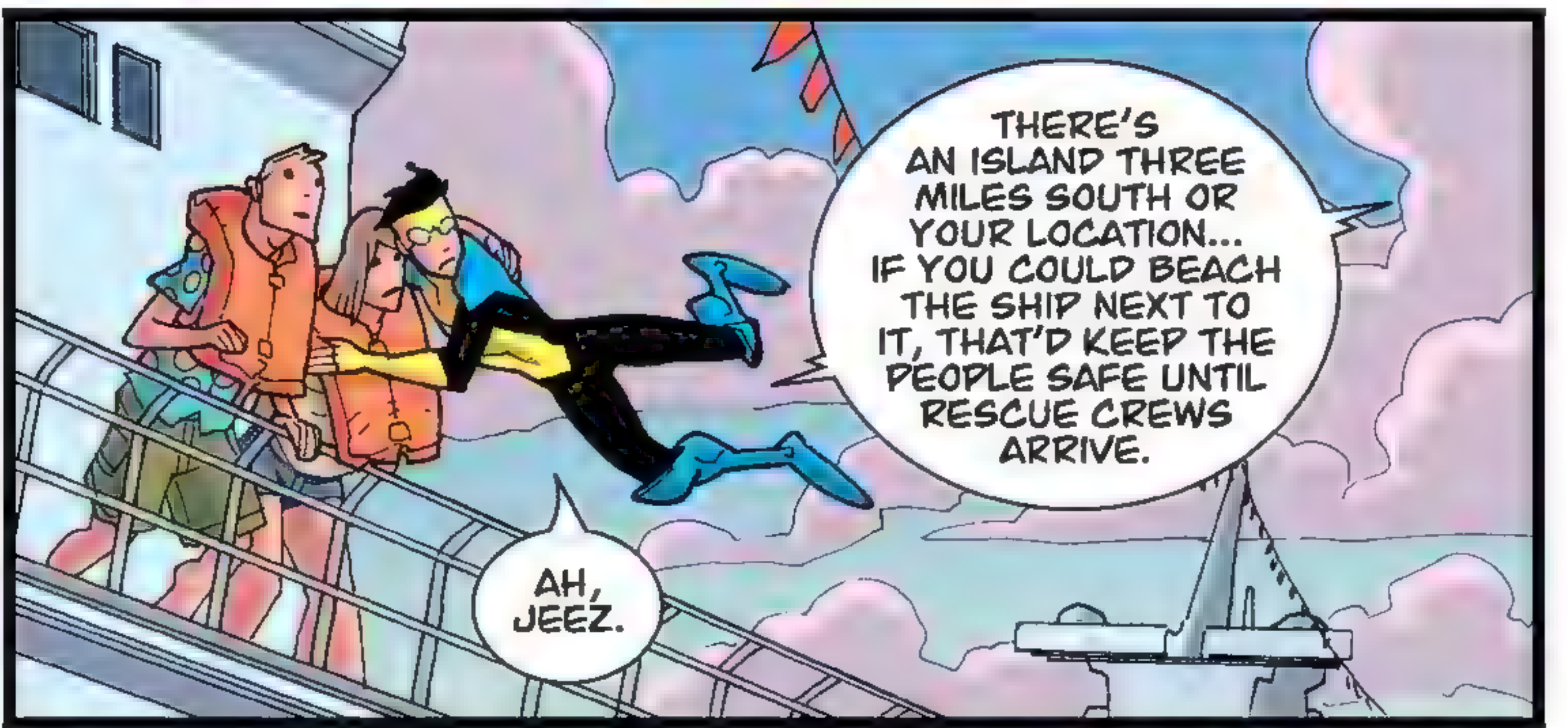
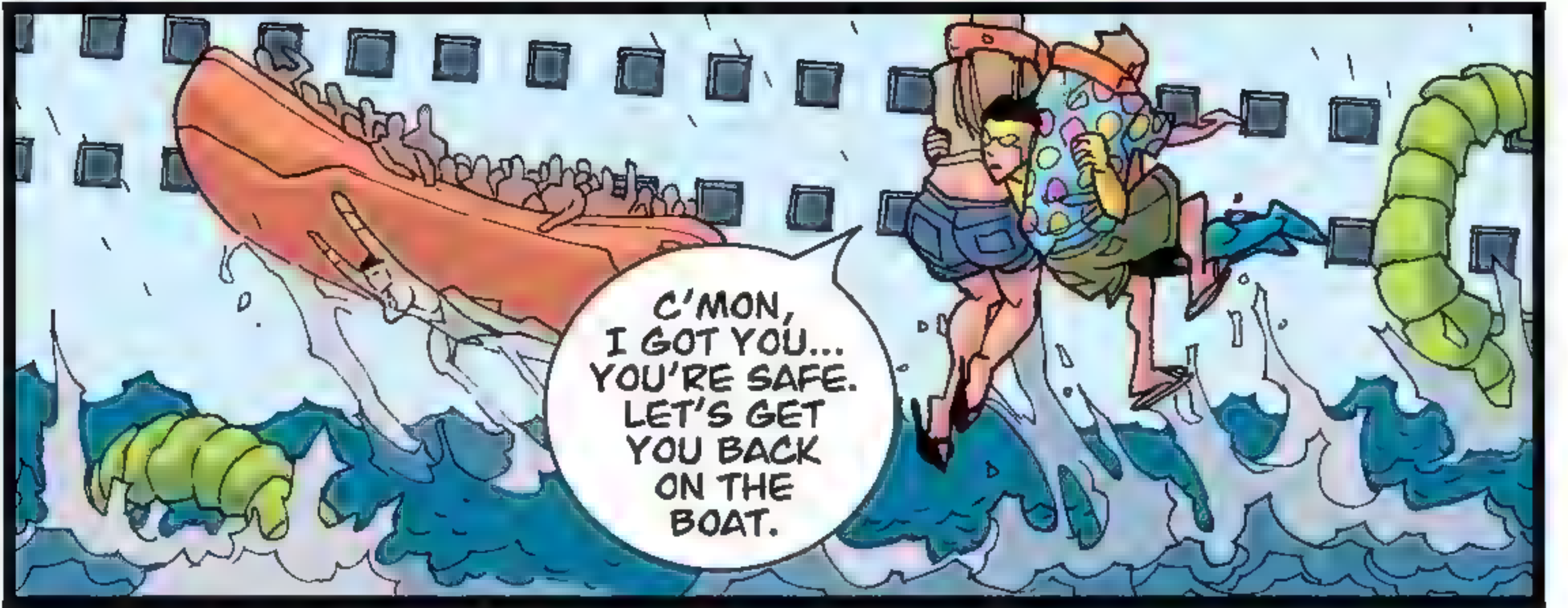
I'LL TRY MY BEST TO REMEMBER.



HOLY CRAP.

THE MONSTER--I CAN HURT THE MONSTER, RIGHT?





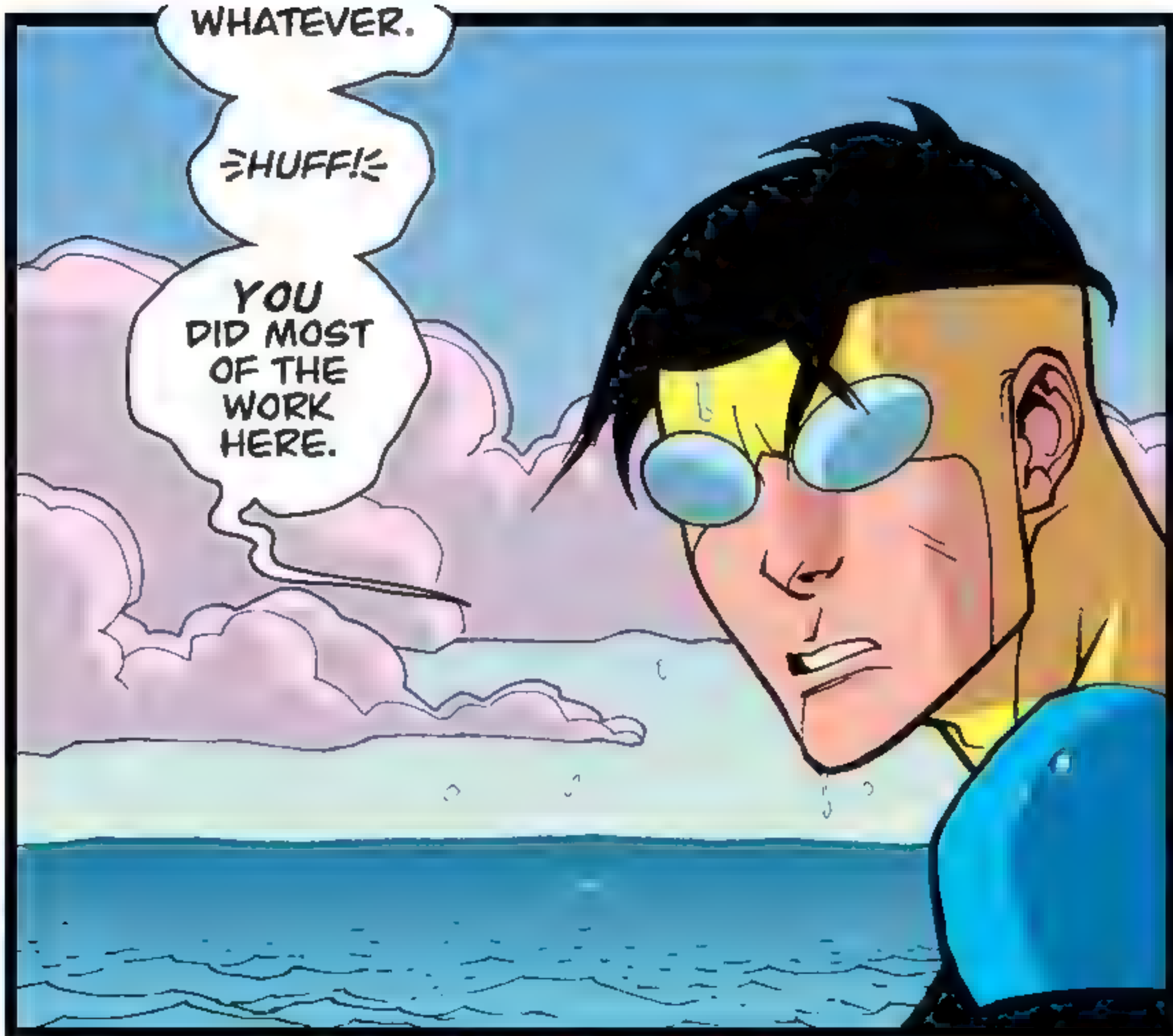


⇒HUFF!⇐

⇒HUFF!⇐

⇒HUFF!⇐

YOU DID
SOME VERY
IMPRESSIVE
WORK
TODAY.



WHATEVER.

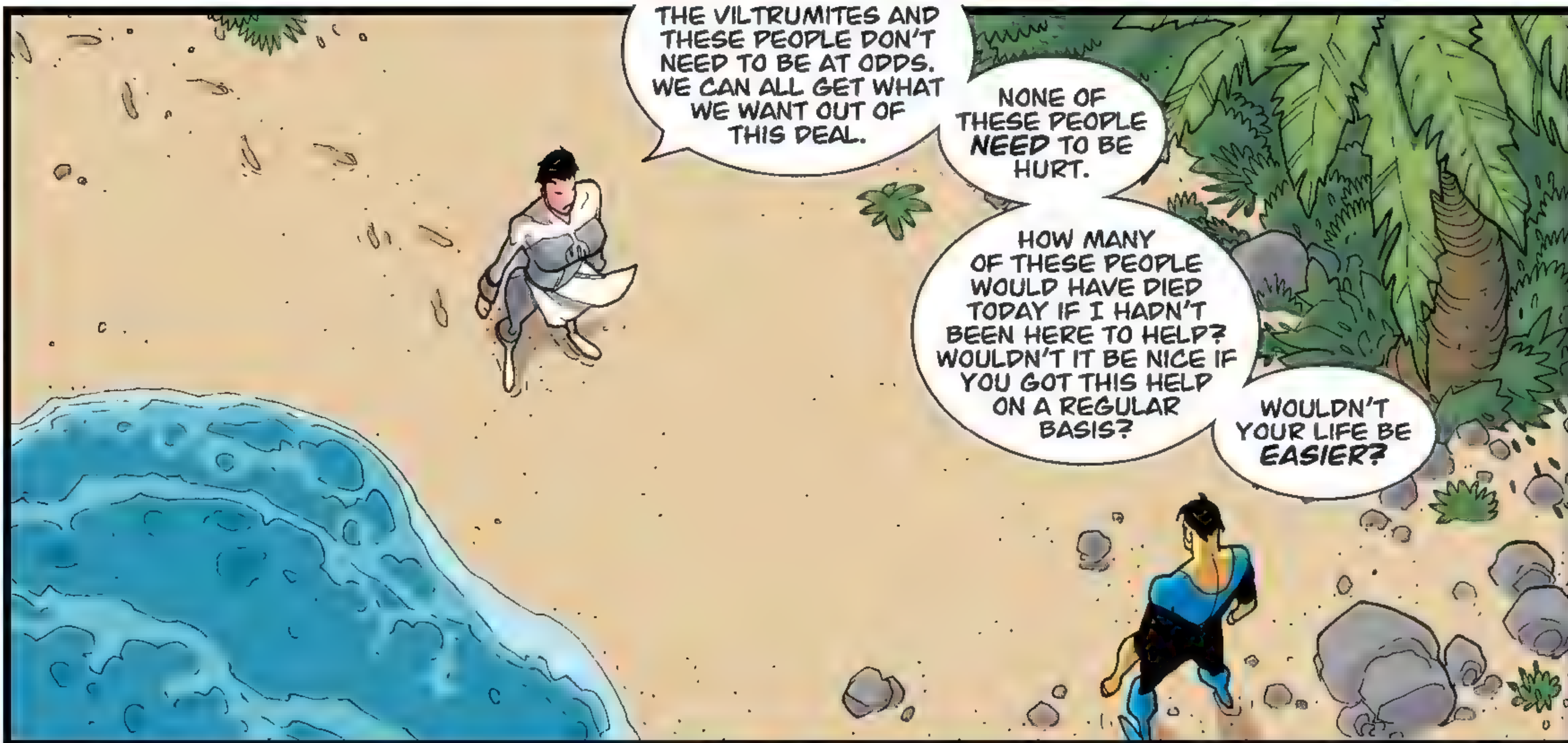
SHUFFLE

YOU
DID MOST
OF THE
WORK
HERE.



STILL, I CAN
SEE THAT YOU
CARE A GREAT
DEAL ABOUT THIS
PLANET AND ITS
INHABITANTS.

I
RESPECT
THAT.

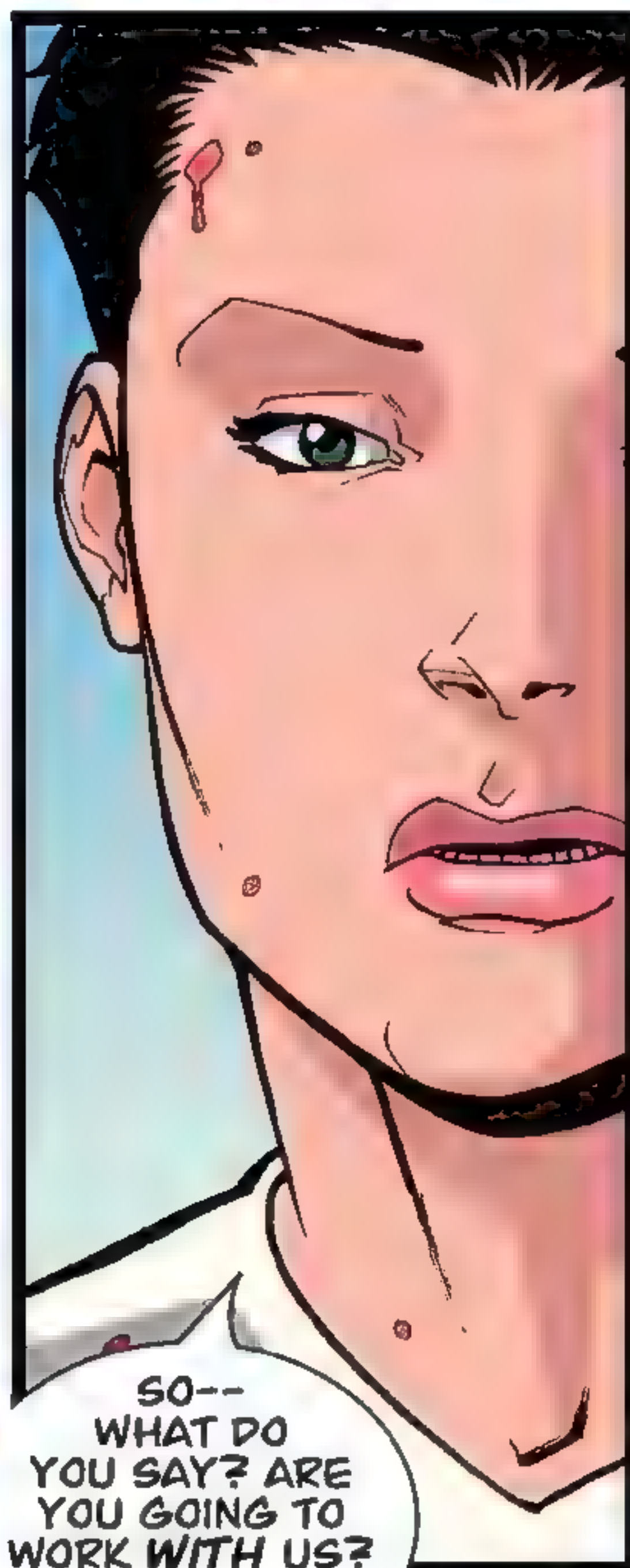
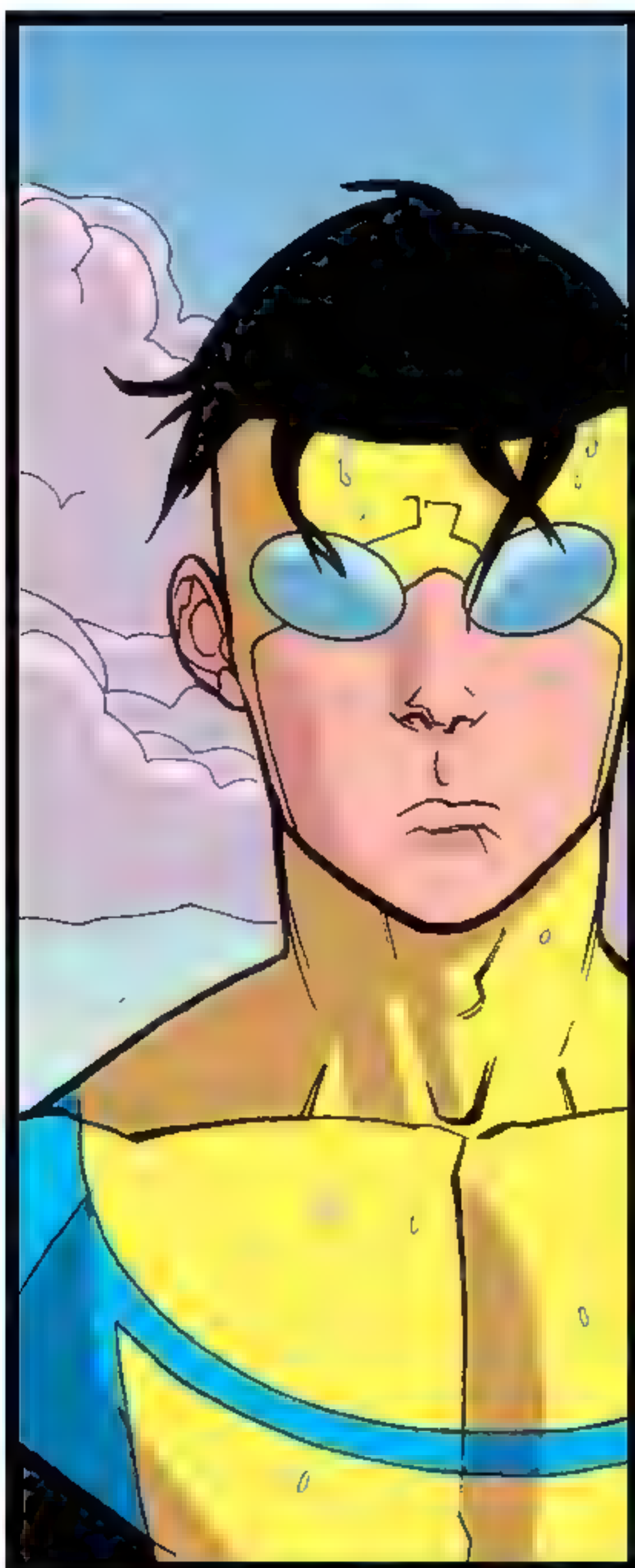


THE VILTRUMITES AND
THESE PEOPLE DON'T
NEED TO BE AT ODDS.
WE CAN ALL GET WHAT
WE WANT OUT OF
THIS DEAL.

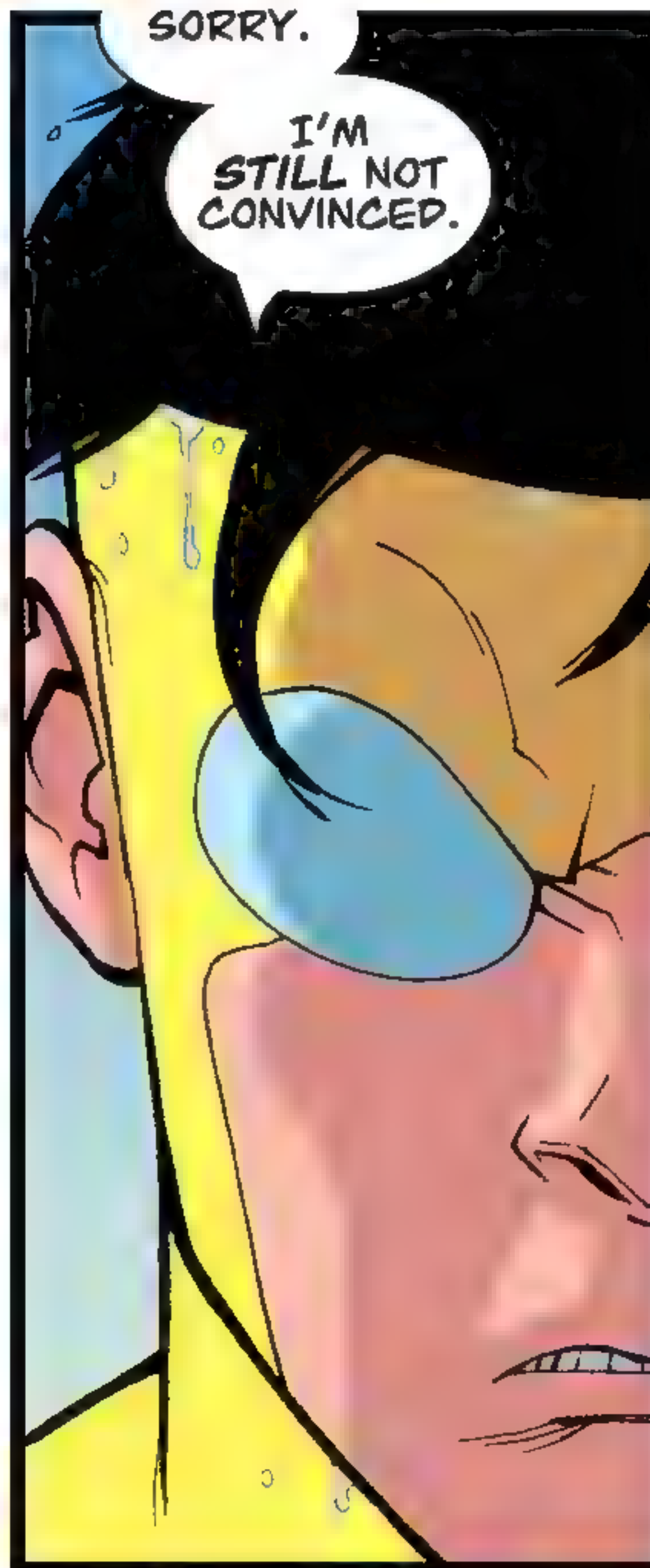
NONE OF
THESE PEOPLE
NEED TO BE
HURT.

HOW MANY
OF THESE PEOPLE
WOULD HAVE DIED
TODAY IF I HADN'T
BEEN HERE TO HELP?
WOULDN'T IT BE NICE IF
YOU GOT THIS HELP
ON A REGULAR
BASIS?

WOULDN'T
YOUR LIFE BE
EASIER?

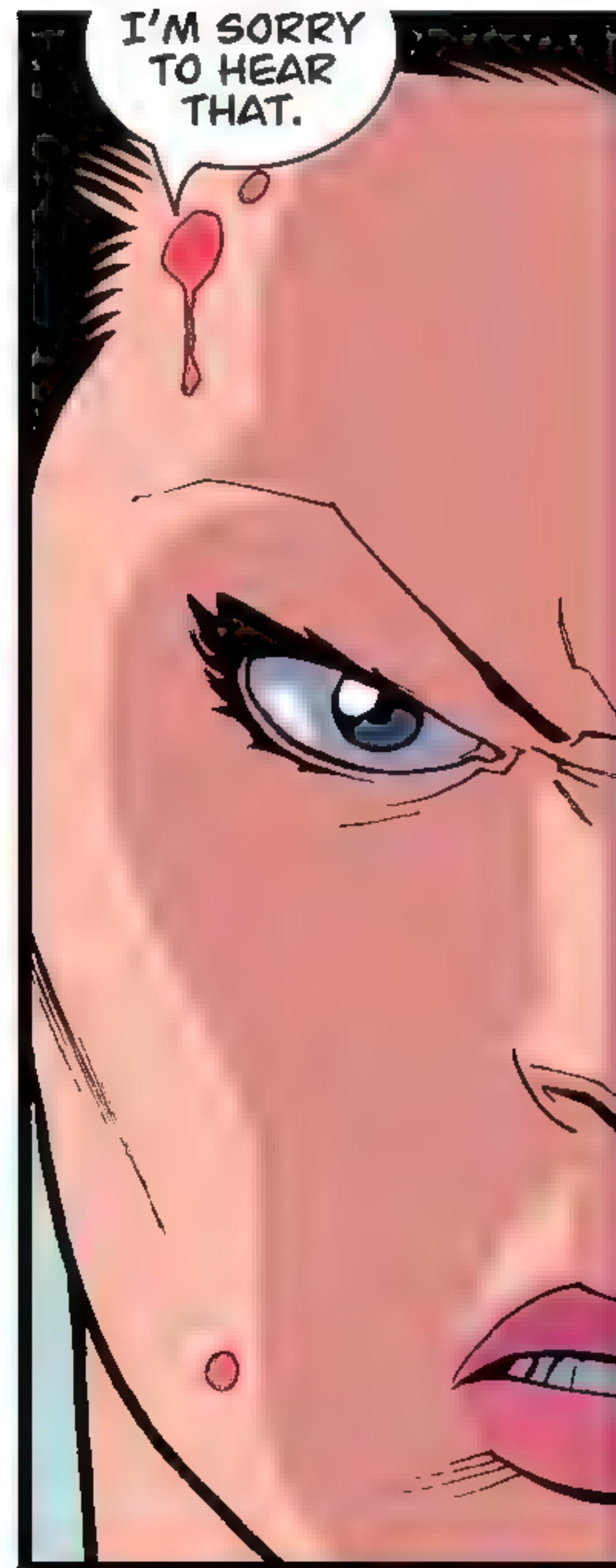


SO--
WHAT DO
YOU SAY? ARE
YOU GOING TO
WORK WITH US?



SORRY.

I'M
STILL NOT
CONVINCED.



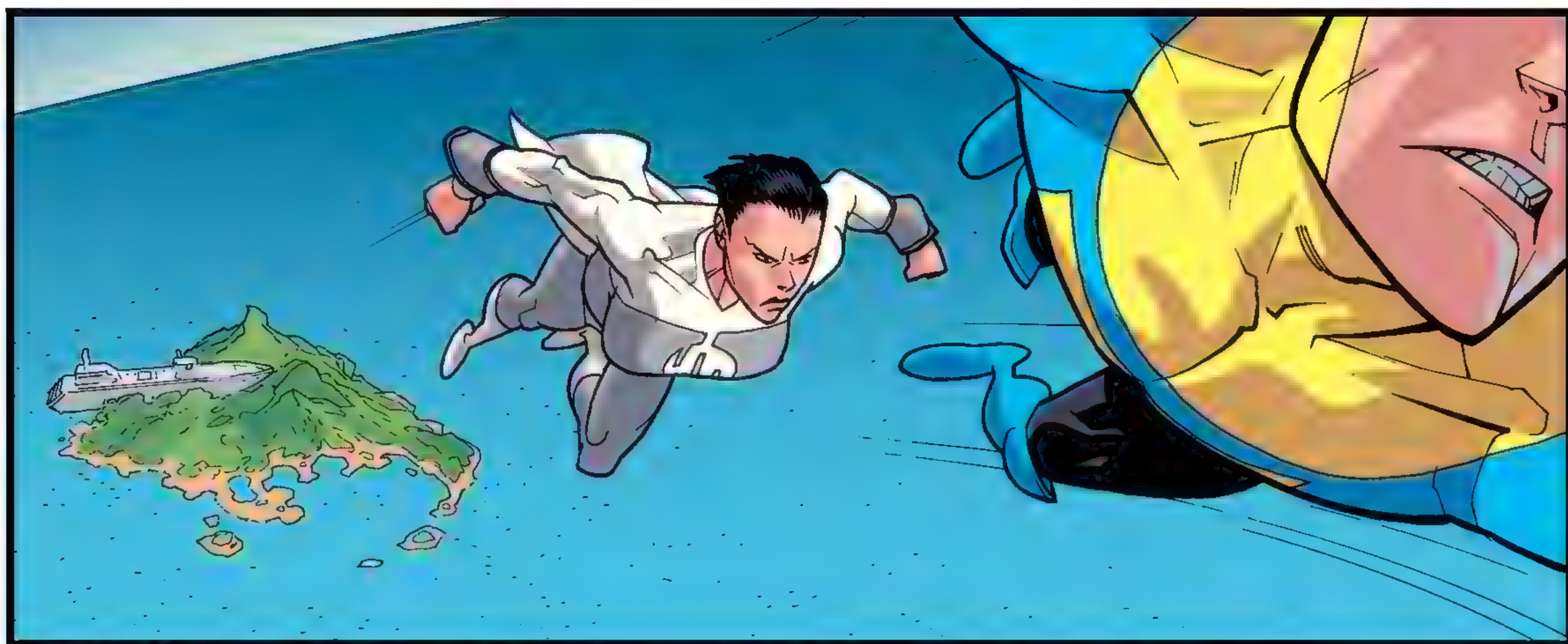
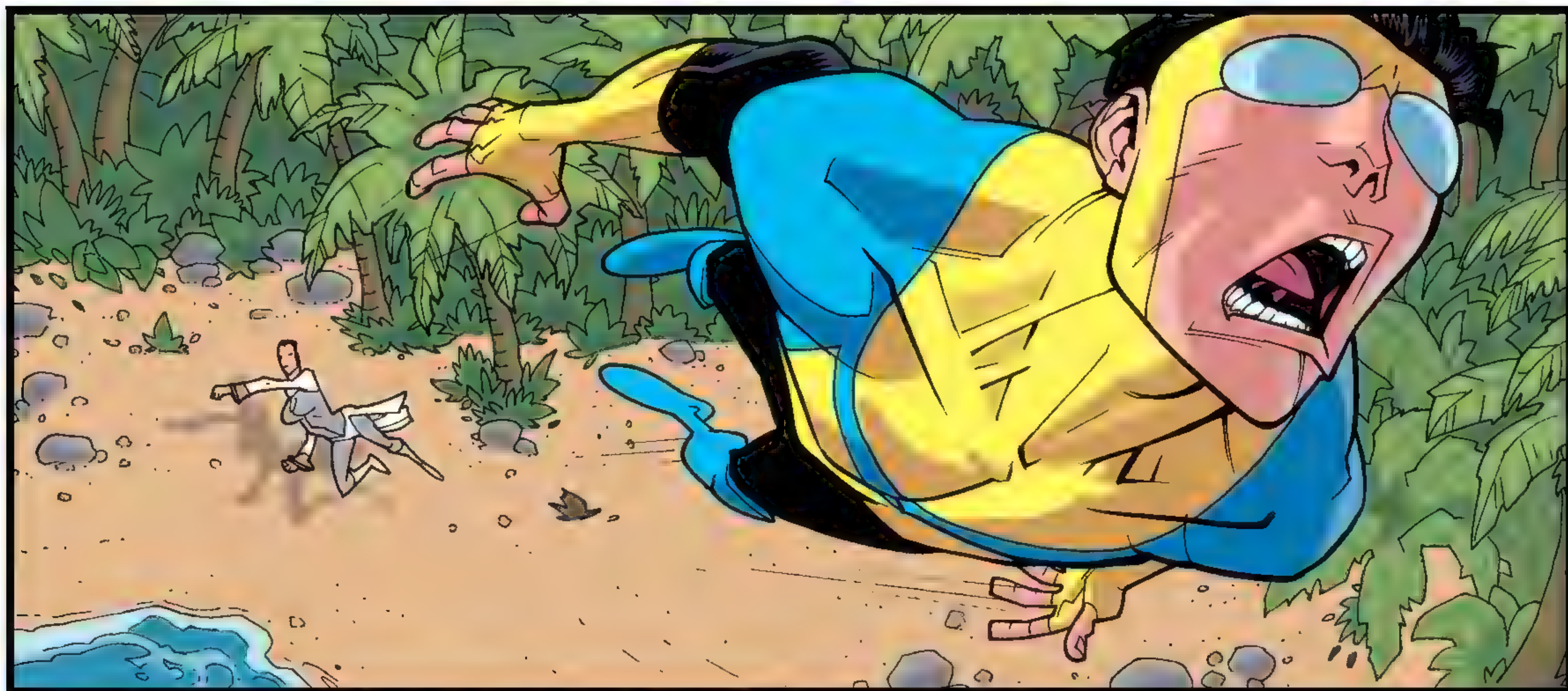
I'M SORRY
TO HEAR
THAT.



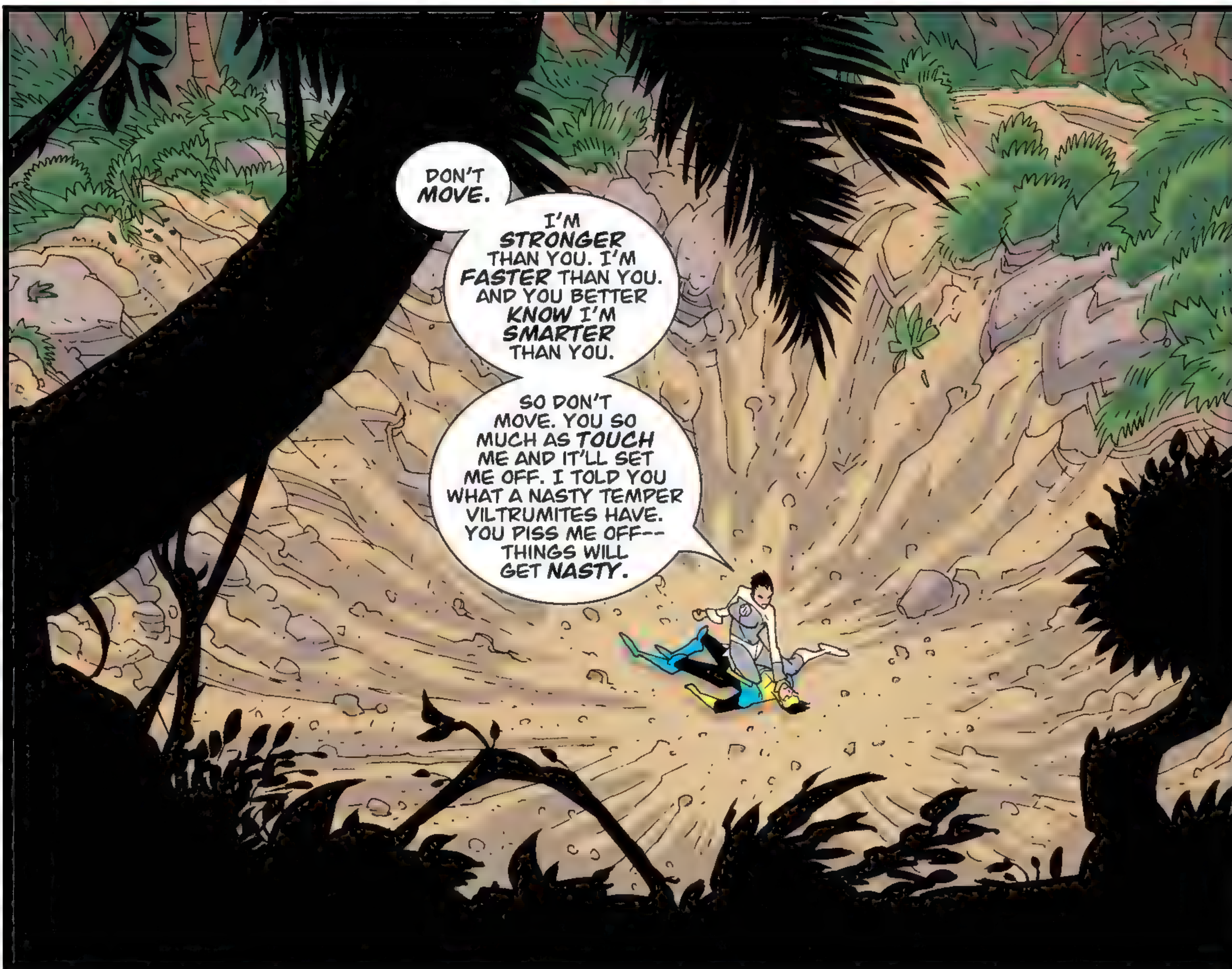
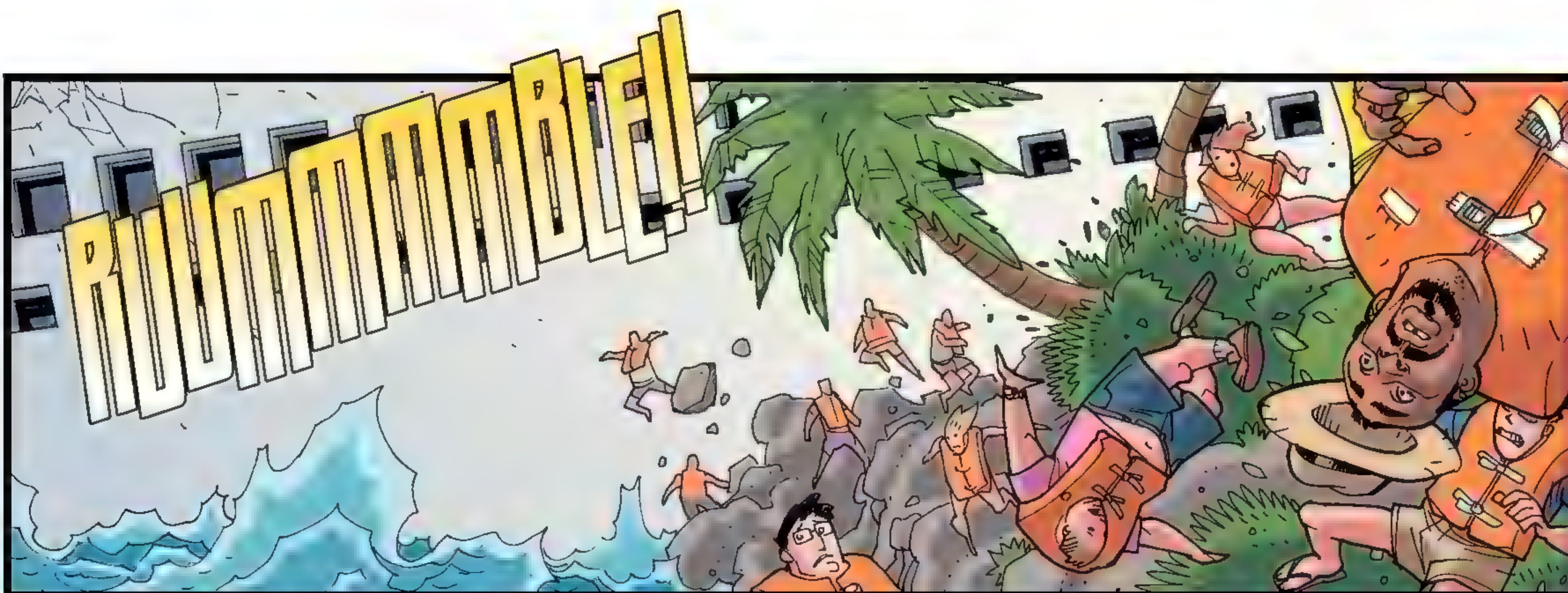


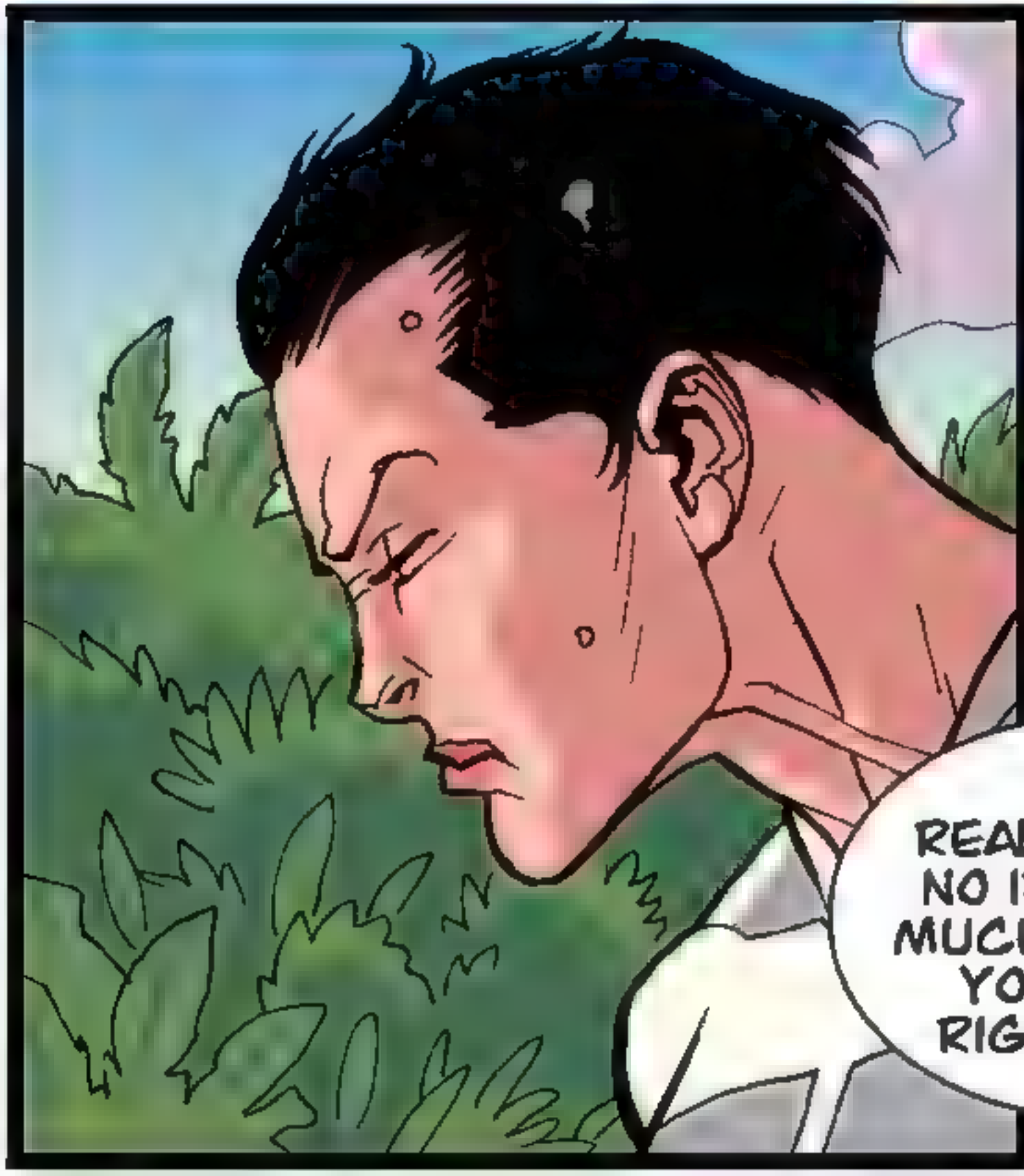
ISSUE FORTY-FIVE











YOU
REALLY HAVE
NO IDEA HOW
MUCH DANGER
YOU'RE IN
RIGHT NOW.



THAT'S...
DISAPPOINTING.

YOU HAVE BEEN APPOINTED
THE VILTRUMITE AGENT OF
THIS PLANET, CHARGED WITH
PREPARING IT FOR EVENTUAL
TAKEOVER. THAT IS NOT
UP FOR DEBATE.

YOU ARE
FREE TO IGNORE
YOUR DUTIES BUT
THAT WILL BRING
CONSEQUENCES.

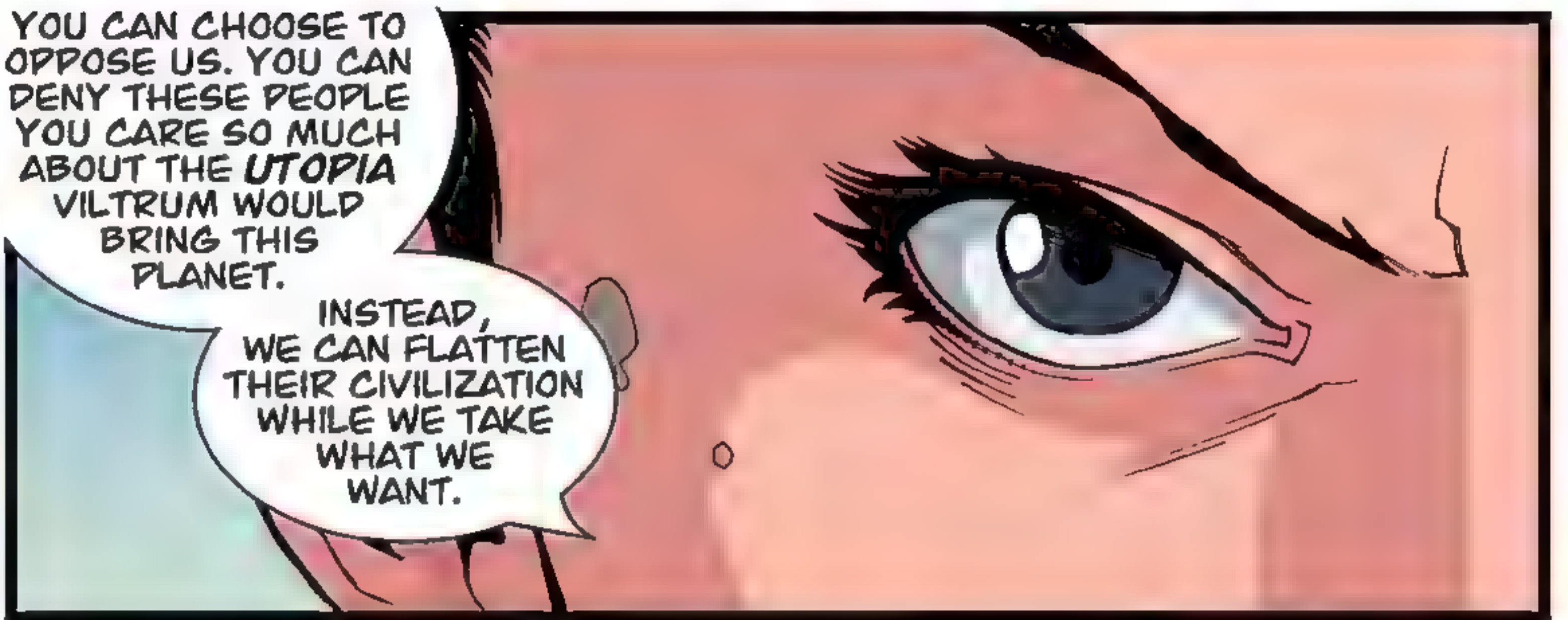
CURRENTLY
OUR RESERVE
FORCES ARE OCCUPIED.
THIS IS, NO DOUBT,
WHY YOU WERE GIVEN
THIS ASSIGNMENT
TO BEGIN WITH.

SO
I CAN'T
REPLACE
YOU NOW.



YOU CAN CHOOSE TO
OPPOSE US. YOU CAN
DENY THESE PEOPLE
YOU CARE SO MUCH
ABOUT THE *UTOPIA*
VILTRUM WOULD
BRING THIS
PLANET.

INSTEAD,
WE CAN FLATTEN
THEIR CIVILIZATION
WHILE WE TAKE
WHAT WE
WANT.



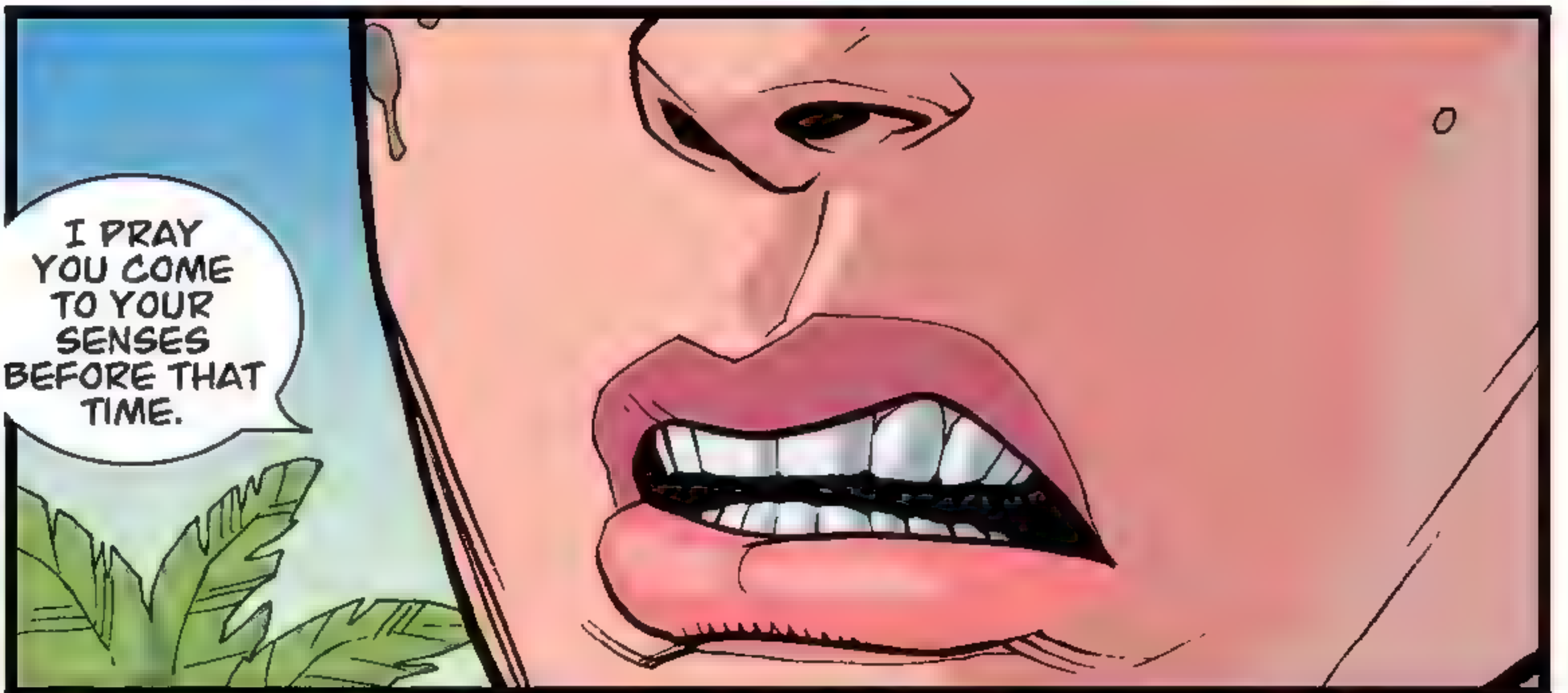
THAT
DECISION
IS YOURS
TO MAKE.

IN TIME, A REPLACEMENT
FOR YOU WILL BE MADE
AVAILABLE. ANOTHER
VILTRUMITE AGENT WILL
BE SENT HERE. IF YOU
STILL CHOOSE TO OPPOSE
US, YOU WILL BE KILLED
AND REPLACED AT
THAT TIME.

IT
COULD BE
FIVE MONTHS...
IT COULD BE
FIVE
YEARS.



I PRAY
YOU COME
TO YOUR
SENSES
BEFORE THAT
TIME.





YEAH,
THANKS.



LIKE I
DON'T HAVE
ENOUGH
TO WORRY
ABOUT.

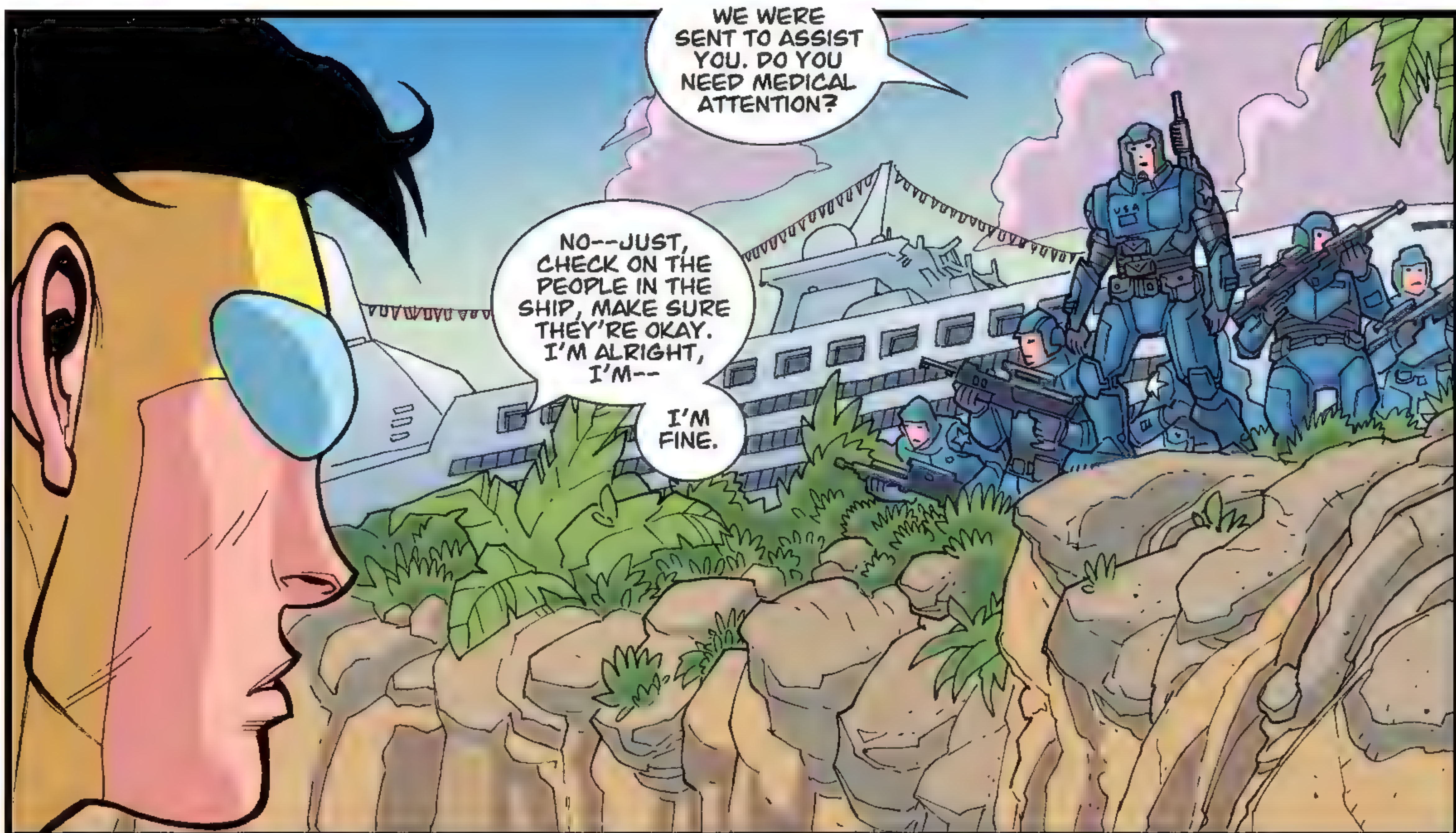


≡COUGH≡

≡COUGH≡



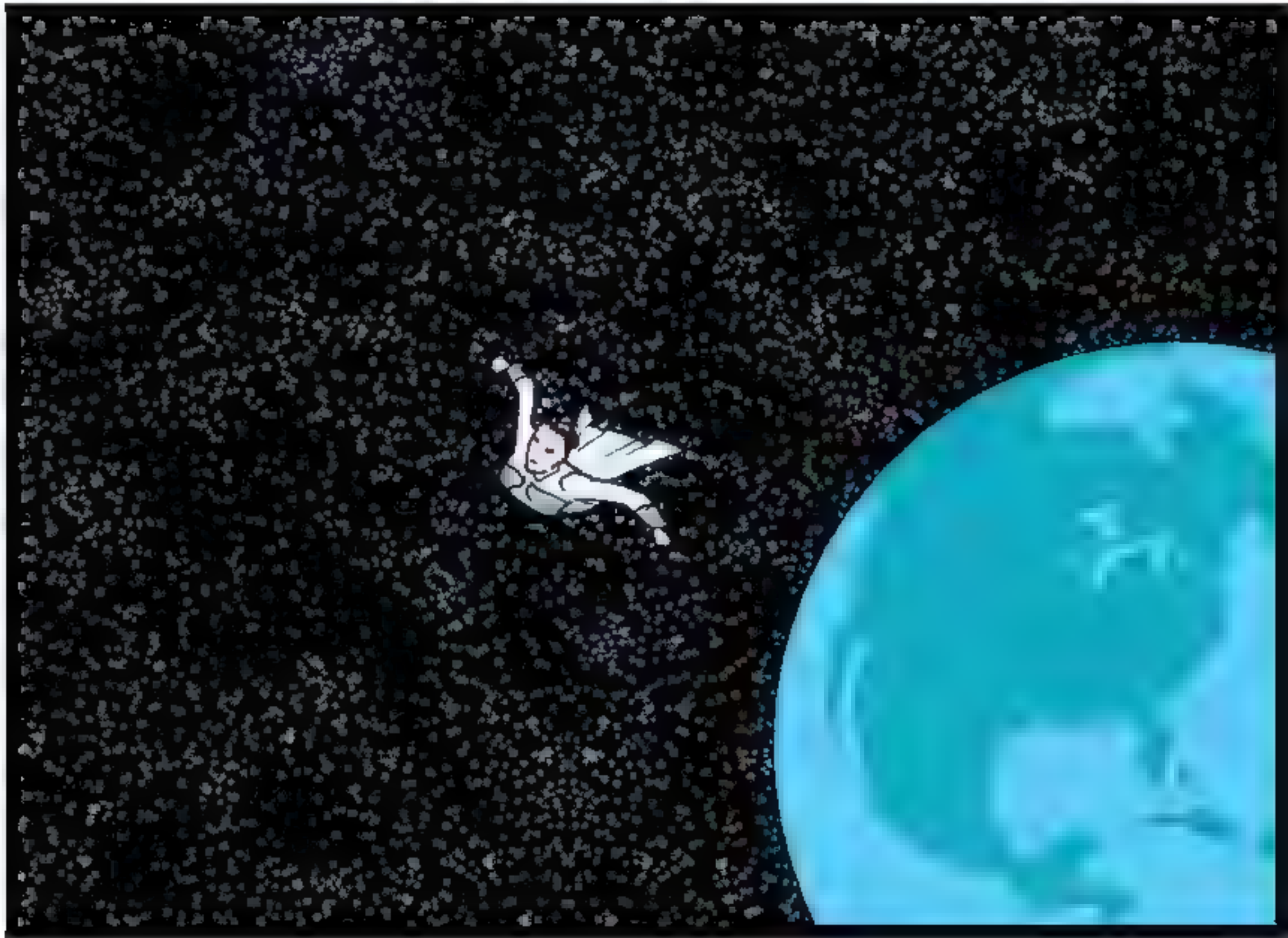
ARE
YOU OKAY,
SIR?

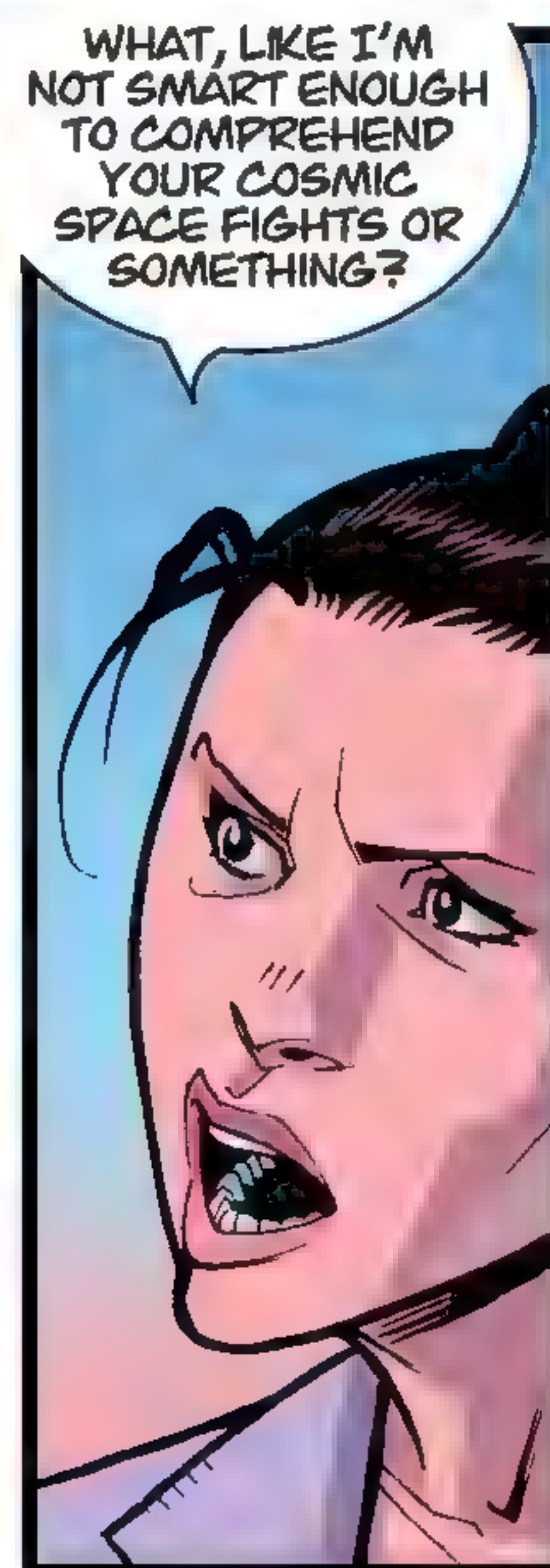
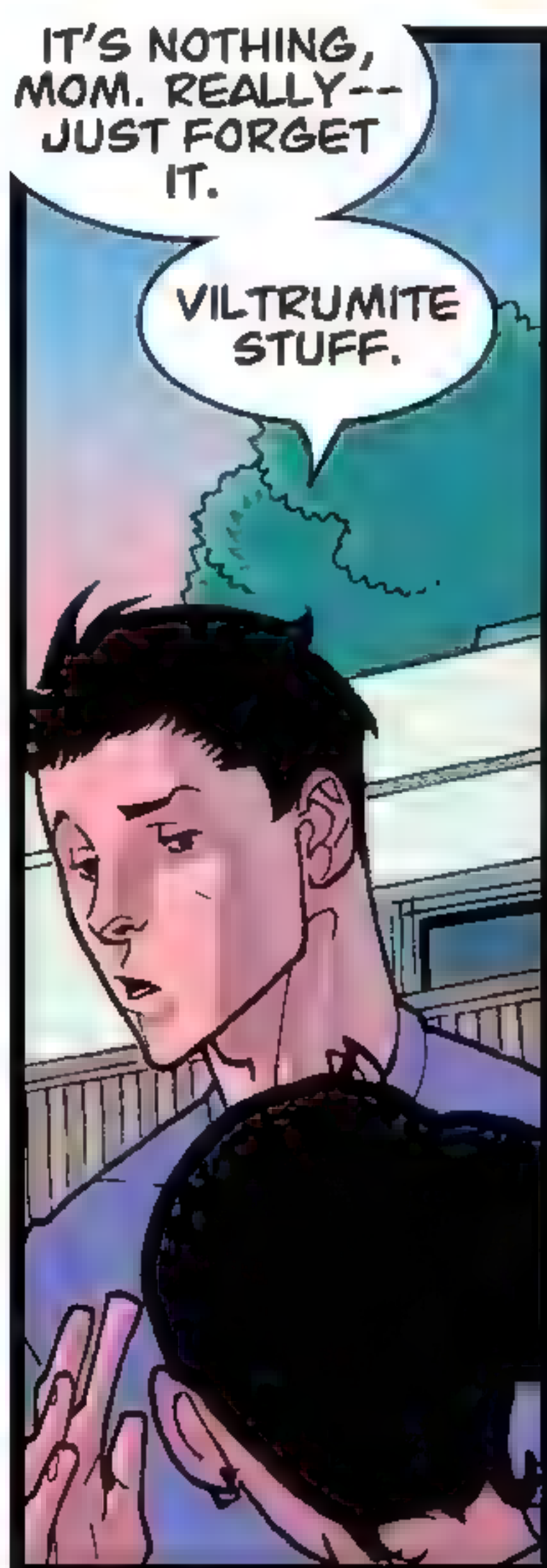
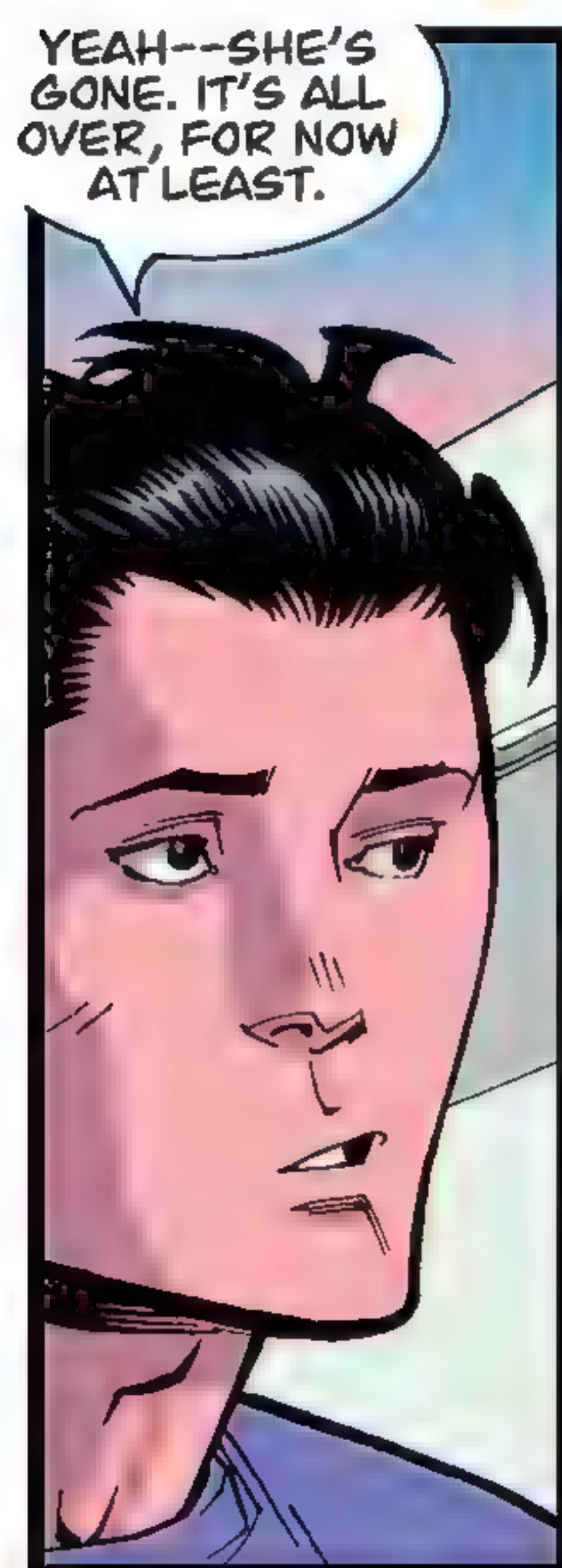


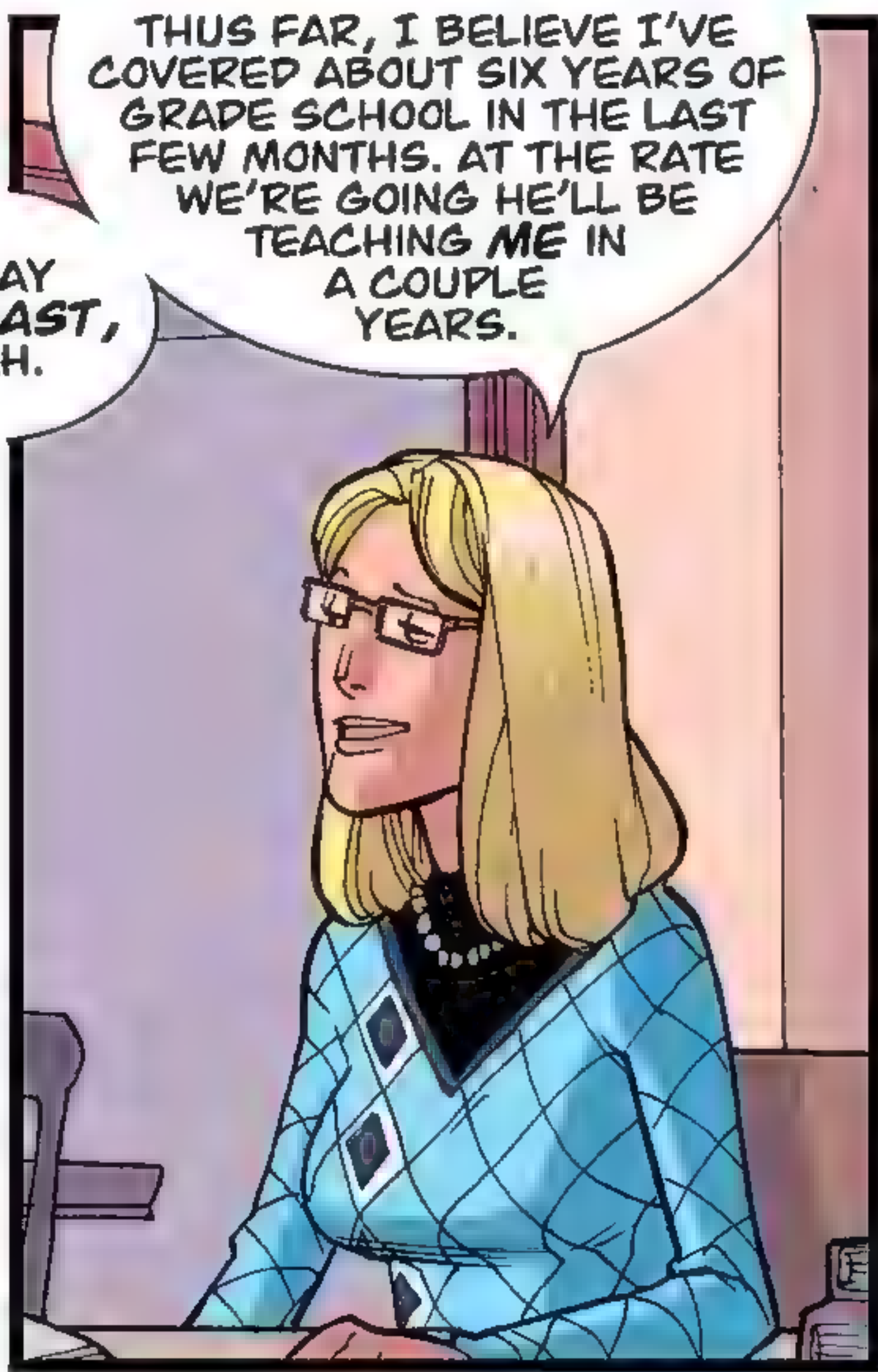
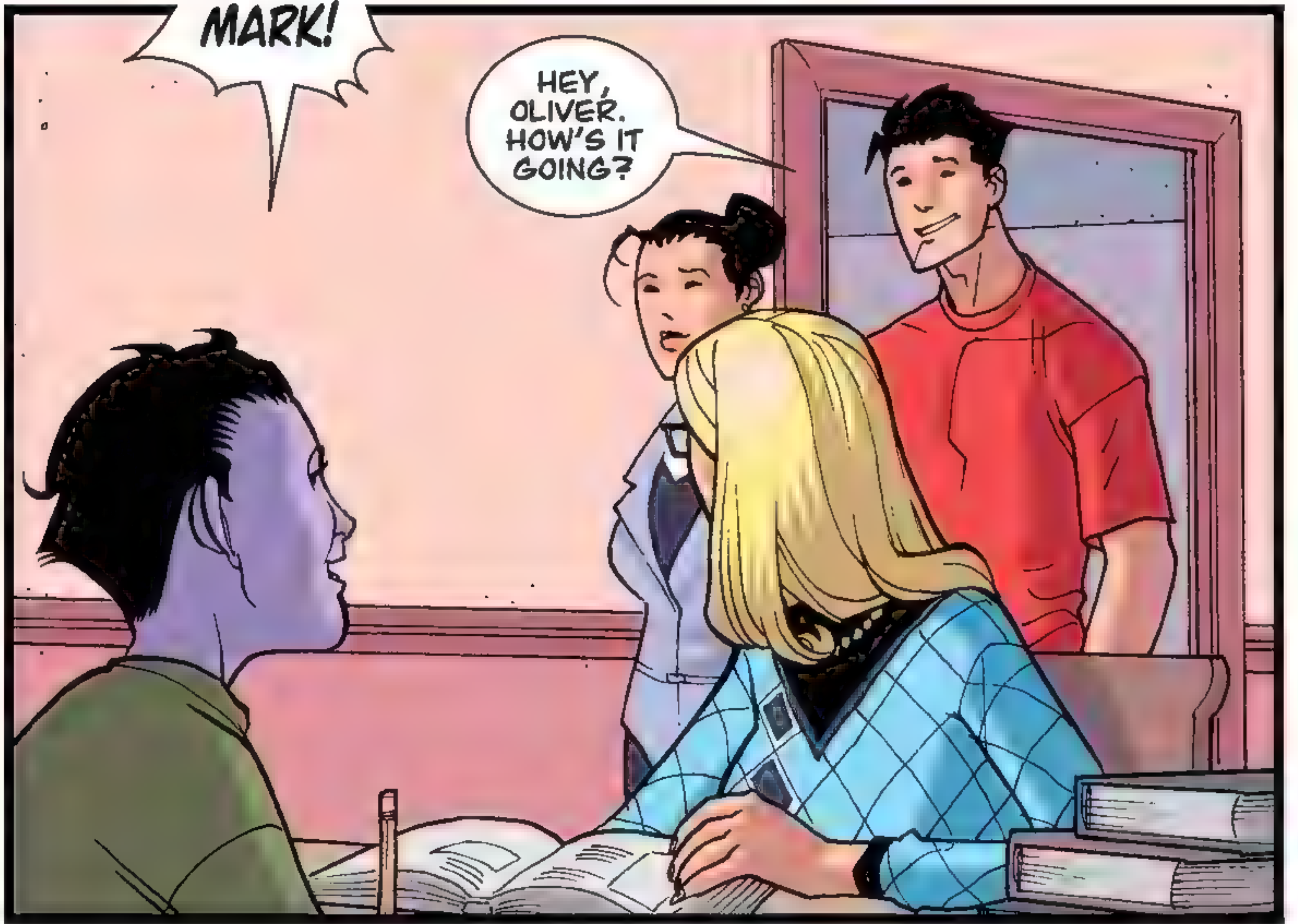
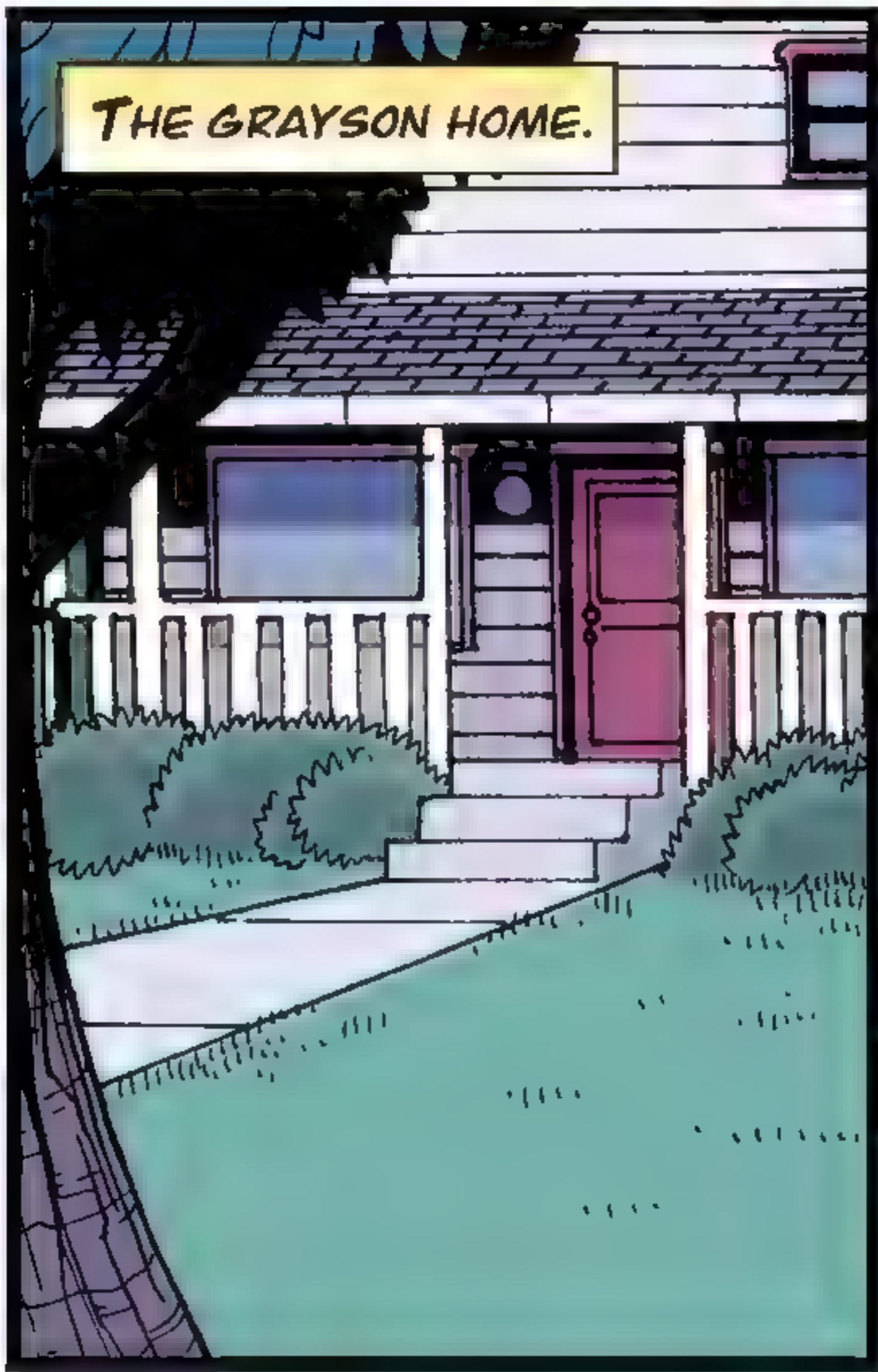
WE WERE
SENT TO ASSIST
YOU. DO YOU
NEED MEDICAL
ATTENTION?

NO--JUST,
CHECK ON THE
PEOPLE IN THE
SHIP, MAKE SURE
THEY'RE OKAY.
I'M ALRIGHT,
I'M--

I'M
FINE.









AT THIS RATE I SHOULD GET BACK HOME IN A FEW DAYS. NOT BAD REALLY, I'M MAKING GOOD TIME.

I WONDER HOW TELIA IS DOING. I'M SURE SHE'S MAD THAT I'VE BEEN GONE SO LONG. SHE DOESN'T REALIZE HOW IMPORTANT MY MISSIONS ARE.

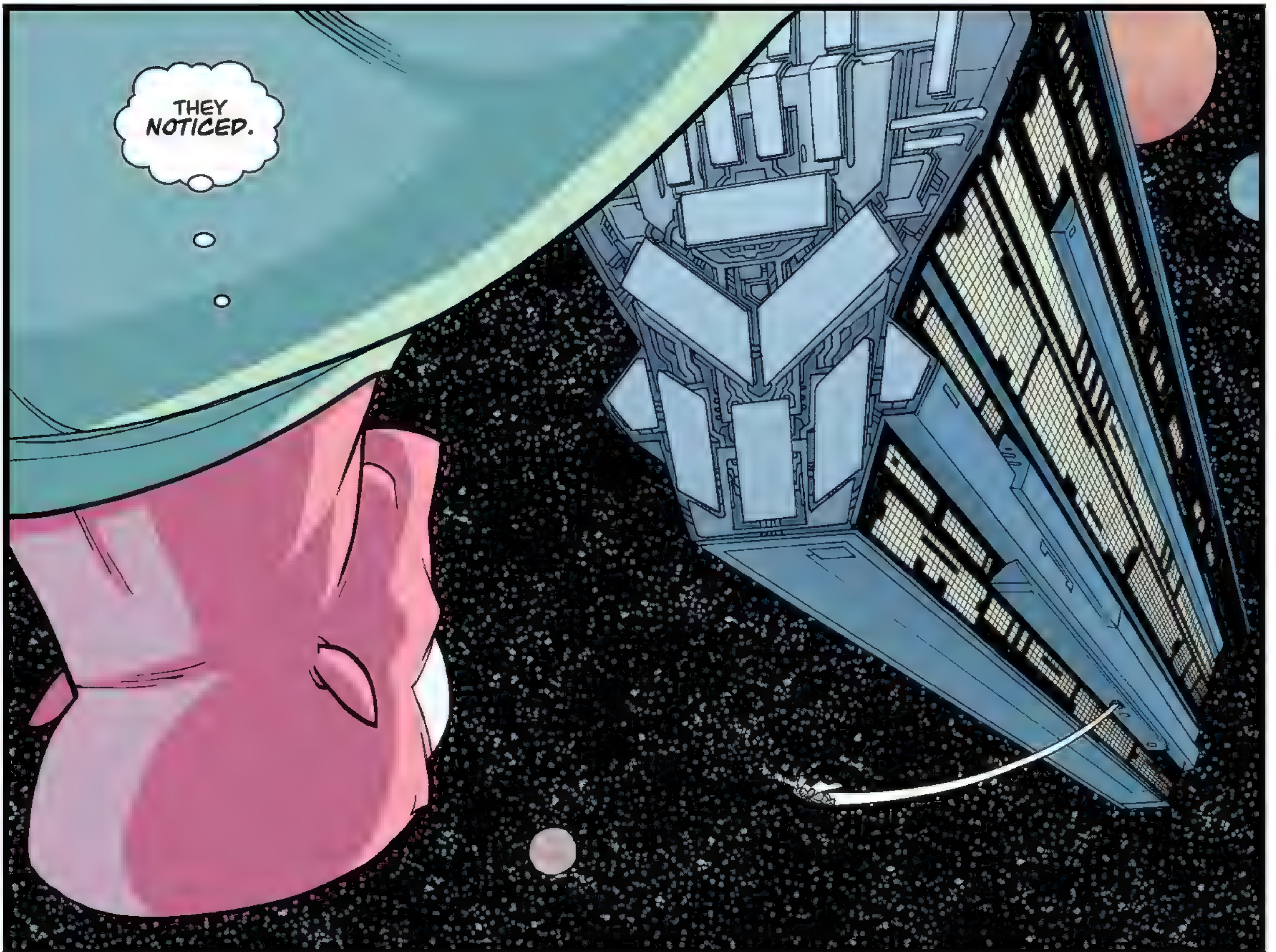
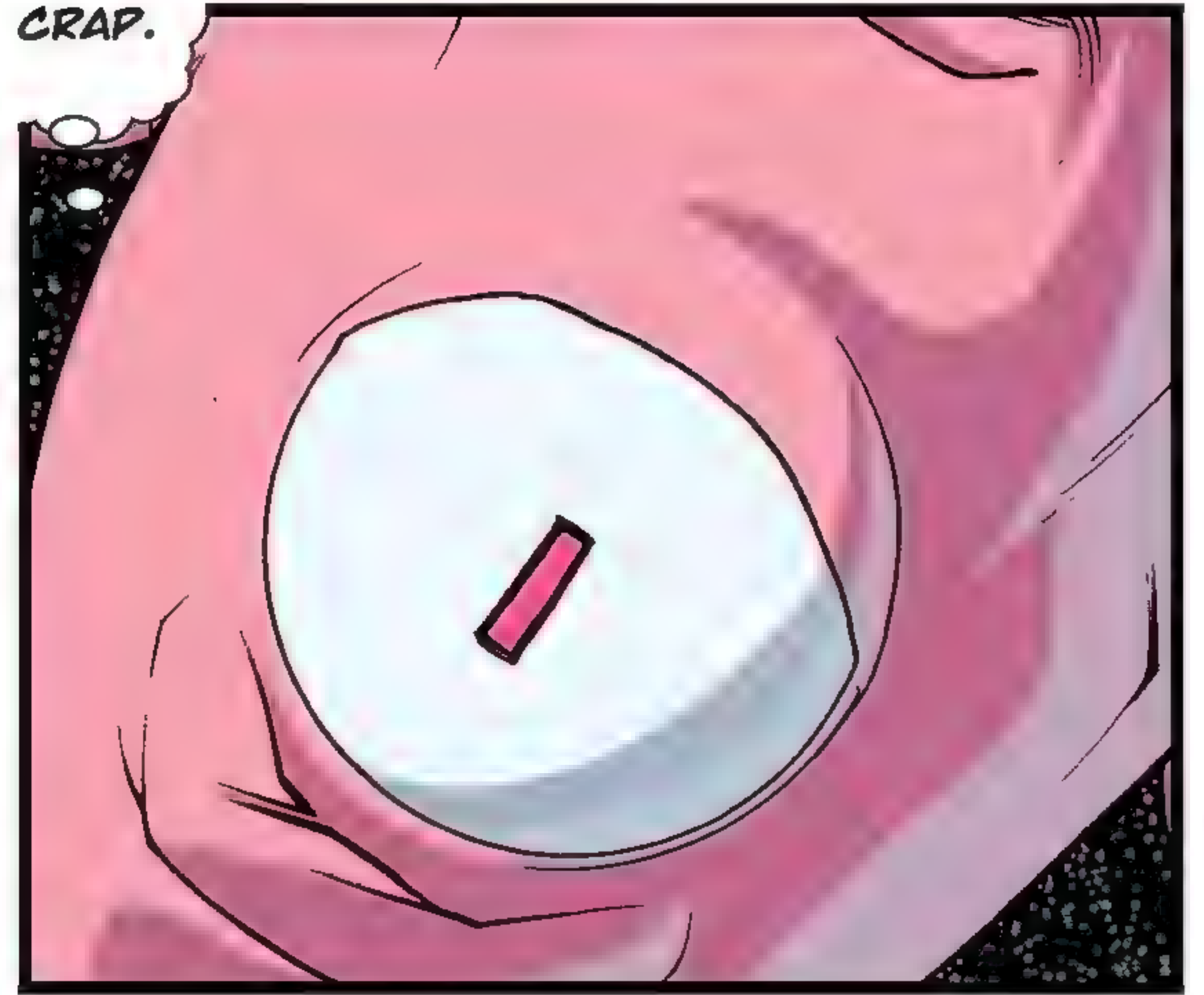
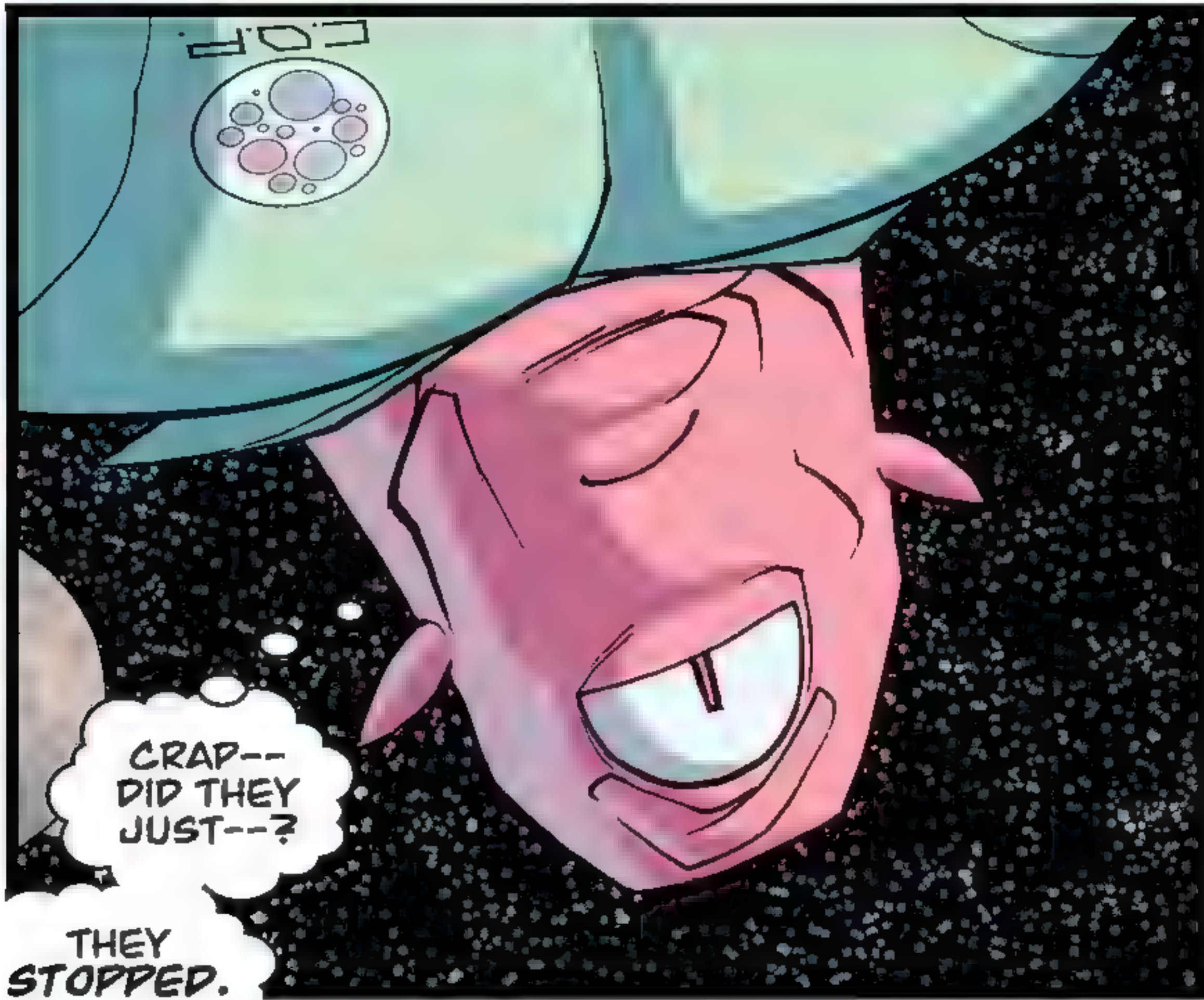
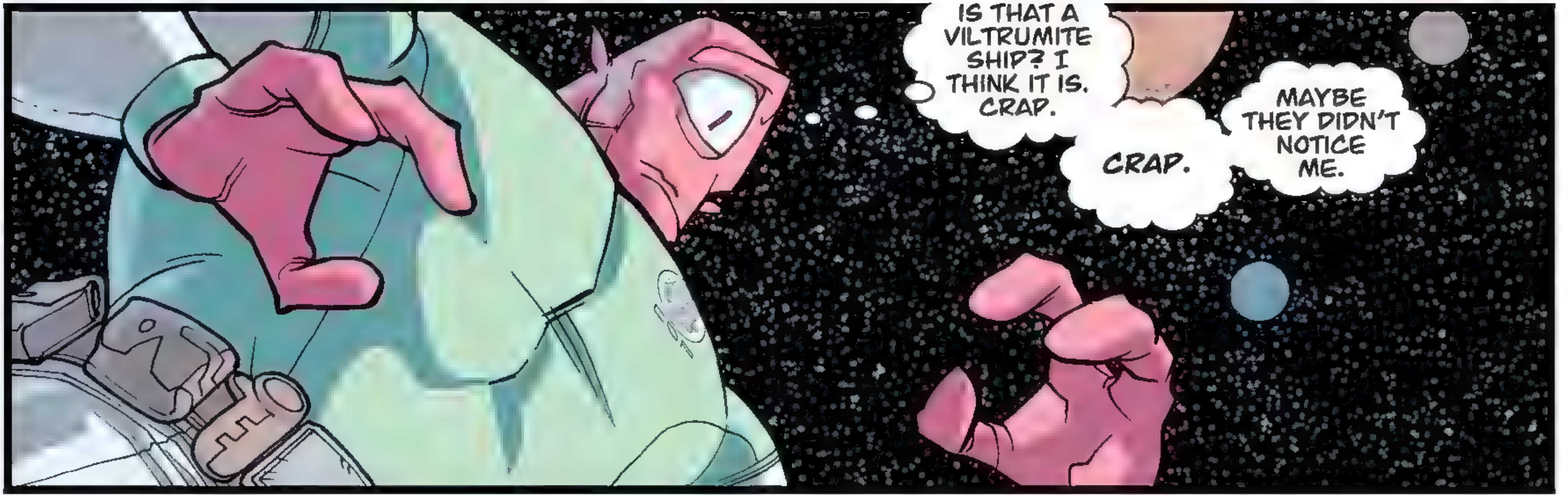


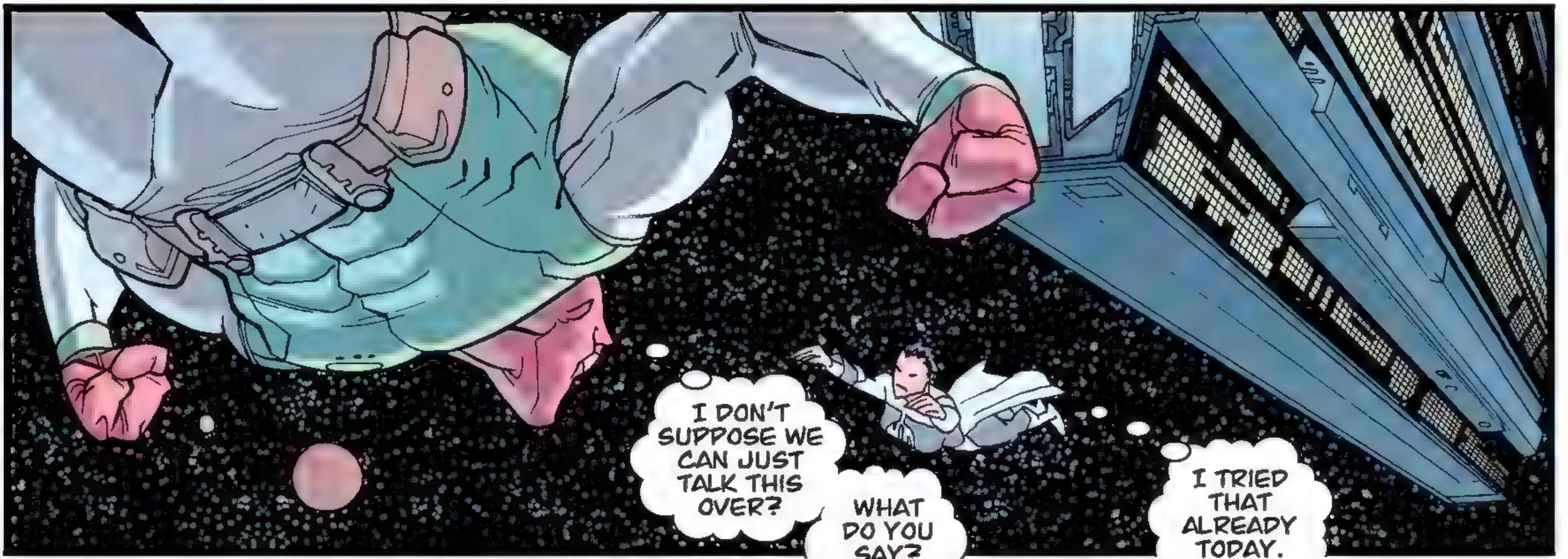
I DO MISS HER. I LOVE HER VERY MUCH.

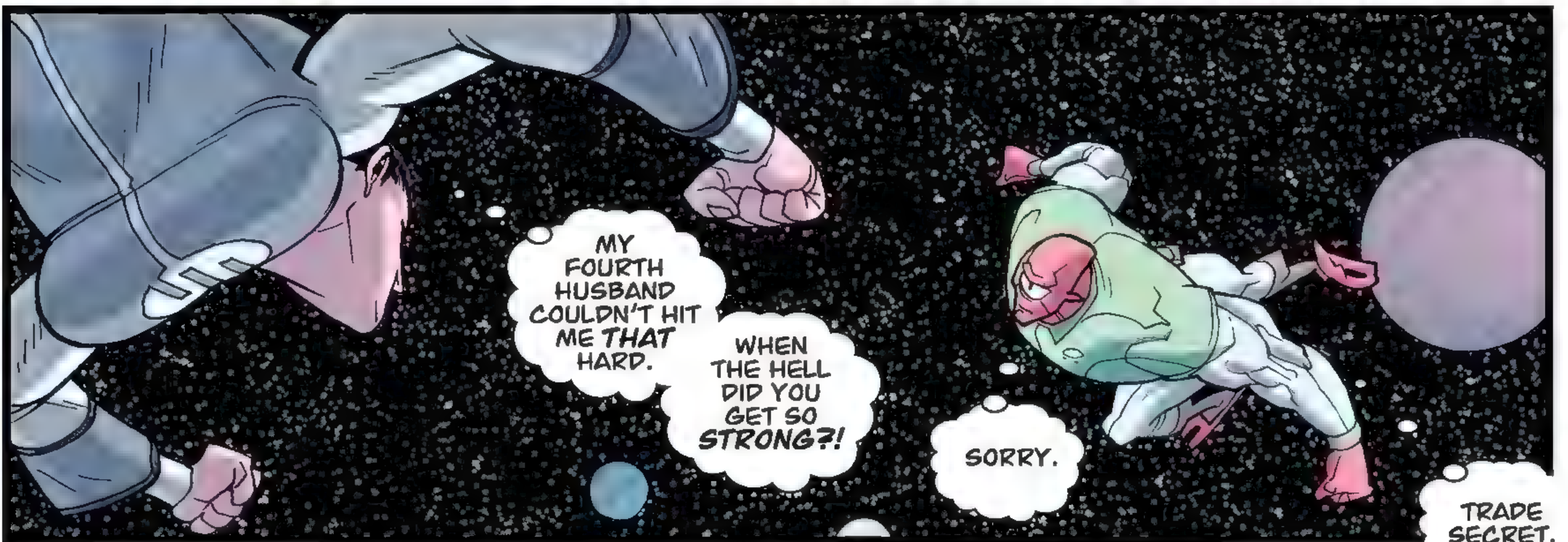
I WISH MY PEOPLE WOULD ALLOW ME TO MARRY HER. MAYBE NOW THAT MY POWERS HAVE BEEN ENHANCED I COULD CONVINCE THEM TO ALLOW IT.

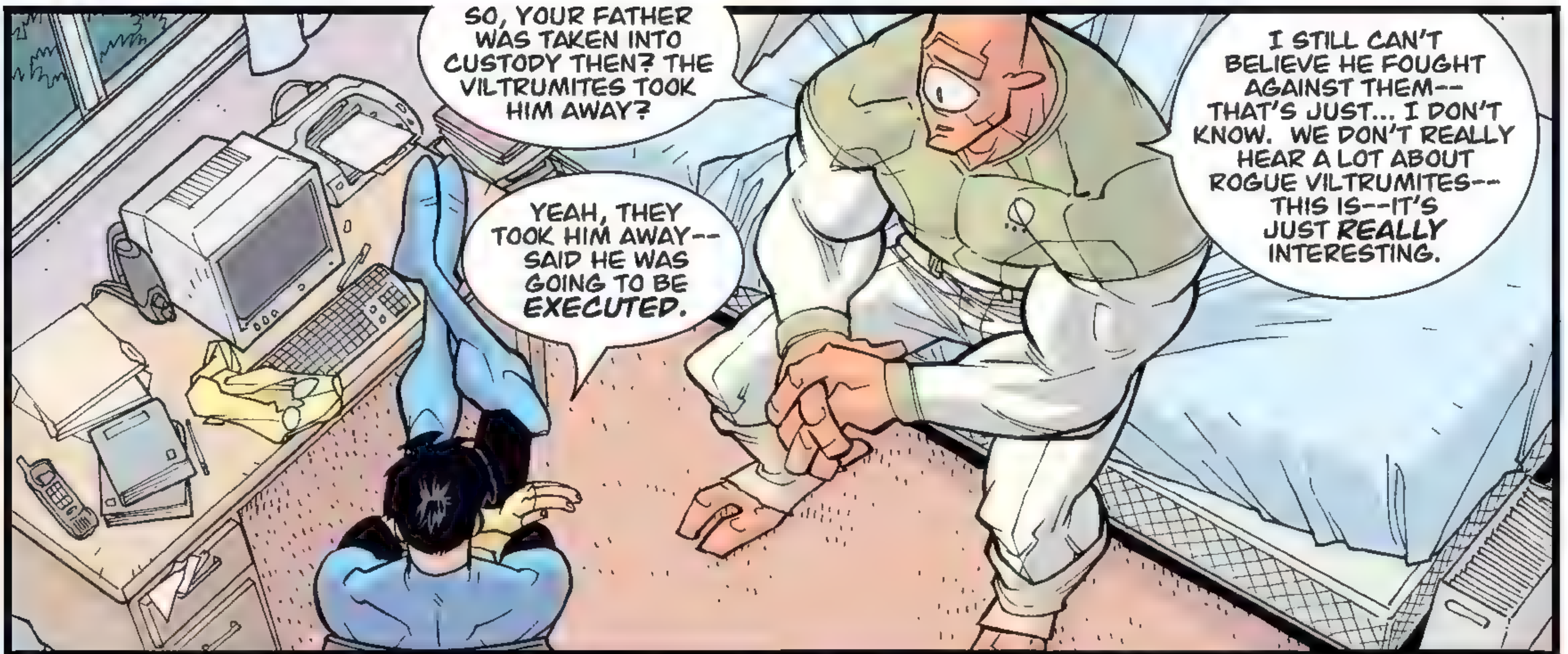
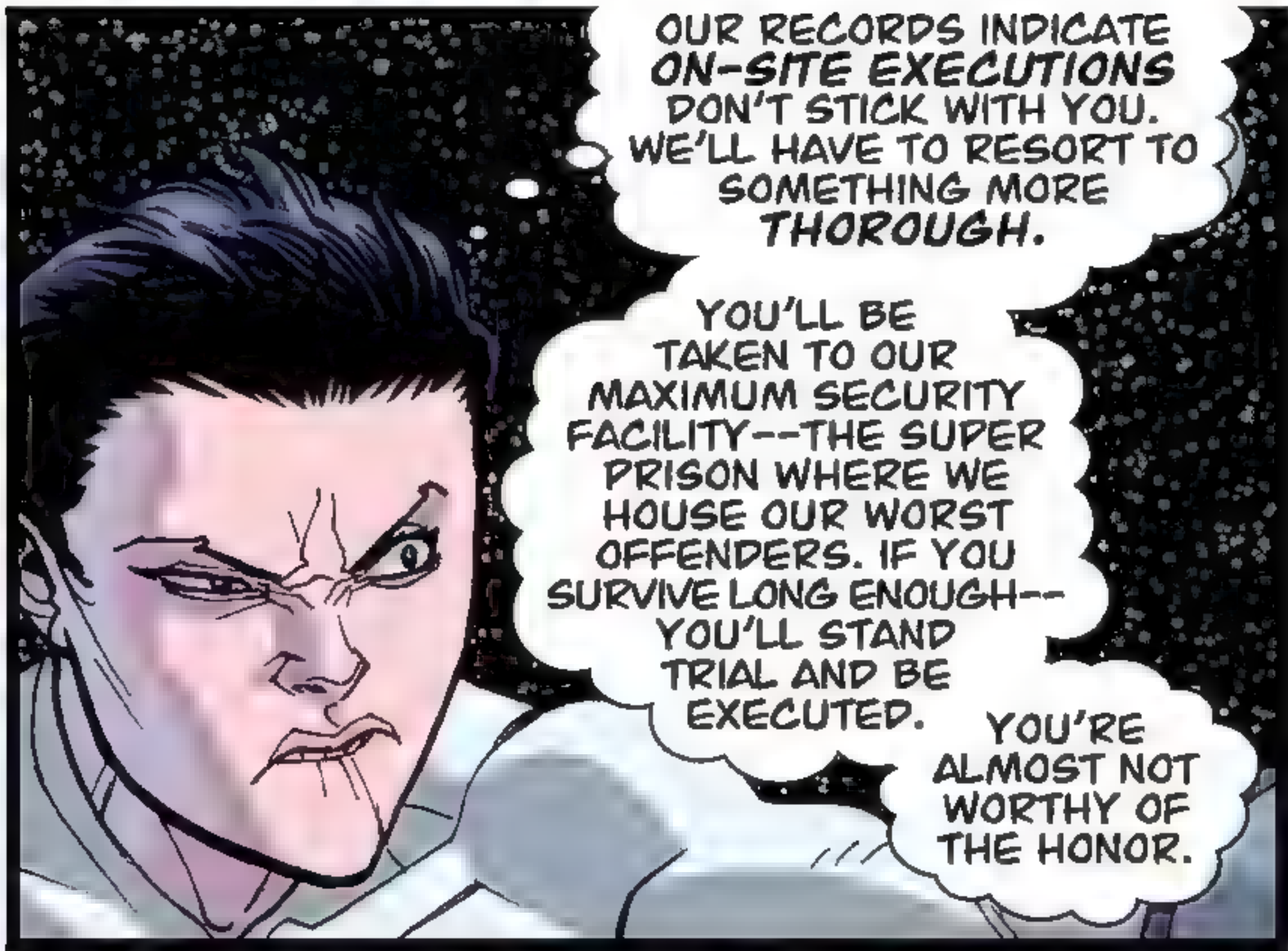
I JUST HATE LIVING IN SECRET SO MUCH.

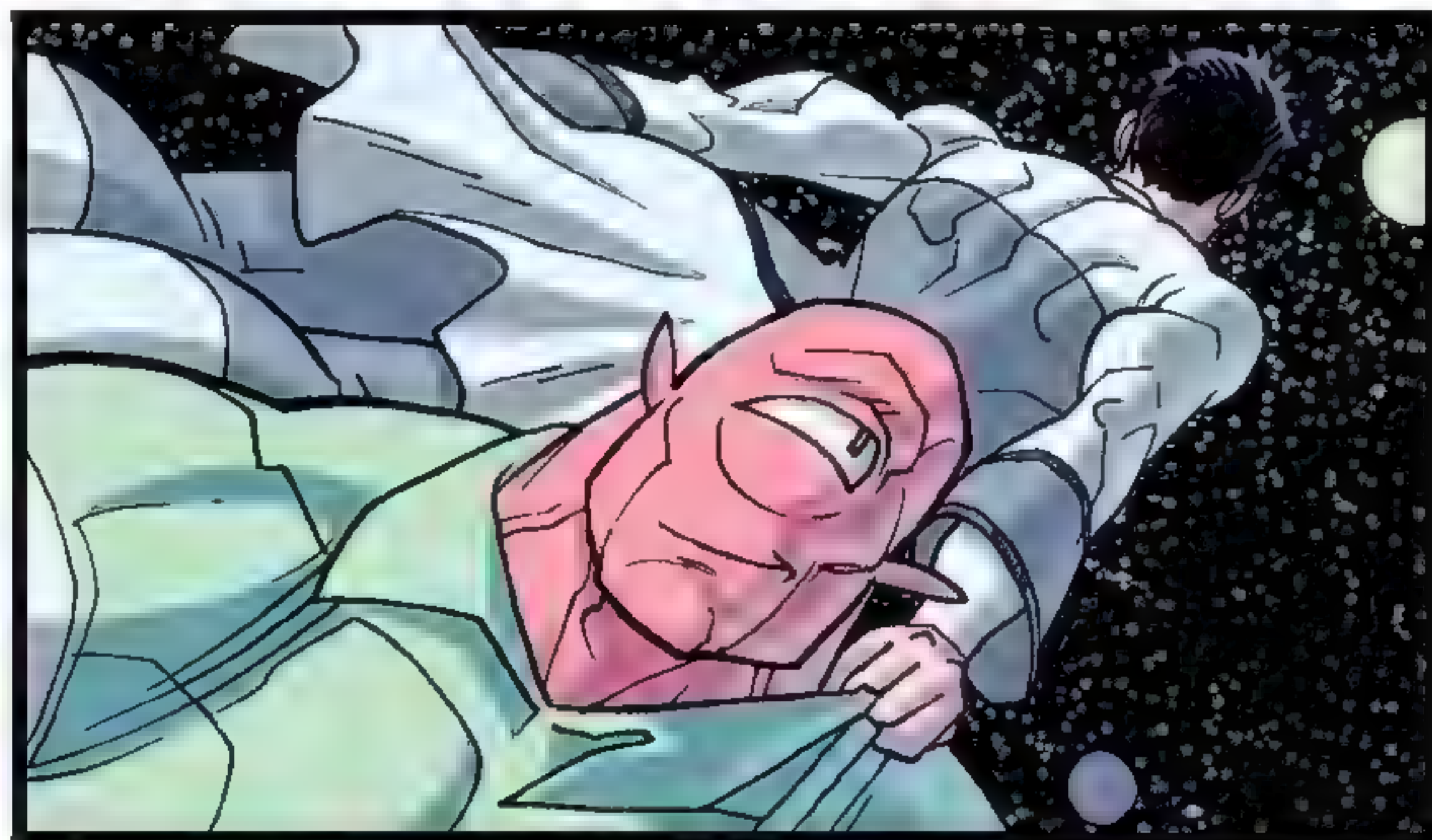
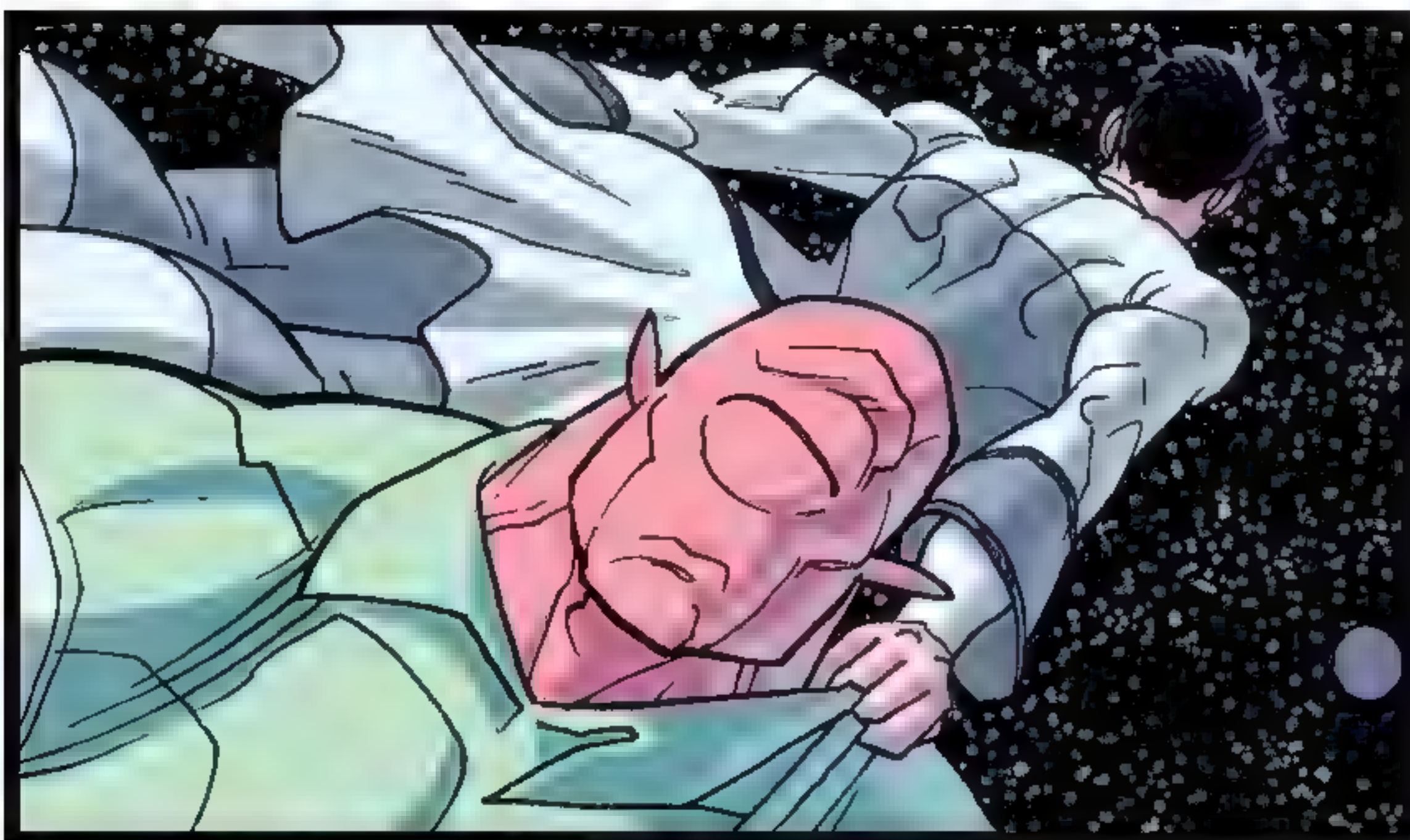
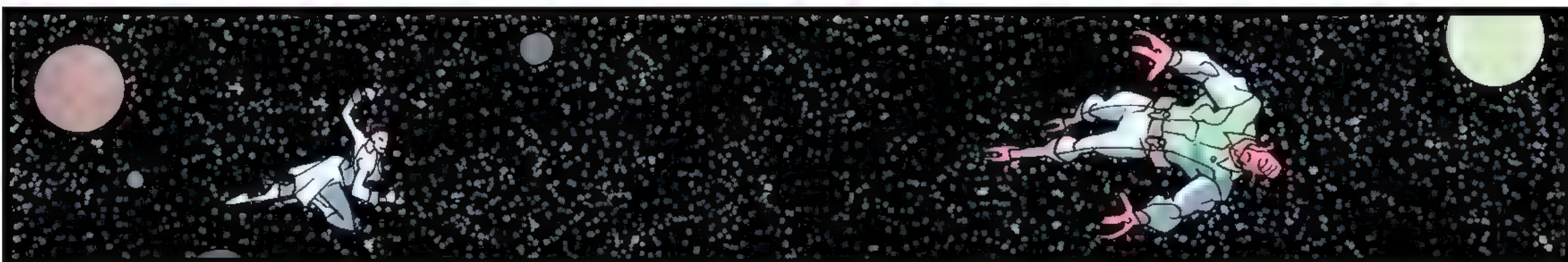






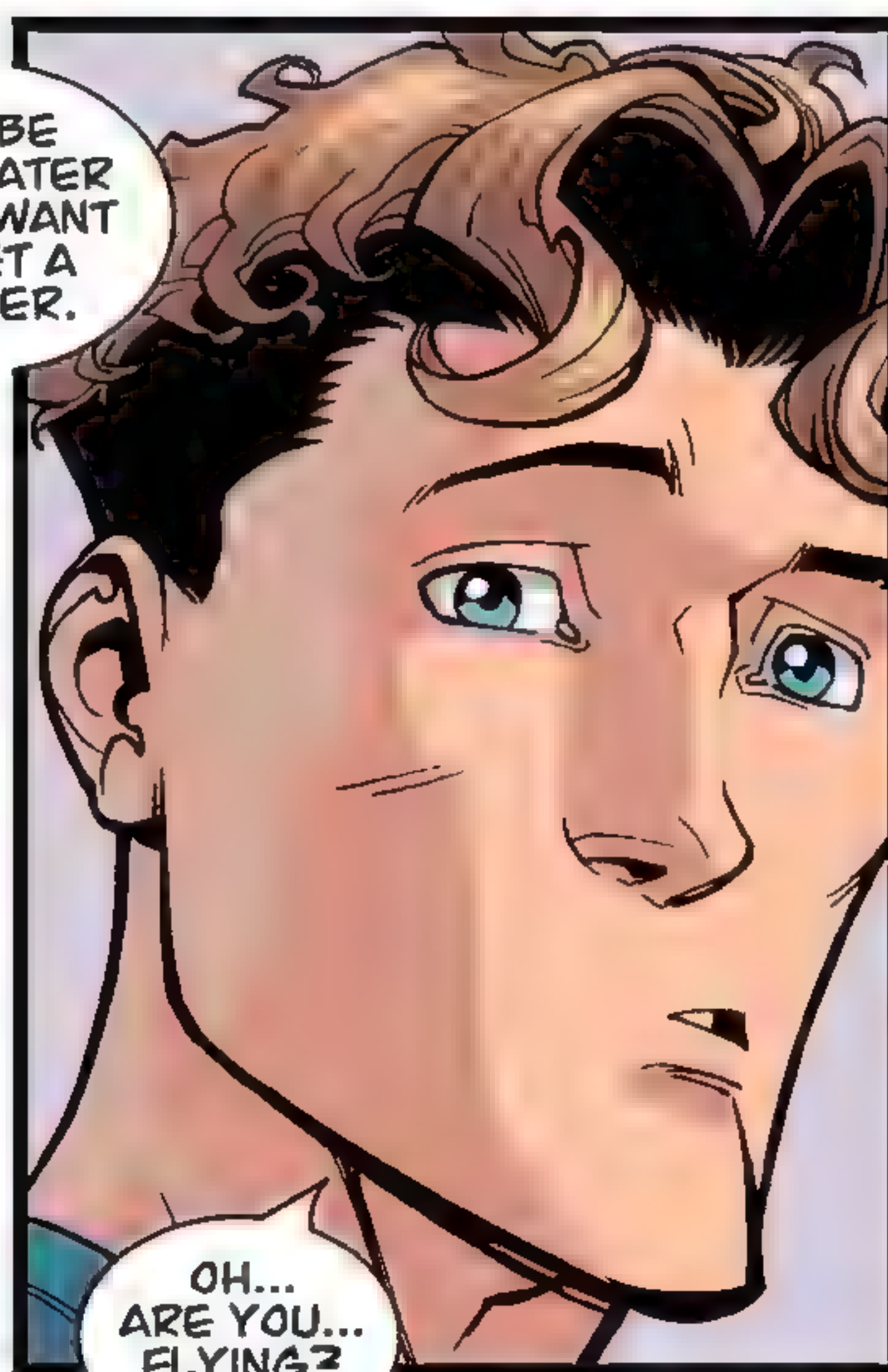
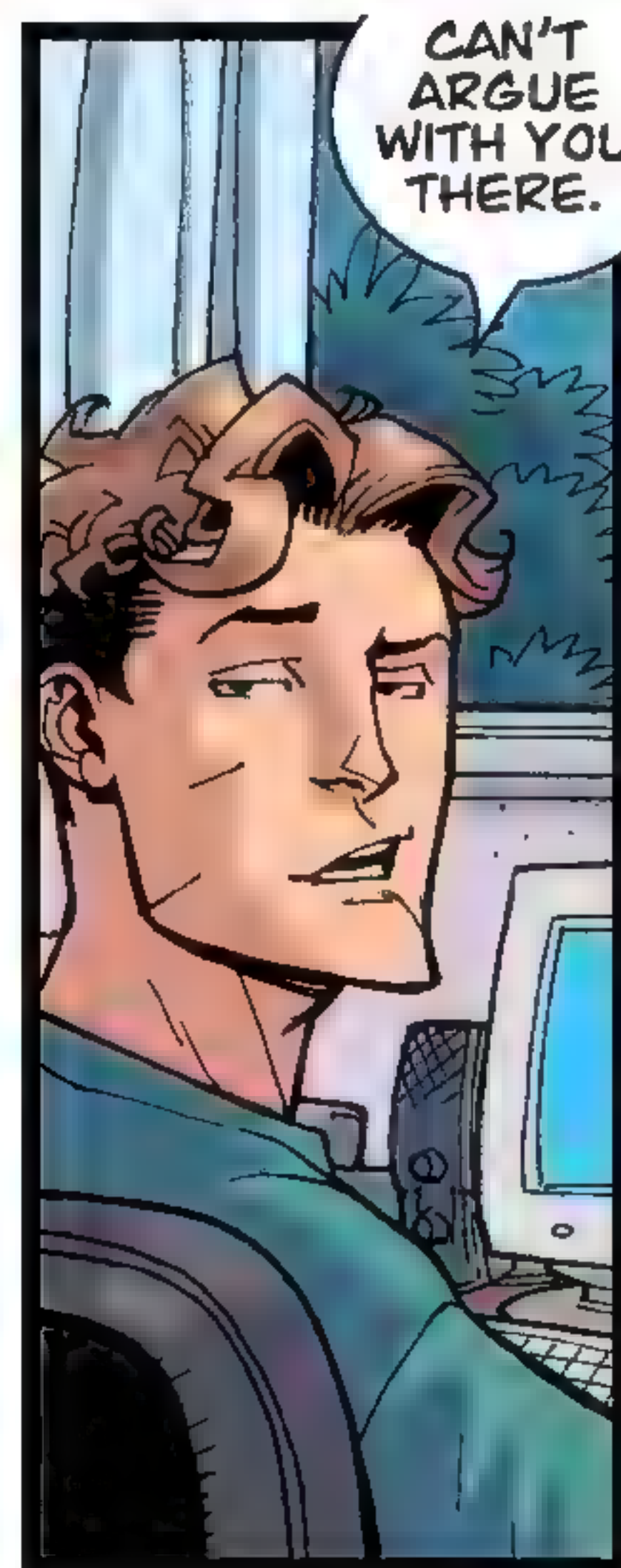
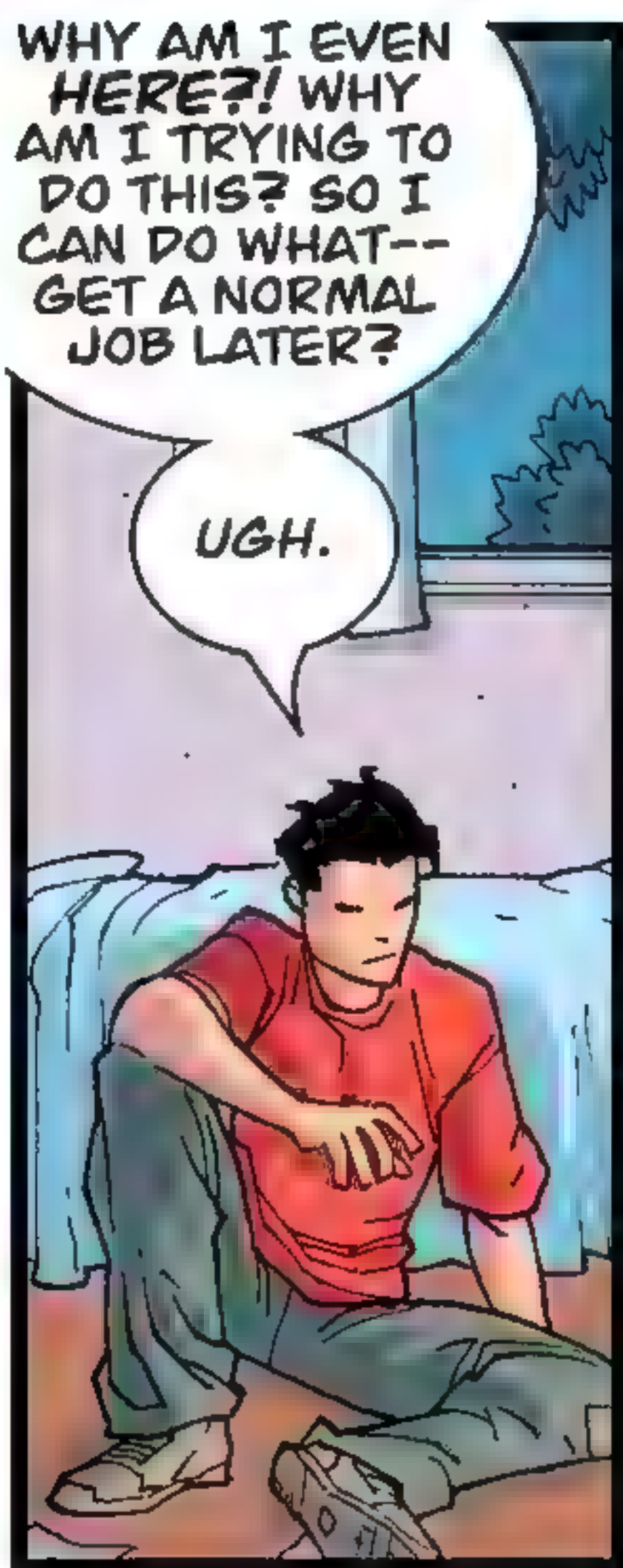
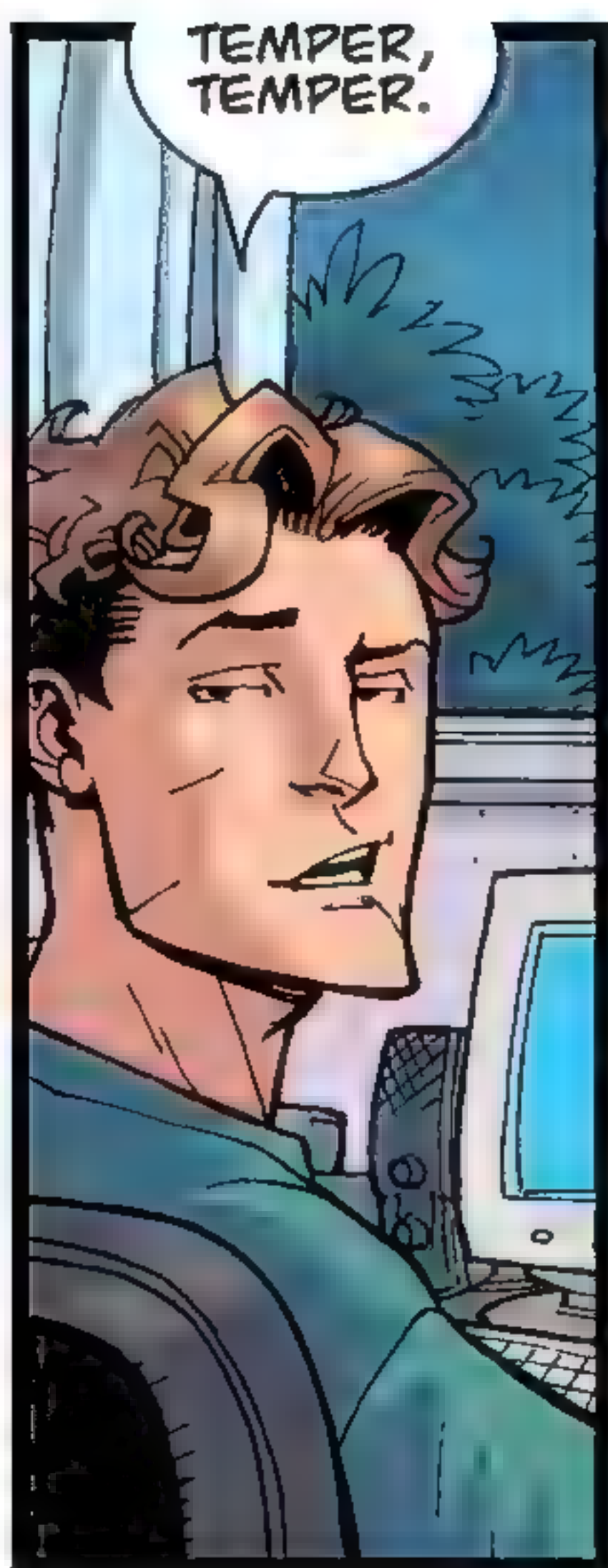




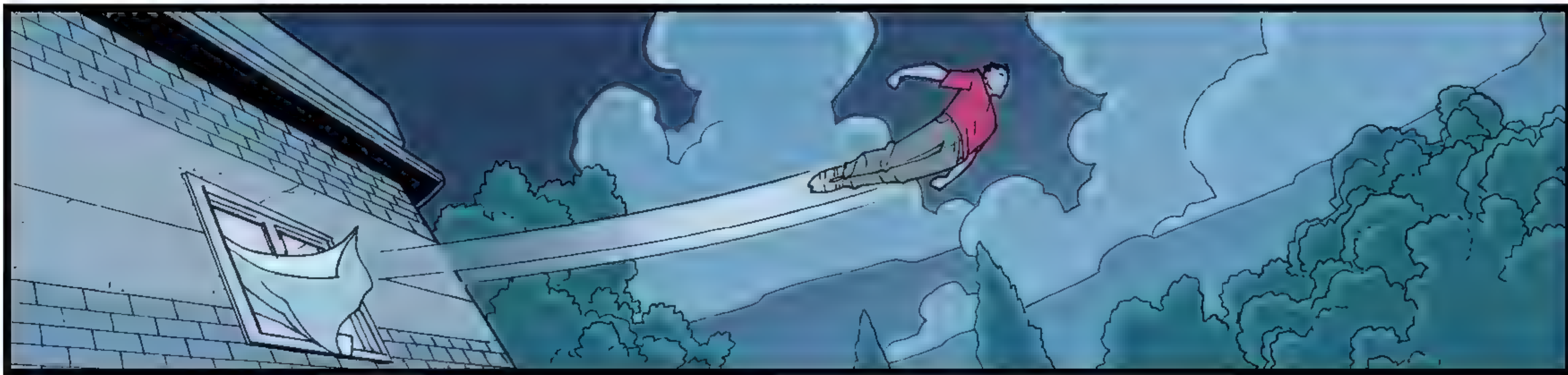




UPSTATE UNIVERSITY.
THE DORM ROOM OF
MARK GRAYSON AND
WILLIAM CLOCKWELL.



I HOPE THAT'S COOL.



"FIVE YEARS
OR FIVE
MONTHS..."

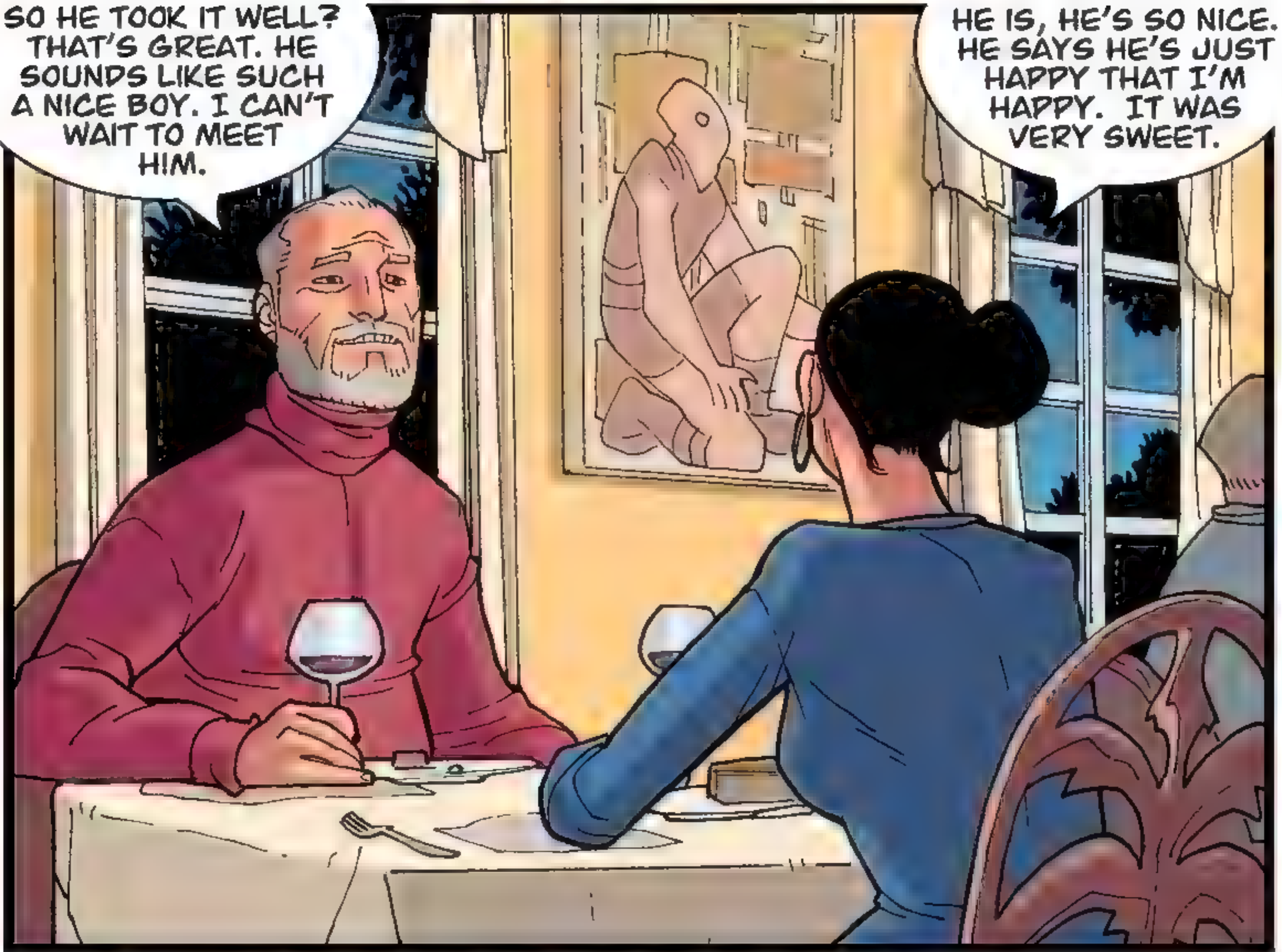
≡SIGH≡

CRAP.

I'M
GOING TO
NEED TO START
WORKING
OUT MORE.



CROCKETT'S GRILL AND FINE EATERY. WHERE DEBBIE GRAYSON IS ENJOYING A NICE EVENING OUT.



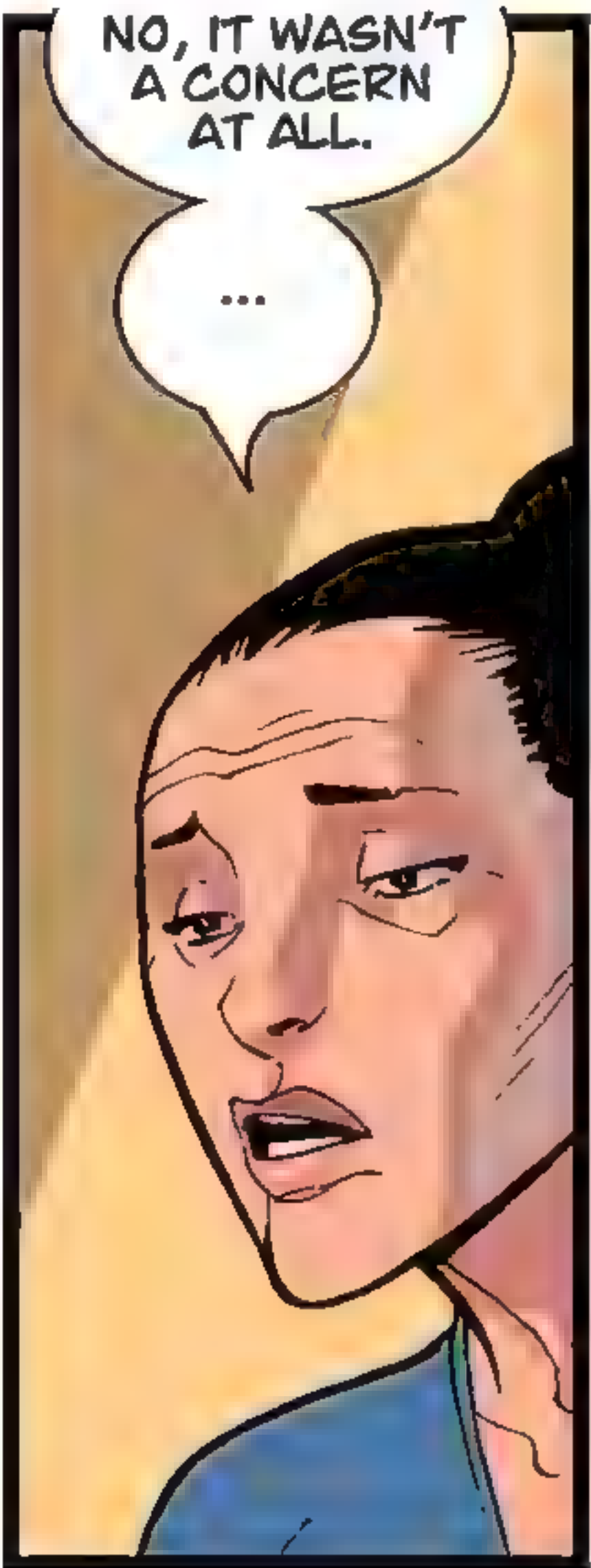
SO HE TOOK IT WELL? THAT'S GREAT. HE SOUNDS LIKE SUCH A NICE BOY. I CAN'T WAIT TO MEET HIM.

HE IS, HE'S SO NICE. HE SAYS HE'S JUST HAPPY THAT I'M HAPPY. IT WAS VERY SWEET.



HE DIDN'T THINK IT WAS TOO SOON... AFTER YOUR HUSBAND...?

I KNOW THAT WAS YOUR MAIN CONCERN.



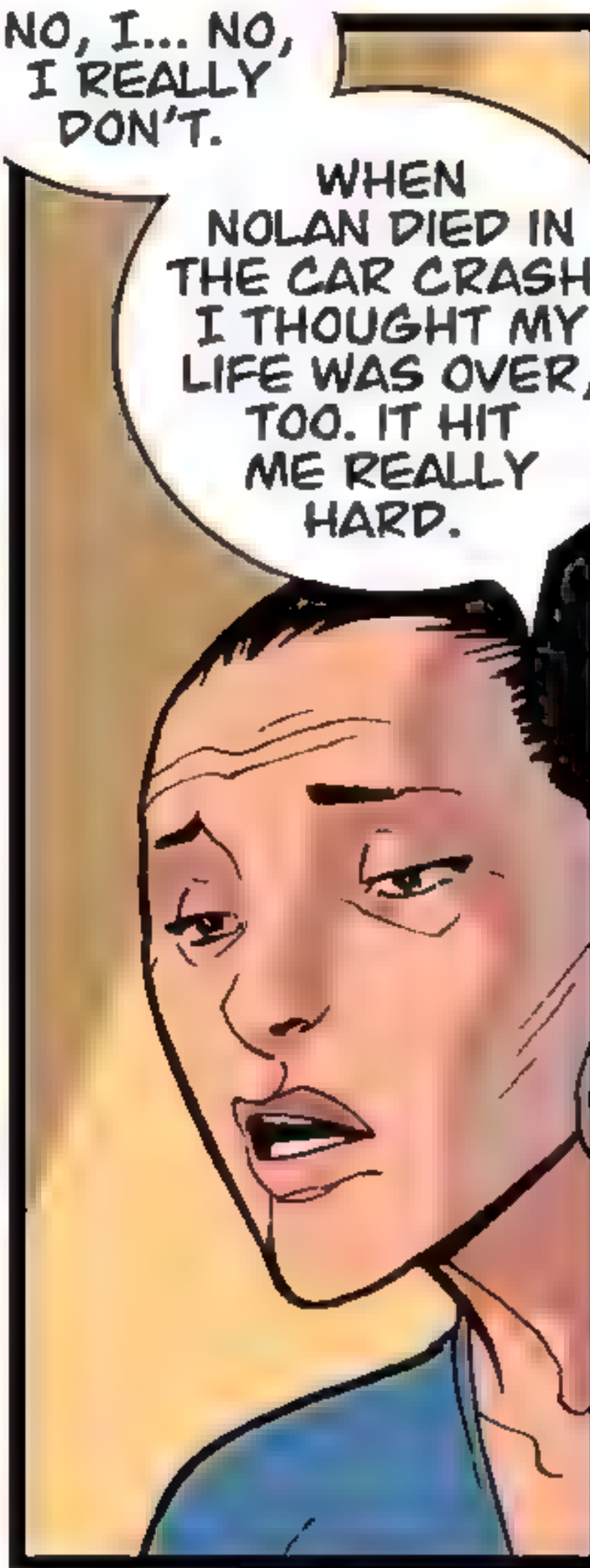
NO, IT WASN'T A CONCERN AT ALL.

...



DEBBIE...

...DO YOU THINK IT'S TOO SOON?



NO, I... NO, I REALLY DON'T.

WHEN NOLAN DIED IN THE CAR CRASH, I THOUGHT MY LIFE WAS OVER, TOO. IT HIT ME REALLY HARD.



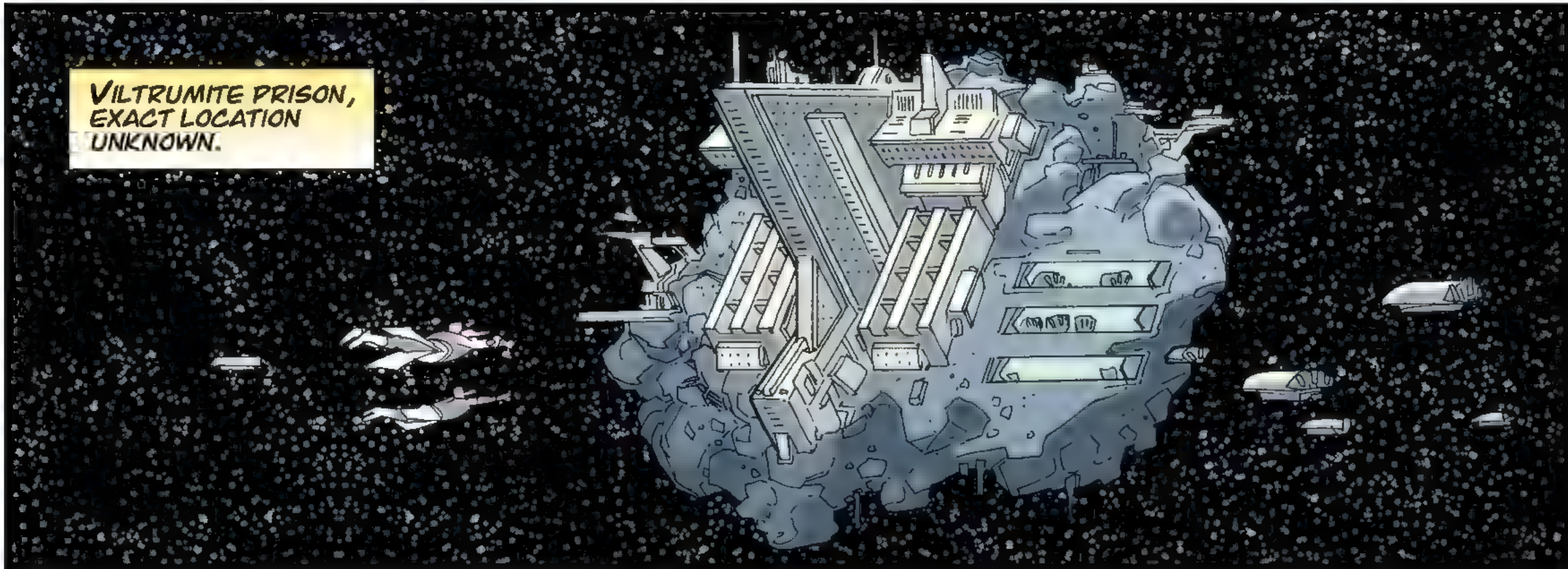
BUT AS TIME HAS GONE ON, THE THINGS I'VE LEARNED SINCE HIS DEATH...

...ABOUT HIM... ABOUT US...



THE THING THAT UPSETS ME THE MOST IS KNOWING THAT HE NEVER REALLY LOVED ME IN THE FIRST PLACE.

VILTRUMITE PRISON,
EXACT LOCATION
UNKNOWN.



NOLAN,
FRIEND. YOU
SEEM
TROUBLED.

WHAT
IS IT THAT
TROUBLES
YOU SO?



MY SPINE IS HEALING,
I'M CLOSER TO
PERFECTION EVERY DAY.
ONCE I AM WORTHY
OF EXECUTION MY
LIFE WILL BE
TAKEN.

IS THAT
NOT REASON
ENOUGH
FOR MY
MOOD?




WE HAVE SHARED
THIS CELL FOR SOME
TIME NOW AND THAT
IS SOMETHING YOU
HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN.
TODAY IS
DIFFERENT.

IT IS
OBVIOUS TO
ME THAT THIS
IS SOMETHING
NEW THAT
TROUBLES
YOU.



I--



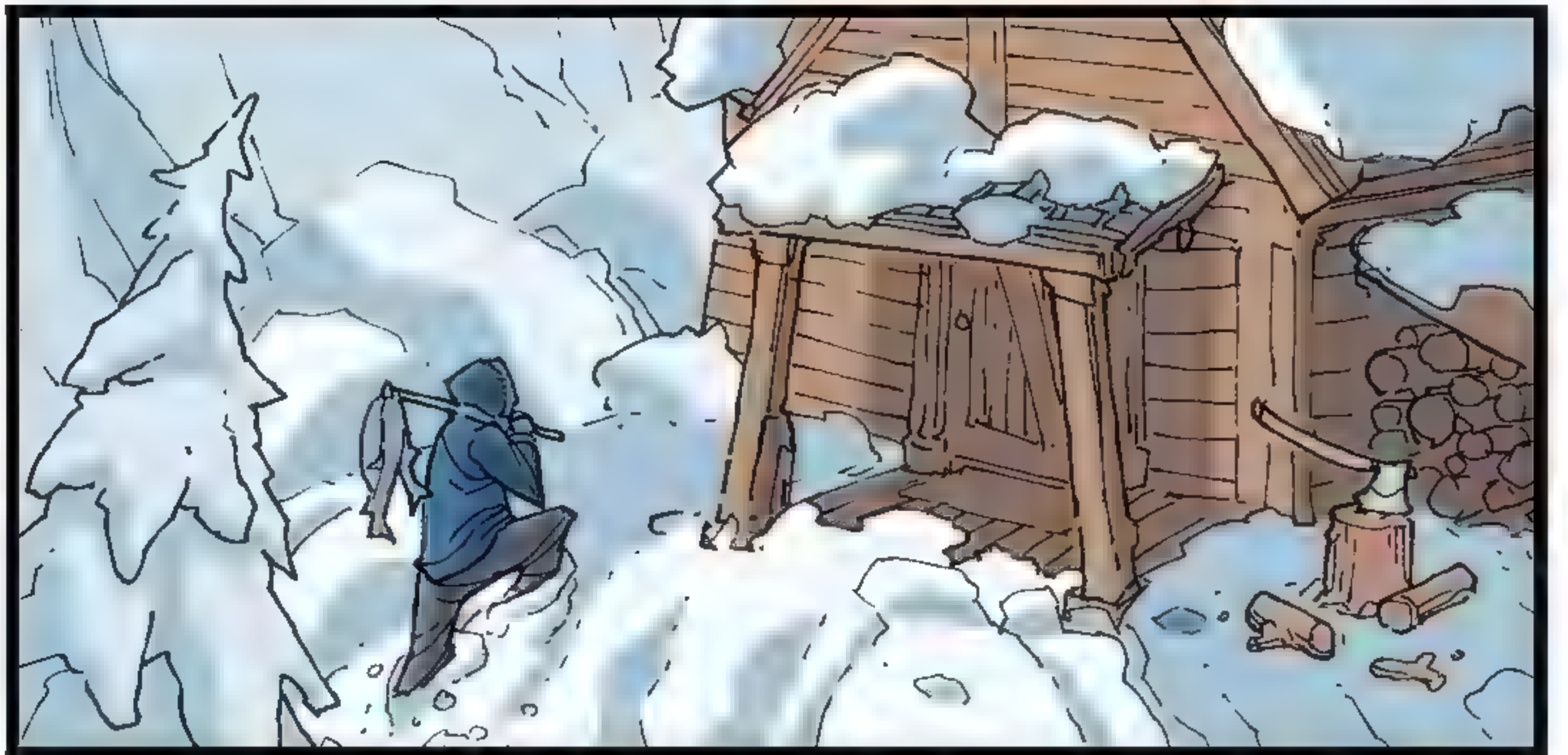
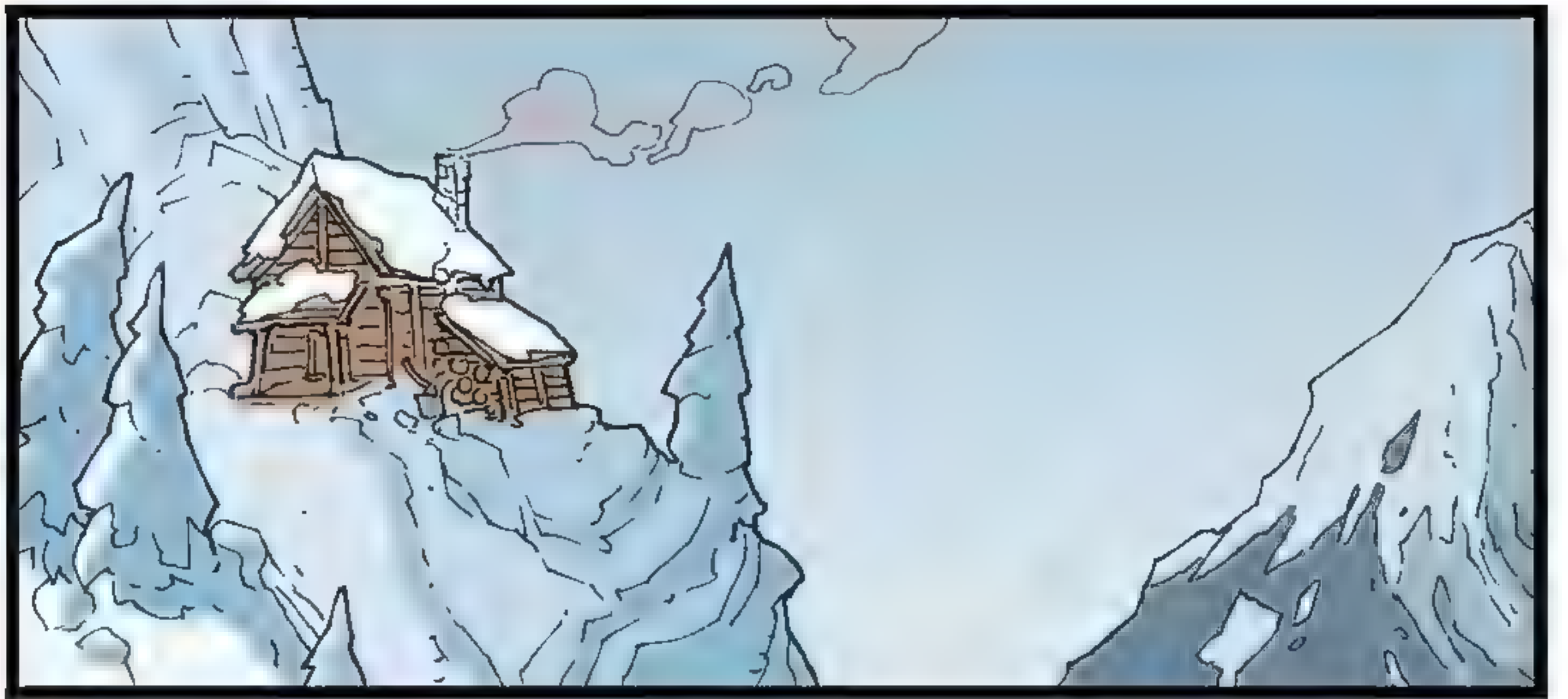


I THINK
I MISS MY
WIFE.



ISSUE FORTY-SIX







I'M
SORRY I
NEVER TOLD
YOU. I
NEVER TOLD
ANYONE.

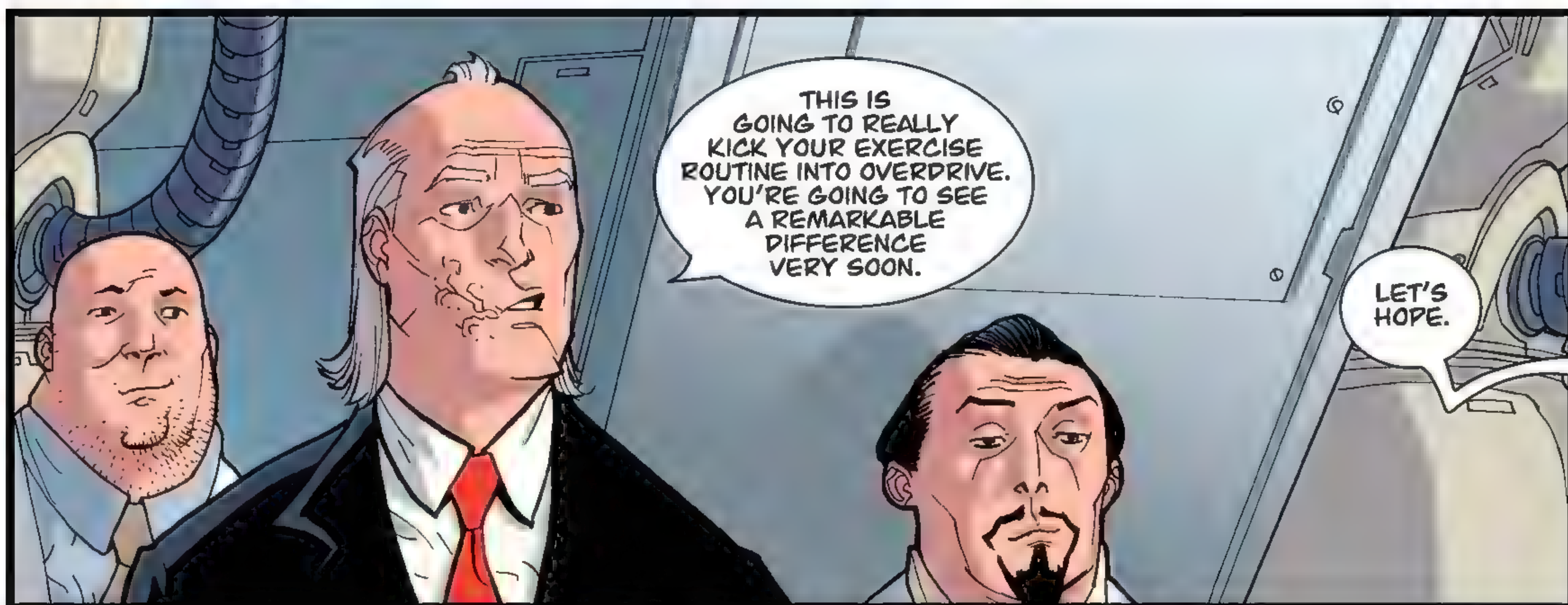
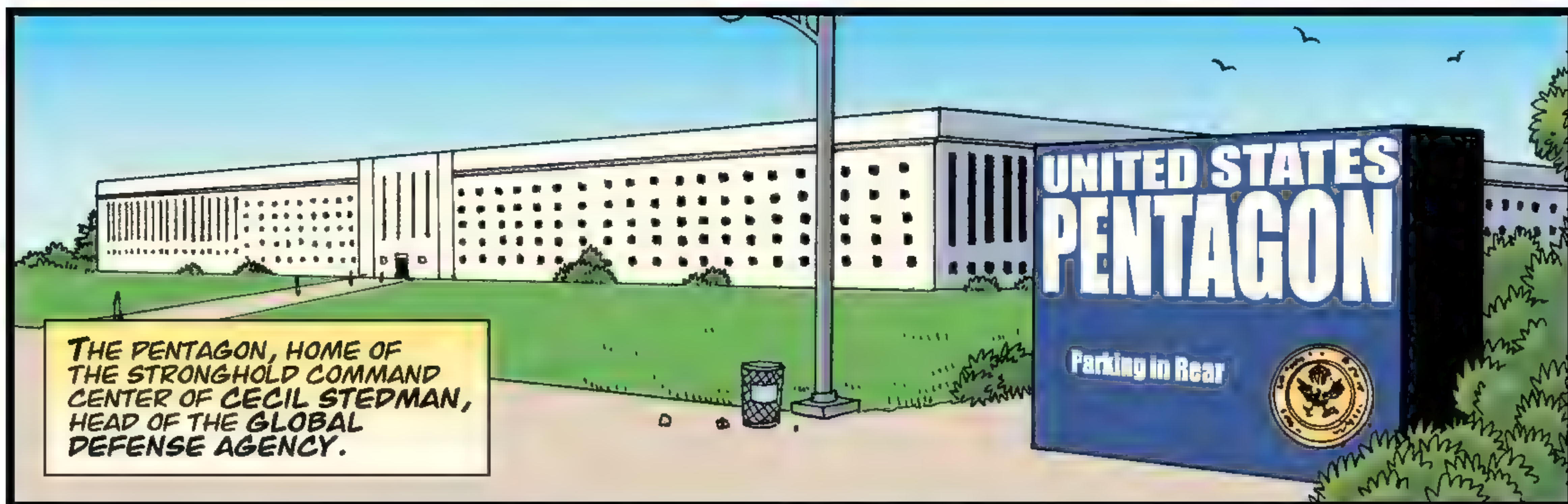
I HAD A
CLOSE CALL
ONCE--DECIDED
THEN AND THERE I'D
ALWAYS LIVE LIFE
THROUGH A COPY,
NEVER LEAVING MYSELF
EXPOSED. ALL MY COPIES
SHARE THE SAME
CONSCIOUSNESS, ALL
PART OF THE SAME
PERSON--IT'S HARD
TO EXPLAIN.

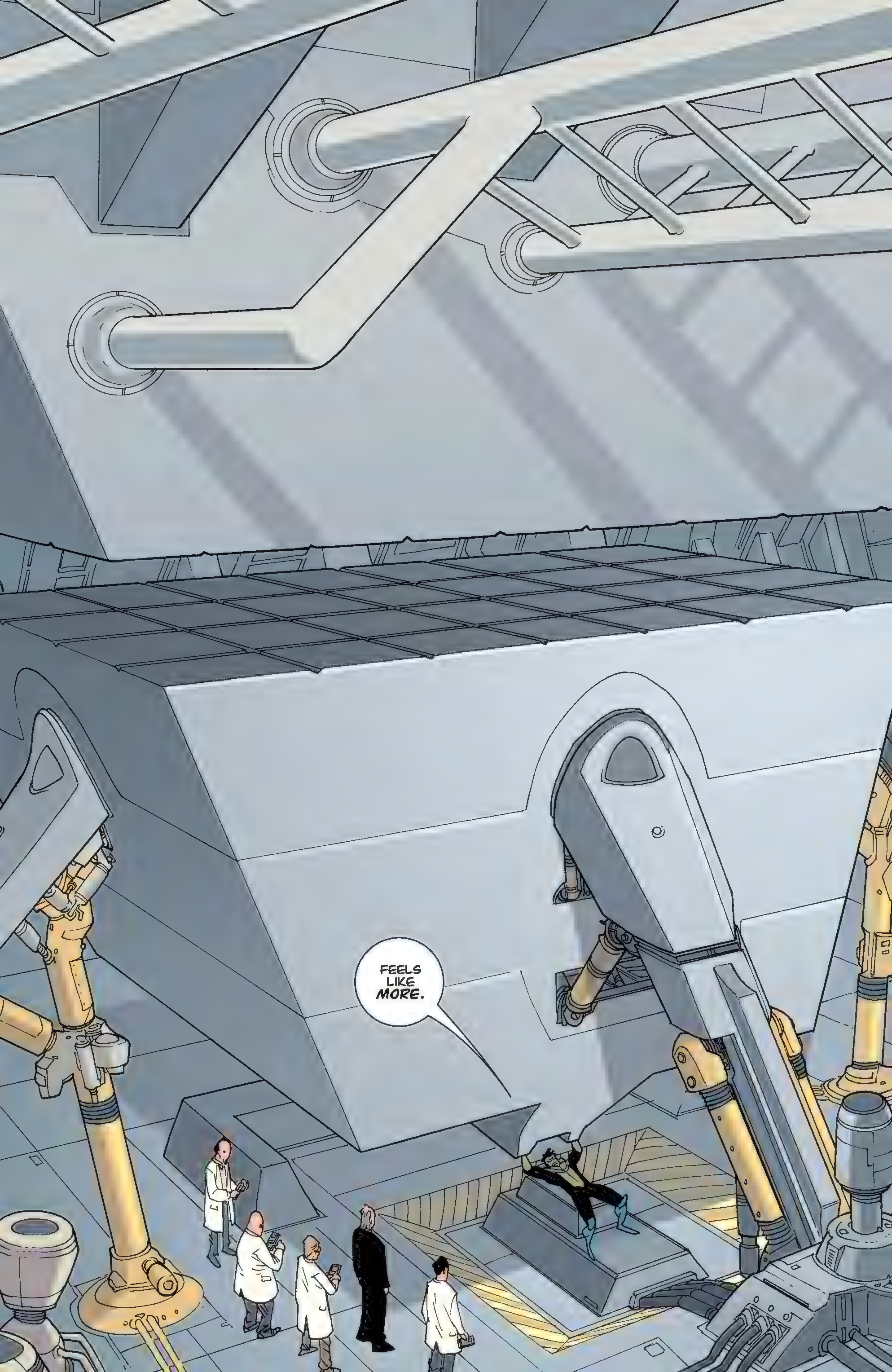
BUT I
TRUST YOU NOW...
AND I'M SORRY I
PUT YOU THROUGH
WHAT I DID. IT TOOK
ME A LONG TIME TO
GET OUT OF MY
SANCTUARY.



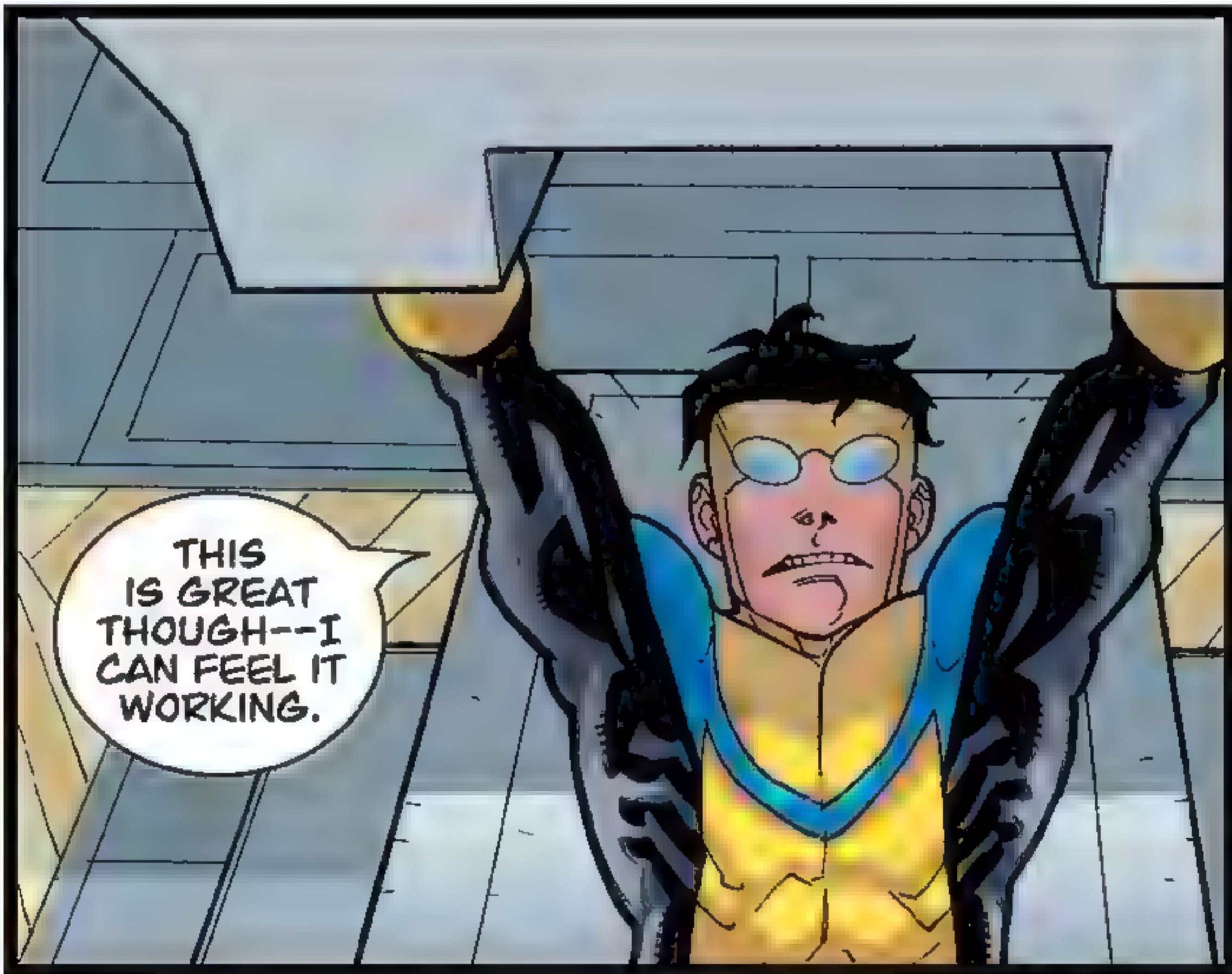
I NEED
YOUR
HELP.

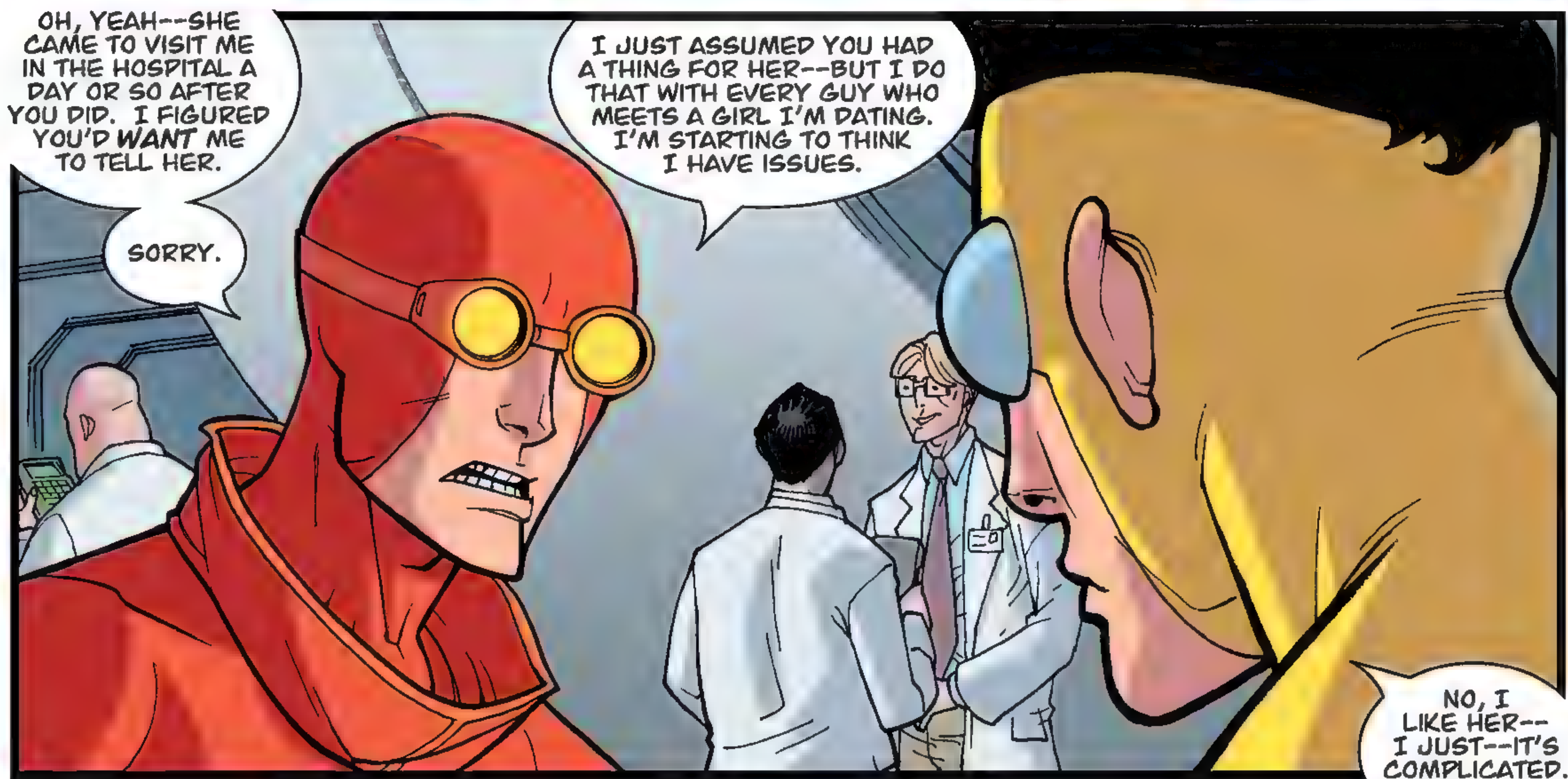
WE'VE
GOT TO STOP
MY BROTHER
BEFORE HE DOES
SOMETHING
STUPID.

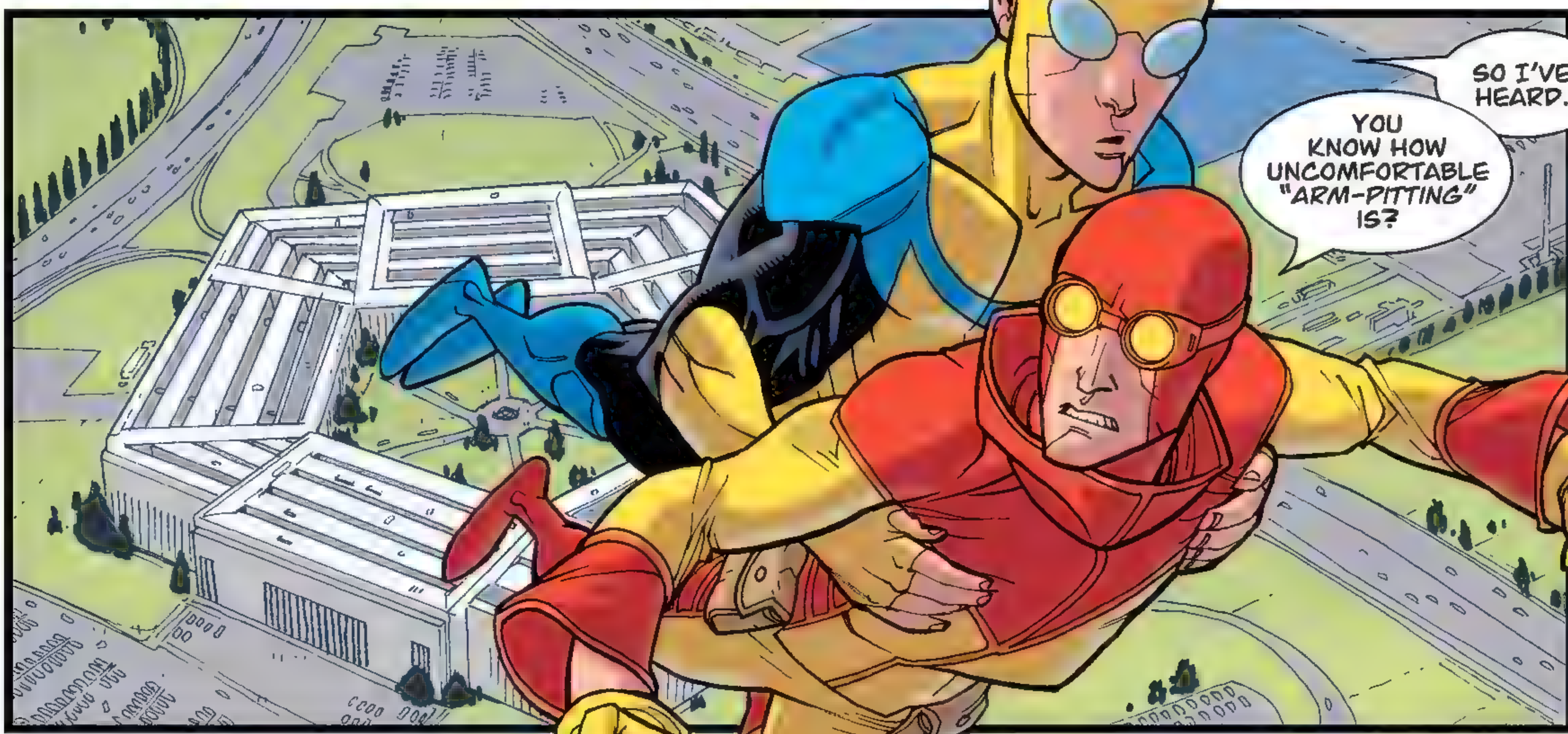
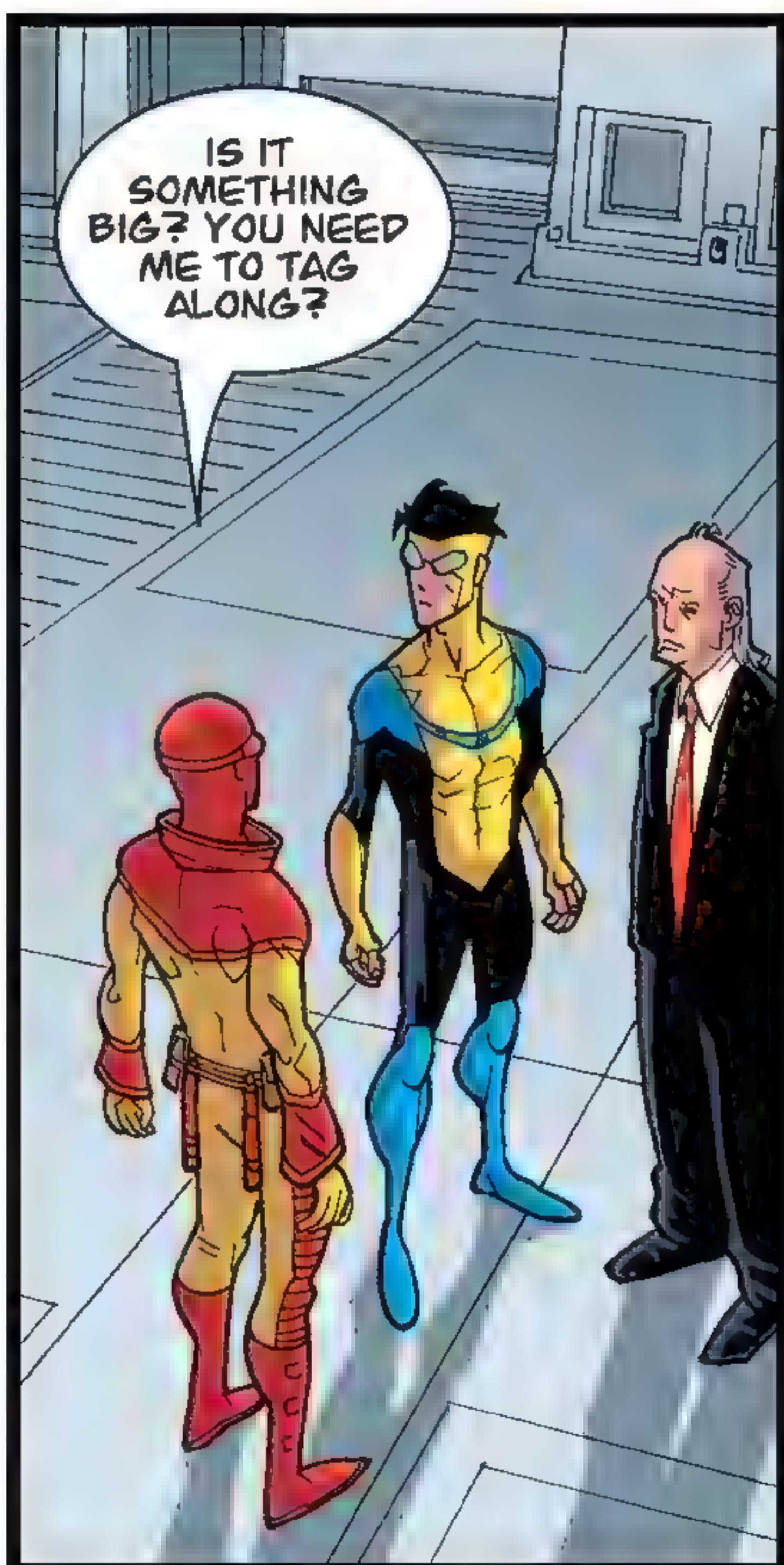




FEELS
LIKE
MORE.







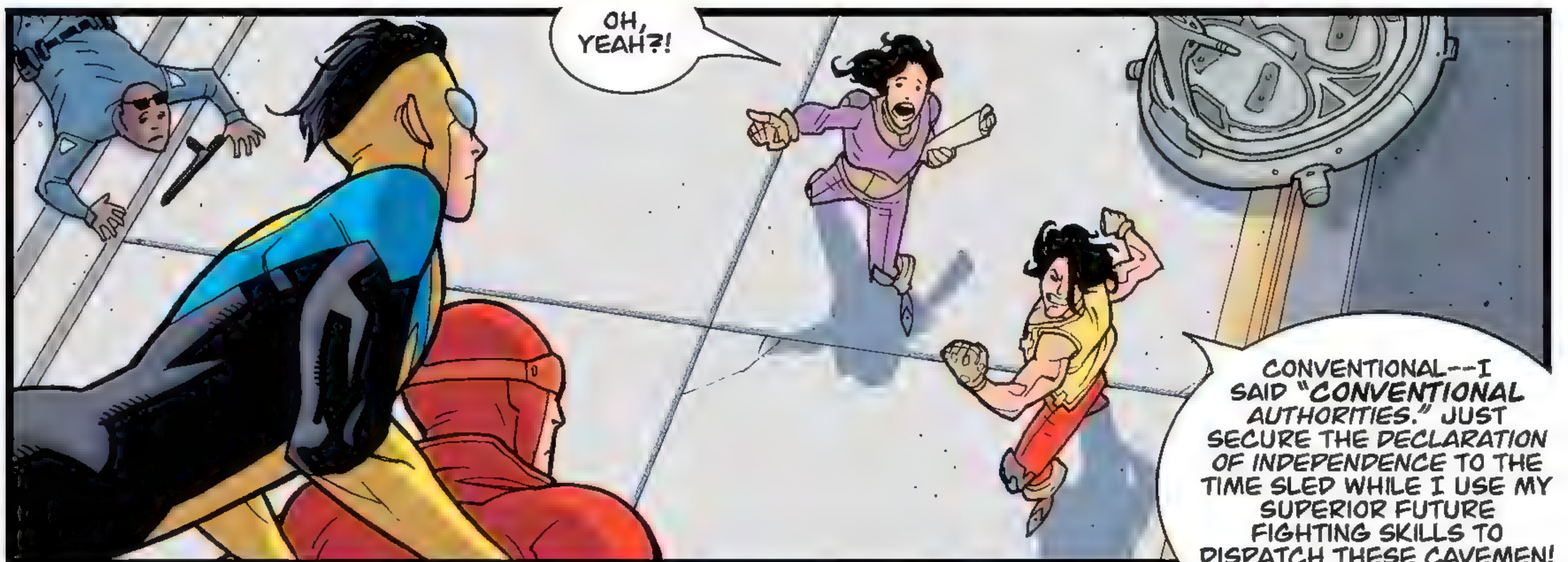


ACROSS TOWN--
THE SMITHSONIAN.

QUICK,
QUICK, QUICK--
WE GOTTA GET
AWAY FROM
THESE GOONS
AND GET ON
THE MOVE.

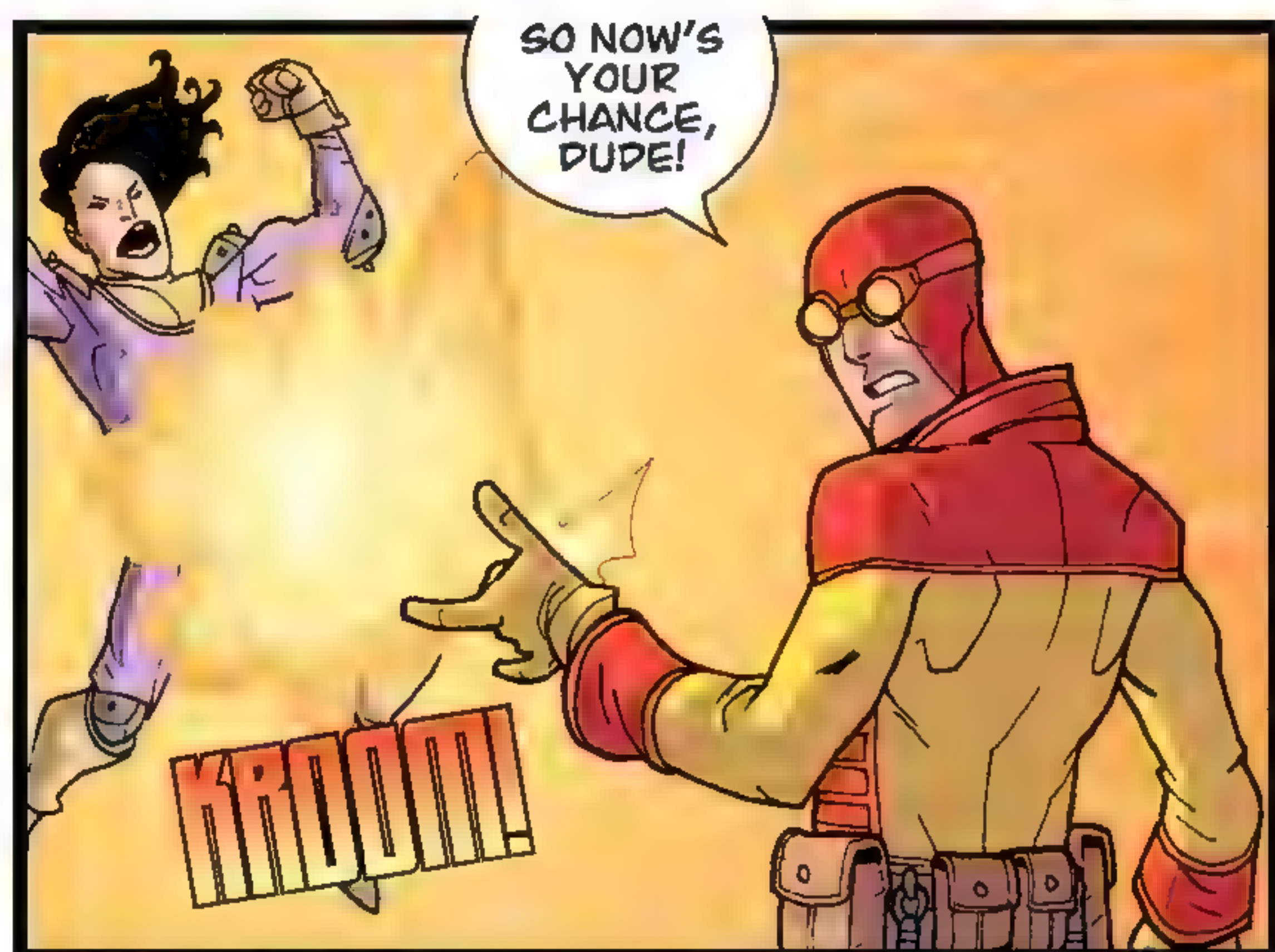
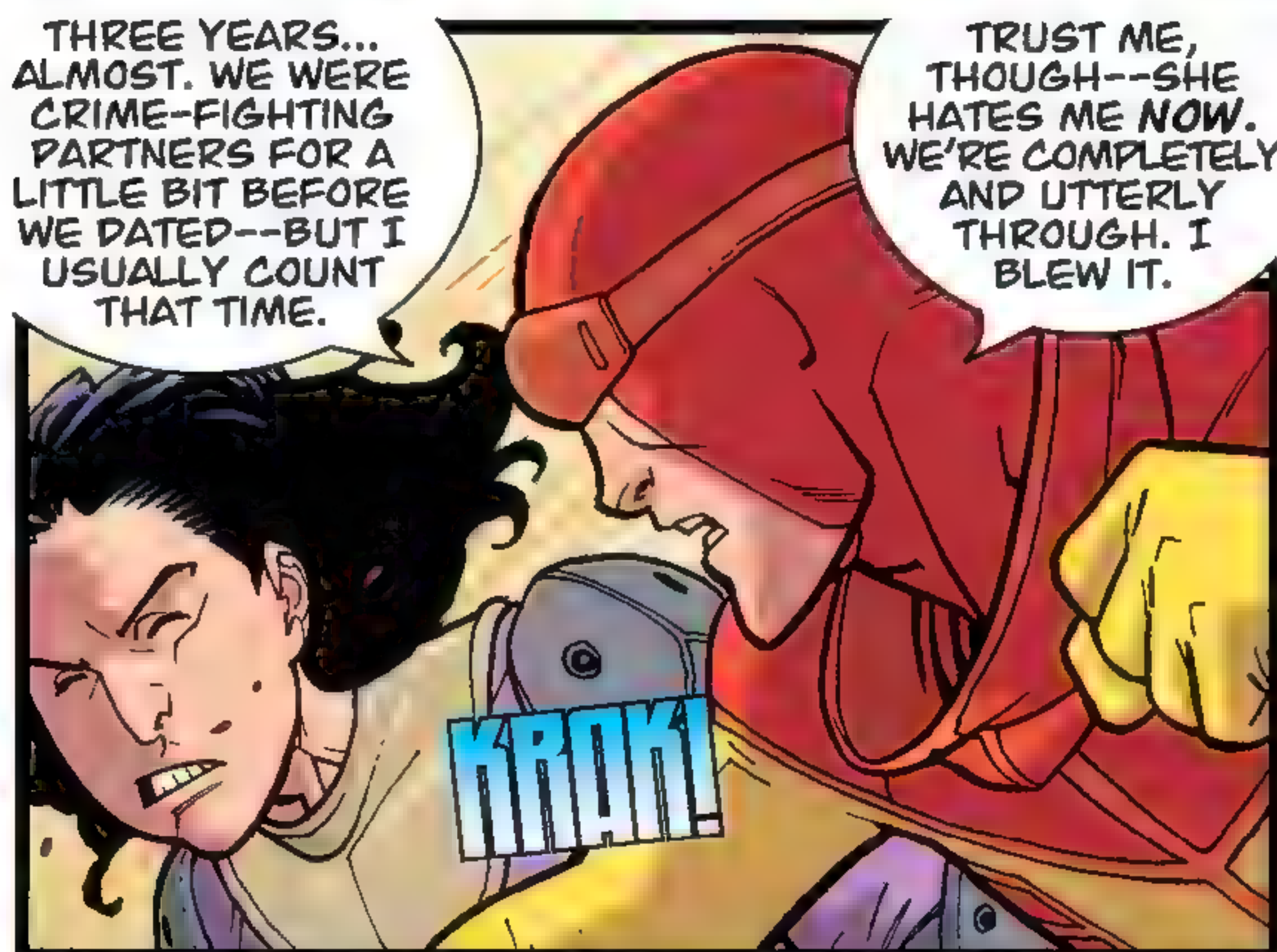
C'MON,
FIGHTMASTER,
I'M SERIOUS! GET IN,
GET OUT--THAT WAS
THE PLAN. WE CAN'T
RISK BEING DETECTED
HERE, WE'VE GOT
TO PRESERVE THE
TIMELINE!

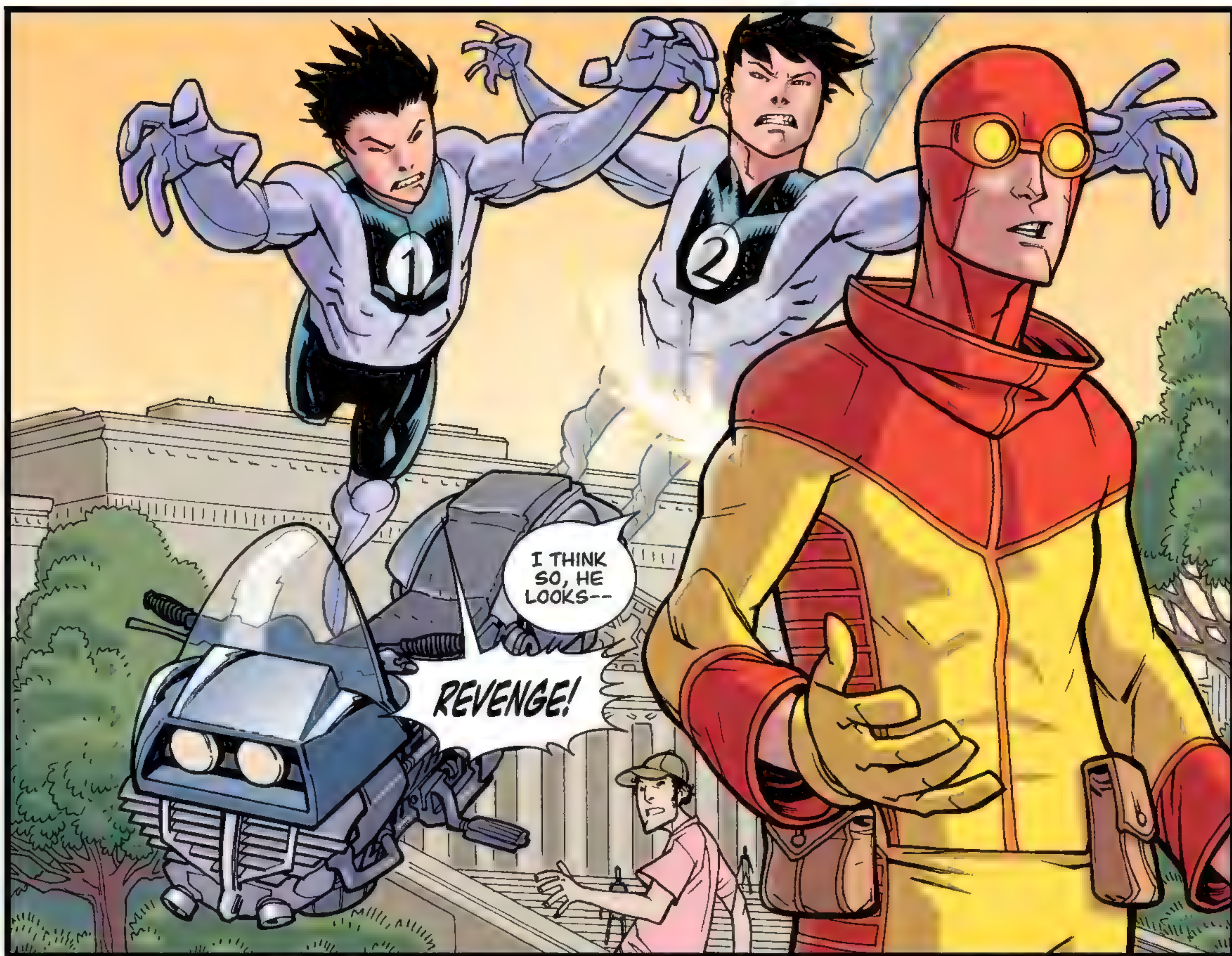
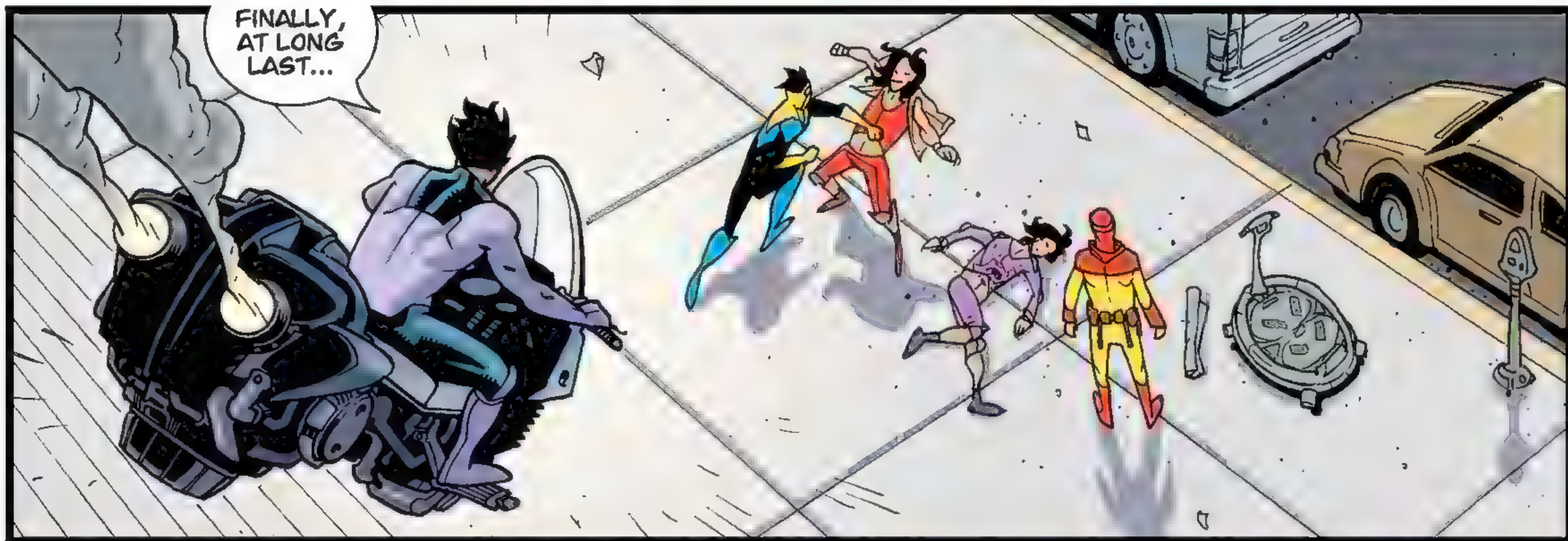
DROP KICK,
PLEASE--CALM
DOWN. I KNOW WHAT
I'M DOING. IT'LL BE
AT LEAST TWO POINT
NINE MORE MINUTES
BEFORE THE CONVENTIONAL
AUTHORITIES OF THIS
TIME PERIOD
RESPOND.



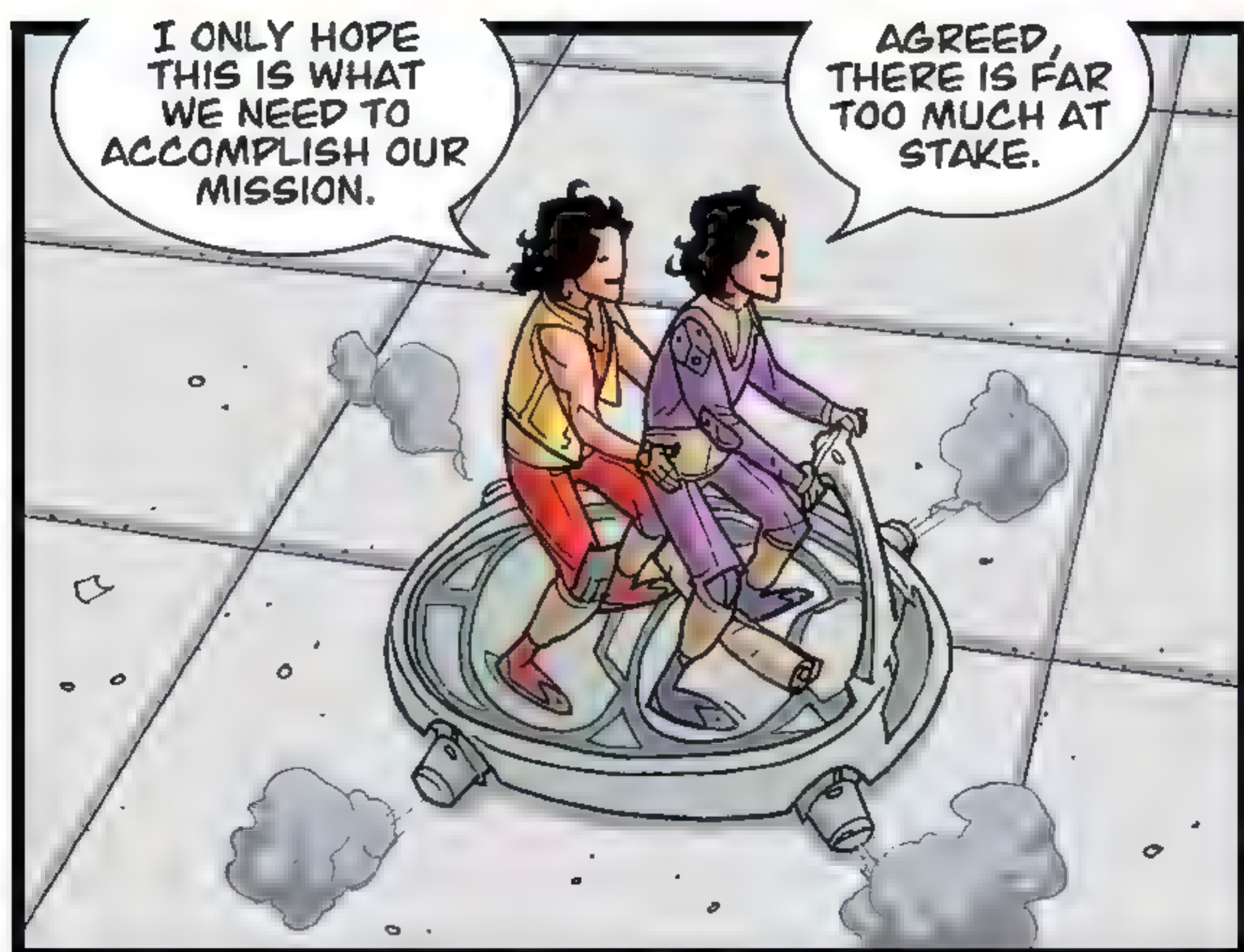
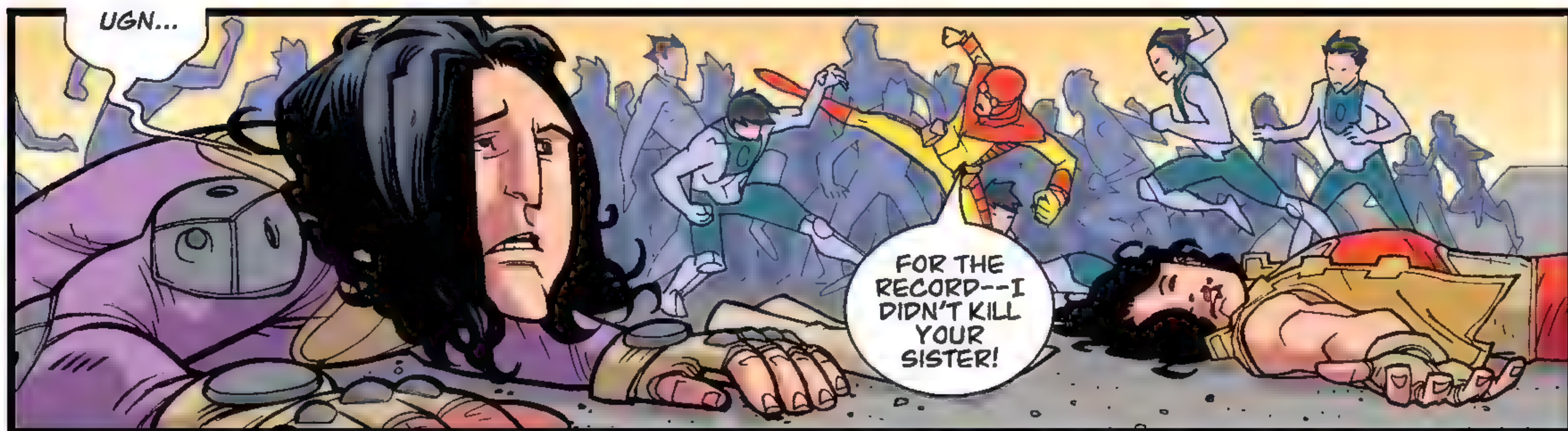
OH,
YEAH?!

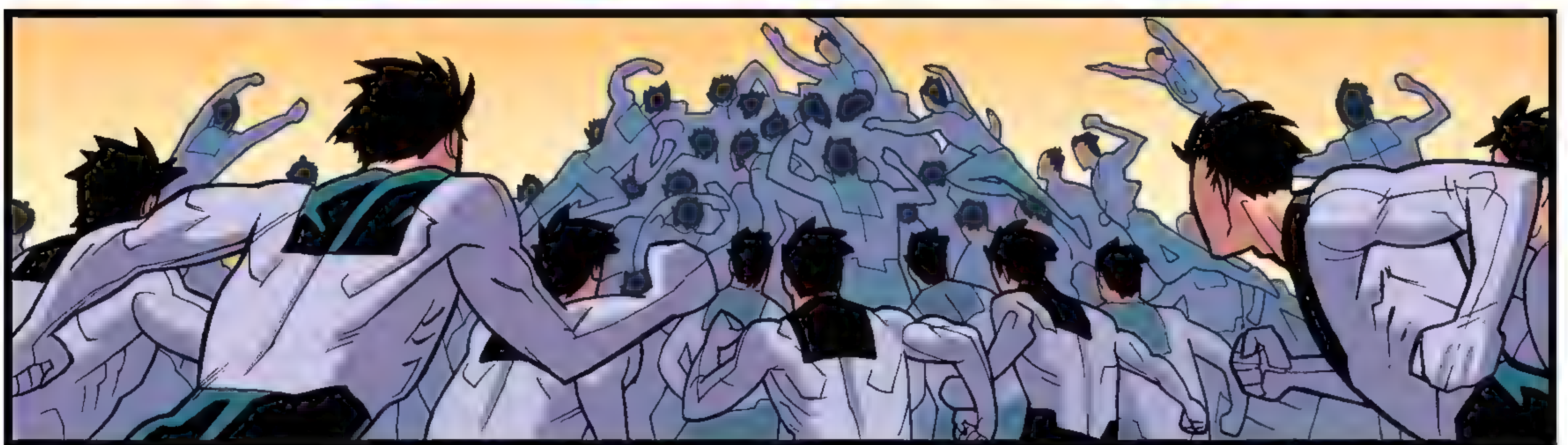
CONVENTIONAL--I
SAID "CONVENTIONAL
AUTHORITIES." JUST
SECURE THE DECLARATION
OF INDEPENDENCE TO THE
TIME SLED WHILE I USE MY
SUPERIOR FUTURE
FIGHTING SKILLS TO
DISPATCH THESE CAVEMEN!



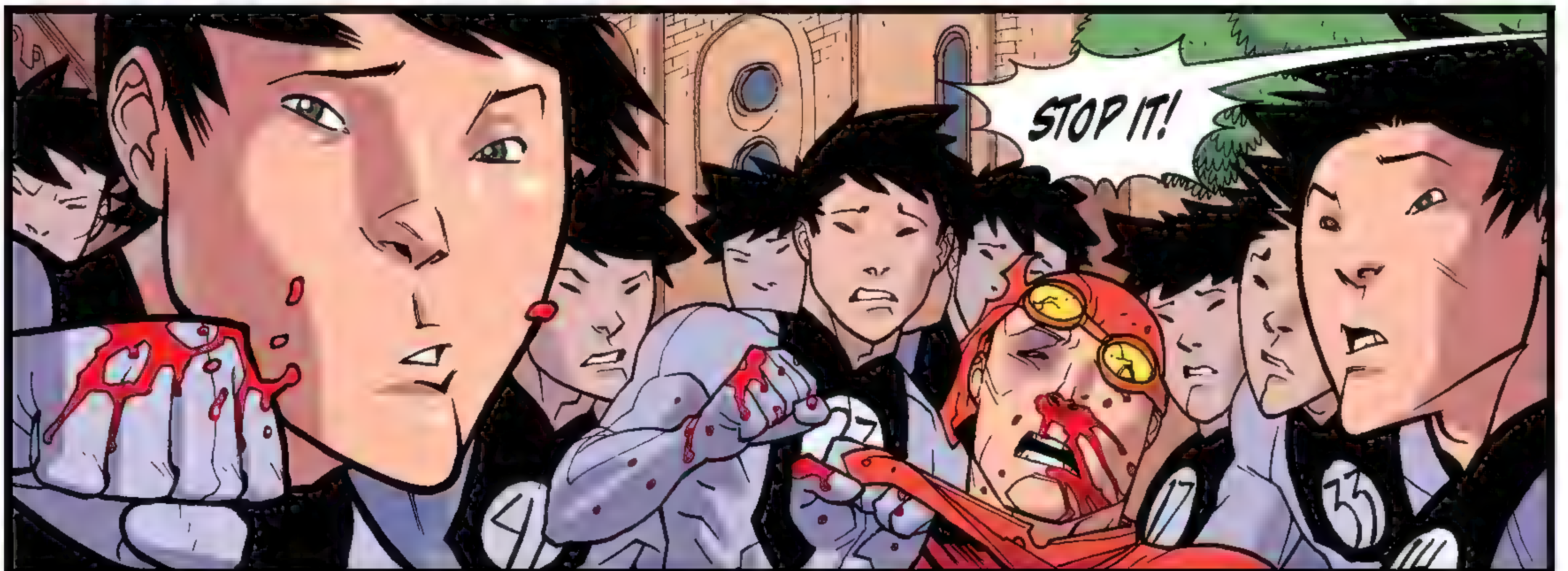
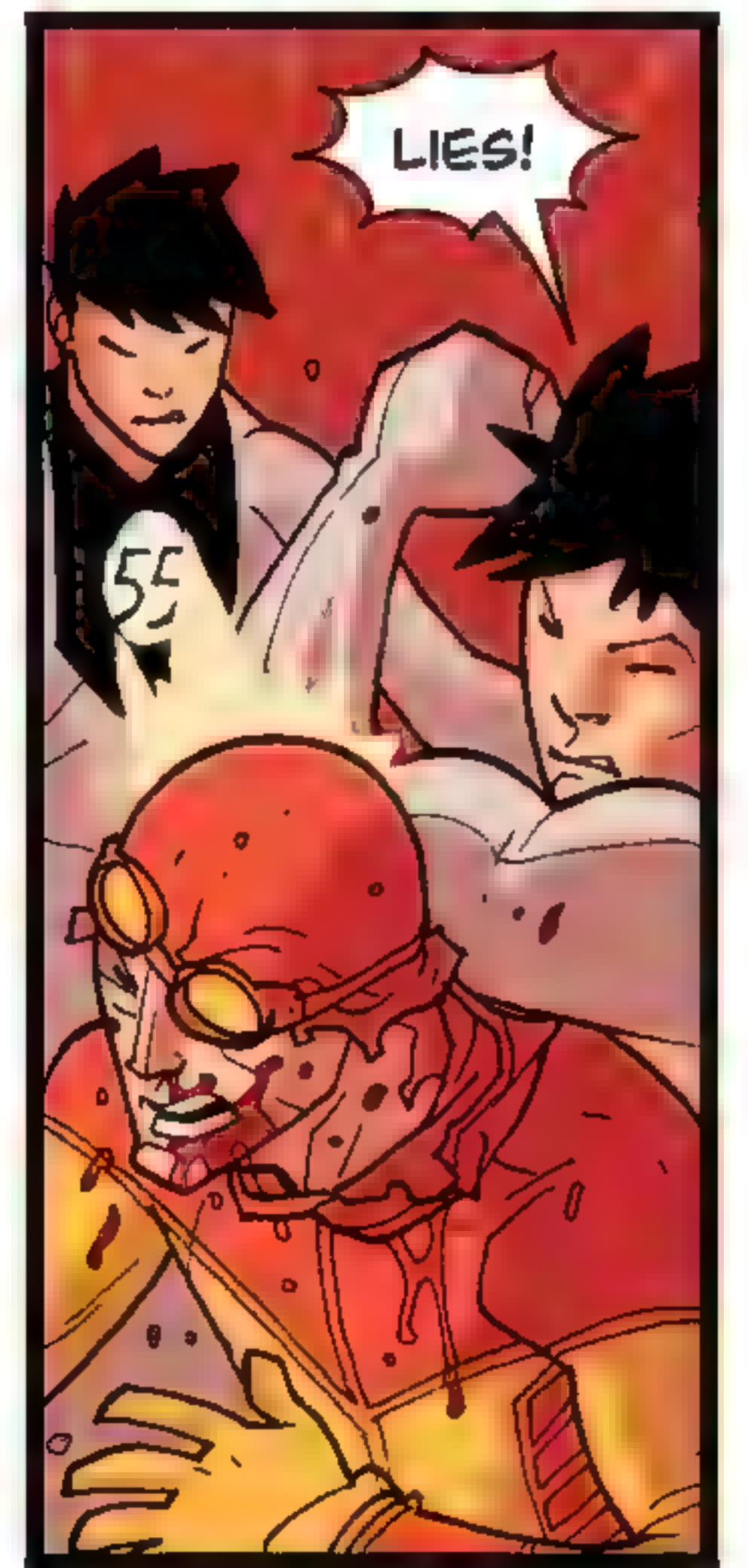
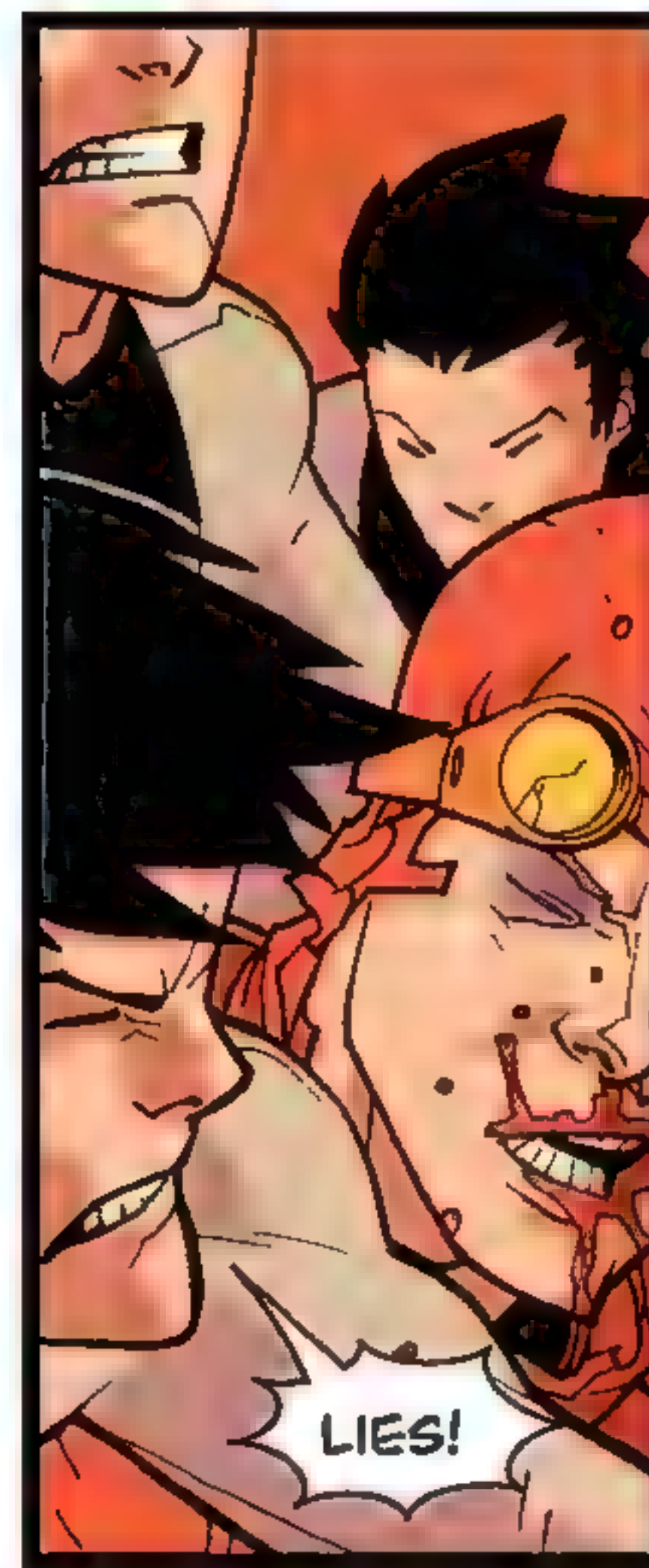
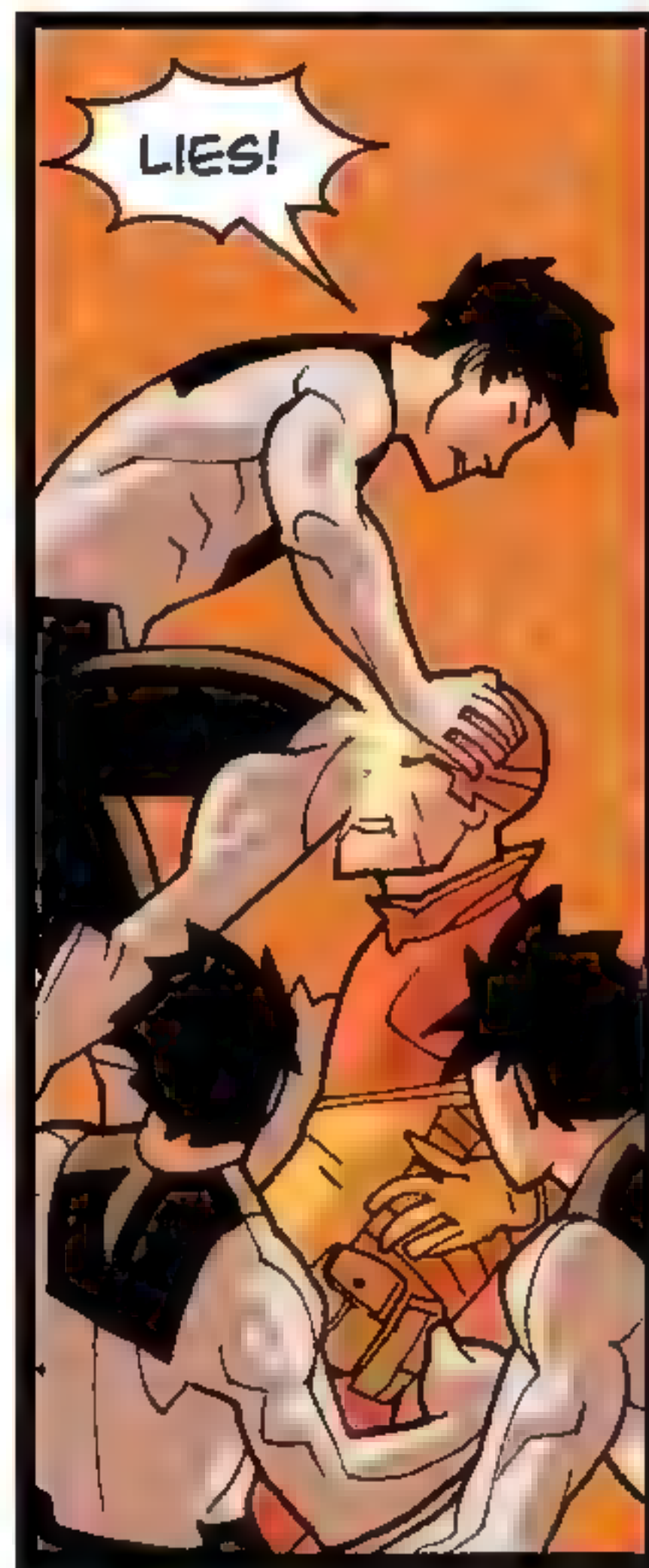
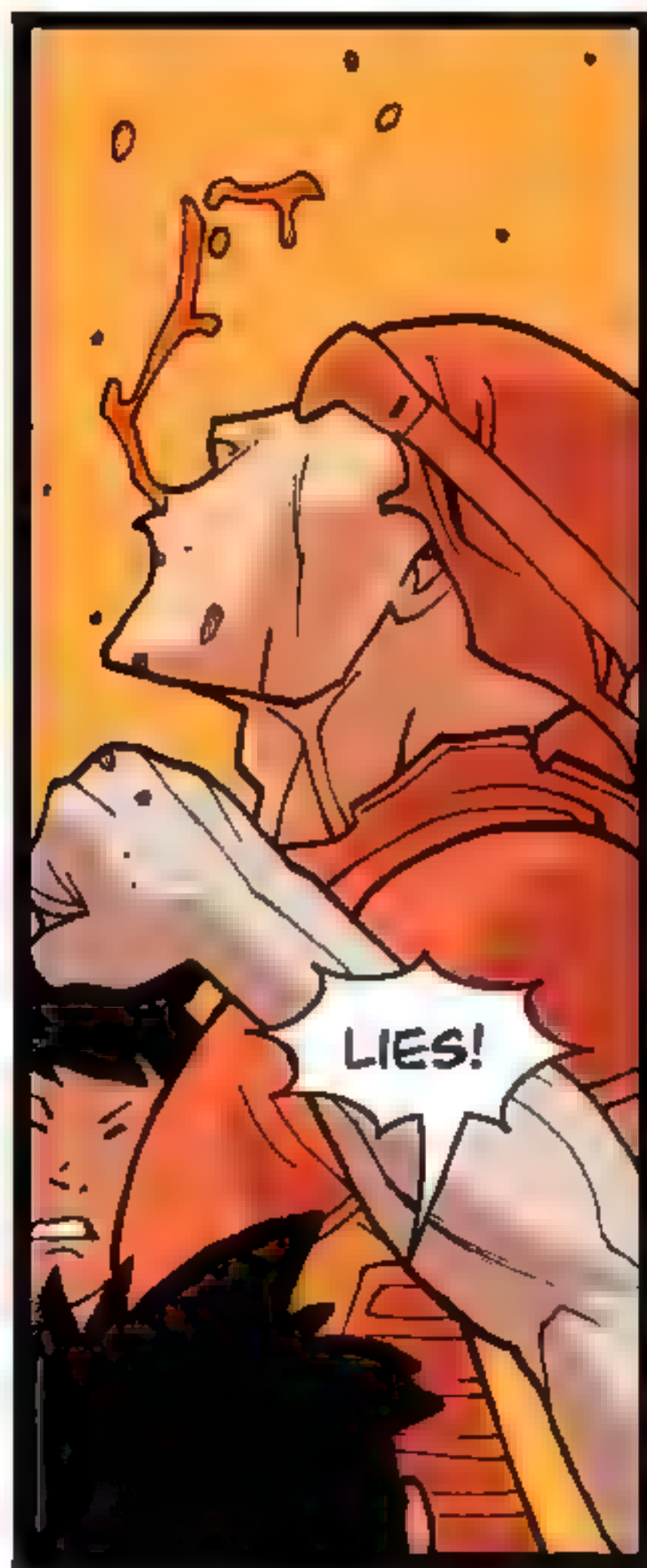
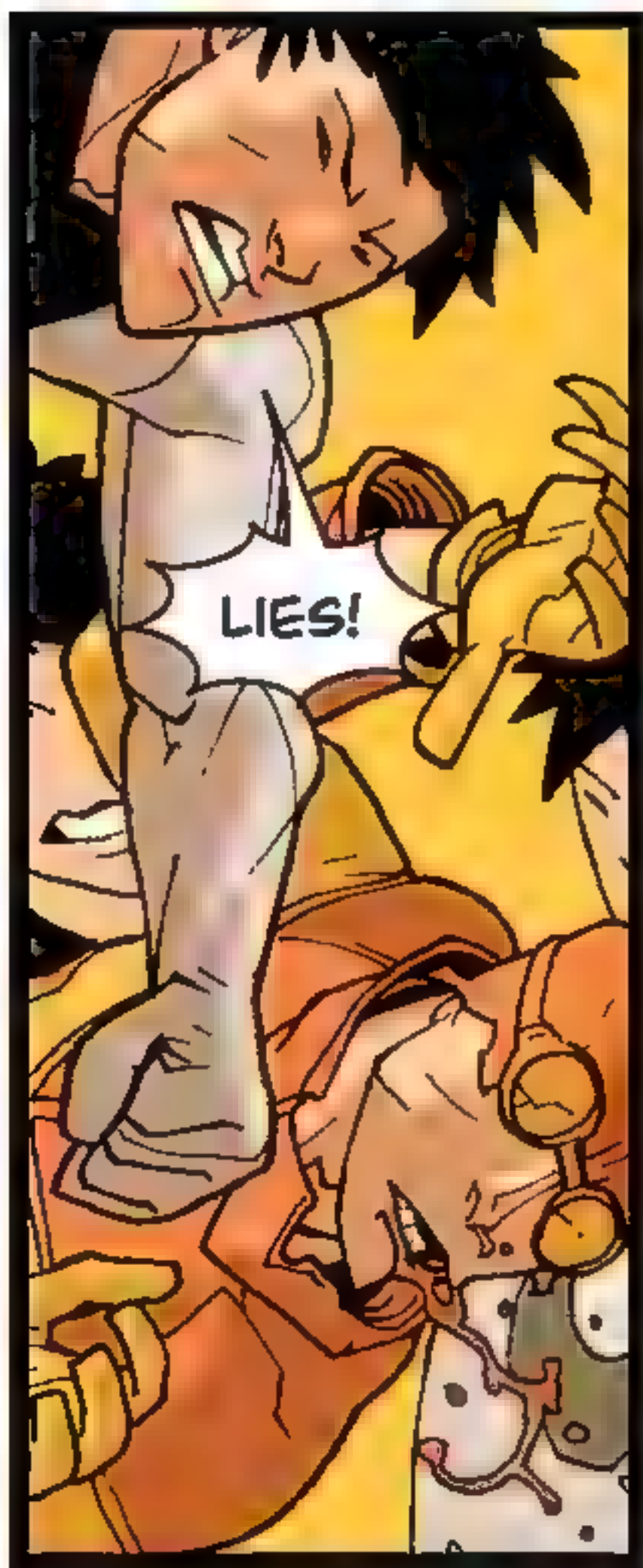












WHAT THE HELL, PAUL?!

HAVE YOU GONE CRAZY? STOP THIS--THESE ARE MY FRIENDS. YOU'RE ACTING LIKE A MANIAC.



SHE'S ALIVE.



NEW COSTUME--NICE.



TALK TO ME, PAUL. THIS ISN'T LIKE YOU.

I LOST YOU, SISTER. I HADN'T SEEN YOU IN SO LONG, BECAUSE OF MY... WORK. I FELT SO GUILTY WHEN I'D HEARD YOU'D DIED.

I DIDN'T KNOW IF YOU'D TAKEN MY ADVICE AND HIDDEN YOUR ZERO TO ONLY LIVE THROUGH YOUR ONE... I'D HOPED YOU HAD, BUT SO MUCH TIME HAD PASSED AFTER YOUR DEATH...

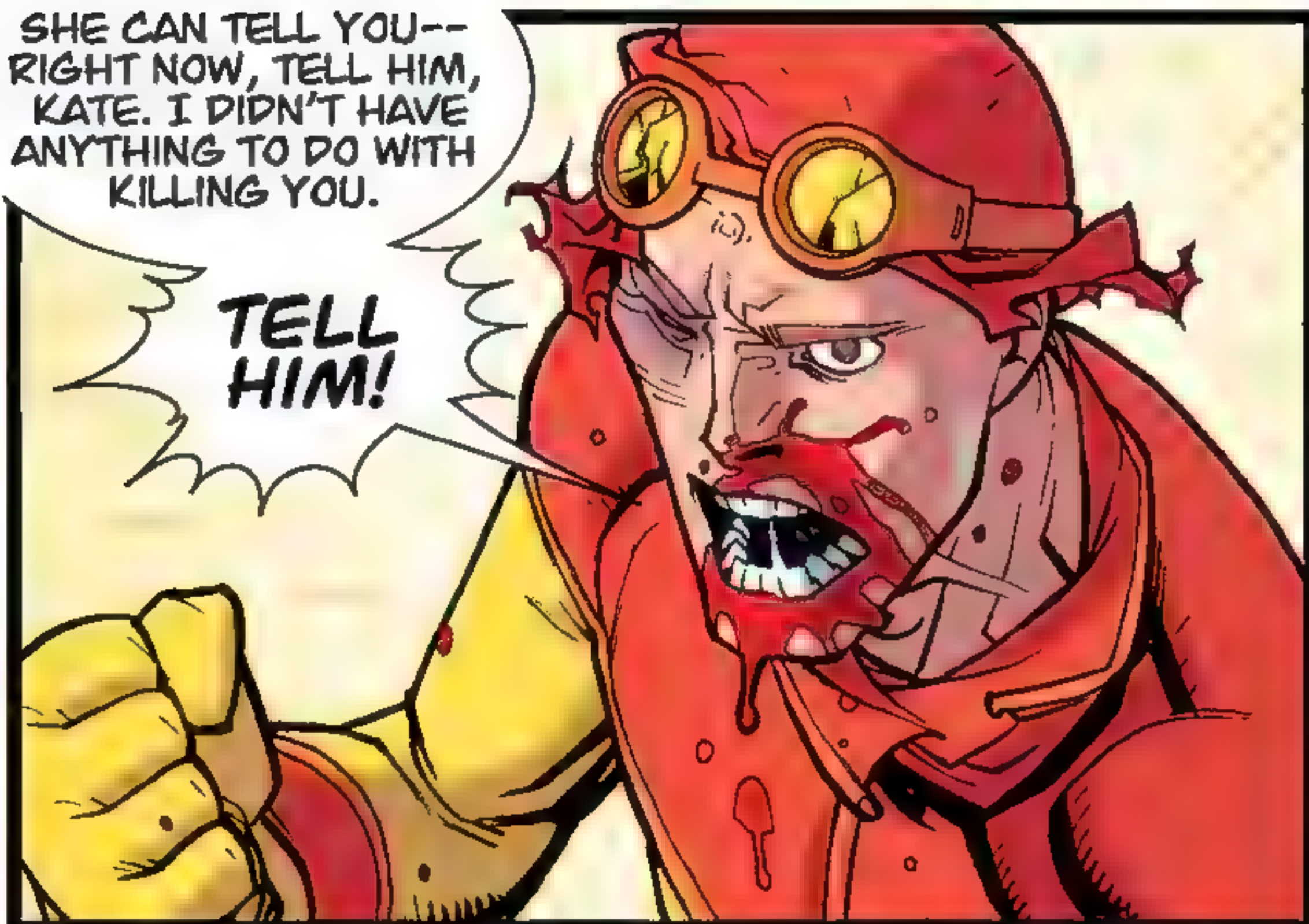
YOU KNOW I NEVER LIKED THIS REX PERSON... FROM WHAT YOU WROTE TO ME, HE IS A HORRIBLE PERSON. I STILL DON'T BELIEVE HE HAD NO INVOLVEMENT WITH YOUR DEATHS. I DON'T TRUST HIM.

HEY!



SHE CAN TELL YOU--
RIGHT NOW, TELL HIM,
KATE. I DIDN'T HAVE
ANYTHING TO DO WITH
KILLING YOU.

TELL
HIM!

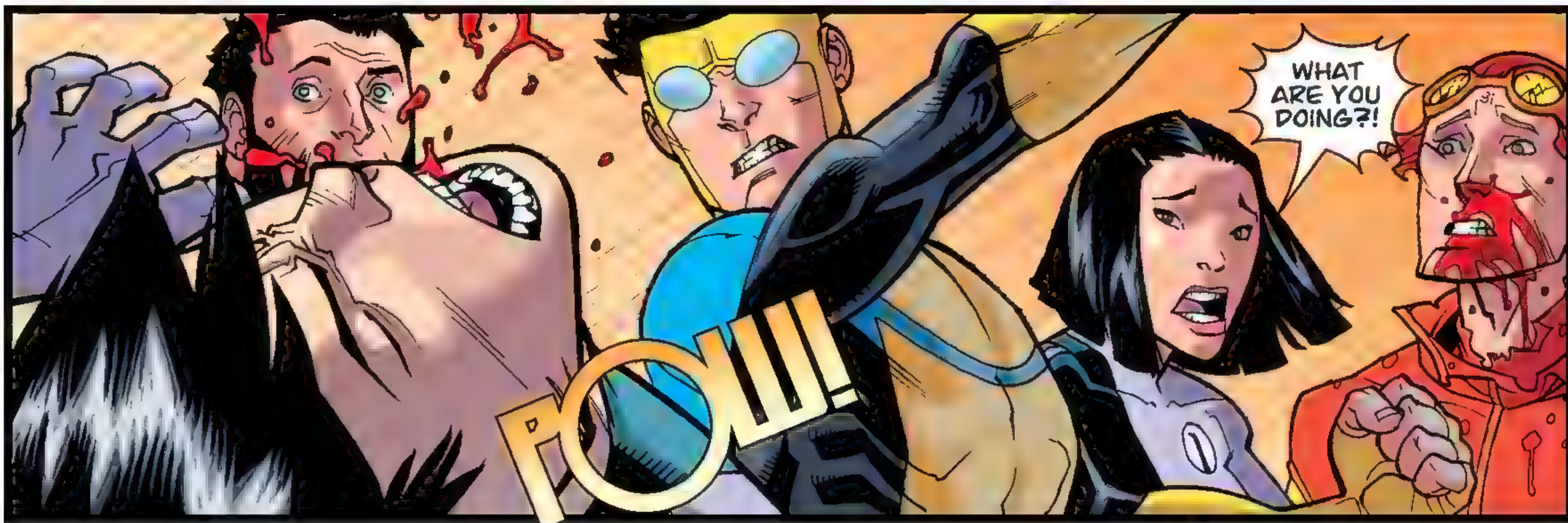


DON'T SPEAK TO
HER THAT WAY!
I'LL FINISH WHAT
I STARTED--

PAUL,
STOP IT.
THIS ISN'T
THE TIME
FOR--



WHAT
ARE YOU
DOING?!



OKAY,
THAT'S IT--

BACK OFF,
IMMORTAL.

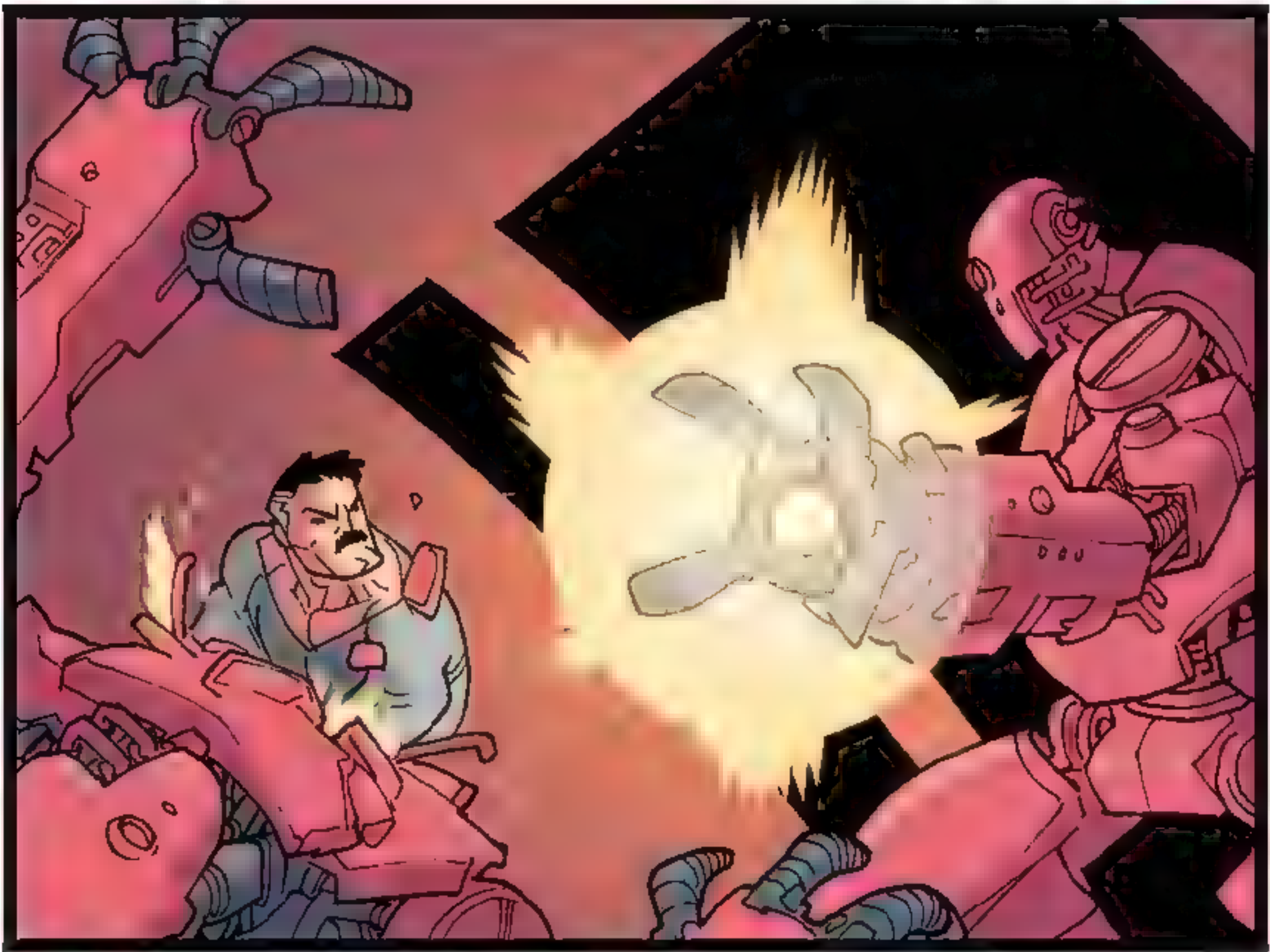
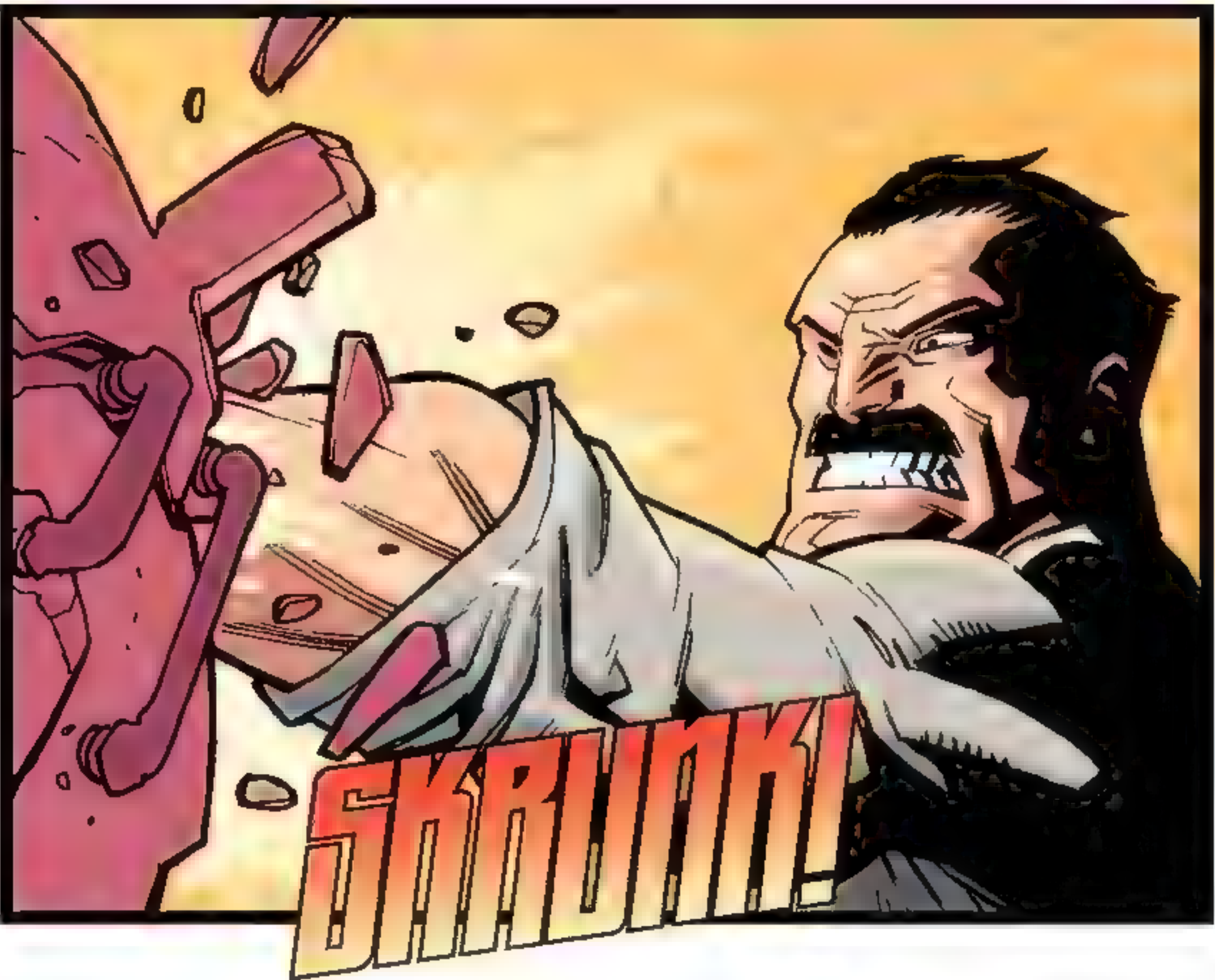
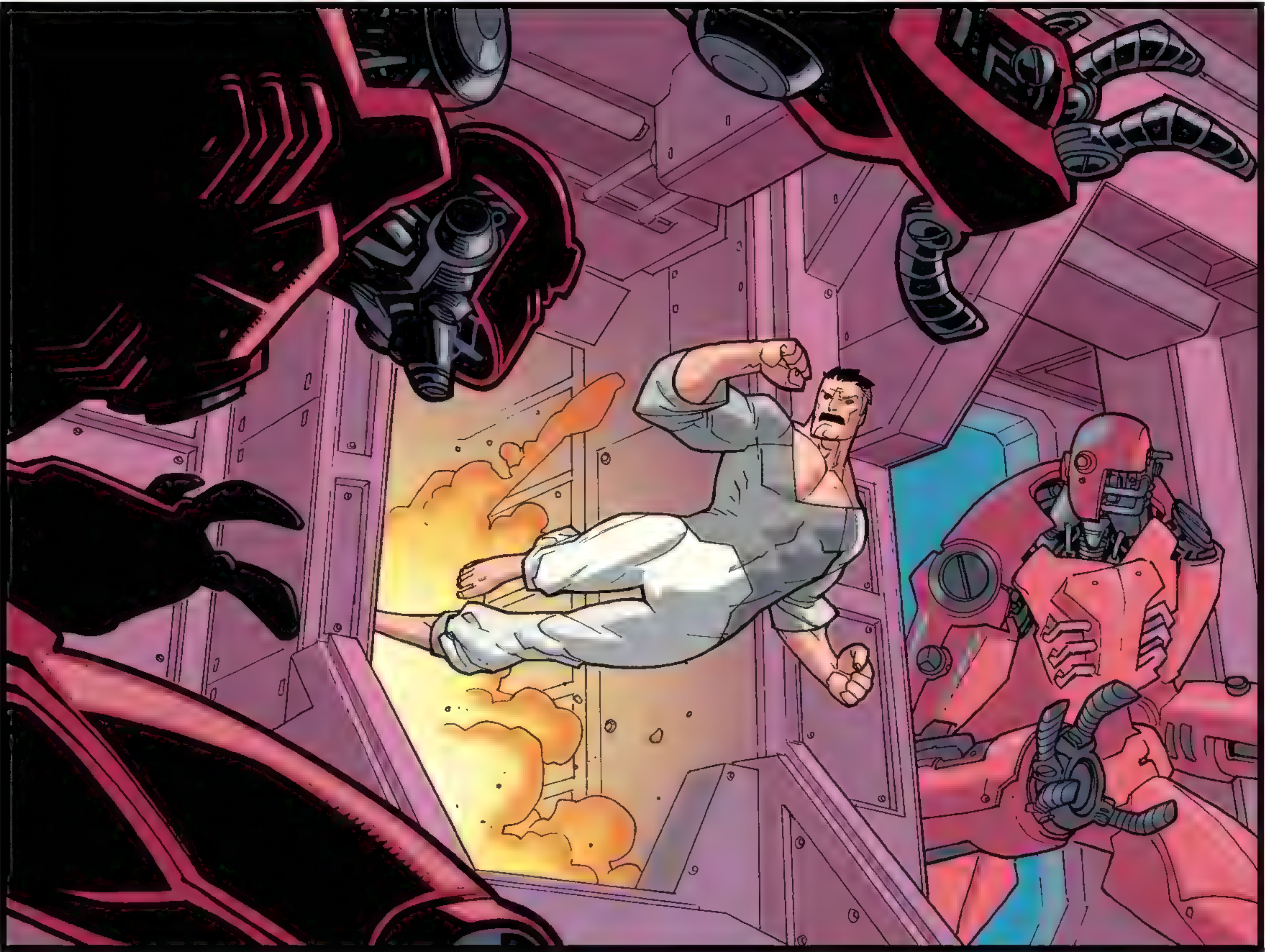
TAKE A
SECOND TO
LOOK AROUND
YOU, KATE. YOU
SEE WHAT YOUR
BROTHER HAS
CAUSED?

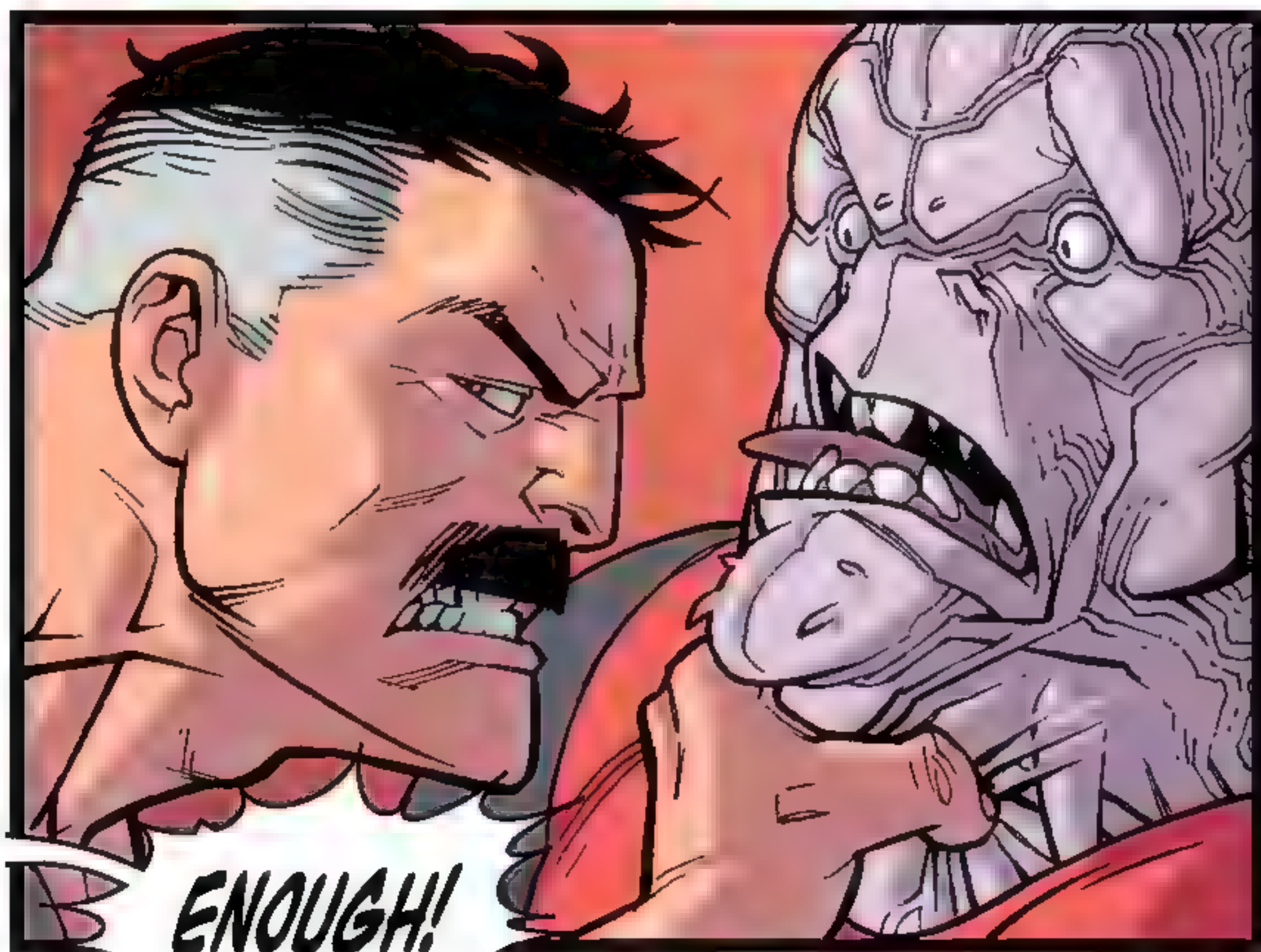
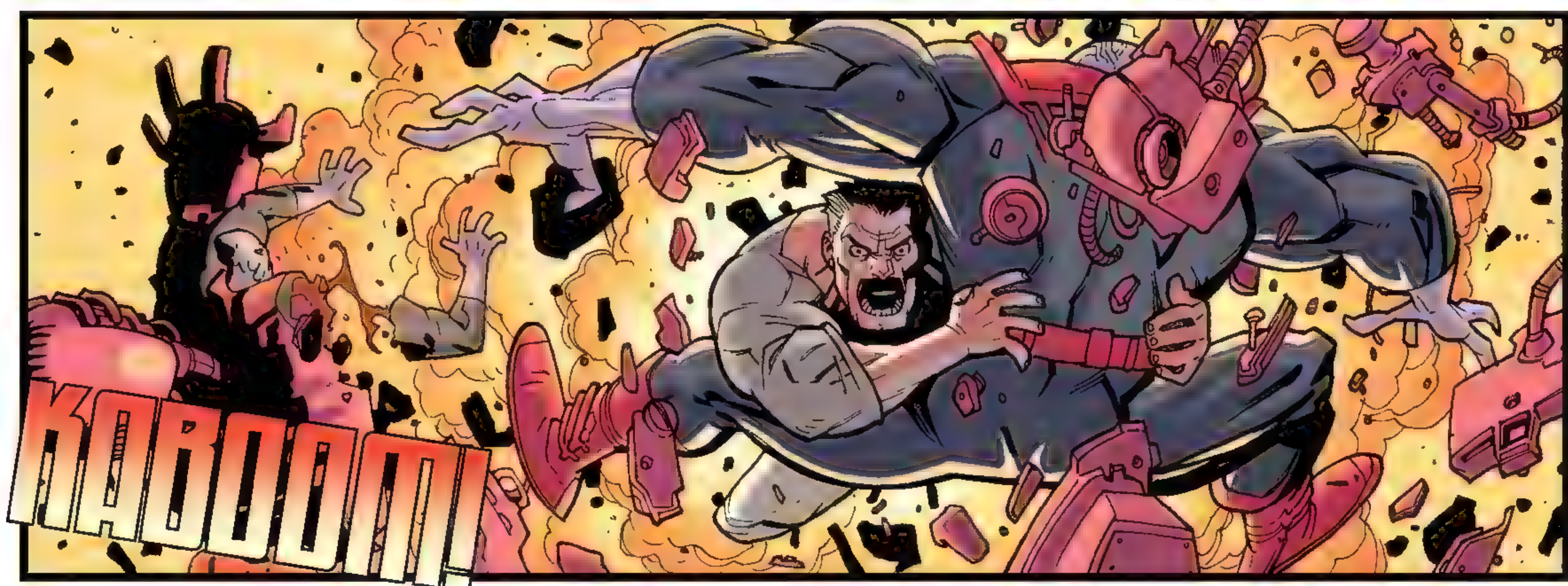
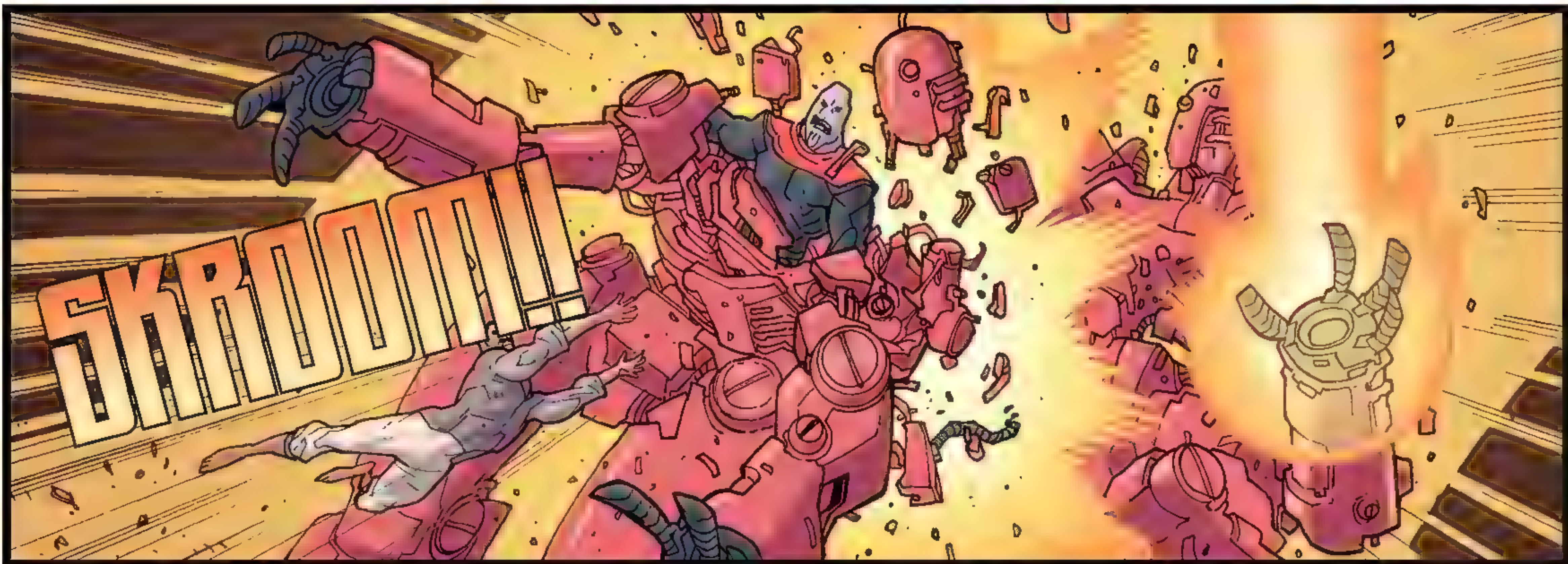


HE DID
ALL THIS FOR
NOTHING. HE
STOPPED REX AND
I FROM PREVENTING
A ROBBERY. HE
ENDANGERED
LIVES.

YOUR
BROTHER
IS TOTALLY
GOING TO
JAIL!









THAT WILL
BE QUITE
ENOUGH.



GENERAL KREGG,
I DIDN'T EXPECT
YOU TO COME DOWN
HERE YOURSELF...
I'M IMPRESSED.



YOU KNOW
I WOULDN'T
MISS THIS.

YOU
FLATTER
ME.



I'VE BEEN
WATCHING YOUR
SESSION FROM THE
OBSERVATION DECK.
YOU'LL BE HAPPY
TO KNOW YOU'VE
PASSED
INSPECTION.

YOUR
EXECUTION
IS BEING
SCHEDULED
NOW.

...YOU'LL
BE PUT TO
DEATH!

IT'S ONLY
A MATTER OF
TIME, NOW. SOON,
VERY SOON, FOR THE
DISGRACE YOU'VE
CAUSED US...



ISSUE FORTY-SEVEN



VILTRUMITE PRISON,
EXACT LOCATION
UNKNOWN.

THE COUNCIL STATES THAT
IN ORDER FOR A VILTRUMITE
TO BE EXECUTED... HE MUST
BE COMPLETELY WHOLE AND
INTACT, WORTHY TO
STAND AND FACE THE END
OF HIS LIFE AT FULL
STRENGTH.

BUT
THEY SAID
NOTHING OF
BRUISES.

TAKE
HIM BACK
TO HIS
CELL.

YES,
OFFICER
KREGG, AT
ONCE.

NO--

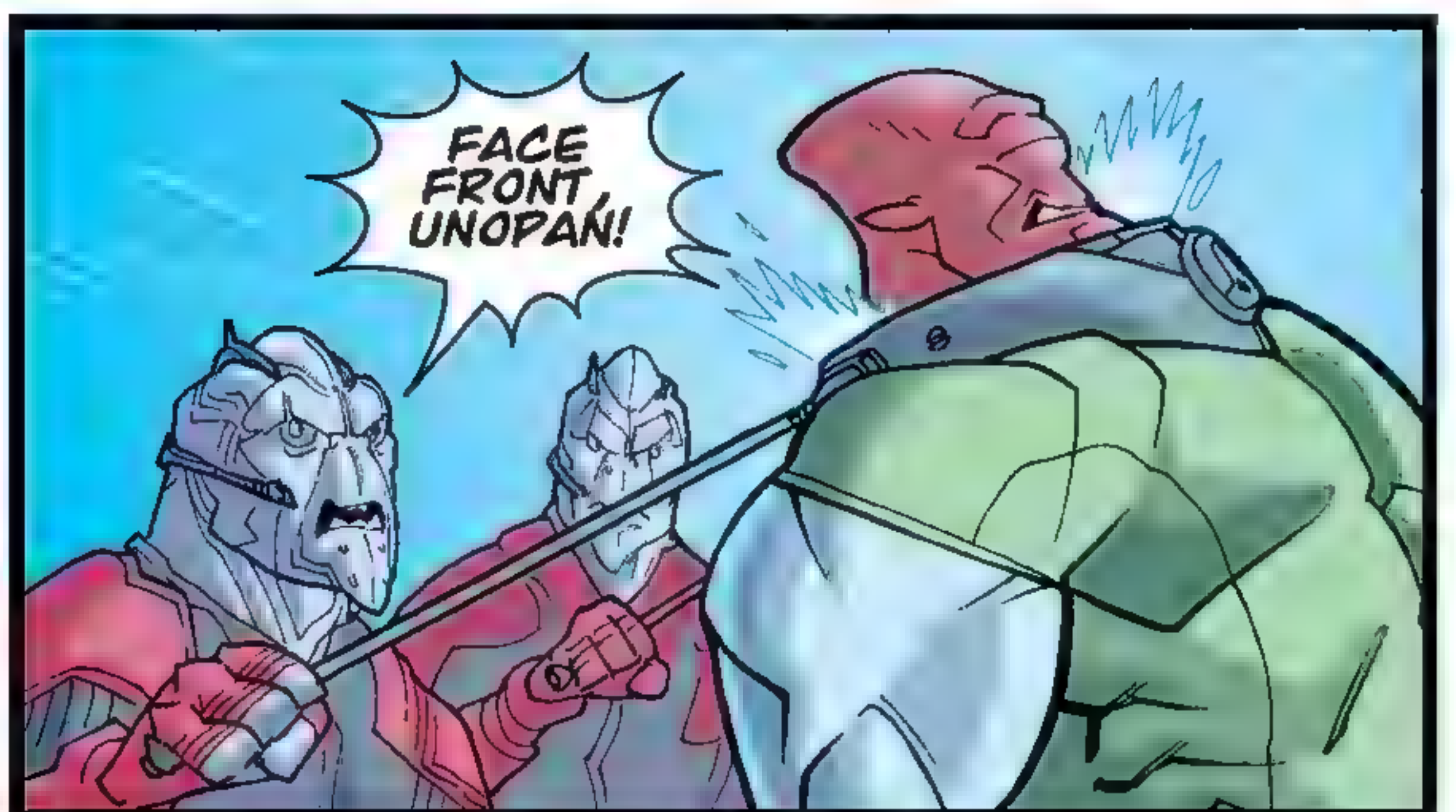
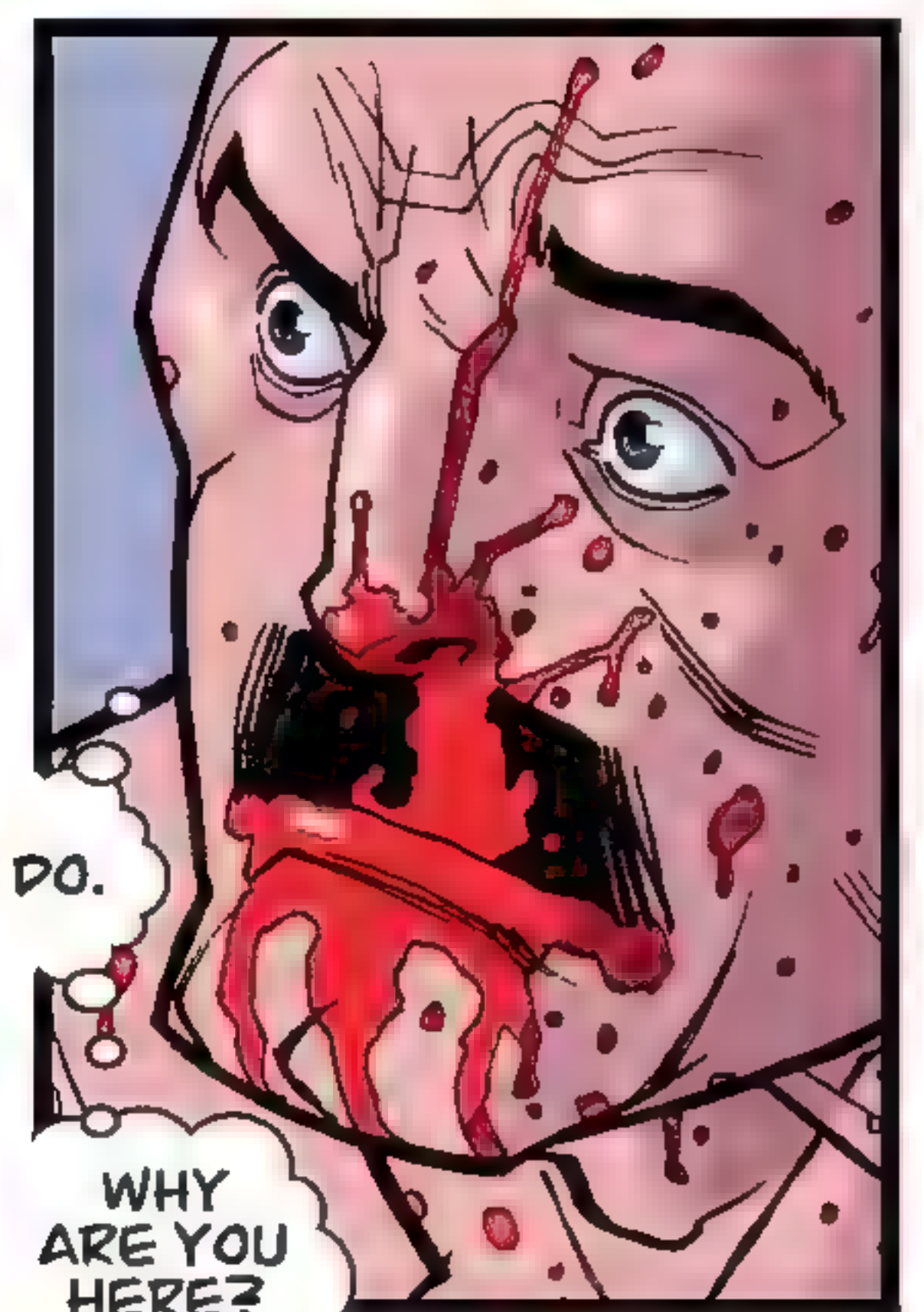
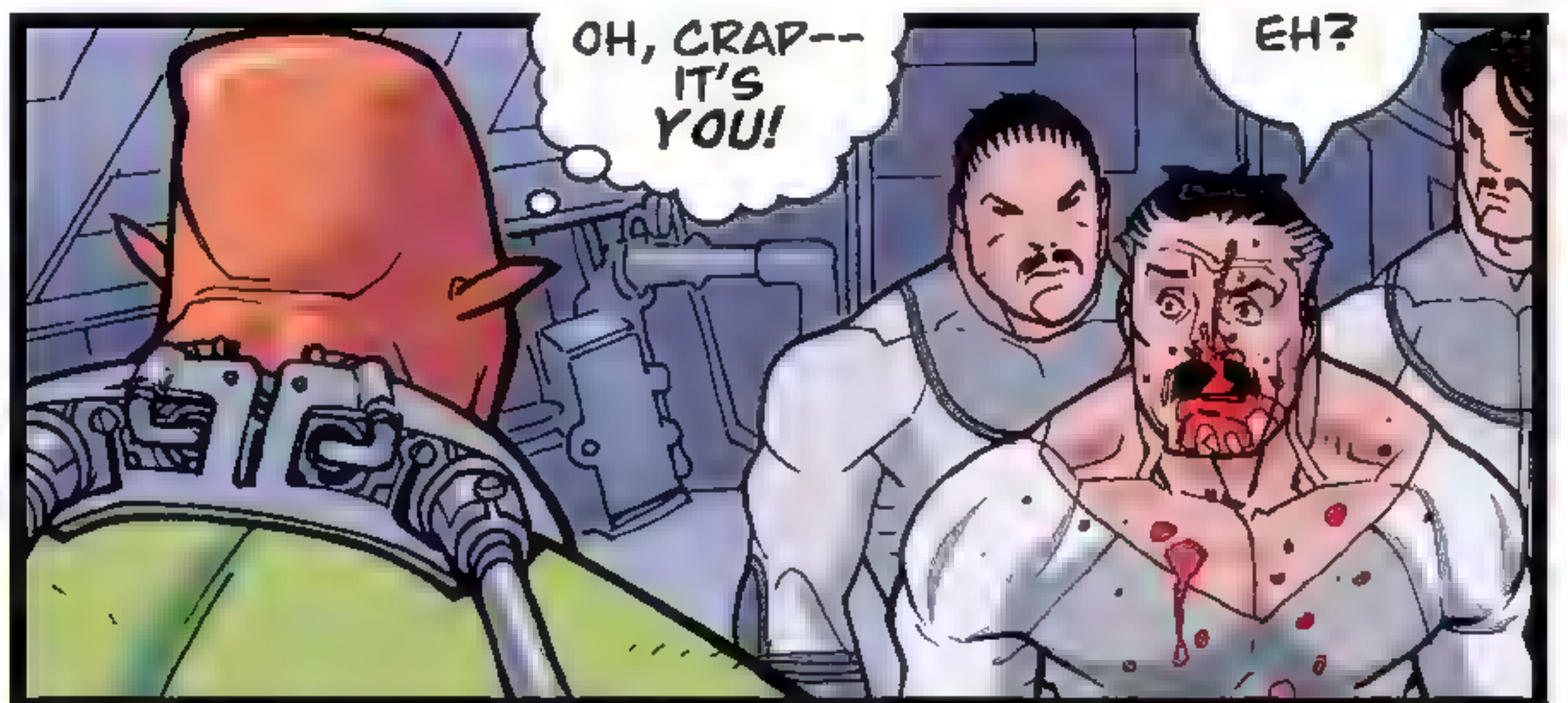
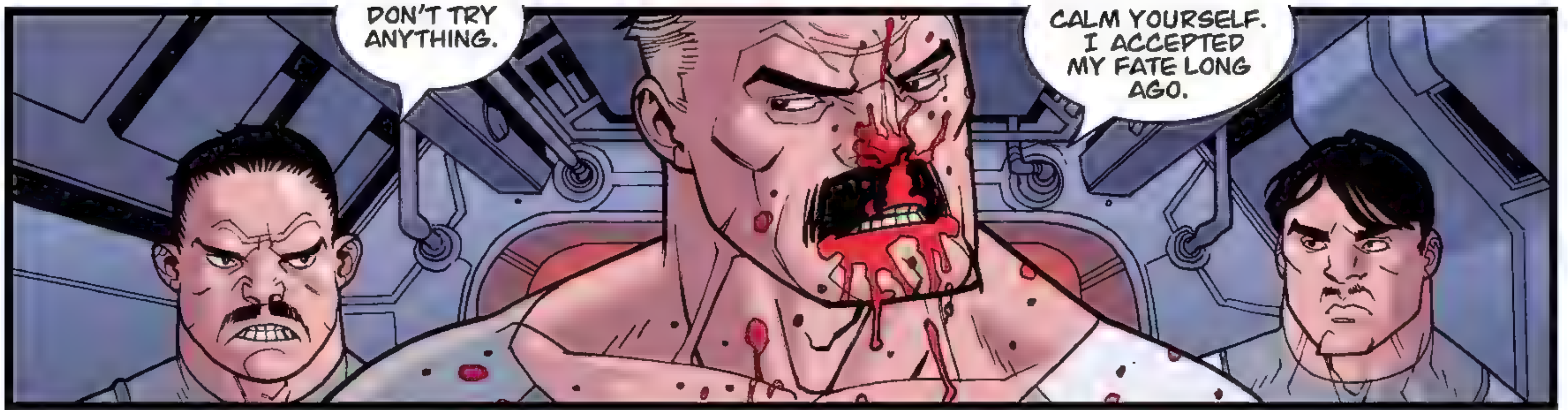
SIR, PLEASE. MY
FATHER USED TO
TELL STORIES OF
YOUR ADVENTURES
BEFORE MY
ENLISTMENT.

WHEN I
HEARD YOU
WENT ROGUE--
I REFUSED TO
BELIEVE IT.
THIS IS HARD
ENOUGH ALREADY,
DON'T MAKE
ME HAVE TO
HURT YOU.

I JUST
WISHED TO
STAND.

I'LL
WALK OUT
OF HERE
ON MY
OWN.

WAIT.



BACK ON EARTH.

THIS IS UNACCEPTABLE! MULTI-PAUL WAS A DIRECT AGENT OF MY ORGANIZATION. THE FACT THAT HE IS INCARCERATED HERE ON AMERICAN SOIL IS A TRAVESTY!

AN INSULT!

YOUR PREDECESSOR KNEW WHAT IT MEANT TO BE A MEMBER OF THE ORDER. THERE ARE CERTAIN THINGS THAT JUST AREN'T DONE.

A MEMBER CANNOT ALLOW ANYONE UNDER THE PROTECTION OF ANOTHER MEMBER BE HELD BY THEIR GOVERNMENT.

THOSE ARE THE RULES.

YOU UNDERSTAND THE RULES, DON'T YOU--?



--TITAN?!

YES. OF COURSE
I DO. WOULD I BE
ANY GOOD AT THIS
IF I DIDN'T?

YOUR MAN
WILL BE
RECOVERED FOR
YOU. I SEEM TO RECALL
ALREADY TELLING YOU
THIS THROUGH AN
INTERMEDIARY. BUT
I DO APPRECIATE
THE VISIT.

IT'S GOOD
TO SEE YOUR
COLLEAGUES
FACE TO FACE
FROM TIME
TO TIME.

ALL I NEED
IS *TIME*. I'M NOT
EVEN SURE WHERE
MULTI-PAUL IS
BEING HELD. ONCE
I DISCOVER THAT,
HE WILL BE
RECOVERED AND
DELIVERED
TO YOU.

I APPRECIATE
EVERYTHING YOU'VE
DONE FOR ME IN THE
PAST DURING THE
TRANSITION PERIOD
AFTER I TOOK OVER
FOR MACHINE
HEAD.

IT WILL
BE DONE. YOU
HAVE MY
WORD.

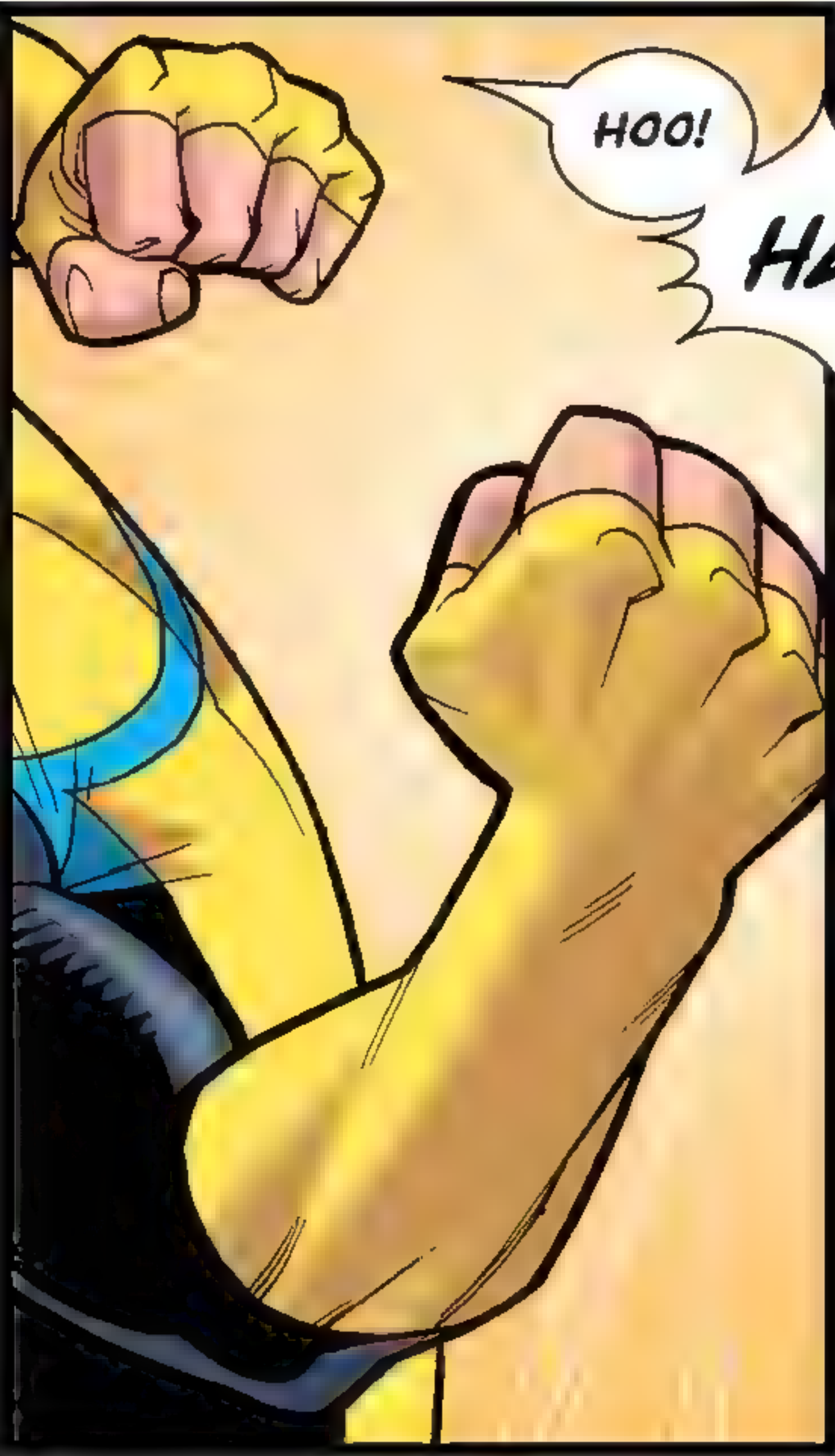
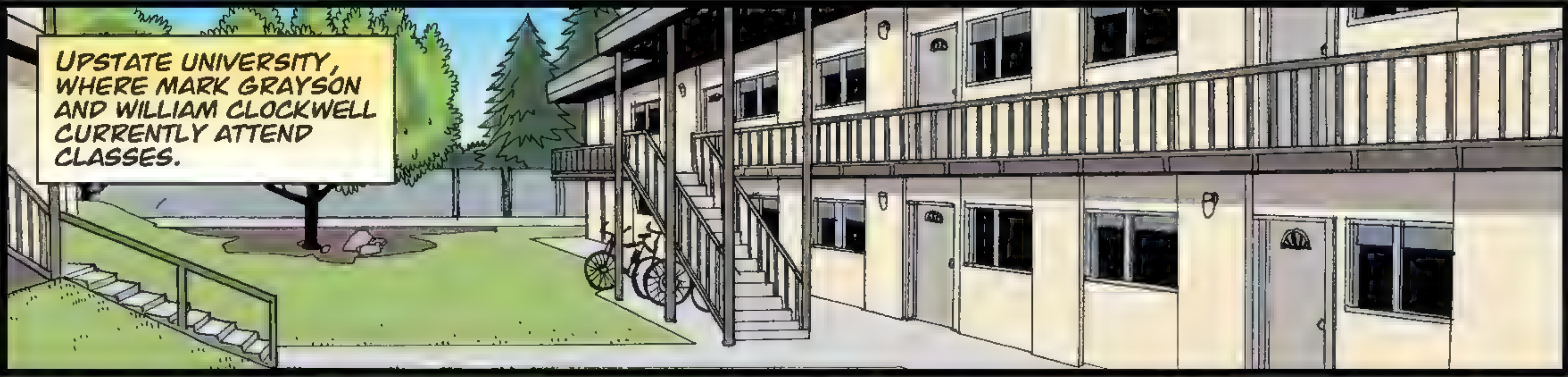
MACHINE HEAD WAS A
MALCONTENT--HE WAS
AN EMBARRASSMENT.
I'M PLEASED TO SEE
THAT YOU ARE
A REASONABLE
MAN.

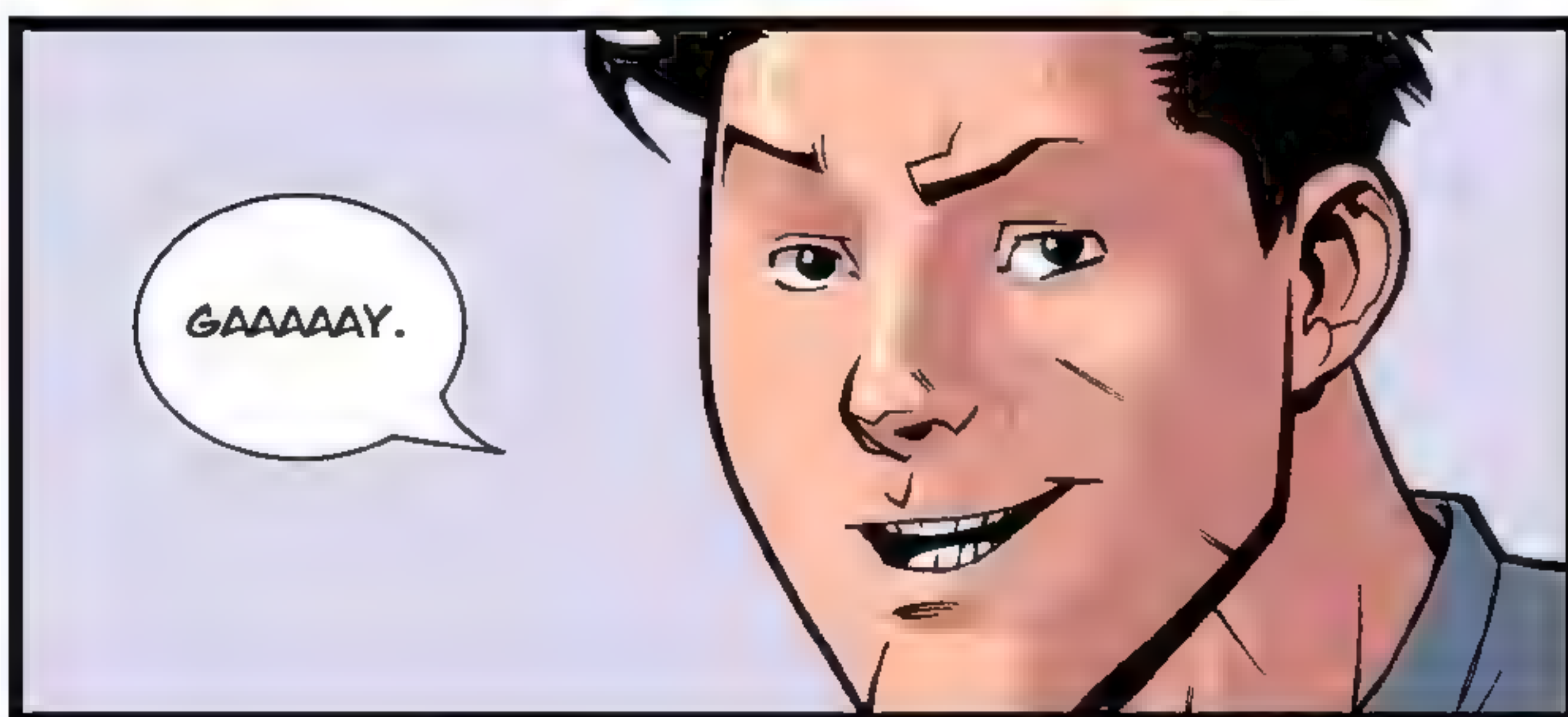
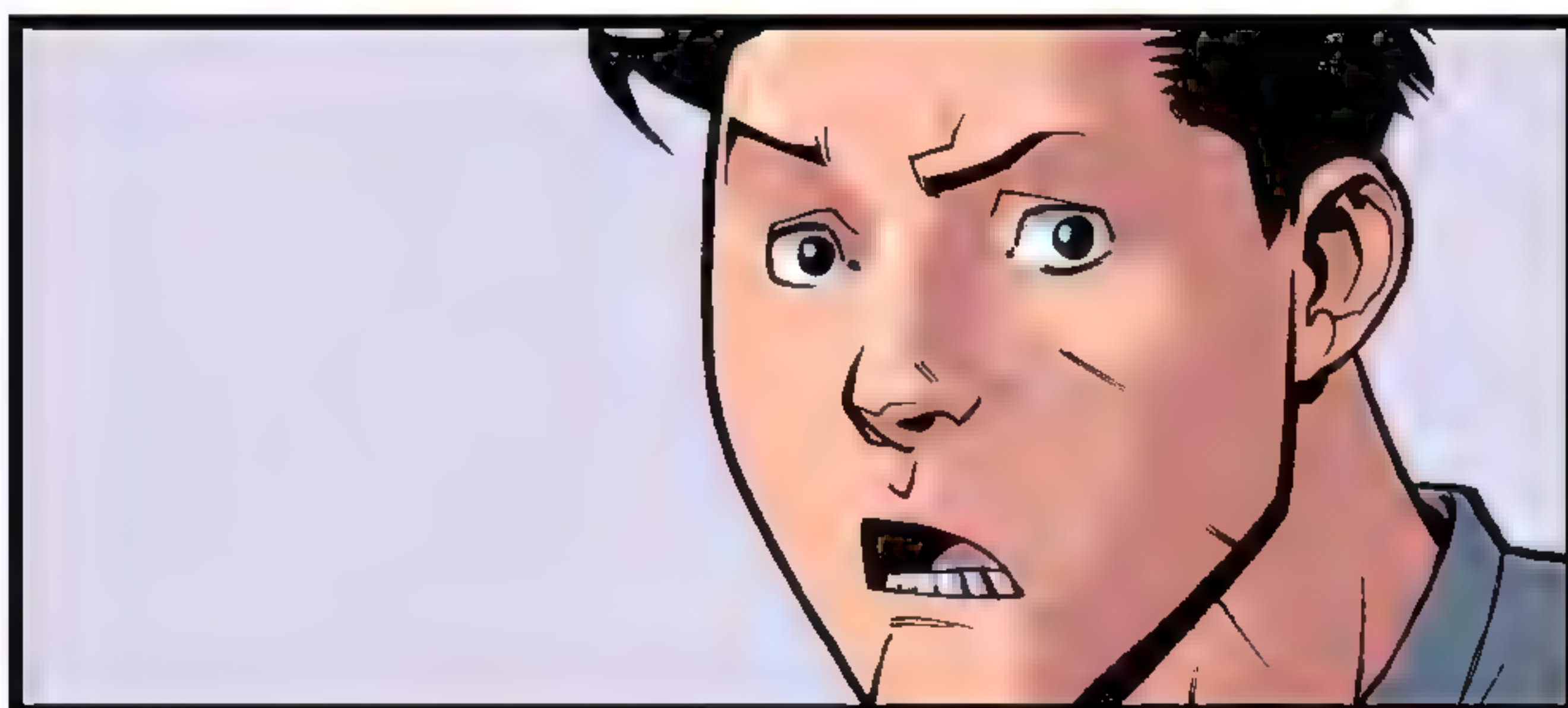
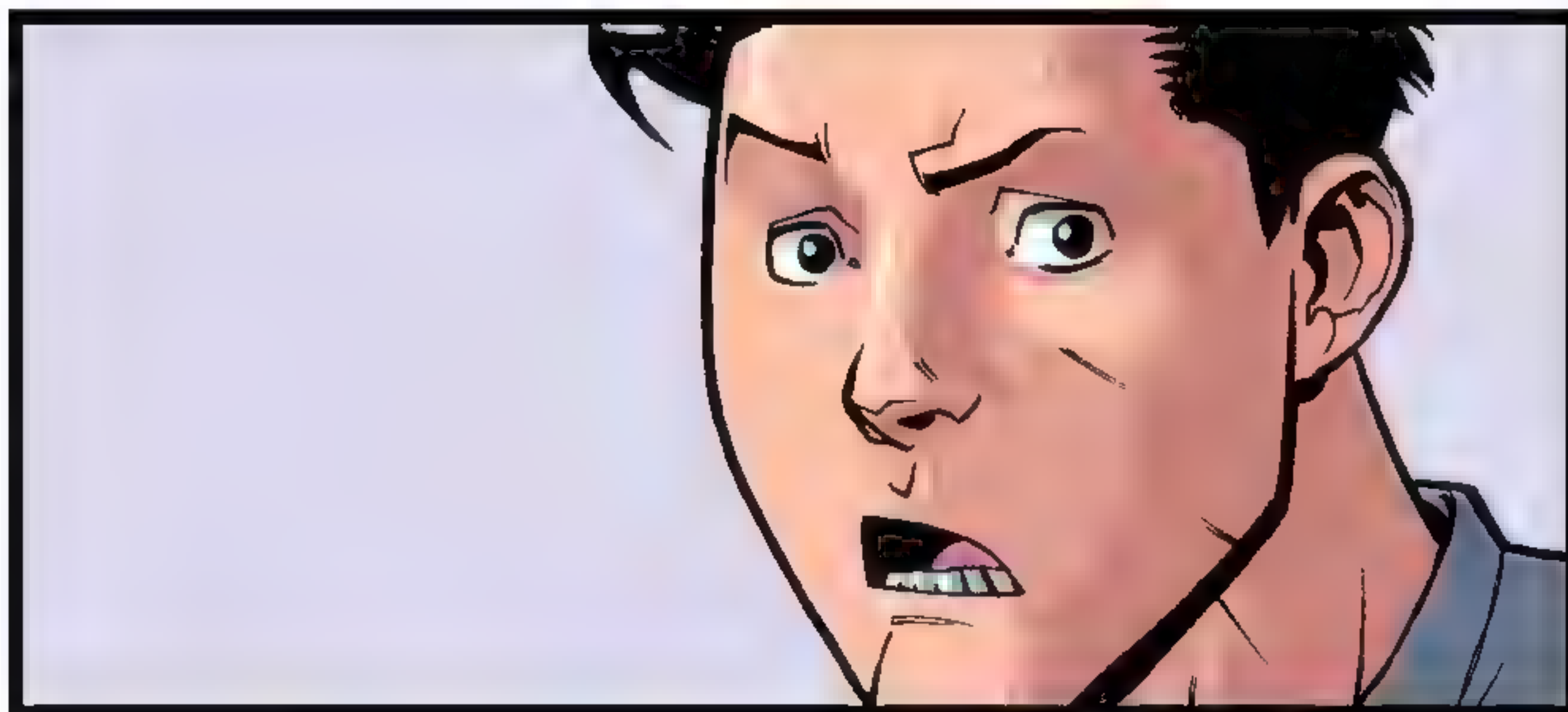
ALL I
ASK IS THAT
YOU NOT KEEP
ME WAITING
FOR LONG.

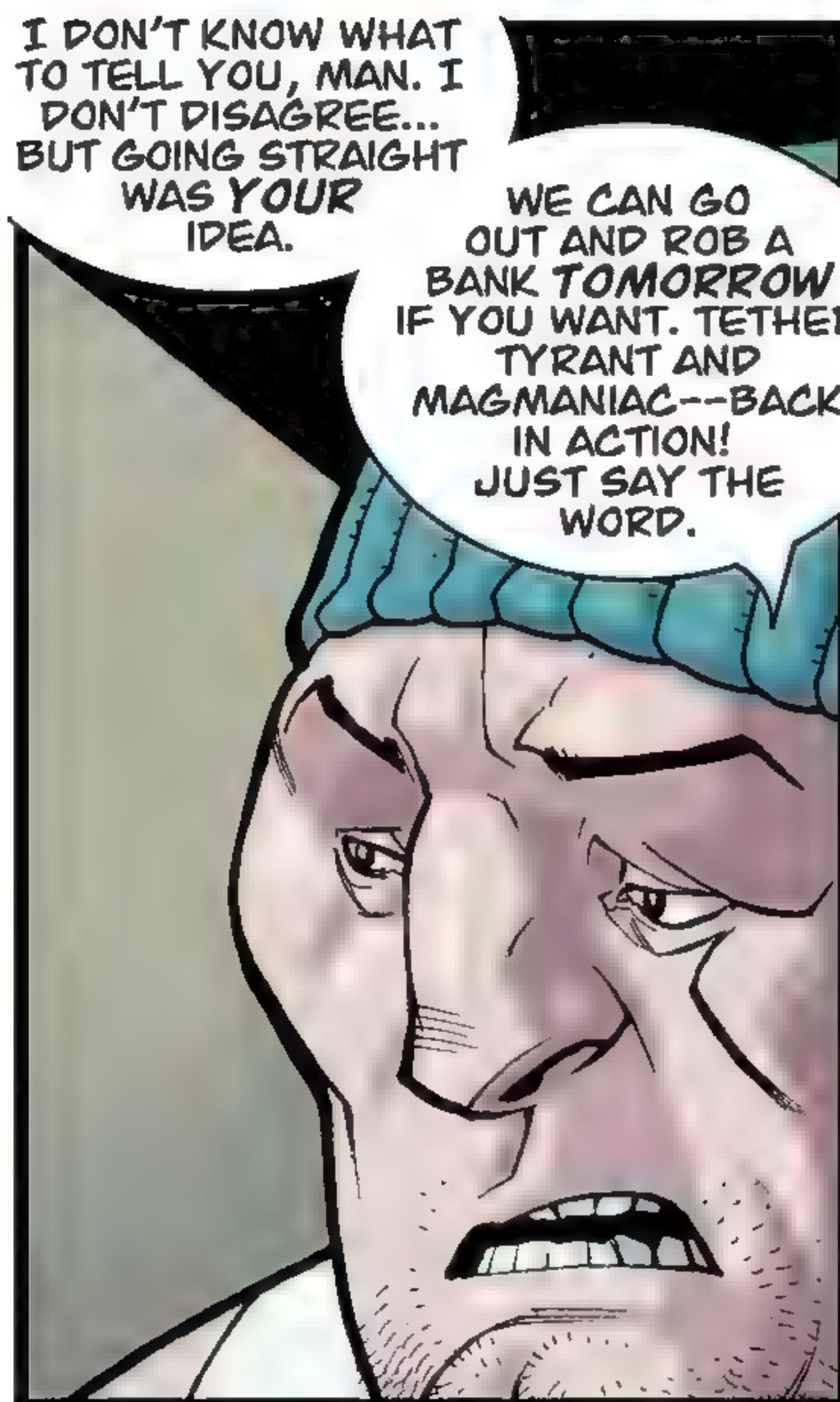
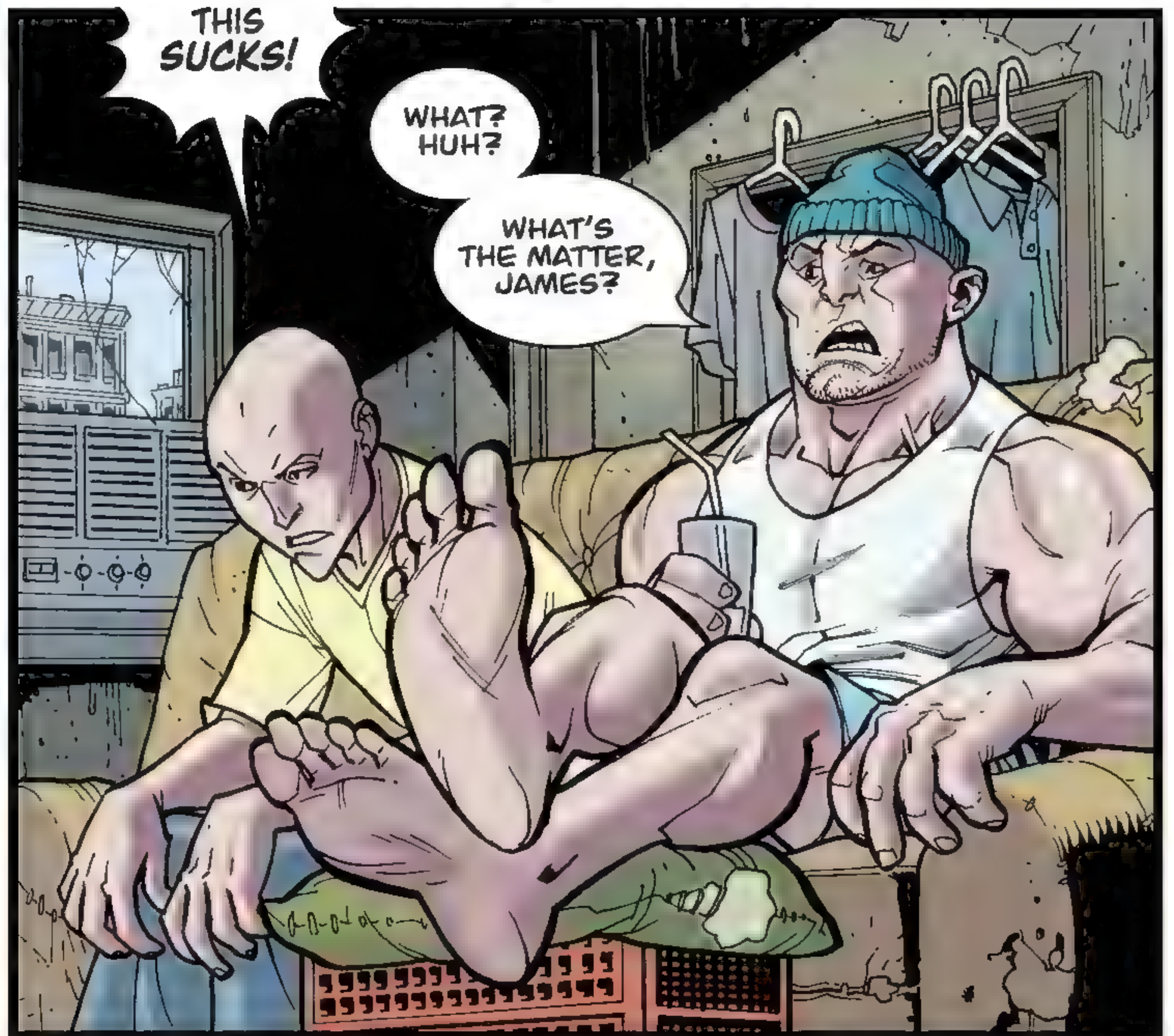
I'LL
DO MY
BEST.

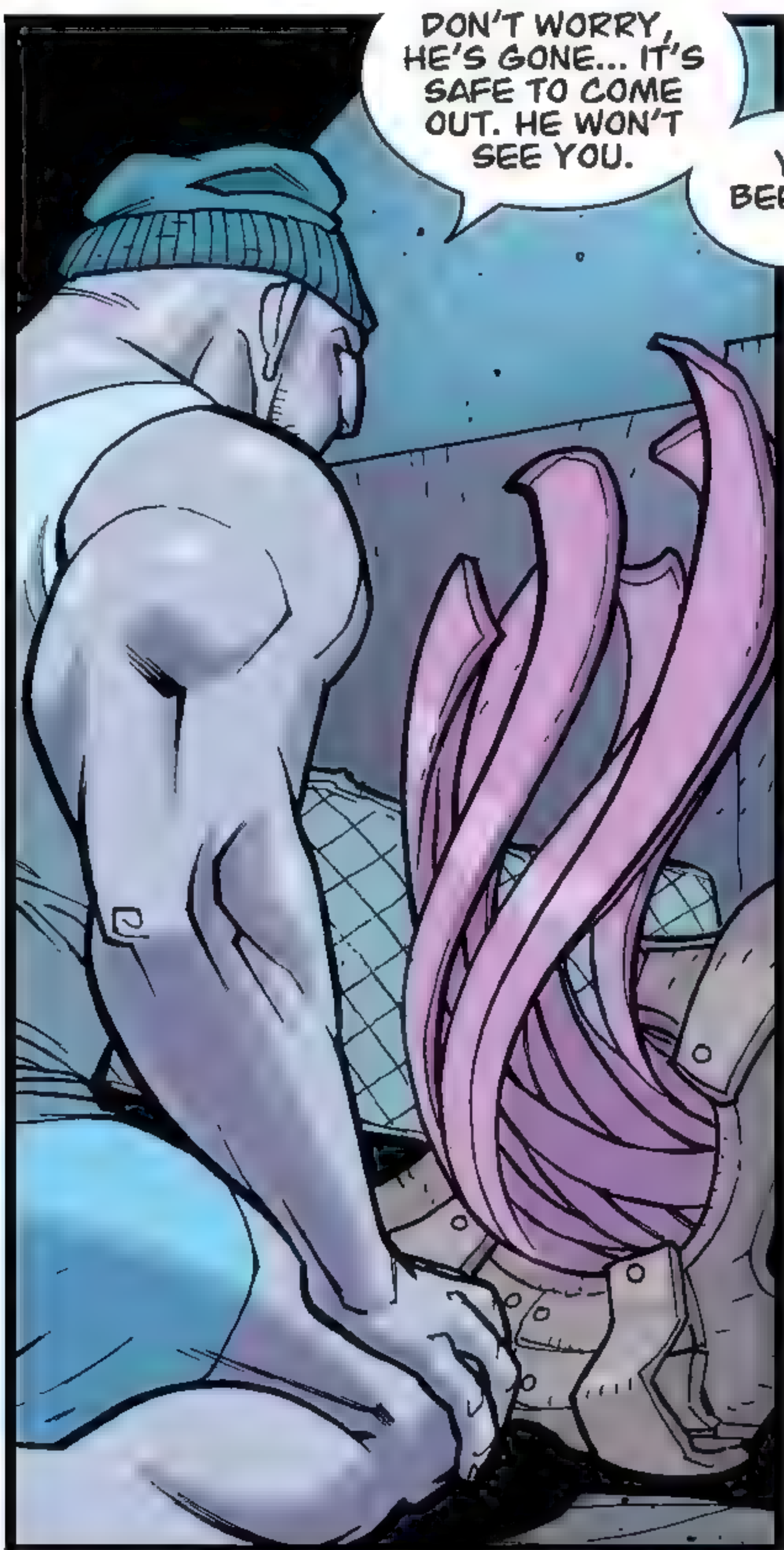
ISOTOPE,
MAKE SURE
MR. LIU MAKES
IT HOME
SAFELY.

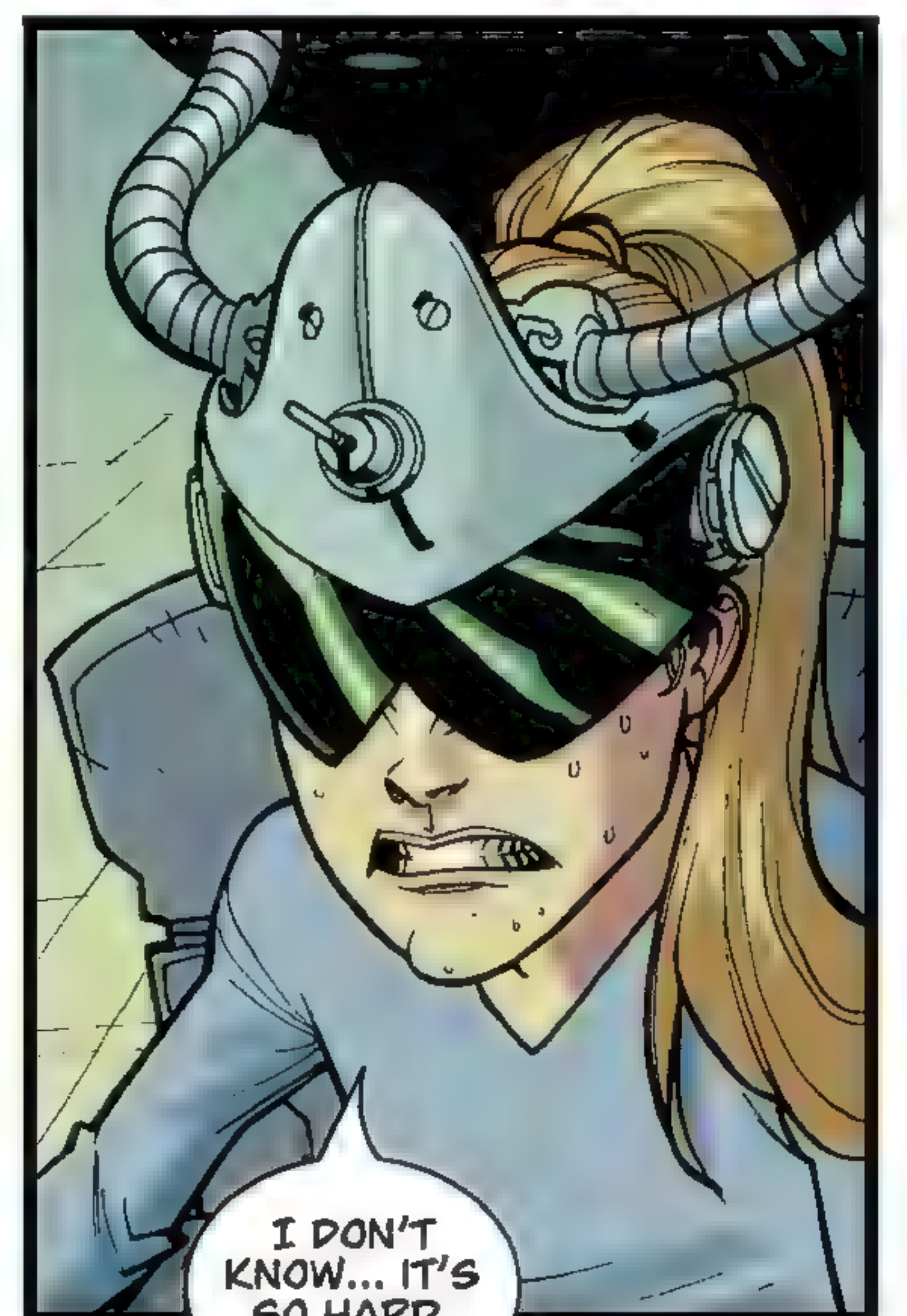
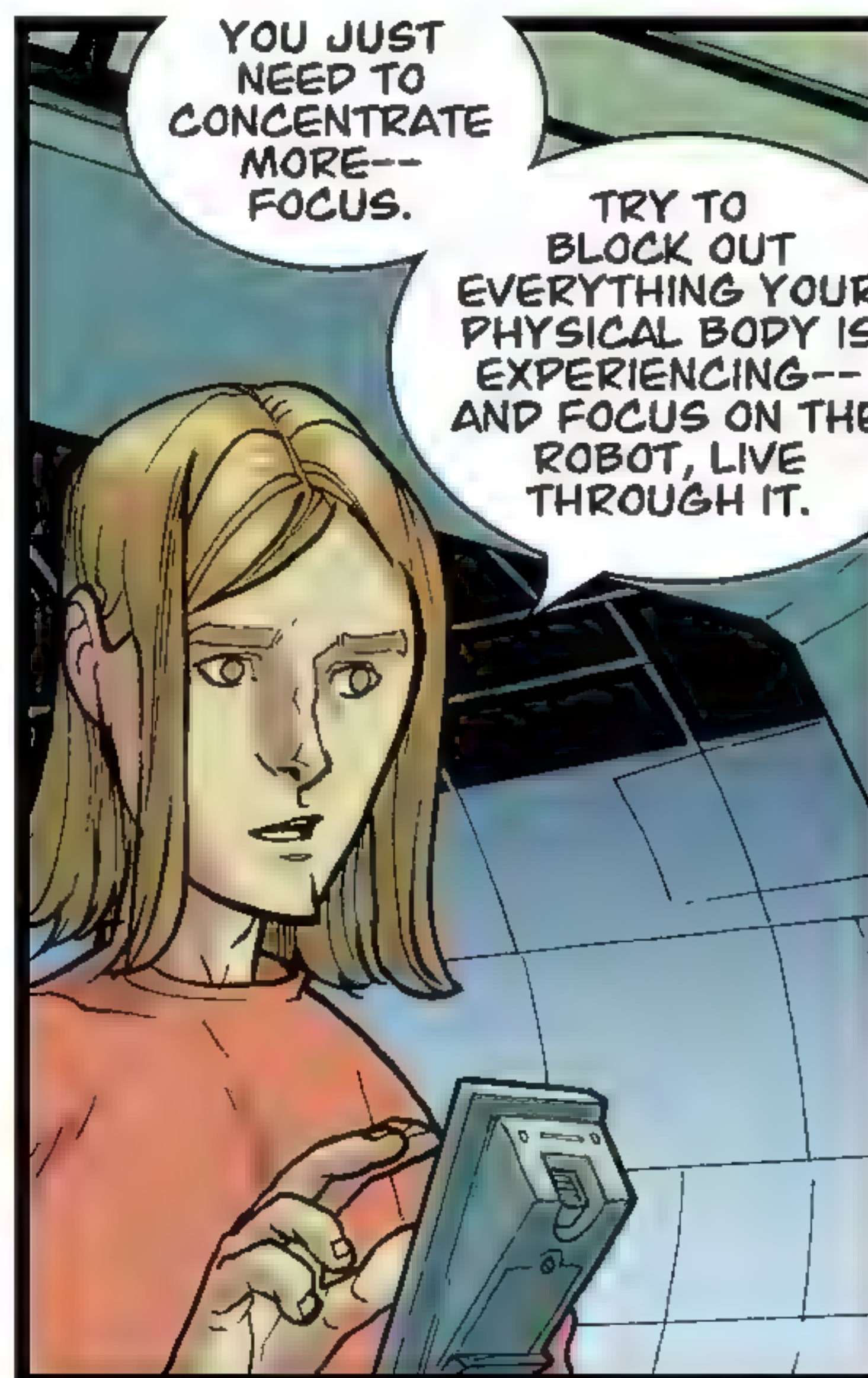
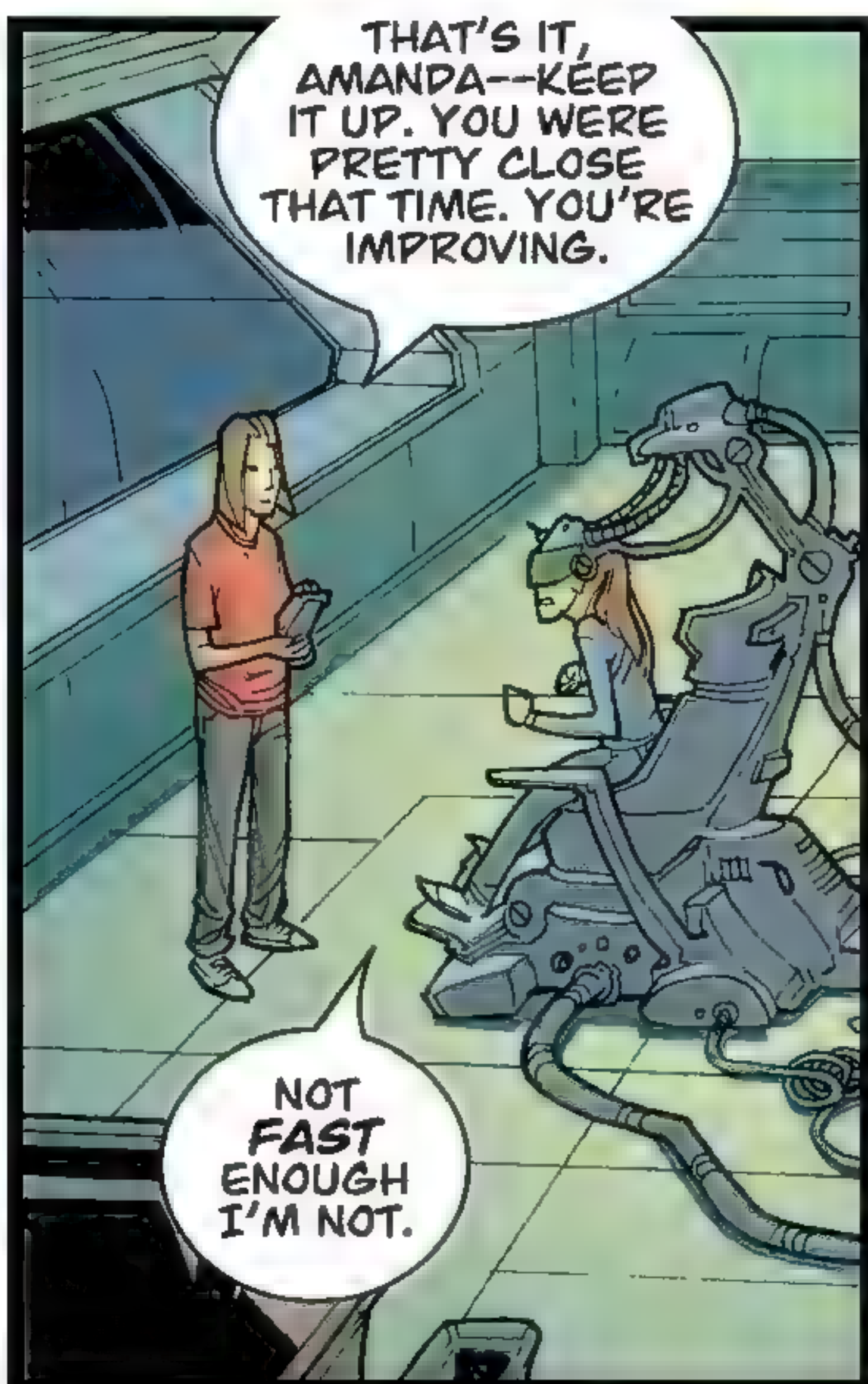
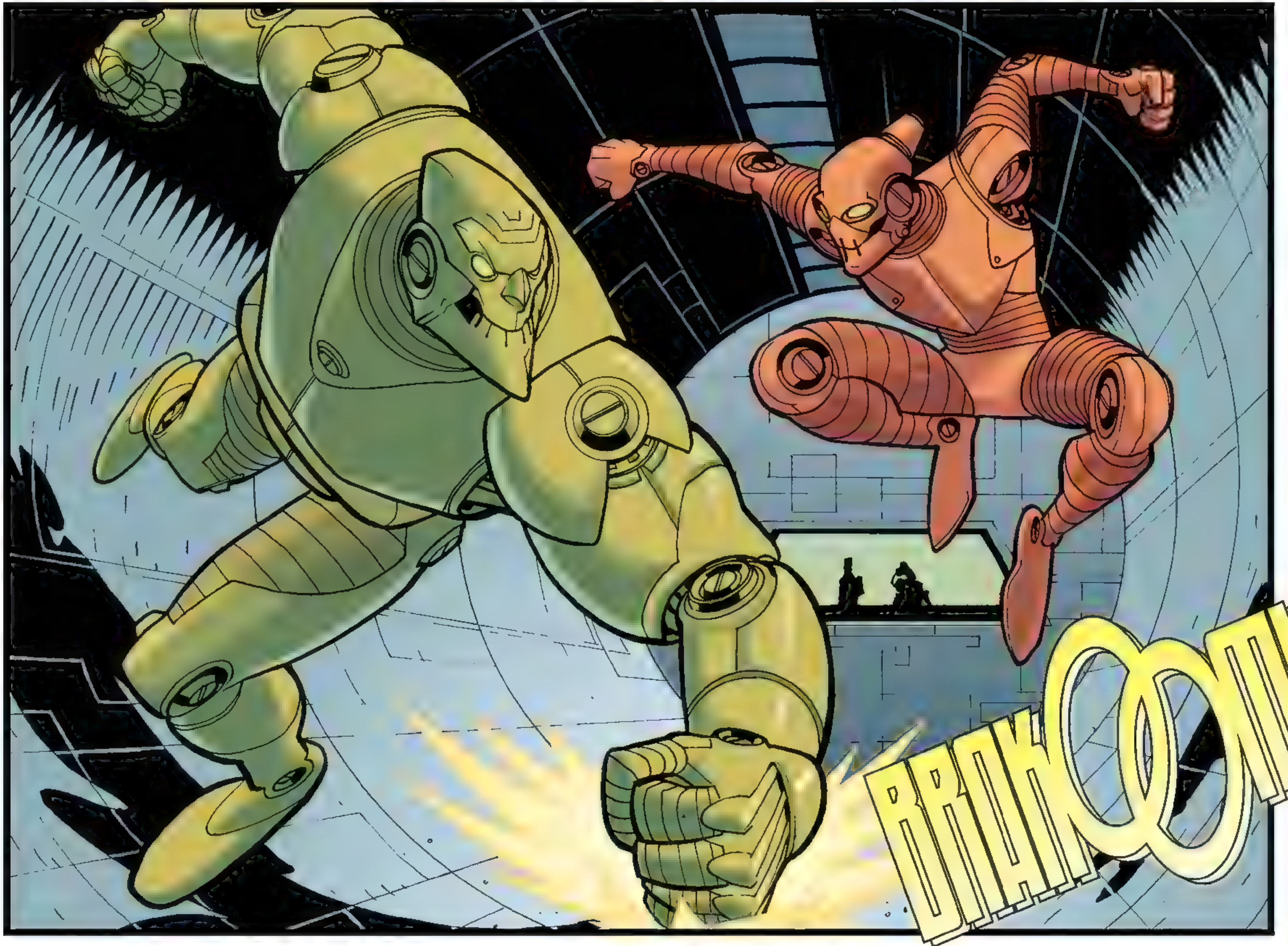
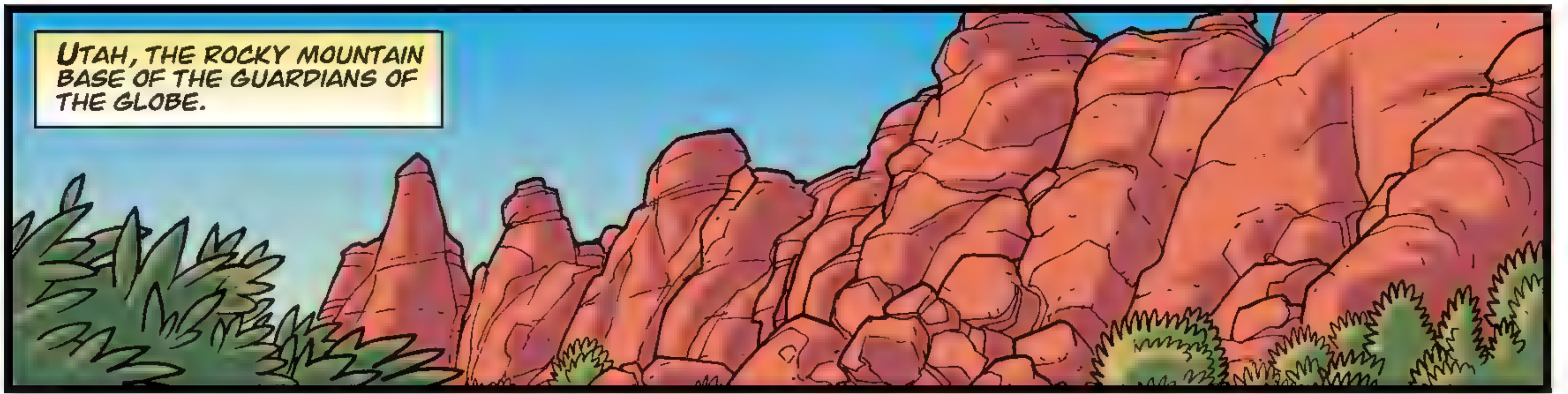
YES,
SIR.

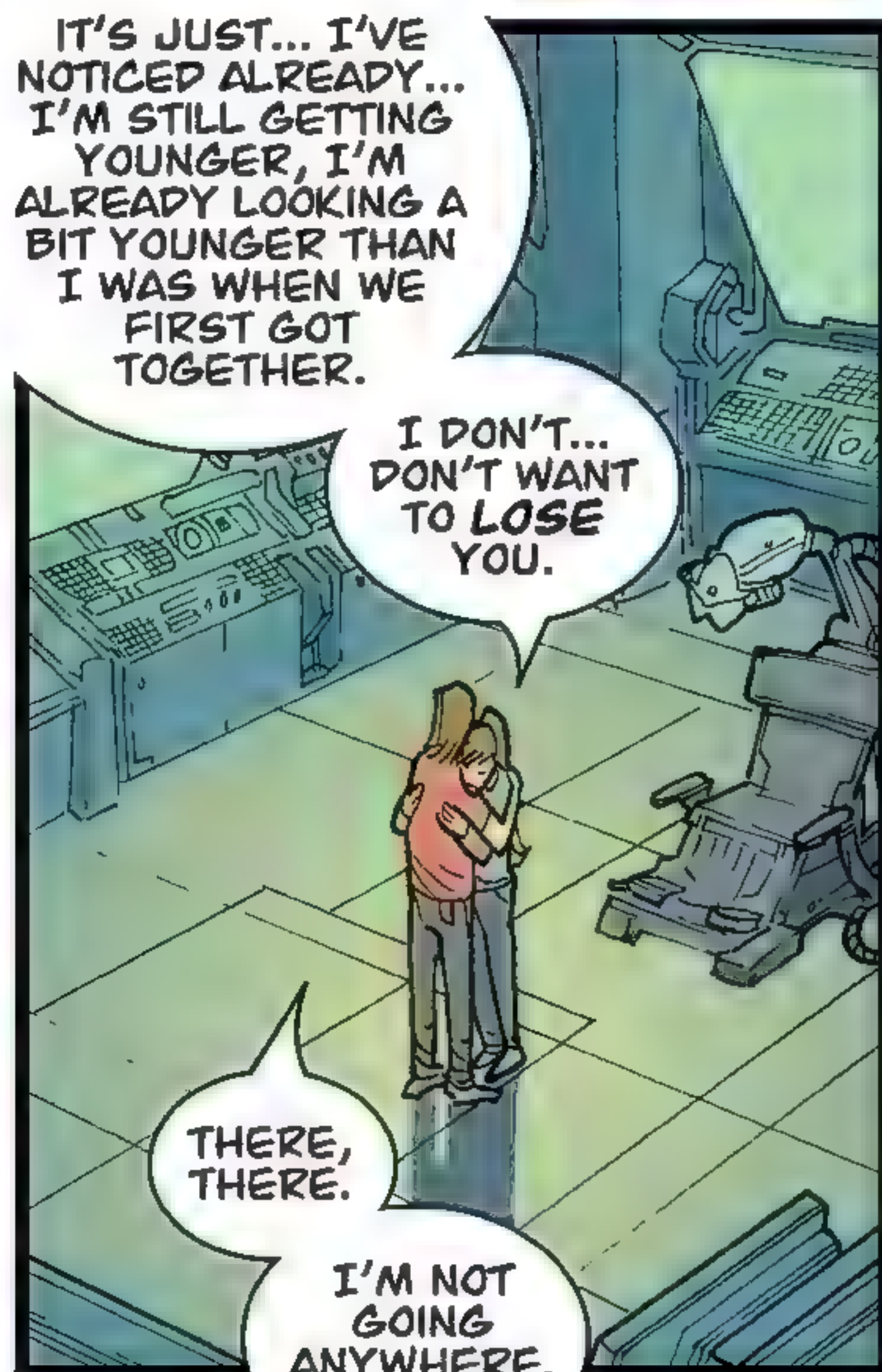
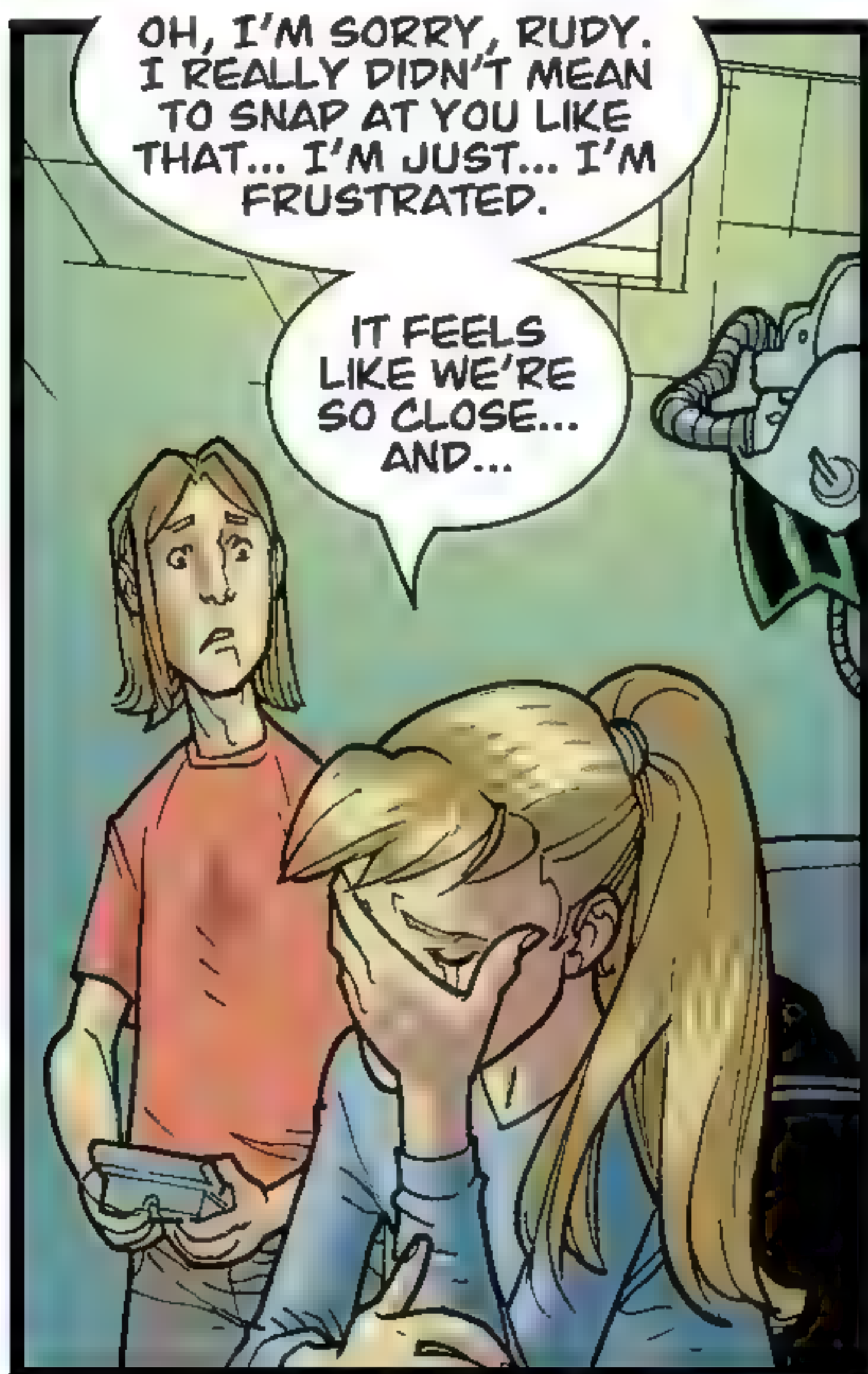
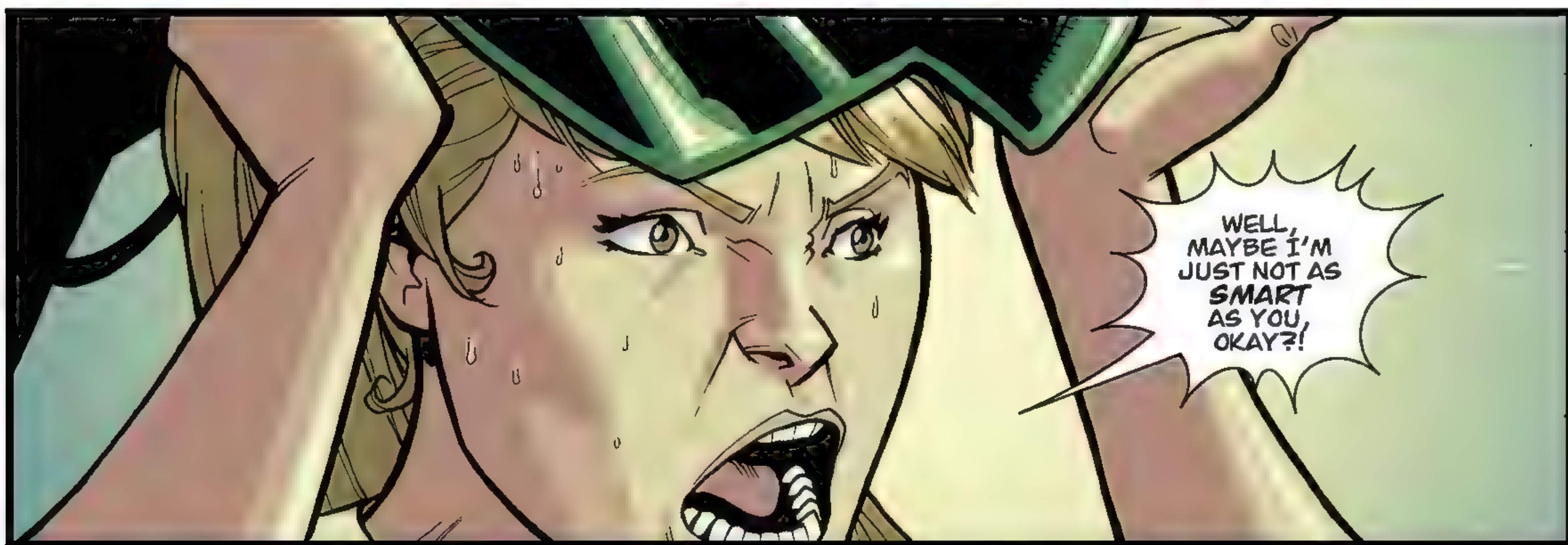
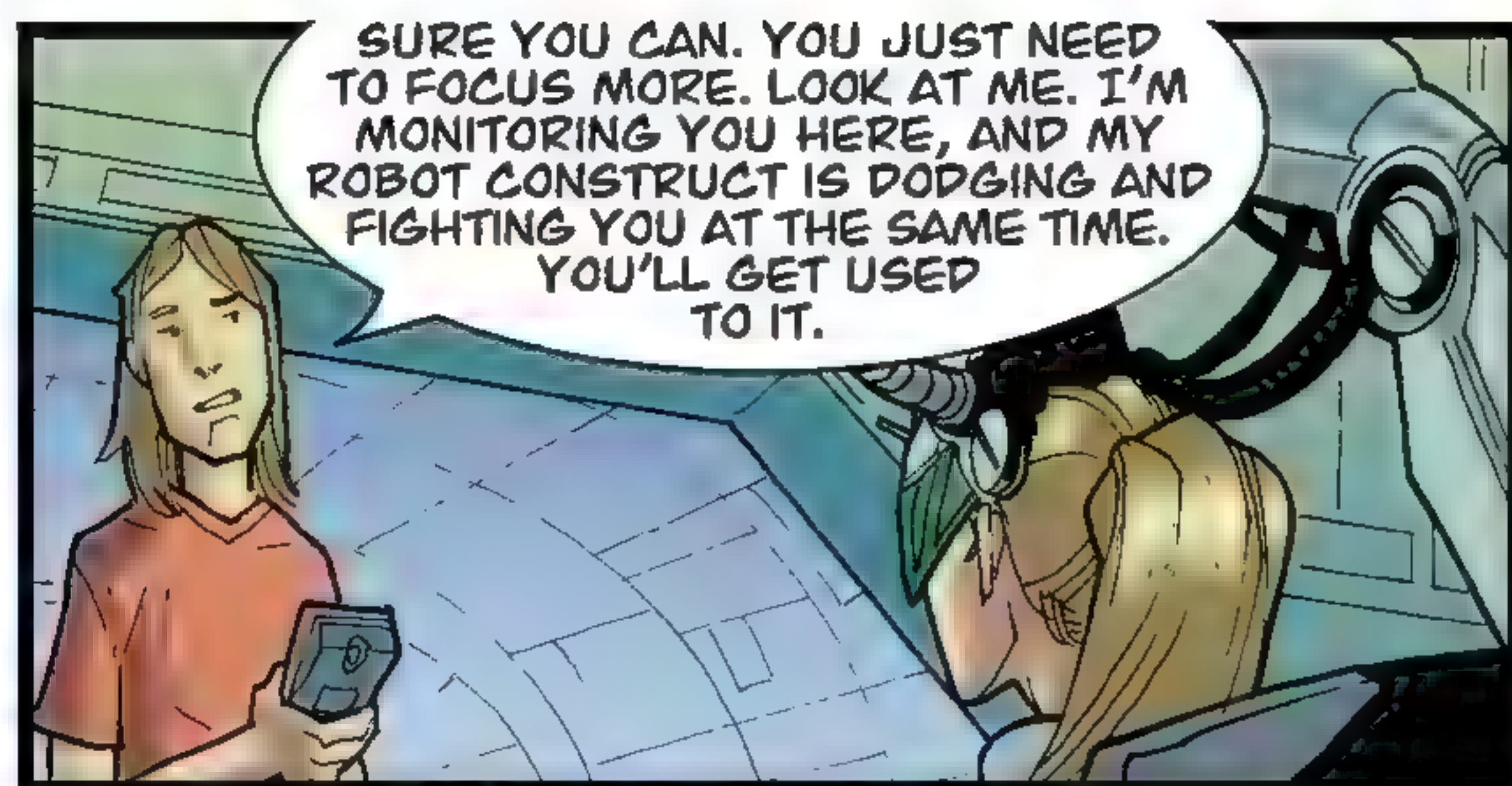
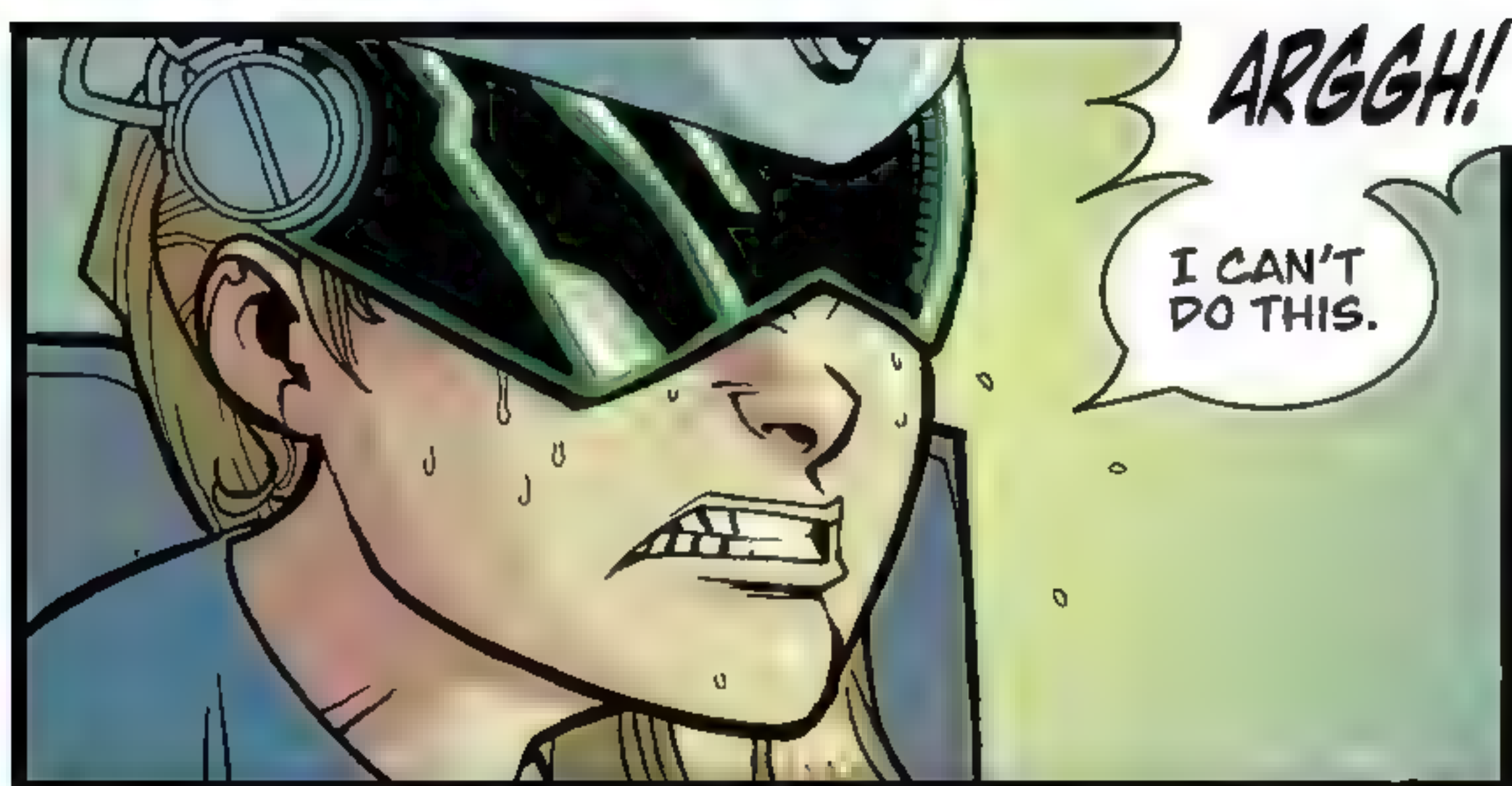
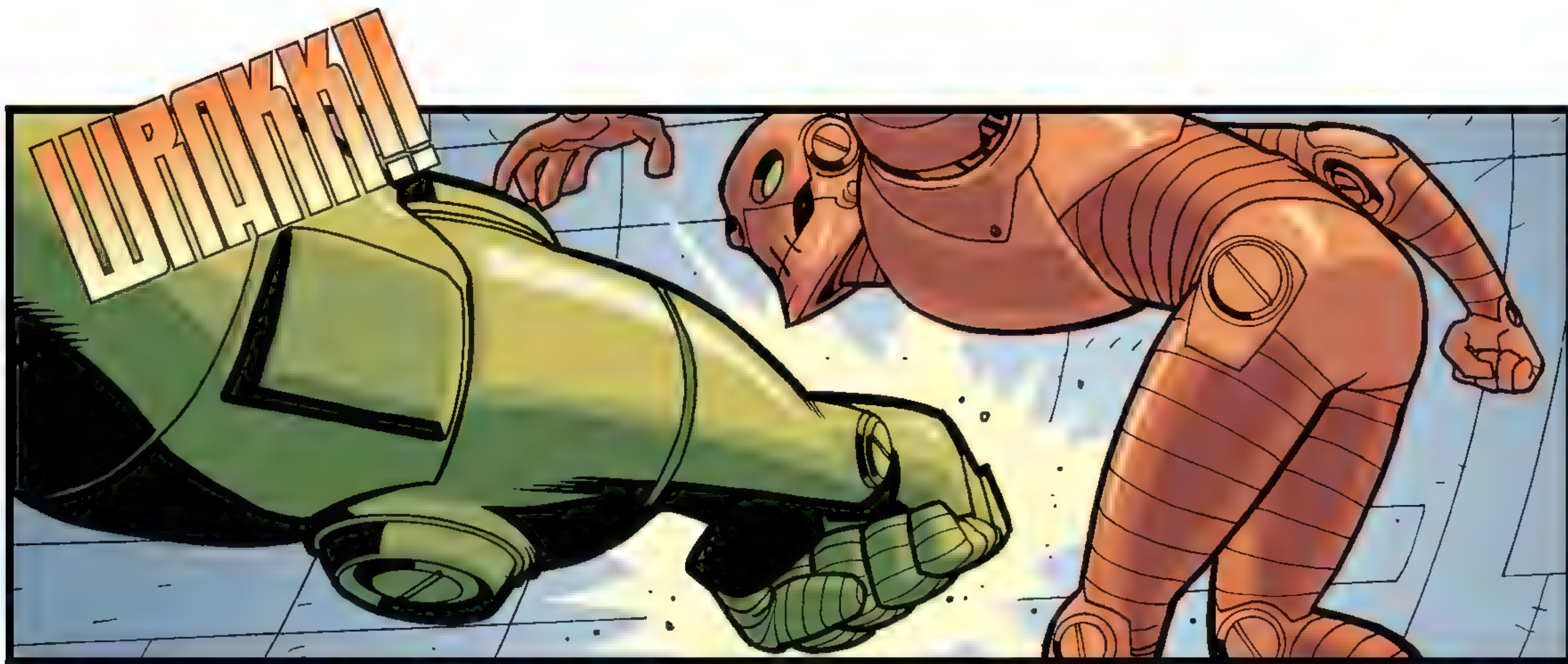


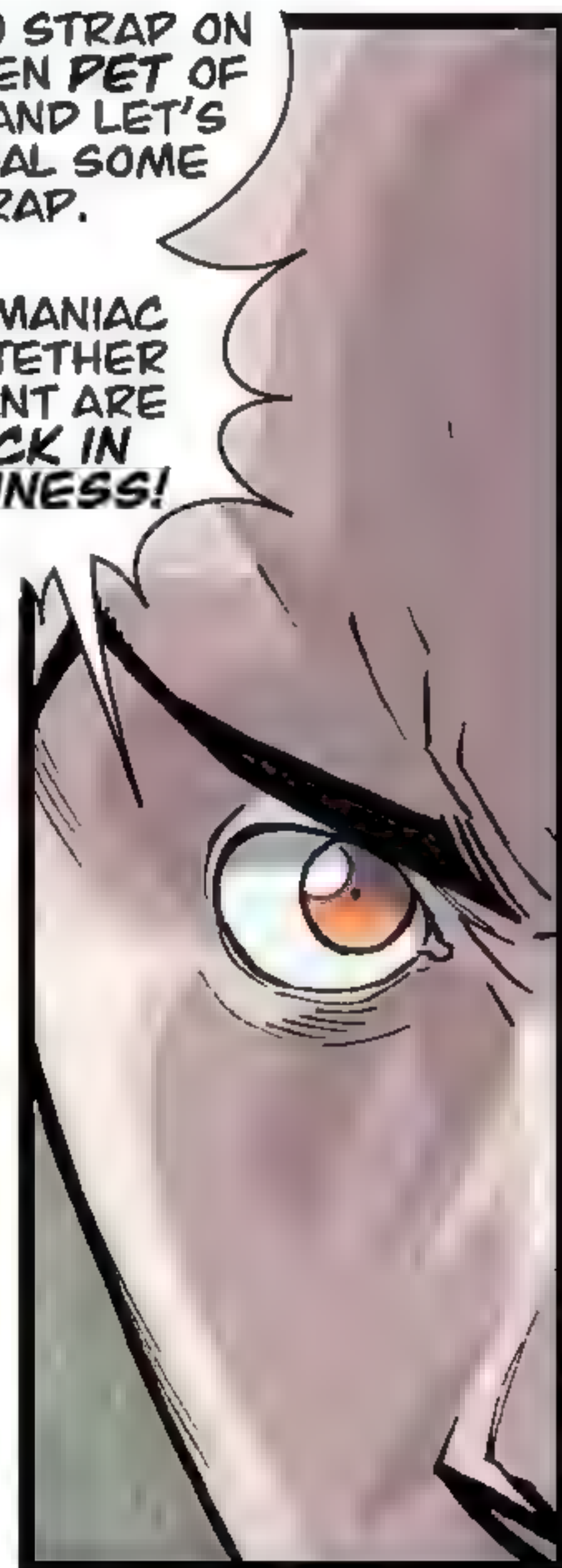
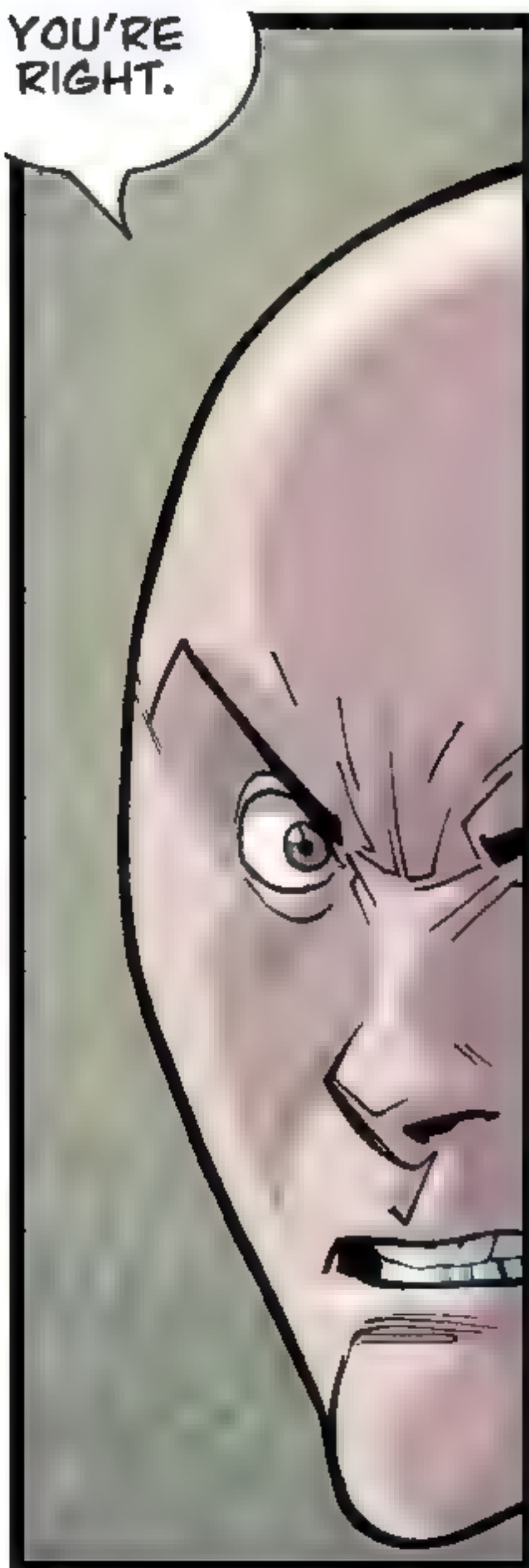
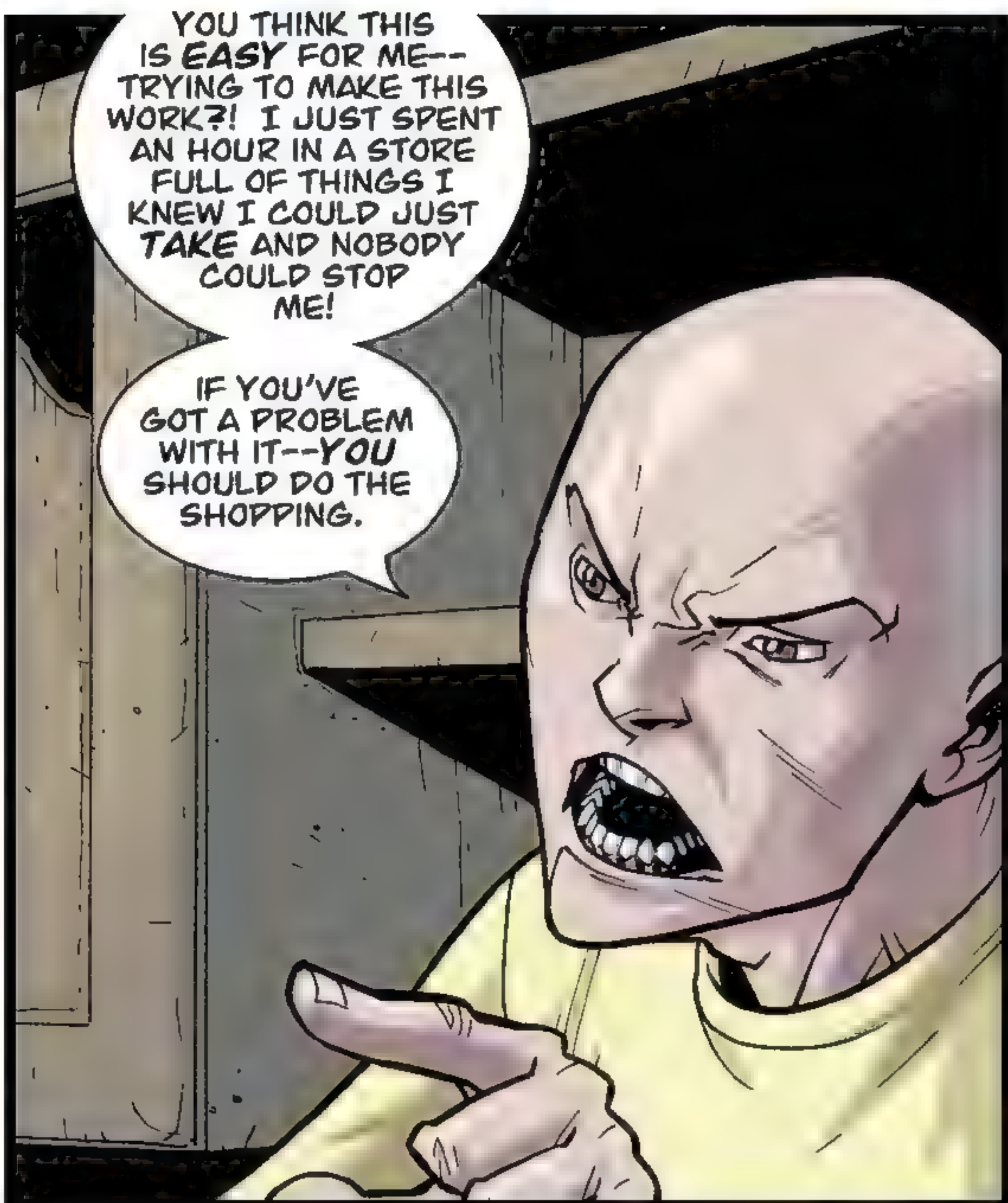


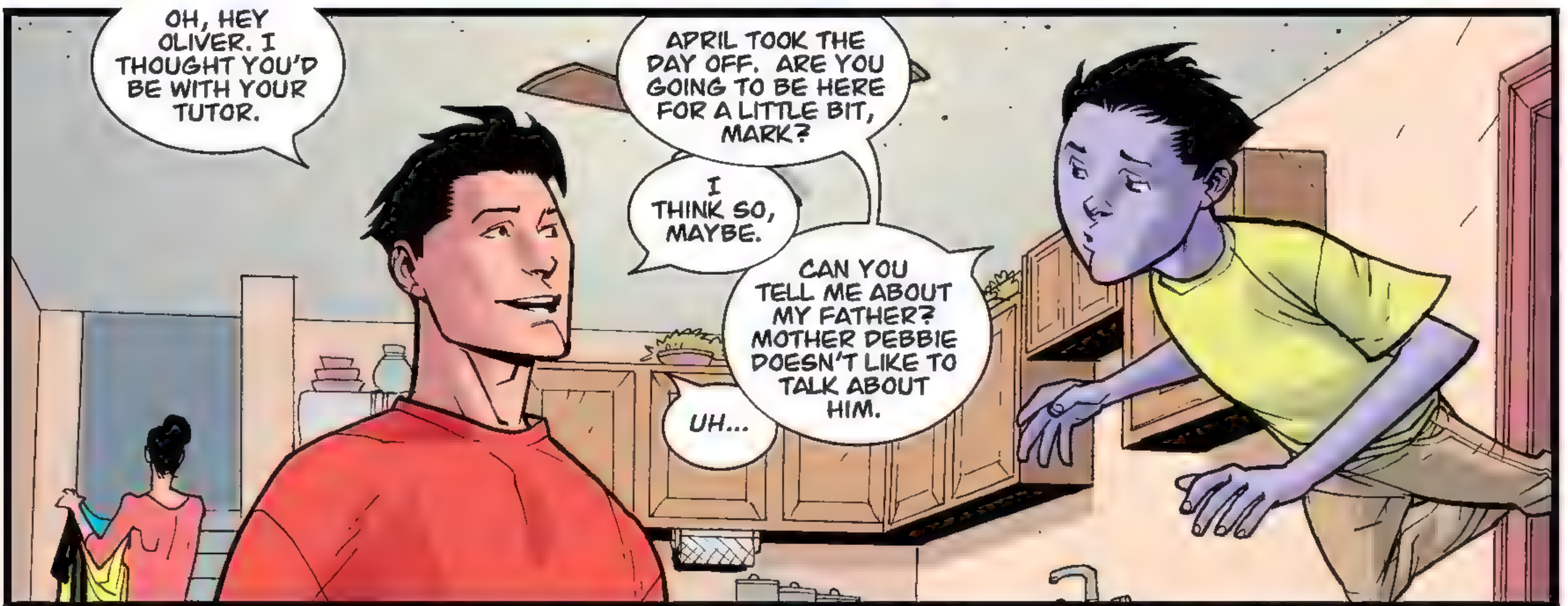
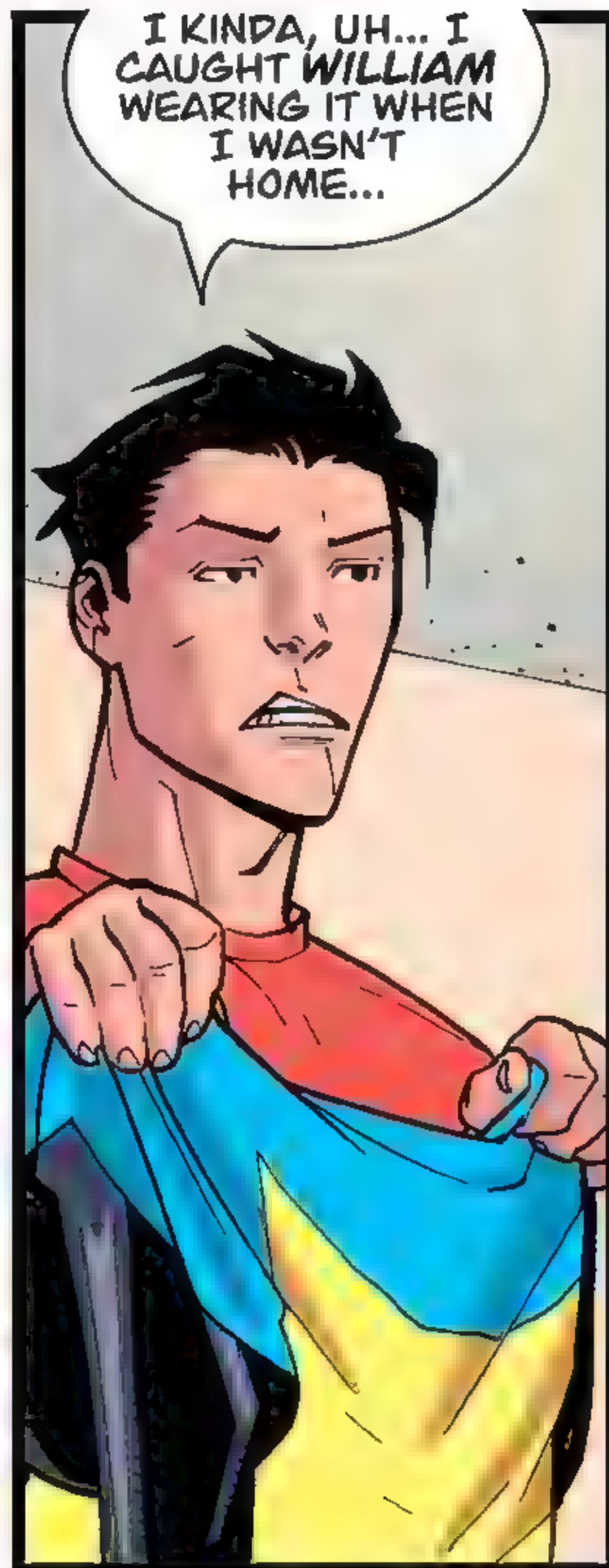
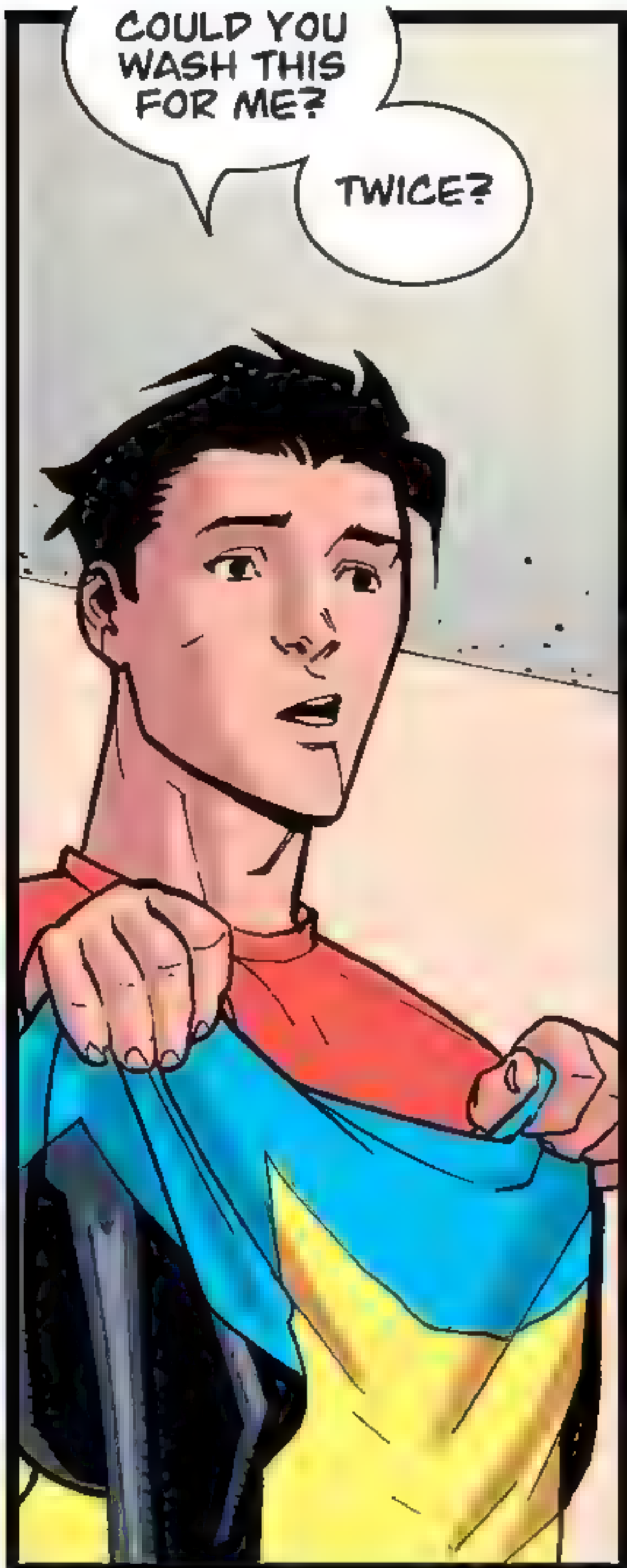
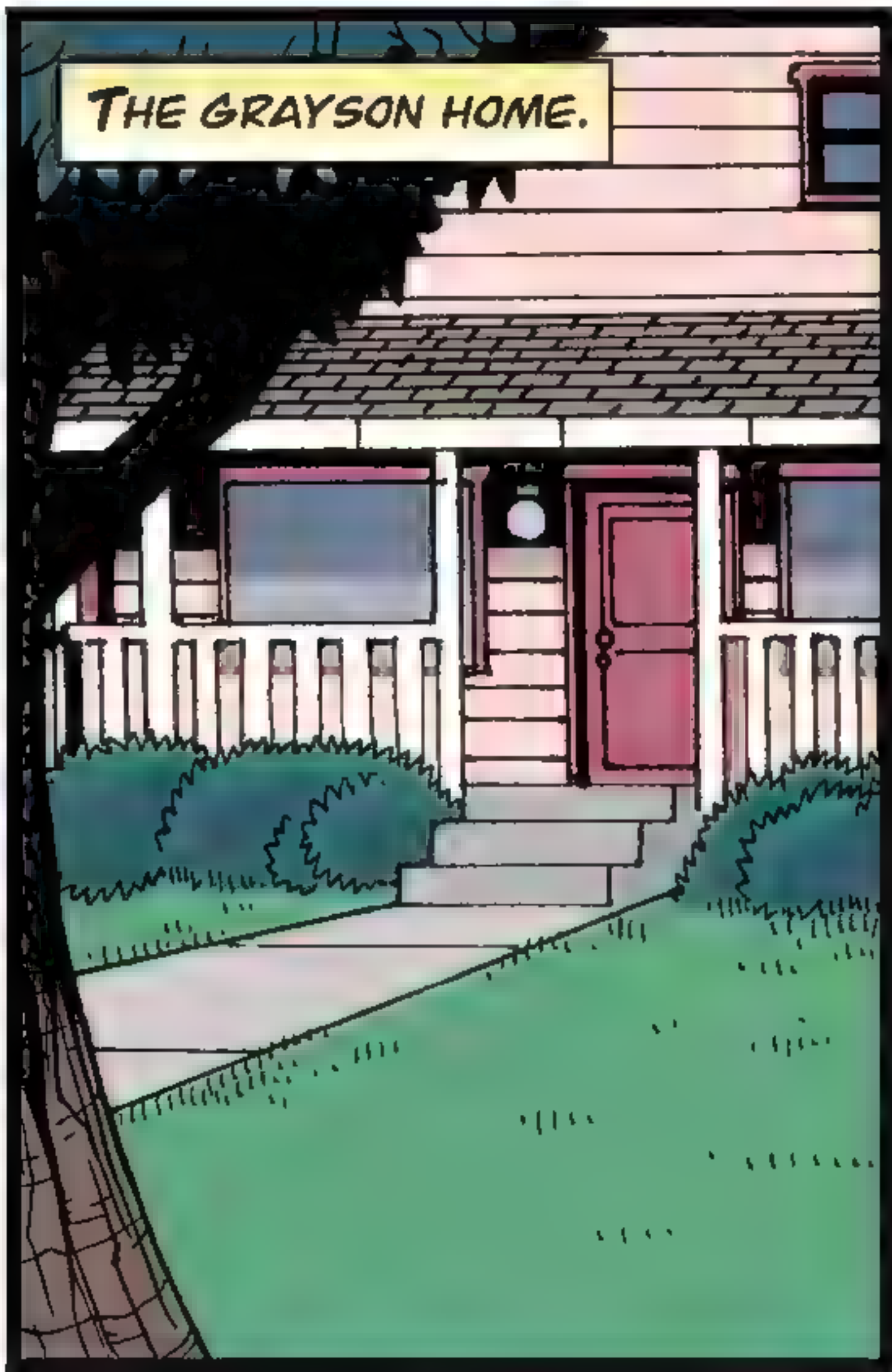


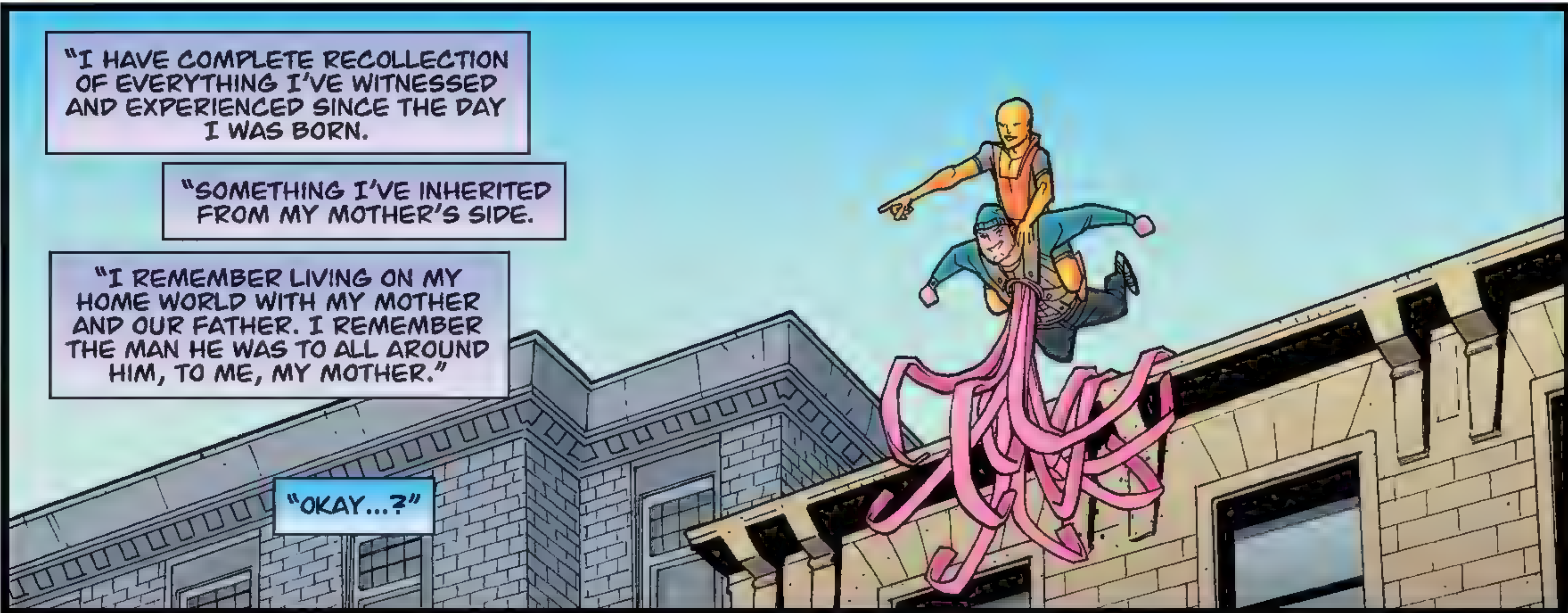










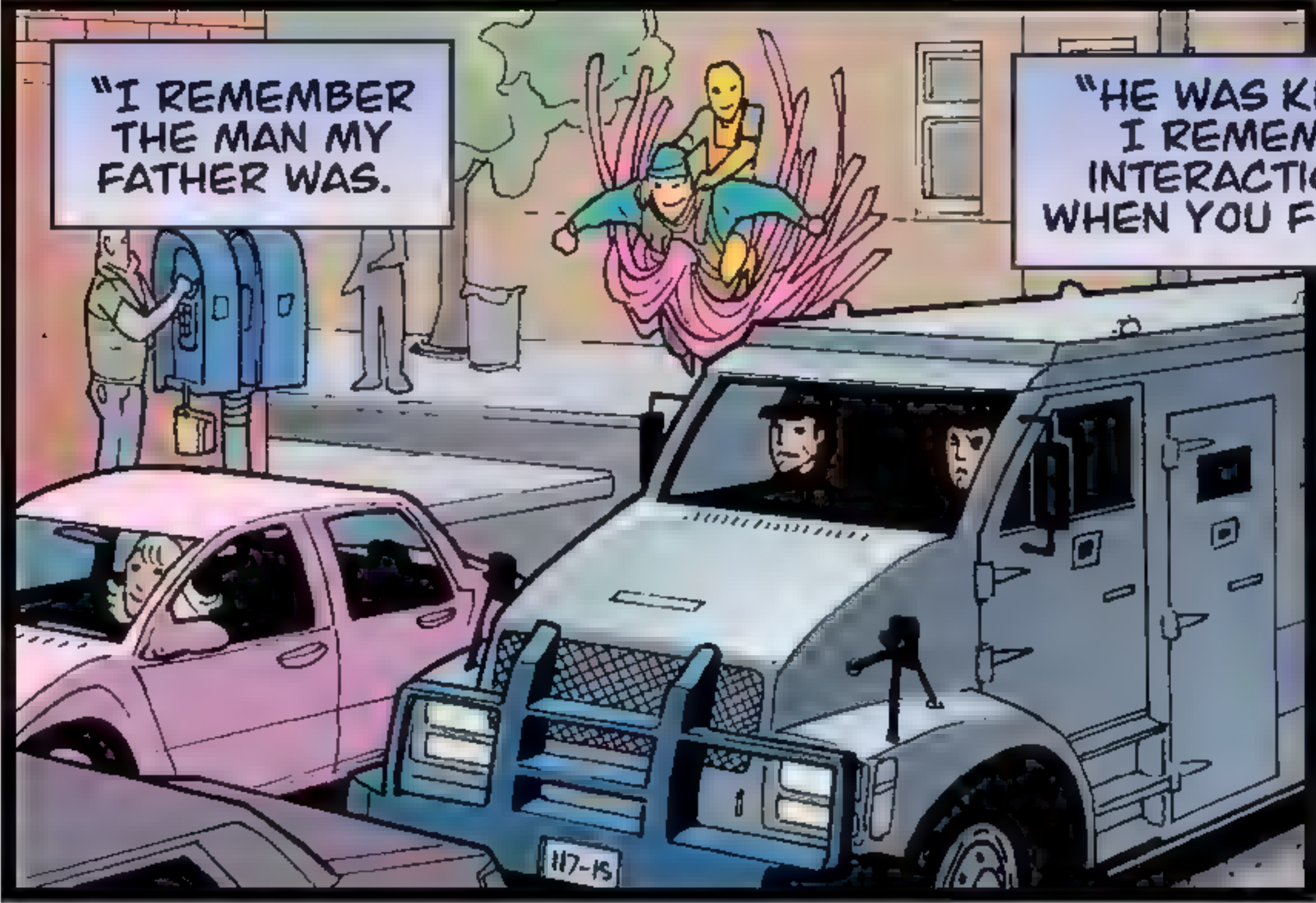


"I HAVE COMPLETE RECOLLECTION OF EVERYTHING I'VE WITNESSED AND EXPERIENCED SINCE THE DAY I WAS BORN.

"SOMETHING I'VE INHERITED FROM MY MOTHER'S SIDE.

"I REMEMBER LIVING ON MY HOME WORLD WITH MY MOTHER AND OUR FATHER. I REMEMBER THE MAN HE WAS TO ALL AROUND HIM, TO ME, MY MOTHER."

"OKAY...?"

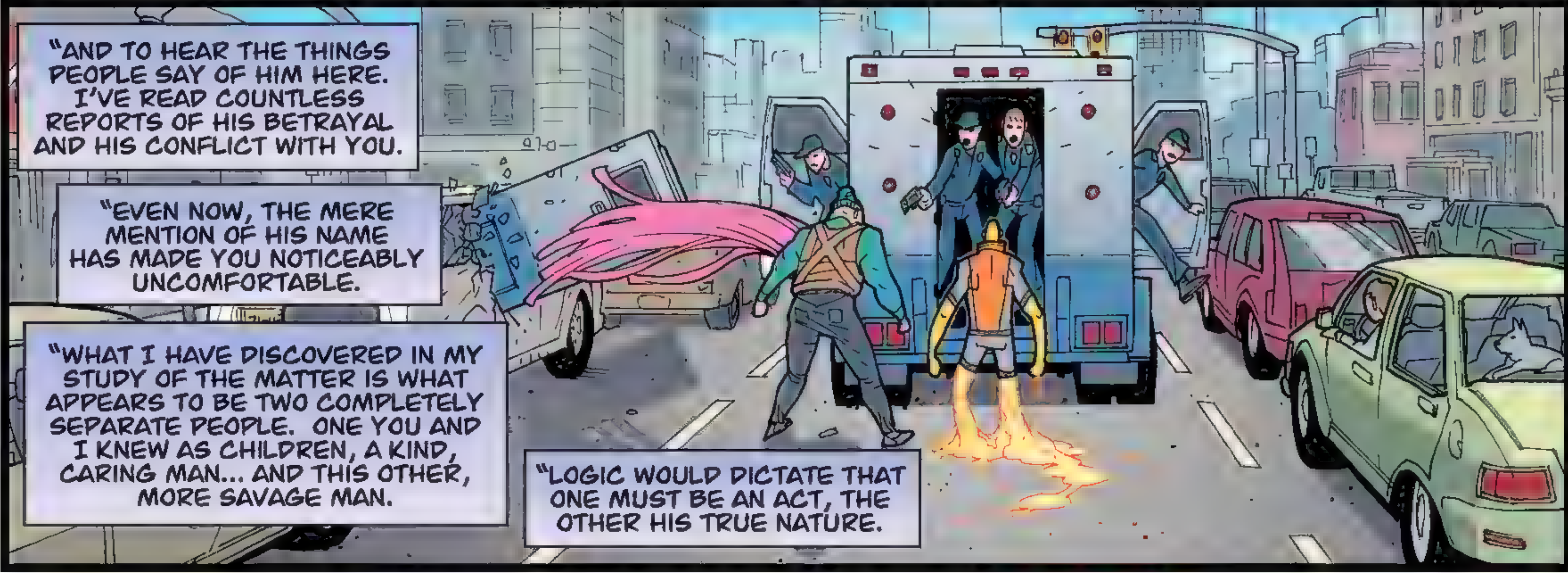


"I REMEMBER THE MAN MY FATHER WAS.

"HE WAS KIND, CARING, I REMEMBER YOUR INTERACTION WITH HIM WHEN YOU FIRST ARRIVED.



"I DO NOT RECALL EVER HAVING REASON TO FEAR THE MAN.



"AND TO HEAR THE THINGS PEOPLE SAY OF HIM HERE. I'VE READ COUNTLESS REPORTS OF HIS BETRAYAL AND HIS CONFLICT WITH YOU.

"EVEN NOW, THE MERE MENTION OF HIS NAME HAS MADE YOU NOTICEABLY UNCOMFORTABLE.

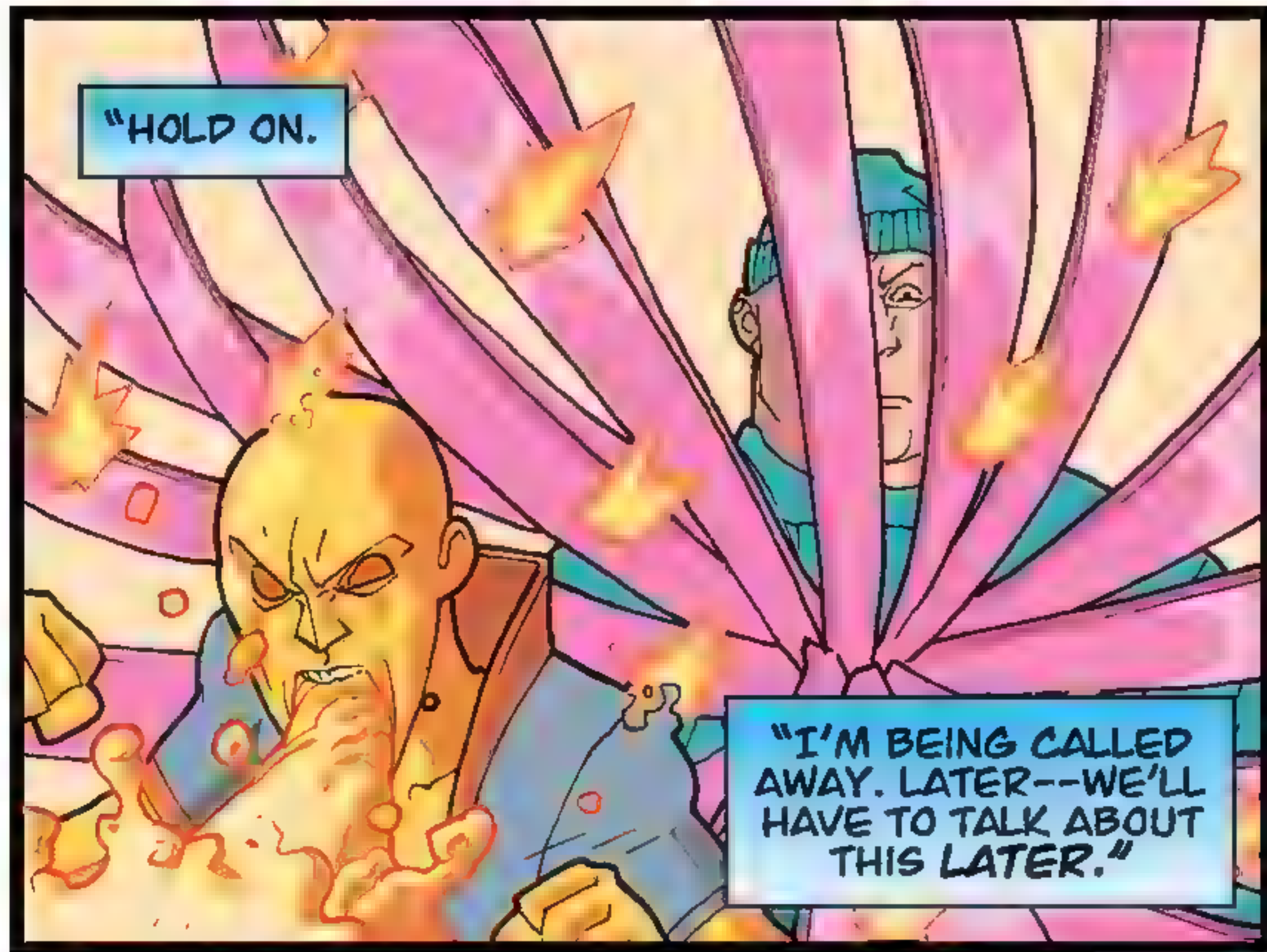
"WHAT I HAVE DISCOVERED IN MY STUDY OF THE MATTER IS WHAT APPEARS TO BE TWO COMPLETELY SEPARATE PEOPLE. ONE YOU AND I KNEW AS CHILDREN, A KIND, CARING MAN... AND THIS OTHER, MORE SAVAGE MAN.

"LOGIC WOULD DICTATE THAT ONE MUST BE AN ACT, THE OTHER HIS TRUE NATURE.



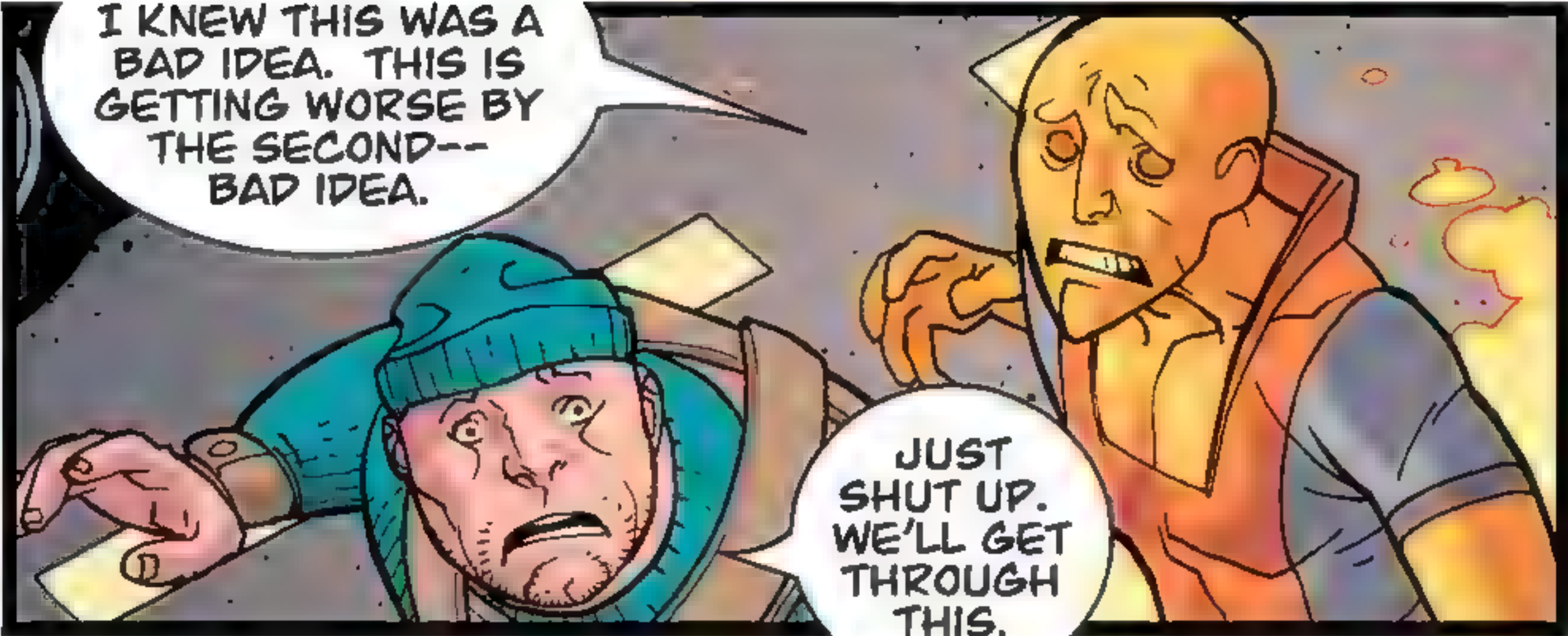
"WHICH ONE DO YOU THINK IS THE REAL VERSION OF OUR FATHER?"

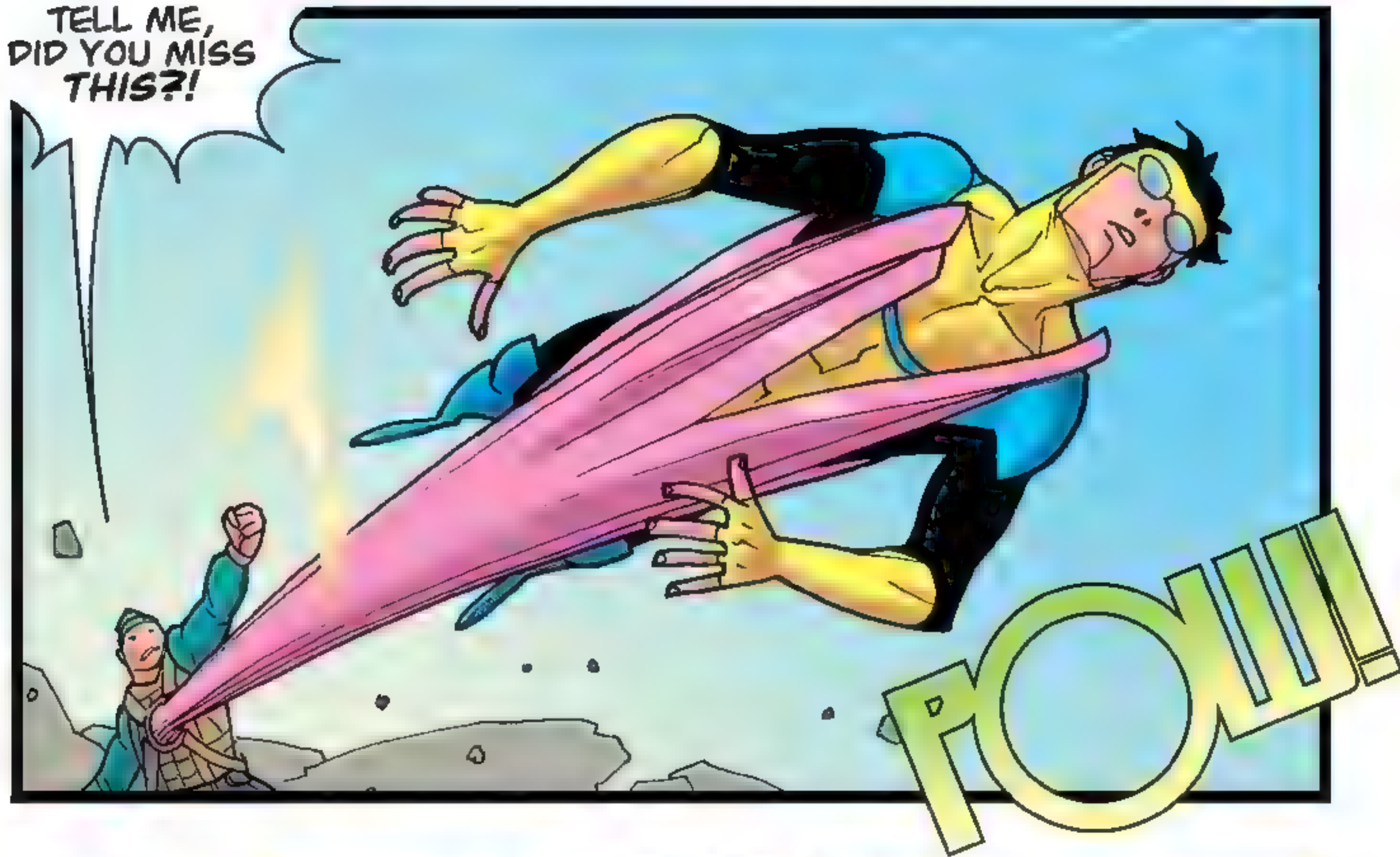
"OLIVER, REALLY, I--



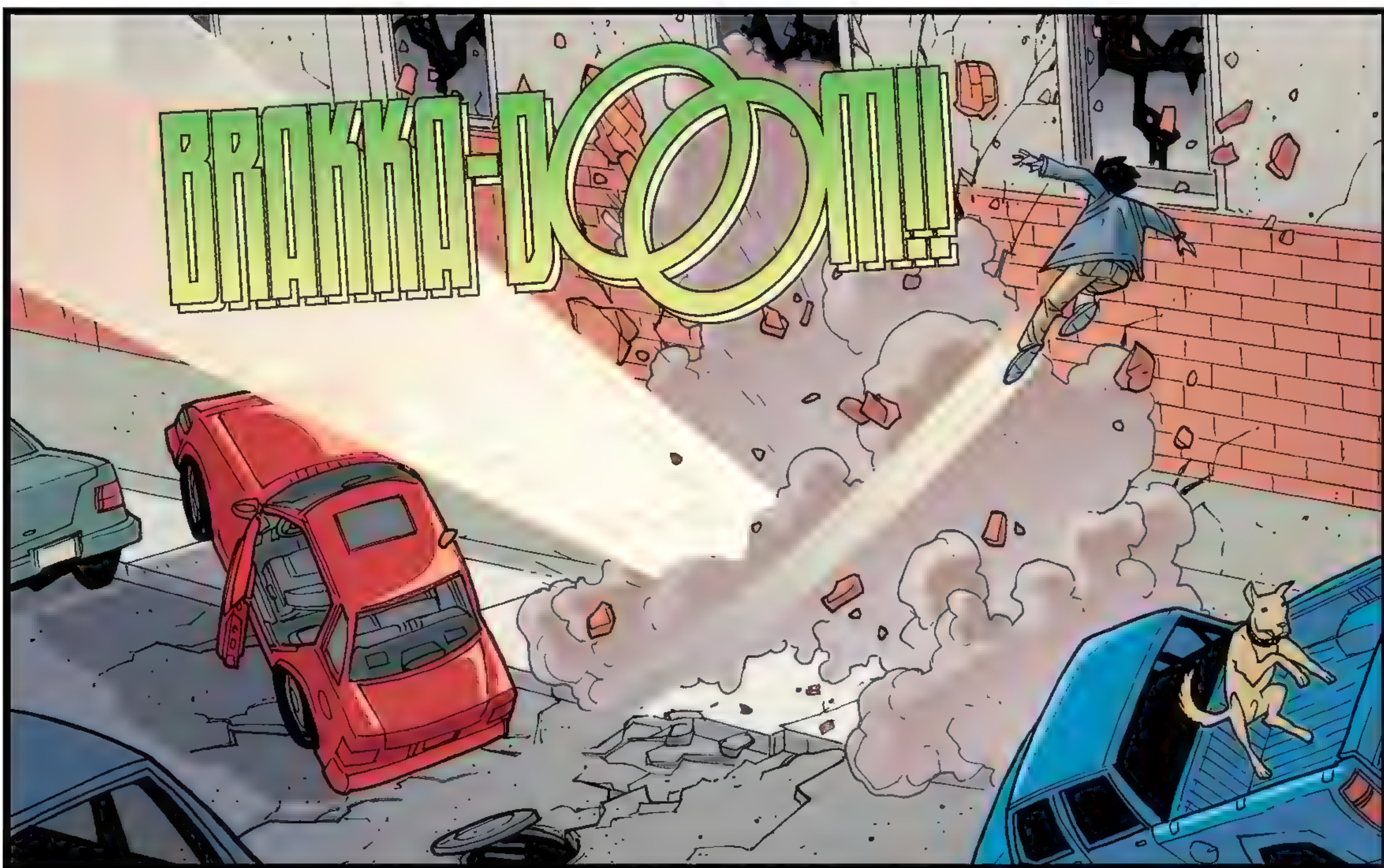
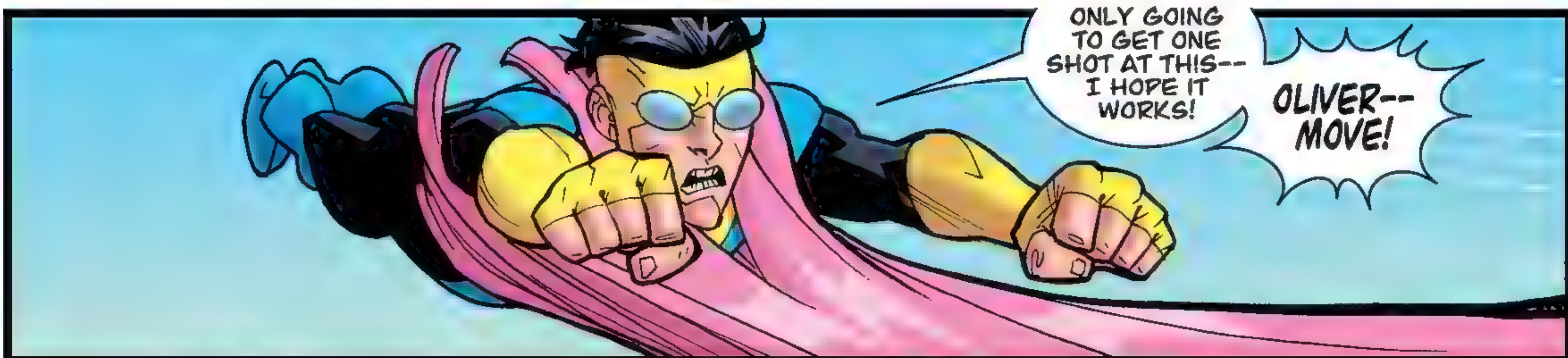
"HOLD ON.

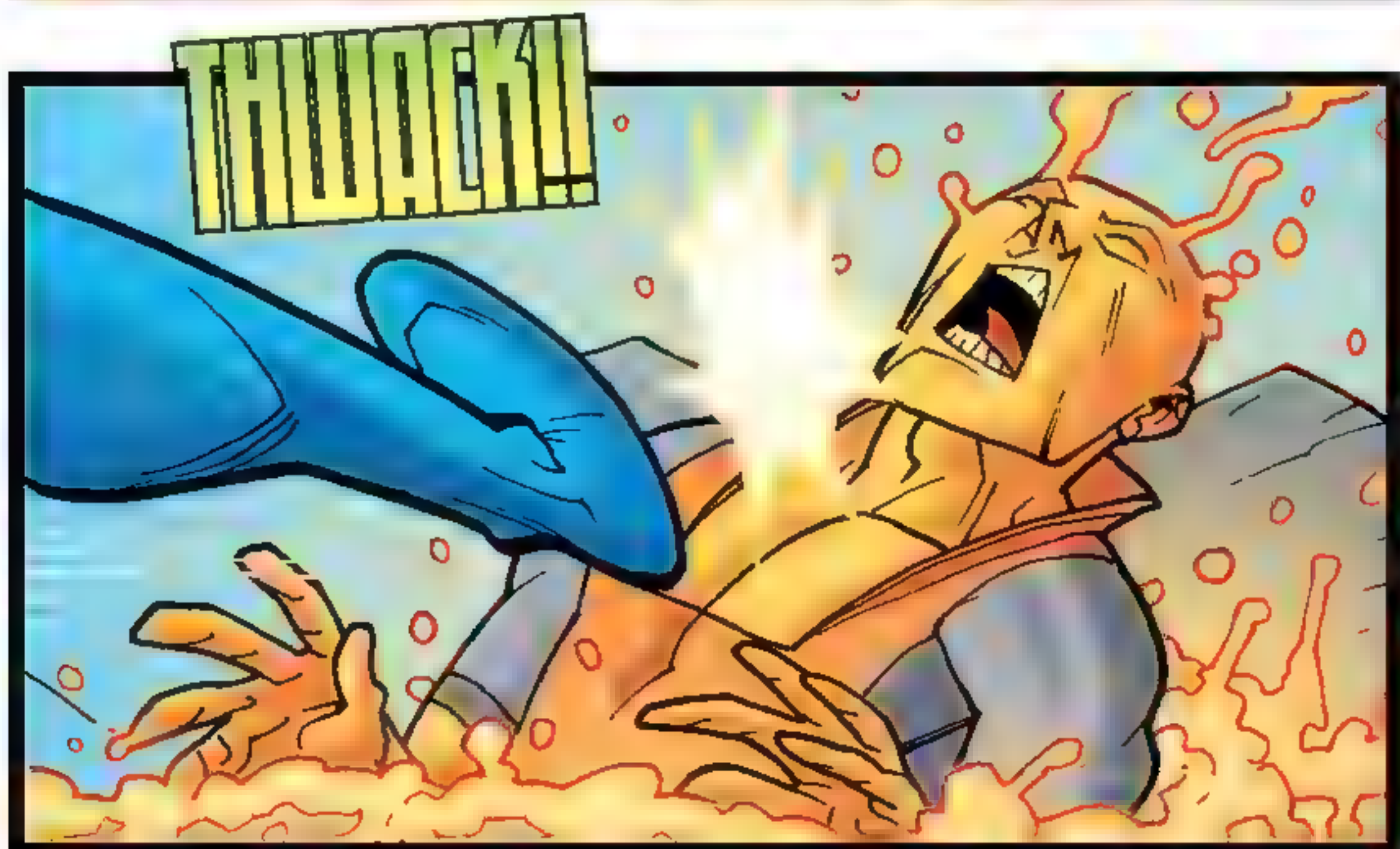
"I'M BEING CALLED AWAY. LATER--WE'LL HAVE TO TALK ABOUT THIS LATER."

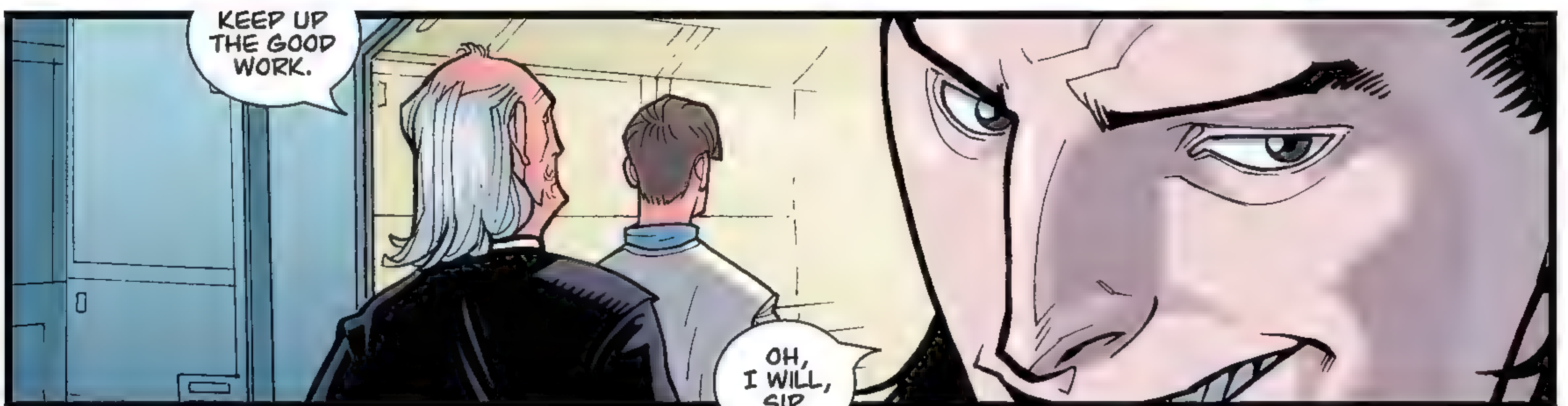
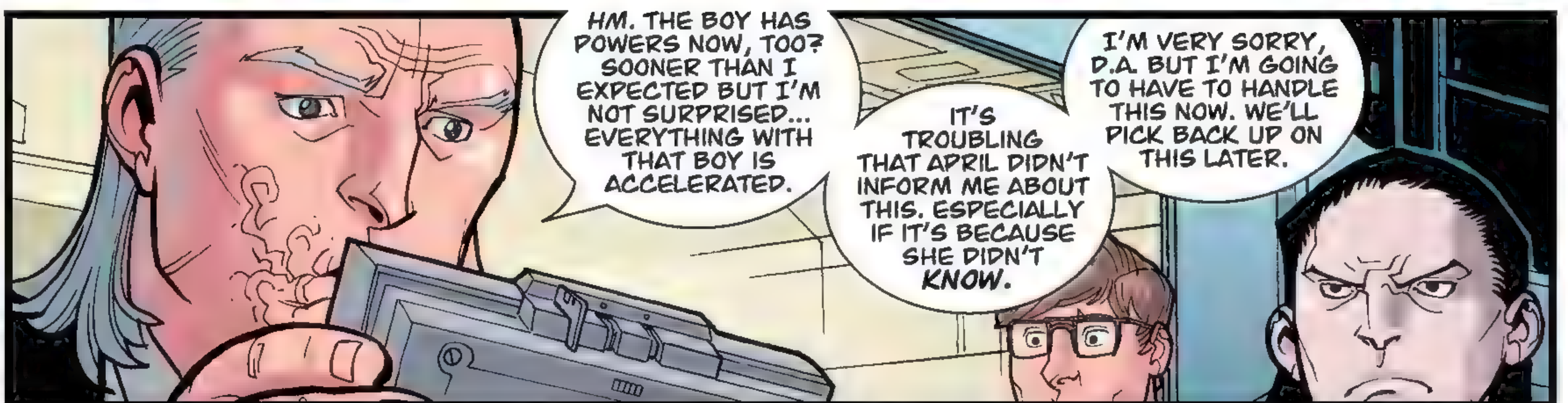
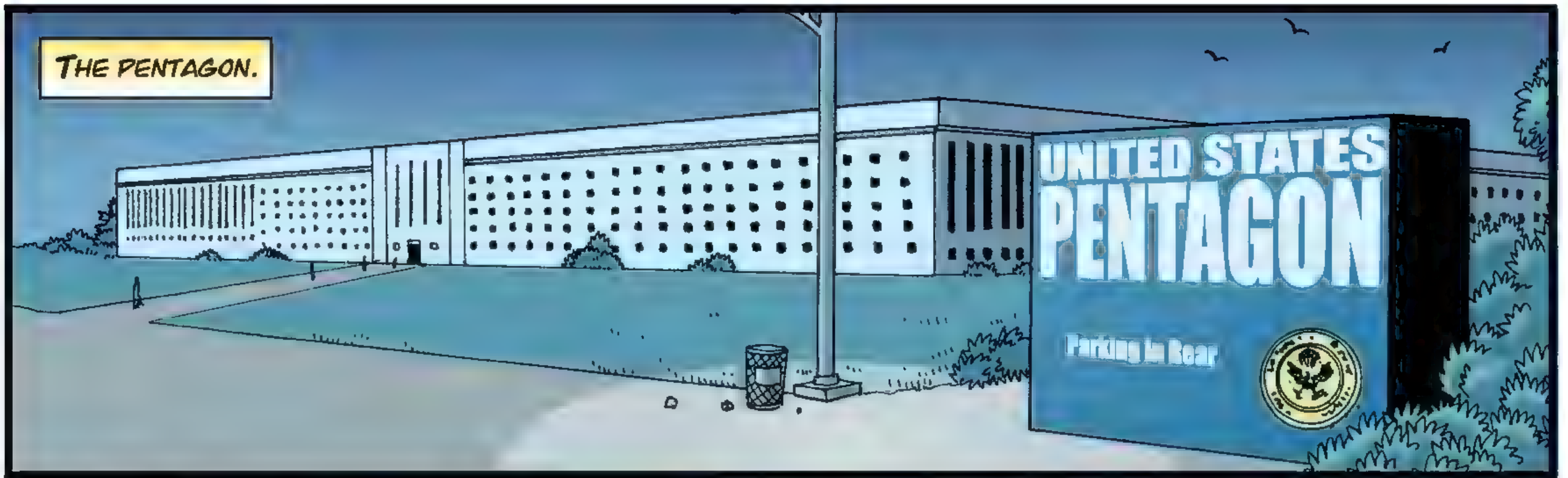


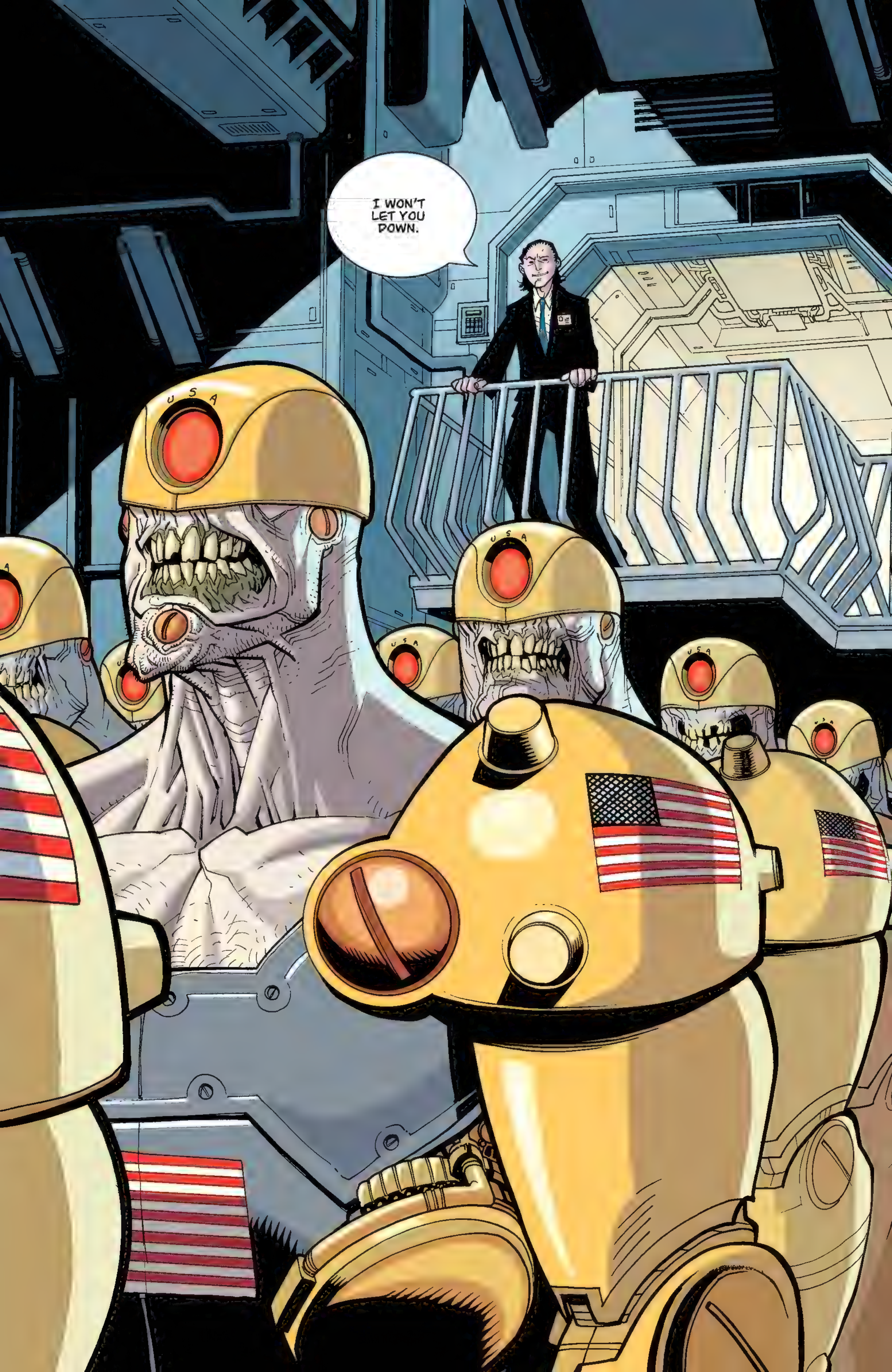












I WON'T
LET YOU
DOWN.

Since first breaking in as the writer of his self-published Battle Pope, **ROBERT KIRKMAN** has been a strident proponent of creator-owned comics. Making his home at Image Comics early on, Kirkman is the creator and co-creator of some of the company's most beloved titles, including Invincible, The Walking Dead and The Astounding Wolf-Man. Based on the strength of his creator-owned properties, the writer was offered work at Marvel Comics, where he worked on popular characters such as the X-Men and Fantastic Four, while launching the fan-favorite The Irredeemable Ant-Man and Destroyer MAX. More recently, Kirkman has committed himself fully to creator-owned work, continuing his ongoing titles and also acting as writer on new series Thief of Thieves under his Skybound imprint at Image.

The co-creator of Invincible, **CORY WALKER** was also the series' original artist, drawing issues #1-7 and setting the tone for the title. Since then, the talented artist has performed art duties on numerous titles at both Marvel and DC Comics, including issues of Marvel Team-Up, The Irredeemable Ant-Man, Punisher War Journal, and Shadowpact in addition to acting as sole artist on the critically acclaimed Destroyer MAX, alongside writer and Invincible co-creator Robert Kirkman. Walker has never forgotten his creation however, and has contributed frequent guest spots on Invincible issues, covers and back-ups.

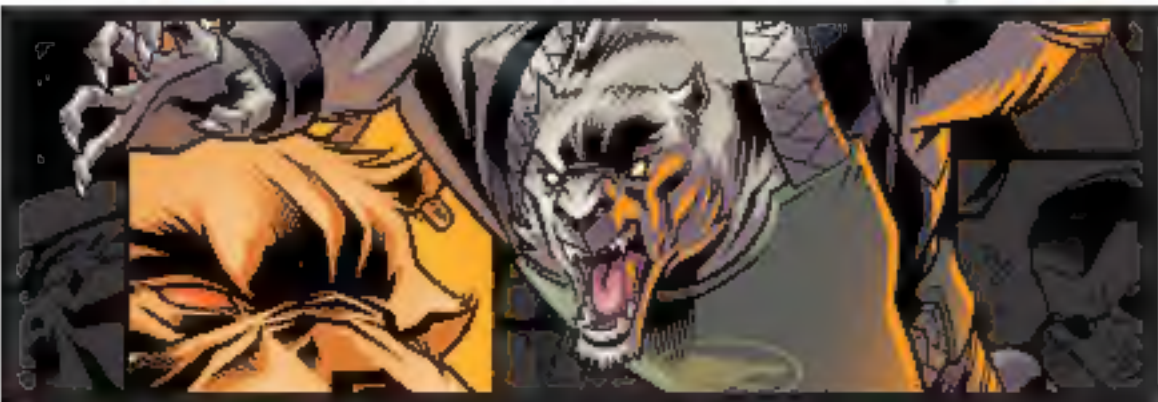
Starting with issue #8, **RYAN OTTLEY** has not only made Invincible his home, but he has made it his own as well. For years, the artist has joined forces with Robert Kirkman in detailing the ongoing adventures of young Mark Grayson. Not only is Ottley a talented storyteller, but he also boasts an unparalleled work ethic. His speed made it possible for him to draw a guest spot on DC Comics' Superman/Batman as well as launch the new ongoing series Haunt, while remaining Invincible's regular artist for over sixty issues and counting.

BILL CRABTREE makes music, comics and love. Mostly love, though -- and let's be honest, if any of us had the choice to make any of those three things at any time on any day... we'd always choose the love. Seriously, Bill can do those things at the drop of a hat if he so chooses. At the local grocery store they call him "love maker" and they barely know Bill Crabtree.

Anyone who looks at the credits of their favorite comic books is likely familiar with the name **RUS WOOTON**. With his work on Invincible, The Walking Dead, The Astounding Wolf-Man, Godland, Fear Agent and more, a case could easily be made for Wooton being the go-to letterer for creator-owned comics. But Wooton's work can also be found in abundance at Marvel Comics, where as a member of Chris Eliopoulos' Virtual Caligraphy group he has lettered countless series including Fantastic Four, newuniversal, Uncanny X-Men and more.

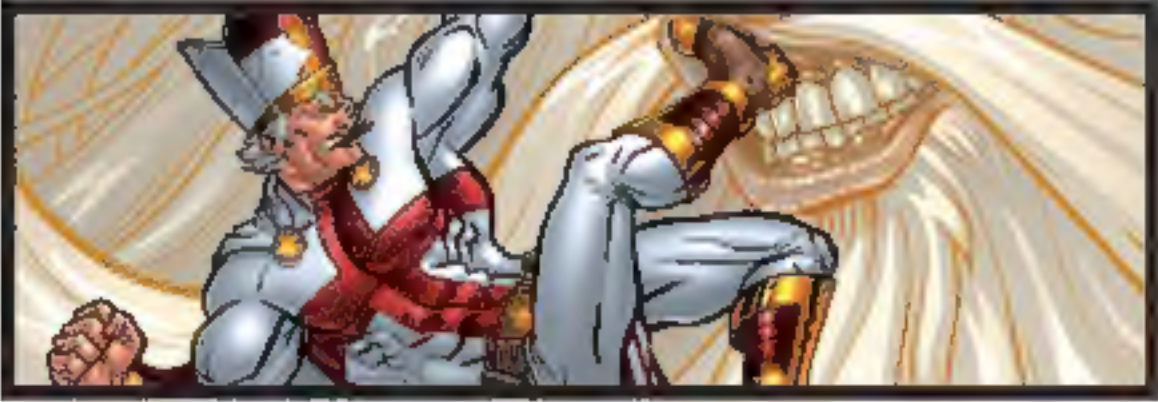
Editor **SEAN MACKIEWICZ** is handsome.

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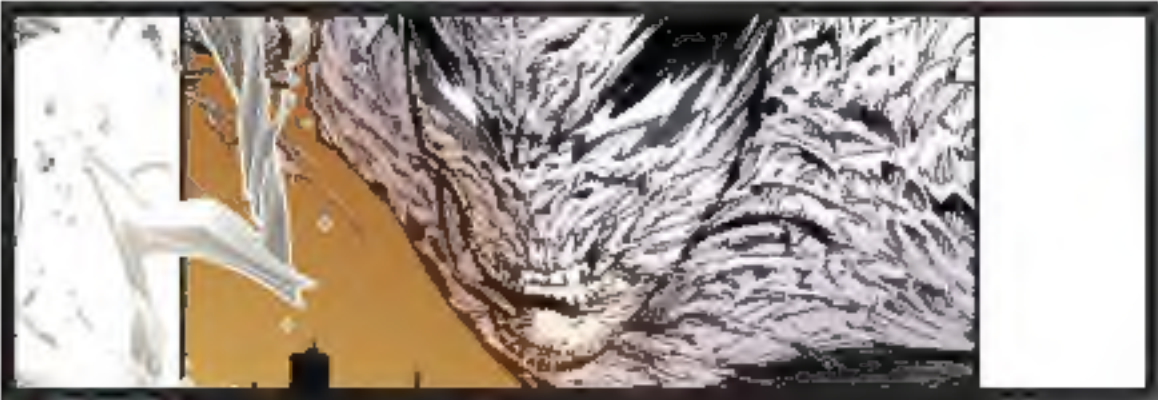
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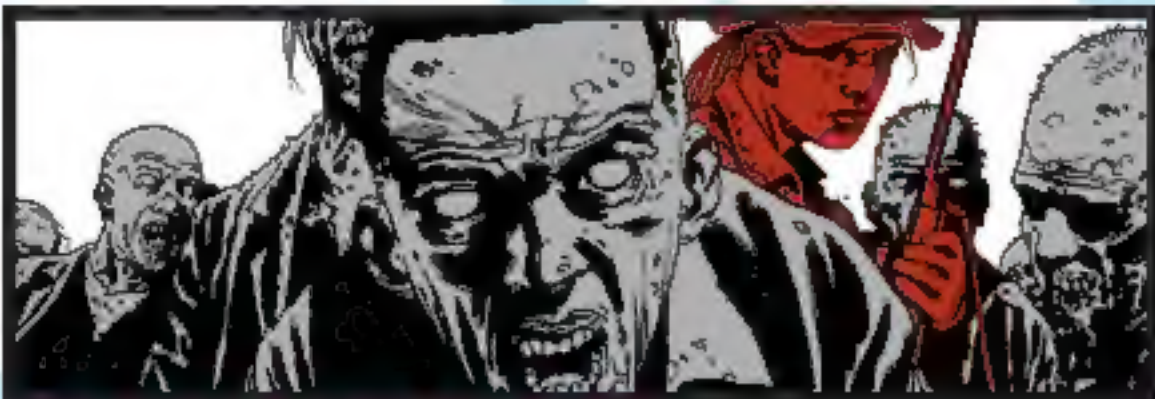
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